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# CRITIQUE OF IMPURE REASON

An Essay on Neurons,  
Somatic Markers, and Consciousness

Peter Munz

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PUBLISHING GROUP

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IMPURE REASON

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## Preface

Like almost everybody else, I grew up in the belief that there were bodily events and mental events and that in spite of many theories as to how exactly they were working together, nothing conclusive had ever been proved. I was aroused from these dogmatic slumbers by reading Marcel Proust's work on the search for and the recovery of lost times. Proust made me realize above all that the two are not working in unison and that a theory to show that they do is bound to fail. Next, I learned from him that one's inner subjective feelings cannot be described—not even by the person who is having them. They can only be referred to indirectly by describing the infinite features of the world we are living in so that they symbolize those feelings. What is more, he made it clear to me that the world he was describing in order to achieve such oblique reference to his inner feelings did not stand in a simple one-to-one correspondence to those inner feelings. His feelings were larger or smaller—more loving or less loving, more despairing or less despairing—than the circumstances warranted; and, what is more, one cannot ever tell how much or how little the circumstances *do* warrant. Our minds are neither bundles of well-adapted domain-specific modules as Leda Cosmides, John Tooby, and Steven Mithen would have it; nor systems of organs of computation designed by natural selection to solve problems faced by our foraging ancestors as Steven Pinker thinks; nor, as the recent, widely publicized book by Jan Stewart and Jack Cohen maintains, “figments of reality.” They are on the contrary, more or less mildly askew and in varying degrees imaginative verbal interpretations of the somatic mark-



ers produced by our outsized nervous system and its devious operations. Insofar as we are conscious, we do anything but accurately reflect the world we are living in. This may sound like some form of old philosophical idealism. But in this new Proustian form, I believe, it contains very good evolutionary reasons why distortions and even absences of mere mechanical reflexivity should occur. They are, strange as it may sound, indirectly adaptive because they are able to yield a much needed and wholesome compensation for our oversized brain and its unnecessarily confusing hypersensitivity.

I have reviewed the problem of consciousness, and, more specifically, the problem of how our neuronal systems relate to what we experience as states of mind, in the light of these realizations. In this sense, this book is an extended commentary on what I learned from Proust—a commentary that led me to reexamine not only the psychology of Freud, but also non-Freudian psychology as well as a wide range of contemporary aspirations known variously as cognitive science and/or neurophilosophy.

In stressing our dependence on cultural correctives of the disorienting disabilities caused by our large brain, I may have created the impression that I am arguing on the side of cultural relativism and am joining that postmodern chorus of cultural anthropologists who are disregarding biology and genetics and, in so doing, are inviting us to live on quicksand. I do not intend to do any such thing. On the contrary, in firmly anchoring my theory in biology in general and in neurology in particular, I am merely drawing attention to the need for culture-based correctives. Human nature is the product of universal evolution and every human life the result of its genes. My point, however, is that since the evolved genetic blueprint is too diffuse and not informative enough, it is our biological heritage that forces us to fall back on cultures and construct them by availing ourselves of the very opportunities which the diffuseness of the blueprint is offering. It is not that we are living either by nature or by nurture. It is the deficiencies of our nature which not only compel us to do a lot of nurturing, but also, at the same time, supply the means of doing it, more or less successfully, by forcing us to use our imaginative interpretations of the disorienting by-products of our nervous systems.

In the course of this book, I make extensive use of Popper's criticism of Freud and extend it to psychological reasoning in general. In an earlier book of 1985 (*Our Knowledge of the Growth of Knowledge; Popper or Wittgenstein?*), I had argued that Popper and Wittgenstein are incompatible and diametrically opposed to one another. In this book I am looking at them from a different perspective, in that I am trying to show that one can use Wittgenstein's theory of the construction of meaningful

language to explain how psychological reasoning, which by Popperian standards falls by the wayside, can be rescued to perform a useful as well as a therapeutic function.

Fifty years ago, late one night in the University of Cambridge, I discussed my then embryonic thoughts about how Proust displayed his mind with Iris Murdoch and John Wisdom. Iris Murdoch was vaguely sympathetic and John Wisdom, who at that time was preoccupied with *Other Minds*, skeptically amused. Many years later, the advent of cognitive science provoked me to elaborate these ideas, and the perverse campaign unleashed against Freud in the wake of the recovered memory debate in the mid-1990s finally pushed me into writing them down. I am presenting them here in as final a form as I am able to give them. I have received much help from many friends and colleagues who have read various parts of drafts of this book. At the end of three chapters there are quotations from the works of Thomas Szasz. Lest they be taken as afterthoughts, I must explain that Szasz's writings, ever since his *The Myth of Mental Illness* of 1961, have been a guide and inspiration, and that his personal comments, sometimes critical, of an earlier draft of this book have been invaluable. I also wish to thank Peter Webster, John Roberts, Patrick van Alfaene, Anne Munz, Hugo Hoffmann, Paul Morris, and Bob Tristram (all of Wellington), M. C. Corballis (Auckland), Peter Wilson (Dunedin), and Laurie Brown (Oxford) for many critical but helpful comments; Brian McGuinness (Siena) and Philip Hoy (London) for helping me to a better understanding of Wittgenstein; Paul Hoffmann (Tübingen) for deepening my appreciation of language; Paul Levinson (New York) for his enthusiastic support of my case for the genesis of consciousness; and Derek Freeman (Canberra) for his untiring encouragement and a running supply of reading matter. Strangely, I also have to thank three friends, J. W. N. Watkins (London), Anthony O'Hear (Bradford), and Ian Jarvie (York), who did not read any of the drafts but whose bemused scepticism during many conversations has proved both challenging and stimulating.

I also thank the Victoria University of Wellington, New Zealand, for their continuing support of my researches, especially my friend Margaret Clark, the Chairperson of the Political Studies Department, for her generous permission to use her department's electronic facilities and Jim Baltaxe, Tim Naylor, and Adrienne Nolan for their word-processing expertise. Equally sincere thanks to Elisabetta Linton of Praeger for her friendly encouragement and to John Beck and his colleagues for their friendly, efficient, and constructive copy editing. Last but not least, I thank Barbro Harris, the head of the library's reference department, and her staff, but especially Justin Cargill, without whose indefatigable bibliographical skill, care, and support this book could not have taken its final shape.

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## *Introduction*

This book is about our minds—about something we know so intimately and with which we are so indissolubly identified that it seems not worthwhile to write a book about it. When people say they are “out of their mind” or they “do not know their mind,” we take it for granted that there is something wrong with them and their ignorance of their own minds. The reality is very different. In reality, we are most ignorant of what we are most assured. Our minds are the last things we know—that is, in any meaningful sense of the term “know.” The people who are out of their minds or who do not know what is in their minds or who cannot make up their minds are the real realists. We others are all trying to make do with, or compensate for, various varieties of ignorance.

When we claim we know what we have in mind—and this is the crux of this book—we can never check whether what we claim to be in mind of is truly in our minds or not. I am neither talking about lying nor about sincere self-deception. To lie or to deceive oneself, no matter how sincerely, one has to be able to know or think one knows what is really in one’s mind so that one can avow the opposite; in the case of sincere self-deception, somebody else has to be able to know what is really in the mind of the self-deceiver so that one can define the deception. I am, rather, talking about the fact that when one avows what one minds, what one is mindful of, what one intends, or what one has in mind there is no fact or event one can point to that would falsify or verify that what one is avowing is really the case. Let me be quite clear

about this: If one says one is seeing a tree, to take the simplest case, one can certainly ascertain whether there is or is not a tree. There is no problem here. The problem begins when one focuses on the "seeing." Is one *really* seeing when one is avowing to be seeing? One can check whether what the avowal is about (a tree) is the case or not. But one cannot check whether one is really seeing or wishing to be seeing or imagining that one is seeing or is hallucinating that one is seeing. The seeing refers not to the tree, but to an inner event, and the question is whether there is an event which unequivocally corresponds to the act of seeing. So, in order to verify the avowal that one is seeing, one has to look inside, only to find out that there is nothing to be seen that refers to the avowal and, to be precise, there is nothing there other than neurons firing and signals being transferred across synapses.

When we look inside our bodies to check or test, we do come across neuronal events which consist of chemical and physical processes that show up on screens and can be monitored by machines and scanned or made visible in test tubes. Moreover, we notice inside our bodies certain rumbling disturbances which we are obliged to take to be the direct effects of these neuronal events. But such disturbances, though rumbling enough to come to our attention and obtrusive enough to be quite distinct, are not distinct enough to allow us to check whether anything we say about them in being conscious of them is in truth a truthful, let alone an adequate, description of any one of these rumblings. The states of mind we are conscious of are quite explicit, but there is next to nothing in these rumbling disturbances caused by our neurons to be explicit about. So what exactly is it we are conscious of when we are saying we are conscious or we are having a certain state of mind?

This peculiar uncertainty as to what it is our states of mind are referring to became a real problem at the end of the nineteenth century, when the first attempts at unravelling the functioning of our nervous system were being made. It came to be noticed that there seemed to be an incongruity or gap between the marvels of the nervous system and our states of mind, and to many people this incongruity appeared to underwrite the old traditional dualism of body and soul. The more people discovered about the nervous system, the more mysterious the functioning of the mind became. But many others hoped that more and more unravelling of the neurons would, indeed must, ultimately lead to the connection between neurons and states of mind. A final unravelling, it was held, would yield enough distinct knowledge about those rumbling disturbances we notice to allow one to decide whether any explicitly formulated state of mind was or was not a true representation of these disturbances. The short answer which will be presented in this

book is that there is not and that there cannot be such a connection: What we call “mental events” or our conscious states of mind are verbally explicit hypotheses about or interpretations of those neuronally caused rumbling disturbances. There is, therefore, no telling whether any one such state of mind is or is not a correct representation of what neurons are doing inside us, any more than there is a final decision as to which of the many interpretations of *Hamlet* is the correct interpretation. The text of Shakespeare’s play does not provide sufficient information to allow more than well-nigh endless hypothetical interpretations.

Given the state of neuroscience at the end of the nineteenth century, all attempts to find a secure connection between neurons and mental events were condemned to failure. At that time the blame was laid, not unreasonably, at the door of our ignorance of neurons. It was because of such failure that Freud invented instead what he took to be a science of psychology which would allow us to probe our states of mind successfully without recourse to neuroscience. It must be stressed, however, that he himself considered such a science *faute de mieux*. Now, one hundred years later, it is timely to examine his efforts because there are renewed and vigorous neuroscientific and philosophical moves to deliver—after all and at long last—what Freud, after his own initial attempts at neuroscience, had despaired of. Since the present moves in this direction, for reasons not altogether different from the ones which made Freud give up a hundred years ago, have, in spite of so much increased knowledge of neurons, not been fruitful and because the philosophical interpretations of these efforts are deeply suspect, it is important to take another look at Freud’s alternative: his philosophy of mind—a science of psychology which would bypass neuroscience. Freud is a key figure in the history of the modern attempt to understand the mind, because modern neuroscience is taking up the struggle, admittedly with better means and greater hopes of success, which Freud abandoned a hundred years ago. His attempt at a philosophy of mind without neuroscience, designed to tackle the mind as it stands, though exemplary, ran into philosophical difficulties of his own making. So, frustrated though we are by the failures of today’s neuroscience to cover the gap between neurons and minds, Freud’s failure at an alternative must be a lesson to us all.

Since Freud stated explicitly that his science of psychology, which he called “psychoanalysis,” had no need of philosophy, it must seem paradoxical to use Freud as an example of a philosophy of mind. But Freud was wrong in thinking that mere observation of how states of mind are formed and hang together and transform one another is possible, let alone enough. The notion of observation is a non-notion. Every so called observation is oozing theory, dripping with theory, covered by theory,

and underwritten or undermined by theory. There are good theories, bad theories, and false theories. We must focus on theories, not on the observations which are derived from them.

Freud took it that his psychology did not stand in need of philosophical scrutiny because he thought that his psychology could serve as a metaphilosophy because it would enable us to explain why Plato was an "idealist" and Aristotle a "realist"; why Hobbes believed that men in the state of nature were uncontrollable savages and why Locke believed they were comparatively decent; why Darwin thought we were descended from apes and why Bishop Wilberforce thought we were descended from Adam and Eve. There is a similarity here, which will be explored and dwelt on in Chapter 5, with the later Wittgenstein, who thought that his theory of how meanings are determined by the rules of a language game would also serve as a metaphilosophy because it would explain how in one language game people are, say, "idealists" and, in another, "realists." By this reasoning, though he himself did not put it in this way, every fly could be shown to be at home in the bottle it was in. Wittgenstein, of course, was torn. He also often spoke as if he believed that there was one "true" or "correct" language game and that when two people disagreed with each other it must be because at least one, possibly both, were breaking the rules of the one and only game. Hence, he thought that by making them abide by the rules of that one and only game he could dissipate their disagreement and show the fly the way out of the bottle, even though by his own showing it was so much at home in the bottle.

Freud's stance was similar. He declared that all arguments, even those that are claimed to be rational and disinterested, "arise from affective sources." We identify truth with what we like, just as we identify beauty with what is sexually attractive to us.<sup>1</sup> Hence, if one could show how, psychologically, likes and dislikes are formed, one could resolve all arguments and disagreements. I, he added disarmingly, have been able to transcend the effects and discover the *real* truth; that is, what *causes* people to think that this or that is true.<sup>2</sup> Like Wittgenstein, Freud claimed to have discovered what makes people hold certain views and, what is more, that the discovery itself was exempt from the causes that determine other people's views. For this reason, it was not just one other view, but the view that would explain the formation of all other views. Though the affinity between Freudian and Wittgensteinian goals has been noticed, the reasons for that affinity have as yet not been considered.<sup>3</sup> They will be worked out in detail in Chapter 5.

Seeing that Freud himself never subjected his own findings to philosophical scrutiny, any philosophical investigation of those findings must of necessity be critical because it must be carried out from a non-Freudian

point of view. But such criticism must distance itself from those critics who are avowedly hostile and who criticize in order to get at Freud and his theories: For example, Frederick Crews turned violently against psychoanalysis, as addicts are wont to do and as Arthur Koestler did when he started to campaign against communism, his God who had failed him; or as Joseph McCabe, a lapsed Jesuit, did when he campaigned against the Roman Church. I myself have no personal commitment and my plan is to be as philosophical as I can in order to distinguish the good from the bad and the credible from the less credible.

The core of my argument, then, is a critique of psychology, rather than a critique of Freudian psychology. The body of knowledge which we call psychological is something we cannot do without, but it is a body of knowledge which is of necessity highly impure. The argument focuses on Freud because he was the only psychologist whose attempt to purge psychology of its inherent impurities makes any sense. All the other attempts, inspired by the very dubiousness of psychological reasoning this book is concerned with—and there have been countless ones, from behaviorism to cognitive science and neurophilosophy—are attempts to do away with psychology and substitute something else. Freud was remarkable because he took impure psychology seriously and tried to make it pure.

His theories and findings are dubious and some of them are downright incredible because they appear to break all rules of viable scientific method. But, as I will try to show, they are dubious or incredible because he tried to force psychology into a Procrustean bed of scientific standards which were fast becoming outmoded even while Freud was at his most productive. He clung to nineteenth-century standards of scientific knowledge which equated science with materialism and determinism. His findings have become doubly dubious since those standards have been questioned and displaced. However, by any standards of science, psychology is a very dubious enterprise in which we all are compelled to engage. Freud's failings and especially his totalitarian claims must be seen against this background of psychology. It is not only Freudian psychology which is lacking in evidential and confidence-inspiring foundations. No psychology, and this is the main burden of this book, can have adequate, evidential foundations. All psychology, not just Freudian psychology, is suspect. Freud merely tried to make the best of a bad job.

Though Freud was a master psychologist, he did not or did not want to understand the shaky foundations of all psychological reasoning. At first he thought that some daughters had been seduced by their fathers. Then he changed his mind and thought that they wished to have been seduced. Then somebody came along and said that Freud



was dishonest in abandoning his seduction evidence and that the daughters really had been abused. And then somebody else came along and claimed that nobody had been seduced by anybody and that Freud had it all made up. Or take the by now ancient case made by H. J. Eysenck against Freud in his *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology*.<sup>4</sup> Eysenck mentions the case of a young woman who resisted three determined efforts at seduction by her boyfriend, only to have the success of the enterprise presented to her in a dream in symbolic form. Freud, Eysenck comments, argued nonsensically that though the young woman engaged three times in heated lovemaking, she found actual intercourse so shocking that she had to disguise it to herself in a dream. But Eysenck's comments are equally nonsensical. Obviously, Freud would reply, she *did* find the idea of intercourse shocking otherwise she would not have resisted so successfully three times! Or take a recent comment on Edith Wharton's famous narrative of how a young woman is beautifully seduced by her father. Some critics say that the beauty of the story is proof that she must have known from her own very personal experience what she was writing about. Others say exactly the opposite: They claim to know that father-daughter incest is never beautiful and conclude, therefore, that the narrative, being positively idyllic, cannot possibly be based on personal experience. With all such endlessly similar reasoning we are clearly treading on quicksand, but the quicksand is not just Freudian; it is the quicksand of psychological reason.

Many people take Freud's case histories as literature. Though they are very well written and it is therefore tempting to follow this trend, these stories purport to be neither fairy tales nor science fiction. But the claim that they are science like physics and geology stems from Freud's own lack of philosophical finesse and from his consequent misunderstanding of what is and what is not scientific. This book is not concerned with Freud's psychology, but with his unjustifiable claims to scientific finality. These Freudian claims have been challenged often enough. The core of the present argument is that this lack of justification applies not only to Freud's psychology, but to all psychology.

The upshot of my argument is that psychology is not a science in any of the ordinary senses of that term. There are indeed many senses of the term, as the different schools of the philosophy of science bear witness to. But psychology cannot be covered by any of them and for this reason psychologists should never be allowed to claim special expertise or be accorded a standing of expert witnesses in a court of law or in any other situation. Those Acts of Parliament which in many countries confer on people who have a degree or diploma in psychology the right to call themselves "psychologists" should be taken to mean no more than that people who have such a degree or diploma in psy-

chology are people who have such a degree or diploma in psychology. They should not be taken to mean that such people have special knowledge in a science called "psychology," for there cannot be such special expert knowledge.

At the present time the question of whether there are psychologists with such expert knowledge is specially urgent because of the widespread reporting of sexual abuse of children and of the intervention in the reported cases of psychologists who claim to be able to ascertain whether the abuse did occur because they have special knowledge about the recovery of repressed memories. In many of these cases the name of Freud is either tacitly or explicitly invoked. The phenomenon of repression and of the possibility of recovery of repressed content certainly stood in the center of Freud's psychology. Critics like Frederick Crews are now vociferously blaming Freud for having taught that recovered memories are proof of earlier repression of what had happened, and adherents of Freud are deriving sustenance from his belief that memories can be recovered. Both sides are wrong in dragging Freud into their dispute, for Freud, in a famous letter to his friend Fliess in 1897, made it quite clear that since there are no indications of reality in the unconscious, one cannot distinguish between the truth and fiction of such recovered memories.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, as I shall argue in this book, it was Freud's signal contribution to the way our minds work that one cannot tell from behavior or from conscious emotions whether they were triggered by what really happened or by fantasies. Reality and fantasy, he maintained, are both equally causally efficacious. If Freud were invoked in good faith, rather than to prove a case, his testimony would go to show that one cannot tell from *present* symptoms whether the seduction really happened or whether it was an early fantasy. This, as I shall argue in this book, is the quintessence of his message. It was his attempt to put that message on what he thought was a scientific footing that led to untenable and indefensible claims of certainty and truth. This critical approach to psychology in general and to Freudian depth psychology in particular is very different from the campaigns which have been waged against Freud by people like Adolf Grünbaum, Frederick Crews, Allan Esterson, or Jeffrey Masson. Unlike these critics, I am concerned with the dubious foundations of *all* psychological reasoning and my criticism of Freud centers on his honest but misguided attempts to make those foundations less dubious by turning psychology into depth psychology. Freud's numerous critics and detractors are not necessarily mistaken, but they are barking up the wrong tree.

The best and, to my mind, only construction one can put on Freud's work is that he failed to transform psychology into a science—not because he was dishonest or incompetent, but because it cannot be done.

Nevertheless, he achieved something less ambitious. He succeeded in practicing what the later Wittgenstein preached. He produced the rules for a more-or-less viable language game which is all one can do if one wants to talk about states of mind. Since it is impossible to determine their causes or the reasons why we have them, all we can do is to learn to talk about them intelligently. Our inability to do more than talk about them intelligently according to the rules of a game is not due to an ignorance which, one might hope, will one fine day be overcome. It lies in the nature of states of mind and their peculiar relationship to the physical operations that produce them. Freud's trouble was that he supposed that the game he had invented was the only possible game. His mistake was not improved by the fact that he built this exclusiveness into the very rules of the game he proposed.

As to Wittgenstein, there was real irony. Wittgenstein once remarked that Freud is "full of fishy thinking and his charm and the charm of his subject is so great that you may be easily fooled. . . . So hold on to your brains."<sup>6</sup> But in the end it turned out that it was none other than the later Wittgenstein himself who produced the explanation why such "fishy thinking" could gain ground and become common coinage through the establishment of a language game. For the later Wittgenstein had indeed come to the conclusion that whether thinking is fishy or not does not matter as long as it is done according to rules and that the only kind of fishiness to be avoided was fishiness without rules. Since in Wittgenstein's scheme of games there is only need for rules but no specification of what kind of rules, there is no fishy thinking that could not be carried out in Wittgenstein's world. All one needs is to devise rules, and this is precisely what Freud managed to do. I think I have detected a kind of symbiosis between Freud and the later Wittgenstein, but am at a loss to decide whether this mutual dependence is damaging to both or to either of them or whether it reflects favorably on either of them and, if so, on whom.

The unjustifiable pretensions of Freud have given rise to an understandable barrage of criticisms. It is time to look at the heart of the matter; that is, at psychology, the so called science of states of mind. Psychologists claim that they can trace the etiology of any given behavior to its true source. My argument is that there can be no true source and that no amount of pro-Freud and anti-Freud argument can create one. It is in ourselves that we are underlings. The real trouble lies in the pretensions of psychology, not in Freud's amendments to these pretensions. Compared with these troubles, the detection of flaws in Freud's psychology by Adolf Grünbaum and Frederick Crews and Frank Sulloway are child's play. This book is addressed to these troubles and tries to show that not even Freud was able to overcome them. If a car has no engine,

no amount of fuel will make it run, and there can be no merit in any proof that Freud's attempt to make it run on claret is flawed.

One final word about terminology. Freud was concerned with neurotic symptoms and his theories were initially designed to cure such symptoms. Nevertheless, he was a psychologist, not a psychiatrist treating psychotic symptoms. The distinction is crucial, for neuroses are indeed not psychotic and are nothing more than extreme forms of ordinary behavior and its states of mind. Since, as I shall argue, no state of mind can be accounted for, equated with, or reduced to neuronal events, there is, in every such state of mind, a peculiar residue, a lack of a one-to-one correspondence, not only to the world that impinges on our senses, but also to the neuronal events which may or may not result directly from such impingement. Since neurotic states of mind are states of mind which are overreactions or underreactions to circumstances or situations, all states of mind, since they cannot altogether be accounted for in terms of the circumstances they refer to and since they contain features which cannot be exhaustively reduced to neuronal events, are "neurotic." By this token, all neurotic conditions are part of ordinary psychology. Conscious mental events always are either overreactions or underreactions. We are always more loving or less loving, more anxious or less anxious, more frightened or less frightened, more hopeful or less hopeful, more despairing or less despairing, more hating or less hating, than any situation warrants. What is more, we cannot ever say how much love, hate, despair, hope, or anxiety is warranted. Although it is often said that men are more afraid of women than is necessary, there is no telling how much fear would be necessary; that is, would be "realistic."

It is an essential character of our states of mind that they can never stand in a one-to-one correspondence to the objects they purport to intend, for the very simple reason that there is nothing determinable they can stand in such a one-to-one correspondence to. For this reason, they are always neurotic, and this neurotic quality is not necessarily pathological, but more or less normal. If our conscience does make cowards of us all, it is the nature of our psyche which makes neurotics of us all. Since nobody in this sense can be completely non-neurotic, our attitudes to and our treatment of neuroses as well as all theories about them fall squarely into the field of ordinary psychology. In this book I often refer to people Freud talked about as "patients," because he himself usually did so. But "patient" should read "person," because, since there are neurotic traits in every state of mind, the difference between the Wolf Man or the Rat Man and Everyman is only one of degree. All of them, not only Everyman, are *mon semblable, mon frère*. Freud himself thought so when he carried his initial therapeutic theories into

the realm of the interpretation of our dreams, into prehistory as well as into modern sociology and what he called the psychopathology of everyday life. This book, though it is about Freud, is about normal, not abnormal psychology. Even normal psychological reasoning has to be as impure as the "reasoning" of neurotics. Freud endeavored to purify it; but this endeavor, given the nature of our psyche, had to fail.

Though it is undeniable that this book is about the philosophy of mind, it must also be stressed that I am writing as a historian about the history of ideas: how they come, how they change, and how they are both handled and mishandled. The outcome of both handling and mishandling is often not the one that was intended or is logically compelling. Who indeed could have foreseen that Freud, who set out as a paragon of scientific rectitude, would, as explained in Chapter 6, end up providing a public stage for the anti-science pretensions of post-modernism to strut upon? *Habent sua fata libelli!*

### NOTES

1. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1955–1964), 7: 156, 21: 83 (hereafter cited as *S.E.*). Cp. H. Damisch, *The Judgment of Paris*, trans. J. Goodman (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1996), 111ff.
2. Freud, *S.E.*, 15: 23.
3. J. Bouveresse, *Wittgenstein Reads Freud*, trans. C. Cosman (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995), 8–9; B. McGuinness, "Freud and Wittgenstein," in *Wittgenstein and His Times*, ed. B. McGuinness (Oxford: Blackwell, 1981), 42–43.
4. H. J. Eysenck, *Sense and Nonsense in Psychology* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1958), 165.
5. *The Complete Letters of Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, 1887–1904*, trans. and ed. J. M. Masson (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1985), 264.
6. C. Barrett, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Lectures and Conversations* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1966), 27.

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## *The Silence of the Neurons*

### PSYCHOLOGY AND STATES OF MIND

By psychology, blithely, we understand the study of states of mind—how they come into being, how they hang together, how they cease to exist, and how they influence one another. The study consists of making verbal statements about them in such a way that they assert regularities of occurrence, causation, genesis, and disappearance. We assume in such study that the mind is lying ready, waiting to be studied by psychologists. In reality, the mind is a composite phenomenon, made up of neuronal events, inner feels caused by these events, and, as a final outcome, verbally articulated “minds.” For this reason, it would be more correct to call the events referred to by psychological statements the “psyche”; although, as my argument will show, we ought to replace that word with a different, more telling term. I propose to reserve the term “mind” for the explicit statements we make *about* the psyche, so that “having a mind” or “being in mind of” or “believing that” or “feeling that” amounts to doing psychology about the psyche. It is the psyche, the feels, which are the subject matter. The mind is talk about that subject matter.

There is, then, our feels or our psyche—how we feel ourselves to be—and there is talk about those feels. That talk is psychology and the subject matter of psychology is those feels. The great and all important question is what the relationship between the way we feel ourselves to be and the way we talk about the way we feel ourselves to be is; or, if



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