Ironic Existence

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Lecture II: Ironic Soul

In the previous lecture I argued that the experience of irony is an experience of erotic uncanniness. It is a significant form of pretense-transcending aspiring. Thus insofar as it is important to understand our capacity to aspire in ways that transcend the aspirations already embedded in social pretense, we need to understand better how this peculiar form of uncanniness works. I also claimed that it is possible to develop a capacity for irony: that is, a capacity to occasion an experience of irony (in oneself or another). One might have thought that since ironic experience is uncanny disruption, we must be passive sufferers. But, in fact, it is possible to become active with respect to one’s own ironic experience. I also claimed that ironic existence is a peculiar human excellence: the capacity to deploy irony in the right sort of way at the right time in living a distinctively human life. In this lecture I would like to ask the question: what are we like such that all of this is possible? This is not a Kantian transcendental inquiry -- what must we be like for irony to be possible? -- so much as a Platonic inquiry: what are we like such that a purported virtue -- ironic existence -- is a possibility for us.

Aside from its intrinsic interest, there are two related reasons I want to take up this question. First, I want to correct a widespread assumption about the psychic shape that pretense-transcending-aspiring must take. We have, I think, overlooked a significant possibility because it does not fit into the familiar range of possibilities. We tend to assume either, Plato-fashion, that one posits a special faculty of the soul – reason -- whose special job it is to break us out of appearances and grasp reality as it really is; or, following Nietzsche and Freud, that one adopts a hermeneutics of suspicion in which aspirations to transcendence are diagnosed as hidden expressions of resentment, envy, or aggression turned on the self. This is an impoverished range of options. I want to open up room for a plausible moral psychology that in allowing us to see how irony works will also legitimate ironic
activity. Second, getting the proper psychology in view will require us to re-think what it is to be a unified self. The unity that is genuinely available to us is, I think, marked by disruption and division. This is not the well-known view that whatever psychic unity we achieve will always be vulnerable to disruption, but rather that whatever unity is genuinely available partially consists in certain forms of disruption. The aim of unity should not be to overcome these disruptions, but to find ways to live well with them. Ironically, the unity that is available to us is a peculiar form of disunity. In trying to work out the family of concepts that include rational will, action, and agency, philosophers have tended to rely on an idealized conception of unity that does not really fit the human soul. I want to get clear on what this lack-of-fit consists in and why it should matter.

2. The possibility of a non-moralized moral psychology
It would be easy enough if we could simply posit a pretending part of the soul -- that part which takes up social meanings and crafts a sense of identity around available social roles -- and posit also a pretense-transcending part -- a part that effectively calls into question the activities of the pretending part by using the very same terms. There then would be intrapsychic activity that was a fairly direct correlate of irony: the activity of these two opposed parts on one another. We could then question whether psychic unity was feasible, and what its costs and benefits were. But grasping how irony works is not that straightforward.

One broad-scale way to read Plato’s psychology -- as it emerges in different ways in Republic, Symposium and Phaedrus -- is as an attempt to explain how irony is possible. Plato, of course, posits a pretense-transcendent good -- The Good -- which organizes the other pretense-transcendent forms. So the main question for his psychology is why it is that we are creatures who, for the most part, do not grasp the real situation we are in; and how it is that on occasion an individual is able to break free of appearances and engage in genuine acts of pretense-transcendent aspiring. On occasion he attributes this to our erotic natures -- our capacity to be stunned by beauty and overcome by pretense-transcendent longing; on occasion he attributes this to what he calls "summoners of thought" -- situations in which there is an
apparent contradiction or no easy way to give an answer in terms of appearances; on occasion he attributes this to the instability of souls that are organized around the acquisition of honor or wealth.\footnote{1} There are various ways the world of social pretenses can break down for special inhabitants. And that, for Plato, opens up the possibility of aspiring to an ideal that is more true, better, than any finite socially embedded conception. Thus if there is some part of us that naturally does such aspiring, then there is some part of us that is naturally oriented towards and fulfilled in the real, the true and the good.

Plato’s accounts of psychological breakdown are astonishingly astute, but Christine Korsgaard and Bernard Williams have both argued that his positive account of how pretense-transcending aspiring occurs begs the question.\footnote{2} The fact that the breakdown should result in pretense-transcendent aspiring is guaranteed, for Plato, by positing a faculty that can grasp a transcendent object that is the source of value. This is not an explanation, Korsgaard argues, but a placeholder for where an explanation ought to go. And Williams claims that Plato has built into his psychology the morality he wants to get out of it. The task, according to Williams, is to formulate a non-moralized moral psychology: one that is sufficiently rich to give us insight into ethically rich human activities, motivations and emotions, while also making clear that these are natural phenomena.

These are powerful criticisms. Perhaps some day a great Platonist will come along to answer them, but for now the prudent strategy is to give an alternative and more modest account of how such pretense-transcending aspiring might occur. The way to do this, I think, is to notice another problem with Plato’s psychology that has escaped notice -- largely because the philosophical tradition has accepted Plato’s assumption. From the beginning of philosophy’s attempt to ground ethics in the unity of the soul, the "lower" part of the soul has been assumed to be disparate, heterogeneous, multifarious, lacking in unity. In the \textit{Republic}, Plato says that the part of the soul he calls appetite is so multiform (\textit{πολυειδίαν}) that it doesn’t really

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} Plato, \textit{Phaedrus} 2.44a-253a; \textit{Symposium} 206d-e; \textit{Republic} VII.524; VIII.548c-554e.
\textsuperscript{2} Korsgaard, \textit{Sources of Normativity} op. cit. pp. 37-40; Bernard Williams, \textit{Shame and Necessity} (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1993), pp.42-46.}
have a name that is proper to it. ³ It is given the name appetite because of paradigmatic examples. This diffuseness is, of course, central to Plato’s argument: the life of the tyrant, ‘ruled’ as it is by appetite, is portrayed as a disorganized mess. Though much of Plato’s psychology and metaphysics have been discarded, the presumption remains that the "lower" part of the soul, however conceived, is lacking in unity and organization. In this lecture I will question that assumption: I believe that unconscious fantasy provides an alternative source of unity for the self; and that this has significant philosophical consequences.

But for the moment, notice that if one does become suspicious of pretense-transcending aspiring as Plato describes it, it is natural to become suspicious of pretense-transcending aspiring itself. Deflationary accounts and unmasking accounts have gone hand in hand. Nietzsche and Freud are, of course, two prominent examples. To take Freud as an example: he was intensely suspicious of the claims morality made on us -- above all the idea that we should transcend our nature in the name of a higher ideal. And while the ego may be considered a faculty of pretense -- governing how we put ourselves forward in the world -- the idea that the superego in any of its guises might be a faculty for pretense-transcending aspiring would be met by Freud with skepticism bordering on derision. Far from being a faculty of pretense-transcendence, the superego is dedicated to keeping us in line. Especially in Civilization and its discontents, the superego is portrayed as a faculty of surveillance and punishment: keeping us on the straight-and-narrow when it comes to the demands of morality and civilization.⁴ If anything, the superego is, on this characterization, a pretense-enforcer. It is, Freud tells us, a defensive structure (an heir of the Oedipus complex) that arose to resist the transgressive wishes of the id. It basically has the structure of response: a "No!" to the id’s "Yes!" The guilty, unhappy, discontent individual who thereby manages a "civilized" life, a life of social pretense, is the outcome.

And this psychically unhappy-making structure does have an instance that looks a lot like irony. A punitive superego can painfully attack ordinary attempts to

³ Plato, Republic IX.580d10-e1.
put myself forward -- claiming "You are a fraud!" or "You are guilty!" -- in relation to which I experience myself falling abysmally short. Clearly, this is a significant source of human suffering; and if the irony I am trying to isolate were just a version of this structure, we would be better off without it. However, I do not think this is the end of the story.

3. Unconscious fantasy as a source of psychic unity

There is more to be learned from psychoanalysis than Freud’s initial diagnosis of the superego might suggest. If ironic experience is a peculiar form of uncanniness, then perhaps we can take a different clue from Freud. He famously claimed "that the uncanny [unheimlich] is something which is secretly familiar [heimlich-heimisch], which has undergone repression and then returned from it". A repressed thought comes back to disrupt the present with an experience that is at once weirdly familiar and unfamiliar. The claim I would like to add -- and this is crucial -- is that unconscious motivations are not simply a disparate hodgepodge of one-off desires, fantasies and emotions that occasionally disrupt consciousness, but they can supply alternative unifying sources of the self. Indeed, it is not too much of a stretch to talk of unconscious practical identity. So what is breaking through in an uncanny experience need not be just some rejected wish, it may be me coming back to haunt myself. To take this thought seriously will have an impact on what we take to be the philosophical significance of our conscious sense of practical identity, on what kind of psychic unity, if any, is available to us, and on what is involved in making the unconscious conscious.

To start at the beginning, the basic idea is that unconscious fantasies -- often referred to as "phantasies" -- are emotionally laden, motivationally charged structures of meaning that tend toward formal organization. They tend toward the

expression of an unconscious world-view, whereby all experience is interpreted in its terms. Correlatively, there is a subject who is at the center of this (unconsciously organized) world. The core fantasy has great organizing power and provides an imaginative answer to the question: who am I? The claim then is that the self tends to have a formal cause, unrecognized as such, which stands at significant odds with the conscious sense of practical identity.

I have come to believe this because, in addition to reading and teaching philosophy, I have over the past twenty years been seeing people in psychoanalysis. Over and over again I have watched these structures come into view. That is not all there is, of course; and I do not subscribe to the view that anything answers to the description "the unconscious". There are unconscious strategies, modes of thought, conflicting fantasies, ideation and so on. The only important points are, first, that among the disparate forms of unconscious mental activity there is a sub-class of disparate forms that are kept out of consciousness via a disparate group of motivated strategies. Second, in the analysis of adults there tends to emerge a core unconscious fantasy that has great organizing power. (I am not making any universal claim about human nature, but am commenting on a wide swathe of human experience that Freud called neurotic.)

Here is a brief example. Ms A., an attractive young woman in her mid-twenties from the west coast, came into analysis because of lack of sexual feelings for her husband. She thought it was due to acne he had -- which she attributed to his desire for greasy, fast food, but she wasn't really sure. In any case, it turned her off. According to Ms A., her husband was upset by their lack sexual relations: he felt frustrated, ashamed and inadequate. She entered analysis with the conscious desire to solve this specific problem. As the analysis progressed, it turned out that as she was growing up, she was a tomboy: she liked wearing boy's clothes and having her hair cropped short. She liked climbing trees, hanging out in a tree house. From first grade on she liked playing (as the only girl) on boys' athletic teams -- and she grew up at a time and in a local culture -- (and at a particular moment in American history) -- that praised lack of stereotyping in respect of gender, race or ethnic identity. She stayed on the (basically) boys' team through high school. She was not
able to play on a the varsity team in college, but the university she attended was divided up in such a way that there were intramural teams, and she played on one of the boy's teams. Even now, as a young professional, Ms A enjoys playing on an officially coed team, but the team has only two women on it, and the other woman rarely plays. It is in the heat of a competitive game that she feels most alive. Afterwards, she glows with pleasure in recounting the most challenging moments. She likes hanging out with her teammates after the game -- still suited up in uniform -- and going to the bar afterwards with them to talk about the game. This drives her husband wildly jealous -- he thinks she is flirting -- but she doesn't understand what he is talking about. For her, this is the teammates having a beer.

Ms. A mentioned an involuntary association. When she was thinking about her husband's acne an image of her stepfather came into her mind. Her husband's acne reminded her of some markings on her stepfather's skin. Might he have something to do with her inhibition? Ms. A never really understood why her stepfather replaced her father. At some point during her ruminations and associations, a memory came back to her: at around seven years old, she got out of bed one night and wandered by her mother and stepfather's bedroom. The door was ajar, and the light of the television screen illuminated them. They were in an unusual physical position -- one that disturbed her and made her anxious. The mother's position looked awkward. She hurried away, never mentioned it to anyone and, indeed, forgot all about it until this moment in analysis about two decades later.

She also remembered something she was told in childhood: that when she was still in the womb, her parents thought she was going to be a boy. According to the story, the mother had visited the midwife who, using ultrasound, thought she saw a penis. The parents had spent months expecting a boy and had picked out a boy's name for her. Here is the remembered content of a dream: she is at a party in the backyard of a house overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Everyone is busy talking, drinking beer. There is a little boy there about 10 years old (whose hair color is the opposite of the dreamer). While she is in animated conversation with others, the little boy falls down a sharp drop at the edge of the property -- no one at the party
notices. Suddenly she notices and runs over to jump off the edge herself -- and then
wakes up, with a vague sense that maybe she rescued him. There is obviously much
more to this story, but perhaps I have said enough to give you the flavor.

There is obviously much more to this story, but perhaps I have said enough
to make it plausible that certain images of boyishness are providing a source of unity
to Ms. A's life. For the most part, the manifestations of boyishness are not
recognized as such. The love of a particular sport, for example, was certainly
recognized, but it was not initially linked to anything else in the person's life other
than a love of exercise. The memories of having been a tomboy -- where boyishness
was explicitly recognized -- were not deeply repressed, but they were not anything
she thought about until coming into analysis. But once boyishness came into view as
an unconscious source of identity an enormous amount of other behavior started to
make sense. She was the one who paid the bills. Indeed, she was the income-earner
in the family. She enjoyed being "competitive" in the workplace. The husband
stayed at home. He is an artisan. She admired his ability as maker of fine things, but
she wondered why he rarely left the house, why he found it so difficult to put
himself forward professionally. On the rare occasions when they did have sex, she
had to be "on top". She was successful in the business world, whereas he stayed
home, sleeping late, often remaining in the same comfortable clothes he slept in.
Her dress tended towards extremes in terms of images of culturally established
gender identities, though on different occasions she would wear "masculine" or
"feminine" outfits. As we saw, she enjoyed going out to the bar to hang out with the
boys. She wore sports bras that tended to flatten her breasts. She talked a lot about
responsibility, about paying her bills on time. She took pride in her self-reliance.
She felt she could move anywhere and get a good job and do well. For her, these
professional images were associated with masculinity; and they were, for her, a
source of pride. There was also a lot in her dream-life in which young boys and their
mothers and fathers played a significant role. And so on.

Three points command our attention. First, as we have begun to see, her
image of boyishness is functioning as a kind of formal cause: there is nothing else
that would otherwise hold together myriad and pervasive activities and features of
her life: the way she pays her bills, stands at a bar, daydreams when she looks at trees, what she consciously imagines while having sex. Life is being organized and maintained around fantasies of boyishness. Second, the fact that there is an underlying, motivated unity amongst these disparate phenomena is itself kept hidden from view -- because Ms. A herself is anxious that the fantasies of boyishness significantly conflict with her conscious practical identity which is markedly feminine. The point is not about any inherent conflict between boyishness and femininity. Third, because the fantasies of boyishness are held at bay, the images of boyishness and of femininity tend to depend on social images: soccer, beer, bars; dramatically feminine shoes, suggestively cut dresses, etc. Note that this does not mean that Ms. A was unreflective about her practical identity. On the contrary, she had read feminist literature and she took her feminine dress to be an expression of her version. However, her reflective activity of stepping back from received images seemed to be in the service of sticking with them. It allowed her to participate in received images even after having subjected them to, as she put it, "feminist critique".

4. *Making the unconscious conscious*:

I hope that if there is anything strange about the above example, it is its sense of familiarity. I would guess that many of you, if you let your minds wander, will be able to think of someone who lives with a tension like this, or some other one that has a similar shape. We are not dealing here with anything exotic -- for example, a biological male who is certain he is a woman trapped in a man’s body. Rather, this is an example of the extraordinary stuff of ordinary life. It is a mark of the human that we do not quite fit into our own skins. That is, we do not fit without remainder into socially available practical identities. By now, this is a familiar thought. The unfamiliar thought is that this remainder should not be thought of as the flotsam and jetsam of life. What I have found over and over again is that if one allows a person -- who, for all the world, looks like a healthy human being with some problems to discuss -- to lie down say whatever comes into his or her mind, one will
find not only that the person does not quite fit into his or her skin, but that what lies 'outside' is a basic organizing principle, working around primordial human challenges: for example, what it means to be the first-born or second-born, what it means to lose a parent early in life, what is it to be the child of divorced parents; how could one trust or be faithful to another person or, to take the classic case, what is it to be a person who is, for a while, a child, but who then must grow into adulthood, old age and die? Unconscious motivations are not simply this or that temptation to break a socially accepted norm; they are also organized attempts to form an identity around the solution to a primordial human problem. At the same time, and in uncanny ways, the unconscious uses received social pretenses to both express and attempt solutions to these problems.

Notice, too, that all of the phenomena I mentioned in the case of Ms. A are right there on the surface of life. I have not tried to provide a deep interpretation of anything, including the remembered dream. The only suggestion I have made is that these myriad phenomena fit together: that they manifest a formal unity that is itself the manifestation and expression of unconscious fantasy. The fantasy thus serves as a source of unity of the self. *This* is what is unconscious.

And there is another thought of which she was unaware, though it was manifest throughout her life: namely that she *values* her boyish life. Even if she is not in a position reflectively to endorse it, the evidence is everywhere that *this* boy's life matters to her. These would seem to be acts that are paradigmatically coming from *her*, though the source of the self from which they come remains obscure to her.

But what then would it be to make this unconscious source of the self conscious? I am going to argue that the answer involves facilitating the development of a capacity for irony. This may at first seem like an odd answer, and it will take us a few steps to get there. Let us begin with the thought that the psychoanalytic understanding of what it means to make the unconscious conscious must be internal to psychoanalysis. Psychoanalysis is essentially a therapeutic technique. It aims to make people better (along some dimension of psychic well being that needs to be spelled out), and its sense of what it is to make the unconscious conscious is essentially linked to that process. Thus we cannot understand the psychoanalytic
meaning of "making the unconscious conscious" independently of understanding what is possible and desirable as an outcome of psychoanalytic therapy. Obviously, the process is misdirected if the major cognitive achievement is located in the analyst. The analyst listens and observes the analysand for a while, makes some remarkable connections, and shares her conclusion with the analysand, "You have an unconscious fantasy of being a boy." Even if the analysand "accepts" the expert’s judgment, such "acceptance" need have no effect on the workings of the fantasy itself. The situation is somewhat improved if the analysand carries out the bulk of that observational work herself: she observes her own behavior, her memories, the flow of her thoughts, what she says, etc., and, perhaps with some assistance from her analyst, draws her own conclusion that she must be organizing her life around boyish fantasies. She can sincerely say, on the basis of self-observation, "I realize I've been living with boyish fantasies all my life." And her sincere avowal can, for her, sum up myriad activities, daydreams and dream-memories. Such a moment might be significant in a person's life, but it can also function defensively, to keep one detached from the fantasy precisely by the ostensible act of naming and recognizing it. The fantasy can find other routes of expression; and nothing significant need shift. Thus neither of these images of therapy can be an adequate account of the psychoanalytic meaning of making the unconscious conscious. What, then, would an adequate account look like?

4.1 The expression of unconscious emotion

To answer this question, we need to proceed in stages. Consider, first, a relatively simple act the making conscious of a hitherto unconscious emotion, say anger. Here I am indebted to the work of my colleague David Finkelstein, especially his book *Expression and the inner.* There are two distinct ways, Finkelstein points out, in which one might be said to become conscious of one's anger. One way does not depend on my consciously feeling anger. Certain things I am doing strike my attention: I have started coming late to our meetings; I find myself making a

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spontaneous sarcastic remark; although I don’t usually gossip, I have started to talk behind your back, and so on. I wonder about my own behavior, and then I remember something you did a few weeks ago that irked me at the time. I come to the conclusion that I am angry, though I have been unaware of it. I might even say to you, “You know, I can see in my behavior that I must have been angry at you.” Or even: “I realize I’m angry at you” or “I’m angry at you”. I might thus sincerely avow my anger in this familiar sense: I am sincerely making a true assertion about my anger, based on the evidence. But, in Finkelstein’s sense, I am not thereby expressing my anger. For my anger is not there, present in the utterance – even though I am sincere and my judgment is responsible. In such a case, to use Finkelstein’s terminology, I have become conscious of my anger, but I am not yet consciously angry.

Now consider this alternative scene: in the midst of boiling rage, I say “I’m furious with you!” In this case, the anger itself is present in the verbal self-ascription of anger that is directed at you. In this case, the self-ascription of anger is itself an angry expression. Unlike the former case, I do not have to observe myself to know that I am angry. I just am angry; and the form my anger at you takes on this occasion is the angry verbal self-ascription of anger directed at you. In this case, the utterance “I am furious with you!” may replace other forms of angry expression such as shaking with rage or impulsively striking out; or getting depressed or feeling guilty. This is a case, in Finkelstein’s terms where I am not only conscious of my anger, I am consciously angry. It is this sense of becoming conscious that is our central concern. In the occasion, I have non-observational, first-personal authority for my anger – not because I have some private, inner-directed perceptual faculty – but because I have acquired the capacity to express my anger directly and spontaneously in a verbal self-ascription of anger, or in some other self-consciously angry statement. In this case, the verbal expression of anger is making a truth-
claim about my anger that, in the instance, is a manifestation of the very anger about which the truth-claim makes its claim.\textsuperscript{8}

To use an expression from Aristotle, in this expression the what and the how have come together. On occasion I can say that I am angry; on occasion, I can speak angrily; but on this occasion I angrily say that I am angry. The anger is manifest in the utterance; and the utterance is simultaneously saying something true about the anger, namely, that I am the one who is angry at you. Finkelstein’s point is that it is in these special moments of coincidence that we can, inspired by Wittgenstein, talk about the verbal expression of anger replacing a natural expression. (Wittgenstein concentrated on the verbal expression of a sensation such as pain replacing natural expressions such as crying; Finkelstein extends that treatment to the expression of emotions)

4.2 The psychoanalytic hypothesis

So far, we have not introduced any particularly psychoanalytic thought. But now, suppose the angry thought that is coming into consciousness has, until this moment, been held out of conscious awareness via various motivated strategies. It is somehow held to conflict with one’s consciously held understanding of one’s identity and emotional life.\textsuperscript{9} On this assumption, there opens up a significant difference between these two cases of unconscious anger becoming conscious. In the first case, I notice that I have been behaving in not-altogether-nice ways to you

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\textsuperscript{8} Finkelstein is adapting Wittgenstein’s account of how we acquire the ability to express our pain in language. Wittgenstein’s suggestion in Philosophical Investigations §244 is that “words are connected with the primitive, natural expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences.” In this way, “the verbal expression of pain replaces crying” (my emphasis). The point about replacement does not imply that a verbal expression can have no more semantic meaning than crying, nor that it must lack a truth-value because it is an expression of pain. “That hurts!” can both be true and express the pain. The point is, rather, that because the child can learn verbal expressions – say, “Ouch!” (which, like crying, can express pain and lacks a truth-value), and “That hurts!” (which, like crying can express pain, but unlike crying does have a truth-value) – these verbal expressions can replace crying as they become alternative vehicles for expressing the very pain crying would have expressed.

\textsuperscript{9} For an account of how this might be possible without invoking any objectionable theory of homunculi or being an instance of the bad faith Sartre criticized, see my Freud (New York and London: Routledge, 2005) and Sebastian Gardner, Irrationality and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993).
and infer I must be angry with you. I then reflect on possible reasons, realize that my actions are out of proportion and resolve to try to get over my anger. This is an exemplification of the standard model of reflection, but there is this problem: what grounds my confidence that my resolution to get over my anger will have any impact on my anger? Obviously, there are cases where my emotional life does follow my reflective assessment; and when it does, hooray for reflective criticism, and hooray for me as rational animal. But, on the assumption we are following -- namely, that the hitherto unconscious anger was unconscious because it was in some way rejected -- it is equally possible that the reflective judgment, rather than abating the anger, serves to preserve and protect it by hiding it from awareness. The deployment of rational reflection in this case would look very similar to the case where the judgment did abate the anger -- only in this case, rational reflection would be in the service of hiding and preserving one's irrational emotional life. That is, a simulacrum of rational responsiveness would serve to protect an underlying irrationality.

The second model of making an unconscious emotion conscious poses a problem of a different order. Note, we need to examine a case not only where I can say "I am angry at you" angrily, but one where the anger has been kept away from consciousness. It is held out of consciousness not simply because it is painful, but because it violates one's sense of who one is. Thus the emergence of unconscious anger in this case has to be a disruption of one's conscious sense of self. How could this be therapeutic?

4.3 Replacement
The question thus becomes whether there could be a process -- not too disruptive, -- by which the verbal expression of anger actually replaces (in the Wittgenstein-Finkelstein sense) its unconscious manifestations. In which case a person might both be able to express her anger and deal with it thoughtfully. This brings us to a second psychoanalytic hypothesis, which concerns the functioning of repression: it doesn't work that well. As Freud famously put it,
"When I set myself the task of bringing to light what human beings keep hidden within them, not by the compelling power of hypnosis, but by observing what they say and what they show, I thought the task was a harder one than it really is. He who has eyes to see and ears to hear may convince himself that no mortal can keep a secret. If his lips are silent, he chatters with his finger tips; betrayal oozes out of him at every pore. And thus the task of making conscious the most hidden recesses of the mind is one which it is quite possible to accomplish.”

Thus the hiddenness of a repressed unconscious idea does not consist in its lack of manifestation, but rather in the form that manifestation takes. If one wants to provide an interpretation of psychoanalysis in the spirit of Wittgenstein, this, I think, is the point of entry. For now one can consider the conditions under which an appropriate verbalization can function as a genuine replacement for other manifestations such as coughing, upset stomach, irritable bowel, panic-attacks, and rituals, as well as more sophisticated forms such as explicit disavowal or sincerely ascribing the opposite emotion to oneself.

The idea that the verbal expression of emotion or fantasy can serve as a significant therapeutic option is one that philosophers have not sufficiently explored. For example, Richard Moran's Authority and Estrangement is one of the most significant inquiries into the structure of self-knowledge in recent times. And it has the distinctive merit of taking the psychoanalytic situation seriously. Moran's account is rich and subtle, and covers a wide range of phenomena. Moreover, it is accurate in this sense: it gives a philosophical formulation of the actual practice of a wide range of therapists at work today. This is not just a philosopher's image of therapy: it is a philosophical characterization of actual forms of therapeutic practice. Yet, Moran draws the map of self-knowledge in such a way that there is no place in it for the form of making the unconscious conscious that I take to be central to psychoanalysis. In coming to see this, we can come to see something missing in the practice of a wide swathe of therapists who have, in one way or another, overlooked this psychoanalytic insight. On one side, Moran places the self-knowledge one might acquire in a "theoretical manner" by taking an "empirical stance" towards oneself. A

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10 Sigmund Freud, Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria; Standard Edition op. cit. VII.77-78.
person observes her behavior, in this case with the help of an analyst, and comes to the conclusion, say, that she is angry at a dead parent. On the other side is avowal; but Moran uses this term in a special technical sense. Avowal, for Moran, is essentially linked to what he calls the transparency condition. A person avows her anger, in Moran’s sense, only if she thereby commits herself to the rationality of her emotion: in this case, that anger is a fit response. A person achieves transparency when, instead of looking inward to determine whether she is angry, she looks outward to consider whether the situation actually merits anger. But the expression of anger as replacement need not occur on either side of this divide.

Moran considers a case where an analysand cannot avow her anger -- because "she cannot learn of her attitude by reflection on the object of that attitude" -- and he concludes: "She can only learn of it in a fully theoretical manner, taking an empirical stance toward herself as a particular psychological subject." But this is not what happens when in, in the midst of an analytic session, there is a moment of uncanny disruption and the anger breaks right through into conscious verbal expression. Nor is it what happens when, in a tranferential outburst, the anger is expressed directly at the analyst. Such moments of unconscious emotions or fantasies breaking through into conscious verbal expression lie at the heart of psychoanalytic work and, to put it mildly, they are not based on observation. Nor are they avowals

12 Moran: "The notion of avowal here has been developed in relation to the ... idea of transparency. A statement of one’s belief about X is said to obey the Transparency Condition when the statement is made by consideration of the facts about X itself, and not by either an "inward glance" or by observation of one’s own behavior. An avowal is a statement of one’s belief which obeys the Transparency Condition." Ibid. p.101.
13 Ibid. p. 85, my emphasis.
14 For example, a much-discussed case in the psychoanalytic world is of a Mr. A who, while in the midst of thanking his analyst for all the gains he has made, falls into an extended coughing fit, which then turns into a f-cough: "Do I want to tell you to fuck off?" Lawrence Levenson, "Superego Defense Analysis In the Termination Phase", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* (1998) 46:847-866. I discuss this case at length in "Technique and Final Cause in Psychoanalysis", *International Journal of Psychoanalysis* (2010). I also discuss it in *Therapeutic Action* op. cit. pp. 122-133. The idea of a movement from cough to f-cough to "fuck off!" was made by Dr. Nancy Olson in an online discussion of this case: L. Levenson, S.H. Phillips, C. Paniagua, S. Sonnenberg and R. White, "Paul Gray's Narrowing Scope: A developmental lag in his theory and technique" by Sidney Phillips, online: http://www.psychoanalysis.net/JPN-Archive.
in Moran’s sense. Rather, the fantasy or emotion is getting openly, verbally expressed. And this is its own form of truthfulness -- not transparency to external conditions that purportedly merit the response, nor correspondence to an internal reality inferred from observation by theoretical inference, but the direct expression of the emotion or fantasy in speech. That is, the speech not only acknowledges the content of the emotion or fantasy, but also expresses it; and it not only expresses the fantasy or emotion, but in its verbal form also acknowledges its content. In effect, Moran has given us an account of what might be involved in becoming conscious of a fantasy -- derived from observation and inference, the advice of a therapist and so on -- but he has left no room for the peculiar case of consciously fantasizing -- that is, giving the fantasy direct expression in speech that simultaneously and self-consciously gives its content. This ability to fantasize consciously is crucial to the psychoanalytic situation. (I shall discuss this more in an appendix.)

If one limits a therapeutic situation to the tools that Moran describes -- observation, theoretical inference, and avowal that conforms to the transparency condition -- one may well extend self-understanding. But, from a psychoanalytic point of view, such therapies run a significant danger of being used in the service of evading self-knowledge in the name of obtaining it -- even facilitating the construction of a false self and self-deception. To use Moran’s example: one discovers on the basis of self-observation and one’s therapist’s intervention that one must be angry with one’s dead parent; one then decides that one does not have a good reason to be angry and resolves to get over it. Suppose one decides one has succeeded; and suppose the therapist agrees. The danger is that this purported therapeutic triumph is serving to hide and protect the anger that never got expressed in the first place. Obviously, if one were genuinely able to get over one’s anger in this way, it would be a therapeutic gain -- an instance of gaining rational control over one’s emotional life. However, the danger is that the anger has not gone away, it has gone underground. How many furious people do you know who insist on their lack of anger and try to act as though they are not at all angry? From a psychoanalytic point of view, there are furious people who sincerely do not know this about themselves. But if one does open up room for consciously expressing
hitherto unconscious emotions or fantasies, one thereby opens up room for uncanny disruption. Precisely because the emotion or fantasy had been repressed, it is likely that its initial recognition takes the form of uncanny disruption. It is the return of the unfamiliar as simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar -- thus it must disrupt the world that the analysand has consciously inhabited. And it does not fit the standard model of reflection on an item of consciousness that one is stepping back from; though such reflection may become appropriate later on.

5. Making unconscious practical identity conscious

Now if we accept, first, that unconscious fantasy can function as something like an unconscious practical identity; and, second, that making the unconscious conscious necessarily involves the expression of the unconscious fantasy in the form of self-ascription, we seem to be led to a caricature for a conclusion: namely, that in addition to being able to notice the disparate manifestations of boyishness in her life, Ms A needs to be able to say "I am a boy!" boyishly. Obviously, such an exclamation need be no more than a camp gesture, or an embarrassing misfire. Still, the truth lies in what the caricature is a caricature of. Psychoanalysis facilitates a process by which one gains the capacity to express one's fantasies verbally: the fantasy is right there in the utterance, while the content of the utterance gives the content of the fantasy. Only then can the verbal expression of the fantasy replace (in the Wittgenstein-Finkelstein sense) other manifestations -- such as bodily manifestations that arise with minimal self-conscious awareness, rituals that are poorly understood and not recognized as such, or motivated self-misunderstandings. And given that the core fantasy is something like an unconscious practical identity, making the unconscious conscious does consist in becoming able to express verbally a hitherto unconscious identity. In this section, I aim to drain the initial appearance of absurdity from this characterization. And I hope to show that the development of this capacity for replacement is itself the development of a capacity for irony.

To begin with, while we are familiar with certain images of social pretense, we are less familiar with the thought that social pretenses have their voices. I have a
friend George, a young man in his twenties, who has a conscious practical identity that includes being 'one of the guys'. He was supposed to come over for dinner one evening right after he finished seeing an afternoon Chicago White Sox game. I realized I had a conflict and called him the night before to tell him we'd have to reschedule our dinner. His response: "That's great. Now I can get drunk with the guys at the game!" That was followed by a hearty laugh. It was not difficult to hear that in addition to the anticipation of typically "boyish" pleasures, there was boyish pleasure in the anticipation. This is one way in which the verbal expression of a conscious fantasy -- a daydream or anticipated event -- can provide its own gratification. And the verbal utterance was itself an expression of George's boyish practical identity. George's boyishness was right there in his utterance. 15

As Ms A is lying on the couch reflecting on, say, the pleasures of suiting up in a team uniform -- pleasures that she might not have thought of before -- her out-loud thinking about her boyishness begins to become a boyish expression. Ironically, what is disturbing in this particular instance is not so much the content of the reflection as the vibrancy she experiences in her voice. Given the structure of the analytic situation, her expression is accompanied by apperceptive consciousness. The result is an uncanny jolt. This is a fractal moment: analysis is full of uncanny disruptions, in the microcosm and macrocosm. There are disrupting dreams, and disrupting associations to dreams, intrusive thoughts, associations that come to mind whether one likes it or not; and then, over time, in the transference, the core fantasy will attempt to take over and inform the entire analytic situation. The analysis becomes, say, a playing field in which the analyst is, on different occasions, coach, umpire, teammate, member of the opposing team, father in the stands yelling at the analysand to run faster!, mother crying for her lost daughter, and so on. As the core fantasy unfolds and its formal nature comes into view, the

15 Such voices of boyishness are used on American television both in humor and in advertising. For humor, think of the Saturday Night Live sketch "Da Bears, Da Bulls" (E.g. "Da Super Fans Talk -- Da Bulls", http://www.evtv1.com/player.aspx?itemnum=6203. For a history of this sketch see the Wikipedia entry under "Bill Swerski's Superfans) Almost all the humor circulated around imitations of "guy talk". For an example of an advertisement that relies on the idea that black masculinity must be present in the speech, not just as content but as animating principle of the speech, see the Budweiser ad "Wassup" at http://www.adbrands.net/us/budweiser_us.htm
fantasy is right there in the utterance, getting itself expressed verbally. And as the expression is accompanied by apperceptive awareness this is tantamount to, or a half-step away from, self-ascription. In such a situation, to use Finkelstein’s distinction, the analysand is not simply becoming conscious of a fantasy, she is consciously fantasizing.

Of course, there is plenty of room for reflection of the standard variety: stepping back and reflecting on what one believes, desires, the contents of one’s dreams and fantasies. Such reflections can serve as important moments of consolidation and judgment. But from an analytic point of view they are derivative. Finkelstein has argued that as one acquires the ability to express one’s emotions verbally, one thereby acquires first-person authority with respect to them. That is, I gain non-observational authority precisely because, in the verbal act -- "I’m furious with you!" -- I am expressing the anger. Similarly, I want to claim, with the acquisition of the capacity to express verbally what has hitherto functioned as an unconscious practical identity: as I acquire the ability to express this organizing fantasy verbally I also gain first person authority with respect to it. I am putting myself into words. I am right there in the words that are expressing (as well as perhaps describing) who I am.

This is a process that cannot occur without ironic disruption -- and it characteristically occurs across four related dimensions. First, there is ironic disruption of one’s conscious practical identity. As Ms. A, for example, comes to express her unconscious practical identity verbally, this cannot help but disrupt her conscious sense of practical identity. The analytic process aims to create a space in which the disruption can be playful, as opposed to scary, overwhelming or traumatic. But there is a disruption of ordinary conscious life which, put into words, has this shape: "What does any of this have to do with being a woman?" The "any of this" stretches out in all directions: covering not only the boyish voice that is finding expression in the analytic session but also the feminine images that Ms. A has, until now, lived by. This is the experience of erotic uncanniness that is irony. It is an uncanny doubling wherein Ms. A is not only expressing herself (through her core fantasy) she is also looking over at herself as weirdly unfamiliar in her familiarity.
Her question is urgent and practical and it confronts her in the first person. It is disorienting in the sense that she can no longer simply appeal to received images or to standard reflections on her conscious practical identity--for that is precisely what is in question. Nor, correlatively, can anyone else answer her question for her.

Note that in terms of overt social manifestations, behavior or even internal conscious stances about one’s identity, there is no particular direction in which a person in Ms. A’s position ought to go. She may consciously reaffirm the very shape of her conscious practical identity, stay with the received image of femininity she has lived with all along (only now it will be accompanied by an ironized sense of its possibilities); or she may decide to emphasize a more boyish identity; or she may opt for a playful mixture; she may decide she is bi-sexual, transexual, cross-gendered, gay or re-enter heterosexual life. From the first-order perspective of establishing a gender identity, the analysis is not moving in any particular direction. It is simply facilitating a process by which cut-off parts of the self find their way into speech. This does not mean that the analysis itself is not moving in a direction; quite the contrary. When it is working well, analysis moves in the direction of freedom, truthfulness and self-knowledge of the analysand. These concepts require philosophical reflection particularly in the context of psychoanalysis. But I take it they are different ways of naming the formal and final cause of psychoanalysis. And it is precisely because analysis is constituted by this aim that, at the level of conscious practical identity it does not aim in any direction. But, for the moment, the important point to notice is that in facilitating the expression of hitherto hidden parts of the self, analysis simultaneously facilitates a process of ironic disruption.

The second dimension of ironic disruption concerns large-scale subjective questions that tend to unfold in an analysis. Ms A, remember, did not come into the analysis with any conscious complaint about her practical identity; she was specifically concerned about sexual relations with her husband. But as an analysis deepens, broad-scale questions typically come into view: am I able to love?, to allow myself to be loved?, to become a lover? Am I able to create in this world --

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something -- before I die? Am I able to be a friend, a husband, a wife, a professor, an artist, a gardener, a journalist? And when such questions come into view, the available social pretenses themselves come into question. A person may know very well that he fulfils the social norms of being a husband -- he's gone through the ritual, he's got the marriage certificate, he is co-habiting with the person with whom he went through the ritual, etc. -- what he wants to know is: could he ever be married? It is precisely the disruptions of unconscious identity that disrupt any attempt to keep this questioning confined to what, in the last lecture, I called left-column phenomena. The emergence of Ms. A's boyishness, for example, disrupts what might otherwise have been a standard-issue 'therapeutic discussion' of whether she loves her husband. It opens up disruptive questioning of what loving, for her, could possibly mean.

In yesterday's lecture I concentrated on the experience of irony as an uncanny ballooning out of one's sense of practical identity. In this lecture I have focused on the psychoanalytically familiar experience of not fitting comfortably into one's own psychic skin: in this case, one's practical identity comes to seem too small, too tight. We can now see how these experiences are related. The experience of one's conscious sense of practical identity being too constricted is occasioned by dynamic relations with an unconscious practical identity; and this may in certain circumstances be the occasion for an ironic disruption of one's conscious practical identity.

The third dimension of ironic disruption is in the transference. It is only when Ms A's boyish fantasy enters the room, fills up her speech and organizes her relationship to me -- in effect, turns the analytic hour into a 'late night bull session', or the playing field I described -- that psychoanalysis truly comes alive. Psychoanalysis cannot simply consist in a mutual conversation, based on observation and memory about how a person fits the masculine and feminine parts of herself together -- even though such conversations may occur within a psychoanalytic context and can, of course, have some therapeutic value. An analysis will typically entangle the analyst in a disruptive drama: as, for example, when Ms. A experiences the end of a session as me shoving her off the field. This has to be an
ironic disruption of previous understandings of what it is to be an analyst, an analysand, in analysis -- and it up-ends socially received images of therapy. In this regard, consider Freud’s discussion of how what he calls the compulsion to repeat is replaced by remembering -- though let me substitute "core fantasy" where he uses "compulsion":

"We render the [core fantasy] harmless, and indeed useful, by giving it the right to assert itself in a definite field. We admit it into the transference as a playground in which it is allowed to expand in almost complete freedom .. The transference thus creates an intermediate region between illness and real life through which the transition from one to the other is made."17

I am not a fan of Freud’s medical terminology, but his description of the analytic process as creating an intermediate region is exactly right.18 This intermediate region is the region of the uncanny. For, from this perspective, "remembering" cannot be a purely cognitive process -- as in, remembering a certain forgotten content. Rather, it has got to be a playful disruption of the soul -- which at the same time can give voice to what is happening.

The fourth dimension of ironic disruption may explicitly occur less often in an analysis -- and pursuing it perhaps occurs rarely among humans -- but one can now see how it arises out of the material we have been discussing. It is, in effect, an ironic questioning of the virtues. I am not claiming that all ironic questioning occurs in this way, but rather that this is one fascinating route. It arises with the practical question: How can I face all of this courageously? Or: How can I face all of this with integrity? But the "all-of-this" that emerges in analysis may on occasion put into question what, in this case, courage or integrity could be. Of course, the concept of courage has developed over time from its origins as a manly, warrior virtue; 19 and we are by now used to imagining all sorts of complex circumstances as occasions for courage. Still, the case that is envisaged here is not simply the difficulty of whether

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19 The ancient Greek word translated as courage is, of course, ἀνδρεία, manliness.
to apply a complex concept to a particularly tricky instance. If one acquires the virtues at all it is, as Plato and Aristotle emphasized, typically through a social education that begins in childhood. The education aims to instill a capacity to face whatever comes one’s way virtuously; in this case, courageously. That is, one is being trained to face an expectable range of possibilities. Thus training in a virtue like courage -- whatever its current historical manifestation -- will be in relation to available social pretenses and conscious practical identities. These will assume ranges of possibilities that are themselves up-ended in ironic disruption. There thus arises the possibility of the question: how can one face courageously the disruption of the entire range of possibilities that was assumed in one’s own training in courage? There is no obvious or automatic way to answer this question. Thus one can see how, from this psycho-social turmoil, there might arise a question of what a virtue like courage consists in. In effect, this questioning imports a peculiar form of not knowing into one’s life with the virtues. And in case you should think this an interesting story, but a million miles from Socrates, consider his account of how he came to focus on his characteristic activity:

"I am still unable, as the Delphic inscription orders, to know myself; and it really seems to me ridiculous to look into other things before I have really understood that. That is why I do not concern myself with them. I accept what is generally believed and, as I was just saying, I look not into them but into my own self: Am I a beast more complicated and savage than Typhon, or am I a simpler animal with a share in a divine and gentle nature?"

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20 Ms A, for example, may have had training in how to face circumstances courageously as a woman; and she had training in how to face them courageously as a boy; but what she faces in analysis is a disruption, or even a breakdown, of the idiosyncratic, individual form of life in which those images had application. The ironic question becomes: how does one face courageously the disruption or breakdown of courage as one has inherited and internalized it? That is, what does courage have to do with courage? This may occur against a background in which available social pretenses are robust and fairly stable, or it may occur when available social images are themselves undergoing transformation and disruption. Either way, there is an room for ironic questioning of the virtues. A dramatic inverse case is when the social understandings of the virtues themselves breakdown (regardless of what is happening to the individual). This is a central topic in my Radical Hope: Ethics in the Face of Cultural Devastation (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006).

21 Phaedrus 229e-230a (A. Nehamas and P. Woodruff trans.; in Plato: Complete Works, (J. Cooper ed. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997)). For a description of the horrific nature of Typhon see Hesiod, Theogony ll. 820-880. From a psychoanalytic perspective, it is interesting that the Sphinx, whose
6. Agency and psychic unity

I have been trying to show how our capacity for pretense-transcending aspiring can arise out of "lowly" psychic origins. We do not need to posit a special faculty capable of breaking through the pretenses of ordinary life and grasping the true ethical value of one's identity. And we need not go in the direction of metaphysical extravagance to see how it works. Yet, as we try to give a naturalistic, dynamic psychological account, one need not dismiss irony as one more punitive function of the superego. It is certainly true that superego functioning can make one feel that one is falling short in one's practical identity. But irony, as I understand it, emerges when the superego relaxes its punishing functions. These intrapsychic transformations have consequences for our understanding of agency and of psychic unity.

Normally, we use the concepts of action, agent, and agency to describe a distinctive form of life of which humans are capable: namely, that which is typically thought of as rational self-governance. We are creatures who can evaluate our desires and beliefs, ask what reasons we have for a proposed action; and often we can live in the light of our reasoning. In so acting, we constitute ourselves as agents. It is not simply that this or that desire -- or this or that psychic bit -- causes this or that bodily movement; rather, I, in choosing to act on this desire, constitute myself as the author of this action, and as an agent I take charge of what I am doing. Obviously, the idea of responsibility lies at the heart of this family of notions: as an agent acting, I open myself to a challenge that is directed at me: "What are you doing!?" For this question to be appropriate I have to have whatever unity is required to be the agent, the author of that act. It is a familiar thought that this kind of unity is an achievement and a task. It is, as Korsgaard puts it, "the ongoing struggle for integrity, the struggle for psychic unity, the struggle to be, in the face of psychic complexity, a single unified agent." 22 And she eloquently argues that it is

riddle Oedipus solved, was an offspring of Typhon. And, according to legend, Typhon, in revenge for Oedipus' killing the Sphinx, sent a human servant to reveal who Oedipus was.

22 Korsgaard, Self-constitution, op. cit., p. 7.
precisely the normative standards of practical identity that provide "the principles by which we achieve the psychic unity that makes agency possible." Thus, for her, the psychic unity required for agency simply is the unity achieved by living according to the norms of a practical identity which, by the same token, is the activity of self-constitution.

This is a plausible line of thought on the assumption that there are no other sources of psychic unity that are salient to agency or self-constitution. This is the assumption I have been calling into question. Consider how different the human scene will look depending on whether or not the assumption that rational judgment based on (conscious) practical identity is the only salient source of psychic unity in play.

Scene 1 is Ms. A before analysis. And for the sake of argument, imagine Ms. A had been studying moral philosophy. The idea pops into her head that it would be nice to be having a beer with her friend Bruno down at the bar. (The fact that he is her teammate does not enter her mind.) She is somewhat surprised by the thought, and as she reflects on it she decides it would conflict with her sense of who she is. She is a wife who is loyal to her husband; and her sense of appropriate gender roles is such that a married woman does not call up a handsome, single man and ask him out to a bar. She judges that she will not act on this impulse. Morally speaking it looks to her as though she has done the right thing. She has rejected the 'wayward' impulse by stepping back from it, judging it according to the norms of her practical identity -- loyal spouse, mature woman, rational agent, principled person, faithful to her commitments and so on -- and thus this looks like the autonomous act of a rational agent, an act of self-constitution. On the assumption that there are no other relevant acts of psychic unification, such a judgment (and fidelity to it) can plausibly be thought of as an act of unification.

However, if we allow the possibility of unconscious unifying sources of the self, the scene looks different. For this impulse-emerging-into-consciousness is not the isolated atom that it appears to be. Far from this being a case in which the self is trying to maintain and preserve psychic unity in the face of a possible disruption 'from outside', the very attempt to preserve psychic unity is in fact an act of psychic
division in which a powerful and primordial source of psychic unity is treated as though it were just an impulse -- or, perhaps even an habitual one. In the name of rational agency, and in the name of practical identity Ms. A is ignoring -- and thereby splitting off -- a vibrant, organizing part of herself. The idea that her reflectively judged act is coming from her would be treated by Plato (as well as by Freud) as mere appearance.

Scene 2: Same as Scene 1, except that having made the decision not to call Bruno, she calls Bruno and invites him out for a drink. This of course looks akratic; but whether it is or not depends on what one takes akrasia to be. It certainly is a case of deciding to do one thing and then doing another, of succumbing to temptation and so on. But it is not a case of Ms. A understanding what her options are, making a rational decision and then acting against it. It is not a case of her seeing clearly what the temptation is, deciding not to act on it, and then acting on it. In this sense, it is not so much a case of weakness of will as lack of self-knowledge -- though perhaps this is what we call weakness of will turns out to be. But the important point for now is that, in this scene, Ms A's conscious rational will, far from being the source of unity, is actively dividing the self by ignoring other unifying sources of the self.

Scene 3: Ms. A is in analysis. If this is conceived on the standard model of reflection, it will look as though reflective consciousness is extending its reach: taking more and more mental items into account. And as it is able to judge these formerly unconscious items, the agent will increase the breadth and depth of her psychic unity. On this picture there is room for acknowledging conflicts, and for negotiating the insistent demands of fantasy with one's conscious commitment to a practical identity. Ms A, for example, could reflect on how to fit together her boyish fantasies with her feminine identity. And she could take practical steps as a result of her deliberation. There is truth to this picture, and important truth. But to think it gives us the whole truth -- or even the essential truth -- is to mislead ourselves about the kind of creature we are. In the name of making the unconscious conscious one unwittingly collaborates in keeping it unconscious. For the unconscious is not some darkened realm of forbidden items over which a brave reflective
consciousness casts its beacon. Indeed, it often makes itself manifest most clearly in moments when reflective consciousness is itself disrupted, thrown out of joint. By the time reflection can step back from this experience to consider it in its standard fashion, it has itself already been transformed by the disruption. This is a crucial point: the psychoanalytic process of making the unconscious conscious tends to be a radically non-conservative extension of one’s conscious practical identity.\textsuperscript{23} This is more than the straightforward point that as one discovers more about one’s unconscious motivations one will have to go back and revise one's sense of who one is. In addition, there will be upending, uncanny moments such that by the time one does go back to revise, revisions will have already occurred. The question then becomes one of learning how to live well with this unusual form of self-development. Ironically, there is an important form of psychic integration which consists in deploying well a capacity for ironic disruption. A deep form of integration can occur only when we find creative ways to disrupt and disturb ourselves.

Obviously, fidelity to our practical identity is an important human commitment; and reflection on the various temptations and incentives that come our way is one crucial way we maintain that fidelity. But that important truth can again lead us into error if we assume that our conscious practical identity is the only salient source of psychic unity available to us. What psychoanalysis has discovered is that one’s conscious sense of practical identity is often achieved at great cost to other organizing parts of the self. Let us assume that every person has achieved an \textit{ethically cleansed} practical identity in this sense: each person has been able to take on a set of social roles that do not interfere with the social roles chosen by other people; each person has been able to reflect on his practical identity and perform a reflective-endorsement test that conforms to the categorical imperative; and that that reflective endorsement provides the grounds on which each person has the

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\textsuperscript{23} In logic, a theory T2 is a conservative extension of theory T1 if every theorem in T2 that uses only the symbols of T1 is already a theorem of T1. Obviously, the idea of a non-conservative extension in the current context can only be analogical and suggestive.
practical identity he or she has. In short, for some version of the kingdom of ends, we are in the kingdom of ends. No doubt, there is much to commend this world. In such a world each person will be respected by others and will respect other people - - if what we mean by "person" and "people" is "inhabitant of an available conscious practical identity". This, of course, amounts to a maximally harmonious form of life in the left-hand lane. But, if the line of thinking I have been pursuing is correct, the problem with this kingdom of ends is that it is compatible with being a dystopia pervaded by unfreedom.

The possibility for unhappiness is obvious: in the name of psychic unity, integrity, practical identity and so on, the inhabitants of this kingdom would be splitting off a vibrant part of themselves -- treating a deeply rooted source of psychic unity as though it were a mere disruption or distraction from the only unity we have. This would in effect be an act of repression and, as such, the occasion for psychic conflict. In the case of freedom, the language of "autonomy" would be deployed, among other things, to discredit and disavow other expressions of the self. In short, it would be possible to have a conscious practical identity, to have carried out successfully the categorical imperative test in reflective endorsement, to be a citizen of the kingdom of ends so described -- and yet be a miserable failure as a human being. And here the issue is not simply that one might be unhappy even though one is an autonomous moral agent. The worry is that the language of autonomy would be deployed misleadingly to disavow other sources of the self. Traditionally, we have understood an agent’s action to be free if it could genuinely be understood as coming from her. The appeal of this thought depends on the assumption that what it is for an action to come from her is for it to issue from her rational will. Thus the principles of rationality, psychic unity and agency have traditionally been thought to coincide. I do not wish to pull this trio apart, but I hope I have said enough in these lectures to call into question what each of the elements consists in. Above all, it would seem to be rational to call into question the ultimate rationality of the picture of rationality as simply consisting in my ability to step back and reflect on how well or badly items of consciousness conform to my conscious practical identity.
Appendix II.1: Comment on Richard Moran's Conception of the Psychoanalytic Situation

As I said in the lecture, Richard Moran's *Authority and Estrangement* is not only an important philosophical inquiry into the structure of self-knowledge, it accurately captures the actual practice of a wide range of talking cures. That is why it is important to get clear on what is left out. Consider one of Moran's paradigmatic characterizations of the therapeutic situation:

"In various familiar therapeutic contexts, for instance, the manner in which the analysand becomes aware of various of her beliefs and other attitudes does not necessarily conform to the Transparency Condition. The person who feels anger at the dead parent for having abandoned her, or who feels betrayed or deprived of something by another child, may only know of this attitude through the eliciting and interpreting of evidence of various kinds. She might become thoroughly convinced, both from the constructions of the analyst, as well as from her own appreciation of the evidence, that this attitude must indeed by attributed to her. And yet, at the same time, when she reflects on the world-directed question itself, whether she has indeed been betrayed by this person, she may find that the answer is no or can't be settled one way or the other. So, transparency fails because she cannot learn of this attitude of hers by reflection on the object of that attitude. *She can only learn of it in a fully theoretical manner, taking an empirical stance toward herself as a particular psychological subject.*"\(^{24}\)

I do not think this last claim is correct. At the heart of psychoanalysis -- really, what distinguishes it from other forms of talking therapy -- is the development and handling of transference. If, say, anger at the dead parent for having abandoned her

\[^{24}\text{Moran, Authority and Estrangement op. cit., p. 85; my emphasis.}\]
is a part of the analysand’s fantasy life, one would expect to find repetitions and variations on this theme within the analysand’s current life (breakups with boyfriends, painful relations with the boss, depression at the end of the school year when a class ends, etc.) -- as well as some kind of manifestation within the analytic context: for example, conflicted feelings about the analyst taking a vacation or missing a session. If there is no living manifestation of the anger then it is hard to know what it means to say the analysand is angry. Conversely, if anger at abandonment is unconsciously informing daily life, or life within the analytic session, then the analyst ought not to rely on theoretical inferences, but should rather be attuned to moments when the fantasy is alive and getting actively expressed. Analyst and analysand can then work together to facilitate a process in which the analysand can express her angry fantasy verbally. As Freud, commenting on the handling of the transference, so memorably put it, "The unconscious impulses do not want to be remembered in the way the treatment desires them to be, but endeavor to reproduce themselves in accordance with the timelessness of the unconscious and its capacity for hallucination. Just as happens in dreams, the patient regards the products of the awakening of his unconscious impulses as contemporaneous and real; he seeks to put his passions into action without taking any account of the real situation. The doctor tries to compel him to fit these emotional impulses into the nexus of the treatment and of his life-history, to submit them to intellectual consideration and to understand them in the light of their psychical value. This struggle between the doctor and the patient, between intellect and instinctual life, between understanding and seeking to act, is played out almost exclusively in the phenomena of transference. It cannot be disputed that controlling the phenomena of transference presents the psychoanalyst with the greatest difficulties. But it should not be forgotten that it is precisely they that do us the inestimable service of making the
patient's hidden and forgotten impulses immediate and manifest. For when all is said and done, it is impossible to destroy anyone in absentia or in effigy."  

From a psychoanalytic perspective, if the anger at the dead parent is to be transformed it must be worked through in the here-and-now. This is decidedly not a process of making theoretical constructions based on empirical observations and inference. It bears more resemblance to the painful but ultimately liberating activity of mourning.

Moran makes claims about the psychoanalytic situation that on first read look eminently plausible, for example:

"It is virtually definitive of psychoanalytic treatment ... that it does not begin by taking first-person declarations as necessarily describing the truth about the analysand's actual attitudes. And this might be taken to mean that the knowledge of oneself it seeks to culminate in would ideally dispense with avowal as something unsophisticated and unreliable, substituting for it something more interpretive and theoretically grounded. But any such suggestion would neglect, at the very least, the crucial therapeutic difference between the merely "intellectual" acceptance of an interpretation, which will itself normally be seen as a form of resistance, and the process of working-through that leads to a fully internalized acknowledgement of some attitude which makes a felt difference to the rest of the analysand's mental life. This goal of treatment, however, requires that the attitude in question be

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26 The psychoanalyst Hans Loewald describes it as a process of turning ghosts into ancestors: "The transference neurosis, in the technical sense of the establishment and resolution of it in the analytic process, is due to the blood of recognition, which the patient's unconscious is given to taste so that the old ghosts reawaken to life. Those who know ghosts tell us that they long to be released from their ghost life and led to rest as ancestors. As ancestors they life forth in the present generation, while as ghosts they are compelled to haunt the present generation with their shadow life. Transference is pathological insofar as the unconscious is a crowd of ghosts, and this is the beginning of the transference neurosis in analysis: ghosts of the unconscious, imprisoned by defenses but haunting the patient in the dark of his defenses and symptoms, are allowed to taste blood, and are let loose. In the daylight of analysis the ghosts of the unconscious are laid and led to rest as ancestors whose power is taken over and transformed into the newer intensity of present life." Hans Loewald, "On the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis", in The Essential Loewald op.cit., pp. 248-249; my emphasis.
knowable by the person, not through a process of theoretical self-
interpretation but *by avowal* of how one thinks and feels."27

If Moran meant by "avowal" what we often mean -- a general term for sincere
expression, then I would have no quarrel with this paragraph. The only issue would
be to try to explicate in more detail what this particular kind of avowal consists in --
namely, the verbal *expression* of the fantasy. However, Moran does not mean this; as
he makes explicit:

That is, what is to be restored to the person is not just knowledge of the facts
about oneself, but self-knowledge that obeys the condition of
transparency."28

Certainly, Moran is right that analysis aims at more than restoration of theoretical
knowledge of the facts about oneself. But what grounds the thought that the aim is
to restore self-knowledge that obeys the conditions of transparency? In the
example Moran uses, this would consist in the analysand’s anger at the dead parent
abating when she realized that he did not abandon her, he just died. Obviously, if
the analysand’s anger did abate in this way, there would be much to be said in favor
of such a movement: the analysand would be living in more realistic (and rational)
relations to events that actually happened in the external world.

But, from a psychoanalytic point of view, there is a further challenge of how
to take *internal* reality into account. By ‘internal reality’ I do not simply mean the
truths about one’s inner life. Rather, as one probes one’s inner life one comes up
against a certain obduracy. So, as an analysand comes to recognize that she is angry
at a dead parent for abandoning her, and she also comes to recognize that, in fact, he
just died, she may also come to recognize *that she is still angry!* Perhaps the anger
and disappointment may diminish over time as she works through her anger; but
there may be a significant residue that perdures. She may indeed feel her anger
vividly, express it verbally all the while knowing that -- considered at the level of
rational assessment -- it is not warranted. Of course, the phenomenon of
recalcitrant emotions is well known; but the psychoanalytic interpretation of the

27 Moran, *Authority and Estrangement*, op. cit. pp.89-90, my emphasis.
28 Ibid. p. 90
phenomenon is distinctive. For the aim of psychoanalytic therapy is not to make one's fantasy go away even when it becomes conscious -- which in effect is what is being called for when one states that the goal of analysis is that one's emotional life should obey conditions of transparency -- but rather to find creative and life-fulfilling ways of living with fantasy. On occasion, this may involve transformation of the fantasy -- and a correlative abating of emotions like anger or guilt -- but on occasion -- when the fantasy perdures -- it may involve a transformation of how one lives with it. That is, the anger and disappointment at the dead parent might not go away -- even after rational assessment that it is not ultimately warranted, even after analytic therapy -- but it might become an occasion for humor, for poetry, for meditation on loss, for taking up moral causes, or writing critical book reviews, for spending more time with one's own children, for reading Shakespeare, for taking up canoeing. The success of the therapy does not necessarily depend on the anger going away in the light of rational assessment (transparency), but rather on whether one ceases to be stuck with the anger in rigid routines one does not understand.

It also must be said that there are huge swathes of fantasy-life in which it does not make sense to ask after transparency conditions. While it does make sense to ask whether residual anger at a dead parent is called for, what could it be to ask whether a fantasy of boyishness is appropriate? Appropriate to what? But even in those cases where it does make sense to inquire about appropriateness -- say, anger at the dead parent -- fantasy-life by its nature resists transparency. It is a part of imaginative life that feeds off of (and informs) real-life experiences in oblique ways, but is also insulated from them. In that sense, fantasy is essentially different from those familiar propositional attitudes that do aim to conform to transparency. In its isolation, in its insistence and its obstinacy, fantasy-life has a reality of its own. The aim of analysis is not simply to make our emotions appropriate reactions to the external facts (that is, conform to the transparency condition), but to find creative and life-enhancing ways of negotiating internal and external realities.