

Wollheim and the puzzle of unconscious emotions

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1. There is a puzzle about the nature of unconscious emotions that Freud noted, and has vexed philosophers for some time. The puzzle stems from the fact that we intuitively connect emotion to feeling, e.g. we would expect a fear of spiders to cause someone to feel afraid when confronted by a spider. But the idea of having a feeling we don't feel consciously is so perplexing that many philosophers and psychologists, including Freud, have thought it a contradiction in terms: "It is surely the essence of an emotion that we should be aware of it, i.e. that it should become known to consciousness". And yet, he goes on, "in psychoanalytic practice we are accustomed to speak of unconscious love, hate, anger, etc., and find it impossible to avoid even the strange conjunction, 'unconsciousness of guilt', or a paradoxical 'unconscious anxiety'".\*

Attributing emotions of which the subject is unaware is not restricted to psychoanalytic interpretation. It is commonplace for people to later realise what they felt, but were not consciously aware of feeling, at an earlier time; everyday explanations of people's behaviour, perhaps particularly in personal relationships, require us to attribute unconscious emotions to them; literature is full of examples and illustrations of characters' ignorance and self-deception regarding what they feel.

What is an unconscious emotion, then? Here's a working definition: An unconscious emotion is *an emotion that the subject is not aware of in such a way as to be able to avow it directly and non-inferentially* (these last three words – 'directly and non-inferentially' – are intended to rule out inferring one's emotions from behaviour). The puzzle arises like this:

- a. We feel our emotions.
- b. Feelings must be conscious to exist at all; unconscious feelings make no sense.
- c. We know what it is that we feel when we feel it.
- d. Yet, by definition, we are not aware of our unconscious emotions.

Many philosophers think the problem lies with c: we do feel our unconscious emotions consciously, but we don't acknowledge or recognise the feeling in some way. The *feeling* is conscious in some important sense, but the emotion remains unconscious because the feeling doesn't reveal the emotion to us. I agree that this is often true, but I don't think this model covers many of the kinds of case study that psychoanalysts put forward. Consider an example from Freud's famous case, the Rat Man.<sup>†</sup> One day when the Rat Man's lady was leaving after visiting him, his foot knocked a stone, and he felt obliged to move it to the side of the road in case her

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\* Freud, S. (1915), *The Unconscious* (London: Penguin Freud Library), 179f.

<sup>†</sup> Freud, S. (1909), *Notes Upon a Case of Obsessional Neurosis* (London: Penguin Freud Library)

carriage, which would pass that way, would strike the stone and be overturned. He walked on a bit, but then thought his action was ridiculous, and he felt obliged to go back and put the stone back in the middle of the road. Did he *consciously feel* hatred for his lady when doing this, but fail to recognise his feeling *as* hatred? Certainly, as Freud's interpretation shows, his action in removing and replacing the stone manifest his hatred. But this is not to say that he must also have therefore *felt* his hatred. We could claim instead that we *don't feel* our unconscious emotions: the Rat Man never felt his hatred for his lady. Or we could say that we feel them *unconsciously*, disagreeing with the assertion of Freud and the philosophers that feeling cannot be unconscious.

I have discussed these issues elsewhere, so it is not my purpose here to survey the alternative theories that present themselves.\* Instead, I want to outline and develop Richard Wollheim's views on emotion in order to understand unconscious emotions better. In contrast to many philosophers, Wollheim does not find the idea of unconscious feeling puzzling, so his position on the puzzle is to deny b: feelings do not have to be conscious, and there is a perfectly legitimate sense in which we feel our unconscious emotions unconsciously. I don't intend to defend or evaluate this claim directly, but to discuss the broader question of the place of feeling in an account of unconscious emotion.

Wollheim's arguments on emotion are lengthy and complex, and his theory is extremely rich. As he never discusses unconscious emotion separately and explicitly, we are presented with a difficult exegetical task. It is this task of interpretation and development of core themes in Wollheim's work that is my goal today.† First, I present Wollheim's account of what emotions are. Then, I develop his views on the relation between emotions and feelings. Third, the question becomes more complex when we understand how unconscious emotions differ from 'normal' emotions with the onset of defensive phantasy, and so, finally, I note the implications of this development.

2. To understand Wollheim's theory of emotions, we must first understand his distinction between mental states and mental dispositions. Mental states are episodic: they occur at a time and are transient. Examples include perceptions, sensations, attacks of dizziness, dreams, thoughts, images, recollections, and moments of feeling desire. Mental dispositions are 'more or less persisting modifications of the mind which underlie this sequence of mental states'.‡ They manifest themselves intermittently in mental states and activities, and have histories. Wollheim's examples include knowledge, beliefs, desires, habits, virtues, skills, memories, and inhibitions. Mental activities form a third category of the mind. They bring about mental states or

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\* Lacewing, M. (forthcoming), 'The Puzzle of Unconscious Emotion' in Braddock and Lacewing (ed.) *The Academic Face of Psychoanalysis* (London: Routledge)

† In addition to Wollheim's (1999) *On the Emotions* (New Haven: Yale University Press), I have drawn on his (1984) *The Thread of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press) and his (2003), 'The Emotions and their Philosophy of Mind' in Hatzimoysis, A. (ed.) (2003) *Philosophy and the Emotions* (Cambridge University Press), 19-38. Page numbers in the text refer to Wollheim (1999).

‡ Wollheim (1984), 1

dispositions, and include thinking a thought, willing, processes of attention, repression, projection, and introjection.

While we are talking of states and dispositions, we should note that the term ‘unconscious’ can be used in two, very distinct ways. All dispositions, while they are not manifesting themselves in states, are ‘unconscious’ in the sense of being ‘unactualized’. For example, your belief that Paris is the capital of France was ‘unconscious’ in this sense before I brought it into mind. This is obviously not what psychoanalysts talk about when they talk about the unconscious, so let us put it aside. I shall not use the word ‘unconscious’ with this sense again. Instead, I shall use it in the sense I suggested above: A mental *state*, such as a thought or feeling, is unconscious if the subject is not aware of in such a way as to be able to avow it directly and non-inferentially. A *disposition* is unconscious, by extension, if it manifests itself only in states which do not enable the subject to know and avow, non-inferentially, that he has that disposition. A disposition is not unconscious, in my use of the term, simply because it is a disposition. In this sense, your belief that Paris is the capital of France is a ‘conscious’ disposition, because you can easily and reliably check whether you believe it by entertaining the thought.\* Our Oedipal desires, by contrast, tend to be unconscious dispositions.

So where do emotions fall in this categorization of the mind? The close association of emotions and feelings I began by remarking on might mislead us into thinking that emotions are states, since feelings are states – they occur at a time, and pass. And many contemporary accounts of emotion seem to assume this. However, Wollheim argues that emotions are dispositions. Consider three examples of how we ascribe emotions: ‘He is proud of his children’, ‘she is afraid of snakes’, ‘he is angry with his boss today’. None of these attributions are reducible to the attribution of a constant, continuing episode of feeling. This is obvious in being proud of one’s children or being afraid of snakes, emotions which last a long time. But even in the case of being angry at one’s boss for a day, angry thoughts and feelings may *come and go* throughout the day. I am said to be angry as long as they continue to occur, not just *when* they occur. Whether I am still angry the next day, for example, is decided (in part) by whether I am disposed to feel angry once again.† The disposition – the emotion – and the feeling are logically distinct (even if the disposition last no longer than the feeling), and we should understand the feeling as the manifestation of the emotion. Episodes of feeling have a special place in our understanding of what emotion is, but we should not think that such episodes of feeling are all there is to an emotion. Emotions are dispositions, feelings are states.

As it illustrates the nature of emotions, it is worth saying more on the interaction of states and dispositions. Wollheim lists five ways in which mental states and dispositions interact with each other (1999, 2-3):

1. a state can initiate a disposition; a boy’s waking up to discover a frog on his pillow may cause a fear of frogs that lasts for years;

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\* Thanks to Edward Harcourt for pointing to the need to make this distinction between two senses of ‘unconscious’.

† Again, if I recognise my anger for what it is, nothing ‘unconscious’ is going on here. The anger, as a disposition, does not persist ‘unconsciously’ between bouts of angry feelings. It persists unactualized, but not ‘unconsciously’; to think otherwise is to confuse the two senses of ‘unconscious’.

2. a state can terminate or extinguish a disposition; a tight-rope walker's sudden fright on the wire may destroy her confidence for good so that she can no longer walk the rope;
3. a state can attenuate or reinforce a disposition; the boy's adolescent encounter with an injured frog may reduce or intensify his fear of frogs;
4. a disposition, sometimes in response to a stimulus of the moment, sometimes apparently spontaneously, can manifest itself in a state or activity, in something the person does or endures, whether inwardly or outwardly, voluntarily or involuntarily; someone's desire to escape poverty may cause a passing fantasy or daydream of wealth, perhaps at a time when their poverty is brought to their attention;
5. finally, a disposition can filter or deflect our interactions with the world; a man's sudden fear robs his declaration of love of conviction; a woman revisits a childhood place, anticipating a familiar pleasure, but the experience is soured by memories she thought she had overcome.

Accepting, then, that emotions are dispositions, what kind of disposition are they? Dispositions are divided into kinds by their role or function. Beliefs function to provide the subject with a true picture of the world; desires function to provide targets, objectives, to aim at, and also furnish reasons for action; emotions, claims Wollheim, provide an orientation, or attitude, to objects in the world. Attitudes are neither a type of belief nor a type of desire, they are distinct, Wollheim argues: 'beliefs can be falsified, emotions cannot be; desires can be satisfied, emotions cannot be'.\*,†

3. Understanding that emotions are dispositions rather than states takes us a step in the right direction towards understanding the puzzle of unconscious emotions. For it is not puzzling how someone may have dispositions they are not aware of, through self-deception or through repression. I may not know what my attitudes towards other people are; given that discovering this could be painful, or clash with my self-image, I may be motivated to keep myself from discovering them. It is not, then, their nature as attitudes that makes unconscious emotions puzzling. It is the fact that we expect emotions to be *felt*.

As noted above, if we want to affirm this expectation, we may either say that we feel unconscious emotions unconsciously or that we feel them consciously, but in a way that prevents us from realizing what our emotions truly are. But some philosophers have argued that feelings are not an essential part of emotions; it is only the attitude, the way the emotion relates the subject to the world, that counts. If there is no reason to think that it is the *nature* of emotions to manifest themselves in feelings, the puzzle of unconscious emotions dissolves. Wollheim rejects

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\* Wollheim (2003), 29

† Emotions, attitudes, have similarities to both belief and desire. Both beliefs and attitudes influence how we understand the world, but attitudes do so not only through what we hold to be true, but how we imagine the world. Emotions can be caused by beliefs, and if so, can (but don't necessarily) take on some sensitivity to the truth. Both desires and attitudes leave one pleased or displeased with the world as it is, but attitudes don't necessarily lead one to do anything about it. Emotions can cause desires, and if so, can (but don't necessarily) take on some of the motivational force of desire.

this line of argument. To understand why, we need to understand more about dispositions and the states that manifest them.

Wollheim argues that an emotion, a disposition, manifests itself in feeling, a state.\* 'Manifestation' is spelled out by Wollheim as a form of causal relation that is not accidental, but intrinsic to the nature of the disposition and the state that manifests it. Dispositions, we remarked, are divided into kinds by their function. But how do they fulfil their function? Wollheim argues that it is 'most distinctive of our psychology' that 'mental dispositions manifest themselves in mental states that are apt, or well-adjusted, to advance the role or function of the dispositions, and their aptness lies in the way in which what it is like for the person to be in that kind of state propels the person to do what, in the circumstances, will fulfil that role'.† For example, desire provides us with targets to aim at. For example, I have a desire to be on time. Desire motivates us by manifesting itself in the state of feeling the desire – a feeling that has a force to it, including the pleasure that is anticipated in imagining the desire satisfied and the pain anticipated in imagining it unsatisfied. My desire to be on time, when I am in danger of running late, manifests itself in a feeling of anxiety, which makes me move faster. So 'what it is like' to feel the desire inclines us to act in a way that satisfies the desire; and getting us to act in this way is precisely the role of a desire. So the desire fulfils its role through the state of feeling desire.‡ The state of feeling desire is therefore a manifestation of desire.

Wollheim argues that a feeling, when it occurs, is a manifestation of an emotion, not just a correlation or accidental causal effect. He gives three grounds: first, it can initiate emotion; second, it can manifest it appropriately; and third, it can inform the subject about the specific character of the emotion (119).

The second condition is the most straightforward: feeling an existing emotion expresses and reinforces the attitude of the emotion, and this is why the feelings occur. Their occurrence is not an inessential addition to emotion. If an adolescent boy is angry at his father, each episode of his feeling anger reinforces this disposition. We will see below that in cases of new emotions, the feelings from which the emotion emerges secure and enforce the developing attitude. In more complex cases, the dynamic activity of feeling when responsive to both existing emotions and a new situation, is the means by which emotional attitudes are refined or revised. If the father sensitively confronts and responds to his son's anger when it is felt, the son may be able to revised or relinquish his anger as his angry feelings change in response to his father's response to him. As psychoanalysts are all too aware, it is difficult – some would say impossible – for someone to change their emotions without engaging their feelings.

The third condition strengthens the second. It is clear from our experience that what we feel informs us of the specific character of the emotion in that the occurrence of feeling teaches

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\* *ibid.*, 30

† *ibid.*, 26

‡ In Wollheim's more technical terminology, for a state to manifest a disposition, the state must have a causal efficacy that coincides with the role of the disposition, and the disposition causes the state because of this concurrence. The feeling of desire occurs precisely in order to incline us to act so as to fulfil the desire. A state's causal efficacy Wollheim labels its 'psychic force'. When the state occurs because of its psychic force, as when it manifests a disposition, then its psychic force is its 'psychic function'. Its function is to carry out, through its psychic force, the function or role of the disposition.

us an old emotion is still extant (meeting an old flame after some years), a new one has formed (a sense of despair when first confronted with extreme poverty), or that a familiar one is present (a pride in one's achievements).<sup>\*</sup> However, how and when feelings reveal our emotions to us is somewhat complex.<sup>†</sup> Wollheim argues that we cannot make sense of feelings independently of understanding them as manifestations of emotions: 'we cannot understand what "feeling angry" means without first understanding "being angry"' (10). Only through associating the feeling to the disposition that we are able to fully recognise the feeling for what it is.<sup>‡</sup> However, once we have been 'emotionally educated', once the structure of interpretation is in place, so to speak, the feeling is often relatively transparent – we can identify our feeling as of anger, sadness, joy etc. and as directed towards a particular object. We often discover what emotions we have through the feelings we have. This is part of the privileged place that feelings have in our understanding of emotion. Nevertheless, feelings alone, i.e. in the absence of interpretation, may not tell us what emotion is being manifest. We may feel churned up, but not quite know whether it is anxiety, disappointment, anger, self-righteousness or what we feel, and why. First, interpreting our feelings can be a difficult matter. Second, interpreting our feelings can be part of the process by which an emotion is formed or revised, i.e. the emotion manifest in the feeling is not necessarily fully determinate in advance of its interpretation.<sup>§</sup> As I reflect on my feelings, my process of thought may in fact create a more determinate attitude, so the emotion becomes one of disappointment rather than anger, say. To connect this back to Wollheim's argument: it is because the emotion is expressed by and through feelings that feelings have this ability to reveal emotions as they do.

These arguments are enough to establish that feelings, when they occur, are not mere concomitants to emotion, but a fully integrated part of what it is to have an emotion.<sup>\*\*</sup> They don't show that emotions *must always* manifest themselves in feeling. Wollheim argues that other

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<sup>\*</sup> Wollheim (1999), 123

<sup>†</sup> Thanks again to Edward Harcourt for pressing me to make this clearer.

<sup>‡</sup> Wollheim (2003), 22

<sup>§</sup> See Taylor, C. (1985) 'Self-Interpreting Animals' in his *Human Agency and Language: Philosophical Papers* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) and Tanney, J. (2002) 'Self-knowledge, Normativity, and Construction', *Philosophy* 51 (Supp.), 37-55, for arguments supporting this claim. In the context of our investigation, it is worth noting that this is not a claim that is particularly about unconscious emotion, for once I have reached my self-interpretation, supposing it is sufficiently accurate and true to myself to resolve my uncertainty, the resulting determinate emotion may be conscious. I am supposing, in the case of the Rat Man, that he feels hatred, even if the precise content of that hatred is indeterminate, is sufficiently determinate independent of and prior to his self-interpretation. Freud's explanation – and indeed, I believe, any plausible explanation – of the stone moving episode requires this degree of mental realism. That Taylor would probably accept this realism as consonant with his interpretive constructivism is indicated by his acceptance of limits on self-interpretation: 'in offering a characterization [of our feelings], these feelings open the question whether this characterization is adequate...whether we have properly explicated what the feeling gives us a sense of' (1985, p. 64).

<sup>\*\*</sup> What is the strength of the claim that feelings are 'essential' to emotion? Wollheim is clear that his enquiry falls under 'applied' rather than 'pure' philosophy (see the 'Introduction' to Wollheim (1999)). Pure philosophy attempts to establish conceptual possibilities, truths that hold for all possible worlds. Applied philosophy attempts to establish theoretical possibilities, truths that hold in this world in accordance with the laws of nature. Hence, the claim should be understood as saying that feelings are essential to the role of emotion in human beings as constituted.

states also manifest emotions, e.g. occurrent thoughts, wishes and phantasies (115), and he goes on to remark that it is wishes and phantasies that ‘account for the deeper, or more buried, side of emotion’ (116). This opens up a new way of understanding the Rat Man: his unconscious hatred is manifest in an unconscious phantasy, rather than an unconscious feeling, that causes his action of removing and replacing the stone and his conscious feelings of solicitous love and the obligation to act.

On the basis of Wollheim’s account so far, whether unconscious emotions manifest themselves in feelings is unresolved. But, as I noted in the introduction, this is not an issue for Wollheim, as he does not find the idea of unconscious feeling puzzling, and his emphasis on phantasy is not intended to be a substitute for feeling as he believes that occurrent unconscious phantasies are felt.\* I shall discuss the place of phantasy in unconscious emotion in due course, but we first have unfinished business with the first of Wollheim’s three connections between feeling and emotion, viz. the origin of emotions in feelings.

4. In order to understand emotion, Wollheim argues, it is not enough to simply note its attitudinal nature. We must also understand how such attitudes develop, for ‘it is essential to emotions...not only that they generate attitudes, but that they standardly arise in a certain way’.† Emotions originate, he claims, in the satisfaction or frustration of desire. The emotional attitude is formed by the subject projecting the experience of satisfaction or frustration onto that thing or fact which he takes to have precipitated the experience.‡ The transformation of the experience of satisfaction or frustration into an attitude is not easy to understand. In outline: first, the person moves from a state of being ‘immured’ in the experience to concentrating on what precipitated it; second, this leads to that object being perceived or imagined in a particular way, viz. as the cause, or part of the cause, of the experience of satisfaction or frustration. What Wollheim terms a ‘correspondence’ is established between the object and the experience, the object is experienced so that it is ‘just the sort of thing’ that would produce this experience.

An attitude cannot form and persist without a correspondence being established. For this to happen, the projection of the experience needs to have a certain complexity.§ In simple cases of projecting a feeling, the result of projection is that the object, usually another person, is thought to have *that feeling*. That isn’t what happens in the formation of emotion. Rather, the object is experienced as *of a piece* with the feeling. For this to occur, the object must have been selected for projection because of some ‘affinity’ between it and the feeling. Wollheim explicitly

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\* Wollheim (1984, Ch. 5, § 5) claims that phantasy may be either a mental state or a mental disposition, and that as a state it may manifest a dispositional phantasy.

† *ibid.*, 29; see also (1999), 74

‡ Two qualifications: first, Wollheim argues that the satisfaction or frustration need not be actual, but may be merely supposed or even just anticipated. Second, Wollheim (1999, 18) notes that we have ‘instant desires’. It is not necessary to his account that the desire precedes the experience of that which becomes the object. It is sufficient if the object ‘grabs’ the subject, creating a desire then and there at the very moment of holding out the possibility of its satisfaction or frustration, as when we are offered a drink.

§ See Wollheim (1991), ‘Correspondence, Projective Properties, and Expression in the Arts’ reprinted in his (1993), *The Mind and Its Depths* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press), Ch. IX.

says that there can be no account of this sense of affinity.\* Correspondence and affinity can be illustrated from art: we say that certain landscapes are melancholic, others joyful. In attributing the properties to the landscape, we have effected a correspondence. We do so on the basis that there is some affinity between the landscape and the feeling, of melancholy or joy, that it produces in us. There can be no account of why we should experience such an affinity.

What is important in this account, however, is that the attitude develops as a result of the projection of the experience of satisfaction or frustration of desire. The projection stabilizes this sense of affinity into correspondence and lays the ground for the attitude towards the object to develop. And so, Wollheim remarks, ‘That emotion rides into our lives on the back of desire is a crucial fact about emotion... the colour with which emotion tints the world is something to be understood only through the origin of emotion in desire’ (15).

Wollheim argues that the satisfaction or frustration of desire is not simply a matter of a state of affairs coming about; it is an *experience*, one accompanied by feelings of pleasure and pain as well as various thoughts about the desire, its satisfaction or frustration and the object which precipitated this (28-50). And it is this experience that is subject to projection. The experience involves feelings similar to those we experience when we feel an emotion. First, Wollheim notes that certain varieties of joy, rage and sadness can repeat the original tone and content of satisfaction or frustration (75-6), which illustrates that simple emotional feeling may be involved in the experience from the start. Second, in a discussion of correspondence in the perception of nature, he describes the states that are projected as affective.† Hence he understands correspondence to be rooted in feeling. And third, he argues that the way emotion ‘tints’ the world derives from that original experience. It is intuitive to understand this tinting as involving states of feeling.

As the experience is transformed into an attitude, so I think we should add that the feelings that form part of that experience are transformed, and the ground for the more complex feelings of emotion is laid down. It is clear that the feelings that manifest an emotion will be richer and more complex than those – of satisfaction, frustration, joy or sadness – that originate it. For at the time of the originary feelings, the emotion has not yet been formed as a settled attitude, and it has no history. As it develops a history, so its complexity, the complexity of the attitude towards the world the subject takes, the many associations between the previous occasions and objects of the emotion, develops; and the feelings which manifest it will correspondingly develop in depth and complexity. Nevertheless, we can recognise in these later feelings, in a modulated form, the feelings of the experience. So Wollheim states: ‘the attitude, which is the core of emotion, seldom totally casts off the marks of the situation in which it was formed’.‡ It ‘is fundamentally a variation upon, or a transform of, the original experience of satisfaction or frustration of desire. It is for this reason that the emotion, in its primary role of colouring the world or some part of it, also memorializes the past in which it originates. It does not escape its origins.’ (75)

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\* *ibid.*, 154

† Wollheim (1991), 149

‡ Wollheim (2003), 16

This analysis of the origins of emotion makes feeling central to those origins. Wollheim has argued that emotions are dispositions, attitudes that orient our responses to the world; that feelings, when they occur, are manifestations of emotion, not just concomitants; and that emotions originate in experiences of feeling.

5. Not all emotions begin smoothly as described. Wollheim provides an account of what happens to emotions that are defended against at their point of origin, one which gives pride of place to phantasy. As unconscious emotions, at least those that create the puzzle with which we began, are emotions the subject defends against, Wollheim's account suggests a number of points about their nature.

The origin of emotion is in the experience of satisfaction or frustration of desire. But the subject may be unable to tolerate the experience: 'Instead, anxiety is experienced, a defence is activated, in consequence of which the situation is perceived afresh, an attitude appropriate to this fresh perception arises, and an emotion that could never have been anticipated on the basis of the originating condition now forms or, we might say, malforms.' (82) The reasons for the subject's inability to tolerate the experience can be various, and need not detain us: guilt or anxiety might attach to the satisfaction of the desire, the person may be too committed to the desire to tolerate its frustration, the experience may be anticipated as too powerful to endure, and so on. The resulting anxiety triggers a mechanism of defence, such as splitting or projective identification, and a defensive phantasy occurs.\* The phantasy occludes those aspects of reality – internal or external – that would falsify it, and the emotion that now forms is based upon a perversion of reality. At the heart of malformed emotion, then, lies defensive phantasy, responding to unprocessed, undeveloped feeling and the anxiety it arouses.

We can understand unconscious emotion in terms of malformed emotion.† In cases of unconscious emotion that are unconscious from their origin, what is called the unconscious emotion can be understood as the original response which was defended against. Just as emotion generally memorializes its origin in feeling and desire, so the feelings of the original response are memorialized in the defensive phantasy of the malformed emotion. Because it is memorialized in defensive phantasy, its development and history are different. Its history is the history of the defensive phantasy. We can therefore trace the history, effects and manifestations of an unconscious emotion by tracing the history, effects and manifestations of the defensive phantasy that embodies it.

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\* Just as the initial response originates the emotion as a disposition, so the defensive phantasy that occurs originates a phantasy as disposition, which will manifest itself in further occurrences of the phantasy and appropriate variants.

† More precisely, those unconscious emotions that create the puzzle with which we began can be understood as malformed. It is these that are defended against, and hence the natural connection between the emotion and its being felt consciously is most likely to be broken. Other unconscious emotions that are unconscious not for reasons of defence, but because of their primitive content, e.g. positive feelings towards the parental couple, do not create the same difficulty, as there is no reason the subject may not feel the emotion consciously, though this will be in symbolic form. (Thanks to David Bell for raising this point.)

The account does not, however, apply to emotions in psychosis, for these have not been successfully defended against in the sense of being prevented from reaching conscious feeling. I believe emotions in psychosis can be accommodated by the spirit of what follows, but time restricts me from developing this line of thought further.

We may generalize the account to all unconscious emotions. Later repression and the phenomenon of *Nachträglichkeit* indicates that an emotion previously conscious may become unconscious upon a later significant event. Perhaps, then, whenever an emotion becomes subject to defensive phantasy, the phantasy replaces or stands in for the emotional attitude, and a malformed emotion comes about. Once again, the history of the emotion from that point on becomes the history of the defensive phantasy.

Developing the account further, we should note that defence can be iterative. A malformed emotion may itself become subject to a further defence, and a further malformed emotion may result. For example, Wollheim argues that envy is a malformed emotion, a defence against the feelings of dependency and fear that arise from the sense of not being able to control that which is good outside oneself. The phantasy arises that the object is all goodness and it is totally beyond influence or control. Anxiety is transformed into that particular brand of hatred that is envy, hatred of goodness as such. But envy is itself often subject to defence. In its core phantasy, it retains an awareness of goodness. A new phantasy can then arise, that the object of envy is not good and can be controlled, resulting in emotions of triumph over and contempt for it. Although I cannot develop the idea further here, we could argue that there are grounds for saying these feelings of triumph and contempt *manifest* the unconscious emotions of fear and dependency, not directly or transparently, but ‘symbolically’ perhaps.

This developmental distinction, the distinction between an attitude and a defensive phantasy, has consequences for how we should understand unconscious emotion. On the one hand, as Wollheim notes:

we believe an unconscious mental state of a certain type to have occurred because, if a conscious mental state of that type had occurred, it would, *mutatis mutandis*, have accounted for what we have to explain. For example, we ascribe unconscious rage to someone because he behaved in the way that, *mutatis mutandis*, conscious rage would have explained.\*

However, he goes on to note, the conscious and behavioural effects of defensive phantasy will differ from the conscious and behavioural effects of a conscious emotion in a number of ways:†

- a) as a result of the systemic separation of *Cs.* and *Ucs.*, unconscious phantasies, and so unconscious emotions, bring about their effects only through collaboration with other unconscious states;
- b) for the same reason, the effects (and content) of unconscious phantasies and emotions are much grosser than those of conscious emotions; and
- c) the conscious effects of unconscious phantasies and emotions are disguised.

Understanding unconscious emotion in terms of malformed emotion reveals a developmental distinction between unconscious and conscious emotion, for an unconscious emotion has not been allowed to continue along its ‘normal’ developmental path, and to become conscious, would

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\* Wollheim (1984), 45

† The following remarks are taken from Wollheim (1984), 45f.

need to do so. And in doing so, it will not remain exactly as it is.\* This restriction on development explains the differences between unconscious and conscious emotion. These differences do not prevent us from talking of conscious and unconscious rage as of the same type of emotion on the basis of their similarities in behavioural effects and some mental states, and the developmental link also justifies a certain assimilation of unconscious and conscious emotion types, for the one would develop into the other if it were not for the defensive response it provokes.

6. What, then, can we say of the place of feelings in unconscious emotions? Wollheim has argued that feelings are central to the origin of all emotions, unconscious emotions included. At the outset, I remarked that it may often be the case that conscious feelings manifesting unconscious emotions do occur, but the subject is unaware of them or unable to understand them: that the feeling manifests a particular emotion is not transparent. Here we may adapt Wollheim's point that emotions memorialize their origins: conscious states that manifest unconscious emotions bear the marks of their origins, and one predominant form in which they do so is anxiety.† It is because of this that the disguise can be lifted, e.g. by interpretation, and unconscious emotions become conscious.

The central place of defensive phantasy in unconscious emotions, however, should lead us to expect that the manifestations of unconscious emotion will not be straightforward. We may expect the relation between conscious feelings and unconscious phantasies to be complex. Although we may or may not want to accept Wollheim's contention that there are unconscious feelings, the richness and insight Wollheim's theory of emotion increases our understanding of what unconscious emotions are.

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\* Jonathan Lear writes very illuminatingly on this subject. See Lear, J. (1990), *Love and Its Place in Nature* (New Haven: Yale University Press), Chh. 1, 2, 6

† For further discussion, see Lacey (2005), 'Emotional Self-Awareness and Ethical Deliberation', *Ratio* XVIII, 65-81.