On 1 April 1915 Freud wrote to Lou Andreas-Salomé:

> The next numbers of the *journal* will contain a kind of psychological synthesis of various ideas of mine under three headings: instinct and their vicissitudes – repression – the unconscious: incomplete, like everything I do but not without some new content. The essay on the unconscious in particular will contain a new definition of the term, which is really tantamount to a restatement. ([In the French edition of these letters the phrase reads: 'L'article sur l'inconscient, notamment, doit exposer une nouvelle définition de celui-ci, laquelle, en fait, équivaut à une agnostisation']. (Andreas-Salomé, 1912-13, p. 38)

This neologism, based on the German *Agnoszierung*, suggests a religious or sacred character, marked by a strong belief, linked to the unconscious beforehand. Freud intends to propose a new definition, agnostic. A keen study of his text allows us to conclude in which sense his definition was a new one, not as much concerning the thesis of his times on the subject, but mainly concerning the Freudian approaches themselves.

The Standard Edition editors, for instance, have written in their introduction to Freud's paper on 'The Unconscious':

> In his early days and in his nearest environment there can have been no great resistance to the idea. His immediate teachers – Meynert, for instance – in so far as they were interested in psychology, were governed chiefly by the views of J. F. Herbart (1776-1841), and it seems that a text-book embodying the Herbartian principles was in use at Freud's secondary school. (Freud, 1915c, p. 162)

These views, interesting as they are, don't cover the whole field on the subject of the contributions which may have influenced Freud in two ways: in the sense of the more recent contributions, contemporary to Freud's writing of his own paper, and also in the sense of the earlier contributions, which were better known and disseminated than Meynert's or Herbart's.
Different approaches and sources to the unconscious

Edward von Hartmann (1842–1906) published in 1869 *Philosophie des Unbewussten*, which received wide public acclaim and made him famous overnight. In this book, Hartmann pays homage to his predecessors: Schelling, Hegel and Schopenhauer. Starting with the analysis of organic phenomena, he establishes an opposition between ‘repulsive’ instincts, such as fear of death or disgust, on the one hand, and ‘sympathetic’ instincts, such as motherly love or sexual love, on the other. Morality, aesthetics and mysticism are rooted in this opposition, according to sublimation which, if it is not studied as such by Hartmann, is present in German thought from Kant onwards, and casts its shadow over Freud’s concept (Prado de Oliveira, 1998, pp. 1117–26). Whereas for Hartmann the unconscious belongs to metaphysics and has no time representation, Freud keeps this last characteristic, but make it a metapsychological concept. This opposition between two fundamental groups of ‘instincts’ and its resolution in death seems to have marked psychoanalysis. Indeed, considering Hartmann’s contribution, it is easy to conceive that Freud could wish for an *Agnosierung* of the notion of unconscious, in order to rid it of any religious connotation.

As for Freud’s contemporaries who may have influenced his thinking and stimulated his attempt to theorize his concept of the unconscious, there is, of course, Bleuler who in 1906 published his *Unbewusstes und Assoziation* as a contribution to Jung’s studies on free associations, which appears in his *Assoziationsstudien*. Hirschman recalls it in his own contribution, ‘A General Presentation of Freud’s Theories (Propaganda among Physicians)’, to the meeting of the Vienna Psycho-analytical Society on 21 April 1909. He states there:

> The difficulties in understanding psychoneuroses are rooted in the concept of the unconscious and in infantile sexuality, which must be substantiated in terms of a purely empirical science. One would have to range quite far in enlarging upon the [concept of the] unconscious, and go into some detail about its virulent [illness-provoking] role. At the same time one could bring forward some things that [it is] necessary [to know] about dreams, jokes and everyday life.

> Finally, one should touch on analysis briefly, as the only method by which one can learn something about the unconscious. About this [the unconscious], one would then have to make the following statements: first of all, the extent to which it contains repressed material (Hirschmann, quoted in Bleuler: ‘Unbewusstes und Assoziation’ [‘Unconscious and Association’]); secondly, that we cannot understand the unconscious without [a knowledge] of the phenomena of hypnotism, suggestion and double consciousness. (Nunberg and Federn, 1908–10, p. 209)

Indeed, Freud’s interest in the unconscious is present from the beginning of his psychoanalytical researches. In 1895, when he is thinking about Emmy von N’s cure, Freud writes in a footnote:
Her astonishment the evening before as its being so long since she had had a neck-cramp was thus a premonition of an approaching condition which was already in preparation at the time and was perceived in the unconscious. This curious kind of premonition occurred regularly in the case already mentioned of Frau Càcilie M. If, for instance, while she was in the best of health, she said to me, 'It's a long time since I've been frightened of witches at night', or, 'how glad I am that I've not had pains in my eyes for such a long time', I could feel sure that the following night a severe onset of her fear of witches would be making extra work for her nurse or that her next attack of pains in the eyes was on the point of beginning. On each occasion what was already present as a finished product in the unconscious was beginning to show through indistinctly. This idea, which emerged as a sudden notion, was worked over by the unsuspecting 'official' consciousness (to use Charcot's term) into a feeling of satisfaction, which swiftly and invariably turned out to be unjustified. Frau Càcilie, who was a highly intelligent woman, to whom I am indebted for much help in gaining an understanding of hysterical symptoms, herself pointed out to me that events of this kind may have given rise to superstitions about the danger of being boastful or of anticipating evils. (Breuer and Freud, 1893–95, p. 76)

The theory of the unconscious thus has undoubtedly clinical grounds. If it is in this note that the term appears for the first time in Freud's works it is important to appreciate that it occurs following Freud's own questioning in a previous note, doubtless one of the longest notes in the history of literature. He brings back this questioning in its entirety in his 1915 paper (Freud, 1915c) several times rather than just once, as we shall see, i.e. the question that bears on the double inscription or the double register of representations and of affects or thoughts, as well as on the outcome of these double inscriptions or registers. In this note, Freud underlines the *spaltung* of consciousness, the constitution of preconscious representations and their move from one register to another. He doesn't dispose yet of the repression concept, but he underlines the *fausses associations*, which pursue certain representations of consciousness (Breuer and Freud, 1893–95, pp. 67–8).

The Standard Edition editors, it seems to me, do not pay sufficient attention to the essentially clinical, and even auto-analytical grounds of the concept of unconscious, even if they point towards it:

It should be made clear at once, however, that Freud's interest in the assumption was never a philosophical one - though, no doubt, philosophical problems inevitably lay just around the corner. His interest was a *practical* one. He found that without making that assumption he was unable to explain or even to describe a large variety of phenomena which he came across. By making it, on the other hand, he found the way open to an immensely fertile region of fresh knowledge. (Freud, 1915c, p. 162)

In fact the Standard Edition editors do not mention a single one of these 'practical' occasions where the concept of the unconscious has been so useful. On the contrary, they deal largely with the theoretical aspect that may be necessary for a theoretical understanding of Freud's use of the concept.
One may follow them, enriched by the theoretical progress made since then, which means coming back to clinical and auto-analytical considerations, in order to deploy Freud’s richness and complexity.

For instance, these editors have written:

Indeed, the whole basis of the repression theory of hysteria, and of the cathartic method of treatment, cried out for a psychological explanation, and it was only by the most contorted efforts that they had been accounted for neurologically in Part II of the ‘Project’. A few years later, in ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ (Freud, 1900), a strange transformation has occurred: not only had the neurological account of psychology completely disappeared, but much of what Freud had written in the ‘Project’ in terms of the nervous system now turned out to be valid and far more intelligible when translated into mental terms.

And they conclude (which I want to underline):

The unconscious was established once and for all. (Freud, 1915c, p. 164)

The main theoretical aspect seem well established, but there is some unsatisfactory thinking. To suppose the unconscious was established once and for all seems to foreclose any surprise and, as such, any bewilderment as well as any fear, in the task of rediscovering it. And this is quite a problem. On the other hand, to understand a single path towards this discovery, always to be started anew, seems a way to launch again and again the experience of the unconscious. Thus, it is not in the Entwurf einer Psychologie, of 1895, to which translators often add a ‘scientific’, that is, an almost geometrical model of the thought apparatus, to which the unconscious belongs, but earlier, in a letter to Fliess, when Freud tries to understand melancholy. He asks himself: ‘How does it come about that anaesthesia plays this role in melancholia?’ (Freud and Fleiss, 1985 [1887-1904], pp. 100-2). And, to answer this question, Freud draws up a first draft of the soul apparatus, where terms such as ego boundaries, external world, sexual object, sexual tension, psychic groups, etc. appear. This diagram, in its general character, is repeated and simplified in order to explain melancholy and mania in particular.

Indeed, on 27 April 1895, Freud writes to Fliess that he is deeply involved in his project ‘Psychology for Neurologists’ and, the same year, on 25 May, he explains his inability to let go of his work:

The main reason, however, was this: a man like me cannot live without a hobby-horse, without a consuming passion, without - in Schiller’s words - a tyrant. I have found one. In its service I know no limits. It is psychology, which has always been my distant, beckoning goal, and which now, since I have come upon the problem of neuroses, has drawn so much nearer. I am tormented by two aims: to examine what shape the theory of mental functioning takes if one introduces quantitative considerations, a sort of economics of nerve forces; and, second, to peel off from psychopathology a gain for normal psychology. Actually, a satisfactory general conception of neuropsychotic disturbances is impossible if one cannot link it with
clear assumptions about normal mental processes. (Freud quoted in Masson, 1985, p. 129)

The project for a ‘Psychology for Neurologists’ is only partly inspired by the geometric model which appears in the letter to Fliess, even if the unconscious clearly appears once again. It is also truly a psychological project even if neurology functions as a metaphor, any truly neurological preoccupation being far from Freud’s mind at the time. Last, but not least, the unconscious is clearly linked to dreams in this text (Freud, 1950[1895], pp. 341–3).

The best example and the conclusion of Freud’s reflections at this time appear in one of his letters to Fliess written at the end of the following year, and are much more explicit than anything he had written before (Freud and Fleiss, 1985 [1887–1904], pp. 207–15). This letter is indeed a true draft of the well-known Chapter 7 of Freud’s ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’. He states there the whole of his topographical model of the psychic apparatus and his psychological project is much clearer.

In ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’, Freud once more works on his model, in order to remove any reference to the Fliess periods, which he still acknowledged in his letter. It is in this sense alone that ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ presents a finished version of the topographical aspect of his metapsychology and, thus, of the topographical make-up of the unconscious. Perception appears at one end of the thought apparatus; the accumulation of mnemonic traces at this end will be the source of the unconscious, and from there on some of these traces may become preconscious at the other end of the apparatus, just before the motor discharge, which brings back to the external world which first came from it as perception (Freud, 1953 [1900–1], pp. 537–41). Moreover, some elements belonging to perception proper may inscribe themselves directly on the preconscious register.

The letters to Fliess, as well as the project for a psychology, were both entangled with transference and clinical preoccupations. ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’ is mingled with Freud’s mourning of his father, but also with the mourning of the end of a friendship. This book is the most important effort in auto-analysis ever to have been accomplished.

The paper on the unconscious

1912 was a year when Freud published several important writings. ‘Totem and Taboo’, certainly, but also ‘The Dynamics of Transference’, ‘On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love)’, ‘Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis’, ‘Types of Onset of Neurosis’, ‘Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation’ (this last subject being the one most frequently discussed at the Vienna Psycho-analytical Society, where nine meetings had been devoted to the question, which looked in a novel way at the subjects of masturbation,
secretion and institutional life), and, finally, 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis'. In several respects the 1915c paper on the subject is a revised version of this last one.

In the same year there was a rupture between Freud and Stekel, just when Freud was terminating his rupture with Adler and starting to split from Jung. Once more, his thoughts on the unconscious were linked to mourning. On 2 January 1912, he wrote to Abraham: 'For myself I have no great expectations; gloomy times lie ahead, and recognition will probably come only for the next generation' (Freud and Abraham, 1907-25, p. 145). Just after splitting from his first student, Stekel, Freud created the Internationale Zeitschrift für ärztliche Psychoanalyse, in the same year. So many writings, so many initiatives, and this is what he called a 'dark period'!

This same year, directly in English, responding to a request from the Society for Psychical Research of London, Freud wrote a short text with the title 'A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis'. This text already presented the essentials of what Freud would develop later, in 1915, and mainly proposes an approach to the thinking apparatus and the unconscious which takes into consideration its topological, dynamic and descriptive aspects. The Standard Edition editors wrote:

The present account is both more elaborate and clearer than the much shorter one given in Section II of the great paper. For there only two uses are differentiated, the 'descriptive' and the 'systematic'; and no plain distinction appears to be made between the latter and the 'dynamic' - the term which in the present paper is applied to the repressed unconscious. (Freud, 1912c, p. 258)

And indeed they are quite right!

This short, effectively very clear, text starts with a proposition:

Now let us call 'conscious' the conception which is present to our consciousness and of which we are aware, and let this be the only meaning of the term 'conscious'. As for latent conceptions, if we have any reason to suppose that they exist in the mind - as we had in the case of memory - let them be denoted by the term 'unconscious'. (ibid., p. 260)

What allows him to insist on this difference, besides memory and associations, is post-hypnotic suggestion and mainly the experience of Bernheim in France, which Freud describes (ibid., p. 261). This experience allows him to differentiate a dynamic approach of the unconscious from its sole description. The dynamic approach recognizes the existence of thoughts kept away from the conscious despite their intensity and their activity. Thus, besides conscious and unconscious mental states, Freud reaffirms the existence of preconscious states, the existence of which was already stated in 'The Interpretation of Dreams'.

He also returns to his 1901 thesis, according to which the psychic activity is unconscious at the beginning and either remains as such or follows its path
towards consciousness according to the resistances it meets (or not), coming from different psychic representations. Freud even compares the relationship between the unconscious and conscious to the relation that exists between the positive and negative when a photo is developed. It is interesting to spot the several links made by Freud between these two notions, as when he states that neurosis is the ‘negative’ of perversion, conceived as ‘positive’ (Freud and Fliess, 1887-1904, p. 227). Moreover, not only does the unconscious become conscious, but a reverse movement also often happens, when elements which belong to consciousness return to the realm of the unconscious, for instance the latent thoughts of dreams.

At the end of this text, Freud makes two important statements: the first of them questions the laws of unconscious thought, in as much as they are different from those of conscious thought; the second statement bears on the independent nature of the unconscious system. He proposes to designate it by three letters - ‘Ucs’ or, in German, ‘Ubw’. This proposition had already been stated on a letter to Fliess at the end of 1896.

The paper in the unconscious under scrutiny is divided into seven chapters, bearing on the justification for such a concept, on the various meanings of the term and the topographical point of view, on unconscious emotions, the topographical and dynamics of repression, on the special characteristics of the Ucs system, on the communication between the two systems, i.e. the unconscious and the conscious, and, finally, on the assessment of the unconscious. These chapters are of unequal importance and present a thesis previously developed in an unequal manner. The enthusiasm showed by Freud in his 1 April letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé is highly contentious. Freud had already established an ‘agnostization’ of the unconscious before his new text and it is remarkable how Freud manages never to quote any of his predecessors or contemporaries dealing with the same concept, not even to refute them. Nevertheless this text has considerable importance: it represents a great effort to answer a set of questions which appears often enough in Freud’s works: Can a single thing exist simultaneously in several different places and manifest itself in several different ways? And also: can two or more different things occupy simultaneously a single place and manifest themselves in similar modes? The answer to these questions is always positive. The concept of over-determination or of multiple determinations is the basis for this answer and brings about all its ramifications. This concept, one of the most revolutionary in Freud’s thought, remains largely unexplored, not only in psychoanalysis, but generally.

Thus, the introduction to this 1915 text begins with a comparison between the repressed and the unconscious. At once, it enlarges the realm of the unconscious which is not restricted to the repressed, which raises a new question: ‘How are we to arrive at a knowledge of the unconscious?’ (Freud, 1915c, p. 166). There are several answers. The first of them: there is a
translation in progress between the unconscious and the conscious. It would be hard to overemphasize the overwhelming importance of the notion of translation in Freud's work.

This same first chapter offers a second answer to the question at issue, an answer which itself is divided into two parts:

Consciousness makes each of us aware only of his own states of mind; that other people, too, possess a consciousness is an inference which we draw by analogy from their observable utterances and actions, in order to make this behaviour of theirs intelligible to us. ... This inference (or this identification) was formerly extended by the ego to other human beings, to animals, plants, inanimate objects and to the world at large. ... Psycho-analysis demands nothing more than that we should apply this process of inference to ourselves also. ... If we do this, we must say: all the acts and manifestations which I notice in myself and do not know how to link up with the rest of my mental life must be judged as if they belonged to someone else: they are to be explained by a mental life ascribed to this other person. (ibid., p. 169)

And further:

In psycho-analysis there is no choice for us but to assert that mental processes are in themselves unconscious, and to liken the perception of them by means of consciousness to the perception of the external world by means of the sense-organs. (ibid., p. 171)

These constitute in fact two different answers: the first one states the importance of analogical procedures and the second one states the possibility of applying these procedures to the actual relationship between consciousness and the unconscious. But from the start of the chapter the reader must understand that, concerning psychoanalysis, important facts to be observed are essentially parapraxis, dreams, symptoms and compulsions, as well as 'ideas that come into our head we do not know from where, and with intellectual conclusions arrived at we do not know how' (ibid., pp. 166-7).

Thus, the chapter on the justification of the concept of the unconscious, much more than simply presenting a list of facts that allow the establishment of a hypothesis, also introduces a methodology to observe these facts, that is, translations, analogies and the perception of one's own self as an element of the external world.

I want to underline the analogy of the endopsychic perception and the perception of the rest of the world. It also relates to data that are important to the understanding of contemporary psychoanalytical techniques. Freud states: 'Today, our critical judgment is already in doubt on the question of consciousness in animals; we refuse to admit it in plants and we regard the assumption of its existence in inanimate matter as mysticism' (ibid., p. 169). But the problem no longer seems pertinent. Such an approach to mysticism seems linked some how to reductionism. Nowadays, based on the psychoanalytical knowledge of psychosis, far from the science characteristic
of Freud's times, it appears that those beliefs correspond to initials steps in recognizing oneself as a human being, after a recognition of oneself as belonging to the world and, thus, to inanimate and vegetal realms.

The second chapter deals with the several meanings of the concept of unconscious and the topographical approach. This chapter now seems to be quite problematic. As the British editors of the Standard Edition have pointed out, this chapter is poorer than the 1912c paper, because now 'only two uses [of the concept] are differentiated, the "descriptive" and the "systematic"; and no plain distinction appears to be made between the latter and the "dynamic" (ibid., p. 164) but also because the articulation between the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious is well established and has been developed for a long time.

If this chapter is still of interest, it is due to his clinical propositions, which appear in one of its last paragraphs. Freud writes:

If we communicate to a patient some idea which he has at one time repressed but which we have discovered in him, our telling him makes at first no change in his mental condition. Above all, it does not remove the repression nor undo its effects, as might perhaps be expected from the fact that the previously unconscious idea has now become conscious. On the contrary, all that we shall achieve at first will be a fresh rejection of the repressed idea. But now the patient has in actual fact the same idea in two forms in different places in his mental apparatus: first, he has the conscious memory of the auditory trace of the idea, conveyed in what we told him; and secondly, he also has - as we know for certain - the unconscious memory of his experience as it was in its earlier form. Actually there is no lifting of the repression until the conscious idea, after the resistances have been overcome, has entered into connection with the unconscious memory-trace. It is only through the making conscious of the latter itself that success is achieved. On superficial consideration this would seem to show that conscious and unconscious ideas are distinct registrations, topographically separated or the same content. But a moment's reflection shows that the identity of the information given to the patient with his repressed memory is only apparent. To have heard something and to have experienced something are in their psychological nature two quite different things, even though the content of both is the same. (ibid., pp. 175-6)

The remarks about the difference and on the links between the experience one has gone through and that one has heard about are not new. They first appear in 1897, when these links are even more developed than when they appear again in 1915. In 1897, Freud mentions them twice: first in a letter of 16 May to Fliess, when he states, 'The fantasies derive, as in hysteria, from what has been heard and understood subsequently'. In this statement we can read that there is a temporal distance between the source of the nachträglichkeit (deferred action) and the nachträglich itself and, in the M Draft, included in a letter a few days later to his then friend, the following reformulation: 'Fantasies arise from an unconscious combination of things experienced and heard, according to certain tendencies' (Freud and Fleiss, 1985 [1887-1904], pp. 243 and 247).
The link between what has been heard and what has been experienced is weaker in 1915. What has been heard now becomes that which the patient hears from the analyst. Freud does not make it clear that this is added to what he has heard at another time, in his own 'foreign country' of childhood. This new definition seems to be the basis of a method where the analyst's sole preoccupation becomes the transference interpretation, excluding any effort of reconstruction based on memories or on new association.

Freud's clinical knowledge leads to the questioning of the existence of unconscious emotions in the third chapter, and facing the complexity of possible answers. It is impossible, indeed, to speak of 'unconscious feelings', as much as it is impossible to speak of unconscious drives, given that only the drive representations come to be inscribed in the unconscious. Drives themselves belong to the biological realm. Nevertheless, as the psychoanalyst's usual language puts forward the notion of unconscious feelings, it is as well to try to search for the correspondence between their way of speaking and the reality they thus seek to describe. So, indeed, there is a certain parallelism between drives and emotions, for these have a biological basis (the heart beats faster, sweat, etc.). On the other hand, in the conscious system, feelings have their own representations. Affects themselves may correspond to a large extent to a translation of the drive in something accessible to consciousness:

we may say that as long as the system Cs. controls affectivity and motility, the mental condition of the person in question is spoken of as normal ... Whereas the control by the Cs. over voluntary motility is firmly rooted, regularly withstands the onslaught of neurosis and only breaks down in psychosis, control of the Cs. over the development of affects is less secure. (Freud, 1915c, p. 179)

This curious remark is made clear in a footnote:

Affectivity manifests itself essentially in motor (secretory and vaso-motor) discharge resulting in an (internal) alteration of the subject's own body without reference to the external world; motility, in actions designed to effect changes in the external world. (ibid., p. 179)

It remains a matter of argument and research to establish whether affects are linked to external events.

This third chapter prepares the ground for the following one, and is quite rich for psychoanalytical clinical reflection. It bears on repression, a founding concept, and its title is 'Topography and Dynamics of Repression'. Repression, states Freud, corresponds to a 'withdrawal of cathexis; but the question is, in which system does the withdrawal take place and to which system does the cathexis that is withdrawn belong?' (ibid., p. 180).

When he tackles these questions, Freud quotes extensively from another of his articles which also appears in 'Papers on Metapsychology' and whose
'The Unconscious'

It is pertinent to ask whether it is really necessary to introduce in a study on the unconscious a section devoted to repression, when the author has just presented a whole study on the question a few pages earlier.

To ask it is pertinent as the editors of the Standard Edition seem to overlook two important aspects of the working through of Freudian theory on these issues when they introduce the paper on repression and in their introduction to the papers on the unconscious. Repression, Freud states here, is divided into two distinct moments: first, a primary repression, when splitting between the drive occurs in which access to the conscious is forbidden and the representation of this drive. During this phase, a fixation (italics in Freud's paper) occurs.

The second stage of repression, repression proper, affects mental derivatives of the repressed representative, or such trains of thought as, originating elsewhere, have come into associative connection with it. (ibid., p. 148)

In both papers, the one from the fourth chapter on the unconscious and the other one, on repression proper, the same clinical examples are described: the action of repression in anxiety hysteria, in conversion hysteria, and on obsessional neurosis (ibid., pp. 155-7, 182-5).

The editors of the Standard Edition, when introducing the paper on repression, reduce its action to the anxiety neurosis, where, according to Freud, repression is akin to defences. And, above all, in their introduction of the paper on the unconscious, they also introduce the confusion between the unconscious and metapsychology (ibid., pp 143-5, 161-5).

But the most complete theory of Freud's on repression from a clinical point of view is presented in his text on Schreber, of 1911, which follows the author's working through it and elaborating on it in his exchange of letters with Jung and Ferenczi, whereas the first Freudian metapsychological approaches derive from his correspondence on melancholy with Fliess and Abraham (Prado de Oliveira, 1997). Paranoia and melancholy are subjects that necessitate new methods of thought, namely psychoanalytical theory and the metapsychological approach of the mind, where repression plays a major part. Metapsychology should not be confused with its study subjects, unconscious or conscious, symptoms or fantasy. Freud underlines this in this fourth chapter in almost the same terms that he used in his letters to Abraham:

I propose that when we have succeeded in describing a psychical process in its dynamic, topographical and economic aspects, we should speak of it as a metapsychological presentation. (Freud, 1915c, p. 181)

To be precise: 'it' means here the description of minds of work and not the mind or the work itself. A mind procedure or mind instance alone is never
It is interesting to compare clinical examples which appear in the paper on repression and the way Freud tackles them in this part of his text on the unconscious. After comparing repression with his three major neuroses at that time – anxiety hysteria, conversion hysteria and obsessional neurosis – in his paper on the unconscious he simply describes the application of the mode of repression on anxiety neurosis to the two other forms of mental disorder.

Freud in his fifth chapter returns to the study of the unconscious proper. There he defines the special characteristics of the system Ucs. This is an extraordinary part of the paper under scrutiny: it presents a very concise reading of several other of his papers on the unconscious. For instance, when he states that ‘the nucleus of the Ucs. consists of instinctual representatives which seek to discharge their cathexis; that is to say, it consists of wishful impulses’ (ibid., p. 186), or when he summarizes the dream-work, that is, no negation, displacement, condensation, timelessness, submission to the pleasure principle, replacement of external to internal reality, all those statements appear for the first time in ‘The Interpretation of Dreams’. One can argue that the dream is not the unconscious. Nevertheless, they share many features, according to Freud’s definitions of them.

Still, after defining the Ucs characteristics, Freud moves on and establishes the main features of the Pcs, in such a way that the former are defined, definitively, by their opposition to the latter. Freud recognizes this at once, stating:

The full significance of the characteristics of the system Ucs. described above could only be appreciated by us if we were to contrast and compare them with those of the system Pcs. (ibid., p. 188).

And he goes on to explain in detail the main features of the Pcs: to institute communication between the content of representations in such a way that they may influence one another, to organize these contents according to time, to introduce censure or even several layers of censorship, to institute reality testing and the reality principle and, finally, to promote the development of memory as opposed to memory-traces, which belong uniquely to the inscription of experiences of the unconscious.

This postulate of memory-traces is curious and may question some of Freud’s statements in this fifth chapter as well as many traditional ways to approach metapsychology, psychoanalysis or its techniques.

Indeed, during the discussion of the relationship between the two systems of Ucs and Pcs, the subject of the sixth chapter of his paper, when he strives to establish the bridges between them and the conscious, as well as the hypothesis of several layers of censorship, Freud doesn’t hesitate to point out:
It would nevertheless be wrong to imagine that the Ucs. remains at rest while the whole work of the mind is performed by the Pcs. - that the Ucs. is something finished with, a vestigial organ, a residuum from the process of development. It is wrong also to suppose that communication between the two systems is confined to the act of repression, with the Pcs. casting everything that seems disturbing to it into the abyss of the Ucs. On the contrary, the Ucs. is alive and capable of development and maintains a number of other relations with the Pcs., amongst them that of co-operation. In brief, it must be said that the Ucs. is continued into what are known as derivatives, that it is accessible to the impressions of life, that it constantly influences the Pcs., and is even, for its part, subjected to influences from the Pcs. (ibid., p. 190, emphasis added)

When Freud states that the rule of the pleasure principle or the substitution of external reality by internal reality is characteristics of the unconscious, he seems to forget his own statement according to which, in large measure, it is this same 'external reality' which nourishes the 'internal reality', and thus the distinction between 'internal' and 'external' deserves to be renewed and studied again and again, beginning with the precise evaluation of what has already been done in order to get an idea of who, tried to maintain a very tight and impermeable distinction between these two realms, and how, on the one hand; and who has tried to point the circulation and movements occurring between them, and how.

This last Freudian conception is stated again and again:

*But the Ucs. is also affected by experiences originating from external perception. Normally all the paths from perception to the Ucs. remain open, and only those leading on from the Ucs. are subject to blocking by repression.* (ibid., p. 194, emphasis added)

In the course of these last two parts of his paper, the clinical examples introduced by Freud change in nature. They no longer belong to the realm of neurosis, but to the domain of the unconscious and its derivatives, that is, dreams and fantasies, symptoms and general pathology, besides considerations on the psychoanalytical techniques that render it fully dependent of the conscious.

The fifth chapter ends thus:

*Moreover, in human beings we must be prepared to find possible pathological conditions under which the two systems alter, or even exchange, both their content and their characteristics.* (ibid., p. 189)

Likewise, towards the end of his sixth chapter, Freud writes:

*A complete divergence of their trends, a total severance of the two systems, is what above all characterizes a condition of illness.* (ibid., p. 194)
Thus, it is no surprise that the seventh and last chapter of this paper, entitled ‘Assessment of the Unconscious’, is entirely devoted to the study and discussion of schizophrenia, based on clinical cases and theories presented by Victor Tausk which Freud makes his own. The revolutionary propositions formulated then can be resumed: schizophrenics deal with words as if they were things; in parallel to this, schizophrenics develop ‘language of organs’, which is close to hypochondria.

The importance of Tausk to the history of the analytical theory should not be overlooked. It is not enough to remember that the projective identification concept derives from his thoughts about his clinical experience and that Bion’s studies on the schizophrenic way of thinking and using words are due to him. Nevertheless, Freud underlines his own and his closest followers’ priority when he thinks he has found in these theses arguments to solve the problem he has formulated about ‘double inscription’. He states:

>We now seem to know all at once what the difference is between a conscious and an unconscious presentation. The two are not, as we supposed, different registrations of the same content in different psychical localities, nor yet different functional states of cathexis in the same locality; but the conscious presentation comprises the presentation of the thing plus the presentation of the word belonging to it, while the unconscious presentation is the presentation of the thing alone.’ (ibid., p. 201)

It is remarkable that Freud first announces his paper on the unconscious to Lou Andreas-Salomé and then finishes it with a long consideration of Tausk’s thesis and clinical experience. Indeed, this young analyst had received many favours from Andreas-Salomé. Freud’s paper thus seems to stem from a double transference towards one or another of these two former lovers, who marked his life, one replacing the other in his own thoughts (Gay, 1991, pp. 220 and 448), just like the unconscious itself, which stems from elements that are excluded from conscious life or are unable to obtain access to it, either because they are too dangerous or because they seem to be useless.

Notes

1. For an examination of Hartmann’s and Freud’s thoughts, see Whyte (1974) and Brès (1985).
2. Brackets in the text added by the editors.
3. For instance, in his letter to Fliess, of 24 January 1897: ‘I am beginning to grasp an idea: it is as though in the perversions, of which hysteria is the negative ...’ And again: ‘Thus symptoms are formed in part at the cost of abnormal sexuality; neuroses are, so to say, the negative of perversions. (Freud, 1905, p. 165). From what Freud writes about the relationship
between the unconscious and the conscious, we should expect a conception that would go the other way round.

References


Freud S (1900–1) The Interpretation of Dreams. SE 4.


Freud S (1912a) Contributions to a Discussion on Masturbation. SE 12.

Freud S (1912b) The Dynamics of Transference. SE 12.

Freud S (1912c) A Note on the Unconscious in Psycho-Analysis. SE 12.

Freud S (1912d) On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love (Contributions to the Psychology of Love). SE 11.

Freud S (1912e) Recommendations to Physicians Practising Psycho-Analysis. SE 12.

Freud S (1912f) Types of Onset of Neurosis. SE 12.


Freud S (1915c) The Unconscious. SE 14.

Freud S (1950[1895]) Project for a Scientific Psychology. SE 1.


