
Wish-fulfilment in Philosophy and Psychoanalysis

The tyranny of desire

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Wish and wish-fulfilment

Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but the wish come true is a tree of life.
Proverbs XII, 12

1.1 Introduction: wish and wish-fulfilment

In 1899 Sigmund Freud wrote to his friend Fliess:

My dear Wilhelm, ... My last generalization holds good and seems inclined to spread to an unpredictable extent. It is not only dreams that are fulfilments of wishes, but hysterical attacks as well. This is true of hysterical symptoms, but it probably applies to every product of neurosis – for I recognized it long ago in acute delusional insanity. Reality – wish-fulfilment: it is from this contrasting pair that our mental life springs.

(Freud 1950a: 277)

The generalisation did spread, and wish-fulfilment's scope acquired ambitious dimensions:

... the principal function of the mental mechanism is to relieve the individual from the tensions created in him by his needs... But the satisfaction of... part of these needs... is regularly frustrated by reality. This leads to the further task of finding some other means of dealing with the unsatisfied impulses. The whole course of the history of civilization is no more than an account of the various methods adopted by mankind for 'binding' their unsatisfied wishes. Myths, religion and morality find their place in this scheme as attempts to seek a compensation for the lack of satisfaction of human wishes... [T]he neuroses themselves have turned out to be attempts to find individual solutions for the problems of compensating for unsatisfied wishes, whilst the institutions seek to provide social solutions for these same problems... [T]he exercising of an art [is] once again an activity intended to allay ungratified wishes – in the first place in the creative artist himself and subsequently in his audience or spectators.

(Freud 1913j: 186–7)

Freud eventually concluded that dreams, daydreams, phantasies, neurotic and some psychotic symptoms – delusions, hallucinations – jokes and art, slips of the tongue, bungled actions, magical or omnipotent thinking and illusions such as religion, as well as forms of social organisation and moral institutions, were either wish-fulfilling or attempts at wish-fulfilment. When he wrote ‘Reality – wish-fulfilment: it is from this contrasting pair that our mental life springs’, Freud meant that wishes and ‘reality’ – or, rather, the agencies of mind representing ‘reality’ which oppose those wishes – may both be fulfilled in symptoms and their congeners.¹ So wish-fulfilment is usually a compromise: ‘a symptom arises where the repressed and the repressing thought can come together in the wish-fulfilment’ (1950a: 278). This is a startling idea. Symptoms are not only *caused* by conflicts between a person’s wishes and the internalised demands of reality, but *are* the fulfilments or satisfactions – in a manner to be explored – of one or both.

Another novel idea emerges in the second passage quoted. The mind’s task, the task of the ‘mental mechanism’, is the relief of tensions created by needs or drives (see 2.2), expressed as desires or wishes. Ordinarily, when we strongly desire to perform an action or wish to obtain some state of affairs, we will act. But if prevented from acting by sleep, inhibition or social constraints, or because the desired end is unattainable, then sometimes we can produce transformations in ourselves – self-deceptive or consoling beliefs and phantasies, hallucinatory experiences, delusions or other symptoms – which manage to substitute for the real objects of those wishes and, in a manner, satisfy and temporarily terminate them. Here the mind has recourse to wish-fulfilment or, as Freud often says, ‘substitutive satisfaction’. Evidently this conception of wish-fulfilment is quite singular and differs in important respects from the ordinary understanding of what it is for a wish to be fulfilled. I will henceforth refer to it as ‘Freudian wish-fulfilment’ or ‘FWT’.

In the preceding passages I used ‘wish’ and ‘desire’ interchangeably, and this requires explanation. Even if wishing and desiring are taken as natural kinds (Schroeder 2004), or as having similar realisers in the brain (as assumed by most neuroscientists), there are important conceptual differences between them (and between wanting, longing, yearning, etc.). Moreover, the nature of ‘the wish’ in Freud’s work has given rise to significant scholarly controversy and it will pay to insert a parenthesis here to settle this issue at the outset, as more important matters turn on it.

In its *conceptually central* uses, the wish-locution presupposes an acknowledgment that action is impossible, or close to being so: it indicates a mere expression of preference. ‘How I wish I could have been there’ or, even, ‘I do wish I could go’ do not place me in causal relation to action in a time frame but tell, instead, of my preferences. That is why one cannot desire or want what is known to be impossible, but one can certainly wish for it. I cannot knowingly desire to undo the past, but I may still wish that I had been born into wealth or gone to a better school. Nevertheless, because I want to adhere as closely as practicable to Freudian usage, I will use ‘wish’ and ‘desire’ interchangeably.

The German *wunsch* has a stronger causal affiliation with action than our ‘wish’ does, and neither Freud nor his translators distinguished systematically between

wishing and desiring. Many of Freud's recent philosophical commentators, however, have claimed to identify in Freud's account of wish-fulfilment a systematically quasi-technical use of 'the wish'. It is said that Freud distinguished between wishes and desires. Sebastian Gardner (1993: 124, 140) claims that the 'psychoanalytic wish' uncovered by Freud is a novel kind of mental creature, 'a sort of hybrid', different from both desire and ordinary wishes – though related to the ordinary kind of wish – and is 'necessarily engaged in the process of wish-fulfilment' (1993: 126). The difference he alleges is underlined in his claim that 'Freud did not envisage wish-fulfilment as a mode of satisfaction available to propositional desires' (1993: 123), though desires (according to Gardner) can exploit wish-fulfilment by regressing to a state of instinctual demand and give rise to a wish susceptible to wish-fulfilment (1993: 123). Richard Wollheim (1984: 85, 90ff) also recognises a quasi-technical notion of *wish* that acquires its significance in the context of the archaic operation of mind. Jonathan Lear says that 'a wish is a motivating force, but, unlike desire, its products are not actions. Freud implicitly recognises that a wish differs from a desire. For he characterises a wish by its role within the archaic functioning of the infantile mind' (1990: 75–6). Similarly, Brakel (2009: 139) thinks that 'wish' is a term of art for Freud and wishing, unlike desire, is exclusively satisfied by phantasy. Jim Hopkins, who does not usually put much weight on this distinction (1982: xix ff; 1995), did wonder, though, whether – in consequence of the irrationality and detachment from reality of the wishes fulfilled in dreams – Freud should not have 'introduced a special theoretical term – perhaps something like "night-time motive derivative" – instead of the common-sense term "wish" (1988: 44–5).

I think the attribution of these categorical distinctions to Freud is mistaken and leads their authors to distorted accounts of wish-fulfilment. Freud distinguishes amongst kinds of wishes in terms of their content and topographical location: whether they are conscious, preconscious or unconscious. But he does not distinguish between ordinary and 'psychoanalytic wishes', or between pre-propositional wishes (or some hybrid of wish and desire) and propositional desires (Gardner 1993: 153–6). The fundamental distinction Freud makes is not between orectic kinds *wish* and *desire*, nor between an ordinary and a technical sense of 'wish', but between the kinds of process, primary or secondary, which can take both wishes and desires as their materials. This is easily demonstrable. First, Freud frequently uses 'wish' in an inclusive way to cover for all the conative and orectic states that set our minds turning, as when he writes that 'nothing but a wish can set our mental apparatus working' (Freud 1900a: 567). Second, in relation to the formation of the dream, Freud contends that there has to be at least one wish 'dating from earliest childhood' (1900a: 269) that is strong enough to instigate the dream (1900a: 553); these wishes, invariably associated with wish-fulfilment, have some of the properties attributed to them by the commentators. But Freud then goes on to claim that in dreams there is a *layering* of wish-fulfilments in which all manner of wishes and quite ordinary desires left over from the 'day residues' are also fulfilled – in the peculiar manner of FWT to be investigated presently (1900a: 550–72). Thus his 19-month-old daughter Anna's spoken-out-loud dream consisting of a menu, to which her own name

was attached: '*Anna F, stwawbewwies, wild stwawbewwies, omblet, pudden!*' (1916–17: 164) is directly instigated by unsatisfied desires of the previous day resulting from an enforced fast. Third, Freud conceived of daydream, art, religion, and other things as fulfilling wishes and desires equally. 'Only in art', he says, 'does it still happen that a man who is consumed by desires performs something resembling the accomplishment of those desires and that what he does in play produces emotional effects – thanks to artistic illusion – just as though it were something real' (1912–13: 90). What are those desires? Principally, they are commonplace (propositional) 'desires to win honour, power, wealth and the love of women' (1916–17: 376). Here 'wish' could be substituted without loss for 'desire', as could the reverse substitution in Freud's characterisation of religious ideas as 'illusions, fulfilments of the oldest, strongest and most urgent wishes of mankind' (1927c: 30). End of parenthesis.

Freudian wish-fulfilment is one of the fundamental but tacit working concepts of classical psychoanalysis. Although FWT pervades his work, Freud did not distinguish it as a fundamental tenet,² partly, I think, because he failed to recognise its singularity. Psychoanalysis is generally scant on rigorous conceptual analysis and that singularity has remained unappreciated. Several other specific reasons for the neglect may be noted. In some quarters a false dichotomy between drive theory and object relations or interpersonal theory is enjoined, as if object-relating somehow precluded mutual relations motivated by wishes. Since wish-fulfilment is part of an account of motivation naturally associated with drive theory, both motivational concepts – wish and drive – have suffered neglect. Generally speaking, the classical preoccupation with neuroses, considered largely as pathologies of desire and conflict, has given way in contemporary theory to concern with pathologies of developmental, predominantly cognitive, deficits due to environmental failures: failures in attachment leading to incapacity for 'mentalisation' (Fonagy *et al.* 2004; Holmes 2010); inadequate (pre-verbal) internalisation leading to faulty 'interactional structures'; Bowlby's (1971) 'internal working models' (IWMs); Stern's (1985) 'representations of interactions generalised' (RIGs); and the acquisition of unconscious pathogenic beliefs (Weiss and Sampson 1986). This attention to impaired (broadly) cognitive structures³ and associated failures in affect regulation appears to have diminished interest in the active, desiderative, wish-fulfilling aspects of mind. Psychoanalysis appears now less concerned with the pathology of desire than of belief, or the various belief-like structures antecedent beliefs (IWMs, RIGs, procedural memories, etc.) that have been proposed; less concerned with the consequences of frustrated wishes than with deficits in cognitive functions. In this, of course, psychoanalysis has moved closer to schools of clinical psychology such as cognitive behavioural therapy that focus on the acquisition and role of cognitive structures and on rectifying faulty beliefs and interactional dispositions.

I believe that this emphasis on the (broadly) cognitive at the expense of the wishful aspects of mind is a mistake: neither the origins nor the persistence of pathogenic (broadly) cognitive structures can be understood independently of the orectic (desiderative, appetitive, wishful) and conative (willing, decisive, intending) aspects of mind. I hope to show why. In any event, the concept of wish-fulfilment has not

vanished from psychoanalysis altogether. It retains a place in contemporary theory and practice, albeit under guises: as omnipotent phantasy; as underlying psychological defences that supervene on phantasy such as projective identification; in ‘actualisation’ (Sandler 1976) in transference, acting out, some aspects of symptom formation and the analysis of dreams; indeed, as active in much of the territory that Freud mapped out for it, but less explicitly.

It is evident that if Freud was even approximately right about the nature and scope of FWT, then it must also form an important compartment of any philosophy of mind that seeks to understand irrational action and belief formation in *Intentional or common-sense-psychological* terms.⁴ And here I must insert another parenthesis, this time about terminology.

In philosophy the term ‘intentional’, as well as being used in the ordinary way to qualify action as ‘purposeful’ or ‘meant’, is also used in a technical sense which, following common practice, will be capitalised: ‘Intentional’. The Latin root for this sense appears to be ‘*intentio*’, which in Scholastic use meant ‘representation’ (Kneale 1968), but – probably as a result of mistranslating Brentano’s text, in which the term reappears in modern philosophy – Intentionality has come to denote the property of ‘aboutness’ possessed by most of the mental states which we use to explain human behaviour and, by extension, whatever bears sufficient similarity to such behaviour (Daniel Dennett’s (1989) ‘Intentional stance’). Belief, fear, desire, and so on, can have Intentional objects – for example what we think (that grass is green) or what we think about (grass, greenness); and since we can think about, fear, desire things that don’t exist, Intentional objects need not exist or even be possible. Intentionality has been said to be the mark of the mental, but this is incorrect. Mental states such as bare awareness (Damasio 1999), moods and sensations fail to have Intentional objects: a headache, for example, is not about pain, it *is* pain. *It is very important in what follows not to confuse Intentionality with the notion of intentional or purposeful action.*

Intentional or common-sense psychology explains behaviour and relations between mental states by using Intentional idioms to attribute Intentional states and causal and conceptual connections between them. Other names for Intentional psychology include ‘propositional attitude psychology’, ‘ordinary psychology’, ‘belief-desire psychology’, ‘folk-psychology’, and ‘theory of mind’. None of these names are entirely satisfactory. A choice has to be made, and I will mostly use ‘Intentional’ or ‘common-sense psychology’ as the most comprehensive terms. End of parenthesis.

1.2 The singularity of Freudian wish-fulfilment

FWT is conceptually complex. For the present, let’s focus on its conceptual conditions and leave to the next chapter the issue of whether anything – dreams, symptoms etc. – actually satisfies it.

First, what is the *ordinary* understanding of what it is for a wish to be fulfilled? Suppose I wish I were in Spain and one evening I dream or hallucinate that I am in Spain; will my wish have been fulfilled in any ordinary sense? No, a person’s wish that *p* is not fulfilled or satisfied in the ordinary understanding of these terms unless

it becomes the case that p . For my wish to be fulfilled it is necessary that I get to Spain, that it be a fact that I am in Spain. Necessary, but not sufficient, for as well as being in Spain I must believe that I am in Spain; if I do not believe I am in Spain even when I am, I will continue wishing: my wish will not have been extinguished and therefore fulfilled.⁵

Here then are three marks of the ordinary, fully-fledged conception of what it is for a wish to be fulfilled: the wished-for state of affairs or action must obtain; the agent must come to believe that the wished-for state of affairs or action obtains; and the wish must be, at least temporarily, extinguished: the agent must cease (that) wishing.

There is a further condition. Suppose I wish to be in Spain and have somehow acquired the false belief that I am in Spain, though in fact I am not. One night, unawares, I am whisked off to Spain. I wake, still with my false belief. All three prescribed conditions hold: I believe that I am in Spain; I am in Spain; my wish to be in Spain is extinct. Yet this case is not an instance of ordinary wish-fulfilment. Why? The reason seems to be that it is a necessary condition for a wish being fulfilled in the ordinary way that its extinction be a causal consequence of the relevant disposition of states of affairs in the world. In the present case, although the wished-for state of affairs (my being in Spain) obtains, it is causally inert in relation to my belief and to the satisfaction of my wish. In the ordinary case, wish-fulfilling belief must be brought about in the right way.⁶ Hence condition (iv) in the following summary:

- (A) In the *ordinary sense*, any wish that p is fulfilled only if:
- (i) the wish is extinguished: the agent ceases to wish that p ;
 - (ii) the agent comes to believe that p ;
 - (iii) it is a fact that p : the wished-for state of affairs or action occurs;
 - (iv) the wish is extinguished *because* of the occurrence or institution of p .

In contrast, it is distinctive of those phenomena identified by Freud as wish-fulfilling – dreams, daydreams, hallucinations and so on – that whilst conditions (i) and (ii) are necessary, conditions (iii) and (iv) are not. Characteristically in FWT either the wished-for states of affairs do not exist or come to pass or, if they do, they have no causal role in the extinction of the wish. The causal role must, therefore, rest entirely with (ii), ‘coming to believe that p ’ (or with some mental state functioning terminatively in the manner of belief, if such there are).⁷ Moreover, in nearly all cases of wish-fulfilment described by Freud, the agent *initiates* the wish-fulfilling process.⁸ FWT cannot be something that adventitiously and entirely befalls an agent. Thus, Freud’s patient Dora periodically succumbed to hysterical coughing and aphonia that were causally overdetermined; one such cause, according to Freud, was Dora’s intention to separate her father from his mistress. Even if the symptoms were not manufactured intentionally – even if, say, they were produced subintentionally (by desire alone) or as the expression of affective processes – they could still have succeeded fortuitously in separating the lovers, and thus be wish-fulfilling in the Freudian sense. What would *not* count as wish-fulfilment in this

sense is if, for example, a brick fell on the mistress's head. That would have served to satisfy Dora's wish to separate her father from his mistress but it would not count as an instance of FWT.

So a further condition recognising agency must be added to (i) and (ii). Since there may be degrees of intentional involvement it will be useful to mark the limits, from the (let's say) *maximally* intentional cases, such as compensatory daydreams, to the simplest cases where no intention (though perhaps just motivating desire or emotion) is at work, such as the hallucinatory wish-fulfilment in infant mental life posited by Freud. This can be done by distinguishing two forms of a condition which replaces conditions (iii) and (iv). The weaker form, (v(a)), is that the agent initiates the wish-fulfilling process, in a sense that does not entail but does not exclude intention. The stronger form, (v(b)), identifies the *maximal* cases of wish-fulfilment where a wish that *p* of an agent A is fulfilled – where the process that fulfils the wish can be truly described as intentional under such descriptions as 'A fulfilling A's wish that *p*' or 'A gratifying (consoling, appeasing...) A'.

Because I will insist that there are forms of FWT that causally involve intention, though in varying ways, we need a name for the position: *intentionalism* (not to be confused with 'representationalism') will serve. And because it is a feature of FWT that it is usually temporary, a stop-gap measure that breaks down in the face of ineluctable desire or need – long-standing delusions are perhaps exceptions – the conditions need to be suitably qualified. We then arrive at the following schema for Freudian wish-fulfilment.

- (B) For any wish that *p*, it will be fulfilled in the manner of FWT only if:
- (i) the wish is (temporarily) terminated: the agent ceases to wish that *p*;
 - (ii) the agent comes to (temporarily) believe that *p*;
 - (v(a)) the agent initiates the wish-fulfilling process, in a sense that does not entail but does not exclude intention; or
 - (v(b)) in maximal cases, the process that fulfils the wish can be truly described as intentional under such descriptions as 'A fulfilling A's wish that *p*' or 'A gratifying (consoling, appeasing...) A'.⁹

This conception, not of course expressed in these terms, is entirely original to Freud and, as we shall see, of great significance to the understanding of mind. However, it was muddled by him in three different ways. First, he regularly conflated the ordinary kind of wish-fulfilment with his novel discovery, FWT. Second, he conflated FWT with the conceptions of precursors, especially ancient oneiromancers, who had hit on wishful interpretations of dreams (2.1). But most importantly, if we distinguish between (i) a wish; (ii) a representation of a wish; (iii) the object or action or state of affairs whose occurrence would fulfil the wish; (iv) a representation of such an object, action or state of affairs; (v) a representation of a wish being fulfilled; and (vi) the fulfilment of the wish, the process (or, what is different, the end state) of the wish being fulfilled as this occurs (a) when the wish finds its true objects and (b) when the wish is fulfilled by some counterfeit, as in a

dream or phantasy, then – amongst other conflation, such as between (i) and (ii) and (vi)(a) and (vi)(b) – Freud fails consistently to distinguish between (v) and (vi). Consider some typical statements:

- (1) Of the famous Irma dream Freud says that ‘its content was the fulfilment of a wish and its motive was a wish’. (1900a: 119)
- (2) Hysterical acts are ‘mimetic or hallucinatory representations of phantasies’. (Freud 1913: 173)
- (3) Freud writes of a ‘delusion having as content the fulfilment of the wish’. (1922b: 226)
- (4) ‘*A dream is a (disguised) fulfilment of a (suppressed or repressed) wish.*’ (1900a: 160)
- (5) ‘*Dreams are not disturbers of sleep... but guardians of sleep which get rid of disturbances of sleep... a dream does not simply give expression to a thought, but represents the wish fulfilled as a hallucinatory experience... the dream does not simply reproduce the stimulus [the wish], but removes it, gets rid of it, deals with it, by means of a kind of experience.*’ (1916–17: 129)
- (6) ‘Every dream may be a wish-fulfilment, but apart from dreams there must be other forms of abnormal wish-fulfilments. And it is a fact that the theory governing all psychoneurotic symptoms culminates in a single proposition, which asserts that they too are to be regarded as fulfilments of unconscious wishes.’ (1900a: 568–9)
- (7) ‘The motive force of phantasies are unsatisfied wishes, and every single phantasy is the fulfilment of a wish, a correction of unsatisfying reality.’ (1908e: 146).
- (8) ‘Symptoms serve for the patient’s sexual satisfaction; they are a substitute for satisfaction of this kind, which the patients are without in their lives. ... This symptom was fundamentally a wish-fulfilment, just like a dream – and more-over what is not always true of a dream, an erotic wish-fulfilment.’ (1916–17: 299)
- (9) Again: ‘The symptoms of a neurosis are, it might be said, without exception either a substitutive satisfaction of some sexual urge or measures to prevent such a satisfaction; and as a rule they are compromises between the two.’ (1940a: 186)
- (10) ‘Religious ideas... are illusions, fulfilments of the oldest and most urgent wishes of mankind.’ (1927c: 30)

Scores of similar passages could be adduced, treating hallucinations, art and so on. Now, Freud says at least two quite different things about wish-fulfilling processes. In (1), (2) and (3) the processes are said to be *representations* of wish-fulfilment, or to have as their *content* representations of wish-fulfilment. But in the rest the processes are said to *be* wish-fulfilments. This is a distinction with significant difference. I suggest that Freud’s considered view is that dreams, symptoms and some of their kin do not just represent the objects of wishes (e.g. a cake I crave) or, what is different, scenarios of wishes being fulfilled (my eating the cake); they actually fulfil them, though they do this in a qualified way (it is *as if* I had eaten the cake).

This understanding is supported by the fact that Freud frequently refers to wish-fulfilments as ‘substitutive satisfactions’, by which he appears to mean that they are real, albeit attenuated satisfactions of wishes, achieved by roundabout means. But we must see why this is a theoretical necessity in Freud’s work and not just loose language. Representations of wishes being fulfilled, we shall find, only function as wish-fulfilling (FWT) in limited but important circumstances.

The idea that mere representation suffices for FWT fails to capture the specific roles that Freud assigns to the function of dreams and symptoms: for example, to preserve sleep or to circumvent realistic action. FWT involves less than full satisfaction (in the ordinary sense) but more than the mere representation of satisfaction: it involves, as well, *a cessation of wishing* or, in Jim Hopkins’ term, a *pacification* of the wish (Hopkins 1995).¹⁰ That the wishful representation alone cannot constitute FWT is evident from the fact, noted by Freud (1917d: 231), that a particular representation may at one time and not at another fulfil the wish it represents as fulfilled. Just as there is a difference between entertaining a thought and believing it, so there is between (merely) experiencing an imaginal representation of wish-fulfilment and taking it ‘for real’. Freud notes also that dreams, though representationally intact, can fail to be wish-fulfilling when, as in some anxiety dreams, anxiety disrupts the dream and sleep is abandoned. Again, it is essential to distinguish between a delusional thought and a delusional belief with identical content. Freud considers the situation of persecutory or other irrational ideas entering consciousness ‘without finding acceptance or belief’ there (1922b: 228). The person who has a wishful phantasy or thought of killing his father, consciously or unconsciously, who represents to himself this wish fulfilled, may feel guilt at having evil thoughts. But this is a different matter altogether from the fully-fledged wish-fulfilling phantasy or delusion that he has killed his father.

The significance of termination (or pacification) in wish-fulfilment emerges clearly from an adaptational (Hartmann 1939; cf. Freud 1916–17: 366; 1924b: 185) perspective. There is little advantage to an incapacitated organism in merely expressing or representing wishes as fulfilled, in the absence of those conditions that can facilitate FWT: the organism that cannot change the world to accord with its desires still demands an end to the painful stimulus of ineluctable wish or desire and tries to terminate it, in default of realistic action. Dreams and the rest of the wish-fulfilling series aim to fulfil wishes in order to prevent or delay action, not *just* to represent them. Dreams are guardians of sleep. Symptoms are not merely representations but satisfactions achieved in roundabout ways (e.g. 1916–17: 350, 361), in the manner of FWT: they presuppose facilitating conditions (2.3, 2.4).

Now the outline of the concept of FWT is traced, but we have no assurance either that the concept is coherent or that there are in fact mental processes or actions falling under it. The features of the concept were extracted from Freud’s understanding of dreams, symptoms and their congeners, but of course Freud may have gone astray. It may be that *nothing* satisfies the concept whose features are set out in (B), just as nothing satisfies the concept *unicorn*. It may reasonably be objected that there simply are no psychological conditions under which any form of FWT

can be efficacious; or, in particular, that the conditions for intentional and, especially, maximal cases of FWT cannot be satisfied. Showing that such objections can be answered, and how those answers illuminate much that seems puzzling in the life of the mind, are amongst our principal aims.

Having a handle now on the concept of FWT, I want to outline the book's argument. But FWT is entwined with several other puzzling concepts – with *belief*, with *mental dissociation* or *partition* and *unconscious intentionality*, amongst others – and they too require an introduction. The argument is not easily exposed. It will go best, I think, against the backdrop of its historical development.

1.3 A very brief history of our subject with polemical remarks

It is old wisdom, as the epigram shows, that frustrated desire can sicken and kill. When the seventeenth-century missionary Father Rageneau visited North America he found that the Huron people distinguished three causes of disease: natural causes; sorcery; unfulfilled wishes. Of the latter, some were known to the individual; others, called *ondinnonk*, were not, but could be revealed to him in his dreams. The wishes could, however, be concealed or implicit, and diviners were required to identify them. If the patient was mortally ill, the diviners would declare that the objects of his wishes were impossible to obtain. When there were chances of recovery, a 'festival of dreams' would be organised, a collection made amongst the group and the objects collected given to the patient during a banquet and public rejoicing. The patient would not only recover from his disease, but would sometimes come out a rich man.¹¹ Thus societies kinder and more enlightened than ours.

Ancient Greek and Hellenic philosophers wrote much about the pathologies of desire and divided selves (Sorabji 2006) and Augustine wrote brilliantly about the conflicted will. But in the long period of Christian totalitarianism that followed, philosophical interest in the appetitive roots of action, internal conflict¹² and the possibilities of self-division waned. Eros was deprecated and the immortality of the soul, implying indivisibility, precluded questions about self-division. It was not till the late Enlightenment and the Romantic age of heroic assertion and imperial conquest that philosophical interest turned once again to the motive power of passion and will, and their capacity to turn the self against itself. Arthur Schopenhauer, hugely influential in the last half of the nineteenth century, identified the will with the Kantian thing-in-itself, and so as noumenally constitutive of everything in the cosmos. In its personal expression the will is largely unconscious striving, without knowledge, aided by an intellect that is 'a mere tool in the service of the will' (Schopenhauer 1966: 205). 'In fact, the intellect remains so much excluded from the real resolutions and secret decisions of its own will that sometimes it can only get to know them, like those of a stranger, by spying out and taking it unawares; and it must surprise the will in the act of expressing itself, in order merely to discover its real intentions' (1966: 209).

Under the influence of Schopenhauer and the *Naturphilosophie* founded by F.W. von Schelling, the will came to be identified with a kind of universal Unconscious,

and thinkers such as Carl Gustav Carus and Eduard von Hartmann developed highly elaborate and extravagant accounts of unconscious processes animating Nature as well as humankind. In the prevailing psychological schools of 'Voluntarism', *striving* or *willing* were regarded as the dominant principles of human psychology (Alexander and Seleznick 1966: 218 ff; Ellenberger 1970: ch. 5). American pragmatism has roots in these developments and William James and F. H. Bradley, the great proponent of Absolute Idealism, wrote extensively on the will, both of them in ways that still command interest. Towards the end of the century Nietzsche insisted, with unparalleled intensity and influence (though not plausibility), that the *will to power* is the fundamental motivation in human psychology and cosmos.

A little earlier, the Romantic psychiatrists Johann Heinroth (1773–1843), Johann Christian Reil (1759–1813) and Karl Wilhelm Ideler (1795–1860) expressed prescient insights. They recognised the paramount importance of passions and of inner conflict in the genesis of mental illness. Ideler emphasised the aetiological significance of sexuality and traced delusions back to childhood experiences. Heinroth expressed an acute awareness of the pathogenic role of guilt (sin, as he termed it). Like their precursors, the Magnetists, these alienists had an intuitive grasp of the significance of *the rapport*, of transference and suggestion, of unconscious motivation and the therapeutic import of 'unmasking' or revealing 'the pathogenic secret'; all of which, as Ellenberger remarks, became characteristic of the later dynamic psychiatry of the 1880s and 1890s, though their source had by then been forgotten (Ellenberger 1970: 277).

Sigmund Freud is usually appreciated as a scientist steeped in the spirit of the Enlightenment, educated in the reductionist biophysics principally associated with Herman von Helmholtz and his teachers Ernst Brücke and Theodore Meynert. Freud has testified to the importance of these men in shaping his work.¹³ Yet in his authoritative study, Ellenberger (1970: 199) describes Freud (and Jung) as the late great epigones of Romanticism and this, thematically – as I have tried to adumbrate in my brief reference to Romantic psychiatry – is also true. Despite accepting the reductionist materialism of his teachers, which he never abandoned in principle, some of Freud's earliest defining doctrines and preoccupations were more in harmony with his Romantic predecessors than his contemporary scientific milieu. It is unlikely that there was direct influence: there is no evidence in his writings that Freud possessed anything like a *scholarly* knowledge of Schopenhauer, Carus, Nietzsche, Brentano, Kant or the Romantic psychiatrists but, of course, their popularised ideas were in the air, and so large a mind as Freud's could scarcely have failed to assimilate them.¹⁴ It was with Bernheim in 1889 (in one of the last pockets of Romantic medicine), Freud tells us, that he 'received the profoundest impression of the possibility that there could be powerful mental processes which nevertheless remained hidden from the consciousness of men' (Freud 1925d: 17).

In the mid-nineteenth century Willhelm Griesinger declared that mental illness was a disease of the brain or central nervous system. That view soon prevailed in German psychiatry and shaped Freud's earliest approaches to mind (1950a). But during the late 1890s Freud's interest gradually shifted from his patients' central

nervous systems to their early interpersonal experiences, and the manner in which these were distorted by their phantasies. Several features of Freud's early psychoanalytic work ran counter to the dominant scientific positivism and, specifically, neurological psychiatry of the late nineteenth century. Freud insisted on the importance of the emotions, and particularly sexuality, in the aetiology of psychopathology – a salient theme in Schopenhauer and some contemporary sexologists, but not in the milieu in which Freud worked. In his early writings Freud described mental conflict in terms of will (or intention) and counter-will, and hysteria as arising from an intentional or willed splitting of consciousness (Freud 1892–3: 122–28; 1894a). In contrast to the spirit of the biophysics movement, he insisted on the causality of mental states, especially the desiring, wishful aspects of mind, and on the consequences of their suppression. After 1905, Freud (1905d) attempted to underpin these motivational concepts with a biological concept of instinctual drive, but the relationship between these sets of concepts was neither clear nor unproblematic (2.2). Eventually Freud's apparently incompatible commitments to scientific materialism on the one hand, and to mental causation and the Intentional idiom indispensable for the expression of mental states on the other, created a schism in his theorising between a quasi-neurological framework, the 'metapsychology' that was the lingering ghost of his neurobiological tenets, and an augmented Intentional psychology. He realised that what needed to be said about the neuroses could be said only with the Intentional idiom.

I have not always been a psychotherapist. Like other neuropathologists, I was trained to employ local diagnoses and electro-prognosis, and it still strikes me myself as strange that the case histories I write should read like stories and that, as one might say, they lack the serious stamp of science. I must console myself with the reflection that the nature of the subject is evidently responsible for this, rather than any preference of my own. The fact is that local diagnosis and electrical reactions lead nowhere in the study of hysteria, whereas a detailed description of mental processes such as we are accustomed to find in the works of imaginative writers enables me, with the use of a few psychological formulas, to at least obtain some kind of insight into the course of that affection.

(1895: 160–1)

Freud never abjured the view that all psychological processes have a biological foundation and may eventually be described in purely physical terms, but in recognising the difficulties and struggling with his dual commitments he demonstrates greater philosophical acumen than many of our neuroscientific contemporaries. The shift from a neuroscientific perspective to a predominantly psychological and social one involved something so conspicuous that it is likely to be overlooked altogether: the overriding importance of other people! Freud's progressive realisation of the primacy of *object relations* in psychopathology and, later, in normal psychological development turned out to be a profound event in the human sciences.

Freud observed that object (interpersonal) relations, with the intense drama of sex, love, jealousy, begin in early childhood and that the child's earliest objects may be 'introjected' or internalised as 'imagos' into an 'inner world' of unconscious imagination or phantasy that is, however, not treated as imagination but as if it were real, as constituting a 'psychic reality'. Later, in his development of the 'structural model' of mind (Freud 1923b), he tried to show that through such internalisation and subsequent identification, objects could enter into the constitution of mind. Identification structured or partitioned the mind into separate agencies which then entered into relations in certain respects not unlike those between external agents (5.3, 5.6).

The idea that the mind may be divided to form separate selves or subpersonalities, like the idea of unconscious mentation, was also no novelty in the nineteenth century. Demonic possession as a clinical entity was gradually replaced by hysteria and multiple personality. The variety of hidden personalities which were manifested in certain conditions or evoked by therapeutic procedures eventually suggested to many investigators of the time that 'the human mind was rather like a matrix from which whole sets of subpersonalities could emerge and differentiate themselves' (Ellenberger 1970: 139). Jean Charcot introduced the idea that 'small, split-off fragments of the personality could follow an invisible development of their own and manifest themselves through clinical disturbances' (Ellenberger 1970: 149). Pierre Janet 'contended that certain hysterical symptoms can be related to the existence of split parts of personality (subconscious fixed ideas) endowed with an autonomous life and development' (Ellenberger 1970: 361). Tales, such as those of Dostoyevsky and Robert Louis Stevenson, of demonic possession, doppelgangers and split personalities abounded. Freud's views evolved against this background of conceptions of the unconscious and of divided minds. His special achievement in this connection was not only the particularly detailed and fruitful conception of the (topographical) Unconscious or the development of a structural theory of id, ego and superego that incorporated the features of that Unconscious; his major achievement was to link these two conceptions to the developmental and object-relational perspectives: to indicate some of the ways in which the intense need for objects in the course of individual development fundamentally modifies the structure of the mind. This is the model, in the barest possible outline, that stood at the centre of classical psychoanalysis.

By the 1970s it was obvious that fundamental parts of the Freudian edifice, especially the metapsychology intricately developed by his ego-psychologist heirs (e.g. Hartmann 1964; Hartmann, Kris and Loewenstein 1964; Rappaport 1971), were inadequate to the explanatory demands made on it. The structural model was too coarse-grained to accommodate new clinical entities such as narcissistic and borderline pathology; the superego underwent fission. In particular, the drive-discharge model of motivation (2.2), in which Hartmann had with deliberation placed his hopes (Hartmann 1948), failed to provide a plausible account of action. The ego-psychologists had hopes of creating a general psychology from psychoanalytic materials and confronted the fact that the ego had many functions that were autonomous,

or relatively independent of drive activity: the ego perceived, deliberated, judged, decided and chose courses of action. But about such functions classical theory was largely silent. Hartmann complained that despite theoretical progress in other areas, there was 'still no systematic presentation of an *analytic theory of action*' (Hartmann 1947: 37). Melanie Klein, whilst formally accepting Freud's dual-drive model, shifted her interest to phantasy, and other object-relational thinkers retreated from drive psychology altogether. In effect, as the idea of a general psychoanalytic theory receded and object-relational conceptions of motivation remained opaque, interest in developing a systematic theory of motivation and action theory largely dissipated.

So it happened that for these and other reasons the 1970s witnessed a revival of interest in Freud's pre-drive account of motivation based on the wish and wish-fulfilment. This development can be observed in many articles of the period.¹⁵ At the same time, significant developments in the Analytic philosophy of mind were taking place. The variety of broadly behaviourist approaches that dominated the middle third of the twentieth century lost their hold and renewed interest in motivation and action was initiated by the work of Wittgenstein, Elizabeth Anscombe (1957) and an influential series of papers by Donald Davidson (1980), amongst others (e.g. Goldman 1970; Kenny 1963). Eventually there appeared a promising survey of a stretch of conceptual terrain in which could be located, in reasonably systematic ways, the causal and conceptual relations between desire (wanting, wishing), instrumental belief, reasons for acting, deliberation, intention, choice, decision, and so on; some idea of how irrationality enters the picture, and of how some elements of action's antecedents may be physically realised.

Initially, Analytic philosophers showed little interest in psychoanalysis generally and wish-fulfilment in particular. Major figures such as Russell and Wittgenstein discussed Freudian doctrines but their engagement was superficial. Philosophers of science addressed methodological issues in psychoanalysis and swiftly determined it to be non-science, or worse (Karl Popper most famously – but see Hook 1959; Grunbaum 1984). Serious interest was slow in coming. As late as 1974, Richard Wollheim complained in the preface to his important anthology on Freud (Wollheim 1974a: ix) that Freud's ideas 'have barely impinged upon philosophers'. Then, as classical metapsychology collapsed, a number of psychoanalytically informed philosophers – pre-eminent amongst them Wollheim and Jim Hopkins – began to view psychoanalysis through the lens of Analytic action theory and explicitly articulated psychoanalytic concepts and causal structures as extensions of Intentional or common-sense psychology (Wollheim 1991, 1979, 1984, 1993a; Hopkins 1982, 1988, 1995). Their approach influenced important work in the philosophy of psychoanalysis but has not been as influential within psychoanalysis, philosophy or psychology disciplines in general as it should be.¹⁶

1.4 Some basic concepts for the philosophy of psychoanalysis

The general view taken by Wollheim and Hopkins, and of several philosophers who – albeit with significant variations – have followed them (e.g. Gardner 1993; Lear 1998a; Snelling 2000; Cavell 1993, 2006), can be summarised as follows:

- (1) A significant part of psychoanalytic theory is an extension and deepening of common-sense psychology; this can be viewed in two parts:
 - (1(a)) some key concepts of psychoanalysis are extensions of common-sense-psychological concepts, e.g. *introjection* and *unconscious phantasy* are extensions – are based on our understanding of – *imagination*;
 - (1(b)) the forms of causal explanation used in psychoanalysis are in some cases the same as, and in others extensions of, those of common-sense psychology;
- (2) the distinctive forms of causal explanation in psychoanalysis are Freudian wish-fulfilment (FWT) and phantasy (where phantasy is regarded as distinct from FWT);
- (3) FWT involves modes of causal explanation that are non-intentional.

The view that the concepts of an extended Intentional or common-sense psychology suffice as materials for the explanation of neurotic symptoms (and their congeners), let alone for the major mental disorders, is not without critics.¹⁷ I will come to them. I will later provide illustrations of the sorts of Intentional explanations referred to in the summary, and explain how I depart from the views summarised in the schema (1)–(3) above. But first I must set out and explain as plainly as I can some of the chief concepts of the Intentional framework of action theory employed in this book.

In Intentional or common-sense psychology we explain actions and mental activity, as well as dispositions and the occurrence of sensations, emotions and moods, using an immense variety of mental concepts – desire, belief, rage, joy, envy, disappointment, fear, fervour, worry, habit, cowardice, scrupulosity, generosity, malice, etc. It is necessary to recall how rich and heterogeneous this cluster of concepts is – evolved over millennia of human social life – and to resist the temptation to suppose that these concepts can be neatly reduced to, and behaviour explained in terms of, a few basic concepts such as belief and desire. Nevertheless, belief and desire are basic to the causal explanation of *much* action and mental activity, and for this reason, as well as for reasons of economy, the focus will generally be on them.

Not all explanation of action is causal. Sometimes action is explained by re-description. Money is seen to be changing hands and we explain that our friend is repaying a debt, bribing an official, buying a car. These re-descriptions are explanations, and useful ones. Psychology or neuroscience cannot displace such explanations because they presuppose concepts foreign to the sciences. The concepts of *debt*, *bribe* and *buying* supervene on conventions, practices and institutions that cannot conceivably figure as concepts of any possible psychology or neuroscience. However, we may become interested in *how* actions (the activation of the musculature, etc.) are performed, in what *manner* they are performed (resentfully, with trepidation) and *why* (because she wanted to clear a debt, to win) they are performed. Here the sciences spring into their own and, as regards manner and purpose, the causal explanations available to Intentional psychology are also invoked. The most basic pattern of explanation in Intentional psychology is that for intentional action. It seems to be a necessary condition of intentional action that it is performed for and from a reason.¹⁸

The condition has been challenged. It has been proposed that so-called *actes gratuits* are actions performed intentionally for no reason. This proposal would require that a person can intend, decide or choose to act without reason: that, for example, someone intentionally climbs a mountain for no reason. The claim seems to me incoherent, but even if it is not, it is likely to be empirically false and incompatible with a regulative principle of psychoanalysis: if there is no conscious reason for action in evidence, then there is an unconscious one.

Typically, a reason is said to consist of a desire and an instrumental belief that together rationalise and cause the action that is performed for the reason. My friend seeks out the fridge. She wants something to eat and believes that edibles are to be found therein. Her want and her belief cause her to seek the fridge, and make sense of her behaviour. This is the pattern of intentional explanation captured in the Aristotelian practical syllogism: a major premise states a want or desire, a minor premise states an instrumental belief, and the conclusion is an action (or, in some versions, an intention to act).

I will frequently refer to the ‘subintentional’ causation of acts, including mental acts, by wish or desire unfacilitated by instrumental beliefs or anything else. The term was introduced by O’Shaughnessy (1980). Such action has teleology but is caused non-rationally; that is, it is not performed for a reason or through an executive state such as intention, decision or choice. Perhaps wishful imagination, unconscious phantasy and some day-dreaming belong here (2.6). Our Intentional framework also recognises other motives to action – I use ‘motive’ loosely to signify anything that instigates action and mental activity. There are forms of *expression* which have archaeology but no teleology, as when I clench my fists in (out of) anguish, or laugh, or shudder with fear. Explanation along these lines is Intentional, but neither intentional nor subintentional. So there are several forms of causal but non-intentional explanation, of which the subintentional and the expressive are examples.

Now we come to the extension of common-sense psychology in psychoanalysis. Richard Wollheim (1991: xixff; 1993a) has usefully (and I think more or less correctly) summarised the ways in which Freud built on and expanded the Intentional framework. I summarise his summary here and will elaborate on it selectively in later sections. First, *non-conscious* desires and beliefs operating as non-conscious reasons (Wollheim leaves it open whether the reasons are preconscious or dynamically unconscious) explain some intentional actions such as some parapraxes: the ‘accidental’ dropping of vases, the missing of crucial meetings, and the like (Freud 1901b). Second, unconscious desire and belief and a chain of association lead to what Wollheim calls a *displaced action*. Thus Freud’s patient, the Ratman, wanted to kill his competitor, Dick (in German = fat), and embarked on a strenuous course of exercise to ‘lose fat’. Through that chain of association, losing fat takes on the symbolic meaning of killing Dick. A third motive, the conjunction of desire and what Wollheim calls (infelicitously) ‘instinct’, results in processes designated *mental activity*. Wollheim includes (some of) the defence mechanisms in this category – such

activities as disavowal, projection and repression. In such cases it *looks as if* an agent believed that initiating a defence mechanism would further her desire, but it is not plausible, Wollheim says, to posit instrumental beliefs (1991: xxxiii). (Wollheim next mentions the conjunction of desire and phantasy, but it is unclear how or in what instances he conceived of this motive's application, so I leave it aside.) Fourth, the operation of desire (in the absence of an instrumental belief and 'instinct') plus some precipitating factor leads to *expression*. 'Expression includes dreams, those neurotic symptoms which are not to be thought of as displaced actions and those parapraxes which are not to be thought of either as displaced actions or as actions with unconscious motivation' (1991: xxxv). Expression, Wollheim says, 'is clearly not action; it is also not activity' (1991: xxxv). Yet it is more in keeping with Freud's approach, he continues, to hold 'that the person would not have done what he did were it not for the gratification that ensued' (1991: xxxiv). I am not sure I understand Wollheim's thought here: he seems to be identifying a motive different from the ('archaic') expression of emotion noted above, as in smiling or shuddering, as well as the subintentional causation of action. In any case, I consider many of the phenomena Wollheim subsumes under 'expression' to have an intentional provenance, and will criticise this proposed extension below (3.7).

The programme of explaining much of the psychoanalytic domain in the Intentional idiom is not an easy one and several authors, while committed to the programme overall, have seen a need to innovate, to introduce (to 'discover') new Intentional entities with special qualities apt for explicating wish-fulfilment and other 'psychoanalytic phenomena': for example, *the wish* and *phantasy*, understood as 'pre-propositional' by Gardner (1993) and Lear (1995, 1998a) and as technical terms by Brakel (2009); *propositional reflection* in Gardner (1993); and *neurotic belief* in Brakel (2009). I think that these innovations are unnecessary and I will argue for their dispensability in [Chapter 3](#).

Wollheim's list is not complete. I will contend that ordinary intentional explanation (belief-desire explanation) plays a much greater role in unconscious intrapsychic activity, in the activity of the mental agencies in relation to each other, than Wollheim – and indeed most philosophers – would allow. But that is to come. Now (at last) I am in a position to outline the book's argument.

1.5 Four aporia and the outline of an argument

In his influential early formulations, Hopkins (1982, 1988) placed wish-fulfilment at the centre of an Intentional approach but explicitly contrasted the mode of action in FWT with intentional action. He conceives FWT subintentionally, as the result of imaginative activity animated by desire. He says: 'in rational action motives produce willed intentions and real actions aimed at satisfaction. Here [in dreams] they produce wishes and mere representations of satisfaction, on the pattern of wishful imagining' (1988: 41); this pattern is then enlisted in the explanation of complex obsessive symptoms as well as dreams (1982: xxiff; 1988: 55).¹⁹

Similarly, Gardner (1993) maintains that '[t]he fundamental idea on which a psychoanalytic extension of ordinary psychology hinges is that of a connection of content, driven by the operation of desire freed from rational constraints' (1993: 229; 88–9).

Hopkins was driven to the non-intentional analysis of FWT at least partly because he recognised that an intentional analysis entailed unconscious intentional activity, which he considered problematic. Specifically, there is the problem of identifying suitable practical syllogisms (1982: xix ff). To illustrate the problem, consider this clinical vignette:

A patient, a successful scientist in his own field, came to analysis because (amongst other things) he had a severe work problem. He could, in fact, produce the work required of him, and had made several notable contributions in his field. He had previously had analysis for some years, and at the beginning of his current analysis it seemed that all the well known factors causing a work difficulty of the sort he had were present. His need to delay getting down to work till the very last minute was quite clearly an oedipal problem, in which he could not allow himself to feel that he had satisfied oedipal sexual and aggressive wishes by working well. It was also seen to be part of an anal-retentive tendency, which had persisted for most of his life, and so on. Analysis of his fear of success, of his need to hold on until the last moment, and of many other elements that were clearly related to his work problems did not do more than give him greater insight... Eventually... the significant function of his symptom became clear. By allowing himself to get into a state of anxiety, and by creating a feeling of great internal pressure as the time passed and his work was not done, he could recreate, to a degree which was almost hallucinatory in intensity, the feeling of being nagged at and even screamed at by his mother. It became clear that he used his symptom to re-experience an object-relationship, one in which a wished-for sado-masochistic relationship with his mother was actualised. However, what was present was more than the simple sexualisation of anxiety, but a real need to feel secure by re-experiencing the earlier relationship to the mother, even though he had to pay a rather painful price for this.

(Sandler and Sandler 1978: 290–1)

The scientist is said to have 'used his symptom to re-experience... a wished-for sado-masochistic relationship with his mother'. It looks as if the Sandler thought the scientist intentionally created his symptom to use it for a definite purpose. But how is that to be conceived? We may assume that the scientist has reason to want his mother's presence, to recreate the relationship to her – painful, to be sure, but satisfying his overriding need for attachment or security. In the light of this interpretation we can re-describe the anxiety he generates as representing (as *being experienced as*) mother's presence in near hallucinatory form. These assumptions yield the following syllogisms:

S wants mother's presence

S believes that by making himself anxious mother will be present

S makes himself anxious

S wants to experience mother's presence (something like her presence)

S believes that by making himself anxious he will experience her presence

S makes himself anxious

Other options of this kind can be fashioned, but none of them seem plausible because the instrumental beliefs in each case are mad. Who could believe such things? Difficulties of this kind have deterred even those receptive to the Freudian unconscious and to non-intentional types of FWT from countenancing a notion of FWT in which intention has a role, and *a fortiori* the notion of maximal FWT in which the wish-fulfilment itself is intended (see footnote 9; this case is discussed further in 3.2).

Several philosophers, Sebastian Gardner (1993) most comprehensively, added to the difficulties by highlighting concerns about mental partition, or in his catchy phrase 'second-mind personology', that intentionalism appears to entail. To see the problem, consider a situation described by David Pears (1984: 79) in which a girl 'persuaded herself that her lover was not unfaithful ... (but avoided) ... a particular café because she believed that she might find him there with her rival ...' Let's suppose that consciously she was persuaded of her lover's fidelity, and her troubling belief that he was unfaithful was unconscious or otherwise dissociated. Then she harbours contradictory and segregated beliefs about her lover's fidelity. The more important point to notice, however, is that by intentionally avoiding the café she seems to be *actively protecting* herself against acknowledging a belief which she (unconsciously) already has; and *that* unconscious belief plays a part in motivating her protective activity. For the manoeuvre to succeed she must be unconscious of her *intentional* avoidance of the café; for her intention is predicated on a reason which contains the disavowed belief, and knowledge of it would unravel her purpose. The right hand cannot know what the left hand is doing. So the supposition of *unconscious intentional agency* seems to entail two perplexing conclusions: (a) that there is unconscious practical reasoning or deliberation leading to (unconscious) intentional action (i.e. there may be conscious knowledge that an action is performed but its grounds or causes are unconscious) and (b) a dissociation of self into at least two quasi-independent, self-like centres of agency. Gardner (1993) considers the notion of unconscious deliberation and intentional action problematic on its own terms, but he also contends that partition offends the view of persons as substantial unities embedded in ordinary psychology. 'This explains', he says, 'the importance of the issue of partition for the philosophy of psychoanalysis. At stake is the harmony between psychoanalysis and ordinary psychology: if psychoanalytic theory is partitive, its agreement with ordinary thought is questionable' (1993: 7).

We have, then, these two striking aporia: (a) the difficulty of constructing suitable practical syllogisms for unconscious intentional activity, and (b) the problem of mental partition or radical disunity. Implicit in (a) and (b) is another difficulty: (c) scepticism about the concept of unconscious intention and of unconscious rationation or deliberation. And there is a fourth difficulty, a venerable objection to psychoanalysis, particularly acute for our thesis: (d) Sartre's 'censor argument', according to which any attempt to introduce duality (or multiplicity) in mind by the interposition of a censor merely opens up an untenable duality in the censor, and institutes a vicious regress. My treatment of this fourth objection will be brief because, despite its venerability, it can be expeditiously dispatched (4.7).

For these and other reasons, most philosophers have considered radical partition a price too high and have opted for non-intentional analyses of wish-fulfilment, phantasy and symptom formation.²⁰ The role of FWT in art, religion and prejudice they have largely ignored.

I take a different line. My overall strategy for establishing the relevance and good credentials of FWT is five-fold. First, the conception of FWT is shown to be coherent. Second, typical, albeit briefly described, cases – of phantasy, dream, symptom – are considered and shown to fit the models of FWT which reciprocally illuminate them. Third, the inadequacies of the subintentionalist and other competing accounts are exposed. Fourth, plausible motivational structures are developed together with an account of mental differentiation or dissociation that can accommodate FWT, including maximal FWT. Fifth, I demonstrate the relevance of explanation by means of FWT across a range of phenomena, pathological and normal, such as delusion, religion and art.

On the intentionalist view developed here, FWT involves a spectrum of techniques and processes with varying degrees of intentional involvement, including unconscious intentional involvement. The simplest forms, hallucinatory wish-fulfilment and most dreaming, involve only non-intentional mechanisms operating in mental conditions with little Intentional differentiation, but with propensity to *engrossment* in the salient objects of attention (2.4). Freud has described the basic operation of this sort of FWT in a couple of famous passages and I will elaborate on his account (2.3), endorse it with qualification and indicate its limitations. At the other end of the spectrum of FWT, however, are complex, reflexive processes in which phantastic (imaginal or plastic) representations, enactments, manipulation of other people or tendentious selections from available evidence are used intentionally and unconsciously for such purposes as fulfilling wishes or gratifying, consoling, protecting or appeasing oneself. Some compensatory daydreams are obvious examples of this kind, as are, less obviously, forms of wish-fulfilling symptoms, such as the anxious scientist's. I will suggest that Freud was an intentionalist about such cases, though the enabling conditions he described for the simpler forms of FWT – the operation of the primary process in the System Ucs. – do not allow for the explanation of the more complex forms involving action or enactment, the temporally extended projects of personality disorder, transference phenomena, religious devotion and other complex wish-fulfilling phenomena. To explain these

phenomena requires that we enquire into the conceptions of unconscious agency (4.2–4.6) and the dissociation of the self that entails (5.3–5.7).

But first the alternatives to this novel and difficult account of FWT have to be addressed and dispatched. The entirety of **Chapter 3** is dedicated to that task. In the main, the approach is to demonstrate that the alternatives are inadequate to the clinical material which is the touchstone of adequacy. Some of the alternatives also suffer from internal incoherence and this, too, is exposed.

Chapter 4 sets out the case for unconscious intentional activity and shows that plausible practical syllogisms can indeed be constructed for the troublesome cases. The reflexive, maximal forms of FWT are located as members of a class of self-caring or self-sollicitous activities such as self-consolation, self-appeasement and, in some of its forms, self-deception. These, albeit sometimes distorted, modes of self-caring may enter into auxiliary or superordinate relations. For example, self-abasement can be an instrument of self-appeasement, and self-deception is often in the strategic service of superordinate modes of self-solicitude such as self-consolation or self-justification. *Self-solicitude* will now emerge as the more encompassing class of which FWT is a member, but since the satisfaction of most needs graduates to the fulfilment of wishes and most self-solicitude presupposes the fulfilment of wishes, I will usually just refer to FWT.

Interestingly, the consideration of FWT leads to a new argument for the partitioning or dissociation of mind or self (greater exactitude is introduced in 5.6). Successful FWT entails that the self be divided along certain lines. Thus partitioning appears not just as *deus ex machina* for curing the paradoxes of irrationality; the possibility of unconscious FWT *presupposes* partitioning of a kind for which there are already *established developmental grounds* (4.6, 5.3). The consolidation of certain kinds of internalised object relations produce forms of dissociation into agencies or person-like parts which on germane criteria are strongly partitive (5.6). This development, the consequence of ineluctable need for secure object relations and internalisation of maternal caring functions, the basic capacities for self-regulation, largely explains the range of reflexive, self-sollicitous attitudes of which some forms of FWT, self-deception, *akrasia* are compartments. I will argue that the best way to figure these ‘parts’ or dissociated aspects of self is as ‘personations’ – persons enacting various roles in depth, mutually opaque, but with roles retaining sufficient threads of rational connection to preserve important elements of self-unity (5.6–5.7). These considerations usher in a welcome result for psychoanalysis: the description of some intrapsychic relations in language apposite for describing interpersonal relationships is vindicated.

That completes the outline of the major theoretical aims of this book and indicates our answers to the four perplexities that confronted us. **Part II** applies theory to a number of issues of social significance and illustrates and expands Freudian wish-fulfilment’s remit. Self-deception and delusion are located in the context of FWT (**Chapter 6**) and the discussion of delusion provides further opportunity to provide examples of FWT in action. In **Chapter 7** I show how wishes associated with various character dispositions, particularly originating from narcissistic needs

(for self-esteem, superiority, difference), find substitutive satisfaction in religious group identity and ideology. In **Chapter 9** on the insanity defence a novel argument sheds light on the operation of unconscious non-culpable intent in some cases of criminal insanity. In **Chapter 8** on writing as redemption I argue that writing can provide wish-fulfilling reconstructions of lost aspects of the self and of objects, but is ultimately an ephemeral and futile endeavour for that end. In the final chapter I briefly criticise the 'biological' trends in contemporary psychiatry that ignore, subordinate or deprecate the Intentional, irectic, wish-fulfilling and interpersonal sources of the troubles that afflict the majority of our kind. That is the outline of the argument.

1.6 The psychoanalysis of philosophy

I cannot leave this introductory chapter without a note on the psychoanalysis of philosophy. Philosophy, at least in certain registers, is a peculiar activity, and the lives, activities and doctrines of philosophers have attracted psychoanalytic curiosity and suspicion. I don't know about curiosity, but suspicion goes back at least as far as Thrasymachus, who thought philosophers unmanly. Nietzsche, who didn't like many people, was exceptionally mean about philosophers:

They all pose as if they had discovered and reached their real opinions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely unconcerned dialectic... while at bottom it is an assumption, a hunch, indeed a kind of 'inspiration' - most often a desire of the heart that has been filtered and made abstract - that they defend with reasons they have sought after the fact. They are all advocates who resent that name...

(Nietzsche 1966 [1886]: 202)

This kind of asperity is not often directed at historians or scientists. Freud had studied under Brentano briefly, translated Mill and obviously read some of the leading lights throughout his life, but there is little indication of systematic philosophical engagement, except perhaps on the mind/body issue on which he is acute. His comments on philosophers are generally disdainful, probably because he believed, wrongly, that philosophers as a tribe denied unconscious mentality. He detected unconscious motives. The 'intelligence is always weak', he wrote, 'and it is easy for a philosopher to transform resistance into discovering logical refutations' (1887-1902: 9/12/89).

Writers have been more popular subjects, but there is also a considerable psychoanalytic literature on philosophers, from Descartes to Sartre and Wittgenstein. But psychoanalysis is not at its best without a couch. The best analytic writing on philosophers comes from other philosophers, and there was an interesting, short-lived movement towards the middle of last century, inspired by Freud and Wittgenstein, that adopted a therapeutic approach to philosophy and its practitioners. There was already something of the therapeutic in Wittgenstein, though it is now largely neglected: 'A philosopher is a man who has to cure many intellectual diseases in himself before he can arrive at the notions of common sense' (Wittgenstein 1980:

44e). However, the idea that philosophers need psychological and not just intellectual therapy was only suggested by some of his students. John Wisdom wrote:

There is therefore logical confusion and logical penetration at the back of metaphysics. But if we now ask, 'What drives people to pursue to such lengths questions of the sort 'Do we know this?' 'What right have we to make these statements?' and what preserves the power of those models which keep us for ever seeking but never finding the knowledge we seem to want, then it occurs to us to wonder whether the forces at work in this curiously unsatisfactory struggle which never ends up in success nor in failure aren't in part the same as those at work in those other struggles in which something is for ever sought and never found, struggles which in their turn are connected with an earlier time when there was something, namely the world of the grown-ups, knowledge of which we desperately desired and equally desperately dreaded.

(Wisdom 1969: 281)

Morris Lazerowitz, Alice Ambrose (both also Wittgenstein's students), Charles Hanly and others wrote in a deliberately therapeutic vein (e.g. Hanly and Lazerowitz, eds, 1970). Ambrose noted the resistance of philosophers to the notion of the unconscious and held that philosophical theories are 'illusions soaked with unconscious thought... One can explain the manoeuvring with the terminology as a game played for the sake of the illusion created' (Ambrose 1970: 33). Of the psycho-biographies, one of the best is on Berkeley (Wisdom 1953). The book was most unfairly derided on publication and its author, J. O. Wisdom, suffered considerable opprobrium as a result. He summed up the value of analysing philosophers through their work in these words:

Philosophy is the last refuge open to myth (though not necessarily every kind of philosophy is impregnated with it). Nonetheless, the analysis of a philosopher does not in itself refute the philosophy... The value of such analysis would seem to lie in several different consequences. (i) They give a new angle from which one can approach intellectual problems and contributions: one recognizes more easily a phantastic system for what it is, though more ready to see the grain of truth hidden in a system that might otherwise be written off. (ii) One is less concerned with arguments about the truth or falsity of such a system when it obviously depicts a phantasy. (iii) Such systems are seen to have a meaning and not to be nonsense as Logical Positivism has asserted. And (iv) the nature of the meaning brought out by the analysis may provide a good practical indication of whether or not there is something objective present.

(Wisdom 1953: 230)

I won't pursue this line of thought, though I believe that the account of FWT provided here can throw considerable light on the way in which (some) philosophical doctrines can provide unconscious gratifications and, indeed, be motivated by

the desire for those gratifications. Freud said that there was no appeal to a court above that of reason (Freud 1927c: 28). That is so, but it is not inconsistent with the need to maintain a lively sense of the extent to which even that court can be compromised by desire.

Notes

- 1 I will mostly use ‘symptoms’ to stand in for the class. In contemporary psychoanalytic nosology the emphasis is on character or personality disorder rather than on isolated symptoms, and the trend in the DSM classifications (APA 1994) to use syndromes or sets of symptoms to classify disorders, though largely ignoring aetiology, moves in the same direction. I use ‘symptom’ partly for simplicity and partly because the action theory that underpins much of the approach in this book is often concerned with causal relations between events such as those between forming an intention and performing a particular act or sequence of acts. Personality disorder may be viewed from this perspective as manifesting in a sequence of emotions, moods, actions or enactments strung out over a sustained period.
- 2 ‘The theories of resistance and repression, of the unconscious, of the etiological significance of sexual life and of the importance of infantile experiences – these form the principal constituents of the theoretical structure of psychoanalysis’ (Freud 1925d: 40).
- 3 For a deft overview of the role of such unconscious representations see Eagle 2011: 126ff; on accommodating object relations with drive theory see Eagle 2011: 258ff; Maze 2009; Newberry 2010.
- 4 The partial integration of neuroscience, attachment theory and psychoanalytic studies of affect regulation exemplified in the work of Jim Hopkins (2012, 2013) and Panksepp (1998; Panksepp and Biven 2012), Schore (1994, 2003), Solms (Solms and Turnbull 2002), Fonagy (Fonagy *et al.* 2004) and others (e.g. Fotopoulou *et al.* 2012) is likely to refocus attention on Freudian wish-fulfilment (Hopkins 2012), for the following reason. Freudian drive theory is bound to make way for the type of affective theory of motivation charted by Panksepp (for efforts along these lines see Fotopoulou *et al.* 2012) in which primary subcortical emotional command systems – SEEKING, RAGE, CARE, etc. – constitute the basic motivational forces that stimulate or energise tertiary neocortical systems to produce purposeful action. This rather Humean account of motivation can be seen as having picked up the lead of the older orectic and conative faculties. It may be, as Panksepp contends, that the systems are, to begin with, objectless, but they cannot remain so if they are to function as motivational systems, and their functioning will be expressed on a personal level as wanting or wishing to do something. The theory cannot challenge our ordinary understanding of action using Intentional concepts. For if, say, I rage at X – I have come to the point of raging at X – *I will want or wish to do something to X*. It is the same with the other affective systems. Action, however, may be frustrated and it is then, as I suggested, that phantasy or other vehicles of FWT come to our aid.
- 5 There is a marginal sense in which the extinction of wishing is unnecessary to fulfilment, as when a person’s wishes are fulfilled after they died, say in accord with a will. But we can leave that aside.
- 6 Imagine drugs could be administered to differentially obliterate particular wishes. Suppose that in a subject some wishes are differentially obliterated and that simultaneously the wished-for states of affairs occurred. We would not say of such wishes that they had been fulfilled. We could rightly speak of the elimination of these wishes and say that what the agent wished for had come to pass. But where the relation between the way the world is and the extinction of the wish is entirely adventitious, we do not have a case of fully-fledged wish-fulfilment.

- 7 It may be questioned whether ‘coming to believe’ that the wished-for state of affairs has come to pass is necessary, or even possible, in circumstances such as hallucinatory wish-fulfilment in the infant where propositional structures are absent. I think that this kind of objection supervenes on mistakes about the nature of *belief* that I discuss later (2.4, 2.5).
- 8 The unconscious wish-fulfilment achieved through art or religious worship and ritual may be exceptions to this condition, though even here it seems likely that wish-fulfilment occurs only as a consequence of projective and introjective engagement with the work of art, religious conception or practice, in which unconscious wishes find or generate representations of their fulfilment and achieve FWT.
- 9 Examples may help. We can construct a wish-fulfilling series of increasing complexity as intention plays a greater role. In the simplest type of FWT a wish or desire instigates the process but intention plays no role in the satisfaction of the instigating wish: these are (see 1.4) subintentional, expressive or related phenomena. In a second type, in which intention is not yet in play, a wish may be conceived to activate mental activity of the sort proposed by Wollheim (1993a), or by Johnston (1988) under the name of ‘tropism’ (3.2), the operation of which leads to FWT. Perhaps defence mechanisms such as repression, avoidance and projection are examples. In a third type, representations or pictures of wished-for states of affairs – wishful phantasy or fond memory – may be generated intentionally, though not yet for the purpose of achieving wish-fulfilment. I may, for example, summon up remembrance of things past or review the nicer aspects of the holidays, but FWT can overtake this process if regressive conditions of engrossment (2.3, 2.4) or reverie impose, and wishful phantasy is mistaken for reality, albeit ephemerally. It is easy to see that children become engrossed in their play and wishful phantasies, but engrossment can occur later, too, when we are dozing, withdrawn or otherwise lost to the world. Much day-dreaming falls into this category. A fourth possible type – the maximal instances – presupposes a mind capable of intentionally providing for itself substitutive satisfactions. Some so-called ‘lucid dreams’, compensatory phantasy, neurotic and psychotic symptoms and various kinds of irrational behaviour and belief formation may be of this kind. In the other types, the relation between the wish and its expression in wishful phantasy (not wish-fulfilling phantasy) on the one hand, and the fulfilment of the wish on the other, was adventitious. There was a role for intention in the third type, but not for intended wish-fulfilment. In all these cases wish-fulfilment *befell* desire. The expressions of the wish or wishful phantasy were simply mistaken for what would satisfy the wish in the first and third types, and mental mechanism subverted to satisfy the wish in the second. In the fourth class the relations between wish, the *vehicle* of wish-fulfilment – whether phantasy, symptom or action – and the satisfaction of wish are not adventitious. Briefly, wish-fulfilment is itself either intended or is instrumental to another form of self-solicitude that is intended – and, as we will see, it must be intended unconsciously.
- 10 Hopkins, in earlier work (1988: 40), was wrong, I think, to impute to Freud the reasoning that ‘Since the dream represents the wish as fulfilled, the dream can be regarded as wish-fulfilment’. See also Hopkins 1991: 97 and Cavell (1993: 44).
- 11 Abridged from Father Rageneau, *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (1897–99), quoted in Ellenberger (1970: 26).
- 12 It is the genius of Abrahamic religions to obscure self-knowledge by transforming internal conflict into dramatic engagement with illusionary figures. See [Chapter 7](#).
- 13 Freud (1925d); Makari (2008). Freud performed neuroanatomical work in Brucke’s laboratory for six years, made substantial contributions to neuropathology and worked at the Vienna General Hospital under the psychiatrist Meynert, who was influenced by both Schopenhauer and Wilhelm Griesinger. The latter is credited with establishing the dominance of the exclusively neurological or *Somatiker* approach in German psychiatry.

14 A large body of recent work depicts Freud as someone who sold out on science, developing psychoanalysis in an *a priori* fashion from philosophical and dated nineteenth-century scientific conceptions (Sulloway 1992; Kitcher 1992; Smith 2003; Brook 2003; Tauber 2010). This work, diverse in many ways, is remarkable for its indifference to the import of Freud's clinical experience. Kitcher (1992: 102–11), for example, argues that the superego concept was derived essentially from Freud's covert commitments in biology and anthropology, but Freud tried to conceal that and presented the superego concept as a clinical discovery. Yet entirely absent in her book is any clinically informed discussion of guilt, melancholia, negative therapeutic reaction, masochism or persecutory delusions; that is, all those conditions which would deeply impress a sensitive clinician, and whose manifestations cry out for a conceptualisation of intrapsychic relations of kinds like those of which the superego concept is an instance. Freud certainly knew the biology, neuroscience and anthropology of his day. But it is the most bookish of turns to suppose that the clinical phenomena he confronted daily played no, or only a negligible, part in the construction of theories designed to explain such self-reflexive phenomena.

Remarkable also is Tauber's (2010) portrayal of Freud as an engaged philosopher responding to the doctrines of Brentano, Kant, Schopenhauer, Lange and others. In Tauber's vision Freud is concerned explicitly to counter Brentano's denial of unconscious mentation while adopting the philosopher's thesis of Intentionality. Freud's conceptions of reason and freedom are 'ideas lifted directly from Kant', and 'the entire psychoanalytic edifice rested upon a version of Kant's philosophy of mind'. Indeed, 'Kant in striking ways served as Freud's philosophical North Star'. Freud is also 'profoundly indebted' to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, a claim made by many others who have mined this field. On the biological conception of human nature Freud 'closely aligned himself with the Nietzschean-Schopenhaurian line'. 'The Schopenhaurian Will is the direct precursor of Freud's id' and 'Freud would later formulate this drive [Schopenhaurian Will to life] into the various instincts'. And so on (2010: pp. 9, 19, 22, 123, 125, 156, 159). These claims are speculations based on superficial thematic affinity, and completely ignore the far-reaching impact of clinical encounter. The more cogent picture is that the philosophical themes detectable in Freud's work were common coin of educated folk in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Freud was largely indifferent to traditional philosophical problems. Thus, he was committed to strong determinism and it is possible, as Tauber argues, to extract a view of rational autonomy in his later work when he turned his attention to ego autonomy. Tauber thinks that this view of rational autonomy or free will was adopted from Kant. But rather than demonstrating direct philosophical engagement, as Tauber supposes, Freud's attitude shows the opposite: the striking fact in relation to the incompatibility between psychic determinism and rational autonomy is that he made no attempt to resolve it. There is little evidence that Freud even felt the philosophical tension. Such insensitivity may be a vice, but it is beside the point to complain, as Tauber does (138), that Freud failed to 'explicitly develop psychoanalysis as a moral enterprise'. Few things could have been further from his mind.

15 See e.g. Gill and Holzmann 1976; Sandler 1976; Sandler and Sandler 1978; Holt 1976; Schafer 1976; Wollheim 1979.

16 Gardner 1993; Cavell 1993, 2006; Lear 1998a; Petocz 1999; Levine (ed.) 2000; Chung and Feltham (eds.) 2003)

17 Note that the claim is not about specific clinical findings – about castration anxiety, envy and so on – being extensions of common-sense psychology; it is about the extension of basic Intentional concepts – wishing, imagining, and so on – and explanatory patterns in the context of an evolving theory.

18 The 'for and from' locution is intended to eliminate the possibility of deviant causal chains: one has reasons for doing X, one does X because of those reasons, but not *for*

those reasons. I have reasons for killing my uncle. On my way to murder him I accidentally run over a pedestrian who, unknown to me, happens to be my uncle. Here my reasons had a causal role in the killing of my uncle, but not in the *right way*. A common expedient for circumventing the problem is to insert an executive state, an intention, decision or choice between the having of reasons for action and the performing of it.

- 19 In later papers Hopkins recognises that FWT requires not only the representation of a wish fulfilled but also its pacification. It is, he says, 'a form of wishful thinking or imagining, in which a wish or desire causes an imaginative representation of its fulfilment, which is experience- or belief-like' and yields 'pacification without satisfaction' (1995: 461, 471). In Hopkins (2012) essentially the same formula is repeated for dreams but now is applied only to pathological *thoughts*, not to actions.
- 20 Against partition see Thalberg 1974; De Sousa 1976; Davidson 1982a; Moore 1984; Johnston 1988; Gardner 1993; Graham 2010. Davidson, it is true, argued for segregating constellations of propositional attitudes, but he did not hold that these constellations constitute independent centres of agency: 'such constellations', as Hopkins (1995: 473) says, 'do not *have* motives; rather they *are* (groups of) motives'. To my knowledge, only David Pears (1984), Rorty (1988); Pataki (1996b, 2000, 2003) and Boag (2005) have, though along different lines, argued for a conception of mind whose parts satisfy, at least transiently, sufficient conditions for independent agency. Petocz (1999: 164) is also receptive to mental plurality. Within psychoanalysis, on the other hand, it is commonplace to hold that the mind is constituted by independent agencies. Freud, Fairbairn (arguably), M. Klein, Winnicott, Bion, Ogden, Symington, S. Mitchell have all explicitly embraced partitive conceptions of mind. Of course, a roll-call doesn't settle anything about the adequacy of partitive conceptualisation, but it can suggest that the observed clinical phenomena do press strongly in its direction. For the non-intentional reading of FWT within a broadly common-sense-psychological framework see Wollheim 1991, 1979, 1984, 1993c; Hopkins 1982, 1988, 1991, 1995, 2012; Moore 1984; Eagle 1984, 2011; Johnston 1988; Lear 1998a; Gardner 1991, 1993; Cavell 1993, 2006; Marshall 2000. McLaughlin (1988) and Brakel (2009) possibly also belong here. R. K. Shope (1967, 1970) had earlier argued that psychoanalytic explanation was non-intentional. Wollheim's account of the motivational structures found in symptoms and their kin allows for instances of intentional activity, as in his notion of 'displaced action', but essentially comes down on the side of the subintentional and expressive at the expense of the intentional. Some early attempts to explicate enactments (obsessive acts in the main) as intentional are discussed in Hopkins (1982: xxiff).