

Process Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Since Freud's (1933) denunciation of psychoanalysis as a *Weltanschauung*, psychoanalysis has largely remained skeptical toward philosophic speculation while favoring a scientific attitude. But with increasing attention paid to philosophical paradigms within contemporary psychoanalysis, new vistas emerge for mutual dialogue and theoretical advance. Throughout this project, I attempt to offer the first systematic account of a psychoanalytic metaphysics grounded in process philosophy largely derived from Hegel's dialectical logic. After rectifying many misconceptions of Hegel's dialectic, I endeavor to provide a process account of metaphysical realism and its implications for psychoanalytic inquiry. It is my hope that process psychology will stimulate new directions in psychoanalytic theory and practice.

There has always been a tension between psychoanalysis and philosophy, primarily because each discipline privileges its own discourse and agenda over that of the other. While psychoanalysis largely heralds itself as a behavioral science, philosophy sees science as being only one species within its vast metaphysical genus. This tension was present from the start, for it was Freud who envisioned psychoanalysis as a scientific discipline superior to philosophic speculation (see Freud,

1916-1917, p. 20), not to mention the fact that he loathed metaphysics. Within the past decade, however, psychoanalysis has grown more friendly toward philosophy, and in some circles, has embraced a variety of phenomenological, hermeneutic, and postmodern sensibilities to theory and practice. We may observe this trend among many poststructuralist, feminist, constructivist, and narrative perspectives, as well as among contemporary relational and intersubjective paradigms. But without exception, psychoanalysis has not endeavored to offer its own formal metaphysics.

The central purpose of this article is to introduce a new theoretical system to psychoanalytic thought which I have called ‘dialectical psychoanalysis’ or ‘process psychology’ (Mills, 2000). While process psychology has potential applications for theoretical, clinical, and applied psychoanalysis, here I will be mainly concerned with explicating its conceptual explanatory power. It is my hope that this work will be received as a fresh paragon for the advancement of psychoanalytic inquiry grounded in a solid philosophical foundation. If it finds verification among the behavioral and social sciences including empirical psychology it stands a chance of enjoying greater receptivity across disciplines; but this work ultimately rests on philosophical justification alone. In this way, my approach is founded in a theory-based practice that further informs methodological considerations. Here, I am concerned with ‘first principles,’ namely, the ontological configurations of mind and the logical precepts that lend cohesion and intelligibility to human experience. Because I will be preoccupied with articulating the basic constituents of psychic reality derived from process philosophy, some readers may find this work to be tedious and/or irrelevant to therapeutic practice. It is my intention, however, to stimulate a conceptual shift in addressing the axiomatic principles that inform our presuppositions of mental functioning on the most fundamental level, a subject matter that has been uniformly neglected within the psychoanalytic literature. It is

largely for this reason that I attempt to show how psychoanalysis is ultimately a metaphysical enterprise.¹

Prolegomena to a System

In my most recent book, *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis* (2002), I provide the first systematic application of Hegel's philosophy of mind to psychoanalytic inquiry.² It is here where I comprehensively point toward a process account of psychoanalysis grounded in dialectical logic and show how it has the potential to advance the discipline itself. While many psychoanalysts, psychologists, behavioral scientists, and clinicians of all kinds may find this approach to be highly abstruse and esoteric, I nevertheless believe that psychoanalysis stands everything to gain from philosophical fortification. Therefore, process psychology is concerned with expatiating the ontological conditions that make human experience possible, and this has its root and etiology in the dialectic of process.

The broader metaphysical commitments of process psychology and their implications for psychoanalysis are outlined in an appendix to this article as a prolegomena to my system, so I will only briefly mention them here. Process psychology rests on three fundamental axioms: (1) *The*

¹ Because psychoanalysis conceptually addresses all aspects of the human condition including the nature and structure of mind, society, politics, and culture, psychoanalysis is by definition a philosophical undertaking. Although perhaps unintended by Freud and his followers, or seen as a corollary to the psychological observations advanced by psychoanalysis as a behavioral science, psychoanalysis as a discipline is a mode of philosophical inquiry by virtue of the fact that it critically examines and speculates on the ontological, epistemological, and phenomenological aspects of human existence through the puissance of reason, or what Freud (1927, 1930, 1932) refers to as *Logos*—the scientific intellect.

² Jessica Benjamin (1988, 1992) is the only other applied Hegelian within psychoanalytic theory that I am aware of; however, her work has exclusively focused on the *Phenomenology of Spirit* (1807), and especially Hegel's treatment of intersubjectivity within the master-slave dialectic. My work centers on Hegel's mature system as outlined in his *Science of Logic* (1812) and the *Encyclopaedia of the Philosophical Sciences*, Division Three, *Philosophy of Spirit* (1817c).

Primacy of Process; (2) *The Ontology of the Dialectic*; and (3) *Psychic Holism*. These fundamental propositions serve to structure the scope of this project, thus providing a conceptual framework orienting our attention toward understanding how process is ontologically constituted, is predicated on a logic of the dialectic, and underlies all domains of psychoanalytic speculation. After showing the value of process thought through Hegel's logic, I will provide detailed amendments to Hegel's dialectic and argue for a process account of metaphysical realism that emphasizes a holistic interpretation of the psychodynamics of mind.

Process Dialectics

The notion of process, activity, or change has an inextricable relation to the nature and meaning of dialectic. In ancient philosophy, dialectic (*dialektik*'), derived from the Greek *dialegein*, meaning to 'converse,' 'argue,' or 'discourse,' involved a conversational method of argumentative exchange. By Plato's time, the term acquired a technical sense in the form of question and answer similar to a debate, and is now generally equated with Socrates' pedagogical style primarily represented in Plato's *Dialogues*. In this sense, dialectic is both the art of refutation and the quintessential method for ascertaining knowledge.

Aristotle attributes Zeno of Elea with inventing the notion of dialectic due to his paradoxical arguments against motion and multiplicity, which rests on premises yielding contradictory consequences (Smith, 1999). Aristotle is one of the first philosophers to organize formal procedures for dialectical debates in the *Topics*, which reappeared centuries later in the formalized disputations practiced in universities throughout the Middle Ages in Europe. Responding to the ancient's alleged 'illusory' logic, Kant (1781) introduced the notion of the 'Transcendental Dialectic' in his first

Critique as a means of analyzing antinomies or contradictions in reasoning, while Fichte (1794) attempted to bridge opposition by showing how thought seeks a natural synthesis. Hegel (1807, 1817,a,b,c) extended his dialectic of spirit (*Geist*) to a metaphysical enterprise that attempts to account for logic, nature, mind, and human history, while Marx in turn reduced spirit to matter. Whitehead (1929), on the other hand, reanimated nature as mind in his cosmology and established the last great metaphysical system in the history of philosophy emphasizing the primacy of process.

The preSocratic philosopher, Heraclitus, was the first to emphasize unity in the process of change which necessarily evolves out of contraries that compose the world. Interpreted from the few fragments and epigrams he left behind, Heraclitus posited that there is a hidden harmony in the universe that sustains reality despite the conflict of opposites which we experience. While there is some scholarly dispute (Kirk, Raven, & Schofield, 1957), for Heraclitus, process is reality and the underlying source of the unity of phenomena. Following the law of process and opposition, Heraclitus affirms both the unity of contradictory appearances and the reality of process (Graham, 1999). All things come to pass over into their opposite form, which is the edict of change and its expression. While the emphasis on locomotion and flux is often attributed to Heraclitus, the kernel of his philosophy is probably most representative in his thesis on unity in diversity and difference in unity, hence the tension of opposites is essential to the one (Copleston, 1946).

Over two thousand years later, the German Idealist, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel (1812, 1817a), established a comprehensive science of the dialectic based on the logic of process. Drawing on Heraclitus' ideas on change, the strife and tension of opposition, and the many within the one, Hegel's dialectical logic is a monistic metaphysical system that attempts to account for all aspects of reality. Hegel viewed logic as a movement rather than a pure analysis of how form could be

applied to content or content fit into form. Form and content, particulars and universals, are indivisibly united in a process that not only describes human cognition and patterns of rational thought, but the process of nature and experience itself. What Heraclitus inferred in his fragments, Hegel systematized through rigorous logical methodology.

For Hegel, logic is the natural starting point for philosophy because it is the only discipline that thinks about itself and its operations. Unlike other reflective disciplines that presuppose something given in nature or presume that thinking is self-evident, Hegel painstakingly shows how thought dialectically progresses from the most elemental to the most convoluted and profound modes of self-organization and dynamic expression. In fact, he delves so deeply in the very essence and contours of thought, making such subtle moves and inferences, that most people would never even become aware of them (Burbidge, 1993). Because there are so few scholars prepared to work out in full detail the logical processes and transitions in which we actually think and reason, it is not surprising that Hegel's dialectical logic challenges traditional analytic philosophy (see Hylton, 1993).

Although it was Hegel who first argued systematically that reality is a process of becoming, it is Alfred North Whitehead (1925, 1929) who is most commonly referred to as the founder of process philosophy. A mathematician, logician, philosopher of science, and metaphysician, Whitehead argued that the fundamental activity that comprises and underlies the cosmos is the eternal process of experience constituted through a dynamic flux of microcosmic orderly events, much of which are non-conscious organizations as "drops of experience, complex and interdependent" (Whitehead, 1929, p. 18). For Whitehead, process reality comprises a flux of energy continuous throughout nature and is the fundamental building blocks of the universe. Whitehead's system emphasizes the creative and novel advance of nature as a continuously

transforming and progressive series of events which are purposeful, directional, and unifying. Like Heraclitus and Hegel before him, Whitehead stresses the dialectical exchange of oppositions that advance the process of becoming.

Whether we accept Heraclitus' dictum: "Everything flows" (*panta hrei*), Hegel's dialectic of spirit, or Whitehead's process philosophy, the notion of process, evolution, and change underlies all reality. This is especially applicable to psychic structure, interpersonal relations, and the psychosocial contexts that constitute our cultural and sociopolitical conditions. Although the notion of the self-as-process has been discussed among some contemporary psychoanalytic thinkers (see Joseph, 1989; Kristeva, 1986), the significance of a process psychology has been virtually ignored. In what is to follow throughout this project, I hope to stimulate a conceptual shift in our understanding of several key psychoanalytic tenets—from classical metapsychology to contemporary intersubjectivity theory—by systematically introducing process dialectical thought.

Dialectical psychoanalysis relies largely on Hegel's (1812, 1817a) general logic of the dialectic and its re-appropriation for psychoanalytic investigation, however, without inheriting the baggage associated with Hegel's entire philosophical system. We need not adopt Hegel's overall system, much of which is non-relevant and/or incomprehensible to psychoanalytic sensibility, in order to appreciate his science of the dialectic and the logical operations in which it unfolds. The adoption of his dialectical method may complement or augment existing theoretical innovations that enrich our understanding of mind and human nature. Juxtaposed to current paradigms, Hegel's dialectic has profound significance for the future of psychoanalytic inquiry.

With increasing tolerance for philosophical exploration, process psychology could open up new directions in psychoanalysis. Process psychology is an essentialist position—not as fixed or

stagnant attributes and properties that inhere in the structure of a substance or thing—rather as a dynamic flux of transmuting and self-generative, creative processes having their form and content within the dialectic of becoming. Process is the essence of mental life insofar that if it were removed, psychic reality would perish. As I intend to show, the appropriation of process psychology within psychoanalysis rests upon a proper appreciation of the dialectic. Understanding the dynamics and nuances of Hegel’s dialectical method can lead to advances in theory, practice, and applied technique. Not only does the dialectic apply to the nature of intrapsychic development, interpersonal relations, and social and institutional reform, but it has direct implications for the consulting room. The dialectic informs the very nature of intersubjectivity, the therapist-patient dyad, group dynamics, organizational development, and the historical progression of culture. This issue is of particular importance when examining the dialectical polarities, forces, and operations of the mind outlined by various psychoanalytic theories and how the field itself may be shown to participate in this dialectical process. From this vantage point, Hegel’s dialectic is especially helpful in understanding the historical development of psychoanalysis (see Mills, 2000). Psychoanalysis, like Hegel’s conception of *Geist*, is a process of becoming.

Hegel’s Dialectical Method

Although Hegel is one of the most prodigious and influential thinkers in the history of philosophy, his dialectical method remains one of his least well understood philosophical contributions. While philosophers have made scores of commentaries and interpretations of Hegel’s dialectic (Beiser, 1993; Burbidge, 1981; Hibben, 1984; McTaggart, 1964), some interpreters have gone so far as to deny Hegel’s method (see Solomon, 1983), or else they have rendered it opaque, simplistic, and

imprecise (Forster, 1993). Hegel's dialectical method governs all three dimensions of his overall philosophical system, namely, the *Logic* (1812), the *Philosophy of Spirit* (1817c) as well as the *Phenomenology* (1807), and the *Philosophy of Nature* (1817b). The dialectic serves as the quintessential method not only for explicating the fundamental operations of mind, but also for expounding the structure of reality.

Hegel's philosophy of mind or spirit (*Geist*) rests on a proper understanding of the ontology of the dialectic. Hegel refers to the unrest of *Aufhebung*—customarily translated as 'sublation,' a continual dialectical process entering into opposition within its own determinations and thus raising this opposition to a higher unity which remains annulled, preserved, and transmuted. Hegel's use of *Aufhebung*, a term he borrowed from Schiller but also an ordinary German word, is to be distinguished from its purely negative function, whereby there is a complete canceling or drowning of the lower relation in the higher, to also encompass a preservative aspect. Therefore, the term *aufheben* has a threefold meaning: (1) to suspend or cancel, (2) to surpass or transcend, and (3) to preserve. In the *Encyclopaedia Logic*, Hegel (1817a) makes this clear: "On the one hand, we understand it to mean 'clear away' or 'cancel,' and in that sense we say that a law or regulation is canceled (*aufgehoben*). But the word also means 'to preserve.'" (§ 96, *Zusatz*).

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 three-step 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 bastardized 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 principles (*Grundsatz*) of thought and judgment.³ Yet this phrase itself is a crude and mechanical rendition of Fichte's logic and does not even properly convey his project. Unlike Fichte's (1794) meaning of the verb *aufheben*, defined as: to eliminate, annihilate, abolish, or destroy, Hegel's designation signifies a threefold activity by which mental operations at once cancel or annul opposition, preserve or retain it, and surpass or elevate its previous shape to a higher structure.

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 inconsistencies in reasoning.⁴ For both Kant and Fichte, their respective dialectics have firm limits or boundaries that may not be bridged. Hegel (1807, 1812, 1817a,b,c), on the other hand, shows how contradiction and opposition are annulled but preserved, unified, and elevated within a progressive, evolutionary process. This process of the dialectic underlies all operations of mind and is seen as the thrust behind world history and culture. It may be said that the dialectic is the *essence* of psychic life, for if it were to be removed, consciousness and unconscious structure would evaporate.

Aufhebung is itself a contradiction; the word contradicts itself. Thought as a contradiction is constituted in and through bifurcation, a rigid opposition as antithesis. Thus, as a process, reason cancels the rigid opposition, surpasses the opposition by transcending or moving beyond it in a

³ In his *Wissenschaftslehre* (§§ 1-3), Fichte (1794) discerns these three fundamental principles or transcendental acts of the mind.

⁴ Cf. Immanuel Kant (1781/1787), *Critique of Pure Reason*, Second Division: Transcendental Dialectic, Book II, Chapters I-II.

higher unity, and simultaneously preserving the opposition in the higher unity rather than simply dissolving it. The preservation is a validating function under which opposition is subsumed within a new shape of consciousness. Reason does not merely set up over and against these antitheses; it does not only set up a higher unity but also reasons a unity precisely through these opposites. Thus, the dialectic has a negative and a positive side. This is echoed in Hegel's (1812) *Science of Logic*:

“*To sublimate*” has a twofold meaning in the language: on the one hand it means to preserve, to maintain, and equally it also means to cause to cease, to put an end to. Even “to preserve” includes a negative element, namely, that something is removed from its immediacy and so from an existence which is open to external influences, in order to preserve it. Thus what is sublated is at the same time preserved; it has only lost its immediacy but is not on that account annihilated (p. 107).

In order to dispense with this erroneous yet well conditioned assumption about Hegel's dialectic that is uncritically accepted as fact, I wish to reiterate myself. When psychoanalysis refers to dialectics, it often uses Fichte's threefold movement of thought in the form of thetic, analytic or antithetic, and synthetic judgments giving rise to the crassly misleading phrase: thesis-antithesis-synthesis—a process normally and inaccurately attributed to Hegel;⁵ or it describes unresolvable contradictions or mutual oppositions that are analogous to Kant's antinomies or paralogisms of the self. It is important to reemphasize that Hegel's dialectic is *not* the same as Kant's, who takes contradiction and conflict as signs of the breakdown of reason, nor is it Fichte's, who does not explicate the preservative function of the lower relation remaining embedded in the higher. Furthermore, when psychoanalysts and social scientists apply something like the Fichtean dialectic to their respective disciplines, the details of this process are omitted. The presumptive conclusion is that a synthesis cancels the previous moments and initiates a new moment that is once again

⁵ For example, see Donald Carveth's (1994) incorrect assessment of Hegel's Logic, p. 151.

opposed and reorganized. But the synthesis does not mean that all previous elements are preserved, or that psychic structure is elevated. In fact, this form of dialectic may lead to an infinite repetition of contradictions and conflict that meets with no resolve.

While 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, however, is understanding the essential structure of the dialectic as sublation denoted by these three simultaneous 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 subsumes and preserves it within its interior. Death is incorporated, remembered, and felt as it breaths new life in the mind's ascendance toward higher shapes of psychic development: it retains the old as it transmogrifies the present, aimed toward a future existence it actively (not pre-determinately) forges along the way. This ensures that dialectical reality is always ensnared 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.

Hegel's dialectic essentially describes the process by which a mediated dynamic begets a new immediate. This process not only informs the basic structure of his *Logic* which may further be attributed to the general principle of *Aufhebung*, but this process also provides the logical basis to account for the role of negativity within a progressive unitary drive. The process by which mediation collapses into a new immediate provides us with the logical model for understanding the dynamics of the mind. An architectonic process, spirit invigorates itself and breaths its own life as a self-determining generative activity that builds upon its successive phases and layers which form its appearances. Mind educates itself as it passes through its various dialectical configurations ascending toward higher shapes of self-conscious awareness. What spirit takes to be truth in its earlier forms is realized to be merely a moment. It is not until the stage of pure self-consciousness, what Hegel calls Absolute Knowing as conceiving or conceptual understanding,⁶ that spirit finally integrates its previous movements into a synthetic unity as a dynamic self-articulated complex whole.

Amendments to Hegel's Dialectic

Process psychology takes as its presupposition the ontology of the dialectic which may be said to account for the most primordial and archaic activity of psychic life, as well as the most cultivated achievement of human consciousness. The dialectic becomes the internal thrust of the mind which

⁶ For our purposes, we may view the striving for self-consciousness to be a process of self-actualization which one can never fully achieve, only approximate through laborious dialectical progression. We are always oriented toward higher modes of self-fulfillment whether in action or fantasy. It is the striving, however, that forms a necessary aspect of any transcendental orientation or philosophy of living, and like the pursuit of wisdom and contentment, it is a process of becoming.

manifests itself through innumerable intrapsychic and intersubjective forms—from primitive unconscious processes to reason, politics, and ethical self-consciousness. However, process psychology departs from Hegel’s dialectic in three significant ways:

(I) There is a regressive element to the dialectic that competes with its upward, natural acclivity toward wholeness;

(II) There is a selective aspect to the retention and preservation of previously vanquished experiential forms the mind encounters which are temporally and contextually realized; and

(III) The Idealist notion of Absolute Knowing as pure self-consciousness is displaced by a contemporary theory of mind that realizes the limits to the epistemology of self-consciousness. These necessary correctives have direct implications for the concept of teleology which I will address in turn.

Dialectical Regression

The logical progression of the dialectic constitutes an architectonic model of development. An essential aspect behind this development involves a generic movement by which a mediated dynamic begets a new immediate. Each mediated immediacy builds on its previous shapes and experiences and thus explains how opposition, violence, and subsumption are responsible for a unitary progressive drive toward higher forms of consciousness. For Hegel (1807), this dialectical progression constitutes the process behind the historical evolution of the human race, the nature of self-consciousness and culture, and the exalted forms of reason actualized as art, religion, and philosophy. While Hegel’s dialectic allows for inversion and withdrawal back to earlier shapes of subjective unconscious experience (see Berthold-Bond, 1995; Mills, 1996, 2002), his overall treatise

on objective spirit—or the collective socialization processes that govern our civilized laws and practices—does not allow for regression because the subjective features of individual minds are already surpassed and integrated within a higher objective stage of the dialectic. This creates a problem for Hegel when attempting to account for psychopathology on a collective scale.⁷

Process psychology observes that mental life—whether individually or collectively realized—is always under the pressure of internal destructive forces and contingencies that can potentially and regressively pull higher developmental achievements back toward earlier instantiations. While it may be said that human consciousness and collective identity have an orienting principle toward psychic holism—either in actuality or in fantasy,⁸ they equally have the potential to relapse into degenerative and pathological states of inversion, abrogation, flight, and fixation to earlier developmental configurations of psychic experience once found to be familiar, simpler, and less threatening. In fact, we see a split or divided dialectic within its unitary monistic structure: one side thrust and positioned toward acclivity in the face of descent, toward unity within disunity, toward progression versus withdrawal. The double orientation of desire becomes an important variable that influences the dialectical progression of mind, one that is particularly sensitive to the subjective contingencies that influence its developmental path and variations. This

⁷ Some Hegel scholars would contest this claim (e.g., Harris, 1993); however, objective spirit is a higher stage than subjective spirit and thus would by definition sublimate the individual to society—hence give priority to the collective. Because collective *Geist* is an advanced stage in the development of the human race, it is presumed that all traces of psychopathology are dissolved in the cultivated modes of aesthetics, ethics, religion, and pure reason. From this perspective, there is no place for the irrational.

⁸ We seek wholeness in our thoughts and actions. Some are inclined to actively seek out transcending, spiritual, and/or consciously integrative activities in order to elevate their human consciousness—as evinced by the myriad social practices and customs that span through many diverse cultural anthropologies. And even in individuals where holism and transcendental actions are not intentionally sought, and perhaps even avoided or dismissed as pure myth, there still persists the *wish* for peace and contentment. For example, I once had a patient who was a vociferous atheist, having renounced every belief and every illusion, yet he still could concede that he harbors the wish for a heaven.

dual center or double edge of desire is particularly influential in the regressive features that inform psychopathology.

Temporal Mediacy

Psychic organization has a simultaneous temporal relation to the past, the present, and the future: (1) The past is subsumed and preserved within the dialectic; (2) The present is immediate mediated experience; and (3) The future (in contemplation and fantasy) becomes a motivational-teleological impetus. Temporal experience is a mediational realization informed by this three-fold relation of the dialectic; however, each domain may have competing and/or opposing pressures that affect the other modalities at any given moment. In other words, each locus may pressurize, extol, invade, usurp, coalesce, and/or symbiotically conjoin with each other within their interdependent dynamic system. But each domain also has the potential of having a subjective experience, surge, voice, or lived reality of its own despite the force and presence of the other two realms; yet such seemingly autonomous moments of individualized expression are relegated to the broader systemic processes that operate within the dialectic.

The past we may refer to as *archaic primacy*, thus emphasizing the primordial nature of our historicities—including *a priori* ontological conditions (e.g. constitutional, social, and cultural forces) as well as that which are subjectively and developmentally experienced (both consciously and unconsciously). The present we may call *immediational presence*, thus stressing the phenomenology of the concretely lived experience presented as subjectively mediated immediacy. The future we will describe in terms of *projective teleology*, which captures the future trajectory of the dialectic of desire that stands in relation to a valued ideal, goal, or purposeful wish-fulfillment.

Temporal mediacy is the dialectic in action in the moment of bringing the past and future to bear upon its present immediate experience.

Archaic primacy holds a privileged position in the psyche since the mind always presupposes and draws on the past in all its mental forms, derivatives, contents, and operations. For instance, cognition necessarily requires memory, which is the *re-presented* past, just as the mind itself requires certain ontological conditions and biological processes in order for there to be cognition at all. Similarly, the unconscious is lost presence, that which had formerly presented itself (albeit in its multiply derived forms). Archaic primacy has a stipulated degree of causal influence over the driving force behind the dialectic since the archaic is always brought to bear upon presentational encounters the subject confronts as immediacy which stimulates projections of the future. The way the present is incorporated into the past, however, may be highly conditional and idiosyncratic given the unique contingencies that comprise the nature of subjectivity, either individually or intersubjectively actualized. It is in this sense that the preservative aspect of the dialectic may be very *selective* in what it retains. While we may generally say that the past is always preserved in some way as our historicity (and this is certainly true of world history), there are certain elements that are—or have the potential of becoming—omitted or negated and forgotten altogether, hence repressed. That is, certain aspects of archaic primacy may not be operative, mobile, or causally expressive, and perhaps may fizzle-out entirely, while other aspects are selected, secured, harbored, and sustained (especially as unconscious life). The selective retention feature or operation of the dialectic points toward the enactment of determinant choice within the encountered experiential contingencies of the process of becoming.

Immediational presence is the subject's experience in the here-and-now and how it engages

what is presented before it (either as an internal event or stimulus, or as an external imposition), thus affecting thought, feeling states, action, and their unconscious resonances. The immediacy of the lived encounter highlights the context and contingencies that influence the phenomenology of the emotional, cognitive, and unconscious aspects of personal experience. While the present immediacy of the moment is largely a conscious phenomena, immediate experience is already a mediated dynamic by virtue of the fact that archaic primacy already suffuses every lived encounter which is superimposed as its facticity. This means that unconscious processes always saturate every conscious experience and become a mediatory screen or template in which the world is received and perceived, thus influencing the contingency and construction of experience.

Selective retention is particularly operative within immediational presence as the dialectic executes certain determinate choices in its relation to mediated experience. In effect, the dialectic seizes upon certain aspects of the environment and/or internally evoked experiences from the press of archaic primacy while refuting, denying access to, or limiting the range of others that may exert certain degrees of determinate influence on immediate experience—the range and signification of each mediated choice having resonance in the dialectic’s trajectory and orientation toward the future. In every immediate encounter, the past and future are summoned and converge on the present: the archaic superimposes past form and content; the future superimposes goal-directed intentionality in mediate thought and action.

Projective teleology is the future trajectory of a desired state of affairs (as wish, intention, or purpose) that is stimulated by presentational processing or mediatory interventions, thus instigating the teleological projection of a goal-directed aim. Like archaic primacy and immediate experience, the projected future may entertain a certain selective aspect to the retention and/or focus

of experience that takes place within the transformative, progressive dialectical processing governing each mediated dynamic. Mediation stands in relation to lack, which the subjective mind experiences as desire.⁹ In all three spheres, however, there exists the primacy of ambiguity, uncertainty, and context, for virtual time may be suspended within the mind and experienced as radically dissociative, incongruent, and/or atemporal, yet nevertheless wed to contingency.

At any given moment of experience, the past and future are ontologically operative on subjective immediacy, bringing to presence the vast configurations and pressures of unconscious affect, wish and defense, and the corresponding conscious reality that is simultaneously evoked and represented. Archaic primacy, immediational presence, and projective teleology are functional aspects of orienting the psyche toward dialectical growth, even if regression and decay are activated consequences of the lived encounter. Here, it becomes important to keep in mind that the dialectic works radically to compress and transpose its multiple instantiations within its mediatory functions. The teleological motives of the dialectic are therefore informed by the threefold presence of the past, the present immediate context, and the future trajectory to which it is oriented, each vector exerting its own source and pressure on the inner constitution of the subject.

⁹ Elsewhere (Mills, 2002), I have comprehensively argued that 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. While 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 existence “as lack,” here unconscious desire is *being-in-relation-to-lack*.

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 which 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. While 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 Ubiquitous Nature of Contingency

We are currently entering a Hegel Renaissance amongst contemporary academe: yet while the value of his ideas are attracting increasing praise, there are equally many dissenters, a philosophical critique of which is beyond our current focus (see Cullen, 1988 for a review). Generally, Hegel's system has been both revered and criticized based on its insistence on rational necessity (Taylor, 1975), its absolute idealism (Desmond, 1989; Pippin, 1989), and its broader implications for ethical, religious, and political-state reform (Harris, 1997; Pinkard, 1994), just to name a few. While there is enormous debate among Hegel scholars regarding the legitimacy, viability, value, and logical congruity of his system, these nuances do not concern us here. Process psychology only need be committed to Hegel's general logic of the dialectic and the implications it generates for understanding and substantiating psychoanalytic thought.

On this point, process psychology does not need to espouse the metaphysical notion of an Absolute or ultimate standard or principle of the Ultimate in order to defend the dialectic. While human subjectivity may be oriented toward an ultimate goal or purpose of its own choosing, the route or direction of which can take many radically different forms, we need not evoke a predetermined, innate mechanism or Aristotelean teleology directing the outcome of such yearnings. In fact, Hegel's dialectic is truly appealing for this reason: it does not profess a model of mind in which future events are causally determined. On the contrary, the future is brought about by dialectical mediations that must constantly confront the contingencies of the moment. This means that immediacy is radically contextual and relative to the multiple over-determined influences that converge and simultaneously superimpose themselves on subjective and relational experience, which is in turn dialectically mediated by mind. It is only by looking back at the process (Findlay, 1971),

that we can discern an intelligible pattern or dynamic of becoming, one that is nevertheless free from predetermination. This is a major theoretical advantage of dialectical psychoanalysis that many deterministic notions of psychic reality preclude: mind is ultimately free.¹⁰

However, for Hegel, like Aristotle before him, Logic was ultimately God as pure thought thinking itself into existence and then dispersing its being into nature, only to emerge out of, evolve, and discover itself as Mind, the coming into being and fulfillment of itself as pure reason. While drawing on Schelling's and Spinoza's notion of the Absolute, the Absolute was the standpoint of pure knowing, conceiving, or conceptual understanding as comprehending the evolution of nature, mind, and human civilization. For Hegel, *Geist* achieves pure knowing. Perhaps psychoanalysis would simply say this is an illusory wish, but one in which we nevertheless strive for and value as a civilized race in search of truth and meaning. Yet despite his emphasis on absolute knowing, Hegel never strays from his insistence that the dialectic is always mired in contingency and context. From the standpoint of contingency always saturating being, there is no absolute standard apart from such conditions which we may only have partial knowledge of and control over at any given time. This insures that the context in which human subjectivity finds itself will be a decisive factor in how the dialectic encounters and engages experience. In this way, dialectical psychoanalysis holds an advantaged position in that the complexifications and over-determined processes that constitute the

¹⁰ Psychoanalysis generally shies away from ontological commitments concerning freedom, and in some cases, displaces the notion altogether. Dialectical freedom points toward the power of determinate choice in the context of one's presentational immediacy by confronting contingencies, at once influenced by the archaic past and certain environmental, political-cultural, and linguistic forces that form our social ontology. There are degrees of contextual freedom in the moment—in the nature of agency and choice, not as predetermined design, but determined by subjective forces that are themselves teleologically driven. This insures that not only is conscious agency influential over contextual freedom, but so are unconscious processes partially informing such conscious choices. What we may call 'psychic determinism' (Brenner, 1955) is not to say that conscious choices are already decided for us by an impersonal unconscious, rather unconscious processes are teleologically constituted forms of liberty. In fact, unconscious teleology conditions—hence makes possible—conscious determinate choice. Therefore, unconscious teleology becomes the logical model for self-generative conscious freedom.

nature of psychic reality, intersubjectivity, and social order can never be fully understood without their relation to one other.

Processential Realism

What is real? This metaphysical question has dogged philosophy since its inception resulting in no unified consensus to date, the likelihood of which remains a futile illusion. Within psychoanalysis the question of reality has come under increasing attention in the literature yielding various tensions between constructivist (Hoffman, 1998), narrative (Schafer, 1980, 1983; Spence, 1982), subjectivist (Atwood & Stolorow, 1984), perspectival (Orange, 1995), and objectivist (Moore, 1999) accounts of human experience. These tensions inevitably engage the realism/anti-realism debate making substantially different ontological claims about the ultimate nature of the real with varying degrees of specificity. There is a spectrum of doctrines that call themselves realists ranging from: naive realism, direct realism, intuitive realism, natural realism, critical realism, blind realism, scientific realism, metaphysical realism, epistemic realism, medieval realism, radical realism, Platonic realism, semantic realism, internal realism, sophisticated realism, commonsense realism, pragmatic realism, ontological realism, realism with a capital R and realism with a small r, and revisionary realism (Bitsakis, 1993). If we are to assume the historical position in the Aristotelean tradition, then realism is the belief that objects in the material world exist independent of consciousness and do not require thought or sense experience to sustain their existence.¹¹

¹¹ Some materialists would qualify their claim by arguing that metaphysical realism is unverifiable, thus a meaningless proposition. Instead they may adopt a critical realist position, assuming that there must be something behind the appearance of natural objects of investigation, or else they adopt phenomenism: reality is only that which appears.

The human species has a preoccupation with dichotomies. I do not wish to revive the irreparable schism between the failed realism/anti-realism controversy, 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 which we indubitably accept as real—things happen around us even if we don't adequately perceive them nor understand their existence or purpose. The instant we open our eyes and orient our senses to what we apprehend before us, we have already made a metaphysical commitment—reality is presupposed. The minute we open our mouths to converse with another, we have already accepted the existence of the other by virtue of the fact that we participate in actions that affirm a sense of the real. Radical subjectivists, idealists, skeptics,¹² and postmodernists who wish to deny the reality of the external world are simply professing a delusion. Whether under the auspices of scholarly assiduity, or motivated by narcissistic currents protective of a certain philosophical ideology, no sane human being truly lives a life devoid of accepting certain premises that predicate an existent world: to say otherwise is disingenuous intellectual masturbation. What is real is what each subject experiences

¹² Skepticism, like relativism, has been historically used to challenge realist claims to truth or to dispute universals, contending that we can never know what is real, itself an absolute proposition. Yet when you look at the skeptic's lifestyle such as Pyro or Sextus Empiricus or Hume, they still ate, spoke, indulged their desires, and engaged in social customs. Their behavior spoke differently than their claim to radical doubt. Any concrete involvement and participation in a communal structure commits one to a realist position. Even though they claim they are creatures of habit, or they cannot help but respond to the demands of their body's needs for sustenance, or the contingencies of social interaction indigenous to custom, they still operated *as if* there *is* something real: even if such reality is appearance, it nevertheless is real by virtue of the fact that it appears.

despite any claim to consensus, originality, personal understanding, or indubitability by the simple fact that it is her experience.

Like philosophy, psychoanalysis remains torn between various tensions that want to affirm both objectivist and subjectivist dimensions of human experience while avoiding the pitfalls inherent to each position. This tension is exacerbated by false dichotomies that either emphasize empirical (objective) science over the phenomenology of (subjective) experience or vice-versa, which inevitably makes ontological assertions about the existence of a mind-independent world. For all practical reasons, this dichotomy is worthless: I live and experience a world which I apprehend as encompassing both inner and outer spatiotemporal events, those intrinsic to my intrapsychic embodiment and those externally alien to me, thus making fine distinctions in the content, contextual operations, and cognitive-affective processes in which sensuous experience and rational judgment unfold. From my account, the question of whether natural objects exist independent of consciousness becomes inane: of course they *do*, or you would not be reading this periodical. Whether or not we can *know* the real, however, becomes an important quest for psychoanalytic epistemology.

The question of objectivity versus subjectivity becomes germane under context, and this has particular ramifications for theoretical and clinical psychoanalysis. One of the more philosophically sophisticated positions within psychoanalysis today is the focus on perspective, what Donna Orange (1995) calls “perspectival realism.” While not a new theory by any means, Orange cogently argues how context and contingency determines the lived truth and reality of the subjective mind within the dynamic field of intersubjective relations. From this perspective, she adopts a pragmatic theory of truth in showing how there are multiple experiences to the lived encounter that inform our

experience of the real, and whether we focus on the patient, analyst, child, or caregiver, all have their own unique psychic truths that develop, emerge, and transform within relational parameters. Therefore, what is true and real is that which emanates in individual subjective experience and relational dialogic engagement.

Following Pierce, Orange's position further echoes James' (1975) theory of truth which he proposed in order to provide a satisfactory method for "settling metaphysical disputes which might otherwise be interminable" (p. 28). The pragmatic notion of truth lies in our divergent understanding and experience of the world. For James, truth participates of a world that is in constant flux and change: reality is seen as something that is created and in a process of becoming reminiscent of Heraclitus' philosophy rather than the Parmenides' changeless world of Being in which traditional forms of truth derive. James (1907) claims that "the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth happens to an idea. It becomes true, is made true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verifying itself, its verification" (p. 92). In this sense, pragmatic epistemology is compatible with a dialectical process view.

Truth is defined in terms of its fluidity and contextuality, not as some unalterable state of reality. Therefore, ideas become true insofar as they orient us in satisfactory relation to other parts of our experience. In effect, we do not seek truth for its own sake, rather for our own psychological purposes. Truth contains value only in the sense that it is applicable to human experience. Hence, truth is an emergent valuational process and avenue which allows us to procure particular goals under particular circumstances.

Perspectivalism emphasizes contingency and therefore favors a process account of psychic reality. But perspective and context does not negate the universality of the dialectic and the way in

which experience unfolds. In fact, the dialectic makes context possible. From this standpoint, contextualism is generated and transpires within the universal dialectical movement constitutive of process, thus taking account of both subjective experience and the conditions that make subjectivity possible. This is an essentialist claim: all experience is governed by process.

In contrast to perspectivalism that opposes absolute truth claims, I wish to argue for a psychoanalytic metaphysics that highlights the phenomenology of subjective experience while at the same time shows how subjectivity is ontologically conditioned on absolute, universal principles that inform the dialectic. This position, which I will call *processential realism*, underscores the notion that process dialectically conditions psychic reality accounting for both first-person subjective experience while at the same time appreciating the universal ontological features of mind that provide the *a priori* structures necessary for subjectivity to emerge in the first place. Therefore, processential realism highlights the contexts and contingencies within the phenomenal lived encounter as distinct moments of the dialectic of becoming while acknowledging the whole process and dynamic teleological pattern of trajectory under consideration. This attempts to mitigate the subject-object polarity; yet such distinctions become important depending upon whether we wish to focus on ontological or phenomenological concerns. In this sense, the ontology of the dialectic makes the phenomenology of human experience possible, experience that, by its very nature, is highly contextualized and recalcitrant to reductive strategies. While the dialectic is a generic process common to all human beings regardless of demographic or historical contingencies, the contextuality of lived experience gives rise to radical nominalistic expressions. It is in this way that subjectivity is grounded, emergent, and transforming experiential activity generated by the logical objectivity of the dialectic.

Postmodern critics may balk at any attempt to resurrect essentialism, universality, or any term that signifies an absolute or ultimate aspect to human nature;¹³ but we need to account for all aspects of mind, and this necessitates making both universal and contingent claims about human experience. Essence is process, allowing for both contingency and universality. Generally we are suspicious of global pronouncements because we can easily evoke certain particulars that readily negate universality (such as Kant's infamous dictum: 'never lie'); yet those debunking universals are nevertheless making universal claims themselves: negation by its very nature is absolute. It is currently in vogue to think that there is no essences because of our vast pluralities; but regardless of what philosophical position one takes, we cannot escape from our universal ontological commitments. For example, all human beings desire and have consciousness despite the fact that we cannot agree on the nature of such. In addition, we are all embodied and communicate through certain linguistic mediums dictated by our social customs despite the fact that they vary from country and culture to those of others. But the unique quality of subjective experience, or the kind of language and cultural edits, still does not negate absolute predications despite radical differences in their manifestation or appearance. In all these instances, universals are presupposed.

Our skepticism about universality serves an adaptive psychological purpose: we are fearful if not paranoid of anything that threatens our sense of freedom, individuality, and psychic integrity (Mills & Polanowski, 1997). This is particularly evident when subjective experience is invalidated or cast into certain universal categories that evoke particular demands which we oppose (e.g., certain religious beliefs or ethical proclamations). In this sense, our willingness to accept universal judgments stand in intimate relation to our desires and identifications which in turn stand in relation

¹³ Here, the reader should not confuse Hegel's notion of Absolute Knowing as pure conceiving with our reference to an absolute as a shared universal.

to identity and difference. If universal injunctions endanger our particular organizing experiences, then they are resisted if not denied. Once again, opposition as negation is the expression and liberty of individuality, itself the form and force of absolutism.

Psychoanalytic Epistemology

The ontological process in which subjectivity accounts for our experience of the real has been virtually ignored in psychoanalysis. This claim may at first seem palpably false: consciousness is predicated on unconsciousness; but it is precisely this *process* of development that remains murky, hence unresolved. One decisive advantage to process psychoanalytic thought is that it attempts to show through progressive dialectical mediation how potentially *all* aspects of experience may be accounted for within a logical speculative paradigm: this approach accounts for the *subjective universality of form* within the multiply contoured contextualization of individual and collective experience that constitutes the qualities and contents of our phenomenal lives. The phenomenal perspective of the sense of the real—the echo of inner truth—carries a validity that only each individual knows and harbors regardless of whether another experiences with that person a shared meaning, reciprocal identification, or empathic resonance. In fact, subjectivity is conditioned by the dialectic even if perspectival experiences defy objective consensus or natural laws. Our subjective appreciations of what is real is radically habituated by our own internal worlds and unconscious permutations thereby influencing conscious perception, judgment, and intersubjective exchange. This is why psychic reality is first-order experience.

All we can experience and know *is* psychic reality: whether inner or outer, present or absent, 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 intermediate or mesocosmic agency—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 and governed by *intrasubjective* processes that allow the natural external world to arise in consciousness. Therefore, our encounter with 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.

This position is in stark contrast to antisubjectivist perspectives popular among many forms of poststructuralism, postmodernism, and linguistic analytic philosophy (e.g. see Cavell, 1993). These approaches insist that the human subject is subverted by language, which structures and orders all experience. This position, like materialism, is essentially reductive. I am in agreement with Roger Frie (1997) that while 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, nonverbal, somatic, and unformulated unconscious affective experiences resonate within our intrapsychic lives. Furthermore, they assume a developmental reversal; namely, that language precedes thought and cognition rather than acknowledging bodily and preverbal forces, unconscious organizing principles, and unarticulated emotive processes that developmentally give rise to linguistic acquisition and expression. In effect, the linguistic claim boasts that meaning does not reside in the mind, rather in language itself. I find this position completely untenable: *words don't think, only subjective agents*

do. Despite the historicity of language within one's existing social ontology, the way language is acquired is potentially idiosyncratic and developmentally different for each child. Furthermore, words may be imbued with functional meaning that resists universal symbols and signifiers, hence insuring the privatization of internally mediated signification.

It is very difficult to denounce the notion that each individual has first person privileged access to their inner thoughts, beliefs, feelings, and experiences that no other person could possibly know, even if such access is limited, truncated, or distorted under the press of mutational factors.

Even if thoughts or belief attributions are objectively false, the inner subjective experience is nevertheless a psychic reality and is *known*—albeit imperfectly—to the person as her experience. Therefore, the truth or falsity of particular beliefs does not negate the fact that inner experience and self-consciousness of that experience is knowledge. While we may become more intimately acquainted with various elements of our inner experiences through third-party observation, extraspective data, and intersubjective facilitation, there is no substitute for knowledge that one directly apprehends or thinks because it is an immediate form of self-experience. In addition, knowledge of our own mind is privileged and authoritative as compared to knowledge of other minds and other things, although such knowledge also constitutes first-order experience by virtue of the fact that we posit it internally.

We have a private viewing in the theater of our own minds. No matter what anyone else thinks or observes, no outside source can directly know that first person's privileged access to their experiences irrespective of truth claims, misrepresentations, or the validity of self-knowledge. Put simply, I know what I had for breakfast this morning and others don't. As Davidson (1974) states, sincere first-person, present-tense assertions about one's own thoughts have an authority no second-

or third-person claims, or first-person other-tense claims can have, even if such claims are fallible. This bears directly on psychoanalytic epistemology since the analyst is attempting to uncover and illuminate hidden aspects of the patient's mind within the joint context of examining the patient's unique experiential world and the intersubjective ambiance that lends mutual structure to the emergent field of subjective truths. Rather than revisit the relation between correspondence and coherence theories of truth in psychoanalysis (see Hanly, 1992), or the pragmatic (perspectival) view (Orange, 1995), aspects that are still nevertheless germane and operative on multiple parallel levels within individual and collective life, process psychology finds complementary value in embracing the Greek notion of truth as *aletheia*, a position entirely ignored in psychoanalytic epistemology.

For the ancients, truth ($\alpha\lambda\epsilon\theta\epsilon\iota\alpha$) is disclosedness or unconcealment. Heidegger's (1949) explication of the Greek notion of truth has relevance to psychoanalytic process thought: truth may only be disclosed from its hiddenness in a clearing that opens a space for unconcealment. Equally, as each space reveals the potentiality for truth to be made know, there is also conversely a closing in that truth may only be revealed in the wake of concealment. Such movement of uncovering in the presence of covering underlies the dialectical participation in the nature of truth. As each new form of truth appears, others become surpassed yet preserved within subjective experience. This favors a process account of truth as emergent dialectical teleological expression: truth sublates its previous moments in the process of what it becomes. Therefore, process psychology views truth as *creative discovery*: truth is at once emergent and constructive as creative advance, as well as a discovery and actualization of lived potential seized upon in contextual immediacy. Opening a space or clearing for the patient's unconcealment becomes a central task of the treatment process

facilitated by the engagement of the analyst. This calls upon the analytic situation to stimulate and bring forth revealed states of the patient's disclosedness from its hiddenness, the verity of which does not necessarily have to correspond to epistemological certainty, rather to the creative process of self-discovery which is the revelation of truth within experiential immediacy. Because psychological truth is a process of disclosedness or unconcealment that is ever evoking and emergent, it remains a process which may never be completely actualized, only strived for; and in this striving, meaning and fulfillment materialize through progressive dialectical ascendance within relational exchange, negotiation, and interdependency.

What becomes essential for processual realism is the appreciation of context and contingency within the dialectical unfolding of truth and reality in the overall process of becoming. And it is precisely in examining the subjective universality of the ontology of the dialectic that particular subjective experience is given phenomenal value. In other words, the subjective universality of the dialectic is the common patterning of human consciousness that informs our collective shared humanity within which a world of infinitely distinct and value laden experiences belonging to individual subjectivities contextually flourish as vibrant creative thrusts of personal expression. In this way, the individual and the community, particularity and contingency, is accounted for within universality, and each are ontologically united in the whole process of its burgeoning development.

Concluding Comments

Throughout this article, I have been mainly concerned with explicating the most primordial constituents of psychic activity that are ontologically operative within all forms of human

experience. In this preview to a system, I have emphasized the value of a process metaphysics for enriching the theoretical domain of psychoanalytic inquiry. Process is predicated on the ontology of the dialectic and is the necessary a priori condition for all intrapsychic, relational, and intersubjective life. Although the implications of process thought are broad and applicable to many key psychoanalytic concepts including clinical practice, a proper appreciation of such remains the task of future work. It is my hope here that psychoanalysis will begin to acknowledge the import of philosophical justification as a harbinger for the unity of wisdom and science.

Appendix: Prolegomena to a System

I. The Primacy of Process

(i) Mind is constituted as process. Process is the essence of all psychic reality and 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.

(ii) Process underlies all experience as an activity of becoming. As becoming, process is pure event, unrest, transmutation, and experiential flow.

(iii) Essence is process. It is neither fixed nor static, inert or predetermined, 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.

(iv) Process is teleologically driven. Psychic structure is not immutable, idle, rigid, or immobile, but transforming, malleable, mediating activity that provides functional capacities and

vivacity to mind within its teleologically self-motivated, purposeful process of becoming.

(v) Mind is teleological insofar as it constitutes a purposeful, dynamic, goal-directed activity of becoming mediated by subjective unconscious and conscious processes as well as extrinsic interactions encountered in relation to its archaic past, its present immediacy, and its future trajectory. Teleology is interactional self-determinate freedom within the context of mediated contingency, not predetermined causal design.

(vi) There is an equiprimordiality to the subject-object contrast allowing for multiple teleological processes within both subjective intrapsychic organizations and the relational-intersubjective matrices that mutually inform the phenomenological field of experience.

(vii) Process is both individual and collective, personal and impersonal, thus allowing for exclusive particularity in content as well as shared universality in form. Although subjective experience is radically individualized and idiosyncratic, subjectivity further unfolds within universal dialectical patterns—as *subjective universality*—(not as predetermined, reductive mechanisms, but as purposeful, contextual operations) that lend actuality and structure to lived reality.

II. *The Ontology of the Dialectic*

(i) Process is dialectically constituted by competing and opposing forces that are interrelated and mutually implicative; hence all forms of psychic reality are dialectically mediated, interdependent, and spatiotemporally occupied.

(ii) Opposition is ubiquitous to psychic reality and operative within all subjective and intersubjective experience. There is an equiprimordiality to all dichotomous relations: that which *is* is always defined and experienced in relation to what it is *not*. All polarity is mutually related and

inseparable, hence one pole may only be differentiated from the other 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-constitute their existence. Identity and difference, universality and particularity, multiplicity and unity —are thus formed in relation to opposition, negation, and conflict, whereby each are ontologically interdependent and dynamically composed of fluid processes that evoke, construct, 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 insures that process multiplies exponentially, *ad infinitum*.

(iii) Psychic reality *is* the dialectic, experientially realized or not. Dialectic is understood as a simultaneous, threefold progressive evolutionary process that at once enters into opposition, annuls such opposition as it elevates itself over its previous moment, while at the same time preserves such opposition within its internal structure. Three primary movements constitute the dialectic: at once they cancel or annul, transcend or surpass, retain or preserve—aspects of every transmogrification.

(iv) There is selective retention to the dialectic: it selects, holds onto, digests, and remembers certain aspects of its experience, while it negates, ignores, regurgitates, and/or forgets others. Selection highlights the teleological freedom of determinant choice in the moment, which has many possible mutative influences on how the dialectic unfolds in immediacy and in future encounters when stimuli are activated due to the constraint of certain contingencies.

(v) The dialectic is both architectonic and epigenetic: it builds upon its previous experiences and progressively redefines its interior constitution; thus fashioning and fortifying its structural organization in its evolutionary drive toward self-generative development. All particularities of conscious and unconscious experience (whether individually or collectively instantiated) are ontologically informed by the universal, motional principles that fuel the dialectic.

(vi) Each movement, each shape of the dialectic, is merely one moment within its holistic teleology, differentiated only by form. 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.

III. *Psychic Holism*

(i) Mind as process is a teleological, dynamically informed, self-generative complex whole. Psychic holism celebrates the self-determinate, liberating freedom of mind that only its teleological and dialectical progression affords. Mind is neither conceived as the product and aggregation of predetermined causal design nor as material-environmental reduction, rather agency and choice are instituted and realized in each moment of becoming as self-generative, elevating procreative succession, thus lending structure, meaning, and understanding to psychic development. The upward drive of the dialectic is oriented toward wholeness, actualization, and contentment achieved through higher shapes of self-conscious realization. Only by looking back at the process of epigenesis can a discernable purpose emerge as a dynamic pattern of mediated immediacy forging the upward progression toward wholeness.

(ii) 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 may revert or regress back to more archaic or primitive shapes of mental life under certain contingencies.

(iii) The orienting principle to mind has dual, bipolar modes of expression. The dialectic of desire seeks quiescence, to fill the lack—the hole in being, and it may do so in one of two primary ways: through transcendence as sublation or through inversion and withdrawal. Yet desire fights within itself the regressive pull of the dialectic calling for a return to prior shapes of mental life that were once experienced as familiar, less threatening or austere, and/or comforting. Desire wants to advance, to go beyond its immediacy, to complete itself, yet it also wishes to return to the symbiotic unity it once felt as secure and/or serene.

(iv) This competing, dual orientation is radically governed by unconscious forces and subjective contingencies belonging to the unique psychic configurations and conflicts of each individual. When intrapsychic deficits, vulnerabilities, and oppressive external factors impinge on psychic reality, mind is seduced to return to early phases of its development. These regressive currents are exacerbated when depressogenetic markers are activated and subsequently tax or eclipse the transcending self-strivings toward sublation and wholeness. All individuals struggle with this fundamental tension between progression and regression, even if regression is only temporarily mobilized.

(v) While the aim of the two orientations is the same—to end the lack, the experiential forms are antithetically instantiated: one wants to surpass absence through acquired presence, while the other wants to end absence by recovering lost presence. But desire always confronts limit: impasse, deprivation, and discontent are inevitable aspects of psychic development replete with contingencies

the dialectic must encounter and attempt to resolve. Desire ultimately realizes that it cannot go beyond itself, thus surpass itself, for if it were to complete itself, it would no longer desire: the dialectic would vanish entirely, hence it would no longer be. This is why death becomes the foundation of life: we are condemned to experience lack, an eternal affliction. In its competing drive toward elevation and destruction, progression and regression, ascendance and decay, —being and nothingness, life and death are the same.

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