



# The Scientific Status of Psychoanalysis: Evidence and Confirmation

By Pushpa Misra

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## The Scientific Status of Psychoanalysis: Evidence and Confirmation By Pushpa Misra

This book deals with the philosophical objections against the foundations of psychoanalysis raised by Adolf Grünbaum, and explores the broader issues relating to the problem of confirmation in psychological sciences. The book will be of interest to students doing research in clinical and experimental topics in psychoanalysis as well as to psychoanalysts interested in the theory of psychoanalysis as a science.

In 1984, Adolf Grünbaum--in his *Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique*--claimed that the arguments supporting psychoanalytic hypotheses are both logically invalid and unsound: unsound because the claimed confirmation on the bases of clinical data is spurious due to the contamination of the data by the suggestive influence of the analyst; invalid because they violate the canons of inductive elimination. Answering these objections is imperative if psychoanalysis is to survive as a scientific discipline.

This book deals with the charge of suggestibility and the charge of invalidity of the repression argument as raised by Grünbaum. To counter the charge of suggestibility, the author argues that the ascription of the Tally Argument to Freud by Grünbaum is neither supported by textual evidence nor by the logical consequences of the theory, nor does it have any significant relevance for the theory. By giving her own formulation of Freud's argument, the author suggests how the problem of suggestibility can be dealt with. The general problem of error in data is discussed with reference to Henry Kyburg, Jr.'s theory of error.

To counter the charge of "invalidity of repression" argument, the author deals with the two specific objections of Grünbaum, namely that repression can be a maintaining rather than an originating cause of the symptoms, and that, secondly, the placebo hypotheses of suggestion has not been eliminated in arriving at the repression aetiology. The author deals with both the objections and claims that it is possible to formulate a valid argument for repression aetiology.

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### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

"Given the centrality of the so-called Tally Argument attributed to Freud in Adolf Grünbaum's critique of the scientific status of psychoanalysis, Pushpa Misra's claim that it is 'the brainchild of Grünbaum, not of Freud' represents an important contribution to the debate over the nature and foundations of psychoanalysis."

(Donald L. Carveth, PhD, RP, FIPA, Emeritus Professor of Sociology and Social & Political Thought, Senior Scholar, York University)

#### About the Author

Pushpa Misra is a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Pittsburgh for post-doctoral research, and holds a Master's degree in psychology from Calcutta University and a doctorate in philosophy from the University of Rochester. Her academic interests range from psychoanalysis to philosophy of science, applied ethics, and literature. Her dual background in philosophy and psychoanalysis, especially her experience as a practicing psychoanalyst, has given her a unique advantage to deal with the philosophical objections raised against psychoanalysis.

### **Users Review**

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##### **Jeffrey Haller:**

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