# On Wittgenstein's Notion of a Surveyable Representation: The Case of Psychoanalysis

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<u>Abstract</u>: I demonstrate that analogies, both explicit and implicit, between Wittgenstein's discussion of rituals, aesthetics, and psychoanalysis (and, indeed, his own philosophical methodology) suggest that he entertained the idea that Freud's psychoanalytic project, when understood correctly—that is, as a descriptive project rather than an explanatory-hypothetical one—provides a "surveyable representation" *(übersichtliche Darstellung)* of certain psychological facts (as opposed to psychological concepts). The consequences of this account are that it offers an explanation of Wittgenstein's admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud, as well as of his apparent "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology.

## 1. Introduction

Consider the following two puzzling views that the later Wittgenstein held. First, he admired Sigmund Freud and thought that his own philosophical project was similar, in important ways, to Freud's psychoanalytic project. Second, some of the later Wittgenstein's remarks seem to suggest that no explanations are required in empirical psychology, an attitude that Robert Fogelin (1987) called a "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology. Both these views require an explanation, since: (a) while Freud's psychoanalytic project is based on causal-hypothetical explanations pertaining to a hidden unconscious, Wittgenstein's philosophical project is based on non-causal, non-hypothetical, non-explanatory descriptions of what is already open to view; and (b) while Wittgenstein's non-explanatory approach may be suitable for philosophical investigations—since in philosophy, according to Wittgenstein, there are no *facts* that require explanation—psychological facts do seem to require causal-hypothetical explanations. My point of entry into is Moore's observation that Wittgenstein's "discussion of Aesthetics […] was mingled in a curious way with criticism of assumptions which he said were constantly made by Frazer in the *Golden Bough*, and also with criticism of Freud" (*MWL I* 312).[1] A thread running through these remarks is the distinction between hypothetical explanations and a synopsis of the facts, suggestive of a view according to which the value of all three projects lies in a certain type of synopsis that they provide of the facts in question.

My aim in this paper is to demonstrate that analogies, both explicit and implicit, between Wittgenstein's discussions of rituals, aesthetics, and psychoanalysis (and, indeed, his own philosophical methodology) suggest that he entertained the idea that Freud's psychoanalytic project, when understood correctly—that is, as a descriptive project rather than an explanatory-hypothetical one—provides a "surveyable representation" *(übersichtliche Darstellung)* of certain

psychological facts (as opposed to psychological concepts).[2] The consequences of this account are that it offers an explanation of Wittgenstein's admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud, as well as of his apparent "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology.

I proceed as follows. After briefly presenting Wittgenstein's conceptualization of a surveyable representation in his philosophical methodology, remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and, by extension, views on aesthetics, I make the case for a surveyable representation of psychological facts (section 2). I then show how this resolves Wittgenstein's puzzling attitudes to psychoanalysis and empirical psychology (section 3). Finally, I consider some of Wittgenstein's negative comments about Freud and psychoanalytic theory and practice, and explain why they do not pose a problem for my interpretation (section 4).

**2. Surveyable Representations in Philosophy, Anthropology, Aesthetics, and Psychoanalysis**

To lay the groundwork for the possibility of a surveyable representation of psychological facts, which I present at the end of this section, I start with a brief overview of Wittgenstein's use of this notion in his philosophical methodology, remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*, and, by extension, views on aesthetics. The use of this notion in Wittgenstein's own philosophical methodology will prove to be important in solving the aforementioned puzzles, and the application of this notion to rituals and aesthetics strengthens the claim that Wittgenstein entertained the idea that it should also apply to psychoanalysis. In *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein presents the notion and importance of a "surveyable representation" *(übersichtliche Darstellung)*:

> A main source of our failure to understand is that we don't have *an overview* of the use of our words.—Our grammar is deficient in surveyability.—A surveyable representation produces precisely that kind of understanding which consists in 'seeing connections'. Hence the importance of finding and inventing *intermediate links*. The concept of a

surveyable representation is of fundamental significance for us. It characterizes the way we represent things, how we look at matters. (Is this a *'Weltanschauung'*?) (*PI* § 122)

The idea of a "surveyable representation" is central to Wittgenstein's philosophical investigations, which are "grammatical" or "conceptual" *(PI* § 90; *Z* § 458). These investigations are descriptive and do not make use of hypothetical explanations to solve empirical problems:

> [O]ur considerations must not be scientific ones. […] And we may not advance any kind of theory. There must not be anything hypothetical in our considerations. All *explanation* must disappear, and description alone must take its place. And this description gets its light—that is to say, its purpose—from the philosophical problems. These are, of course, not empirical problems; but they are solved through an insight into the workings of our language, and that in such a way that these workings are recognized—*despite* an urge to misunderstand them. The problems are solved, not by coming up with new discoveries, but by assembling what we have long been familiar with. (*PI* § 109)

This methodology has both a positive and a negative aspect. On the positive side, Wittgenstein argues that "the task of philosophy" is "to clarify the use of our language" (*PG* 115). On the negative side, instead of trying to solve problems of philosophy, the methodology "sheds light on our problem by clearing misunderstandings away"—primarily misunderstandings "concerning the use of words" (*PI* § 90). When this happens, philosophical problems dissipate (*PI* § 119). Indeed, the negative and positive tasks of Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology are intertwined, for aiming at "*complete* clarity […] simply means that the philosophical problems should *completely* disappear" (*PI* § 133).[3] So the use of a surveyable representation is such that "by assembling what we have long been familiar with," as Wittgenstein puts it in *PI* § 109, we attain a (*non*-explanation-based) understanding, which makes philosophical problems disappear.

As Baker (2004b, 42) notes, a surveyable representation can have non-grammatical subject-matters, such as "the morphology of plants, the classification of animals, religious ceremonies, or magical rites," and so it "is not a pleonasm to speak of 'a [surveyable] representation *of grammar*'."

The most detailed discussion of a surveyable representation that is not "of grammar" occurs in the "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*." In these remarks, Wittgenstein argues that "the very idea of wanting to explain a practice […] seems wrong" and criticizes Frazer's attempts at providing causal-hypothetical explanations of the origins of practices (*GB* 119 & 123). In place of the explanation, what we are really interested in is a *description*: "One must only correctly piece together what one *knows*, without adding anything, and the satisfaction being sought through the explanation follows of itself […] Here one can *describe* and say: this is what human life is like" (*GB* 121). This methodology allows one "to see the data in their relation to one another and to embrace them in a general picture" (*GB* 131) or, put differently, in a "surveyable representation":

> "And so the chorus points to a secret law" one feels like saying to Frazer's collection of facts. I *can* represent this law […] by means of the arrangement of its factual content alone, in a '*perspicuous'* [surveyable] representation [*in einer 'übersichtlichen' Darstellung*]. The concept of perspicuous representation is of fundamental importance for us. It denotes the form of our representation, the way we see things. (A kind of 'World-view' […].) This perspicuous representation brings about the understanding which consists precisely in the fact that we "see the connections". Hence the importance of finding *connecting links*. (*GB* 133)

Wittgenstein explains the workings of the "connecting links" as doing nothing more than directing our attention to "the similarity, the relatedness, of the *facts*" (*GB* 133). In his discussion of the "Beltane Festival," Wittgenstein argues that the relevant facts include, for example, "the kind of people who take part in it, their behavior at other times, that is, their character; the kind of games which they otherwise play" (*GB* 145). Furthermore, a given practice should be seen against a background of similar and related practices: "What satisfies my puzzlement about Beltane, is … simply describing lots of things more or less like Beltane" (*MWL II* 352). When we see the relatedness of these facts, we perceive "the inner nature of the modern practice itself" (*GB* 145),

its meaning, without reference to a hypothesis about its origins; a ritual, Wittgenstein argues, can have "its own complex of feelings without being connected with an ancient practice" (*AWL* 33).

As I noted in the introduction, Wittgenstein made analogies between Frazer's anthropological phenomena and aesthetic phenomena.[4] Moreover, while he does not use the term "surveyable representation" in connection with his discussion of aesthetics, Wittgenstein does mention a "resemblance between a philosophical investigation" and "one in aesthetics" (*CV* 29e), in both of which an "answer to a puzzle is to make a synopsis possible" (*MWL II* 358). Indeed, Wittgenstein's remarks on aesthetics resemble those on Frazer's *Golden Bough* (and those on his philosophical methodology); thus, there is good reason to assume that we are entitled to talk of a surveyable representation in aesthetics. In particular, in several lectures and conversations, he argues against the idea of a "science" of aesthetics and clarifies that aesthetics is not a branch of psychology and has nothing to do with psychological experiments. This is so because, while in psychology we are interested in causal connections, the aesthetic puzzle we feel when asked what makes something beautiful is not removed by providing causal-hypothetical explanations in terms of, for example, mechanisms in the brain or general psychological laws. More generally, in aesthetics one should reject any form of explanation, hypothesis, or theory; rather, aesthetics is "descriptive" in nature (*LC* 11, 17, & 20; *AWL* 38-39; *MWL II* 342 & 357; *WVC* 116).

Aesthetic descriptions involve "certain comparisons—grouping together of certain cases," for example, "by an arrangement of certain musical figures, comparing their effect on us," which allows us "to solve aesthetic puzzlements" (*LC* 20 & 29). Thus, by showing a person a lot of pieces by artist *X* and drawing her attention to certain features, including pertinent comparisons between artist *X* and artist *Y* (*MWL II* 350-351), she sees the aesthetic solution: "To tell a person 'This is the climax' is like saying 'This is the man in the puzzle picture'. Our attention is drawn to a certain

feature, and from that point forward we see that feature" (*AWL* 38-39). Wittgenstein calls the descriptions in question "reasons" and describes them as a form of "justification" (*MWL II* 350-351). Aesthetic reasons are *not* subjective interpretations of a work of art—they are not about a given spectator's subjective impressions or her feelings of agreeableness or satisfaction (*MWL II* 340-350)—but aid us in perceiving the meaning of a work of art, in understanding "what it all means'" (*PI* § 527).[5]

I wish to argue that Wittgenstein entertained the idea of another surveyable representation that is not "of grammar" but rather one of psychological—and, more specifically, psychoanalytic—facts. As was the case in his discussion of aesthetics, Wittgenstein does not explicitly use the term "surveyable representation" in connection with psychoanalysis. But apart from the aforementioned analogies between rituals, aesthetics, and psychoanalysis, there are additional comments that suggest that Wittgenstein entertained the possibility that the psychoanalytic project can provide a surveyable representation. In particular, not only was Wittgenstein skeptical of the claim that psychoanalysis provides explanations or hypotheses (*MWL II* 356-357; *AWL* 39-40; *LC* 25 & 44), but also, when discussing the idea of a "sub-conscious train of thought" in connection with psychoanalysis, he explicitly speaks of a "a neat way of representation" that "enables you to overlook [gain a synoptic view of] a system at a glance" (*MWL II* 357).[6] Wittgenstein is even clearer in the following:

> Freud's discoveries are in fact merely of striking ways of expressing certain facts, & seeing them in a system: <u>not</u> causal explanations.… What Freud says <u>sounds</u> as if it were science, but it is in fact a wonderful representation.… What strikes you in Freud, the enormous field of psychological facts which he arranges.… There are so many cases in which one can ask: How far is this [one of Freud's claims] a hypothesis? How far a good way of representing a fact? On this Freud is constantly unclear." (*MWL II* 363 & 365; also *AWL* 40)[7]

Therefore, it is likely that Wittgenstein entertained the possibility that, by making pertinent comparisons, we attain a synopsis of the psychological facts of interest in a surveyable representation; we then see their meaning (or meanings) in a way that is akin to perceiving the inner nature of a ritual or an aesthetic solution.

Note that I am arguing that there is a case to be made that Freud's psychoanalytic project can make use of the notion of a surveyable representation, *if* this project is understood correctly (by Wittgenstein's lights), that is, as descriptive in nature, and not as part of the inference-based, hypothesis-advancing scientific *Weltanschauung*, which is how Freud (1960, 177-78; 1964a, 158; 1964b, 196-97) understood it. Of course, Wittgenstein's new conceptualization of psychoanalysis requires further refinement of Freud's understanding of his own project. Thus, while Freud believed that psychoanalysis advances hypotheses regarding unconscious causes of psychological phenomena,[8] Wittgenstein—who (a) maintained that when one is making a causal claim one is advancing a hypothesis (*AWL* 39; *BB* 15 & 88; *VW* 107), and (b) was, as noted, skeptical that Freud provided hypotheses about the unconscious—argues that Freud did not discover unconscious causes but rather *reasons* for psychological phenomena (*AWL* 39-40; *MWL II* 360-365): while one *conjectures* a cause and investigates it experimentally, one can *know* first-personally the reason for one's action; indeed, a reason is correct if the agent agrees with the proposed reason-claim (*BB* 15; *AWL* 5; *MWL II* 209-210; *VW* 107-113; *LC* 21).

It might help us appreciate what Wittgenstein has in mind by considering a specific example. Freud believed in the importance of causal explanation in two senses: symptoms are causally determined by unconscious phenomena—hidden causes within a real existent (1953, 612) or as part of a theoretical entity (1959, 32-33) called "the unconscious"—which are causally determined, in turn, by occurrences in early childhood. If, for example, a patient has certain obsessive thoughts

related to fear of his father dying, the unconscious cause might actually be a fantasy to kill his father which, in turn, was caused by an unsuccessful repression of the Oedipus complex in early childhood. However, if we understand these phenomena in the descriptive context of a surveyable representation, which provides a way to see meanings inherent in the phenomena by making pertinent comparisons, this Freudian conceptualization needs to change in two ways.

First, the fantasy of killing the father is not a hidden cause in a concealed chamber within the mind. Rather, it is a fantasy that structures the patient's psychic life and is expressed in his behavior. This does not mean that the fantasy is immediately accessible to the patient or the analyst, much in the same way that the inner nature of a festival or an aesthetic solution in a work of art is not immediately accessible: work needs to be done in the form of making pertinent comparisons, such as relating the patient's symptoms to a web of other psychological meanings, until the fantasy becomes perspicuous and we see it.

Second, as with Frazer's rituals, the discovery of the initial cause of the currently observed phenomenon in the distant past (unsuccessful repression of the Oedipus complex in early childhood) is not what impresses us, for it might be the case that nothing of the original meanings remains in the phenomenon in its present-day form, as Wittgenstein puts the point in connection with Frazer's *Golden Bough* (*GB* 145). Of course, it might be that something like the Oedipus complex *is* part of the meaning of the fantasy in its current form and that this is the reason why it impresses us. However, if this is so, there is no need to form hypotheses about what happened in early childhood, but instead to make pertinent comparisons, so that this aspect of the fantasy is made perspicuous. Finally, psychoanalysis may find patterns of meanings shared by many or all individuals. But this is no different than saying that the inner nature of rituals or aesthetic solutions have features that are shared by many, perhaps even all, rituals or works of art.[9]

**3. Two Puzzles and a Solution**

Postulating a surveyable representation of certain psychological facts has important interpretative consequences for Wittgenstein's philosophy. In particular, this can explain two puzzling aspects of his views: (a) his admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud; (b) his "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology. Let me start with point (a). Wittgenstein's attitude toward Freud was ambivalent.[10] On the one hand, he made derogatory comments about Freud: for example, that "wisdom is something I never would expect from Freud" and that neither Freud nor his writing is "great" (*LC* 41; *CV* 53e & 99e).[11] This negative attitude can be explained by the fact that Wittgenstein believed that both Freud and he suffered from a form of non-original "Jewish reproductive thinking," or, more generally, that both thinkers shared a form of limited "originality that belongs to the soil, not the seed" (*CV* 16e & 42e).[12] On the other hand, Wittgenstein "admired Freud for the observations and suggestions in his writings; for 'having something to say'," noting that "Freud was one of the few authors … worth reading," that he was "greatly impressed" on first reading Freud, and that Freud is "extraordinary" (*LC* 41, *MWM* 100; also *DCW* 151).

Wittgenstein also thought that there was an affinity between himself and the father of psychoanalysis, speaking of himself as "a disciple of Freud" and "a follower of Freud" (*LC* 41). Indeed, Wittgenstein notes that his philosophical method "resembles psychoanalysis" in the sense that "a simile at work in the unconscious is made harmless by being articulated," an analogy that is "certainly no coincidence" (*VW* 69-71; also *PG* 381-382.).[13] Several explanations have been given for Wittgenstein's admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud, such as his indebtedness to Freud "for the vision of how a problem could … be taken up by the roots and put into a quite new way of thinking" (McGuinness 1982, 39); or Wittgenstein's thought of becoming a psychiatrist and his belief that a similar talent is needed for philosophy and psychoanalysis

(Monk 1990, 356-357). These explanations do not, however, account for the fact that Wittgenstein's philosophical project is, on the face of it, substantially different from Freud's psychoanalytic project: while the psychoanalytic project, as *Freud* understands it, is based on causal-hypothetical explanations pertaining to a hidden unconscious, Wittgenstein's philosophical project is based on non-causal, non-hypothetical, non-explanatory descriptions of what is already open to view. Given this *prima facie* difference between their projects, a different explanation is needed for Wittgenstein's admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud.

The second puzzling aspect involves Wittgenstein's views on psychology. Wittgenstein applied his conceptual, descriptive project to the field of psychology, and his later writings abound with attempts to delineate a grammar of psychological concepts.[14] This conceptual investigation (philosophy of psychology) is contrasted by Wittgenstein himself with an empirical, explanatory investigation of the mental (empirical psychology):

> Supposing we tried to construct a mind-model as a result of psychological investigations, a model which, as we should say, would explain the action of the mind. This model would be part of a psychological theory in the way in which a mechanical model of the ether can be part of a theory of electricity [...] But this aspect of the mind does not interest us. The problems which it may set are psychological problems, and the method of their solution is that of natural science […] And when we are worried about the nature of thinking, the puzzlement which we wrongly interpret to be one about the nature of a medium is a puzzlement caused by the mystifying use of our language. (*BB* 6)

Wittgenstein not only dealt primarily with the conceptual investigation of the mental, he also thought that there was a more pressing need for this type of investigation. He maintained that psychology is burdened with "conceptual confusion," and he did not believe that experimental methods of psychology would help answer the psychological questions that trouble us (*PPF* § 371). Nevertheless, Wittgenstein thought that people are attracted to the idea of explaining and cannot easily let go of their need to find explanations, even when there are no further explanations

10

to be found; in such cases one can only assert "*This* is how we think. *This* is how we act. *This* is how we talk about it," and one should be satisfied with a "description" – that is, with giving the matter "the right place in our considerations" (*Z* §§ 309 & 314).

Fogelin (1987, 205-210) has criticized Wittgenstein for attacking the need for explanations not only within the philosophy of psychology but within empirical psychology as well. He calls Wittgenstein's attitude to psychology a "know-nothing approach," meaning an attitude whereby no explanations are required. This attitude, so Fogelin argues, may be suitable for philosophical investigations, since in philosophy there are no *facts* that require explanation. However, empirical inquiries are a different story, and it seems that Wittgenstein's famous spade is turned by them after barely scratching the surface. Fogelin, like Wittgenstein in the passage just cited from *The Blue Book*, divides the philosophy of psychology from empirical psychology and claims that Wittgenstein limited the scope of the latter unjustifiably. And it seems, at least *prima facie*, that Wittgenstein is indeed guilty of this charge: for example, he discusses phenomena of sight and asks why there must be a physiological explanation for our psychological reactions upon seeing objects, suggesting that we do no explaining at all in such cases (*Z* § 614). Thus, we need an explanation for Wittgenstein's seemingly "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology as distinct from philosophy of psychology.

The fact that Wittgenstein entertained the possibility of the psychoanalytic project providing a surveyable representation can explain his admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud: after all, Wittgenstein believed that his own philosophical project, including the part that pertains specifically to psychology, also involves the attainment of a surveyable representation. In other words, both Wittgenstein and Freud—when the latter's project is understood *correctly*—can be understood as engaging in the same type of descriptive enterprise: providing a synopsis of the

phenomena under consideration in a manner that allows us to see their "inner nature" (where "inner nature" means, again, "something that already lies open to view" (*PI* § 92)).[15] However, when it comes to psychology, Wittgenstein's and Freud's surveyable representations have different subject matters: while Wittgenstein's project deals with the grammar of psychological concepts, Freud's project is concerned with psychological facts that are not exclusively grammatical in nature.

Importantly, this difference can explain Wittgenstein's "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology. Since, according to Wittgenstein's understanding of psychoanalysis, the psychoanalytic project provides a surveyable representation of psychological facts and not of concepts—recall his talk of Freud's discoveries "expressing certain facts, & seeing them in a system" and "the enormous field of psychological facts which [Freud] arranges"—it does not belong to the philosophy of psychology, which, as we saw, is a conceptual investigation. However, psychoanalysis does not belong to empirical psychology either, since, according to Wittgenstein himself, while empirical psychology offers hypothetical explanations—"a hypothesis […] is confirmed or rejected […] by empirical science" (*LWL* 66)—psychoanalysis, when understood correctly, does not offer explanations or hypotheses. Therefore, if we understand the psychoanalytic project as providing a surveyable representation, it would serve as a *third* option in addition to philosophy of psychology and empirical psychology: besides a descriptive project of psychological concepts and an explanatory-hypothetical project of psychological facts, Wittgenstein believed that there is a *descriptive* project of psychological *facts*. If this is so, then Wittgenstein had good reason to restrict the realm of explanations of psychological facts, for there is another form of investigation, apart from empirical psychology, a non-explanatory, non-hypothetical investigation appropriate for understanding certain types of psychological facts. This descriptive investigation—which makes use of a surveyable representation to provide a synopsis

of psychological facts and thus reveals their meaning(s)—may at times be even *more* appropriate than what we call "empirical psychology": as is the case, for example, with the type of phenomena of interest to Freud.

## 4. Objections and Replies

A reader familiar with Wittgenstein's remarks on Freud and psychoanalysis might argue that I have painted too rosy a picture of Wittgenstein's attitude to the psychoanalytic project and raise several objections. According to the first objection, a closer examination of Wittgenstein's critique of psychoanalytic explanations might seem to suggest that his criticism runs deeper than mere dissatisfaction with their explanatory status. Wittgenstein believed that Freud's explanations have a corrupting influence: "Freud's fanciful pseudo-explanations (just because they are so brilliant) performed a disservice. (Now every ass has them within reach for 'explaining' symptoms of illness with their help)" (*CV* 62e-63e). Indeed, these explanations have had a dangerous influence on Western culture: Wittgenstein "thought the enormous influence of psychoanalysis in Europe and America was harmful—'although it will take a long time before we lose our subservience to it'" (*LC* 41). He further believed that people are attracted to psychoanalytic 'explanations' for several reasons.

First, and quite generally, "the picture of people having subconscious thoughts has a charm. The idea of an underworld, a secret cellar. Something hidden, uncanny" (*LC* 25). Second, people are inclined to accept psychoanalytic explanations precisely because, as Freud himself emphasized, they are so strongly disinclined to accept them (*LC* 43). In particular, "there may be strong prejudices against uncovering something nasty, but sometimes it is infinitely more *attractive* than it is repulsive" (*MWM* 101; also *LC* 24-25). Third, psychoanalytic explanations

make it "easier" for people "to go certain ways: it makes certain ways of behaving and thinking natural for them"; for example, "all anxiety is a repetition of the anxiety of the birth trauma," which has "the attractiveness of a mythology," as well as "the notion of an '*Urszene*,'" which "has the attractiveness of giving a sort of tragic pattern to one's life." According to such "mythological explanations," as Wittgenstein puts it, "this is all a repetition of something that has happened before," and when people accept such explanations, certain things "seem much clearer and easier for them" (*LC* 43-45 & 51; also *MWL II* 354).

Given Wittgenstein's comments about psychoanalytic explanations, it is perhaps not surprising that some commentators have argued that Wittgenstein believed that Freudian theory was a mere "mythology" (Bouveresse 1995, xix & Levy 1996, 10). However, Wittgenstein aimed his criticisms of psychoanalytic explanations at cautioning us about accepting such explanations *unreflectively*. Accordingly, after Wittgenstein mentions the dangerous influence that psychoanalytic explanations have had on Western culture, he adds that "to learn from Freud you have to be critical; and psychoanalysis generally prevents this" (*LC* 41). He wrote similar things to Malcolm, noting that "unless you think *very* clearly psycho-analysis is a dangerous & a foul practice, & it's done no end of harm &, comparatively, very little good;" but thinking clearly about psychoanalysis is difficult precisely because "the charm of the subject is so great that you may easily be fooled" (*MWM* 100-101). Thus, Wittgenstein was calling on us to "have a very strong and keen and persistent criticism in order to recognize and see through the mythology that is offered or imposed on one [in analysis]," but he was also "trying to separate what is valuable in Freud from that 'way of thinking' which he wanted to combat" (*LC* 41 & 52).

The part of psychoanalysis that Wittgenstein found valuable was, I believe, the surveyable representation that it could provide for arranging psychological phenomena and allowing us to see

their meaning. It is only when we accept psychoanalytic explanations in an unreflective way, that we end up with psychoanalytic "pseudo-explanations" or a psychoanalytic "mythology." Indeed, Wittgenstein told Bouwsma that both Freud's and his own teachings "had done more bad than good," because people did not know how to use these teachings "soberly" but rather treated them like a "formula." He added that many people become fascinated with a thinker's way of thinking, yet they end up hearing "only a chapter in the long process of [the thinker's thought]" and cannot go further with this way of thinking. So they "may use what they have heard as a rigamarole or they may give up and feel cheated. They cannot carry on. And the teacher is stuck. He fails." It is in this sense that Freud "did incalculable harm, much as [Wittgenstein] himself has done" (*BWC* 11-12 & 36). Therefore, the danger in Freud's work is similar to the danger inherent in Wittgenstein's own work: namely, that many people tend to pick up just part of his teachings and then use them like formulas.[16]

According to the second objection, Wittgenstein was critical of Freud's notion of the *unconscious* in a way that may render my talk of a surveyable representation of psychological facts too charitable. For example, he notes that "it is a way of speaking to say the reason was subconscious" and "new regions of the soul have not been discovered" (*AWL* 40; also *MWL II* 361). Indeed, he sometimes describes unconscious thoughts and volitions in terms of a "new terminology" or "new convention" that "can at any time be retranslated into ordinary language," and he emphasizes that "a stupendous discovery" has not been made (*BB* 22-23). It seems that this was the heart of the matter:

> The idea of there being unconscious thoughts has revolted many people. Others again have said that these were wrong in supposing that there could only be conscious thoughts, and that psychoanalysis had discovered unconscious ones. The objectors to unconscious thought did not see that they were not objecting to the newly discovered psychological reactions, but to the way in which they were described. The psychoanalysts on the other

15

hand were misled by their own way of expression into thinking that they had done more than discover new psychological reactions; that they had, in a sense, discovered conscious thoughts which were unconscious. (*BB* 57; also *VW* 3-5, *MWL II* 290)

Thus, we are urged to distinguish between: (a) the discovery of new psychological reactions; (b) the way in which certain psychological reactions are described; (c) the discovery of something more significant than new psychological reactions (conscious thoughts which are unconscious). Freud was mistaken in arguing for (c), when he should have argued for a combination of (a) and (b).

Most commentators have argued that Wittgenstein viewed the Freudian unconscious as a mere *"façon de parler"* and that "the language of the unconscious […] says nothing about the facts involved, which may in principle be retranscribed in traditional notation" (Bouveresse 1995, 27 & 30; also Cioffi 1969, 191; Livingstone Smith 1999, 132-136; McGuinness 1982, 38). I believe that these interpretations understate Wittgenstein's understanding of the achievement inherent in Freud's psychoanalytic project, when this project is understood correctly. While Wittgenstein did not accept Freud's idea of an unconscious as a hidden chamber in the mind, whose contents explain our conscious mental life in causal-hypothetical terms, he did think that there is an interesting connection between the discovery of certain psychological reactions and the way in which they are described—claims (a) and (b)—when these are presented in a surveyable representation. In my view, Wittgenstein suggests that by describing psychological reactions in pertinent ways—that is, by making pertinent comparisons and attaining a synopsis of the facts—we see certain features of these phenomena in the same way that we see the inner nature of a ritual or an aesthetic solution. Therefore, the relation between the psychological reactions and the way in which they are described is *not* an arbitrary one.[17]

16

According to the third objection, Wittgenstein was critical of psychoanalytic *treatment*, claiming that "he would not want to undergo what was known as training analysis" and that "it is a very dangerous procedure" that can cause "infinite harm" (*DCW* 151). However, when making these remarks, Wittgenstein also said that "he did not think it right to reveal all one's thoughts to a stranger" (*DCW* 151). Thus, his belief that psychoanalytic treatment does harm can be explained by his general wariness about prying into a person's inner world; as he puts it elsewhere, "Don't play with what lies deep in another person!" (*CV* 26e).

Nevertheless, Wittgenstein also had worries about the Freudian method of free association, which is at the heart of psychoanalytic treatment, as well as about the role of persuasion in psychoanalytic treatment. First, while Freud (1953, 528) believed that unconscious ideas take control of the stream of associations and determine its course, Wittgenstein argues that "what goes on in *freier Einfall* is probably conditioned by a whole host of circumstances" and that there is "no reason for saying that it must be conditioned only by the sort of wish in which the analyst is interested" (*LC* 46-47). Second, Wittgenstein raises the possibility that "if you are led by psycho-analysis to say that really you thought so and so or that really your motive was so and so, this is not a matter of discovery, but of persuasion" (*LC* 27).

However, his worries about both free association and persuasion pertain to a specific issue and are not intended to undermine the psychoanalytic project in its entirety. Moore reports that Wittgenstein said that "there may be many reasons" for a certain action and "not necessarily one predominating" and that, accordingly, we need to combat the idea that "this one thing is the reason" for the action, or that "in the case of each action there is a motive which is the motive" (*MWL II* 326-327; also *AWL* 33-34).[18] Wittgenstein's criticism of free association, in fact, is concerned with this general theme of Freud's discouraging us from seeing multiple possibilities: "If you want to

complete what seems to be a fragment of a picture, you might be advised to … make whatever dash first comes into your mind, without thinking. This might in many cases be very fruitful advice to give. But it would be astonishing if it *always* produced the best results" (*LC* 47).

This observation is related to Wittgenstein's views on persuasion. Sentences of persuasion, according to him, take the form "this is *really* this," which means that "there are certain differences which you have been persuaded to neglect"; this strategy might persuade one that, for example, one has good reason "for *admitting* sex as motive for everything" (*LC* 26-27). So in his talk of persuasion, Wittgenstein merely cautions us about the ease with which we accept the idea that our action is explained by a single motive. Indeed, given the fact that, immediately following his remarks on persuasion in psychoanalysis, Wittgenstein argues that he also engages in persuasion,[19] he does not seem to be opposed to persuasion per se but rather to persuasion that discourages us from seeing multiple possibilities.[20]

## 5. Conclusion

I have argued that Wittgenstein entertained the idea that Freud's psychoanalytic project, when understood correctly, provides a surveyable representation of psychological facts, which allowed me to offer an explanation of Wittgenstein's admiration for and self-perceived affinity to Freud, as well as of his apparent "know-nothing approach" to empirical psychology. It is worth noting, in conclusion, that while I have provided explanations for some of Wittgenstein's *prima facie* puzzling views, I have not defended, more generally, his notion of a surveyable representation or his descriptive methodology. Nevertheless, as my example at the end of section 2 suggests, the application of Wittgenstein's descriptive methodology, including the notion of a surveyable

representation, to psychoanalysis has important consequences for this project; developing these consequences in further detail is, however, beyond the scope of the current paper.[21]

## References and Abbreviation Key

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[*AWL*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2001. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1932-1935: From the Notes of Alice Ambrose & Margaret Macdonald*. Edited by A. Ambrose. New York: Prometheus Books.

[*BB*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1960. *The Blue and Brown Books: Preliminary Studies for the 'Philosophical Investigations*. 2nd edition. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

[*BWC*] Bouwsma, O.K. 1986. *Wittgenstein: Conversations 1949-1951*. Edited by J. L. Craft & R. E. Hustwit. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.

[*CV*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1998. *Culture and Value*. Revised 2nd edition. Edited by G. H. von Wright. Translated by P. Winch. Malden, MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

[*DB*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1997. *Denkbewegungen: Tagebucher 1930-1932, 1936-1937*. Edited by I. Somavilla. Innsbruck: Haymon-Verlag.

[*DCW*] Drury, M. O'C. 1981. "Conversations with Wittgenstein". In *Ludwig Wittgenstein: Personal Recollections*. Edited by R. Rhees. Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 112-189.

[*GB*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1993. "Remarks on Frazer's *Golden Bough*". In *Philosophical Occasions 1912-1951*. Edited by J. Klagge & A. Nordmann. Translated by J. Beversluis. Indianapolis & Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 115-155.

[*LC*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1967. *Lectures & Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*. Edited by C. Barrett. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

[*LWL*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1980. *Wittgenstein's Lectures, Cambridge, 1930-1932: From the Notes of John King and Desmond Lee*. Edited by D. Lee. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

[*MWL I*] Moore, G.E. 1962. "Wittgenstein's Lectures in 1930-1933". In *Philosophical Papers*. New York: Collier Books, 247- 318.

[*MWL II*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2016. *Wittgenstein Lectures, Cambridge 1930-1933: From the Notes of G. E. Moore*. Edited by D. G. Stern, B. Rogers, & G. Citron. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

[*MWM*] Malcolm, Norman. 1984. *Ludwig Wittgenstein: A Memoir*. 2nd edition. London: Oxford University Press.

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[*PG*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1974. *Philosophical Grammar*. Edited by R. Rhees. Translated by A. Kenny. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

[*PI*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2009. *Philosophical Investigations*. Revised 4th edition. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, P. M. S Hacker, & J. Schulte. Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

[*PPF*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 2009. "Philosophy of Psychology – A Fragment." In *Philosophical Investigations*. Revised 4th edition. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, P. M. S Hacker, & J. Schulte. Malden, MA & Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 182-243.

[*RC*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1977. *Remarks on Colour*. Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe. Translated by L. L. McAlister & M. Schättle. Malden MA & Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.

[*VW*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig., & Waismann, Friedrich. 2003. *The Voices of Wittgenstein: The Vienna Circle*. Edited by G. Baker. Translated by G. Baker, M. Mackert, J. Connolly, & V. Politis. London & New York: Routledge.

[*WVC*] Waismann, Friedrich. 1979. *Wittgenstein and the Vienna Circle*. Edited by B. McGuinness. Translated by. J. Schulte & B. McGuinness. New York: Barnes & Noble.

[*Z*] Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1967. *Zettel*. Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe & G.H. von Wright. Translated by G.E.M. Anscombe. Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press.

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**Notes**

[1] This quote summarizes Moore's own impressions from Wittgenstein's Cambridge lectures. The verbatim text of Moore's notes, published recently and referenced as *MWL II* in this paper (see the references for a full list of abbreviations of Wittgenstein's works), strengthens this claim. For example, on May 26th 1933, Wittgenstein started his lecture by discussing the ways in which Freud's psychoanalytic treatment of jokes is similar to an aesthetic investigation; he then made a remark about Frazer's *Golden Bough*, followed by further discussion of aesthetics (*MWL II* 356-357). See also *MWL II* 362 and A*WL* 39 for additional comparisons between Freud's psychoanalytic project—especially his discussion of the nature of jokes—and aesthetic investigations in particular.

[2] The German "*übersichtliche Darstellung*," which used to be translated as "perspicuous representation," is now translated as "surveyable representation" in the latest (revised 4th) edition of *Philosophical Investigations*. The importance of the distinction between psychological facts and psychological concepts is clarified in section 3.

[3] For an excellent discussion of the negative and positive sides of Wittgenstein's philosophical methodology and the close relation between them, see Kenny (1982). It is worth noting that commentators have disagreed about the clarity that a surveyable representation is supposed to attain. For an overview of the debate, see, for example, Martin (2016).

[4] Moore further records that when Wittgenstein discussed Frazer's *Golden Bough*, he said in connection with the "Beltane Festival" that "in this case you can observe the same thing being puzzling, as in an aesthetic question. You ask: Why does this thing impress us so much?" (*MWL II* 343).

[5] I provide a more detailed account of the topics in the first six paragraphs of this section in Ben-Moshe (2021). The material in these paragraphs is taken, for the most part, from that other paper.

[6] As the editors note, Wittgenstein is using "overlook" as a literal translation of the verb *"übersehen,"* which is most often translated as "survey" or "overview," and hence should be understood to mean "gain a synoptic view" (*MWL II* 353).

[7] The use of "merely" should not be taken as a sign of disrespect for Freud's achievement. Immediately before making this claim, Wittgenstein discusses an instance of a scientific investigation that is not concerned with causal connections and concludes that it is "merely a mathematical transformation. Copernicus's view was in fact this" (*MWL II* 363). Indeed, Wittgenstein himself draws analogies between aesthetics and mathematics (*MWL II* 358 & *AWL* 38).

[8] For an excellent discussion of Freud's widespread postulation of hypotheses about unconscious causes of psychological phenomena, see Grünbaum (1984).

[9] This understanding of psychoanalysis resembles, *to some extent*, the hermeneutic understanding, championed by Habermas (1971) and Ricoeur (1970 & 1981), according to which psychoanalysis deals with hidden *meanings* of – but not with unconscious *causes* of – symptoms, dreams, and so forth. However, as Grünbaum (1984, 60) argues, "by abjuring causal claims, the radical hermeneutician forsakes not only the etiologic rationale for the presumed therapeuticity of lifting repressions, but also the causal attribution of such therapeutic efficacy. On this account, why should any troubled patient go to an analyst at all?" Hence, Wittgenstein's conceptualization of the psychoanalytic project would require us to reconceive the nature of psychoanalytic treatment, a topic that is beyond the scope of this paper.

[10] The ambivalence is perhaps best summarized in this remark: "Freud is certainly very often wrong and as for his character he is surely a pig or something similar, but there is a great deal in what he says. And the same is true of me. There is a *lot* in what I say" (*DB* 21, my translation).

[11] Wittgenstein might have also believed that, much like Freud's work, his own work was not "great" (*MWM* 51).

[12] The first remark is from 1931 and the second from 1939-1940. As Monk (1990, 280) notes, remarks about the "Jewishness" of Freud's and Wittgenstein's thought did not appear after 1931.

[13] Others have reported that while Wittgenstein talked about philosophy "as in certain ways like psychoanalysis," he did so "in the same way in which he might say that it was like a hundred other things" (*BWC* 36), or that he "explicitly attack[ed] […] as based on a confusion" the suggestion that his conception of philosophy is a form of psychoanalysis, saying "they are different techniques" (*MWM* 48). Nevertheless, Wittgenstein did indeed conceive of philosophy as a form of therapy (*PI* § 133 & § 255), and one can find him claiming that his philosophical technique is similar to the psychoanalytic technique (*CV* 24e-25e & *P* 165). See Baker (2004a & 2004c) for discussions of similarities between Wittgenstein's and Freud's method.

[14] In *Wittgenstein's Philosophy of Psychology*, Budd (1989) discusses Wittgenstein's method of achieving a surveyable representation of psychological concepts via the grammar of psychological concepts.

[15] By the phrase "understood correctly," I am referring to *Wittgenstein's* view about the manner in which psychoanalysis *ought* to be conceptualized (despite how Freud himself understood his project). This observation does not undermine his self-perceived affinity to Freud: psychoanalysis, as it ought to understood (as a descriptive project that provides a surveyable representation of psychological facts) is similar in important respects to philosophical methodology, as it ought to be understood (as a descriptive project that provides a surveyable representation of concepts). I am grateful to an anonymous referee for urging me to clarify this point.

[16] Of course, there is a slight difference: one needs to read Freud critically and not apply his teachings as a formula because *Freud* fails to correctly identify the import of his project, whereas one has to read Wittgenstein carefully and not apply his teachings as a formula because *readers* are apt to do just that.

[17] Even if Wittgenstein was skeptical about an unconscious as Freud conceptualized it, he believed that the human soul has depth, a depth that is amenable to some of Freud's key ideas. For example, Wittgenstein, who claims that "there are thoughts which occur deep within one & thoughts which romp about the surface" (*CV* 48e), also writes that within a child's crying there are "psychic forces, terrible forces" that are "different from anything commonly assumed," namely, "profound rage & pain & lust for destruction" (*CV* 4e). Wittgenstein also seems to have accepted the Freudian idea that drives or instincts have a key role to play in our psyche, arguing that "all great art has primitive human drives as its ground bass," which "gives the melody *depth & power*" (*CV* 43e); and that "even our more refined, more philosophical, scruples have a foundation in instinct" (*CV* 83e).

[18] As an instance of this sort of mistake, Wittgenstein notes, in the context of the abovementioned remarks, Frazer's statement that when primitive people stab an effigy, they believe that they have hurt the person represented: "Only in some cases do they thus entertain a false scientific belief. It <u>may</u> be that it expresses your wish to hurt. Or it <u>may</u> be not even this: It may be that you have an impulse to do it, as when in anger you hit a table" (*MWL II* 326).

[19] Wittgenstein writes, "I very often draw your attention to certain differences…. What I'm doing is also persuasion. If someone says : 'There is not a difference', and I say: 'There is a difference' I am persuading, I am saying 'I don't want you to look at it like that'" (*LC* 27). I am grateful to an anonymous referee for drawing my attention to this point.

[20] In addition to criticisms that I have discussed in this section, Wittgenstein was also critical of Freud's dream theory, questioning, among other things, the ideas that (a) dreams say or symbolize something, (b) one can discover the cause of the dream's contents, (c) the dream has a hidden meaning uncovered by free association, (d) *all* dreams are hidden wish-fulfillments and the *essence* of the dream is wish-fulfillment, and (e) Freud had presented a "theory" of dreams pertaining to wishes that lie beneath the surface (*LC* 44-51; *CV* 50e, 78e-79e, 82e, & 88e-89e; *MWL II* 360 & 365; *Z* § 444; *RC* § 230; *BWC* 59-60; *DCW* 168). However, despite the fact that Freud's dream theory was a key component in the birth of psychoanalysis—especially in *The Interpretation of Dreams*—it is not a key component of his later thought, and psychoanalytic theory can be assessed independently of it. Furthermore, Wittgenstein's criticism of

Freud's dream theory does not undermine the value he saw in the psychoanalytic project, since a surveyable representation of the relevant psychological facts need not include dream material or, alternatively, if it does include such material, it can do so in a manner that avoids criticisms (a) through (e)—dream material could merely aid the analyst in making comparisons in order to attain a synopsis of the relevant psychological facts and see their meaning(s).