

**On not creating a false consciousness out of an
indeterminacy in the past: A Review on *Rewriting the Soul***

Chien-Chang Wu^{1,2}

Department of Social Medicine, National Taiwan University College of Medicine¹

Department of Psychiatry, National Taiwan University College of Medicine and
National Taiwan University Hospital²

Corresponding Address: 2F Medical Humanity Building

No.1 Ren-Ai Road Sec. 1, Taipei 100, Taiwan

Tel: 886-2-23560029 Ext.14

E-mail: ccwu88@ntu.edu.tw

Abstract:

There have been vigorous debates on the indeterminacy in the past in chapter 17 of Hacking's *Rewriting the Soul*. Commentators mentioned two kinds of indeterminacies: first, we may not know what a person was doing in his action in the past; second, we may not know what else he could be doing in an action in the past. Hacking finally wrote a response paper to address the issue. Taking the retrospective diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder in a group of soldiers in 1917 as an example, he argued that 'it is the very act (of the soldiers) in 1917, the desertion, etc., which is now asserted by most experts to have involved in PTSD. But, to repeat, it was not determined in 1917 that the act was a consequence of PTSD.' According to him, this contingency as a kind of indeterminacy in the past matters a lot for how we think of our past and not create a 'false consciousness.' The intriguing problem here is how to link indeterminacy with non-false consciousness.

The review approaches it from two directions: first, I will probe the possibility of a non-false consciousness from address recent empirical findings of memory; second, I will address how people might use technologies of memory to create a non-false consciousness based on individual and collective memories. My temporary conclusion is that in a reflexivity turn, Hacking also re-wrote our memory of our memory and thus make a non-false consciousness dynamic and unstable.