

# Review of: "A Philosophical Analysis of Sartre's Critique of Freud's Depth-psychological Account of Self-Deception"

Brentyn Ramm<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Private Universität Witten/Herdecke

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The paper is a well written investigation of self-deception in Sartre and his response to Freud. The author ultimately concludes in favour of Freud's depth psychological account over that of Sartre. To me, however, the interpretation of Sartre's view as 'rationalistic' seemed incongruent with his view of freedom as grounded in pre-reflective consciousness. I also wasn't convinced that Freud's unconscious was supported by cognitive science as opposed to say phenomenological accounts of the unconscious. Please see my specific comments below (my references to Sartre all come from *Being and Nothingness*, Trans. Hazel E. Barnes 1978):

1. The abstract doesn't outline the arguments made in the paper, but rather reads as quite neutral. But then in the body of the paper the argument falls decidedly in favour of Freud. The reader hence doesn't know what to expect / what conclusions the paper will draw. It would also be helpful if the introduction gave a brief roadmap for the arguments of the paper.

2. It could be argued that Sartre does in fact leave room for a kind of unconscious in the sense that some conscious experiences such as unattended pain and background sounds are implicit (undifferentiated) from the total experience: 'I do not cease to hear sounds; they are simply lost in the undifferentiated totality which serves as the background for my reading. Correlatively my body does not cease to be indicated by the world as the total point of view on mundane totality, but it is the world as ground which indicates it' (p. 354). My body itself is also the background that is implicit in my actions such as reading. He also gives the example of how a pain in my eyes can manifest itself through reading in a jerky rhythm (p. 333). In this sense, the pain is not yet differentiated from the totality. I am not reflectively conscious of these background aspects, and blind spots and presumably fail to notice most of them.

3. P. 4. A vast amount of data supports the notion that a significant portion of mental life is unconscious (Westen, 1998b). I wasn't convinced that the existence of the 'cognitive unconscious' provides support for something like Freud's dynamic unconscious. Firstly, cognitive processes are probabilistic rather than deterministic. Secondly, as far as I can tell the findings of cognitive science don't support the notion that there is a separate unified unconscious portion of the mind (like an Id) that is driving much of our behaviour. Thirdly, why does the evidence from cognitive science support the Freudian unconscious over phenomenological accounts of the unconscious? Phenomenologists have an alternative conception of the unconscious as non-representational and non-separate from consciousness. Rather they talk about blind spots and

absences in consciousness, the background on which figures appear, and as 'sedimented practical schema' (e.g., Kozyreva, 2018, Non-representational approaches to the unconscious; Fuchs, 2012 Body memory and the unconscious). One may think that since Sartre was also a phenomenologist, a non-Freudian account of the unconscious could supplement his view. For support in the direction of this interpretation of Sartre see comment 2 above.

4. Yet, his conceptualization of the influence of projects on our motivation seems to be incongruent with his notion of radical freedom.

Talk of the influence of our projects on our motivations suggests a kind of mechanical conception (the mind as psychic entities pulling and pushing on each other) that Sartre rejects (p. 557-564). My reading of Sartre is that our projects aren't psychological states - rather they describe specific ways of making ourselves - they are our ways of being in the world. They are ultimately just part of the 'global project' of making oneself (p. 481). Hence projects do not influence my behaviour and motivations, rather they constitute me and what I do. Similarly for Sartre, 'reasons', 'motivations' 'desires' etc. are not abstract psychic entities. They cannot be adequately separated from the totality of the person in specific circumstances, rather they are embodied by this totality (e.g., 'each drive or tendency is the entire person' p.564).

5. On p. 7 it is stated: Sartre's theory of mind is more congruent with theories of rational agency that view humans as agents with practical reasoning systems, using logic to decide which actions to perform, guided by their beliefs and worldviews (Wooldridge, 2000). From this perspective humans are understood as "intentional systems" (Dennett, 1987). On p. 8. Sartre's view is described as based on 'rational thought processes' and 'rational deliberation'.

The above interpretation seems incongruent with Sartre's account of free choice which is based upon the spontaneity of pre-reflective consciousness (which is non-rational and non-conceptual). He was also careful to distinguish his view of freedom from that of rational deliberation and so-called 'voluntary choice':

'When I deliberate, the chips are down. And if I am brought to the point of deliberating, this is simply because it is a part of my original project to realize motives by means of deliberation rather than by some other form of discovery (by passion, for example, or simply by action, which reveals to me the organized ensemble of causes and of ends as my language informs me of my thought). There is therefore a choice of deliberation as a procedure which will make known to me what I project and consequently what I am. And the choice of deliberation is organized with the ensemble motives-causes and end by free spontaneity. When the will intervenes, the decision is taken, and it has no other value than that of making the announcement.' p. 451.

(On Sartre's rejection of the voluntarist conception of freedom see Rowlands 2015, 'Sartre on Pre-Reflective Consciousness')