

## DECIPHERING THE "GENESIS PROBLEM": ON THE DIALECTICAL ORIGINS OF PSYCHIC REALITY

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Freud never actually used the words *ego* and *id* in his German texts; these are English translations into Latin taken from one of his most famous works, *Das Ich und das Es*.<sup>1</sup> When Freud spoke of the *Ich*, he was referring to the personal pronoun "I"—as in "I myself"—a construct that underwent many significant theoretical transformations throughout his lifetime. By the time Freud advanced his mature model of the psyche, concluding that even a portion of the *I* was also unconscious, he needed to delimit a region of the mind that remained purely concealed from consciousness. This he designated by the impersonal pronoun *es*, which he used as a noun—the *It*, a term originally appropriated from Nietzsche. The translation *ego* displaces the deep emotional significance tied to personal identity that Freud deliberately tried to convey, while the term *id* lacks the customary sense of unfamiliarity associated with otherness, thus rendering these concepts antiseptic, clinical, and devoid of all personal associations. The *I* and the *It* express more precisely the type of antithesis Freud wanted to emphasize between the familiar and the strange, hence the dialectic of the life within.

When we refer to ourselves as "I," we convey a meaning that is deeply personal, subjective, and known, while references to an "It" convey distance, separateness, objectification, and abstraction. The *I* is familiar while the *It* is foreign and unknown, hence an alien presence. Because Freud wanted to preserve the individual intimacy associated with a personal sense of self, the *I* was to stand in firm opposition to the *It*, which was purely estranged from conscious awareness. But the distinction between the *I* and the *It* is not altogether unambiguous, and as *I*

will argue, was not theoretically resolved by Freud himself. In fact, even psychoanalysis today in all its rich theoretical variations has not rectified this issue. Although Freud (1923, pp. 24–25, 38; 1926, p. 97; 1933, pp. 76–77; 1940, p. 145) eventually conceded that the I developed out of the It, he did not explain with any detail how this activity was accomplished; he merely declared that it just happened.

It is my contention that postclassical through contemporary psychoanalytic thought still suffers from ambiguity surrounding the ill-defined nature of the development of the I from the It, which has either been taken as a mere propositional assumption within psychoanalytic theory or has been subverted by alternative paradigms that boast to have surpassed Freud while subsuming his model within an overarching metahistorical paradigm. But a persisting, endemic problem to psychoanalysis is the absence of any *philosophical* attempt to account for genesis, namely, the origins of psychic reality. It is not enough to say that psychic experience begins as unconsciousness and progresses to consciousness, from drive to reason, from the It to the I: We must be able to show how these primordial processes *originally* transpire and sequentially unfold into dynamic patterns of organized mental life. Relational, interactionist, and intersubjective accounts focus on the interpersonally elaborated psychosocial matrix that defines, nurtures, and sustains the existence of the self (Kohut, 1984; Mitchell, 1988; Stern, 1985; Stolorow & Atwood, 1992); and we have every reason to appreciate these exciting advances in our conceptual understanding of psychic development. However, without exception, these schools of thought have not addressed the a priori conditions that make the emergence of the self possible to begin with, that is, the ontological ground and moments of inception of psychic reality.

We have reason to believe that the I and the It are not ontologically differentiated; nor is it to be accepted at face value that the I does in fact develop from the It. What is missing in previous developmental accounts is any detailed attempt to chronicle the very processes that bring the I and the It into being in the first place. Throughout this essay, I will be preoccupied with what I call the “genesis problem,” namely, Beginning—the origins of unconscious life. By way of dialectical analysis, I will trace

the means by which such primitive processes acquire organization, differentiation and integration, teleological progression, self-constitutive identity, and psychic cohesion. Although Freud articulated the fundamental intrapsychic forces that beset human life, he did not attend to these ontological-transmutational concerns. It is my intention to offer a dialectical account of the coming into being of the I and the It, or what I shall call the ego and the abyss, and to show how psychoanalytic process psychology provides an adequate solution to the question and nature of unconscious maturation.

### CONCEPTUALIZING THE PSYCHE

When Freud refers to the mind, he is referring to the Greek notion *psyche*, which corresponds to the German term *Seele*. In fact, Freud does not speak of the "mental apparatus" at all, but rather the "organization of the soul," which he specifically equates with the psyche. Freud adopted this usage as early as 1905, when he emphatically said: "'Psyche' is a Greek word and its German translation is 'soul.' Psychical treatment hence means 'treatment of the soul' [*Seelenbehandlung*]" (1905b, p. 283). Furthermore, Freud (1933, 1940) equates psychoanalysis with the science of the life of the soul (*wer die Wissenschaft vom Seelenleben liebt*), which stands in stark contrast to the biological connotations associated with the English word *mind* (Bettelheim, 1982, pp. 71-75).

Well read in ancient philosophy, Freud was familiar with Plato's notion of the soul as well as his depiction of Eros, which left a lasting impression on Freud's conceptualization of the psyche. Before we proceed, however, it is important to distinguish between what we mean by psyche, self, I or ego, and the It. Historically, psychoanalysis, like other professions, has the propensity of using highly technical jargon to capture the complexities of human mental functioning. This is patently justified, but it poses a problem in conceptual discourse and mutual understanding, especially when concepts remain murky or are presumed to have universal definitions when in fact they mean many different things to different theorists and philosophical

disciplines. So that we may avoid equivocation of our terms, let us begin with a conceptual definition of the I.

The I or ego has a special significance for Freud associated with personal identity, self-reference, conscious thought, perception, mobility, reality testing, and the higher executive functions of reason and intelligence. *Das Ich* is not a common German expression used in everyday conversation, it is used only by professionals in a quasi-scientific context.<sup>2</sup> Neither are references to the self (*Selbst*) or the subject (*Subjekt*) common parlance. In fact, to refer to oneself as “mein Ich” or “mein Selbst” would be viewed as being exceedingly narcissistic. The term *ego* also imports negative connotations associated with inflated self-importance and self-love, such as in the words *egotistical*, *egoism*, and *egocentric*, hence the terms *I* and *ego* have a shared meaning in both German and English. Because the word *ego* has become immortalized in psychoanalytic literature as well as in popular culture, for customary purposes I will refer to the I and the ego interchangeably.

Freud realized that he could not adequately account for the I as being solely conscious, and he therefore introduced a division between conscious and unconscious ego domains and their respective operations. What Freud was mainly concerned about in this division was to explain how certain ego properties, qualities, and tension states influenced the nature of wish, defense, drive discharge, and self-preservation, and how the I stood in relation to an alien force and presence compartmentalized from the ego itself. The ego became a pivotal concept for Freud because it was the locus of agency, intention, and choice both consciously and unconsciously realized—an agency, however, that existed alongside competing agencies in the mind. This theoretical move on Freud’s part is not without conceptual drawbacks and has led many critics to question the plausibility of competing mental entities. Although Freud used the terms *provinces*, *domains*, and *realms* to characterize such psychic activity, he in no way meant to evoke substance ontology characteristic of ancient metaphysics in vogue with some forms of materialism today. Freud explicitly abandoned his earlier neurophysiological visions of the mind represented in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895), and by the time of *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900)

adopted a corpus of the soul that admonished reductionism (see Freud, 1900, p. 536; 1916–1917, p. 21). Characterizing Freud's theory of agency in terms of entity or substance ontology further misrepresents his views on the active processes that constitute the psyche. Freud's purported agencies are active, purposeful, malleable processes—not static, fixed, immobile structures. Although Freud (1900, 1923, 1933) also prefers spatial metaphors in his description of these forces, he is quick to remind us they are only heuristic devices: The question of localization becomes a meaningless proposition when we are in actuality discussing temporal mental processes.

Freud's use of the term *I* imports ambiguity when we compare it to a psychoanalytic conception of the self. In some of Freud's (1914b) intervening works on narcissism, his concept of the ego corresponds to the self; and in *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930), he specifically equates *das Ich* with *das Selbst* (p. 65). This implies that the self would not contain other portions of the psyche such as the drives and the region of the repressed. This definition also situates the self in relation to otherness and is thus no different than our reference to the ego with its conscious and unconscious counterparts. In German, however, the "self" encompasses the entire human being; but on a very earthly plain, it represents the core from which the ego acts and relates mostly to the conscious aspects of personal identity. Although a strong case can be made for the Self as a supraordinate (see Meissner, 2000) encompassing principle—what Freud calls the Soul (*Seele*)—I believe Freud is justified here in conceptualizing the I, ego, and self as synonymous constructs. The self stands in relation to its opposite, namely—the Other—as does subject to object, and hence evokes a firm point of difference. This is precisely why Freud insisted on the dialectical presence of otherness: The I is *not* the It.

For Freud, the It is *alienus*—both alienated mind and that which is alienating. We know it as conflict and chaos under the pressure, whims, and persecutory impulses of the drives, our animal nature. They emanate from within us, but are not consciously willed nor desired. The It does not know and does not say no—*It* knows no negation (Freud, 1925b, p. 239; 1933, p. 74). Under the force of foreign excitations clamoring for discharge,

unrest and tumult are its very nature. Yet such chaos by necessity is combated by degrees of order from the ego. Freud's introduction of the It preserves that realm of inner reality we may never directly know in itself. Here Freud insists on the Kantian *Ding an sich*, the Fichtean *Anstoss*—an impenetrable limit, obstacle, or impasse. The mind becomes demarcated by a rigid "check" that introduces irreconcilable division and contradiction; in other words, dialectic.

We may never have direct access to the It, only to the way in which it appears. We know the It through its endless derivatives—such as dreams, fantasies, slips, and symptoms—as well as that which torments us—that which we wish would remain dead and buried, forever banished to the pit—disowned, renounced, hence repressed. But things that are forgotten have a way of turning up unexpectedly. With every covering over, every concealment, there is simultaneously a de-covering, a resurfacing of the old, a return of the dead. Freud crowned the It the king of the underworld—Hades—while the I traversed the domains of its earthly surface down into the bowels of its nether regions.

Freud's final paradigm of the mind rests on a basic logic of modification. The I differentiates itself and develops out of the It; and later, the I modifies itself again and evolves into a critical-moral agency, what Freud calls the *Über-Ich*, or that aspect of the I that stands over against itself and holds itself up to a higher authority. Here the I undergoes another doubling function, in fact, a doubling of the doubling—this time turned onto itself. What is familiarly known as the *superego* is nothing other than a split-off portion of the I that stands in relation to a particular form of identification: namely, a set of values and prohibitions it internalized from familial relations and cultural experience, ideals and principles the self strives to attain. Freud's logic of modification, however, goes unexplained, the explanatory limits of which he modestly concedes (Freud, 1933, p. 77; 1940, p. 145).

Although Freud makes the superego (over-I, or above-I) into a critical agency that besieges the I and defiles the It, the superego is merely an extension of the ego, both the self in its exaltation as an identification and pining for its ideal form, as well as the judgment, fury, and condemnation that informs our sense

of conscience, guilt, shame, and moral reproach. The ego and superego are therefore the same agency divided yet internally conjoined. Freud spoke prematurely in making the superego a third agency of the psyche when, properly speaking, it is not: It merely *appears* as an independent agent when ontologically the ego and the superego are the same. The ego is *supra* in relation to itself—what it wants to be, hence what it strives to become. And when the ego does not live up to itself—up to its own ideals—it debases itself with as much wrath and force as is brewing in the tempestuous cauldron of the It. It is no coincidence that the It and the superego share the same fist of fury, because both are fueled (with stipulations) by the drives, a point I will return to shortly. But for now it becomes important to emphasize that the psyche is a divided self, with each division and modification remaining interdependent and ontologically bound.

In the end, Freud gives us a vision of the mind as composed of three ontically interrelated forces with varying qualitative degrees of organization and zest ranging from the most primitive, unmodulated evolutionary impulses to the most refined aspects of intelligence and ethical self-consciousness—all brought together under the rubric of soul. Bettelheim (1982) tells us that nowhere in his texts does Freud actually provide us with a direct definition of the soul (p. 77), although we may infer that he intended for it to stand as an overarching concept that enveloped the three agencies of mental life. We do know, however, that Freud had no intention to imply that the soul is immortal, nor does it carry any religious connotations whatsoever. Freud (1927, 1933) was a vociferous atheist, thus his use of the term is meant to reflect our shared collective humanity.

Freud's tripartite division of the soul returns us to the Greek vision of the psyche with one exceptional difference: The soul is largely unconscious. As the seat of the passions (*eros*), reason (*nous*), and moral judgment (*ethos*), the psyche becomes a dynamic organization of competing dialectical forces. Because the notion of consciousness is a modern—not an ancient—concept, Freud is able to enrich the Platonic view by showing that irrationality and emotional forces driven by unconscious processes constantly plague the intellectual and ethical strivings of the ego. Therefore, the logocentrism that is often attributed

to Freud must be viewed within the context of the pervasive tenacity of irrational pressures, although there is always a logic to the interior. Left undefined by Freud, the psyche, we may nevertheless say, is the composition of competing dialectical processes that inform and sustain the division of the I from the It along with its multifarious derivatives. The psyche is pure process and experiential flow composed of a multiplicity of dialectical organizations—each with varying degrees of opposition, complexity, and strands of unification—which form a temporal continuity enduring in embodied space. Although the psyche consists of unifying activity, it itself is not a static unity, but rather a motional-experiential process of becoming spatio-temporally realized as mediated immediacy.

This leads us to a process account of the psyche, or for our purposes, the Self—as a supraordinate complex whole, including both conscious and unconscious parallel activities. Although classical through proceeding historical and contemporary psychoanalytic models have paid great attention to the details and developmental contours of intrapsychic, interpersonal, and psychosocial life, the question of genesis—psychic Origin—and its ontological modifications, remains virtually unconsidered. In what follows, I hope to show how psychoanalytic process psychology offers a logic of the dialectic that proves useful in explaining the rudimentary development of the psyche from its most basal ontological conditions to its most robust configurations and complexifications.

#### THE DIALECTICS OF UNCONSCIOUS EXPERIENCE

Freud is a dialectician of the mind: In his final paradigm, he envisioned the psyche as an active composition of multifarious, bipolar forces that stand in antithetical relation to one another and are therefore mutually implicative. The I and the It, the two classifications of drives, primary versus secondary process mentation, the pleasure versus the reality principle, love and hate, the individual versus society—these are but a few of the oppositional processes that inform his dialectical system. However, Freud never clarified his logic of the dialectic; instead, he relied



on introspection and self-analysis, clinical observation, and technical judgment based on careful consideration of the data at hand, which over time led to radical revisions of his many core theoretical postulates. One of Freud's most modest attributes was his ability to change his mind about previous speculations when new evidence presented itself, thus showing the disciplined persistence of a refined scientific attitude he had revered as *Logos* (see Freud, 1927, 1930).

It is not altogether clear how Freud's dialectic is philosophically constituted, a topic he said nothing about; however, we may draw certain reasonable assumptions. Whereas some dialectical forces seek unification, resolution, and synthetic integration, others do not. For example, consciousness and unconsciousness, like the I and the It, are firm oppositions, yet their distinctions become blurred in times of sleep, day-dreaming, and fantasy formation. Even when we are unconscious, the mind generates impressions and representations from the tableau of images once experienced in conscious sensation and laid down in the deep reservoir of memory within the unconscious configurations of the mind. This suggests that consciousness is on a continuum of presence and absence, disclosure and concealment, with each respective appearance being merely one side or instantiation of its dual nature, a duality highlighted and punctuated by its phenomenal valences and qualities, yet nevertheless ontologically conjoined. Consciousness and unconsciousness could not be ontologically distinct by the simple fact that each context of being overlaps and participates in the other, without which such duality could not be intelligibly conceived unless each counterpart is to be viewed as having separate essences. But if this were the case, neither could participate in the realm of the other, nor could they have mutual causal influence as they are purported to possess, simply because that which has a distinct ontology or being would by definition have a difference essence. Just as Aristotle's (1962) criticism of Plato's (1961) forms still stands as a cogent refutation of ontological dualism based on the incompatibility of different essences, so must we extend this assessment to the split domains of consciousness and unconsciousness. Conscious and unconscious life must have the same ontology, hence

the same essence, by virtue of the fact that each informs the reality of the other: Their respective differences point to their modified forms.

In order for an essence to be what it is—without which it could not exist—it must stand in relation to what it is not. Freud maintains this division of consciousness and unconsciousness (1) from an experiential or phenomenological standpoint—that which qualitatively appears; (2) from an epistemological one—that which is known; and (3) as a conceptual, heuristic scheme—that which is conceived. However, despite his dual classification of drives, he does not maintain such duality from an ontological framework: Consciousness arises *in* the ego, itself the outgrowth of an unconscious It. I will speak more to this later, but suffice it to say that Freud's dialectic permits both integration and impasse, synthesis and disunity, universality and particularity, hence contradiction and paradox. But as Freud (1933) says, the It knows nothing, above all the law of contradiction: "Contrary impulses exist side by side, without canceling each other out or diminishing each other: at most they may converge to form compromises" (p. 73). Mental processes could "converge" and transmute their original forms only on the condition that they participate in the same essence, hence an original ontological ground that makes the conversion of form possible.

Another example of the blurred distinctions of duality and limit in Freud's system may be witnessed in the dialectic of repression (Freud, 1915b). That which is denied conscious access, negated, and banished to the pit is not totally annulled, hence not completely opposed. Rather, it is preserved where it festers and seeks discharge through another form. Thus opposition remains contextual, yet always has the potential of being breached.

Although we may observe a boundary of firm antitheses in Freud's model, there is also a synthetic function to the ego that seeks to mediate, resolve, and channel competing desires and conflicts through intentional strategies that find their way into overt behavior and conscious phenomena. But there is also a regressive function to ego, and each function is potentially mobilized given the particular contingencies that govern psychic economy. On the other hand, the process of sublimation has a unifying, transcending character that combats regression, de-

spite the fact that both can be operative in parallel realms of development. This leaves Freud somewhere between what Kant (1781) referred to as the antinomies of reason or the paralogisms of the self, which correspond to irreconcilable contradictions within the mind that meet with no resolve, and the Hegelian (1807, 1812, 1817a) notion of *Aufhebung*—a progressive dialectical process that cancels, surpasses, and simultaneously preserves opposition within an elevating, unifying, procreative self-structure. Despite Freud's lack of clarification surrounding his dialectical logic, we can nevertheless say that his model is compatible with a process account of unconscious experience that is dialectically organized and mediated by oppositional contingent forces exerting equiprimordial pressures that are contextually realized in time.<sup>3</sup>

The mind is dialectical, hence relational; that is, it stands in relation—in both temporal continuity and disjunction—to that which is other than its current form or experience. It is important to note that regardless of the form of difference we wish to theoretically or experientially highlight, all dialectical organizations of the psyche are simultaneously operative from the vantage point of their own unique constitutions and contextualized perspectives. Therefore, the perspectivism of each inhabited domain of lived (yet at times unformulated) unconscious experience is not to negate the force and presence of competing intentional faculties within the mind. It now becomes our task to examine more closely how these psychic processes are logically constituted through dialectically mediated progression, a discussion that will prepare us to engage the question of original ground.

### PROCESS PSYCHOLOGY

In several recent publications (Mills, 2000a, 2000b, 2002), I have advocated a new theoretical approach to contemporary psychoanalytic thought called "dialectical psychoanalysis" or "process psychology." Although process psychology has potential application for theoretical, clinical, and applied psychoanalysis, here I will be mainly concerned with examining its conceptual explanatory power. This approach relies largely on Hegel's (1812, 1817a)

general logic of the dialectic and its reappropriation for psychoanalytic inquiry without, however, inheriting the baggage associated with Hegel's entire philosophical system. We need not adopt Hegel's overall system to appreciate his science of the dialectic and the logical operations in which it unfolds. Furthermore, Hegel's dialectical logic allows us to examine more precisely the nature of mental functioning and explain how unconscious modification is made possible. This has direct bearing on engaging the question of the origin of psychic reality and specifically the coming into being of the I and the It.

Process psychology assumes a fundamental axiom: Mind is constituted as process. This is the essence of all psychic reality and is the indispensable ontological foundation for all forms of mental life. Every mental derivative—from unconscious to conscious, intrapsychic to relational, individual to collective—is necessarily predicated on process. Process underlies all experience as an activity of becoming. As becoming, process is pure event, unrest, or experiential flow. Essence is process. It is neither fixed nor static, neither inert nor predetermined, but rather a spontaneous motional flux and trajectory of dynamic pattern lending increasing order, organization, and zeal to psychic development. As process, essence must appear in order for any psychic event to be made actual.

Psychic reality, with all its contours and manifestations, is dialectically constituted by competing and opposing forces that are interrelated and mutually implicative. Opposition is ubiquitous to psychic reality and operative within all subjective and intersubjective experience: That which *is* is always defined in relation to what it *is not*. Hence there is an equiprimordality to all dichotomous relations. All polarity is mutually related and inseparable, hence one pole may be differentiated from the other only in contextual thought or by experiential perspective. Polarities of similarity and difference, identity and otherness, are phenomenal encounters in time each highlighted by their respective positionality toward the other, even though their mutual relation to opposition co-constitutes their existence. Identity and difference are thus formed in relation to opposition, negation, and conflict, whereby each is ontologically interdependent and dynamically composed of fluid processes that evoke, con-

struct, and sustain psychic organization and structure. Therefore, the subject-object contrast may only be properly appreciated as an intrinsic dynamic totality whereby each event and its internal relation is emphasized as a particular moment in the process of becoming. From the mutual standpoint of shared difference, each individual subject stands in relation to the multiply contoured intersubjective matrix that is generated when particular subjectivities collide and interact. This ensures that process multiplies exponentially.

The nature of psychic process is derived from an active organizing principle that is replete with conflict and destruction providing thrust, progression, and ascendance within a dynamically informed system, yet that may revert or regress back to more archaic or primitive shapes of mental life under certain contingencies. Process is not simply subjective experience that is radically individualized (although it encompasses it); rather, subjectivity unfolds within universal dialectical patterns—as *subjective universality*—(not as predetermined, reductive mechanisms, but as teleological, contextual operations) that lend actuality and structure to lived reality. It is important to reiterate that psychic structure is not fixed, static, or immobile, but is transforming, malleable, and mediating activity or flux that provides functional capacities and vivacity within a teleologically driven, purposeful process of becoming. Therefore, all particularities of conscious and unconscious experience (whether individually or collectively instantiated) are ontologically informed by the universal, motivational principles that fuel the dialectic.

Hegel's dialectical logic has been grossly misunderstood by the humanities and social sciences largely due to historical misinterpretations dating back to Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus, an earlier Hegel expositor, and unfortunately perpetuated by current mythology surrounding Hegel's system. As a result, Hegel's dialectic is inaccurately conceived of as a threefold movement involving the generation of a proposition or "thesis" followed by an "antithesis," then resulting in a "synthesis" of the prior movements, thus giving rise to the popularized and crassly misleading phrase: thesis-antithesis-synthesis. This is not Hegel's dialectic; rather, it is Fichte's (1794) depiction of the transcendental acts of consciousness, which he describes as the fundamental princi-

ples (*Grundsatz*) of thought and judgment. Yet this phrase itself is a crude and mechanical rendition of Fichte's logic and does not even properly convey his project. Fichte's dialectic is a response to Kant's (1781) *Critique of Pure Reason*, where Kant outlines the nature of consciousness and addresses irreconcilable contradictions that are generated in the mind due to breakdowns in reason. For both Kant and Fichte, their respective dialectics have firm limits or boundaries that may not be bridged. Hegel (1807, 1812, 1817a, 1817b, 1817c), on the other hand, shows how contradiction and opposition are annulled but preserved, unified, and elevated within a progressive, evolutionary process.

Although Hegel's (1812) *Science of Logic* has attracted both philosophical admiration and contempt (see Burbidge, 1993), we need not be committed to the fine distinctions of his *Logic*, which is confined to the study of consciousness. What is important for process psychology is understanding the essential structure of the dialectic as *Aufhebung*—customarily translated as “sublation”—denoted by three simultaneous movements which at once (1) annul or cancel opposition, (2) surpass or transcend its prior moment, while (3) preserving such opposition within its new, transformed and synthesized organization. Three movements: At once they cancel or annul, transcend or surpass, retain or preserve—aspects of every transmogrification. The dialectic as process is pure activity and unrest, which acquires more robust organization through its capacities to negate, oppose, and destroy otherness; yet in its negation of opposition, it surpasses difference through a transmutational process of enveloping otherness within its own internal structure, and hence elevates itself to a higher plane. Not only does the psyche destroy opposition, but it also subsumes and preserves it within its interior. Death is incorporated, remembered, and felt as it breathes new life into the mind's ascendance toward higher shapes of psychic development: It retains the old as it transmogrifies the present, aimed toward a future existence that it actively (not predeterminedly) forges along the way. This ensures that dialectical reality is always mired in the contingencies that inform its experiential immediacy. Despite the universality of the logic of the dialectic, mind is always contextually realized. Yet each movement, each

shape of the dialectic, is merely one moment within its holistic teleology, differentiated only by form. The process as a whole constitutes the dialectic whereby each movement highlights a particular piece of psychic activity that is subject to its own particular contingencies. As each valence is highlighted in its immediacy or lived-experiential quality, it is merely one appearance among many appearances in the overall process of its own becoming.

#### APPROACHING THE "GENESIS PROBLEM"

With the enlistment of the dialectic, process psychology offers philosophical fortification to psychoanalysis, which has long been under attack for its alleged lack of scientific credibility (see Bornstein, 2001; Fisher & Greenberg, 1996; Grünbaum, 1984). Although heralding itself a science grounded in clinical observation, practice, and empirical hypothesis testing, much of psychoanalytic theory may be philosophically supported through dialectical logic, an alternative, complementary methodology that gains further in descriptive and explanatory force when empirical accounts become tenuous or questionable. The dialectic proves especially useful when understanding the logic of modification that Freud does not adequately address, thus lending logical rigor, deductive justification, and internal coherence to procedural inquiry concerning, among other things, the nature of the genesis problem. Empirical science in general, and developmental research in particular, is in no better situation to proclaim that it can determine how the ego comes into being except by making reasonable, inductive inferences based on observable phenomena; and this is more often accomplished through speculative inferences based on our own subjective experiences (see Frie, 1999). For example, Stern's (1985) proclamation of the "emergent self" as the earliest stage of ego development in infancy (from birth to two months) does nothing to illuminate the ground from which the self emerges in the first place. There is a current tendency in psychoanalytic infant research to emphasize the relational, dyadic systems and the intersubjective domains that help constitute the ego (Beebe, Jaffe, & Lachmann, 1992; Benjamin, 1992; Lichtenberg, 1989; Mahler, Pine, & Berg-

man, 1975; Ogden, 1986; Stern, 1985), but this does not address the genesis question. Although these developmental paradigms are insightful and informative, the ontology of the *inception* of subjectivity is ignored: Psychic activity is presumed but not accounted for.

Empirical approaches (including clinical and phenomenological investigations) ultimately face the same strain, as do purely theoretical attempts to define the origins of psychic development, because we simply do not possess direct epistemological access to the primordial organizations of the subjective mind. Put laconically, we can never “get inside” an infant’s head. Biological attempts ultimately fail because they succumb to the bane of materialist reduction, thus effacing the unique quality of the lived experience that is displaced by simple location, what Whitehead (1925) calls the fallacy of misplaced concreteness. Although our physical nature is a necessary condition for psychic life, it is far from a sufficient condition to account for the coming into being of psychic reality. This is not to disavow the relevance, contiguity, and importance of the biological sciences for psychoanalytic inquiry (see Gedo, 1996); it is only to emphasize that process thought extends far beyond psychophysicality.

Although process psychology has a favorable attitude toward empirical science, it realizes that relying solely on perceived, observable (controlled) experience can be of little help when answering the question of Beginning. To approach such an issue, we must enlist the principle of sufficient reason: What is the *ground* of psychic life—the inner world? We cannot begin to answer this question without making a priori claims about the logic of the interior, a logic of unconscious internal modification. *Tabula rasa* approaches, typical of early modern philosophy, claim that all knowledge comes from conscious experience while a priori judgments tell us that certain ontological conditions of subjectivity must be unconsciously operative in order to make experience possible. Whereas the former rely on observable experiences that presuppose a psychology of cognition, the latter emphasize the ontological and logical continuity of unconscious experience that allows for the structures and functions of consciousness to arise. *Tabula rasa* explanations are philosophically simple, myopic, and naive—long displaced by the Kantian turn



in philosophy and refined by many German Idealists and post-modern thought, whereby a priori accounts are favored in logic, linguistics, and evolutionary epistemology. As we will see, the process of unconscious modification rests on the internal negations, divisions, projections, incorporations, and reconstitutive movements of the dialectic.

We must first start with the question of genesis, of Origin—original ground. If it becomes necessary to trace the origin and development of the mind in order to come to terms with first principles—the metaphysics of the soul—then we must attempt to conceptually isolate a ground in which all else arises. Like Freud and other empirically motivated theorists, we must situate this unfolding ground within the natural world, within the corporeal subject itself, and thus avoid appealing to a singular, first principle or category of the ultimate that neither we nor the philosophers are equipped to satisfactorily answer without begging the question or steering us down into the abyss of infinite regress. Not only must we start with the natural being of the embryonic psyche—its natural immediacy—we also must inevitably begin from the inside-out, progressing from unconscious internal activity to external mediated consciousness. As I will soon argue, as epistemologically subjective, self-attuned experiential beings, we intuit, feel, and/or know our own interiority *before* we encounter the manifold data of the sensuous outside world, although externality and biological, social, and linguistic contingencies, as well as cultural historicity, are superimposed on us a priori as part of our ontological facticity.

From a methodological account, tracing the dialectical birth and epigenesis of the psyche from the interior to the exterior is more philosophically defensible because it does not merely presuppose the existence of the object world; instead, it constructs a means to engage external reality from its own internal psychic configurations. I do not wish to revive the irreparable schism of the failed realism/antirealism debate, only to show how process is internally mediated and dialectically conditioned. From my account, the subject-object contrast must be seen as a dialectical process system that is ontologically interdependent, emergent, and equiprimordial. The inner world of subjective experience and the outer world of objective natural events are

equiprimordially constituted as interpenetrable processes that comprise our fluxuational experiences of psychic reality.

For all practical purposes, we live and function in a world that we indubitably accept as real—things happen around us even if we don't adequately perceive them or understand their existence or purpose; but our subjective appreciation of what is real is radically habituated by our own internal world and unconscious permutations, thereby influencing conscious perception, judgment, and intersubjective exchange. This is why psychic reality is first-order experience.<sup>4</sup>

All we can know is psychic reality: Whether inner or outer, self or other, presence or absence, perceived or imagined, hallucinated or conceived—reality is mediated by subjective mind. Although an enormous aspect of mind and personal identity involves consciousness, it is only a surface organ—the modification of unconscious life, a fraction of the activity that comprises the internal processes and pervasive throbs of unformulated unconscious experience. Our epistemological understanding of the real is ontologically conditioned on a priori unconscious structures governed by *intrasubjective* processes that allow the natural external world to arise in consciousness. Therefore, our encounter and understanding of psychic reality is always mediated by intrapsychic events that are first-order or first-person experiences even if such experiences operate outside of conscious awareness or are under the influence of extrinsic events exerting variable pressures on our mental operations.

Freud frowned on metaphysics, but his theory of mind is a metaphysical treatise replete with quandaries. Although he stated that the I develops out of the It and that consciousness arises in the ego, he did not proffer an adequate explanation of how this activity occurs. In fact, there are many problems with the relations between ego activity and the drives, the question of mediation by the drives, the distinctness of the I and the It, and whether they can be distinguished at all—and if so, perhaps only phenomenologically, which is not to say that they share separate essences, only different appearances. For Freud, psychic origin was proclaimed to commence in that broad category of the mind labeled *das Es*, what he earlier stipulated under the rubric of the system "*Ucs.*" Now that we have prepared the context for a pro-

cess account of the mind, it is time for us to return to our original task, namely, the genesis problem, and give voice to the logic of modification that Freud anticipated but left unexplained. Here we must examine the psyche's most elemental pulse from its natural immediacy, what Freud reified as the indubitable primacy of the drives.

#### WHERE IT ALL BEGINS: THE TRANSMOGRIFICATION OF THE DRIVES

In contemporary psychoanalysis, Freud is disparaged largely due to his emphasis on the drives. This is partially the result of mistranslations of his actual German texts; however, drive theory has inevitably fallen out of vogue with analysts and clinicians who value more relational approaches to theory and practice. Although these mistranslations and their implications have been previously criticized (see Bettelheim, 1982; Laplanche, 1970; Lear, 1990), nowhere do we see such a gross error as in the misconception of "drive" (*Trieb*) translated as "instinct." This single mistake has misinformed five generations of English-speaking psychoanalysts and clinicians who unfortunately confuse the mind with materialist reduction. Freud never used the English term "instinct" when he spoke of humans: *Instinkt* in German always refers to animals and denotes a fixed, predetermined behavioral pattern or tropism. Freud loathed that term when speaking of the human animal. *Trieb*, on the other hand, means an inner urge, impulse, or drive, which is the proper descriptor used to emphasize the notion of inner unrest, desire, and compulsion often associated with impersonal, nonintentional forces impelling the individual from within. We may initially see why Freud's concept of drive has descriptive utility: It is an unconscious process that fuels and propels the organism. But more importantly, Freud conceives of a drive as a malleable, plastic, transformative activity—not a static, genetically imprinted or determined pressure that cannot be mediated or amended. For Freud, a drive can be altered and permutated, while an instinct is stagnant and unchangeable. Whereas the expression of a drive can be mitigated if not changed entirely, an instinct cannot undergo modification at all. *Instinct* in English, however, also typi-

fies something that is innate. Therefore, to avoid duplicating confusion about the nature of drive and instinct, all references hereafter to instinctual processes should be viewed within this stipulated context of drives.

Freud's theory of the drives went through many significant transformations throughout his career, at one time focusing solely on libido (*Lust*), later to many different competing urges belonging to both unconscious and conscious processes (e.g., *die Ich-Triebe*), then finally settling on the primacy of two antithetical yet interpenetrable classifications: sex and death. Relational schools cannot buy this central tenet, which Stephen Mitchell (1992) calls the "outmoded concept of drives" (p. 3); namely, that the mind is driven and influenced by multifarious, overdetermined unconscious forces that are originally biologically based pressures impinging on the conscious subject and clamoring for release. But the main objection among these schools is the concentrated refutation of the role of libido over relational and intersubjective motives. Here we see the first big turnoff and subsequent resistance by the postclassical field: Everything boils down to sex.

This unfortunate attitude is a deposit based on Freud's (1905a) early work on infantile sexuality; it does not take into account his mature theoretical advances (see Freud, 1933, 1940). As said earlier, Freud was not particularly impressed with having to think the same thing all the time. By the end of his life, he had incorporated libido or the sex drive into his conception of Eros—an encompassing life principle, similar in fashion to the Greeks, who saw the pursuit of Eros as life's supreme aim: viz., the holistic attainment of sensual, aesthetic, ethical, and intellectual fulfillment. In this sense, mind and body are contiguous. Because of this blind focus on Freud's early work at the expense of his mature theory, not only is he misunderstood, but his theoretical corpus is also distorted. It also leads one to presume that Freud was committed to a genetic fallacy, namely, that all psychic life can be reduced to its developmental origins—when he was not.<sup>5</sup> Eros is the sublimation (*Sublimierung*) of natural desire, first materializing as drive then progressing to the cultivated activities of the ego—that is, rational self-conscious life.

For Freud (1915a), the source of a drive is unequivocally

biological and somatic. This is the second big turnoff: Man is viewed as a physical-instinctual machine turned on by the environment. I am of the opinion that not only do many postclassical schools of thought misunderstand the nature of drives but also that they ultimately misunderstand the role of biology and human embodiment. It is simply delusional to think that biology has no place in psychic economy, and those deifying relational factors through negation of the natural body are misguided. Why sex and aggression? Because they are part of our animal evolutionary past. The notion of drive underscores Freud's natural science foundation, which is inextricably bound to evolutionary currents: Sex and aggression are the two fundamental forces behind the inception, course, and progression of civilization, without which there would arguably be no human race.<sup>6</sup>

In the historical movement of psychoanalysis, we can observe a conceptual shifting away from drive theory to ego psychology, object relations theory, self psychology, and now its current preoccupation with intersubjectivity, each calling for a paradigm shift. In the early stages of psychoanalytic theory building, each postclassical movement championed a particular constituent of psychic activity (e.g., ego over object) while complementing and subsuming Freud's general psychological theory. In fact, it was Freud who launched ego psychology and the object relations movement (see Freud, 1933). Today, however, with the insistence on relational and intersubjective approaches, psychoanalysis is being plummeted into a land of false dichotomies suggesting that relation cancels drive. And even if it is conceded that the two realms coexist, we are still asked to choose sides (see Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, p. 390). As a result, within many contemporary analytic circles, the primacy of the drives and the unconscious itself have virtually disappeared.<sup>7</sup> Take Mitchell (1992), for example: "There is *no* experience that is not interpersonally mediated (p. 2, italics added); and Stolorow: Intersubjectivity "recognizes the constitutive role of relatedness in the making of *all* experience" (cited in Buirski & Haglund, 2001, p. xiii, italics added). These proclamations clearly state that consciousness conditions unconsciousness, when they fail to account for what Freud had been so sensitive to investigate.

Although interpersonal processes are an integral and neces-

sary aspect of psychic development, they do not by themselves negate the relevance of the drives and their mutual influence over mental life. Furthermore, Stolorow and his colleagues' (Orange, Atwood, and Stolorow, 1997; Stolorow & Atwood, 1992; Stolorow, Brandchaft, & Atwood, 1987) claim that everything is intersubjective fails to consider intrapsychic experience prior to the onset of consciousness. Unconsciousness precedes consciousness, hence subjective experience is internally mediated before one's encounter with the object world. In fact, drive becomes an ontological a priori that cannot be annulled or denied. Moreover, it precedes interpersonal interaction by virtue of the fact that drive is constitutionally predicated.

We can never escape from the fact that we are embodied. Freud's insistence that the source of a drive is biologically given is simply to accept the brute facticity of our natural corporeality. The mistake many psychoanalytic theorists make is interpreting biology as reduction and that drive discharge precludes relational activity, when, contrarily, Freud's conception of drive makes reduction impossible and relatedness possible. Let me explain.

Freud has to account for embodiment—our natural immediacy—in which urges and impulses arise, thus he focuses on the body as initially providing form, content, and structure to internal experience. This is why erogenous zones are corporeally emphasized. But more importantly, Freud has to show how ego activity and consciousness are also sensuous processes: attention, perception, and the greater faculties of cognition are sentient experiential actions. This is why Freud (1923) says that the ego is a body-ego, itself the projection of a surface: *It projects itself onto its surface, the surface of its immediate feeling and sensuous embodiment.* Therefore, drive is constituted as ego, but not at first. Although Freud does not say this directly, it may nevertheless be inferred: Drive becomes ego—the ego first knows itself as a feeling, craving, desirous corporeal being. But how does this occur? Freud says very little.

In "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," or more appropriately translated, "Drives and Their Fate" (*Triebe und Triebchicksale*), Freud (1915a) distinguishes four constituents of a drive: a source, pressure, aim, and object. Although the source (*Quelle*) is somati-

cally organized, Freud is very clear that the pressure (*Drang*) or force of a drive is its very "essence" (*Wesen*). Here he unquestionably situates the nature of *Trieb* in its activity: drive is pulsation, unrest—pure desire. The aim (*Ziel*) or motive of a drive is to satisfy itself, to achieve pleasure as tension reduction, to end the craving; and the means by which a drive is sated is through an object (*Objekt*). Objects, especially people, are coveted for the functions they serve, and these functional objects may fulfill many competing aims as psychic life becomes more rich and variegated. In fact, drives transmogrify through many circuitous routes and take many derivative forms: What we commonly refer to as a "defense mechanism" is the teleological fate of a drive. This is an unfortunate term because "mechanism" evokes imagery of stasis, rigidity, and fixed predetermined movements, when instead defenses are fluid, mutable, and teleologically directed expressions of desire as *process systems*. As transformed drive, a defense is a particular piece of desire, often unconsciously intended and differentiated by its function in relation to a competing urge, impulse, or counterintention, internal danger, environmental threat, and/or potential conscious realization that must be combated. There are defenses that urge the psyche to regress while others urge it to progress, and this is why a drive cannot be seen simply as biological reduction or devolve back to its original state. Because drives transform, they cannot return to their original form: We can never know a drive in itself, only as a psychological representative, presentation, or idea (*Vorstellung*). Furthermore, what we often experience as drive is its aim—the craving for satisfaction. Moreover, because drives modify themselves through a process of epigenesis, they make the more sophisticated forms of conscious and self-conscious life possible: From the archaic to the refined, unconscious drive manifests itself through relatedness to objects.

Freud's theory of *Trieb* is not without difficulty, and many critics proclaim that because his model of tension reduction was ultimately a hydraulic component of biological-homeostasis theory, the aim or *telos* of a drive overrides relational motivations. But this conclusion is not justified, especially when others become the objects of our satisfaction. Freud (1915a) specifically says that the object of a drive is the most variable aspect and that

it may serve multiple motives simultaneously (p. 123). Nowhere are we led to believe that relation is subordinated to biology when a drive is mediated through object relatedness. Furthermore, Freud's (1925a) later theory of Eros ultimately speaks to the desire for love and the pursuit of our most cherished ideals, which he specifically equates with the Eros of Plato in the *Symposium* (p. 218). As a result, Eros becomes a relational principle (see Reisner, 1992), a relation toward ourselves and others through the exaltation of human value. From the most primitive mind to the most civilized societies, we are *attached* to our ideals through others.

But let us return to a conceptual dilemma for Freud: How could a drive have an object? Put another way, how could a drive take an object as its aim without possessing some form of agency? As a teleological process, a drive has a purpose constituted through its aim, but how could it also be guided in its ability to *choose* objects for its satisfaction without accounting for intentionality by an unconscious agent? Here we see why Freud had to introduce the notion of unconscious agency constituted through the alien presence of the It. The It constitutes the realm of the dual classification of drives as well as the realm of the repressed. But is Freud justified in making the It into an agency? Could it be possible that unconscious actions of the ego are actually performing object choice, whereas the drives and repressed material merely act as a constant pressure that the ego must mediate? This is particularly problematic for Freud given that he specifically tells us that the I logically and temporally proceeds from the It. Freud is very clear in his final specifications of how the psyche develops in this fashion. In *Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety*, Freud (1926) states:

We were justified, I think, in dividing the ego from the id, for there are certain considerations which necessitate that step. On the other hand *the ego is identical with the id, and is merely a specially differentiated part of it*. If we think of this part by itself in contradistinction to the whole, or if a real split has occurred between the two, the weakness of the ego becomes apparent. But if the ego remains bound up with the id and indistinguishable from it, then it displays its strength. The same is true of the relation between the ego and the super-ego. In many situations the two are merged; and as a rule we can only distinguish one from the other



when there is a tension or conflict between them. . . . [T]he ego is an *organization* and the id is not. *The ego is, indeed, the organized portion of the id.* (p. 97, italics added)

Freud clearly explains that the I is a modally differentiated aspect of the It that becomes the mental organization of its prior shape. Elsewhere he (1933) says: "the ego is that portion of the id that was modified . . . tak[ing] on the task of representing the external world to the id" (p. 75). This corresponds to the ego of consciousness, where the material of sensuous perception and thought are mediated, stored, and retrieved from the inner world, hence underscoring the contiguous and interdependent levels of unconscious and conscious processes. Freud's theory of mind adheres to an architectonic process: The ego develops out of its natural immediacy, then acquires increased dynamic complexity and organization as modally differentiated shapes of earlier processes assume new forms. As previously stated, Freud's recognition that organized psychic processes develop from unorganized, hence undifferentiated, natural determinations insulates him from criticism that his theory of mind purports three ontologically distinct agents that participate in mutual causal relations. Because the trinity of the three provinces is modally differentiated forms or shapes of its original undifferentiated being, each participates in the same essence and thus none is an independent nominal agent. Rather, they are interdependent forces that *appear* as separate entities, when they in fact together form the unification of the dynamic temporal processes that govern mental life.

Although Freud admonished Jung for allegedly "watering-down" libido to a monistic energy, Freud's model of the psyche conforms to a developmental monistic ontology: Higher instantiations of mental order evolve from more primordial forces of psychic life through a process of differentiation and modification. Although the I and the It are modifications of the same ontology, it is only the I that appears, itself an unconscious derivative. The specific process of differentiation, however, goes unexplained. All we are told is that the ego becomes the higher organizing agency of the mind derived from primitive processes. In fact, Freud (1940) concedes that although drives find their first psychical expressions in the It, they are "in forms unknown

to us" (p. 145). But why did not Freud isolate the moments of differentiation and modification within the It itself? Given that drive is the basic constituent of mind, which even precedes the organization of the It as a thoroughly unconscious agent, why did he not address modification at this level? Furthermore, if the ego is a secondary modification from a primary unconscious ground, then by Freud's account, drive mediation would have to take place before the ego emerges; but how could a drive possess such agency? Freud does not say.

From my account, the transmogrification of the drives gives rise to psychic agency, and it is through a careful inspection into the process of modification that we can potentially resolve the genesis problem. I believe that Freud was mistaken about making the It into an agency without accounting for how the unconscious portion of the I performs the executive functions of object choice for the drives and competing unconscious material pressing for discharge. The It cannot be understood as an unconscious agency (if at all) without the implicit inclusion of the I unless the nature of a drive includes the capacity to choose objects, which is highly improbable given that only the ego is organized and synthetic in its executive tasks. In fact, Freud (1915a) tells us that the object of a drive is "*assigned to it only in consequence of being peculiarly fitted to make satisfaction possible*" (p. 122, italics added). If the I is ontologically undifferentiated from the It, it makes the question of unconscious agency more delicate when attempting to account for teleology and intentional object choice. Rather than the I developing from the It, the ego may be properly said to develop from drive. But even more importantly, as I will soon argue, we have reason to believe that drive and ego are the same.

As it stands, there are many problems associated with Freud's contrast between the I and the It. The It is impersonal but it allegedly picks an object for the drives. How is this so? According to Freud, only the ego can do this; hence we have a problem with an executive agency, and we have a problem with the definition of a drive. Although a drive needs an object for its satisfaction, are we justified in saying that an object is a proper characteristic of a drive? This implies that an object inheres in the drive as a property of it, when this is unlikely. An object

stands in relation or absence to the *telos* or aim of a drive, but it does not follow that an object is necessarily a part of a drive's constitution, only that it requires an object for its satisfaction. To procure an object, it requires mediation. Here enters the I. The unconscious ego mediates object choice, not drive, hence Freud introduces a contradiction in his model. He further confounds the issue by making the ego a developmental agent that does not materialize until the formative stages of early oedipalization, a postulate corrected by Klein and many post-Kleinians, and today confirmed by developmental researchers who recognize the existence of the ego or the self at the moment of birth (e.g. see Stern, 1985).

Freud attempts to resolve his own contradiction by making the It a separate agent. But how does it have any organizing agency without the ego that lends structure and direction to it? Yet Freud (1926) equivocates the issue by saying that the I is "identical" with the It. In Freud's final tripartite model, the ego becomes the locus of mind because of its synthetic and dynamic functions, which stand in mediatory relation to the other two competing agencies. Yet these other two agencies are ontologically conjoined, hence we cannot separate any one agency from the others because of their inextricability. But is it possible to save Freud from his own contradiction? Can a drive take itself as its own object? And if so, when does drive become ego? Why does it emerge to begin with? At what point does the I take on a formal unity? How does it effect its transition to executive agency? To consciousness? To answer these questions, we must increasingly turn our attention to a dialectical account of modification.

### ARKHĒ

When does psychic life begin? Does the emergence of the ego properly constitute human subjectivity, or can we legitimately point toward prior ontological forces? As mentioned earlier, I do not wish to reduce this metaphysical query to a materialist enterprise, only to acknowledge that certain physiological contingencies of embodiment are a necessary condition, albeit not a sufficient condition, to account for psychic origin. Although

process psychology is sensitive to the contiguous and compatible work within the biological and neurosciences, this need not concern us here. If one is content with a materialist approach, let him resort to discourse on ovum and sperm. But we must proceed with a careful respect for Freud's (1900, 1933) dictum and resist the temptation to reduce the psyche to its anatomical substratum. Because empirical approaches alone cannot possibly address the epistemology of the interior or the lived quality of experiential process, we must attempt to approach the question dialectically. Put more specifically, we are concerned with isolating the experiential movements that bring about the inception of lived psychical reality. Before we can address the ego of consciousness, we must first account for original ground through a process account of the coming into being of archaic structure. Although unarticulated by Freud himself, the concept of drive allows us to engage the question of genesis.

We must now return to the question of ground. Although Freud tells us that the It conditions all other forms of psychic agency, drives and the repressed condition the It. Furthermore, because repression is a vicissitude of the drives, drives necessarily become a grounding unconscious activity. Therefore, what we can infer from Freud is that the drives become primordial. But is this enough? How do the drives constitute themselves in the first place, that is, how do they function as organized unconscious life? Moreover, how do they come into being at all?

Unconsciousness precedes consciousness, hence there is a radicalization to unconscious subjective experience. In fact, consciousness is the manifestation of unconscious structure, first expressing itself as drive. Although Freud emphasized the equiprimordiality of Eros and destruction, his notion of the death drive may be arguably considered one of his most important theoretical achievements. The death drive (*Todestrieb*) is not merely the innate presence of animal aggression or externalized acts of destruction, but rather it is the *impulse-toward-death*. Although the drive toward death may be observed as a *will to murder*, first it speaks to the subject as a *will toward suicide*. But as Freud tells us, mainly due to antithetical, counteractive drives motivated by the desire for adaptation and self-preservation, self-destructive impulses are typically deflected and defended against through

projective displacements that find fulfillment through many circuitous paths throughout our developmental histories. Death *appears* as aggression and destruction whether externally displaced or turned on ourselves.

Before Freud fully committed to his notion of the death drive, he gave a speculative account of the evolutionary birth and metamorphosis of animate from inanimate life. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud (1920) conjectures that "*the aim of all life is death*" (p. 38), and that organic life ultimately wants to return to an inorganic state of quiescence. In considering how animate activity came into being, Freud speculated that inorganic matter would have been perfectly content with its simple unity of quiescence if not for the encroachment of neighboring dangers that threatened its internal cohesion and integrity. As a result, libido or a life principle was erected as a defensive maneuver against the imminent threat of destruction from a foreign invasion. From this account, the drive toward life is a defense against a real or perceived danger that threatens to invade the organism's solipsistic world. Extending this notion to the human subject, death is paradoxically beyond the pleasure principle, yet at the same time is the ultimate pleasure: Death is a tensionless state. But death only becomes pleasurable to the extent that it is protracted and endured; this is why Freud says that it must be engaged through circuitous routes of self-destruction (i.e., as repetition) that bring the organism back to its original inorganic condition. In other words, violence is brought about through the subject's own hands.

Freud's bold claim has not been well received among psychoanalysis and has been outright rejected based on biological grounds (see Sulloway, 1992); yet death is unequivocally ontologically conditioned. Death, conflict, negation, chaos saturates psychic structure and is the motional process behind the very evolution of the dialectic. By turning our attention to a process account of the dialectic of desire, I believe we are justified in saying that death is our original drive. Negativity is our inner being that enters into opposition with itself—its own competing, antagonistic mental processes vying for expression whether consciously or unconsciously conceived. As Hegel informs us, the mere act of confronting opposition is negative and aggressive,

hence a conflictual enterprise of canceling, surpassing, and preserving such negativity within the unconscious abyss of our inner constitution. Yet the destruction inherent in all dialectical relations is merely a moment within the holistic process of elevating inner states to higher forms or modes of being. Hence there is a *positive significance to the negative* that brings about more advanced levels of psychic progression and realization. In this way, negativity is both a grounding and transcending process of mind. Extending Freud's notion of the death drive to process dialectics allows us to show how the unconscious grounds its own ground through determinate negation. Death is teleologically directed and experienced as life turned outward, from the interior to the exterior, toward procuring the means of returning to its previous state of undifferentiated, undisturbed peace.

In considering the inception of psychic life, however, we must take Freud's thesis further. In conceiving of genesis—the birth of psychic activity—it makes more sense to me that mental life would have to experience a form of upheaval from within its own interior constitution, rather than as a response to trauma from without. Instead of a pristine, unadulterated state of quiescence, the soul, embryonic ego, or preformed unconscious agent (what Freud calls the It) would have to experience a rupture due to internal discord that would serve to punctuate its breach to life, a process of awakening from its nascent self-entombed unity. But how is this possible? Hegel (1817c) describes the process by which the unconscious soul undergoes a dialectical evolution that eventually becomes the ego of consciousness. Hegel's method is particularly relevant to the question of genesis. By taking a dialectical approach to our theoretical analysis, we may speculate how unconscious agency first materializes.

Because mind cannot emerge *ex nihilo*, we must posit the coming into being of psychic agency as a progressive unconscious, dialectical activity; in other words, as a determinate teleological drive. Given the brute facticity of our embodiment—the givenness of nature itself, mind must emerge from within its natural beginnings. In the *arkhē*, there is simple immediacy, the mere given existence or immediate *isness* of psychical pulse, what we may loosely call *unconscious apperception*. This is unconsciousness in its immediacy, neither cohesively constituted nor

developed, but rather the experiential presence of its sentient being. Because that which *is* is an unconscious, prereflective immediacy, we may only designate it as an implicit agent or passive activity belonging to nascent mental experience. Because it is merely implicit activity in its initial immediacy and structure, it becomes a matter of making itself explicit and mediate through laborious dialectical progression; yet this requires developmental maturation: Mind has much work to do before it becomes a consciously cognizant processual being. Thus, we may only say that in its prenatal form, mind is unconscious pulsation as lulled apperceptive experiential process.

From my account, it makes no sense to speak of nascent mind or self in the beginning as "the summation of sensori-motor aliveness" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 149) or the "center of initiative and a recipient of impressions" (Kohut, 1977, p. 99) without explaining how selfhood and conscious life are prepared by unconscious mediatory relations. Psychoanalysts from Freud to Klein, Winnicott, and Kohut were not able to provide us with a satisfactory account of self-development from the standpoint of genesis: Although the ego is a progressive developmental accomplishment present at birth only in a naive form, we must account for how prenatal maturation of the ego prepares the psyche for later self-transformations and functional tasks. This requires explicating the dialectical maneuvers that bring consciousness into being in the first place. Because the self-development of the self simply does not pop up as the ego of consciousness, we must first examine the context and contingencies that the soul first encounters in its initial immediacy. The term *soul* is used here, as with Hegel, to describe the immediacy of subjectivity as an unconscious state of undifferentiated oneness or unity with its natural corporeality. Thus, unlike Freud, who discusses the soul as the unification of unconscious and conscious life, here the soul is strictly an unconscious, affective embodiment. It does not belong to the sensuousness of consciousness, albeit sensuousness in the form of affective self-certainty is its experiential modality.

It is important at this point to reemphasize that the soul in its immediate unconscious unity, undifferentiated from its sentient nature, is a *lulled* or subdued experiential, apperceptive ac-

tivity. The term *apperception* is used here to denote the felt sensuousness or self-apprehension of the soul's self-immediacy. In its implicitness or initial experiential form, the soul must undergo an internal evolution that arouses itself to a state of experiential *mediacy*. This is the initial dialectical instantiation of psychic life, a relation the unconscious first has with itself. And this is a process that unfolds from within itself, from within its own interior constitution. This self-relation the soul has with itself is the first transition to giving itself determinate life. Before that, soul is ontologically determined immediacy.

In its transition from implicitness to explicitness, immediacy to mediacy, it seizes upon its teleological nature as determinate being. Soul, or what I will call the incipient unconscious ego, undergoes an unrest; moreover, an intensification of its already unrestful nature as pure activity, and generates the initial movement of its own becoming. Hence unconscious being is already thrown into participation with the process of its own becoming as an unconscious trajectory of determinate mediatory relations. Thus, in the beginning stages of the soul's development, the lulled being of unconscious experience undergoes an internal tension and awakens within its natural immediacy as a sensuous, corporeal embodiment.

This is a gradual architectonic process of unfolding dialectical relations that becomes contextually realized through self-generative expression. These dialectical operations undergird psychic development and are the fundamental dynamic activities of erecting mental structures and order (as continual, interactive processes of interrelated and complementing forces) within the mind. In this lulled, rudimentary form of mind, the organism is a passive activity, asleep (as it were) in its own inwardness. We may reasonably say at this point that mind is largely a subdued flow of activity, pulsation, or calm throb of experience that is relatively simple, lacks complexity and internal cohesion, and is relatively constituted through its physiological contingencies. But unlike Freud's quiescent organism, mind undergoes a profound restlessness or inner rumble of negativity, which it experiences from within its coma-like condition as an eruption to *be*. Such restlessness is due to the opposition it encounters from within its own interior—not from externality—yet perhaps it is



experienced as an alien presence or presentation of tension similar to Freud's vision of drive. This drive, however, acts as an internal impetus to awaken, to move, to mobilize itself to more concrete experience. In its initial state of unconscious arousal, it takes itself as its own being, which is vibrant and sentient.

Here unconscious apperception arouses itself to *be* and to project life into itself as the form of feeling self-certainty. The soul intuits its own presence as such through the affective embodied experience of its immediate self-awareness. This self-awareness, however, is not the self-reflective, directive aspects of self-consciousness belonging to the ego of conscious perception and introspection. Rather, it is a prereflective, nonpropositional form of self-certainty as immediate subjective sentient-affective experience, what I have called, "unconscious self-consciousness" (Mills, 2000a). The amorphous self knows itself in its immediacy as unconscious experiential subjectivity.

But why does drive emerge to begin with? What urge or impulse awakens mind from its internal slumber? Here mind is a restless indeterminate immediacy, a simple self-enclosed unconscious unity that pulsates and exists in a state of *disquieted* quiescence. It undergoes upheaval because of certain instinctual, motivational currents pressing for expression as a primordial hunger or longing to experience, to feed, to fill itself, namely, as appetite or *desire*. Here we have something to learn from the Idealists.<sup>8</sup> Human subjectivity is a desirous enterprise—it yearns, it seeks, it finds. But why do we desire? In other words, what constitutes desire in the first place? Freud finds its source in somatic organizations, and we have good reason to believe that desire is a natural process emanating from the body informed by evolutionary pressures; but this does not adequately address the ontological status of desire, nor does it mean that drive devolves into biology as we have previously shown. Freud (1915a) is unmistakable in telling us that the pressure or force of a drive is its very essence (*Wesen*), hence not simply reducible to its subterranean material-efficient causal determinants. But why does unconscious desire experience such pressure to begin with? What is its *reason* to desire?

Mind desires because it stands in relation to absence or lack. Thus, drive emerges from a primal desire, the desire to fill the

lack. In the most primitive phases of psychic constitution, mind is an active stream of desire exerting pressure from within itself as drive, clamoring for satisfaction, what Freud would call "pleasure." But unlike Freud, who sees pleasure as tension reduction, mind may be said to always crave, to always desire. Whereas a particular drive or its accompanying derivatives may be sated, desire itself may be said to never formally stop yearning: It is condemned to experience lack. Unlike Lacan (1977), however, who describes desire as "lack of being," and Sartre (1943), who initially views human experience "as lack," here unconscious desire is *being-in-relation-to-lack*.<sup>9</sup>

Within the very process of unconscious genesis, we may observe the overwhelming presence of death. The dialectic is conditioned on the premise of negation and lack, a primacy of the *not*. Nothingness or lack informs the dialectic that we experience as desire. Desire is teleological (purposeful) activity, a craving—at once an urge and an impetus—an infinite striving, a striving to fill the lack. Absence stands in primary relation to presence, including the being or presence of absence; hence this is why desire remains a fundamental being-in-relation-to-lack. Although drive gradually becomes more expressive and organized into mental life, the deep reservoir of the unconscious begins to fill as psychic agency simultaneously incubates and transposes itself through its own determinate activity. In its original state, however, being and nothing, life and death, are the same.

#### THE EGO AND THE ABYSS

Following our dialectical analysis of the coming into being of unconscious agency, we can readily see how this developmental process proceeds from the archaic and unrefined immediacy of our sentient corporeal nature to the standpoint of ego development belonging to the higher activities of cognition: Mind awakens from its initial primordial indeterminate immediacy and unfolds into a more robust, determinate progressive organization of psychic life—from the most primitive to the most exalted shapes of human consciousness. But initially mind has its form in the natural immediacy in which it finds itself as nonconscious

prereflective, affective, embodied experience. The self-certainty that the unconscious soul has of itself in its natural immediacy may be summarized by the following dialectical phases:

1. Mind awakens as unconscious apperception due to internal compulsions to experience and reveal itself to itself as sentient, apperceptive corporeal activity;
2. the coming into being of unconscious subjectivity undergoes a gradual internal upheaval due to the pressures of desire and drive, which it
3. experiences as affectively laden, embodied sensuous self-certainty.

This predevelopment of the human being no doubt takes place in the prenatal fetal milieu, which is essentially innately predisposed orientations of the organism belonging to and awakening as the privatization of unconscious subjective experience.

We have determined that restlessness due to desire as the experience of lack is the initial point of genesis of felt psychic expression. The psyche at this level takes itself as its initial form, which is none other than the affective self-certainty of its embodied natural immediacy. So far we have used the term *soul* to designate this intermediate process of psychic development, but are we justified in going further? When does unconscious subjectivity become an organized agency to the point we can say there is an I and/or an It? Is it legitimate to say that as soon as there is any unconscious activity at all, this constitutes agency, or must agency derive from a higher developmental state or occasion? Because there is a mediatory transition from restless desire to the urge or drive to experience *itself*, I think we are justified in saying that at this phase in the epigenesis of the unconscious mind we have the rudimentary form of ego, which has as its task to become more aware and develop even further as a subjective being in the world. Because mind mediates its immediate naturalness as experiential affectivity, this constitutes a dialectical movement of determinate affirmation of self, even though such determination is still profoundly primitive and elementary. This determination of the mind's self-instantiation places ego development before birth within its prenatal environment, where it

## EPIGENESIS OF THE EGO

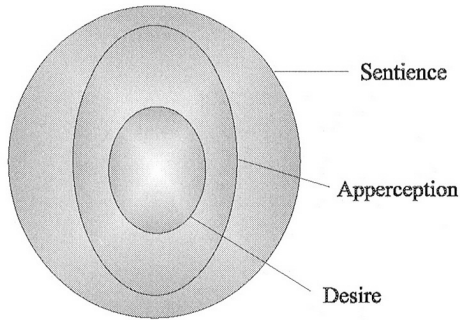


Figure 1.  
Epigenesis of the unconscious ego.

prepares for conscious awakening and thereafter. Therefore, the ego is not merely an agency constituted *at birth*; instead, it is prepared in the unconscious soul long beforehand.

Schematically, we may trace the initial unfolding of the incipient unconscious ego as it progresses from (1) desire to (2) apperception to (3) sentience, each phase being merely a moment in the constitution of subjective agency through its own determinant dialectical mediation (see Figure 1). We can readily see how this process of modification continues to proliferate in a consecutive subluted dynamic fashion, eventually becoming the ego of consciousness embracing and incorporating its new-found experiences and developmental acquisitions.

Up to now, I have emphasized the affective embodied experience the ego has with its own immediacy within its unconscious totality. That is, the ego only knows itself as a feeling, sentient being. In fact, it has no content other than its original form of unity within its natural corporeal condition of unconscious sensuousness. This sensuousness, however, is not the sensuousness of conscious perception; instead, it is the felt inwardizing of experiential immediacy. But as soon as the ego feels itself as an experiential being, it already performs the mediatory action of *cognizing* its own existence. *This shift from waking within its natural immediacy to experiencing itself as a feeling agent constitutes the*

*birth of the psyche*. We may refer to this activity as a process of *intuition* that is both a form a sensuousness and a form of thought. Here, the rigid bifurcation between emotion and thought must be suspended, for unconscious affective apperception becomes the prototype for thinking that we attribute to conscious subjectivity: Thought—reason—is the materialization of desire. In effect, the nascent self intuits its own being by collecting or gathering up the sensuous data it experiences internally, from within its own self-interior, and then posits or thinks itself *in* this state; hence this process is both an affective and a cognizing activity. This is not to imply that the self thinks itself into existence, as contend many Modern philosophies of the will; rather, *thinking is initially experiential affectivity as self-certainty*. Although the higher operations of conscious cognition do not concern us here, we have shown how consciousness is dialectically prepared within unconscious subjective experience. In this way, the unconscious ego imposes its own experiential order on the phenomenology of consciousness that arises in the ego upon the actual physical birth of the human infant. However, despite the intensification of the senses that accrues through cognitive development, the resonance of the ego's initial unconscious affective states becomes the touchstone for mind to filter and compare all subsequent experiential encounters. The life of feeling remains an essential aspect of human subjectivity.

The self experiences itself as sensuously embodied thought that eventually becomes further divided, differentiated, organized, and expressed dialectically as the higher shapes of psychic development unfold. I have referred to this generic process of psychic progression as a projective identifiatory trajectory of dynamic pattern whereby the self divides itself via internal splitting, then projects its interior into externality as affirmative negation, and then identifies with its disavowed shape, which it seizes upon and reabsorbs, hence reincorporating itself back into its transmuted inner constitution (Mills, 2000a). This is a progressive dynamic pattern of unconscious architectonic trajectory that moves far beyond the notion of projective identification first espoused by Klein (1946) and Bion (1962). In fact, this process itself is the ontological force of the dialectic responsible

for the evolution of mind. It is from that dim interior of unconscious void where the ego must liberate and elevate itself from its solitary imprisoned existence to the experiential world of consciousness. Yet the embryonic ego first knows itself, not as a conscious subject, but as a prereflective, unconscious self-consciousness—in other words, as inwardizing self-intuition.

The unconscious ego comes into being as an agency that has some crude capacity for dialectical mediatory relations, and in determining the point of such transmogrifications, we can reasonably say there is determinate teleological expression. The ego's dialectical mediation of its natural immediacy and affective experience of itself as self-certainty becomes the logical model of psychic progression. It is in this way that the unconscious mind progresses from the most archaic mental configurations of unconscious impulse or urge to the refined experiences of self-consciousness. But this assessment leaves us with the difficult question of difference between ego and drive, what Freud dichotomized as the I and the It. Rather than conceive of the ego and the domain of the drives as two separate entities, I believe it becomes important to reconceptualize this duality as a monistic process of psychic differentiation and modification showing how the ego is in fact the organized embodiment and experience of drive. Because the ego is ontologically fueled by the dialectic of unconscious desire, and desire is the very force behind the appearance of drive, the division between the I and the It is essentially annulled. It is how drive *appears* as ego that we may observe such differences, while ontologically speaking ego and drive are identical.

In relation to Hegel's philosophy, I have relabeled the domain of the It as an unconscious *abyss*, which I think more precisely captures the multiple processes of unconsciousness that Freud tried to systematically categorize. Yet whereas Freud alerts us to his view of the unconscious as consisting of three divided agencies, with the ego and superego being further split into conscious and unconscious counterparts, I envision the abyss from the standpoint of a monistic developmental unconscious ontology that gives rise to higher forms of psychic organization that interact with and interpenetrate the experiential and intersubjective contingencies that it encounters and assimilates through a

cybernetic function of reciprocal dialectical relations. The abyss is that domain of unconscious mind that the ego emerges out of and yet continues to fill and engage through its relation to conscious subjective experience. In a word, the abyss is the indispensable psychic foundation of human subjectivity—the ontological a priori condition for all forms of consciousness to emerge, materialize, and thrive. This ensures the primacy of archaic experience, unformulated affect, emotional vicissitudes, and prelinguistic and/or extralinguistic reverberations despite the equiprimordiality of language and unconscious process.

The relation of the ego to the abyss becomes one that requires a degree of differentiation and negation performed by the ego directed toward all realms of otherness. In effect, what the ego experiences is alienation, especially its own self-alienation or alienating activity as disavowed experience, which becomes relegated to otherness and split off from its own self-identity. Such differentiation is an activity the ego performs within itself through determinate negation—I am *not* It!—but the ego is what the abyss has become from the standpoint of the ego's self-differentiation from its foreignness and its original natural immediacy. Therefore, the abyss is the materiality of nature that the ego emerges out of but is always immersed in: It experiences itself as drive—as a desirous subjective being—which is the formative organization and expression of unconscious agency that epigenetically becomes the ego of consciousness. It is only in relation to itself that the ego forges a gap between itself and the abyss—which becomes the domain of all that the self refuses to identify as being identical to itself. We can readily see how the Freudian *Es* may be conceptually subsumed within the abyss of the ego, that element of mind *alienus* to the ego's own experiential immediacy.

We have determined that desire as being-in-relation-to-lack is the essence of mind that fuels and sustains the process of the dialectic. Desire becomes the ontological thrust behind the presence and felt experience of drive, itself the urge, pressure, or impulse toward activity; and this process gives rise to the unconscious ego awakening within its own inwardness to discover itself as a sensuous, apperceptive affective self-intuiting being that knows itself in its natural embodied immediacy. This dialectical

transition from indeterminate immediacy to determinate mediacy by which the ego takes its own natural form as its initial object constitutes the coming into being of unconscious subjective agency. Despite its crude organization at this phase of its life, the ego nevertheless points toward the dialectical process of its own becoming as a progressive teleological expression of subjectivity eventually acquiring conscious cognition and the higher faculties of self-conscious rational thought as development sequentially unfolds. These higher planes of development are forged by the sustaining power of the dialectic, a process that takes place first and foremost within the unconscious abyss of its natural immediacy.

The ego materializes out of an abyss in which it itself remains. In this way, the unconscious ego is itself an abyss that must mediate the multiple, overdetermined, and antithetical forces that populate and besiege it. In the ego's determinate activity of mediation, it sets itself in opposition to otherness, which it must sublimate, and this inevitably means that certain aspects of its interiority (e.g., content, images, impulses, wishes, ideation) must be combated and/or superseded. It is only on the condition that the ego intuits itself that it gives itself life felt as subjective experiential immediacy. When seen from the standpoint of the ego's mature development, the abyss becomes anything that the ego refuses to identify as belonging to its own constitution.

Freud (1923) tells us that "the ego is first and foremost a bodily ego" (p. 26) by the simple fact that we are embodied. But he did not fully describe this process: The ego is first and foremost an unconscious embodiment that intuits its Self within the natural immediacy in which it finds itself. Through continual dialectical bifurcation, the ego expands its internal experiential and representational world and thus acquires additional capacities, structures, and attunement through its mediated, conscious relational contingencies and epigenetic achievements. In doing so, the ego forges an even wider and deeper abyss, casting all otherness into the *lair* of self-externalization. Therefore, the chasm between the ego and the abyss is one in which the ego creates itself. The ego of consciousness emerges from an unconscious void that it sinks back into at any given moment, thus never truly attaining ontological distinction. The ego first awak-



ens as unconscious subjectivity within the feeling mode of its original being, which it experiences as drive, the restless compulsion to experience. This is why ego and drive are not ontologically differentiated; ego is merely the appearance of drive. Drive is embodied natural desire, our original being, which goes through endless transformations in the contextualization and enactment of our personal individualities and interpersonally encountered realities. Drive is transporting, and this is what governs the dialectic. The reason why the domain of drive, and more broadly, that of the abyss, seems so foreign to the ego is that from the standpoint of conscious self-differentiation, we are so much more than our mere biologies. We *define* our subjective experiences, and when they come from unintended locations as extraneous temporal encroachments—from the monstrous to the sublime—they are not identified as emanating from within or by one's own determinate will.

Throughout this project, I have attempted to show how dialectical psychoanalytic thought explains the coming into being of unconscious subjectivity, thus answering Freud's adumbrated attempt to explain modification and differentiation of the I from the It. With the current focus on the primacy of emotions in organizing self-experience through intersubjective relations (Aron, 1996; Lichtenberg, 1989; Orange, 1995; Stern, 1997; Stolorow & Atwood, 1992), it is important to emphasize that process psychology explains how affective resonance becomes the locus of unconscious mediatory experience that the self first has with itself. This may explain why the life of emotions yields primordial force and direction in forming psychic structure and intersubjective reality, and thus partially answers why certain unconscious emotional experiences predate and resist articulation through linguistic mediums.

#### NOTES

1. See Freud's *Gesammelte Werke, Chronologisch Geordnet*, 18 Vols. Anna Freud, Edward Bibring, Willi Hoffer, Ernst Kris, and Otto Isakower, in collaboration with Marie Bonaparte (Eds.) (London: 1940–1952; Frankfurt am Main, 1968). All references to Freud's texts will refer to *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, 24 Vols. (1886–1940), James Strachey (Trans. & Gen. Ed.) in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by

Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (London: Hogarth Press, 1966–1995); hereafter followed by the date and page number. I have compared Strachey's translation with the *Gesammelte Werke* and provide my own in places that warrant changes.

2. The noun *Ich* stands in philosophic relation to German Idealism, particularly Fichte's (1794) absolute self-positing self. Today it is almost exclusively a Freudian term.
3. A common interpretation of Freud's dialectic is to conclude that there are oppositional forces that are never resolved, hence never canceled, surpassed, or transcended. Instead, it is thought that a multiplicity of opposing processes and contents—say, impulses, wishes, fantasies, and their counterparts—are preserved in deadlocks, thus maintaining the psychic tension that characterizes the psyche. And there is justification for this argument: Freud himself places a great deal of emphasis on dualism. But this dualism, as I have argued elsewhere (2002), is the way in which psychic processes appear or unfold phenomenologically, even if such appearances are movements or modifications within unconscious experience as the transmutation of organizational processes that fuel and sustain psychic structure. Freud is a developmental monistic ontologist, and in this respect his dialectic is comparable to (albeit not convergent with) Hegel's. As I will point out, Freud's mature theory involves a series of modifications and transmogrifications that are derived from the most primitive unconscious activities to the most exalted self-conscious deliberations, hence psychic organization is a developmental achievement. In the mind, polarity seeks expression, discharge, and resolve. If it does not attain some modicum of compromise, hence negotiated expression, then it can lapse into impasse, therefore a stalemate that can lead to pathology, regression, or fixation at more primitive stages of organization. This is why dream formation, slips of the tongue or pen, significant forgetting, bungled actions, and symptom manifestation are attempts at dialectical syntheses, just as rational discourse and scientific explorations strive for higher (synthetic) levels of comprehension. But these processes are enacted with varying degrees of success and elevation. For example, it can be argued that a repetition compulsion is a failed attempt at achieving a higher stage of transcendence or sublation, which is aimed toward mastery, unification, and wholeness, while sublimation is a more successful and cultivated expression of primordial conflict, such as through art, culture, religion, and social-ethical reform. The mind can never remain "deadlocked" without falling into chaos and despair, and this is why Freud wants to differentiate the abnormal from more adjusted states of mind.
4. This position is in stark contrast to antisubjectivist perspectives popular among many forms of poststructuralism (Lacan, 1977), postmodernism, and linguistic analytic philosophy (Cavell, 1993). These approaches insist that the human subject is subverted by language, which structures and orders all experience. I am in agreement with Roger Frie (1997) that although language is a necessary condition of human subjectivity, it is far from being a sufficient condition for capturing all aspects of lived experience. Sole linguistic accounts do not adequately explain how preverbal, extralinguistic, and unformulated unconscious affective experiences resonate within our intrapsychic processes. Furthermore, they assume a developmental reversal, namely, that language precedes thought and cognition rather than acknowledging preverbal forces, unconscious experience, and emotive processes of subjectivity that developmentally give rise to linguistic acquisition and expression.

In effect, this claim boasts that meaning does not reside in the mind, but rather in language itself. But words do not think, only subjective agents. Despite the historicity of language within one's existing social ontology, the way language is acquired is potentially developmentally different for each child. Furthermore, words may be imbued with functional meaning that rests universal symbols and signifiers, hence ensuring the privatization of internally mediated signification.

5. We must offer a stipulation that although early life predisposes one to neurosis, it does not predetermine a hard and fast developmental sequence: Personal maturation is radically molded by context and contingency. Like his concept of drive, which is mobile and transmutational, Freud's concept of psychic adaptation requires a certain margin of freedom.
6. In evolutionary biology, as in history and in nature, sex and aggression are necessary conditions for organismic survival and self-preservation. Insofar as species could not continue without natural copulation, so must aggression be harnessed to ensure survival. In fact, the whole historical narrative of the human race may be viewed as a "slaughterbench" (Hegel, 1833) in order to advance human civilization, which still requires aggression to enforce law and order (Freud, 1930).
7. In *Contexts of Being*, Stolorow and Atwood (1992) address three realms of the unconscious, which they call (a) prereflective—largely culled from Brentano, Sartre, and early phenomenologists, but ultimately dating back to Fichte, (b), dynamic—a recapitulation of Freud; and (c) the unvalidated—from my account, extrapolated from Binswanger and Sullivan (pp. 29–36). But the theory and practice of the intersubjective approach is unquestionably focused on the nature of lived *conscious* experience and affective attunement to emotional resonances within the patient through an empathic-introspective stance (a method, attitude, and/or sensibility derived from Kohut, 1971). For example, Stolorow claims, "In place of the Freudian unconscious . . . we envision a multiply contextualized experimental world, an organized totality of lived personal experience, more or less conscious" (Foreword to Buirski & Haglund, 2001, p. xii). But regardless of current analytic propensities that focus on the understanding and response to conscious rather than unconscious processes, it does not negate the dynamic presence of subjective unconscious activity. Most recently, Timothy J. Zeddies (2000) revisits the notion of the unconscious within relational perspectives emphasizing the intersubjective and dialogically constituted processes that make up the relational matrix particularly in reference to the analyst-patient relationship.
8. Many Idealist perspectives posit the existence of prereflective, prelinguistic, or nonpropositional self-consciousness. Sartre does this; so do contemporaries such as Manfred Frank (1991) and Dieter Henrich (1966). Such theories derive not only from modern philosophy, but also ultimately from a tradition that dates back to neo-Platonism and theosophic-mystical accounts of the soul. In this tradition, the father of German Idealism, J.G. Fichte, asserted that the prelinguistic subject originally generates and constitutes its own being; that is, the self freely posits or asserts itself absolutely. In his *Wissenschaftslehre* (1794), Fichte states that "*the self begins by an absolute positing of its own existence*" (p. 99). For Fichte, what ultimately characterizes the ground of human subjectivity is pure "activity as such." Before there is consciousness proper, thought lives underground as an "intellectual intuition" of itself—viz., prereflective, nonrepresentational self-consciousness. This original prereflective self-consciousness is in fact *unconscious*. Such unconscious

self-consciousness is the prefamiliarity the self has with itself before achieving conscious self-reflective awareness.

In the Idealist tradition, F.W.J. von Schelling made the unconscious the *sine qua non* of psychic life. Schelling's revision of Kant's and Fichte's transcendental idealism, together with his own philosophy of identity (*Identitätsphilosophie*) and philosophy of nature (*Naturphilosophie*), led to one of the first systematic conceptualizations of the unconscious. For Schelling (1811–1815), "all consciousness has what is unconscious as ground, and, just in coming to be conscious, this unconscious is posited as past by that which becomes conscious of itself" (p. 150). Freud (1923) echoes this sentiment: "The repressed [past] is the prototype of the unconscious. . . . We can come to know even the *Ucs.* only by making it conscious" (pp. 15, 17). Schelling, like Freud, was deeply engaged with the problem of *Beginning*, i.e., original ground (*Grund*). Hegel (1817c) referred to this primordial ground as a "nocturnal abyss," what he had earlier labeled in the *Phenomenology* (1807) the realm of "unconscious Spirit" (p. 278).

In all modern philosophies of the will, an unconscious ground—an *Ungrund*—precedes consciousness. The primacy of the *Ungrund* was first made sensible by the seventeenth-century philosopher, mystic, and theosophist, Jacob Boehme, to whom Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel owe much. The *Abyss* (*Abgrund*) or *Ungrund* is the "ground without a ground," a subject who "seeks," "longs," "lusts," and "finds." This conceptualization of unconscious activity bears comparison to a standard neo-Platonic idea: Proclus, Erigenia, and Plotinus conceived of the *Ungrund* as the *ens manifestativum sui*, "the being whose essence is to reveal itself" (see Koyré, 1929; Mills, 1996; von der Luft, 1994; Walsh, 1994; Weeks, 1991).

9. For both Sartre and Lacan, consciousness itself takes the form of *lack*. Whereas Lacan (1977) refers to a "lack of being" throughout his *Écrits*, Sartre (1943) is more specific when he tells us that "human reality . . . exists first as lack. . . . In its coming into existence, human reality grasps itself as an incomplete being" (p. 89). For Sartre, human subjectivity is desirously compelled to fill the lack through projection of a future transcendence, hence a "being-for-itself."

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**The Psychoanalytic Review**  
 Vol. 89, No. 6, December 2002