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TEXTS · IN · CULTURE

Sigmund Freud's

THE INTERPRETATION  
OF DREAMS

New interdisciplinary essays

LAURA MARCUS

editor

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56 Lacan attempted to distance himself from this urge: 'I am not engaged in redoing the analysis of Freud's dream after Freud himself. That would be absurd. Just as it is out of the question to analyse dead authors, so it is out of the question to analyse his own dream better than Freud. Freud has his reasons for breaking off his associations. . . . It is not a matter of carrying out an exegesis where Freud interrupts himself but for us to take the whole of the dream and its interpretation. That's where we are in a different position from that of Freud.' Lacan, *The Seminar, Book II*, p. 152. It is a moot question whether the two seminars he devoted to the dream of Irma's injection conform to these strictures.

57 Freud, *Five Lectures on Psycho-analysis*.

58 Freud, 'The future prospects of psycho-analytic therapy'.

59 Freud, *On the History of the Psycho-analytic Movement*.

60 Freud and Jones, *The Complete Correspondence*, exchange of letters of 7 and 16 November 1924, pp. 560-2.

61 Freud 'Prefatory note to a paper by E. Pickworth Farrow' [1926]. SE XX 280.

62 As was recognized by Michel Foucault, when he noted that the movements spawned by Marx and Freud were distinctive creators of new discursive practices, who 'produced not only their own work, but the possibility and the rules of the formation of other texts': Michel Foucault, 'What is an author?', in *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*, ed. D. Bouchard (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977), p. 131.

63 For the theory of obligatory passage points, see Bruno Latour, *Science in Action* (Milton Keynes: Open University Press, 1987).

64 On Darwin's writing, see Gillian Beer, *Darwin's Plots* (London: Fontana, 1982).

## 4

### Patterns of interpretation: speech, action and dream

JAMES HOPKINS

In daily life we understand one another in terms of a commonsense interpretive psychology, which is integrated with language, and through which we discern meaning and motive in one another's sounds and movements spontaneously and continually. This capacity seems to develop together with language from early childhood, and both appear to have been built up through evolution, and programmed, in Chomsky's phrase, to grow in the mind (or brain).

This interpretive understanding encompasses both language and motive, and so seems fundamental to our co-operative lives. Since most of what we know is registered and expressed in language, it also seems basic to our thought. But since this understanding is so natural to us we rarely seek to investigate it systematically, or try to see how it can have the cogency required by its fundamental role.

As is well known, Freud attempted to extend commonsense interpretive understanding, by applying it to dreams. This extension is frequently contested, particularly in the literature which seeks to contrast psychoanalysis with science; but it is rarely discussed in the context of the fundamental, natural, and apparently valid form of interpretive understanding from which it flows. So in what follows I try both to describe some of the sources of the cogency of everyday interpretive psychology, and to indicate how these relate to Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*.<sup>1</sup>

## I

We can begin by considering our understanding of language in our own case, and the way this relates to our understanding of others. In doing this we invoke a familiar asymmetry, as between understanding our *selves* and understanding *others*. This is often put as a difference between the first-person perspective, which we occupy when we use the first-person pronoun 'I', and the third-person perspective, in which we regard others when we think of them as 'he' or 'she'; or again as the difference between the role we take as subject or agent of our own thoughts and actions, and the role as object which the things we think about or act on, including others, have for us.

A salient aspect of this difference is that when we ascribe thoughts or feelings to another, our judgement is characteristically mediated by perception of that person's behaviour, and usually serves in one way or another to explain this behaviour, that is, to make it intelligible to us. By contrast, when we ascribe such states to ourselves our judgements are not mediated in this way. We do not ordinarily say that we are in pain, or think or want something, on the basis of observing our own behaviour, or in order to make this behaviour intelligible to ourselves. Rather we simply take it that we feel pain, or think or want something, and can rightly say that this is so.

Thus in the case of our own minds we have, as we can say, a capacity for unmediated self-ascription. This characteristically encompasses all the states of mind which we regard as conscious, and so is remarkably sure and wide-ranging. We do not ordinarily suppose, for example, that we might be mistaken in thinking that we are in pain, or disgusted, or that we want or think something. In a great range of cases we take it that we might go wrong in ascribing these states to others, but not to ourselves. And although there are exceptions to this – including the kind of motives which are studied in psychoanalysis – it applies to many more states of mind than we ordinarily ever explicitly describe. Our thoughts and feelings on many topics occur and pass so quickly, and are so dense and numerous, that we could not seriously envisage communicating all of them to others, even if we tried.

Hence our self-ascriptions are not only unmediated, but have a unique first-person authority.

It is hard to overstate the importance of this asymmetry, and the first-person authority which goes with it; for these features partly define what we regard as consciousness, and are at the root of the epistemological tradition stemming from Descartes and including the British Empiricists and their followers. The mental events and states about which we have unmediated first-person authority include both thoughts and perceptual experiences which represent the world. As these are states of mind, they have a certain independence from the worldly things and situations they represent, and this independence, together with our first-person authority about them, makes them seem uniquely certain and free from empirical doubt.

Thus when I think I see a tree, or another person, I may be wrong as to whether there actually is a tree or other person there to be seen, for my perceptual and cognitive states are thus far independent of what they represent. But I cannot likewise be wrong that I *think* I see such things, or that *it seems to me* that I see them; for this is within the sphere of my first-person authority. Hence self-knowledge of this kind has been taken by Descartes and those who have followed him as an indubitable basis upon which the rest of human knowledge could be built or reconstructed. On this view of knowledge, each person, as we might say, thinks alone; each of us constitutes an isolated island of intellect, working his or her experience into a world-picture which is justifiable from within. So on this account the first-person perspective encompasses the foundations of our knowledge, not only about our own minds, but about the whole world.

Now among the things we know in this apparently immediate and authoritative way are the contents of our thoughts and the meanings of our sentences, and this is a particularly striking achievement. Each of us speaks and understands an idiolect, which we take to be that of a natural language that we share with others, such as English or French. So we can each combine the words of our idiolect in accord with the rules of its syntax to form an indefinitely large number of sentences; and in understanding

these sentences we know the conditions in which they are true. For example each speaker of an idiolect of English knows that:

- the sentence 'Freud worked in Vienna' is true (in my idiolect) just if Freud worked in Vienna;
- the sentence 'Wittgenstein lived in Vienna' is true (in my idiolect) just if Wittgenstein lived in Vienna;
- the sentence 'The moon is blue' is true (in my idiolect) just if the moon is blue, and so on.

Thus each of us knows an indefinitely large number of truths relating the sentences of his or her idiolect to objects and situations in the world via the notion of truth. We can schematize this by saying that a person who knows how to use the sentences of a language knows indefinitely many instances of the form (using 'T' for 'truth')

T: P' is true (in my idiolect) just if P.

where 'P' is a schematic letter which might be replaced by any appropriate sentence of the idiolect.

When we seek to understand others, we do so by characterizing their environments, minds and actions in terms of our own idiolects, and in a particular way. In interpreting others we make use of a vocabulary of words like 'desires', 'believes', 'hopes', 'fears', etc., each of which admits of complementation by a further sentence. So we speak of the desire, belief, hope, fear, etc., *that P*, where 'P' can be replaced by any sentence suitable for specifying the object, event or situation towards which the motive is directed. In this we, as it were, recycle our sentences for describing the world, thereby creating new sentences for describing the mind. Our finite stock of basic psychological words thus becomes the basis for a potential infinity of ascriptions of desire, belief, hope and so forth. This practice implements our conception of the mental as having *intentionality*, that is, a kind of causal and logical directedness upon the world; for any description of this *that P* kind perforce represents the mind as engaged with whatever aspect of the world the embedded sentence 'P' serves to describe. Since we can ascribe a desire *that P* corresponding to any describable situation which a person might desire, a belief *that P* corresponding to any describable situation a person might think

obtains, and so forth, this mode of specification is extraordinarily flexible and precise.

The practice of describing motives in this way is central to psychological understanding. To see something of its working, imagine that we watch someone reach out to get a drink, and assume (hypothesize) that she does this because she saw the drink, wanted it and so reached for it. Then we might try to spell out what was involved in such explanation in the following way. Using 'A' to name our agent, and underlining sentences so as to indicate patterns among them, we have:

- (1) *There is a drink within A's reach.*
- (2) A sees that there is a drink within A's reach.
- (3) A forms the belief that there is a drink within A's reach.
- (4) A forms the belief that if she moves her hand in a certain way then she will get a drink.
- (5) A desires that she get a drink.
- (6) A desires that she move her hand in that way.
- (7) A moves her hand in that way.
- (8) A gets a drink.

Of course, we have spelled out this sequence in a way which is unnaturally full and explicit, but this makes it easier to see underlying patterns. Thus for example we would not ordinarily say that someone desires *that she get a drink*; but this brings out, as the idiom *to get a drink* does not, that the agent's desire is that she, herself, get a drink; and this in turn makes more explicit the connection between the desire in (5) and the belief in (4) with which it interacts, and between the same desire and the situation which fulfils it in (8).

We can bring these patterns out more clearly by replacing the sentences which articulate the various desires and beliefs in the sequence by schematic letters. Then, and taking some liberties with pronouns and tenses, we have:

- (1) P [there is a drink within A's reach].
- (2) A sees that P [that there is a drink within A's reach].
- (3) A forms the belief that P [that there is a drink within A's reach].
- (4) A forms the belief that if Q then R [that if she moves her hand in a certain way then she will get a drink].
- (5) A desires that R [that she get a drink].
- (6) A desires that Q [that she moves her hand in that way].

- (7) Q [A moves her hand in that way].  
 (8) R [A gets a drink].

Clearly this pattern could be discerned in the explanation of many different actions with a similar underlying structure; and such patterns can be applied predictively, and to actions as we watch them unfold. Thus we might have seen the agent above notice the drink, and guessed from the way she looked that she would want to get it. This, in effect, would constitute a hypothesis that the sequence described in (1)–(3) had already taken place, and that described in (5)–(8) was about to occur.

The same sort of patterned explanation also applies to speech. Thus consider someone uttering 'The day is warm' because she wants to say that the day is warm. In this case we have:

- (a) A desires that P [that she say 'that the day is warm'].  
 (b) A believes that if Q then P [that if she utters 'The day is warm' she says that the day is warm].  
 (c) A desires that Q [that she utters 'The day is warm'].

This, as we can see, involves the same pattern as (4)–(6) above, with the sentences in a different order.

The patterns in psychological ascription here marked by schematic letters have a notable feature. They are on the one hand *causal*, and on the other also *correct, rational or logical*. Thus, speaking roughly, we can take what we describe by (1) as a cause of what we describe by (2), what we describe by (2) as cause of what we describe by (3), and so on through the sequence. For, as we know, the transition between (1) and (2) marks the place at which light reflected by objects described in (1) strikes the eyes of the agent described in (2), and causes the changes in the retina, optic nerve, visual areas of the brain, etc., involved in seeing; and perception as described in (2) is a cause of belief, as described in (3); and so on. But also the use of the same schematic letter in (1)–(3) indicates that the perception and belief described there are *correct*, and *correctly formed*. For in describing a perception *that* P as caused by a situation *that* P, we mark that the perception is *veridical*, that it accurately reflects the situation which it is a perception of; and in describing the resulting belief as a belief *that* P we mark that the belief is both *true*, as beliefs ought to be, and also caused by the situation which renders it true, and so *well*

*grounded*. Likewise, the pattern displayed in (4)–(6) describes a formation of desire in light of belief which is both *causal* and *rational*; and (5)–(8) describe intentional action which is *successful*, that is, which is not only *caused by* desire, but in which desire is *satisfied*. So these patterns, as we can say, are both *causal* and *normative*: they are patterns of causal functioning which are in one way or another correct or as they should be.

We are thus dealing with a number of patterns of interpretive/causal explanation, some of which we can briefly describe, write and label as follows. These include:

- (i) A pattern of *well-founded belief*:  
 B: P {causes}→ A believes that P. (cf. (1) and (3) above)  
 (ii) A pattern of *practical reason* (the rational formation of desire in light of belief):  
 PR: A desires that P and A believes that if Q then P {causes}→ A desires that Q. (cf. (4)–(6) above)  
 (iii) A pattern of the *satisfaction of desire*:  
 D: A desires that P {causes}→ P. (cf. (5) and (8) above)

These patterns, which can be represented in deeper and more detailed ways than sketched here, can be discerned in intentional action of all kinds. They seem to constitute a part of the underlying 'grammar', or logical and causal structure, of our natural and intuitive way of understanding one another. Bringing them out in this way enables us to see how our *that* P mode of description of motives makes use of *hermeneutic connections* – connections in sentential description – to mark *motivational causal connections*, that is, connections between motive and motive, or motive and world, such as are sketched in (1)–(8). In these cases, as we can say, relations of *linguistic coherence*, such as obtains among the sentences we are considering, systematically mark relations of *causal coherence*, as between motive and motive, motive and action, or motive and world generally.

This alloy of linguistic and causal coherence flows from the *that* P mode of description itself. When we describe a desire by a sentence 'P', we tacitly lay it down that the desire is to be regarded as satisfied in the circumstances in which 'P' is true; and these are the circumstances in which we understand the desire as functioning to bring about in successful action, as registered in D. Likewise when we describe a belief by a sentence 'P' we lay it

down that the belief is true in the same conditions as the sentence; and these are the conditions which we take the belief as serving to reflect, as registered in B, or again as serving to bring into the satisfaction conditions of desires, as registered in PR. In these cases our norms for the truth of sentences, as registered in T, become norms for the proper working of perception, belief, and desire, as schematized in B, PR, and D. Something similar holds for other motives and mental states which we describe in this way. This systematic reuse of world-describing sentences in characterizing the objects of desire, hope, fear, etc., in effect fuses our conception of *the truth of sentences* with that of *the causal role of motives*, so yielding a natural system for the hermeneutic (or linguistic) discernment of motivational causal role.

Recognizing the way that we naturally use relations of linguistic coherence to map relations of causal coherence enables us to reduce dissonance between hermeneutic and causalist approaches to interpretation, or to the psychological explanation of behaviour generally. Schematically, hermeneutic approaches to these fields emphasize that understanding persons is a matter of finding relations of meaningful coherence or fit – as between motive and motive, motive and action, and so forth – while causalist approaches emphasize that such cohering factors can serve to explain thought or behaviour only insofar as they bear upon them causally.<sup>2</sup> Each of these claims represents a genuine insight into the nature of interpretive understanding. Advocates of each, however, have tended to ignore the way in which we naturally register relations of causal coherence among motives in terms of linguistic or logical coherence, as we have been illustrating; hence both have tended to *contrast* finding meaning or coherence with discerning causes.

This has led to disputes in which advocates of each approach reject the insight of the other. Causalists have tended to deny the explanatory relevance of hermeneutically detected relations of coherence or fit, while hermeneutic thinkers have tended to deny the causal role of reasons or the relevance of causality to explanation generally. What we see in the case of desire, belief, and the like above, however, is that commonsense interpretive thinking naturally registers causal connection (and causal coherence) by way of hermeneutic (sentential) coherence. Hence, and as we

shall see in more detail shortly, the finding of appropriate relations of coherence, or connections in sentential content, can be a way of supporting causal hypotheses, and hence a way of finding causes. Thus we can see that both parties to causalist/hermeneutic disputation are mistaken in their negative claims against one another, while in their positive claims both are stressing something correct, which, as their dispute indicates, might otherwise be denied.<sup>3</sup>

## II

Now to go further into both commonsense and psychoanalytic explanation we must observe that the working of desire, which we can take as the central motive which we invoke in explaining action, is more complex than we have so far indicated. This is because we take it that desire not only prompts (causes) action, but also ceases to operate in response to the perception that action has been successful. We take it that someone who wants a particular drink will, after drinking, realize that she has had the drink she wanted, and so cease to want it. (She might now want *another* drink, or even to drink that drink *again*, but these are different matters.) Let us describe this by saying that we normally expect that when an agent *satisfies a desire* (that is, when A des that P {causes}→ P), and in consequence *believes that this is so* (that is, when P {causes}→ A bels that P), then this results in the *pacification* of the agent's desire (that is, that A's des that P is pacified.) So, abbreviating as above, we have

(iv) A fuller pattern of the role of desire in commonsense psychological explanation, including the *pacification* (causing of operation) of desire, produced by belief in its satisfaction.

D\*: A des that P {causes}→ P {causes}→ A bel that P {causes}→ A's des that P is pacified.

This pattern D\* represents, as it were, the life-cycle of a single desire in successful intentional action. (It clearly contains within itself both D (the pattern of the satisfaction of desire) and B (the pattern of well-founded belief) above.) Thus in thinking that a person, A, is (intentionally) going to get a drink, we in effect frame a predictive hypothesis, which could be put into words by

using the sentence 'A gets a drink' in all four positions in an instance of D\*. We think, that is, that A desires that A get a drink, and we predict *first* that this will result in A moving her body in such a way that she gets a drink, *second* that she will come to believe that she has done so, and *third* that this will pacify her desire, so that she turns to something else. (Of course, again, we do not formulate such predictions, or anything like D\*, explicitly to ourselves. But that we make such predictions shows in the ways in which we would be surprised if the agent's action unfolded differently from the way we expect.)<sup>†</sup>

As this example suggests, our tacit explanatory and predictive use of patterns like B, PR, and D\* is far more frequent and complex than we are aware. Indeed, we commonly see intentional actions as informed by very many more desires and beliefs than we can perspicuously represent by listing the desires and beliefs as above. We can, however, *begin* to show some of the complexity involved by making use of another sort of diagram, of a kind familiar from linguistics. Thus for the explanation of the speech-act above, we have the following, as shown in Figure 4.1.

In this diagram we display the structure of our hypotheses about the constituent structure of an agent's goals in action by a tree diagram, which grows from an aerial root down through a series of branching nodes. Such a tree will have an agent's overall goal in acting at the top (root), and will go down from this motive through the ordered series of other goals which the agent takes as requisite to securing the root. We can take each of these subordinate goals to give rise to a further tree of the same kind, until we reach goals which are simply the performing of various desired

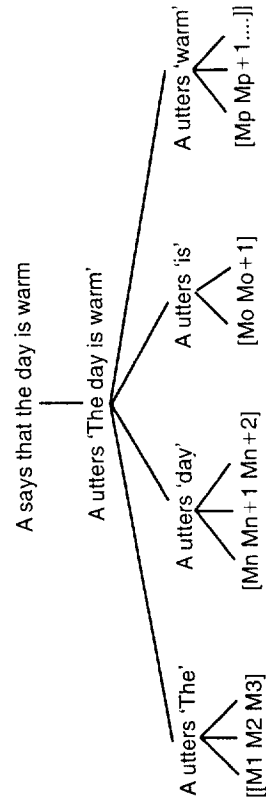


Figure 4.1

bodily movements in sequence, which we can label by M1, M2, etc.<sup>‡</sup> In this way we can indicate the overall structure of actions or projects approaching everyday complexity, such as getting cash from a till (Figure 4.2).

Each such tree relates the sentence at its root to a sequence of hypothesised effects, which, if all goes correctly, should also ultimately be describable as a bringing about of the situation, and thence of the belief, and thence of the pacification of the desire, described by that same root sentence. The same holds for each subsidiary sentence likewise, and in the order marked by the tree. The whole hypothesis thus fixes for each goal and for each intentional movement by which that goal is executed a place in a determinate order of satisfaction and pacification. This imposes a complex bracketing or phrasing on behaviour, which segments the flow of movement upon which the hypotheses is directed into the series of units and sequences, groups and sub-groups, which we perceive as the unfolding rhythm of intention in action. The whole, moreover, can be seen as consisting of iterations of simpler parts which correspond to each aspect of this segmentation, that is, to instances of D\* governed by instances of PR. So we can see each goal-specifying sentence in a tree as applied repeatedly, now to articulate a motive as hypothesis, now to describe predicted (or cohering) effects of that motive as test, as in the simple case spelt out above. In such a tree, therefore, we find the basic normative and hypothetical structure of D\* both repeatedly and in the large.

We can thus see our commonsense practice of interpretation as one in which we tacitly and intuitively hypothesize such tree-like structures of motive as explaining both speech and action.

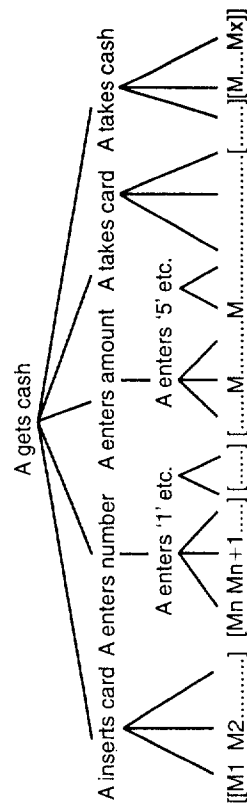


Figure 4.2



Accordingly, the patterns specified in such trees have an epistemic status worth noting. We interpret behaviour in accord with them naturally, and hence spontaneously, rapidly and continually. In this sense we use them more frequently, and rely on them more deeply, than any generalizations of science. (But of course we have no need to realize that this is so.) We learn such patterns together with language, so that their use is in a sense *a priori*. Also, however, we find them instantiated, and hence supported in a way which is both empirical and *a posteriori*, in instances of successful interpretive understanding too dense and numerous to register. This indicates that our practice of interpretation can be considered to have the kind of strength possessed by a well-confirmed empirical theory, and this serves to explicate its potential cogency.

### III

We have so far considered how in interpretation each of us systematically maps the sentences of his or her own idiolect on to the utterances and actions, and thence on to the mind, of others. We can see that language also plays a central role in the first-person case. For when I consider, say, my own belief that Freud lived in Vienna, I use a sentence from my own idiolect (the sentence 'Freud lived in Vienna') to describe the circumstances in which my belief is true; and something similar holds for the other sentimentally described states of mind which I ascribe to myself. So it seems that all my understanding of sentimentally described states of mind – my understanding of my own mind, as well as that of others – presupposes my grasp of my own idiolect.

This again is a consequence of our *that P* practice of describing motives. Since in this practice we use sentences to articulate the states of mind we ascribe to ourselves as well as to others, we can see that our grasp of the mind presupposes that of these sentences. But this, as the schematization in T makes clear, encompasses a potential infinity of beliefs, in accord with which each of us relates his or her sentences, and so his or her linguistically apprehended thoughts, to the world. This is a massive claim to empirical knowledge, about which it seems we could in principle be wrong. So we can ask: How can we be sure that we use the

sentences of our idiolects in a way which is coherent and correct? How can each of us know that the sentences in our idiolects – and hence the desires, beliefs, thoughts and feelings which we articulate by means of these sentences – *really* relate to the world in the way we *think* they do?

This question applies to everything in the scope of our first-person authority. So once we ask this question, I think it is plain that there is a sense in which we cannot answer it.<sup>6</sup> When we occupy the first-person perspective – when we think, speak or act *as subjects* – then we *use* our idiolects, either overtly or in thought; but we do not at the same time fully *evaluate* our uses for correctness, and it is clear that we could not do so without begging the question. If I am asked how I know that I hold the sentence 'Freud worked in Vienna' as true in my idiolect just if a certain person (Freud) performed a certain activity (worked) in a certain place (Vienna), there is nothing to the point which I can reply. For if I were mistaken about how my words relate to the world – if unknown to myself I actually used 'Freud' to speak of Jung, and 'Vienna' to speak of Zurich, so that on my lips and in my mind the sentence 'Freud worked in Vienna' was true just if Jung worked in Zurich – then I would not know what my thoughts were, and so would be unable to think reflectively at all. So this knowledge is in a sense the foundation of my articulate thinking, without which I would be lost; and that I have this knowledge is something I *assume*, but not something I can justify – or even *think* about justifying – without begging the question in the sense of assuming or presupposing that I have it.

This indicates, I think, both how our understanding of language is as at the basis of our cognitive lives, and also how we cannot justify this understanding from within the first-person perspective or by reference to first-person authority. But, of course, the fact that I cannot justify my own use of language from within does not show that this use is not correct. For when *another* understands my language and action, that other can see from outside my perspective that my language relates to the world as I take it to, and also that my first-person ascriptions of thought and feeling are correct. But then so far as another, who takes me as object, could thereby be justified in holding that my mind and language are as I take them to be, I am justified as subject as well.

So even if the first-person perspective cannot be justified from within it can still be justified from without, and this justification is both interpretive and social.

#### IV

We can now see more clearly how interpretive understanding is basic to our thought. Contrary to the Cartesian/empiricist tradition mentioned at the outset, the first-person perspective itself stands in need of justification and so cannot provide the foundations of knowledge. Interpretive thinking provides the required further justification. So our capacity to think and speak about ourselves is constituted as knowledge by a possible relation to others, which shows in our being such as to be interpretable by them.

This, however, provides a further challenge. How are we to understand our interpretive practice as sufficiently powerful to justify our first-person authority about mind and meaning, which includes the precision and certainty with which we understand language itself? I think we can begin to see the outlines of the kind of justification which is required by attending to the contrasting role in interpretation of speech as opposed to non-verbal action.

Speech seems a kind of action which we can interpret with particular clarity and certainty; and it is through understanding speech that we attain precise and extensive understanding of the motives of others. But it is worth noting that speech is a kind of behaviour which we could *not* understand in isolation from the rest of the behavioural order of which it is a part. If we could not regard people's productions of sounds or marks as part of a larger pattern of action and relation to the environment, we could not interpret these sounds or marks, or regard them as language at all. (One can get a sense of this point imagining trying to interpret radio broadcasts of foreign speech, without, however, being able to know anything about what the programmes are about.)

By contrast, we can understand a lot of non-linguistic behaviour without relying on language, at least up to a point. We can generally see the purposive patterns in people's behaviour in terms of their performance of commonplace intentional actions, as in accord with the patterns above. But unless we can link such

actions with language, we cannot, in many cases, know the precise contents of people's beliefs and desires; and in the absence of language it would be doubtful how far we could ascribe precisely conceptualized thoughts to people at all.

Interpretive understanding encompasses both words and deeds (verbal and non-verbal behaviour). But we now find that words with no relation to deeds are unintelligible, and deeds with no relation to words are inarticulate. It follows that the understanding of people we actually attain, in which we take their deeds to spring from motives with determinate and precisely conceptualized content, requires us to integrate our understanding of verbal and non-verbal action, and hence to correlate and co-ordinate the two. It is some such integration which enables us to tie the complex structure of utterance to particular points in the framework of action and context, and thereby to interpret language; and this in turn enables us to interpret the rest of behaviour as informed by experience and thought which, like that expressed in language, has fully articulate content.

I think that the particular mode of integration which we use involves what we can regard as a process of interpretive triangulation. This turns on the fact that in interpreting speech we do not merely assign meanings to sounds; rather we characteristically take utterances as expressions of desire, belief, intention and other motives. (Thus we regularly take assertions as expressing beliefs, questions as expressing desires to know something, requests or orders as expressing desires that something be done, and so forth.) This enables us to interpret the motives which we take to be expressed in this way with precision, and also to relate such interpretation to the speaker's ability to express such motives with first-person authority. Clearly, however, we could not take utterances as such expressions of motives with any degree of accuracy and certainty unless we also had independent means of determining what the agent's operative desires, beliefs or intentions really were. Evidently, the means we use are the interpretation of further actions, including non-verbal ones.

In general, we are able to regard utterances as accurate or authoritative expressions of motives because doing so enables us to interpret other actions, and with cogency, as stemming from those same motives, or others related to them. In understanding

persons in this way, therefore, we in effect correlate their utterances with their other actions, as effects of a set of common causes (motives). Schematically, insofar as we take an utterance of 'P' as an expression of a desire, intention, or belief that P, and then confirm this by independently interpreting further actions as flowing from that same motive, we thereby correlate utterance and action as effects of that desire, intention or belief. By this means we triangulate from episodes in speech and non-verbal action to focus upon their common causes, that is, motives which can be specified by relation to both verbal and non-verbal behaviour.

In this we constantly and tacitly cross-check the motives we assign via speech against those we assign via non-verbal action; and this method becomes particularly powerful where the interpreter also has first-person authority. Roughly, the more an interpreter can put his or her goals and beliefs into words – the more the interpretee exhibits first-person authority – the better an interpreter is able to use those words to understand both the interpretee's speech and other actions. But the better an interpreter is able to understand the interpretee's speech and other actions, the more fully the interpreter can check the interpretee's first-person authority. So in favourable circumstances an interpreter can cross-check his or her understanding of an interpreter's verbal action, non-verbal action and first-person authority together, and in such a way as simultaneously to confirm all three.

We can see this in a kind of situation which is extremely common in everyday interpretive understanding. Suppose that I frame hypotheses as to the motives upon which you are presently acting, and also about what the sounds in your idiolect mean. Then suppose that you also make sounds which, according to my understanding of your idiolect, constitute authoritative expressions of the motives upon which I take you to act, and your further behaviour bears this out. Questions of sincerity aside, this tends to show both (i) that my hypotheses about both the meanings of your utterances and the motives for your present behaviour are correct, and (ii) that you have first-person authority about these things. (The principles underlying this kind of inference are discussed further in the appendix on p. 154.)

In such cross-checking of interpretive hypotheses everything is confirmed empirically, so that nothing is merely assumed or taken on trust. As I test my understanding of your non-verbal actions against my understanding of your expressions of motive, my confidence in my interpretations is based upon their success in explaining and predicting what you do and say, and my confidence in your first-person authority is based upon its coinciding with my own independent understanding of the actions and utterances in which it is expressed. So the more instances of your verbal and non-verbal behaviour I understand in this way, the greater confidence I can gain about my interpretations of your actions and utterances, and also your possession of first-person authority.<sup>8</sup>

The same, of course, also holds for your understanding of me. So given that each of us is both a competent interpreter and an authoritative interpretee, it seems that by this method we may attain mutual understanding which is highly precise and certain. Of course, an interpreter will not always interpret accurately, and there are circumstances in which an interpretee's first-person authority will fail. Still, an interpreter can correct faulty interpretations in light of evidence provided by an interpretee, can check how far the interpretee's first-person account is accurate, and can try to correct it where it is not. Interpreter and interpretee can thus together continually explore the assumptions and presuppositions of interpretation of this kind, in a process which admits of continual extension and refinement.

This particularly applies to the understanding of language. For each of us can, in principle, take any of our countless interpretations of another's non-verbal actions, and seek to pair it with an appropriate self-ascription from the other; and by this means each interpretation of non-verbal action, provided it is correct, can also be made to test and improve each's understanding of the other's use of language. This potentially infinite correlation between verbal and non-verbal action can thus be exploited indefinitely and often, to drive confirmation of the hypothesis that each understands the language of the other steadily upwards. This process exploits first-person authority about language in such a way as to provide it with continuous testing and ratification, and so bridges the justificatory gap noted above. So by this means, it

seems, we can come to regard our possession of mutual understanding, and in particular mutual linguistic understanding, as confirmed in the way our intellectual practice requires.

## V

This sketch of our commonsense practice of interpretation is of course very incomplete, but it suggests that interpretation proceeds most surely where an interpreter can constantly match his or her own account of an interpretee's motives with the interpretee's own potentially authoritative expression of these motives in speech. These theoretically ideal conditions for interpretation are in fact actually approximated in the therapy devised by Freud, which provided the background for his interpretation of dreams. In this an interpretee (analysand) provides an interpreter (analyst) with the fullest possible verbal specification of the motives which both are seeking to understand. Also the analysand engages in free association, reporting the contents of consciousness as they occur, without seeking to censor them, or to render them logical or sensible. This enables the analyst to frame hypotheses (interpretations) as to further motives on the part of the analysand, which both can then consider on the basis of the maximum of shared relevant data.

Above we discussed the everyday practice of the explanation of action by reference to desires (goals) and beliefs. As is familiar, psychoanalysis extends this practice by relating dreams, symptoms and other phenomena to desires or goals as well. The nature of this extension can partly be seen in very simple examples. Thus Freud found that when he had eaten anchovies or some other salty food, he was liable to have a dream *that he was drinking cool delicious water*. After having this dream, or a series of such dreams, Freud would awake, find himself thirsty and get a drink. Probably many people have had this dream, or its counterpart concerning urination. And anyone who has such a dream will naturally regard it as a *wish-fulfilment* in Freud's sense; that is, as (i) caused by, and (ii) representing the satisfaction of, the desire to drink felt on waking.

This natural reasoning is clearly cogent, and it turns upon the fact that the dreamer's desire is so clearly and closely *related in*

*sentential content* to the dream. This is more or less obvious, but let us spell it out. The dreamer's desire is for a certain sort of situation (that in which the dreamer has a drink), and the dream represents that situation as real (the dreamer is having a drink). To put the point schematically, the dreamer's desire is *that P*, and the dream is *that P*, and this striking similarity gives good reason to suppose that the desire brought about the dream. Also it seems that such a dream has a pacifying influence – perhaps only a fleeting one – on the desire which prompts it. The dreamer's experience of drinking seems to provide a form of temporary relief or check on the underlying thirst, the insufficiency of which is indicated by the dreamer's waking to get a real drink.

Such an account assimilates the dream to wishful thinking or imagining, and this, and its role in the pacification of desire, are also familiar. We are aware in many other cases that our response to a desire or wish that P is in one way or another to imagine, suppose or make believe that P (or something related to P) is the case. We know that people day-dream in this way regularly, and often more or less deliberately; and such episodes of imagining may give pleasure, and seem partly to pacify the desires which they represent as fulfilled. The same applies to the kind of make-believe found in children's play, or again to the suspension of disbelief or imaginative immersion involved in the theatre, cinema, video games and the like. In these and many other cases, it seems, people make use of forms of imaginative representation to pacify desires which they cannot or would not actually satisfy by representations of their satisfaction. In using imaginative representation in this way, moreover, people regularly falsify reality – represent things as other than they are – in two connected ways. They misrepresent the state of *their own mind* in representing themselves as experiencing the satisfaction of some desire which, in fact, remains frustrated. And they misrepresent the state of *their own activity* in representing themselves as satisfying a particular desire, while in fact they are at best pacifying that desire with a false representation of its satisfaction. (The dreamer represents himself as actually drinking, while in fact he is only dreaming of doing so.)

Above we described intentional actions as sharing a common schematic pattern, and we can see that the episodes of wishful

imagining we are now considering share a common pattern as well. In all these cases a desire (or wish) that P leads to a form of imagining or making-believe that P, which in one way or another serves (perhaps only partly or incompletely) to pacify the desire.<sup>19</sup> If we call the kind of belief- or experience-like representation involved in such cases 'b-representation', then we can write their common pattern as:

W: A des (wish) that P {causes}→ A b-reps that P {causes}→ A's des (wish) that P is pacified.

This pattern is evidently closely related to D\* above. Both are patterns in which desire is pacified, and via representation; for belief, as it figures in D\* can be taken as the limiting case of belief-like representation which figures in W. The kinship shows in the fact that W can be regarded as a version of D\* in which the role of reality is left out, so that an instance of W can be seen as a kind of *short-circuiting* of the full cycle described by D\*. In the example of drinking by which we illustrated D\* above, the agent's desire produced a real action resulting in a real drink, and thence in a pacifying belief that she was drinking. In a dream of drinking, by contrast, the mind (or brain) by-passes the path through reality which might result in real satisfaction, and produces the pacifying representation directly and by itself. (This shows in that fact that W is like D\* except for the omission of '{causes}→ P {causes}→'; that is, except for the production of the real action which satisfies desire and renders the pacifying belief true and justified.)

Since we are already familiar with many ways in which people use forms of imaginative representation to pacify their desires, pattern W appears to be one which we already tacitly use and understand, even if we rarely make it explicit. And it is certainly intelligible that such a pattern should exist, and that it should be so closely related to that of action. For, as D\* already makes clear, action is aimed not only at satisfaction, but also at the pacification of desire; and in successful action the mind (or brain) achieves this pacification by way of belief, that is, by way of representation. Since such representation is the key to pacification in the case of successful action, it is not surprising that a related form of representation – familiar in various forms of imagination, make-believe, suspension of disbelief, and the like – should also

play a role in pacifying desire and motives related to it. Human desire far outruns the possibilities of successful action. So it is natural that desire should admit of pacification by other means, and that there should be forms of desire, or motives related to desire, which are characteristically pacified by representation alone.

To see something of the role of W in psychoanalytic interpretation let us consider the example with which Freud begins *The Interpretation of Dreams*, his own dream of Irma's injection (SE IV, 104ff). In this dream Freud met Irma, a family friend and patient, whom he had diagnosed as hysterical and treated by an early version of psychoanalysis. He told Irma that if she still felt pains, it was her own fault, for not accepting his 'solution' to her difficulties. As she continued to complain, however, he became alarmed that she was suffering from an organic illness which he had failed to diagnose, and this turned out to be so. Freud examined Irma, and then she was examined by some of Freud's colleagues, including his senior colleague M; it became manifest not only that she was organically ill, but also that her illness was caused by a toxic injection given by another of Freud's colleagues, his family doctor Otto. Thus he sets out the parts of the dream with which we shall be concerned as follows:

numerous guests, among them Irma. I at once took her on one side, as though to answer her letter and to reproach her for not having accepted my 'solution' yet. I said to her, 'If you still get pains, it's really only your fault.' She replied: 'If you only knew what pains I've got now in my throat and stomach and abdomen – it's choking me' – I was alarmed and looked at her . . . I thought to myself that after all I must be missing some organic trouble. . . . I at once called in Dr. M., and he repeated the examination and confirmed it. . . . M. said, 'There's no doubt it's an infection, but no matter; dysentery will supervene and the toxin will be eliminated.' . . . We were directly aware, too, of the origin of the infection. Not long before, when she was feeling unwell, my friend Otto had given her an injection . . . Injections of that sort ought not to be made so thoughtlessly. . . . And probably the syringe had not been clean. (SE IV, 107)

Unlike the simple dream of drinking this dream does not appear to be wish-fulfilling: in fact it dealt with topics which were not

pleasant to Freud. It concerned the continued suffering of a patient who was also a family friend, and for whom, therefore, the question of his responsibility was particularly acute: it was also about the possibility that he had misdiagnosed an organic illness as hysteria, which he described as 'a constant anxiety' to someone offering psychological treatment. But Freud systematically collected his free associations – the thoughts and feelings which occurred to him – in connection with each element of the dream, and in light of these we can see that the treatment of these topics in the dream is in fact wishful, and in a way which is radical.

The topics of the dream had arisen on the day before. Otto had just returned from visiting Irma and her family and had briefly discussed Irma with Freud, commenting that she was looking 'better, but not yet well'. Freud had felt something like a reproach in this, as though he had held out too much hope that Irma might be cured; and in consequence he regarded the remark as thoughtless, and felt annoyed with Otto. (Also, as it happened, Otto had been called on to give someone an injection while at Irma's – cf. the topic of the dream – and Freud had just had news indicating, as he thought, that another of his female patients had been given a careless injection by some other doctor, and had been contemplating his own careful practice in this respect with a degree of self-satisfaction.) That night, in order to justify himself, Freud had started to write up Irma's case to show to M, who was respected by both himself and Otto, and who appeared in the dream as diagnosing Irma's illness and becoming aware that it was Otto's fault.

In considering the dream Freud noted that his desire to justify himself in respect of Irma's case, and in particular not to be responsible for her suffering, was apparent from the beginning, in which he told Irma that her pains were now her own fault. Also, he felt that his alarm at her illness in the dream was not entirely genuine. So, as Freud realised, it seemed that he was actually *wishing* that Irma be organically ill: for as he undertook to treat only psychological complaints, this also would mean that he could not be held responsible for her condition, by Otto or anyone else. This theme, indeed, seemed carried further in the rest of the dream, in which M found that Otto, not Freud, bore responsibility for Irma's illness. The whole dream, in fact, could be seen as a

wishful response to Otto's remark. According to the dream, and contrary to what Freud had taken Otto to imply, Freud bore no responsibility whatever for Irma's condition. Rather, Otto was the sole cause of her suffering, and this was a result of Otto's bad practice with injections, a matter about which Freud himself was particularly careful.

The contrasting role of desire in action and wish-fulfilment shows here particularly clearly. Freud's intentional action in response to his desire to be cleared of culpable responsibility was to write up a case history to show to his respected senior colleague M., whose authoritative judgement might serve to clear him. This is an action in potential accord with pattern PR, and so also with D\*. His dream apparently shows the same motive at work, but in a very different way. There the desire to be cleared produced no rational action, but rather gave rise directly to a (dreamt) belief-like representation of a situation in which Freud was cleared of responsibility in a whole variety of ways, some involving M. These are instances of b-representation produced in accord with pattern W.

We can think of the process by which we specify these instances, and thus represent the material of a dream in terms of pattern W, as follows. The dreamer's free associations, which range over intimate details of his or her life and thought, give information about incidents and emotions (Otto's giving someone an injection while at Irma's, his remark about Irma, Freud's annoyance) which appear to have influenced the content of the dream. These apparent connections between associations and dream are data which require to be explained. The explanation needed is one which specifies how the material from the associations is causally related to the content of the dream.

Inspection of Freud's dream and his associations reveals many such apparent connections. We might start in a preliminary way to list some we have considered as shown in Table 4.1. The list is incomplete but illustrative. It seems hard to deny that the relation of elements on the left to those on the right requires explanation in terms of a causal connection. This being so, the question arises as to what kind of causal hypothesis would provide the best explanation. Freud's hypothesis is in effect that these data are linked by *wishful imaginative representation*, and hence in





pattern is represented by W. The application of this pattern, however, carries a commitment to a range of hitherto unacknowledged mental states and processes. The processes are those of the wishful imagining which give rise to the manifest content of dreams; and the states are those desire-like states which give rise to the wishful imagining, and which, therefore, we call wishes, but in a theoretical and extended sense. These here include Freud's wishing that Irma's suffering be her own fault, that it be organic, that it be Otto's rather than Freud's responsibility, and so forth. Thus in Freud's conception a dream-wish is an entity introduced by hypothesis, to account for an episode of apparently wishful imagining (or pacifying representation more generally). Such wishes stand to the process of wishful imagining manifest in a dream or day-dream, partly as desires stand to the actions they are cited to explain. Hence, just as a desire can be read in part from the intentional action which the desire is hypothesized to explain, so the wish can be read in part from the episode of imagining – from the dream or day-dream – which it is hypothesized to explain; and just as the action serves to pacify the desire, so, apparently, the imagining serves to pacify this wish.

This indicates that the wishes introduced in the psychoanalytic explanation of dreams in accord with W are comparable, from a methodological perspective, with the desires introduced in the explanation of action in accord with D\*. In particular, we can see that psychoanalytic hypotheses admit of testing, and hence of confirmation, in the same sort of way as those advanced in the commonsense explanation of action, which in general we regard as capable of a high degree of cogency. In this case, however, the hypotheses concern motives (dream wishes) of a kind which are capable of explaining phenomena which are unexplained in commonsense psychology, and whose contents are different and more extreme.

We can mark this difference by noting that the wishes which Freud has here uncovered – even in this most superficial layer of interpretation – already stand in striking contrast to motives standardly acknowledged in waking life. By everyday standards, for example, these wishes are highly egoistic, ruthless and extreme. We should regard someone who acted on *desires* with these contents – who, to escape an imagined reproach, arranged

for a friend and patient to be seriously ill, and for revenge to throw the blame for this on another friend, the author of the supposed reproach – as criminal or worse. Likewise, the way of thinking shown in the dream is radically defective: the reversal of Otto's reproach, for example, seems like a transparently childish 'It's not *me* that's bad – it's *you*' (projection). Also, the dream-wishes are sharply at variance with Freud's other motives, so that the representation of their fulfilment seems alarming rather than pleasant, and the acknowledgement of them, even as mere dream-wishes, is not entirely easy. Thus take the wish that Irma be physically ill. Since she was Freud's friend and patient, this would have been a source of considerable distress in real life, and the situation was one of some alarm in the dream. Accordingly, in acknowledging the wish Freud says that he 'had a sense of awkwardness at having invented such a severe illness for Irma simply in order to clear myself. It looked so cruel . . .' So even in this first example, we begin to find a significant extension of commonsense psychology.

And clearly, even in this first example, the extension goes further. We have been considering Freud's dream in relation to events of the day before, and his apparent wishes (i) not to be responsible for Irma's suffering and (ii) to turn the tables on his imagined accuser, Otto. But it is clear from Freud's associations that the dream also related to deeper matters of responsibility, and in particular to Freud's role in the death of one of his patients and one of his friends. Thus he associated as follows to the element of the dream in which he called in Dr M to examine Irma:

*I at once called in Dr. M., and he repeated the examination . . . This reminded me of a tragic event in my practice. I had on one occasion produced a severe toxic state in a woman patient by repeatedly prescribing what was at that time regarded as a harmless remedy (sulphanol), and had hurriedly turned for assistance and support to my experienced senior colleague . . . My patient – who succumbed to the poison – had the same name as my eldest daughter . . . Mathilde . . . (SE IV, 111, 112)*

In addition, this touches on the theme of thoughtless medication, which was also connected with the death of one of Freud's friends, as well as some lesser matters, which, however, also seem likely causes of guilt. As Freud introduces this topic:



*What I saw in her throat: a white patch and turbid bones with scabs on them . . . I was making frequent use of cocaine at that time to relieve some troublesome nasal swellings, and I had heard a few days earlier that one of my women patients who had followed my example had developed an extensive necrosis [area of dead tissue] of the nasal mucous membrane. I had been the first to recommend the [medical] use of cocaine, in 1885, and this recommendation had brought serious reproaches down on me. The misuse of that drug had hastened the death of a dear friend of mine . . . I had advised him to use the drug internally [i.e. orally] only, while morphia was being withdrawn; but he had at once given himself cocaine injections.* (SE IV, 111, 115)

So the figure of Irma in the dream was linked in Freud's mind with that of three persons to whom he had done some damage in his medical interventions, including two who had actually died as a result of them. These cases are apparently alluded to in the dream in a number of ways, for example in M's statement above that 'the toxin will be eliminated'. Their role becomes clearer if we consider Freud's associations to the final elements of the dream, which were quoted above:

*Injections of that sort ought not to be made so thoughtlessly. Here an accusation of thoughtlessness was being made directly against my friend Otto. I seemed to remember thinking something of the same kind that afternoon when his words and looks had appeared to show that he was siding against me. It had been some such notion as: 'How easily his thoughts are influenced! How thoughtlessly he jumps to conclusions!' - Apart from this, this sentence in the dream reminded me once more of my dead friend who had so hastily resorted to cocaine injections . . . I noticed too that in accusing Otto of thoughtlessness in handling chemical substances I was once more touching upon the story of the unfortunate Mathilde, which gave grounds for the same accusation against myself . . .*

*And probably the syringe had not been clean. This was yet another accusation against Otto, but derived from a different source. I had happened the day before to meet the son of an old lady of eighty-two, to whom I had to give an injection of morphia twice a day. At the moment she was in the country and he told me that she was suffering from phlebitis. I has at once thought it must be an infiltration caused by a dirty syringe. I was proud of the fact that in two years I had not caused a single infiltration; I took constant pains to be*

Table 4.3

<i>Data from the associations</i>	<i>Data from the dream</i>
Freud accidentally caused the death of a patient by prescribing her a toxic substance	Otto misuses toxic substances.
Freud advised a friend to take cocaine, and the friend's death was hastened by cocaine injections.	Freud reproaches Otto with the thought that injections of that kind ought not to be made so thoughtlessly.

sure that the syringe was clean. In short: I was conscientious. (SE IV, 117, 118)

Thus, on examination, Freud's associations indicate further apparently non-coincidental connections with his dream, which we can represent as shown in Table 4.3.

It seems clear that, just as Freud wished to avoid culpable responsibility for Irma's suffering, so he might well have wished that he could avoid such responsibility in these cases as well. So if we apply Freud's form of hypothesis to this data, we can represent it as shown in Table 4.4.

These hypotheses are deeper than those which touch merely on the day before the dream and the figure of Irma herself. They involve further figures, the more distant past and deeper emotions. What Freud took to be in question in Otto's remark was responsibility for Irma's continued neurotic suffering. What was in question in the case of his friend and patient, however, was responsibility of a graver kind: that for causing death. Hence the deeper emotion involved is guilt. This is coherent with the wish not to be responsible for Irma's suffering shown more explicitly in the dream; for although Freud does not make the point explicit, this too would be a source of guilt.

To accept these further hypotheses, therefore, is to see the dream as wishfully related not only to persons and events of the day before the dream, but also to persons and events from the past. To put the point in terms of some of Freud's theoretical terminol-

Table 4.4

<i>Data from the associations</i>	<i>Hypothesis about wishful imagining which connects associations and dream</i>	<i>Data from the dream</i>
Freud accidentally caused the death of a patient by giving her a toxic substance.	Freud wishfully represents Otto rather than himself as responsible for the misuse of toxic substances, as in the case of the patient whose death he caused.	Otto misuses toxic substances.
Freud advised a friend to take cocaine, and the friend's death was hastened by cocaine injections.	Freud wishfully represents Otto rather than himself as responsible for thoughtless injections, as were given in the case of his friend who died.	Freud reproaches Otto with the thought that injections of that kind ought not be made so thoughtlessly.

ogy: in these hypotheses the image of Irma in the dream is seen as a *condensation*, involving not only Irma herself, but also the friend and patient from the past, in whose cases Freud would like to be free of guilt; and the dream effects a wishful *displacement* of the kind of guilt Freud felt in respect of these cases too on to the figure of Otto. The dream is thus shaped by persons and events from the past, which are linked in the mind of the dreamer with those from the day before, but have a deeper emotional significance.

In seeing the dream in this way, moreover, we also have reason to see Freud's conscious feelings and actions in a different light. For we can now see, for example, that Freud was so sensitive to Otto's remark, and so ready to regard Otto as thoughtless, for the reason that Otto's remark touched upon issues of medical responsibility which were particularly significant for Freud, even though he was not aware of them at the time, and would not have become aware of them had he not analysed the dream. (Likewise for Freud's action of writing up Irma's case-history, his contemplation of his own care with respect to injections, and so forth.)

The point is not that these thoughts, feelings, and actions are not to be seen partly as Freud consciously represents them; it is rather that the dream and associations indicate that they are also to be seen in another way, that is, as related to the past, and to guilt, in ways the conscious representation alone tells us nothing of.

## V

Although our discussion has touched on only a few of the relevant topics,<sup>10</sup> it suggests that we can see Freud's reasoning in this paradigmatic example as an extension of the kind of patterned interpretation we find in everyday life, and one which admits of potentially strong confirmation in the same way. We noted above that in everyday interpretation an interpreter could cross-check the interpretation of a variety of verbal and non-verbal actions, and so both confirm and explore the limits of the interpreter's first-person authority. From our example we can see that cross-checking in psychoanalysis also plays a distinct but complementary role. The example shows that the interpretation of wish-fulfillments in accord with W can introduce new desires and wishes – such as Freud's desire to be free from blame for thoughtless injections – whose ascription can be cross-checked against both the explanation of actions in accord with D\*, and the explanation of further wish-fulfillments via W.

Interpretation in accord with W thus has the capacity both to discover new (or previously unacknowledged) motives and to contribute to confirmation of their role in human psychology. So Freud's discovery of this mode of interpretation has the power to extend commonsense psychology in ways which are potentially radical, cumulative and sound. Radical, because the interpretation of dreams (or other wish-fulfillments) evidently leads quickly to the ascription of wishes very different from those acknowledged in everyday life, and also to the discernment of new mental mechanisms, new kinds of dependence of present mental life on the past and so forth. Cumulative, because the kinds of wishes we can discern by this means depend upon the desires we take people to have in waking life, and our hypotheses about these, as we have just seen in the case of Freud, tend to be strikingly enriched as a result of considering dreams. So the discovery of

dream-wishes might lead to further hypotheses about waking motives, and these to the finding of further dream wishes and so on, in rapid succession. (Something of this may be visible in Freud's consideration of the Oedipus complex in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.) Finally, even such a radical and cumulative extension might be sound, in the sense that each further hypothesis about new wishes, desires, etc., might be thoroughly cross-checked via the interpretation of very many dreams (or other wish-fulfillments) and verbal and non-verbal actions, and hence be intuitively confirmed to a high degree.

Freud and his successors have in effect claimed that this is so. The argument here suggests that while this would be very difficult to demonstrate, it might nonetheless be true. If this is so there is at least some case for regarding psychoanalysis, as Freud intended, as an interpretive science. Still we should recognize that even a cogent interpretive discipline could never fully *seem* like a real science. For any interpretive discipline must be one in which the tacit and intuitive testing of hypotheses outruns our capacities to make the relevant data, claims and inferences fully explicit and communicable. Whether we choose to call psychoanalysis a science or not, it seems to be such a case; and hence, however well psychoanalytic hypotheses are confirmed, we must expect them to remain in dispute.<sup>11</sup>

#### Appendix: Cross-checking the interpretation of language and action

To represent the points discussed in the text more schematically, let us imagine that we have an interpreter A and an interpretee B, and that the sentences of their idiolects are numbered, so that A's sentences include P1, P2...Pn... and B's include  $\Sigma 1, \Sigma 2, \dots \Sigma n \dots$ . Then in trying to understand B's language A will be trying to devise a correlation in his own idiolect whose instances might be represented as:

- ' $\Sigma 1$ ' is true (in B's idiolect) just if P1
- ' $\Sigma 2$ ' is true (in B's idiolect) just if P2
- ' $\Sigma 3$ ' is true (in B's idiolect) just if P3
- ' $\Sigma 4$ ' is true (in B's idiolect) just if P4

and so on. We may call this the  $\Sigma/P$  correlation, and it could be effected by a theory of truth for B's language.

Let us suppose that A has a hypothetical understanding of B's utterances which includes these interpretations, and also that A is able to interpret some non-verbal action of B's, by a tree such as shown in Figure 4.3. Since A also has a tentative understanding of B's idiolect, he can use this to translate this tree into B's sentences, that is, as shown in Figure 4.4. Now suppose also that A can get B to explain what he is doing, or otherwise to express the desires and beliefs upon which B is acting, so that B's own use of sentences gives us a further tree. This gives us two trees in B's idiolect, the first supplied via A's interpretation of B's language and action, the second via B's own exercise of first-person authority. Given these materials, A can now test his understanding of B's language and action by comparing these trees. If (i) A has understood B's action correctly, and (ii) A's translation of A's hypothetical tree into B's idiolect is correct, and (iii) B has first-person authority, then the translated tree, and that produced by B, should match sentence for sentence.

This is a very precise and antecedently improbable prediction, so, if it is correct, A can regard his understanding of B's sentences and action, and A's possession of first-person authority, as simultaneously confirmed. (Alternatively, if the trees fail to match at any point, A has reason to hold that his interpretation of B's speech or action was mistaken, or that B's first-person authority is defective at this point.) More fully, a match between the trees should raise A's confidence in his initial tree, towards whatever level he associates with B's first-person authority in the case, while also confirming B's possession of this authority, by showing a correlation between self-ascription and the results of interpretation by another. Finally, the match offers support for A's under-

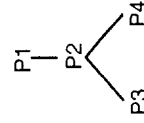


Figure 4.3

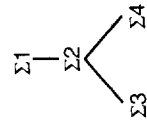


Figure 4.4

standing of B's idiolect, with regard to all the sentences which figured in the trees, for it indicates that A maps B's sentences on to the same actions and situations as B himself. Repeated support of this kind would thus constitute confirmation of A's hypothesis as to the  $\Sigma/P$  correlation generally.

It thus appears that insofar as we hold that this kind of match with the speech of an interpretee obtains for an interpreter's trees for actions generally, we thereby hold (i) that the interpretee has a degree of well-founded first-person authority about her goals and beliefs; (ii) that the interpreter can enjoy a degree of confidence in ascribing these goals and beliefs which tends to approach that of the interpretee; and (iii) that the interpretation of any action can be turned to the testing, and hence to the confirmation, of the interpreter's understanding of the interpretee's sentences. So systematic triangulation between utterance and action of the kind we have been considering can tend simultaneously to render interpretation cogent, first-person authority credible, and our interpretive grip on the meanings of sentences as firm as any we possess.

## Notes

- 1 This chapter continues a line of exposition developed in my essay 'The interpretation of dreams', in J. Neu (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and 'Psychoanalysis, interpretation, and science', in J. Hopkins and A. Savile (eds), *Psychoanalysis, Mind, and Art: Perspectives on Richard Wollheim* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1993).  
The general approach to interpretation is partly based on work by Donald Davidson. See his *Essays on Actions and Events* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), and *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984). Davidson discusses Freud in 'Paradoxes of irrationality' in R. Wollheim and J. Hopkins (eds), *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).
- 2 An example of what I am calling a hermeneutic approach would be that of Klein, *Psychoanalytic Theory* (Chicago: International Universities Press, 1976). A contrasting causalist approach is found in Adolf Grunbaum, *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) and *Validation in the Clinical Theory of Psychoanalysis* (Madison, CT: International Universities Press, 1993). For a discussion of Grunbaum's critique of Freud in these terms see my 'Epistemology and depth psychology', in Peter Clark and Crispin Wright (eds), *Mind, Psychoanalysis, and Science* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), in particular pp. 50ff. In general, attempted critiques of Freud's thinking have failed to grasp

the role of sentential coherence in the intuitive discernment of causal role. Thus the present exposition can be compared with the criticisms in Ch. 1 of E. Erwin, *A Final Accounting* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1997).

- 3 The present approach also enables us to understand dispute of this kind at a deeper level. Our natural interpretive practice enables us to grasp and interrelate various causes of our behaviour (motives) through what we apprehend and describe as relations of sentential coherence. This mode of understanding is basic, capable of accuracy and, at present, the only one we can apply to ourselves in any detail. These same causes, however, admit of study in other ways, say through their realization in the brain, and this would be part of culturally developed physical science. We thus have two ways of thinking and speaking about the same set of causes, and since the ways of thinking are different, it is natural to forget that they are ultimately ways of thinking about the same things, and hence to take them as in competition. But we have good reason to think both ways of thinking capable of accuracy, and insofar as this is so, we can be sure that their results will coincide.
- 4 Thus there are many sorts of cases in which expectations which are predictive in accord with D\* are falsified. For example: (i) an agent may do something we do not expect (instead of drinking the water she pours it on the flowers) so that we conclude that we were wrong about her desire (we were wrong about the sentence 'P' in des P); (ii) an agent may try to do what we did expect but fail (des P was present but failed to cause P); (iii) an agent may not succeed but think she has succeeded and so stop trying (des P produces something besides P, which yet causes bel P); (iv) an agent may succeed but not notice that she has and keep trying (des P causes P, which fails to cause A bels P); and other variations from the predicted norms are possible. Finally, an agent might recognize her own success, but nonetheless be unable to stop trying to achieve her goal (this would be a case in which bel P failed to pacify des P). Given the many ways in which the hypotheses in D\* may be falsified, we may also reasonably take them to be confirmed when things go as we expect.
- 5 This kind of representation is intuitively fairly clear, but it may be worth spelling out what is involved a little more fully. Suppose we have a goal G connected by branches to sub-goals G1 to Gn, and these by further branches to further sub-goals G1,1, G1,2, etc., as in Figure 4.5.  
The top tree corresponds to a desire that G and a belief that if G1 and G2

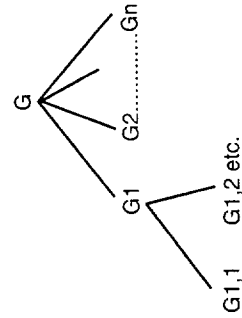


Figure 4.5

and . . . Gn (in that order) then G. This tree constitutes a complex instance of PR, as does the tree down from G1, which corresponds to a desire that G1 and a belief that if G1, I . . . then G1; and so on down the tree. When we spontaneously interpret an agent's movements in terms of intentions and reasons, we tacitly relate these movements to such a tree, or to a series of such trees. (Ordinarily we do not fill these out consciously, but if pressed we can do so in more or less detail; and in this we are not introducing further hypotheses, but making explicit what we already tacitly took to be the case.)

6 This line of questioning, and the answers provided in the next section, are derived from Wittgenstein's celebrated treatment of following a rule. For a discussion of this topic, also related to Freud, see James Hopkins, 'Wittgenstein, interpretation, and the foundations of psychoanalysis', *New Formations: Special Issue on Psychoanalysis and Culture*, autumn (1995) 54-73.

7 To spell this out a little more fully, we can say generally:

(i) The claim that A has a certain belief, desire or other mental state is justified insofar as this claim provides, or is part of, the best explanation of what A says and does, that is, the best explanation of A's behaviour overall.

And since we are taking such explanation to characterize the causes within us of what we say and do, we also have:

(ii) The claim that A has a certain belief, desire or other mental state is justified insofar as this claim provides, or is part of, an accurate and explanatory characterization of the causes within A of what A says and does, that is, the (neural) causes which serve to explain A's behaviour overall.

These criteria of justification are objective in the sense that they are uniform with those which we apply in scientific understanding generally. So this indicates a solution at least to the problem of justifying the claim of first-person authority made by, or on behalf of, a given individual, A. We can say that A has first-person authority insofar as A has the ability to say and think things about A's own mental states and behaviour which are not interpretively mediated by observation of A's own behaviour, but which nonetheless are justified by the objective criteria provided by (i) and (ii). Since this applies to A's beliefs about his or her own idiolect, it covers language as well.

8 Comparison of this type can be made between any two hypotheses which purport to locate the same motives or mental states, and so, e.g. among successive interpretations which we might make of successive bodily movements as a pattern of action unfolds, or those we might offer for a succession of speech acts related to the same objects or events. It is part of our everyday understanding to integrate the ascriptions which cover various actions in such ways, and so check each against the others. Nonetheless, the case taken here, which involves comparing the interpretation of non-verbal action with authoritative expression, has a special role. In this kind of case the interpreter can cross-check his construal of verbal and non-verbal action with the

interpreter's first-person authority, and this makes it possible, as illustrated, simultaneously to confirm all three.

9 Such pacification may not be as deep or permanent as that achieved by satisfying action, but the effects can be genuine nonetheless. In *Sleep and Dreaming* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 2nd edn, 1993), Jacob Empson reports an experiment in which dreamers were deprived of water for twenty-four hours and given a salty meal before going to bed. On these nights their dream-reports included more water-related imagery, such as lakes or snow, as well as some explicitly thirst-satisfying objects, than on nights when they had been allowed to drink as they pleased. Also, subjects reporting gratifying dreams including themes of eating and drinking during the course of the night drank less in the morning, and rated themselves as less thirsty, than those who had not.

10 In particular it should be noted that we have said nothing about symbolism, which can, however, naturally be added to this account. There is some discussion of this in my essay 'Psychoanalysis, metaphor, and mind', in M. Levine (ed.), *The Analytic Freud* (London: Routledge, forthcoming).

11 The comparison between psychoanalysis and fully communicable science is developed in my 'Psychoanalysis, interpretation, and science'.