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Introduction: philosophy and psychoanalysis

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In Richard Wollheim & James Hopkins (eds.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud*.
Cambridge University Press (1982)



Abstract

This (1982) essay sets out the claim that psychoanalysis is a cogent extension of the intuitive common sense psychology by which we naturally understand human action. In this psychology explanation proceeds by relating actions to the logically and causally cohering desires and beliefs of agents. As Freud showed, this kind of explanation is systematically deepened and extended by the explanation of dreams, the symptoms of mental disorder, and other related phenomena via the Freudian concept of wish fulfilment, which was later extended to the more inclusive post-Freudian concept of phantasy. In this extension everyday actions, such as Freud's writing up his patient Irma's case history on the day before his dream of Irma's injection, are seen to be rooted in the same unconscious motives as are represented as fulfilled in dreams and symptoms -- e.g., in this case, by unconscious stirrings of deep guilt on the topic of injection, of which Freud was unaware until he analysed the dream. As this illustrates, the understanding of wishfulfilments and other formations of phantasy enables us fill out our account of agents and their actions by adding a stock of previously unacknowledged desires and modes of expression of desire. These are seen to cohere with, and also to deepen, our previous understanding: after understanding Freud's dream, we also have a deeper and firmer (and so more cogent) understanding of his behaviour on the previous day. In this way Freud effected an extension of our everyday mode of understanding that was cogent, cumulative, and radical, as illustrated further by examination of Freud's case

history of the patient described as the Rat Man.

Keywords

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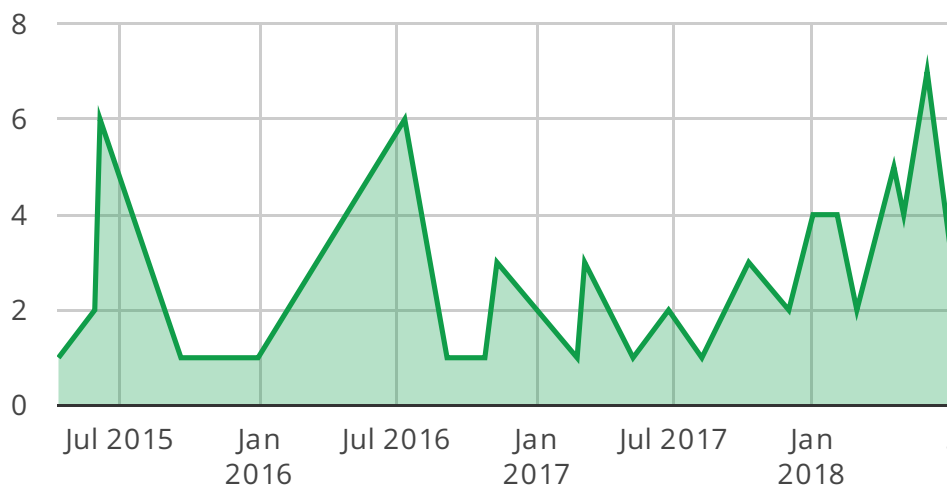
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