

Sub?

What sub?!

Myths of the 'Sub'conscious...

... and theories of the Unconscious

... and nonconscious and ...

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Introduction

My year by year experience is of trainees being sceptical when I speak of there being no such thing as the 'subconscious'. I determined to undertake a little further research in an attempt to clarify - regrettably in some ways, this has resulted in a paper/lecture rather than an experiential, student-centred exercise... So be it!

Definition of terms

When I set out to prepare this, I turned to the index section in many books - psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, psychological. Most books had *no* references *at all* to the 'sub'conscious - *including books by Sigmund Freud himself* - and most of the rest had very few indeed. So what do we mean by the word 'subconscious'? The Concise Oxford Dictionary tells us that the '*subconscious*' is:

of or concerning the part of the mind which is not fully conscious but influences actions et cetera.

Okay... So the 'subconscious' is an influential part of the mind which is *not fully conscious*. Can we make more sense of this by looking up the meaning of '*conscious*'? The O.E.D. tells us:

1 awake and aware of one's surroundings and identity; 2 aware, knowing; 3 (of actions, emotions et cetera) realised or recognised by the doer; intentional; 4 aware of; concerned with - (by the) the conscious mind.

The derivation of the word 'conscious' would seem to be from '*com*' which means 'with' and '*scire*' which means to know - so 'conscious' could be said to mean 'with knowing'. 'Sub' on the other hand means 'under', or 'close to' or 'towards'. Thus 'subconscious' might mean '*beneath* with-knowing' or '*towards* with-knowing' or '*close to* with-knowing'... Let us quickly look at the O.E.D. definition of '*preconscious*' too (I hope that the reason for this will become more clear as you read or listen on) - the O.E.D. says that preconscious means:

1 preceding consciousness; 2 of or associated with a part of the mind below the level of immediate conscious awareness, from which memories and conscious emotions can be recalled.

Now finally '*unconscious*', which according to the O.E.D. means:

not conscious; that part of the mind which is inaccessible to the conscious mind but which affects behaviour, emotions et cetera.

The derivation of 'un' is 'not', or the absence of, or the reverse of... So, literally, 'unconscious' means *the reverse of* with-knowing - or *not* with-knowing...

Without doubt, the word 'subconscious' has passed into common usage (which is why I thought that there might be a value in starting with a 'common usage' dictionary). However, is 'common usage' accurate? Does 'common usage' have any validity in a psychological context? I am mindful, for instance, of how words like 'paranoia' have passed into common usage as meaning 'fear of persecution' when the original meaning was as much to do with 'delusions of grandeur'... So let us turn to the 'Dictionary of Psychology' by Arthur Reber (Penguin, 1985) and see what that has to tell us. Page 740 gives us the following definitions:

subconscious 1 n. In psychoanalytic theory, a level of mind through which material passes on the way toward full consciousness. Note that, in fact, most purists eschew the term as overly popularised and imprecise, preferring the term *preconscious*. 2 n. In more general writings, an information store containing memories that are momentarily outside of awareness but which can easily be brought into consciousness. 3 adj. Characterising information that is not part of one's momentary awareness but which can, given the proper circumstances, be made conscious. 4 adj. Descriptive of information or stimuli that are at the margins of attention, events that one is only vaguely aware of. It should not, in any circumstance, be used as a synonym for unconscious.

So... So if I am to be a 'purist' I will 'eschew' 'common usage' as being *too popular* (!) and *too imprecise*... Hmm... Although this raises many issues for me, my original intent was to look at the term 'subconscious' in a counselling psychology context - and a picture does seem to be emerging of the 'common usage' being imprecise, inaccurate... What other terms and concepts, then, might be more accurate?

unconscious Three distinguishable patterns of usage exist for this term, each with noun and adjective forms; the first is more or less nontechnical, the second is broad and atheoretical, and the third is closely tied in with a particular point of view with respect to theories of the human condition. All three, however, make contact in some way with the general notion of a level of mind lacking in awareness. To wit: 1a n. A state characterised by a lack of awareness, unconsciousness. 1b adj. Characterising an individual in such a state. These meanings when they occur in technical writings are roughly equivalent to those in everyday language. That is, they are used to refer to that pole of the dimension of mental arousal that is exemplified by coma, fainting, deep sleep or the result of general anaesthesia.

Okay...

2a n. A state characterised by a lack of awareness of ongoing internal processes. 2b adj. Characterising those internal processes that proceed in an implicit manner outside of consciousness. While strictly speaking these two usages cover all processes occurring outside of an individual's awareness, the referents are typically the cognitive, emotional and/or motivational processes. Physiological processes, to be sure, take place largely without one's awareness but are rarely intended by users of the term.

Note that in both 1 and 2 above the term *unconscious* was actually never defined. In 1a, 1b it represented *loss* of consciousness; in 2a, 2b it represented that which was *not* conscious. This kind of lexicographic trickery never really solves problems;

Hmmm... I thought of Carl Rogers here, and what he had to say about *organismic valuing*, the psychological processes of *denial* and *distortion*, theories around *pre-perception* and *subception* and...

I'll return to Carl Rogers later. Back to Reber's definitions:

3a n. In the depth psychologies, especially psychoanalysis, a domain of the psyche encompassing the repressed id functions, the primitive impulses and desires, the memories, images and wishes that are too anxiety-provoking to be accepted into consciousness. **3b** adj. Characterising these primordial, repressed desires, memories and images. Note that the unconscious (3a) is assumed to be populated by two varieties of psychic entities, those that were once conscious but had been exiled from awareness and those that were never in consciousness. Distinguish from preconscious, which is the domain of the mind whose components are not momentarily a part of one's consciousness but which may be retrieved by a simple exercise of memory. Note that Freud referred to sense 3 here as the *dynamic unconscious*, owing to the actions of repression, and often used the term *descriptive unconscious* for the *preconscious* - causing no end of confusion (page 799).

Finally for definitions, let us take a quick look at 'preconscious' - the term Freud used to mean what 'common usage' deems to be the 'subconscious' - allegedly!

preconscious A psychoanalytic term that refers to knowledge, emotions, images et cetera which are not momentarily in consciousness but which are easily accessible. Sometimes called the *descriptive unconscious* or the *foreconscious*; distinguish from *unconscious* and compare with *subconscious* (page 565).

I struggle with some of the assertions within these definitions. It is my experience, for instance, that when I hear the word 'subconscious' in 'common usage' the meaning is more akin to definition three of 'unconscious' above and *not* the definition of 'preconscious'. It seems to me that when people speak of the 'subconscious' in everyday life they are referring to that deep dark place from whence dreams and especially nightmares originate - and so on. They are in my experience not speaking of a 'layer of the mind *just* beneath conscious', they are talking about the pits and the deep, deep depths... Nevertheless, let me attempt a summary of what we have so far - a picture is emerging of...

Within the structure or psyche of a human being, there may be a 'subconscious', an 'unconscious', a 'preconscious' and... consciousness. Of these, being conscious is reasonably clearly defined, whereas all of the others are defined, it seems, in terms of being *not* conscious, or being 'beneath' consciousness, or 'before' ('pre') consciousness, or... We are advised by Arthur Reber to think in terms of the *preconscious* rather than the *subconscious* - yet if we look at his definition of preconscious it would not seem to be the same as the definition of subconscious which has passed into common usage... Given that anything other than consciousness seems to be defined in terms of what it is *not* (and indeed the *not known* or *before known* can only *be known* when or if it passes into consciousness!), and given the lack of clarity of definition, I move towards a belief that within the context of counselling psychology that

the word 'subconscious' is of little or no value at all...

Sigmund Freud

There is a popular myth that the word (or indeed the concept) of the subconscious stems from Sigmund Freud and is prevalent within psychoanalysis and other allied approaches. Why 'myth'? A closer look at Freud and some of his followers may serve to help us understand Freud's theories around the structure of the human mind:

Initially through listening to his patients free-associate, Freud formulated a theory of the unconscious. Sigmund described the mind as being like an iceberg, with the vast majority submerged (or repressed). He believed that unconscious forces only enter the mind in a disguised fashion, hence dream analysis, free-association, and so on, as ways of trying to discover something about this 'alien, uncharted territory'...

Freud further theorised about the structure of the mind, proposing that the *Ego* is predominantly conscious, the *Superego* both conscious and unconscious, the *Id* entirely unconscious. The *Id* includes such things as the 'Libido' and is driven by the pleasure principle and immediate gratification - and it cannot tolerate tension. There is no reason within the *Id*, no logic, no ethical values. Freud stated that only the *Id* is present at birth.

In 'Psychology: An Introduction' by Hayes and Orrell (Longman, 1987 - there are no references to 'sub'conscious...) we are informed (page 203) that:

Freud developed a model of the human mind as being like an iceberg, with most of it hidden beneath the surface. The part of the mind which we are aware of he called the **conscious** mind. We also have memories and thoughts which are temporarily forgotten, but which can be brought to consciousness if necessary: the **preconscious** mind. Buried below these, Freud thought, was a deeper layer of the mind, which never came to consciousness: the **unconscious**. It was this part of the human psyche which kept those buried conflicts and traumas which had been laid down in earlier life. Although we were not aware of it, it would influence our behaviour and our emotions, often causing severe disturbance, such as hysteria.

Please note that it is the "*memories and thoughts which are temporarily forgotten, but which can be brought to consciousness if necessary*" - the **preconscious** mind - that is closest to the *psychological* notion of the 'subconscious' - we shall as purists, of course - eschew the term!

Psychoanalytic Characteristics of the Unconscious

In 'Sigmund Freud, Life and Work' Volume Two, by Ernest Jones (Hogarth, 1958 - in which there is only one reference to 'sub'conscious in the entire work and that relates to the work of Wundt, at whom Freud poked fun), we learn about characteristics of the unconscious: It is absolute - there is no negation, no doubt, no degree of certainty... The unconscious is instinctive. Characteristics of the unconscious include (page 362):

- (1) There is no sense of contradiction within the unconscious, opposite ideas exist happily side by side;
- (2) Condensation of ideas and displacement of affect occurs freely, there are no inhibitions within the unconscious;
- (3) There is no conception of time within the unconscious (ideas and impulses 'telescope together') - only the present exists;

- (4) There is no relation between the unconscious and outer reality.

Turning to 'Psychodynamic Counselling In Action' by Michael Jacobs (Sage, 1988 - there are again no references to the 'sub'conscious), on pages 8-10 we find:

Freud distinguished between mental activity which is conscious (that is, what we are currently thinking and feeling); that which is not conscious but easily becomes so, such as a memory of a fact, a feeling or an event (Freud called this the 'preconscious') and "mental processes or mental material which have no easy access to consciousness, but which must be inferred, discovered and translated into conscious form" (quote from 'An Outline Of Psychoanalysis', Freud, 1949); it was for this category that Freud reserved the name 'the unconscious'.

The term is not original, because it was a concept current in some of the literature and philosophy of the day. Perhaps Freud gave more substance to the term, through his determination to show the reality of unconscious material. It was in fact hypnosis which first alerted Freud to the influence of the unconscious, since he found that certain memories seemed accessible only to this particular form of suggestion... (long since abandoned in psychodynamic practice).

Please note here that in his "determination to show the reality of the unconscious", Sigmund believed that it was only a matter of time before the *physical structures* of Id, Ego and Superego were located. In terms of the aims of psychoanalysis, Freud said "Where Id was, there shall Ego be"... In other words, *making the unconscious conscious* could be seen as a primary objective of psychoanalysis/psychodynamic counselling.

The 'unconscious' is, by definition, not conscious. It is therefore unknowable. This makes it a difficult concept to picture, since what was unconscious is only seen when it is no longer unconscious!

Again, we seem to encounter the phenomenon of defining and knowing the 'unconscious' by what it is not...

... although some people may remember events and situations quite accurately, they are not always conscious of the feelings which they then experienced; as if those feelings were not allowed to surface at the time, but were submerged, or 'repressed'... Repression frequently leads to feelings and thoughts being denied in the present as well as in the past.

Hmmm... Freud submerging, repressing and denying - Carl Rogers denying and distorting... Again: We'll return to Carl later.

There is yet another sense in which the 'unconscious' can be understood. If I point out to someone how they are reacting, they may not realise it until I make the observation. They are not conscious of what they are doing, or saying... they remain unconscious (unknowing, unseeing) of themselves. There is no need to mystify the term 'unconscious'. It is a useful image with which to describe certain phenomena, and even to conceptualise the dynamics of the psyche, in which some feelings, certain ideas and even whole experiences appear to be pushed into hiding, because they are too threatening or too painful for the conscious self to acknowledge or experience at the time...

I find myself struggling somewhat again: The unconscious is defined in terms of what it is not, can only be seen when it has become something it is not (i.e. conscious), is unknowable and a difficult concept to picture - yet there is no need to mystify the term...

... Many of the psychodynamic terms can be more fully understood and appreciated if they can be seen as much as metaphors as literal statements...

... The unconscious is one of those partially metaphorical images which psychodynamic thought makes considerable use of, in its attempt to make sense of experience. Whether or not the unconscious exists is a somewhat fruitless argument...

Aha! If we return to the original theme of the 'myth' of the subconscious/unconscious, we now discover that whether or not there is any such thing as subconscious/unconscious is a "fruitless argument"! Freud believed that these structures physiologically existed within the mind and would soon be found - a century of searching has failed to come up with one shred of evidence... His modern day followers tend to believe something more along the lines of:

... The diagrams which Freud originally sketched, in his attempt to illustrate the workings of the conscious and unconscious, and of the Id, Ego and Super-ego are of limited value, serving more as crude pictures of the relationship between conscious and unconscious functions within the psyche. They describe, in quasi-scientific terms, which may therefore be deceptive, (a) type of psychological experience... the sense of there being more than one person within the self; the feeling that there is 'a place' in the mind, to which unpleasant or unacceptable memories, feelings and fantasies are banished; or that the psyche sometimes seems a kind of 'prison' from which these painful feelings and memories crave release. Neither is it unusual to feel that we sometimes act less freely than we wish, as if influenced by some other deep aspect deep within the self.

Okay... I can see how some of my experiencing might fit into this kind of picture... Is a theory of the 'unconscious' the only theory that makes sense of my experiencing?

A More Critical Look at Freud and the Unconscious

In 'Psychology: Science, Behaviour and Life' by Robert Crooks and Jean Stein (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1991 - there are again no references to 'subconscious' in the index.) is written:

Many of Freud's views, particularly his belief that sexual urges were powerful energisers of human behaviour, shocked both professionals and lay-people. His emphasis on the *unconscious mind*, with its irrational urges and drives beyond the control of conscious, rational processes, upset many people; it was a blow to human pride to be told that we are often not the masters of our own lives.

Hmm. Maybe less shocking might have been the underlying belief that the Id, or unconscious urges, were somehow 'bad' or 'immoral' or 'destructive' or... Perhaps such notions of 'evil' or 'darkness' or 'primeval urges' (et cetera) somehow seemed to not contradict notions of 'original sin' or the need for redemption and forgiveness and... It seems to me that there is a socio-historical religious (et cetera) dimension to all of this... Crooks and Stein also comment (page 11) that

... much of the impact of psychoanalysis lies in the critical reactions it has generated. Psychoanalysis has been widely criticised, in part because its assertions cannot be tested in the laboratory.

I find myself questioning the validity of the above statement - in the sense that extensive psychological research has failed to come up with any evidence at all of physiological structures or processes remotely akin to Freud's proposed structure of the mind. However, clearly something defined as what it is not or used as a metaphor cannot be tested in a laboratory...

Perhaps in mitigation of Freud, Crooks and Stein (page 529) state that:

Freud developed his theory in a virtual vacuum of psychological data about human development, thinking, emotions and social behaviour... We have Freud to thank for the concept of the unconscious... Although most modern theorists do not believe that the unconscious plays a much greater role than the conscious mind in shaping behaviour, at least some of our actions are shaped by unconscious forces.

My understanding is that, over the decades, both psychological, and psychoanalytic, and psychodynamic thought has moved further and further away from many of Freud's original hypotheses and theories.

Turning next to 'Foundations of Psychology' by Nicky Hayes (Routledge, 1994 - this book has over 1,000 pages and there is just one reference to the 'subconscious'), we find further criticisms of Freud and psychoanalysis. For instance, Nicky Hayes writes (on page 232):

... Psychoanalytic arguments tend to be circular. Attempts to disprove psychoanalytic explanations are often seen by psychoanalysts as defensive reactions, with the critic's ego defending itself against the psychological threat of accepting psychological theory by denying the validity of the theory itself. Within this circular logic, it is not possible ever to refute the approach.

... There are other weaknesses of psychoanalytic theory. One of these concerns the methodology, in which dreams or slips of the tongue are seen as indicating subconscious (*) wish-fulfilment. Freud... was a materialist, and took these as clear evidence of the workings of the unconscious mind. But a modern psychologist would tend to be less confident of these. Freud also believed that the different aspects of personality which he described had distinct biological origins, and that it was only a matter of time before physiological research would reveal the physiological substrates of the id, ego and super-ego. One hundred years later, this picture looks rather different.

Incidentally, (*) marks the one and only reference to 'sub'conscious in the whole book... At this stage I have not devoted literature review time to researching much of what the current day picture *does* look like from a psychological perspective other than that of Carl Rogers. My understanding is that psychological knowledge (based on research) would tend to be more around electro-chemical pathways and neural connections - physiological as well as psychological demonstrations of the functioning of the brain (or mind)...

One simple illustration I experienced once is when a group of people are asked to spontaneously, without deliberation or thought, respond to 'What do cows drink?' Most people instantly say 'milk'. The explanation for this erroneous answer (cows drink water) is that there is a neural pathway between the words 'cow' and 'milk' - we associate the two and the 'flow' through our brains follows the path of least (electro-chemical) resistance. It does not have to mean that somewhere deep in my 'unconscious' or 'subconscious' is a lurking, demonic, sexual, primitive, instinctual cow...!

... Although to form a somewhat strained link, I may have lurking within a very different kind of C.o.W.:

... *My conditions of worth.*

Carl Rogers

How did Carl Rogers view psychological functioning? Carl wrote often and in depth (see especially 'Client-Centred Therapy', Houghton Mifflin, 1951) about psychological processes, and in particular the experiencing of threat (to the self concept) and the psychological process of defence.

Carl believed in the *actualising* (and formative) *tendency* as fundamental to being. In essence, the actualising tendency can be described as that inherent part of the acorn which strives to become a fully grown, flourishing and healthy oak tree. According to Rogers, there is nothing inherent in the acorn that strives to become stunted, or unhealthy, or to die... The actualising tendency is present in all living organisms, and can only be destroyed by destroying the organism itself.

HOWEVER: Client-centred personality theory states that a *portion* of our total experience becomes 'separated' and symbolised as the self - the self concept. This process occurs through our needs for *positive regard* from significant others, followed by our needs for *positive self regard* (which may become independent from others). By introjecting values and attitudes linked with our needs for regard from others (an 'external locus of evaluation') *conditions of worth* are an integral feature of our self concepts...

... And, more often than not, our conditions of worth serve to *thwart* the actualising tendency.

Let me try and give examples of these processes:

Formation of self concept. I have very little, if any, memories of infancy. My belief is that I was a very happy baby/infant/child and that I experienced myself as part of a nurturing family. One of my very earliest memories is of a loss. My belief is that when I experienced this loss for the first time there was a sense of me being me, I, alone... I felt, somehow, that my experience was mine - those around me did not appear to experience as I did. For the first time I was an individual being, not a fuzzy part of a fuzzy family...

Formation of conditions of worth. Let us suppose that when I was an infant I grazed my knee. My 'organismic valuing' was that this hurt and my organismic response to this was to cry and to seek comfort - to rush for a hug and cuddle. Let us further suppose that I again grazed my knee - but by this time a significant other (maybe a parent or primary carer) had told me that 'big boys don't cry' and in order to please my primary carer and achieve *positive regard*, I stifled my tears and my urge to rush for a hug in

order to please *the other*. Now let us further hypothesise that I again grazed my knee, but by this time I had somehow internally symbolised what it meant to be a 'big boy' (clearly something to work towards and be valued, being 'big'). Now I did not cry or rush for a hug in order to feel good about *me (positive self regard)* - effectively, I was living up to my concept of my self. My organismic valuing, though, still wanted to cry and be comforted... It got thwarted.

Carl wrote of a way of being called *congruence*, meaning that the organism has access to all relevant aspects of experiencing. However, if our experiencing is threatening to our self concept, our perceptions of that experiencing get psychologically *denied* or *distorted* as a way of defending the self concept. Again, I will attempt to illustrate:

By now I am an adult, attending a funeral. Through the years my *self* actualising has served to maintain and enhance the personal construct within my self concept that I am a big boy now - and that big boys don't cry, of course. My organismic valuing of wanting to cry and be cuddled is by now severely thwarted - yet tears well up in the corner of my eyes...

... Someone I rather like notices and, after the service, asks me if I am okay. 'Why do you ask?' I reply, sounding somewhat surprised. 'I thought I saw tears in your eyes' the mourner says. 'No, you must have been mistaken'. In this instance, my personal construct of being a big boy, coupled with a belief that I will be more attractive to this person I rather like if I am seen as a 'big boy' combine to make my psychological defense so strong that I will completely *deny* my experiencing to conscious awareness - the greater the threat to my self concept, the more rigid the defence.

At another funeral the very next day (yes, life can be harsh sometimes), another mourner (who I don't much care for one way or the other) also mentions seeing tears in my eyes. 'Yes' I reply, 'the caterers were peeling onions next door'. In this instance, my self concept is threatened yet not as strongly as the day before. I allow my experience of tears welling up into my conscious awareness, but only in a very *distorted* fashion...

Although originally a *theory* of personality, these psychological process have been tested, examined and researched - at least to some degree. Indeed, Rogers also wrote of '*subception*' or '*pre-perception*', for instance. If, say, I am afraid of spiders I will consciously react to their presence. However, there is evidence that I will also react to spiders at a *nonconscious* level. To illustrate this, experiments were conducted wherein the subjects were flashed pictures on a screen so quickly that the eye/mind could not consciously be aware of them (somewhat akin to the idea of 'subliminal advertising'). At the same time, the subject was connected to all sorts of equipment designed to measure organismic responses (sweating, blood pressure, and so on). Subjects had physiological reactions harmonious with their fears and joys (whatever) even when not consciously aware of the image - in other words, the organism 'preperceived' or 'subceived' an experience as threatening.

Finally turning to the writings of Rogers in an attempt to clarify what Carl had to say about the 'unconscious', in 'A Way Of Being' (Houghton Mifflin, 1980, pages 82-3) he wrote:

During these years I have been, I think, more open to new ideas. The ones of most importance to me have to do with inner space - the realm of the psychological powers and the psychic capabilities of the human person. In my estimation, this area constitutes the new frontier of knowledge, the cutting edge of discovery... Human beings have potentially available a

tremendous range of intuitive powers. We are indeed wiser than our intellects. There is much evidence. We are learning how sadly we have neglected the capacities of the nonrational, creative "metaphoric mind" - the right half of our brain. Biofeedback has shown us that if we let ourselves function in a less conscious, more relaxed way, we can learn at some level to control temperature, heart rate, and all kinds of organic functions... I am open to more mysterious phenomena...
... These phenomena may not fit with known scientific laws, but perhaps we are on the verge of discovering new types of lawful order...

It seems to me that here we see both similarities and differences between Freud and Rogers. On the one hand there would seem to be a shared curiosity with "inner space" - while on the other hand Carl writes of both a 'metaphoric' mind and aspects of the brain which, the more we are open to researching and discovering (there is mention of biofeedback, for instance) may become subject to scientific laws. Yet is this so very different in process terms from Freud? Carl's beliefs may be founded to a large extent on the data and thoughts available in his time, just as Freud's were. The fact that our knowledge has moved on doesn't refute the process... Freud believed that we would soon discover the structures of the Id, Ego and Superego in the brain, Rogers believed...

Let Carl continue (pages 106-7):

I have stated that we are wiser than our intellects, that our organisms as a whole have a wisdom and purposiveness which goes well beyond our conscious thought... I think that men and women, individually and collectively, are inwardly and organismically rejecting the view of one single, culture-approved reality.

Indeed, Carl wrote of changes in the unconscious thinking of communities of people ("thousands and millions of individuals") leading to change. Could this be akin to, for example, Carl Jung's notion of the 'collective unconscious'? Rogers illustrated 'the unconscious thinking of communities of people' by quoting the gradual demise - a "faint unconscious questioning" - of patriotism and nationalism, which prior to the early part of the twentieth century were "unquestioned virtues". It seems to me that Carl Rogers was saying something somewhat different from Carl Jung's view of the 'collective unconscious', in that Carl believed that we are moving inexorably, ("inevitably") "toward the acceptance of millions of separate, challenging, exciting, informative, *individual* perceptions of reality" and that, like sudden and separate scientific discoveries, we will "be living in a totally new universe, different from any in history"...

Also in 'A Way Of Being' (pages 126-128) Carl wrote a piece called 'The Function Of Consciousness In Human Beings'. Similar in some ways to Freud's analogy of the psyche as an iceberg, Carl wrote:

I believe that consciousness has a small but very important part. The ability to focus conscious attention seems to be one of the latest evolutionary developments in our species. This ability can be described as a tiny peak of awareness, of symbolising capacity, topping a vast pyramid of nonconscious organismic functioning. Perhaps a better analogy, more indicative of the continual change going on, is to think of the pyramid as a large fountain of the same shape. The very tip of the fountain is intermittently illuminated with the flickering light of consciousness, but the constant flow of life goes on in the darkness as well, in nonconscious as well as conscious ways. It seems that the human organism has been moving toward the more complete development of awareness. It is at this level that new forms are invented, perhaps even new directions for the human species. It is here that the reciprocal relationship between cause and effect is most demonstrably evident. It

is here that choices are made, spontaneous forms created. We see here perhaps the highest of the human functions.

Reading this, I was very struck by the similarity between Freud's iceberg analogy and Carl's pyramid/fountain analogies. A striking similarity is that both Freud and Rogers seem to agree that consciousness is the tip of the iceberg, the peak of the pyramid. Further, consciousness is 'the light' whole nonconscious is 'darkness'... I do also note Carl's use of the term '*nonconscious*'...

... And 'organismic'. Carl continues:

Some of my colleagues have said that organismic choice - the nonverbal, subconscious choice of way of being - is guided by the evolutionary flow. I agree; I will even go one step further. I would point out that in psychotherapy we have learned something about the psychological conditions that are most conducive to increasing this highly important self-awareness. With greater self awareness, a more informed choice is possible; a choice more free from introjects, a conscious choice that is even more in tune with the evolutionary flow. Such a person is more potentially aware, not only of the stimuli from outside, but of ideas and dreams, and of the ongoing flow of feelings, emotions, and physiological reactions that he or she senses from within. The greater this awareness, the more surely the person will float in a direction consonant with the directional evolutionary flow.

Carl wrote of a universal '*formative tendency*' as well as the 'actualising tendency'. Referring to several theorists and researchers from a variety of scientific disciplines (including biology, botany, astronomy...), Rogers was interested in the notion of *syntropy* running in parallel with *entropy* - the notion that while there is evidence for the ongoing decay of all matter (the universe dying) there is also evidence for organic forms seeking ever more complex modes of existence - and the formative tendency (linked with syntropy) is around positive growth rather than decay (entropy)... In a similar vein, the *actualising tendency* is around the *whole human organism* striving to maintain and enhance itself. Incidentally, just as Freud argued that only the Id is present from birth, so Rogers believed that the actualising tendency is present from birth - and can only be destroyed by destroying the organism itself. Back to Carl:

When a person is functioning in this way, it does not mean that there is a self-conscious awareness of all that is going on within, like the centipede whose movements were paralysed when it became aware of each of its legs. On the contrary, such a person is free to live a feeling subjectively, as well as be aware of it. The individual might experience love, or pain, or fear, or just live in these experiences subjectively. Or, he or she might abstract self from this subjectivity and realise in awareness, "I am in pain;" "I am afraid;" "I do love." The crucial point is that when a person is functioning fully, there are no barriers, no inhibitions, which prevent the full experiencing of whatever is organismically present. This person is moving in the direction of wholeness, integration, a unified life. Consciousness is participating in this larger, creative, formative tendency.

Thus for Rogers 'organismic valuing' might be more relevant than 'unconscious' or 'subconscious', and *perceptual* processes are at the heart of client-centred theory. While there may be several similarities between Rogers and Freud, there are also fundamental differences in terms of philosophy, beliefs and attitude.

To illustrate: Both Freud and Rogers seem to agree that consciousness is the 'tip of the iceberg'. However, Freud believed that the Id, the unconscious, was some kind of

maelstrom of immoral, unchecked, primeval (predominantly sexual) instincts and urges. Indeed, it has been said of the Id that it must be controlled at all costs and at all times if we are survive. Rogers, on the other hand, saw the 'nonconscious' in terms of whole organismic valuing - and that the actualising tendency strives to maintain and enhance a human organism which is inherently and fundamentally trustworthy, co-operative, creative, social, responsible...