

Subjectivity: A Dialectic of Creation and Discovery

[A]nalysis is always more and something other than analysis. It transforms; it translates a transformation already in progress.

-Derrida, "Eating Well"

ONTOLOGICAL INDETERMINACY

If psychoanalytic plurality is irreducible, psychic life or at least certain features thereof must be epistemically and perhaps ontologically indeterminate — and vice versa. To say that psychic life is epistemically but not ontologically indeterminate is to advance a transcendental realist thesis: psychic life subsists in itself — is stably self-present, fully determinate — although our epistemic access to it is insuperably limited or insecure; either something about it inexorably resists comprehension or it is fully comprehensible but we can never be certain that we have hit the mark. To say that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate is not necessarily to advance a strong empirical idealist thesis, i.e., to claim that psychic life is but a raw resource for sovereign interpretive construction, nothing in itself. Nor is it necessarily to advance a classical transcendental idealist thesis, i.e., to claim that certain forms — cognitive mediations — are unavoidable (constitutive of experience) and/or necessary for the scientificity of inquiry. Thus to say that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate is not necessarily to commit oneself to the classical corollary of transcendental idealism, namely, empirical realism, i.e., to claim that although such forms are themselves contingent — they are not necessarily exhibited by all forms of life or even all forms of inquiry undertaken by rational beings — within their compass knowledge is as certain as can be; once we acknowledge our finitude (necessary mediations), and forgo the fantasy of attaining subject-independent knowledge and measuring our knowledge against this cognitive ideal (the “really real,” what is altogether independent of experience), skepticism loses its bite: is either no longer corrosive, becoming immanent to the empirical realist pursuit, or no longer coherent, evidently asking for the impossible; finitude turns out to be not a limit in the sense of an impediment but a condition of possibility, indeed the framework for the pursuit of the infinite.¹ In the following, the claim

that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate involves both a weak empirical idealist thesis (psychic life is partially — and unevenly — pliable to interpretive constitution) and a weak transcendental idealist thesis (certain categorical coordinates are historically uncircumventable and in that sense necessary conditions for intelligibility as a person; they are not subject to transcendental deduction, thus do not claim transhistorical validity as constitutive conditions for experience and/or valid knowledge, but rather are elements of a reigning epistemē — material aprioris.) Thus it means to delimit a new dispensation of idealism: dialectical idealism.

DIALECTICAL IDEALISM

Oriented toward ontologically indeterminate subjectivity, dialectical idealism may be of more limited applicability than Kant's transcendental idealism, Schelling's objective idealism, and Hegel's absolute idealism, though its elaboration of transcendental-historical necessity (the material apriori) and its underscoring of the multiple manners of satisfying such transcendental conditions, thus their underdetermination, i.e., its insistence on the dialectic of creation/discovery, if compelling, may have consequences bearing on all other forms of idealism. If accounting for even a limited domain (subjectivity) demands a formulation of transcendental and empirical idealism as dialectically interarticulated, the ambition of idealism to deliver a definitive statement of the conditions of (im)possibility for rational satisfaction may find itself unsettled from within.

Hegel's absolute idealism (arguably) absolutizes the purview and self-appropriative power of reflection by rendering the object domains over which reflection ranges precipitates of its generative/synthetic activity, i.e., not natural givens but normative delimitations. Schelling's objective idealism skeptically insists on the reflective irrecuperability of the possibility of reflection itself — thus of reflection's generative activity — by demonstrating that the genesis of an object domain over which reflection may range, i.e., the assemblage of a system of categories or determination of a symbolic field, cannot itself be unproblematically accounted for within the field of reflection. Any such accounting would be constituted, therefore incomplete. It would

involve a new layer of description, a regime of reflection itself in need of accounting, thus would indefinitely defer the self-totalization sought. Schelling's skeptical idealism is bound to aspirations to totalization no less than Hegel's absolute idealism. As the preeminent contemporary commentator on Schelling, Markus Gabriel, puts the point, "Hegel does not achieve any absolute closure of form. There is no logical 'absolute form,' as Hegel believes, precisely because reflection in its all-embracing claim to positivity cannot sufficiently reflect its being conditioned by a process which is not always already reflective" (2009, 41). Reflection is necessarily constituted, therefore it cannot provide a neutral account of its constituting activity; it finds its insuperable internal limit in what Schelling calls "mythology." The autopoiesis of reflection remains its blind spot. The conditions for determinacy are indeterminate, and such indeterminacy is the groundless ground of Notional freedom, thus the Notion cannot close upon itself; it remains fractured and propelled by the ineffable.

Schelling's skepticism, however, is unconvincing because it suppresses the distinction between a context of discovery or genesis and a context of justification, and thereby glosses over the question of salience. Excess is not ontologically or logically guaranteed unless reflection *must* pursue seamless self-integration, unconditionally satisfying self-transparency; a self-justifying, fully — albeit perhaps provisionally — satisfying dispensation of reflection is *conceivable* if the demands of and on reflection are historically variable. There is no *a priori* reason that the necessity of a regime of reflection could not be deduced from within its own terms. Of course, the necessity of that regime of reflection may not be binding on all, and its conditions of emergence may be obscure, but these conditions are not necessarily salient to its satisfactions. Why *must* preconditions always be accounted for? In what sense is *the possibility of determinacy a presupposition of determinacy*? Why would (or when would) the impossibility of accounting for the possibility of determinacy be salient to the determination (or evaluation) of determinacy?² Schelling's claim that reflection is conditioned by and actualizes itself as an indeterminate process — an *animus* — for which it cannot account is a theoreticist displacement of history that either addresses a very strange question of

justification — why would the sort of self-closure that Schelling demonstrates to be impossible be necessary, valuable, significant, rationally obligatory, etc.? — or illicitly makes an interesting question of discovery/genesis into a misleading question of justification while denying the available responses to this question (e.g., Fichte’s account of the summons³).

Schelling radicalizes Hegel’s ambition to render the purview of reason absolute, bringing brute existence and mere meaningfulness into the equation in order to interrupt it; but existence and meaningfulness *per se* need not demand explanation (this is one possible lesson of Hegel’s *Logic*) — they could just be recursive posits or phenomenologically granted axioms of inquiry. Or empty categories. Schelling (and perhaps following him, Heidegger) reifies the absolute as withdrawing with each determination of a fundamental object domain or arrangement of categories (metaphysical order; epoch of Being), objective idealism now shading into transcendental realism. Refusing to relinquish the idea of the absolute, desperately introjecting and thereby preserving the salience of immediacy (as always already lost and distorted), Schelling’s skepticism twins the systematic ambitions by which he has clearly been seduced.⁴ Perhaps such ambitions are better mourned and divested (or in Hegel’s idiom, forgiven) than so negated. Schellingian mythology is melancholy reified.

If Hegel’s purported satisfaction with his achievement of reflective self-closure is what Schellingian skepticism means to corrode with demonstrations that self-understanding necessarily involves reiterated recursive abstraction, thus self-loss, then Schelling may be fighting against a false foil. Arguably, Hegel’s dialectical mobilization of categories means to absolutely expand the reach of idealism (normative self-consciousness) by releasing it from its orientation toward and promise of consummate categorical stability (an orientation and promise of Kantian provenance). Various empirical realisms geared to diverse categories and variably motivated (yet always “historically informed”) manners of their interarticulation may be what, on Hegel’s conception, the absolute autonomy of reflection amounts to. The genuine disagreement between Hegel and Schelling, then, may concern Hegel’s *methodological* presupposition that the rational is the actual

and the interests it bears.⁵ An “ethical” disagreement. Putting this possibility aside, as its defense would demand a lengthy exegesis unsuited to this context, and one burdened with the fact that even if Hegel gestures in the abovementioned direction at crucial moments, there are many passages supporting Schelling’s reading, let us say that at least from Schelling’s perspective, Hegel’s interest in underwriting the unlimited ideality of reflection inherits Kant’s claim that rational satisfaction (the satisfaction of the demands of reason) means absolute determination.⁶ But of course the same can be said of Schelling’s denial that reflection can close on itself. Schelling certainly, and Hegel perhaps, remains within the orbit of the absolute, bound to the promise of unqualified rational satisfaction even when reflecting on its irredeemability. “Mythology” is just the creative-poetic expression of the thought that though ever-beckoning, such satisfaction cannot be had. It is the mania of despair; such skepticism a short step to *ennui*.

What Schelling reifies as the moment of mythology generated by reason’s attempt to coil around itself is from the perspective of dialectical idealism a hypostatization and thus distortion of perspectival self-consciousness issuing from contingent dialogical interaction. Unlike Hegel’s absolute idealism and Schelling’s objective idealism, dialectical idealism is not oriented toward the completion or interruption of reflective self-closure (totalization). Rather, it assumes along with the ontological indeterminacy of its subject matter, the displacement of the Kantian horizon in which rational satisfaction means absolute determination. It seeks more diverse and insecure satisfactions issuing from dialectically driven inquiry and its immanent dissonance. Where Schelling would insist on the immanent exterior of mythic ineffability, dialectical idealism would underscore the historically ineluctable conditions for self-consciousness and their realization in dialectics of creation/discovery, universalization/particularization, blindness/insight, inflation/deflation — generally, the variable but not arbitrary interface of the transcendental and the material. Unable to chart a course through steady streams of deduction, dialectical idealism hiccups its way along, drawing attention to obscurity in the concrete contexts of perspectival development — where it might matter.

INDETERMINACY AND IDENTITY

As understood herein, to claim that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate is not to suggest that psychic phenomena can just be crafted any which way by the mystical force of interpretation or that the success of diverse castings must be equivocal because relative to diverse interpretive schemes. That would be both obscurantist and highly implausible. Although the significance of the past can be modified via investments in new or reconfigured narrative or symbolic frameworks that allow the sedimented significance of past events to loosen and subside as latent meaning-potentials of these events are realized, as Lady Macbeth discovered to her great dismay, “What’s done cannot be undone” (Act V, Scene 1). Psychic life is historical: irreversible and incessantly intermediate. Though trauma may be remediable, its incendiary force is inextinguishable; remediation, i.e., (re)symbolization or (re)integration, is conditioned by, and however obliquely and unwittingly, disclosive of the fact and perhaps the nature of the trauma. The range of realizable meaning-potentials of past events are conditioned by individual and collective developmental histories.

Although one’s self-image can change considerably via new interpretations of formative events, of what events have been formative, and of individual and collective latencies, ongoing social recognition of a reformulated self-image is a condition for its coherence and endurance, its very practicability. Interpreting it so can only make it so, when it can, if the interpretation’s precipitate, the newly formed or reformed self-image, achieves sufficient social corroboration: intersubjective recognition and institutional support.

To be sure, interpretive revisions may render us available to futures — experiences, forms of individual and collective self-realization — that our current psychic structures and dispositions inhibit. By means of interpretive reorientation we may alight upon and become attuned to prospects for realizing that which has been buried under the weight and suffering of our psycho-social status quo, become more available to or at least capable of lending consideration to that which has been tendentially muted or distorted by the entrenched forms of selective attention to which our psychic histories, conflicts, and the like have

given rise — and so to what keeps such forms of selective attention in place, what keeps us committed to our suffering and ignorance. Interpretation may yield more expansive, attuned, and fulfilling forms of perception and response; freedom of imagination, feeling, and thought; freedom of initiation and for responsibility (the dialectic of agency). One might even say that the point of inducing and interpreting transference is to remobilize drives for the sake of new beginnings. But we cannot interpretively will our way into our dreams.

If the claim were that psychic life is unlimitedly available to interpretive will, akin to prime matter for certain strands of Medieval theological nominalism, it would rightly fall prey to suspicions of spuriously divinizing either the self or the social, depending on where one locates the source of interpretive authority.

But to contest strong empirical idealism is not necessarily to accede to transcendental or any other form of realism. In fact, to venture the claim that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate is to suspend the assumption on which any realism regarding the psychic must be based: that the psyche is a fully positive substance, that there is a paradoxically mind-independent nature of the mind or subject-independent reality of the subject to which beliefs may correspond, and in corresponding with which, become knowledge, and with respect to which therapeutic interventions can decisively hit or miss their mark.⁷ It is thus to propose that investigations of psychic life that are primarily oriented toward representational accuracy, i.e., aspire to deliver third-personal, intersubjectively verifiable knowledge of psychic structures, contents, and processes, or presume a privileged position from which the third-personal truth of psychosexuality can be dogmatically proclaimed, are categorically misleading. This is not to deny that representational ambitions are often appropriate and informative. It is to suggest, however, that psychic phenomena may confound efforts to construe them as consistent, enduring, and systematically integrated substances fully present to the classical representational regard. If and to the extent that certain aspects of psychic life are distorted when construed from, or occluded by, a third-personal, contemplative vantage-point, e.g., if the spectatorial stance must miss subjectivity's excessiveness vis-à-vis particular subjective determinations,

representational programs will have to acknowledge their limits. If and to the extent that certain aspects of psychic life are intrinsically elusive — self-effacing or self-distorting, e.g., evident only in the difficulties, perturbations, inconsistencies, or breakdowns of symbolization or self-narration, or manifest only as that which the vividness of memory conceals — the clarity and coherence of representational depiction, its confident capture of the matter at hand, may signal its infelicity, hence require representation to bend toward witnessing, testimony, or otherwise oblique indication. Or, less pertinent to our immediate concerns but still to the point of clarifying the limits of representation vis-à-vis psychic life, if certain psychic phenomena arise and/or develop spontaneously, in ways that cannot be accounted for by any psychic mechanism, if certain psychic phenomena are in this sense singular rather than particular, then the systematic aspirations of the representational program will have to acknowledge a fundamental limitation.

Two distinct sets of claims may be involved in the claim that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate:

- (1) Psychic life is partially (and unevenly) pliable to interpretive constitution; and interpretive self-constitution is a necessary and ongoing feature of human subjectivity — its (constitutively provisional) achievement *is* the achievement of (constitutively provisional) subjectivity.
- (2) There are evident moments of spontaneity in psychic life; and such spontaneity may signal not just contingent epistemic incompleteness but ontological indeterminacy.

Commitment to psychoanalysis as an irreducibly pluralistic enterprise only entails commitment to the former conception of psychic indeterminacy. And fortunately so, for the latter conception may amount to a misplaced concretion of spontaneity: what seem to be empirically spontaneous developments “in the mind” may only *seem* that way because knowledge of the mental is not yet systematically complete, or worse, because we have confused the syntactic and semantic indeterminacy of intentional contents — that there is no

definitive description of an intentional content; that the meaning of a belief, desire, hope, or fear may be successively redetermined with alterations to its bearer's fundamental forms of self- and world-comprehension, or more generally, with its differential place in variable contexts of significance — with the empirical operations of the mind itself. Indeterminacy figured as spontaneity may be but a reified image of our ek-static temporality, our self-transfigurative capacity, indeed our freedom. Worse still, the ontologization of indeterminacy as empirical spontaneity may, paradoxically, displace our freedom through its reified rendering as but blind nature. In the ontologization of spontaneity one may detect extreme anxiety, a dogged and doomed attempt to preserve freedom we fear we are on the cusp of losing or have already lost. The ontologization of spontaneity may be a metaphysical displacement of melancholy.

To say that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate in the first sense is to claim that in the context of human beings, who are necessarily and constitutively self-interpreting and socially mediated, the significance of psychic phenomena, thus to a degree, developments and dispositions of psychic structure, remain underdetermined; the significance of psychic material is, as such beings are, inexorably expositive, relational, and reconfigurable. From a slightly different angle, one could press the claim by focusing on the phenomena rather than the context: a great many psychic phenomena, including aversions, anxieties, beliefs, desires, moods, fantasies, feelings, and self-images are relatively, though variably, inchoate; they are not self-subsistent, decisively definable contents, and this not just because they are context dependent, thus open-ended constellations of meaning, but because “in themselves” they are not fully individuated or discursive — they are as fuzzy and fluctuating as experience, perhaps partaking of its weak concept-transcendence. For the present purposes it matters little whether one emphasizes indeterminacy as sourced in socially mediated self-interpretations through which the symbolic and affective significance of experience is shaped and reshaped or in the inchoateness, the inherent and insuperable negativity or excess of possibility, of certain psychic phenomena. Either way, the inevitable excess of psychic life vis-à-vis interpretive concretion comes into view.

So the basic point might be phrased as follows: a wide array of psychic phenomena attain their evolving, ever-indeterminate significance in a matrix of socially mediated yet irreducibly individuated interpretive self-constitution.

To say that we are *necessarily* self-interpreting and socially mediated is to say that (1) the content of experience, like the subject of experience, does not come fully forged. The content of experience cannot be derived from the objects of experience or their circumstantial arrangements, i.e., involves our activity; and correlatively, the coherence of the subject of experience, thus the possibility of meaning, of having experiences rather than merely being at a causal nexus, is not guaranteed by the sequentiality of undergoings — it too involves our activity. The content of experience does not come readymade, or to the extent that it does, like readymade paint, remains stranded in mere possibility, is no more than suggestive, until involved in a practice; nor is the unity of the subject of experience, thus the horizon of meaning, implied by merely being the locus of various undergoings identifiable from a point of spectatorial abstraction. Consciousness implies self-consciousness, and self-consciousness is an activity: the underdetermined, ongoing assumption of a stance on our experiences, thus on ourselves, whereby we become selves (provided sufficient social recognition; subjectivity implies intersubjectivity). The content of experience depends on our interpretively innovating or assuming (i.e., ratifying or recasting) a socially suggested or naturally prompted interpretation of experience, integrating the experience as interpreted into our operative forms of self- and world-understanding, perhaps revising or recalibrating them accordingly, *and in doing so making it ours*. Self-consciousness is necessary activity. As should be clear, to say that we are necessarily self-interpreting is not to subscribe to a triumphalist metaphysics of self-determination and thereby discount the extent to which socialization prescribes the significance of various experiences. From infancy onwards we are exposed to, indeed relentlessly bombarded by, socially normative interpretations of our experiences. Social integration and reproduction require a minimum symbolic hegemony, though of course symbolic hegemony ordinarily extends far beyond such functional requirements. Subjectivity is

constituted, in part, by unremitting susceptibility to socio-symbolic suggestion. Indeed, the very “activity” of self-interpretation is so deeply conditioned by formative socio-symbolic influences that attempting to distinguish the contribution of the self from the contribution of the social, to demarcate the authentic from the inauthentic, is often a fool’s game, an open invitation to befuddled consternation and dogmatic reaction. Especially when efforts to distinguish what comes from the self as opposed to the social treat the self as a positive entity — a fact — rather than a normative status, the results are regularly confounded paralysis and flight into a fantasy of privileged self-access and self-interpretive sovereignty.

As should be equally clear, however, the claim that socio-symbolic influence is unavoidable must be strictly distinguished from the presumption of its sovereign efficacy.⁸ The coding of experience through socio-symbolic suggestion, however strong, consistent, and pervasive, and however well supported by normalizing institutions and punitive apparati, ordinarily operates in a contested field. Symbolic hegemony is usually unstable and incomplete, requiring reconsolidation through the continual integration or marginalization of competing symbolic options (including those to which it may unwittingly give rise).⁹ Not infrequently, the reconsolidation of symbolic hegemony relies on abusive displays of alternatives — specters of madness, depravity, immorality, precarity, abject unintelligibility, crisis and catastrophe of every sort rendered as the consequences or content of such alternatives — that aim to incite revulsion, and so anxious reattachment, but may prove attractive supports for subversive appropriation and contestation or circumvention, and even if not, keep hegemony unstable by binding it to alternatives. Because symbolic hegemony often sustains itself through the managed spectacle of crisis at its collapse (what it excludes is immanent to its strategies of survival); because it is ordinarily unable to overwhelm — assimilate or marginalize — or even identify and target the array of alternatives; because its assimilations and marginalizations may misfire, triggering unanticipated consequences including tensions, resistances, redeployments, and reconfigurations; because its interpretive networks cannot easily efface the heterogeneous, thus potentially reconfigurable,

elements of which it is constituted; and because it relies on resistance, or at least the possibility thereof (which is the promise of every newcomer), symbolic hegemony is tendentially unstable and incomplete. And because socio-symbolic codes must be assumed and elaborated in a unique context of significance, that is, a unique life — a life composed by a unique history, associative patterning, metabolizing tendencies, relational configurations, etc. — their assimilation may be the occasion for individualizing inflection and redirection. The reproduction of symbolic hegemonies necessarily opens them onto the chance of reformulation or differential accentuation; each occasion of interpretive assumption is a possible occasion for resisting, rejecting, or idiosyncratically elaborating (working through) socially suggested meanings. Helping out in the kitchen may be repeatedly coded as “being a good girl,” but as chance may have it, resistance to parental desire, authority, and expectations (and all that is bound up therewith) may constellate around just this scene of interpellation, turning it into a privileged site of resistance and individuation. Contrary to the interpellative intention, “being a good girl” may become what one least wants to do. And because idiosyncratic elaboration, if sustainable, requires social recognition, it may become exemplary, subject to broader uptake and therewith a multiplication of differential inflections.

Likewise, even if certain interpretations of our experiences are naturally prompted, we are not thereby relieved of responsibility for assuming them: ratifying or elaborating and integrating them. Assuming such responsibility is assuming subjectivity (or attempting to). To say that certain interpretations may be naturally prompted is to say that young children may be predisposed to construe, and older children, adolescents, and adults predisposed to consider construing, a certain range of phenomena through particular concepts, schemata, and interpretive orientations. The most likely contenders for this sort of natural authority are concepts, schemata, and interpretive orientations whose scope of employment and specificity cannot be adequately accounted for by inductive explanation (because the properties of the objects are so heterogeneous that induction cannot explain the consistency with which particular forms of categorization and interpretation are employed) or social-mimetic explanation (because the

concepts and interpretive orientations appear, if at all, only marginally in social environment; if they do show up, their apparent social significance pales in comparison with the weight they have for the child).¹⁰ This cognitive endowment may include, for instance, categorical distinctions between the living and the non-living,¹¹ distinctions of kind among the living (i.e., folk species differentiation), the idea that human beings are divisible into enduring kinds with innate characteristics (what Lawrence Hirschfeld calls “the idea of race”),¹² and interpretive-evaluative orientations such as in-group bias.¹³ But that we may be naturally *prompted* to employ or reckon with such categories, concepts, or interpretive orientations by no means entails that we are preordained to assume them. Even if insuperable, the authority of nature is certainly not overwhelming. These classificatory and interpretive impulses may be queried, rejected, or elaborated by older children, and perhaps even younger children can be taught to override their insistence. Even if certain categorical inclinations cannot but be contended with, they are not on their own normatively binding.

Next, to say that we are *necessarily* self-interpreting is to say (2) that assuming a relatively stable interpretive stance on a range of issues considered fundamental to one’s identity — e.g., the meaning of one’s attachments and frustrations, the ranking of one’s values, the significance of one’s sexuateness, etc. — is necessary for intelligibility as a person, which in turn is necessary for viable social and psychological existence. Viable claims to personhood involve practices of performative self-figuration (expressive self-interpretation) through which one takes a stand on — assumes and elaborates — certain features of subjectivity that have come to be considered — or in certain cases, that one performatively presses a novel claim for consideration as — constitutive of the human condition. Exactly what one must take a stand on may be socially and historically variable, but even if there are no universally necessary, minimal conditions for (recognition of) personhood, those that are socially and historically in force are near-uncircumventable terms through which personhood must be figured; circumventing these terms would require compellingly instituting others, nothing less than an act of Kantian genius, i.e., performing personhood in such a way that though the performance fails to satisfy

the prevailing terms of intelligibility, its claim is still, and on its own terms, which have through its efficacy become our terms, persuasive; to successfully circumvent prevailing terms of intelligibility, a performance must condition its own reception, render its internal criteria for evaluation socially exemplary, institute a new rule, and even then, perhaps, the terms it institutes must compensate for and so remain in dialogue with the terms ostensibly circumvented — as is more evidently the case with supplementation or reconfiguration. For instance, if being sexuate is considered coextensive with being human, then performatively articulating one's sexuate being (e.g., desire, identifications, and kinship commitments) will be necessary to achieve intelligibility and social standing as a person.

Certainly the sort of self-interpretation under consideration is no merely mental or private affair, no intimate dialogue of the soul with itself. Rather, it is a preeminently public activity of expressive self-elaboration (= interpretive self-realization). Introspective reflection on what it means to bear such-and-such characteristics, desires, attachments and aversions, historical inheritances, identifications, moral and political commitments, relational predilections, etc. may be involved, but these reflections are as if nothing if they are not enacted through individuating practices of self-figuration, publicly legible performances in which identity stakes a claim to expressive realization. Nothing harbored in the innermost recesses of the heart certifies the truth of identity. *Identity is performative or not at all.*

In this context, the distinction between public and private is as troubled as that between (self-)description and performance, passivity and activity, or individuation and inheritance. If the epitome of privacy, namely, introspective reflection by means of which one seeks to discover who one truly is, must draw on inherited terms and through words, gestures, and deeds manifest in, must *be*, publicly staged acts of self-expression through which one creates and recreates a public persona, if such self-creation or -personification is not voluntaristic self-fashioning but proceeds for the most part as the assumption and elaboration of socially prescribed terms of intelligible subjectivity, and if performative self-realization is a medium of collective self-discovery, a way a social body discovers its limits and possibilities,

then with regard to identity the private can be cleanly distinguished from the public as little as self-description can be held apart from performative self-realization.¹⁴ Subjectivity is an intersubjective dialectic of creation and discovery.

Finally, to say that we are *necessarily* self-interpreting¹⁵ is to say that (3) we must continually schematize, or in narrative terms, emplot our actions and experiences if they are to count as ours, register as the actions and experiences of a single, abiding subject, the protagonist of her own life story.¹⁶ The intelligibility of action and experience generated by the ongoing, recursive, retrospective, and anticipatory gestures of narrative emplotment is a condition for subjective integrity, the experience of oneself as the subject of meaningfully connected actions and experiences rather than subject to, a merely episodic point of convergence of, blind causal forces. It is a condition for assuming a first-person perspective, for the experience of oneself as a singular, unsubstitutable doer of deeds and bearer of consequences rather than an object of unintelligible necessity — or only third-personally intelligible. Thus it is a condition for the experience, indeed the very possibility, of agency, for intelligibility as a doer of meaning-bearing deeds that, together with one's formative experiences, condition one's future development, and for which one can be held and hold oneself responsible. Through narrative we turn temporal succession, the happenstance of going-through, into significant sequence and thus into a course of life that can be acknowledged as ours. Narrative transforms what would otherwise be merely juxtaposed or abstractly (e.g., lawfully) coordinated events into the formative experiences and expressive initiatives of a developing subject. Through narrative self-elaboration, we project a future and thereby stake a claim as to what would count as a continuation of *this* life by regathering the past as our past. By recounting and reckoning with what we have done and what we have suffered, we come to have a past that can be acknowledged and a future that can be lived as ours. By transfiguring a succession of events into significant sequences, narrative self-elaboration gives birth, concurrently and coextensively, to a subject and a world. Through narrative, we claim ourselves by claiming a world in which, stretched between past and future, we feature as fundamental points of reference:

a world comes to gravitate around us, a world whose coherence or lack thereof reflects our own. To self-narrate is to construe oneself as the subject of experiences and doer of deeds that collectively compose — or at least lay claim to composing — the dramatic developments of one's life course and that set the terms for one's future development. What would otherwise be a mobile locus of causal interactions or spectator of impersonal sensations (as in certain moments of Flaubert and Proust), becomes a subject of experience.

Or to put the point the other way around, those events that resist integration into our fundamental forms of self- and world-comprehension, that cannot be woven into narrative self-elaboration even as incitements to its reconfiguration, affix us to a space-time of dead repetition, impact a moment of unassumable immediacy, an insuperable inertia, into subjectivity that intermittently dislocates the first-person perspective, swamping it in a mass of objectivity. Such events encrust another place, another time into the narrative fabric; they are not just dissonant but radically external to experience, alienating us at once from ourselves and our constitutive others as they absorb us into their dead weight. Such events exert a traumatic efficacy by disrupting the narrative metabolism through which experience, selfhood, and worldliness are concurrently and coextensively unified and by means of which the future comes into view as a continuation of the past, there where what lies latent can be worked out.¹⁷

That we are necessarily self-narrating, though, does not mean that we can or must organize our experiences into a unified trajectory of unbroken linear progress. That would be to conflate narrative with (idealized) conceptual synthesis, to reduce the thrown projection of a life, the dialectical creation/discovery of a self, to the step-wise unfolding of a determinate principle: to map the deductive order of logic onto the material order of life. If successful, self-narration strikes a balance, each time unique, of consonance and dissonance. Far from rendering all actions and experiences immediately intelligible, fully self-present, narrative self-envelopment implies endless exposure to indeterminacy and plurivocity. If the significance of our actions is not immediately given but rather determined by the consequences they will have initiated, including the prospects for anticipatory and retrospective

self-narration they will have opened, narrative self-recuperation will always be a moment too late and too soon, self-presence indefinitely deferred. Narrative self-elaboration, if constitutively belated and self-supplementary, will be the unresolved story of a subject-in-process. And if the consequences our actions will have initiated, including the prospects for retrospective and prospective narratability they will have opened, concern not simply ourselves but an undeterminable multitude of others, our life stories are never simply our own. Action's reverberations in excess of intention and unconfinedness to first-person assessment mimetically correspond to narrative's essential retrospectivity and expositivity¹⁸ — the dialectical interplay of which gives rise, in literary terms, to the demand for sequels, spinoffs, and backstories (demands constitutively suspended — issued but unfulfilled — by modernist, i.e., autonomy inclined, literature). The fulfillment of our stories requires, and is indefinitely deferred by, their telling by others. Indeed, our stories cannot but become a collective concern if they are to have any sort of conclusion.¹⁹

The narrated self is a complex of determinacy and indeterminacy, a chiasmus of past and future, the subject of in principle indeterminate, because redeterminable, multiply relatable actions and experiences, a nodal point in a web of power relations. If at all adequate, narrative form will have to accommodate this by elaborating its subject as a problematic individual rather than an epic hero playing out an allotted fate, i.e., find some way to express the excess of ek-static temporality and relationality vis-à-vis represented content.

Far from securing replete self- and world-intelligibility, the consistency afforded by narrative form is precisely the context within which various actions and experiences can stand out as problematic — and not just as anomalies to known laws of development but as potentially formative events freighted with as yet undecided significance, as enigmatic openings onto futures whose realizations depend on whether and how their provocation is assumed. Only against the backdrop of narrative consistency can events manifest as opaque developments in the dramas of our lives and thereby challenge our privileged forms of self- and world-comprehension. The consistency afforded by narrative form is the context within which we can become problems for ourselves,

spurred to work out (create/discover) the significance of our actions and experiences through further action and interpretive work. The world-orientation afforded by narrative self-elaboration is the context in which events can exert their estranging and disruptive force, what makes for the difference between inert or merely causally effective externality and the challenge of an event. As a condition of possibility for subjective integrity, narrative cohesion is a condition for a certain range of traumas (if traumatic impingements are always impingements upon structures of expectation).

Much of what it means to say that we are *constitutively* self-interpreting is implied above. In one sense, it is to propose that we become who we are by assuming sufficiently consistent,²⁰ coherent, and socially corroborated interpretive stances on our actions, inclinations, experiences and memories.²¹ Below the threshold of achieving subjectivity and simplifying for the sake of heuristic convenience, one might say that, for instance, when children are beset by troubling affects associated with dependency and attachment and find themselves in need of a framework to make sense of and perhaps bind and thereby modify or temper, or in some way get a handle on their experiences of loss, threat, frustration, excitement, desire, and dependence, they may commit themselves to an Oedipal narrative/fantasy:²² tending to interpret the relatively hazy state of primordial attachment and aversion to or frustration by one's caregivers in terms of Oedipal ambivalence is just what it means to be Oedipally ambivalent; likewise, tending to interpret frustration as abandonment or withholding, abandonment or withholding as an expression of aggression, the suffering of aggression as a standing motive for revenge, the standing possibility of vengefulness as reason to fear punitive repercussions, and so on, is just what it is to be in the paranoid-schizoid position; or tending to interpret others' weaknesses, faults, failures, and suffering as opportunities to be of assistance and elaborating these interpretations in social interaction is just what it is to be a kind person.²³ On the assumptions that (1) experience is not fully formulated upon impact but conceptually (under)determined, constituted by conceptual mediation yet more dense than its conceptual elaboration, thus indefinitely subject to reinscription, i.e., conceptualized if coherent yet conceptually

inexhaustible or weakly concept-transcendent — this is perhaps most evident with regard to affect; and (2) memory is pliable because meaning is pliable,²⁴ the claim is that experience and memory achieve determination, and we along with them, as they are interpretively cast: semantically and syntactically organized

What we undergo is for the most part, and especially initially, rather vague, not exactly confused but ill-defined.²⁵ How we remember the past and locate ourselves in its legacy may be constrained by the incontestable impact of certain events but is not simply determined by them.²⁶ The contents and structures of experience are not immediately given in full-fledged form; they are relatively amorphous and (indeed, in part because) mutually conditioning, of lastingly indeterminacy insignificance. Even after the initial imprecision of experience fades under the weight of settled interpretative commitment, its indeterminacy does not simply evaporate but ordinarily transmutes into the hazy lining of memory. Psychic phenomena are ontologically indeterminate: relatively though variably inchoate, neither transparently given to conscious immediacy nor fully positive contents registered by and warehoused in the unconscious, lying in wait for decoding and retrieval. Their — thus our — semantic and syntactic organization involves, in a certain sense, the ontological generativity of self-interpretation.

With respect to psychic phenomena, then, the question of what it is (and so the question of who I am) undergoes an enduring crisis. If and to the extent that “it” is not a stable, enduring substance, some bit of absolute reality the comprehensive understanding of which would explain both the entity itself and the history of its variously distorted conceptualizations; if and to the extent that “it” is not a mind-independent reality, thus a truth-maker for statements asserted of it, then what the classical question “What is it?” (*ti esti*) is driving at is better obtained obliquely, perhaps through a conjunction of questions and inquiries that register the singular complexion of determinacy and indeterminacy of the subject matter, its constitution by a dialectic of creation and discovery.

Lest this be heard as a metaphysical hypostatization of the distinction

between mere, indeterminate sensation and conceptual formulation, that is, as positing sense data as the raw material of socially mediated interpretive self-formation, let us underscore that even rare experiences of what can be called pure sensory impressions acquire their putative purity only by manifesting *as* abrasively unassimilable to reigning conceptual mediations, and thereby preserve an essential reference to them. The apparent concrete givenness of pure sensory impression is anything but; such experiences are *abstract* precisely in virtue of their abstraction from, i.e., suppressed mediation by, our ordinary conceptual orientations. What can figure *as* purely sensuous, in other words, depends on our conceptual dispositions; “the purely sensuous” can only be *posited* as such.

Were sense impressions as immediate as they are sometimes claimed to be, we could not build concepts from them since the work of the reproductive imagination through which sense impressions are associated on the basis of their resemblances requires concepts or proto-conceptual schemas in virtue of which resemblances can be discerned as resemblances. Hume’s mistake, in other words, was to deny the necessity of (proto-)concepts for the discernment of resemblances and thereby leave the question of how concepts are formed an empirical question — supplemented by some evolutionary speculations and gerrymandering of the scope of the concept — in order to avoid making the matter wholly mysterious.²⁷ But treating concept formation as an empirical question will never explain the intra- and inter-personal consistency of conceptual composition from extremely heterogeneous sensations. Though appeal to Platonic archetypes would leave the matter just as mysterious — this would be just another way of stating the problem, not solving it — perhaps Plato’s *forms* can be understood as our natural and cultural conceptual endowment, our inherited and engrained habits of gathering appearances, in light of which attention is cued to various similarities and differences. Sense impression is not the raw stuff of the world but a moment of indeterminacy abstracted from a dialectic of determination.

Likewise, much of what it means to say that we are necessarily and constitutively *socially mediated* is implied above. Broadly, it is to propose that subjectivity, indeed experience, unfolds for the most part

as an assumption — ratification or recasting — of socially inherited terms or interpretive dispositions; that subjectivity implies subjection. It is to suggest that we are inexorably relational and expositive, thus never in full control of the significance of our words, deeds, experiences, and self-images; that relationality and expositivity are internal to subjectivity. Although by wording the world we come to have a world, those words are, thus that world is, never simply our own. Inherited terms are the largely insuperable coordinates for interpretive self-constitution. However much given to idiomatic innovation, the necessary and constitutive self-interpretation of (what may thereby become) our actions and experiences requires reference to social regimes of intelligibility and ongoing corroboration (acknowledgment, desirative investment) if it is to prove practicable — a medium of expressive self-realization rather than a fantasy consigned to incoherence and/or rigid repetition. The innermost recesses of psychic life are necessarily permeable to social influence, although not a neutral medium for social inscription. Psychic life transpires not “in the head” but in intersubjective space, indeed as an intersubjective dialectic of creation and discovery. The exquisite permeability of experience, affect, meaning, and self-image to social mediation is most clear in the case of young children: through their physical, vocal, and emotional comportment, generally, their responsive dispositions, caregivers shape the meaning and affective structure of their children’s relatively inchoate experiences.²⁸ And to the extent to which we remain childlike throughout our lives, vulnerable and dependent, the mutuality of meaning — hence indeterminacy — is irreducible.

The discussion of the second set of claims will be brief since they do not directly follow from the plurality premise and require consideration in a more fitting context (chapter 7). To venture the thought that psychic life is, to some as yet unspecified extent, spontaneous is to deny that psychic life is of a piece with deterministic natural processes, i.e., stable mechanisms that reliably respond to stimuli in programmatically predictable and systematically reconstructable ways. It is to entertain the prospect of *de novo* mutation at the level of psychic processing and so to urge consideration of psychic life as, in part, epistemically indeterminate because ontologically indeterminate. If

certain features of psychic life are genuinely spontaneous, unpredictably cropping up here and there in the midst of established regularities or what had seemed to be deterministic mechanisms, the possibility of a systematically complete metapsychology or theory of the mind comes under pressure. To risk the thought of psychic spontaneity is to call for a rethinking of the human as insuperably heterogeneous, categorically underdetermined. All the more so if certain spontaneous psychic developments are neither immediately meaningful nor ultimately recruitable into the order of meanings, the thought of psychic spontaneity presses for an ethos of humility with respect to what is presumably most proximate as it sends a tremor through the *anthropological* horizon.

To say that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate in the senses sketched above is not to advance a comprehensive “theory of the mind.” If certain psychic phenomena are either strictly other to the order of significance or tenuously poised between the orders of sense and nonsense, there will be exceptions to the first model of indeterminacy. There may be strictly meaningless organic aspects of psychic life, as in Hobson’s well known anti-psychoanalytic theory of dreams as meaningless and bizarre mental discharges, and there may be certain psychic tendencies that either altogether evade or partially resist incorporation into the order of significance, as in Jonathan Lear’s theory of spontaneous mental self-interruption, certain Lacanian conceptions of the death drive and the Real, Santner’s notion of “significant stress,” Laplanche’s “enigmatic signifiers,” a number of crucial Kristevan concepts, etc. And of course, the intelligibility of the second model presupposes that the scope of spontaneity, thus indeterminacy, is limited. The claim that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate is certainly exaggerated.

Rather than implausibly denying that psychic life is ontologically determinate and epistemically determinable, this chapter seeks to sponsor a dialectical engagement of determinacy and indeterminacy. The suggestion is that psychic phenomena may be best conceived as complex admixtures of sense and nonsense (content and enigma), historical weight and future eventuality (being and nothingness), generally, determinacy and indeterminacy. By no means do I want to

deny that we can make genuine discoveries about psychic phenomena,²⁹ but I do want to suggest that discovery may be no mere unveiling but rather partially — though depending on the specific phenomena at stake, variably — constitutive of what is found.

Objections from within psychoanalysis to the suggestion that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate, especially when the suggestion is strongly urged, are not difficult to imagine. Is not insisting on the indeterminacy of affect or the vagueness of inner life a typical evasive tactic?³⁰ Might not the suggestion of the ontological indeterminacy of psychic life risk collusion with resistances? A Winnicottian might worry that the claim is a generalization of the self-perception of a false self. A Culturalist — e.g., Karen Horney — might worry that it opaquely reflects, indeed reifies or ontologizes, the pathological impact of a cultural/historical symbolic collapse. A Jungian might worry that acceptance of the ontological indeterminacy of the psychic, specifically, acceptance of the necessity of retrospective self-elaboration/constitution (*Zurückfantasieren*), may result in blindness to the current difficulties and disturbances concealed or avoided through certain manners of recreating one's past — generally, blindness to the symptomatic value of self-narration.³¹ Potential for abuse certainly does not warrant wholesale repudiation — that would token an impracticable fetishism of purity — but the defense-value of the suggestion is reason to be wary.

NOTES

1. Although (a certain version of) empirical realism may be independently compelling and desirable — there have been many intimations of this throughout — (1) it is not implied by the claim that psychic life is ontologically indeterminate; and (2) to the extent that the dialectical conversion or defusing of skepticism by empirical realism binds it to the quests for certainty or claims to the absolute against which and sometimes in league with which skepticism often historically took (and still frequently takes) a stand, i.e., if the conversion or defusing of skepticism conveys into empirical realism a constitutive contrast with passions for the absolute which become a condition for its intelligibility, an undischageable, unmetabolizable inheritance is introduced — as, inversely, (on Lukacs' reading) Kierkegaard's leap of faith bears with it the doubt it presumably overleaps and which becomes central to the experience of faith, enjoining the (impossible) experience of immediacy in reflective mediation, thus aporia (cf. Lukacs 1980 [1962] *The Destruction of Reason*). Or from another angle, if transcendental idealism involves a Table of Categories, a secularized Table of Laws, then stabilizing empirical realism by binding it to transcendental idealism may expose its domesticated skepticism to unwelcome and unruly guests: apparitions of the absolute at, indeed as, its margins. Empirical realism's failure to achieve absolute immanence may be reason to resist or remain ambivalent about commitment to it.

2. Why must the “paradoxical ‘existence’” of a “domain of all domains” be “presuppose[d] in order to make sense of the existence of a multitude of mutually determining object domains”? (Gabriel 2009, p. 90) Is it “only ‘natural’ that we attempt to make sense of the senseless facticity we confront by naming it”? (ibid) If by such naming we achieve “the distance necessary for contingency to have a liberating effect,” then what specific forms of bondage or suffering, and so what horizon(s) of satisfaction, are presupposed? (Gabriel 2009, p. 93).

3. Cf. Bernstein (2007) “Recognition and Embodiment.”

4. “Contra Hegel, the very existence of intelligibility owes itself to a process it cannot account for. This is the point of introducing the indeterminate conditions of determinacy into logical space. If there are experiences of elusiveness which cannot be overcome, then logical space must have properties which point to a dimension which is not logical” (Gabriel 2009, p. 60). How are the demands of reason imagined such that this impasse would amount to their dissatisfaction? To what extent might Schellingian mythology bear traces of Christian theology?

5. Indeed, one valence of Hegel's claim that the rational is the actual may be a swipe at Schelling: the rational character and rational potential of the actual is all the reason there is and need be; the non-actual is the non-rational, i.e., the mythological, and so what?

6. It is “subjectively necessary,” Kant claims in the *Critique of Judgment*, to presuppose “that nature does not have this disturbing boundless heterogeneity of empirical laws and heterogeneity of natural forms, but that, rather, through the affinity of its particular laws under more general ones it takes on the quality of experience as an empirical system”

(“First Introduction” pp. 397-8/209; also cf. *CPR* A556/B584 and B599ff.). Compare Hegel: “The ‘I’ is as it were the crucible and fire which consumes the loose plurality of sense and reduces it to unity . . . The tendency of all man’s endeavors is to understand the world, to appropriate and subdue it to himself; and to this end the positive reality of the world must be as it were crushed and pounded, in other words, idealized.” (*Encyclopedia Logic*, p. 69). A more typical passage in which Hegel seems to commit himself to the thesis that rational satisfaction is attained only upon complete determination is: “However, to knowledge, the goal is as necessarily fixed as the series of the progression. The goal lies at that point where knowledge no longer has the need to go beyond itself, that is, where knowledge works itself out, and where the concept corresponds to the object and the object to the concept. Progress toward this goal is thus also unrelenting, and satisfaction is not to be found at any prior station on the way” (*PhG* ¶ 80; translation modified following Pinkard). Also cf. Hegel’s *Philosophie der Religion*, pp. 393 and 429ff.

7. To be sure, empirical realism in the Kantian tradition is concerned with consolidating realism with regard to the “outer” (e.g., underwriting scientific knowledge of nature) rather than the “inner.” When concern turns to the “inner,” it intentionally overshoots it, as evident in Kant’s transcendental psychology. So to restrict the scope of the central realist assumption (thoroughgoing determinacy) is not to directly contest empirical realism as pursued within the Kantian tradition, for that tradition already implements such a scope restriction. It is in psychoanalytic and empirical psychological traditions that one finds various implicit or explicit transcendental and empirical realist claims regarding psychological phenomena in the mundane sense. However, the Kantian intuition that psychic life resists realist construals, once explicated, may have far reaching reverberations that amount to a serious challenge to the Kantian tradition.

8. Cf. Judith Butler (1997) *Excitable Speech*, especially “Sovereign Performatives.”

9. Cf. Foucault (1990) *The History of Sexuality, Vol I: An Introduction*, pp. 92-102.

10. Cf. Bernstein (2002) “Re-enchanting Nature,” pp. 223-5 and 237-9. Also see Bernstein (2001) *Adorno: Disenchantment and Ethics*.

11. Cf. Michael Thompson (2008) *Life and Action*.

12. Cf. *Race in the Making* (1996).

13. Cf. Max Weber (1978) *Economy and Society*, p. 43ff and 932ff.

14. To say that intelligible personhood requires the assumption of a relatively stable interpretative stance on a range of issues considered fundamental to identity is not to deny that identity is performed sometimes with greater consistency, sometimes with less, or that personal and/or political exigencies may make it crucial to express one’s inconsistency in diachronic or synchronic terms, or even to maintain or manifest a certain unintelligibility. Regimes of social intelligibility are not infinitely lenient, *relatively* consistent and recognizable forms of self-interpretation/figuration are necessary for social legibility, and it is all too easy to imagine inconsistent interpretations/realizations

of one's desire, sexual being, or value-priorities, and all the more so obstinately opaque forms of self-expression, being socially coded to mark their bearers as something less than or other than persons. The specters psychosis and abjection haunt the thresholds and police the borders of social intelligibility. But social intelligibility is not an all or nothing affair.

15. The necessity at stake here and throughout is obviously normative. Though it would be misleading to say that such necessity is merely hypothetical — i.e., something that must be accommodated *if* one is interested in viable social identity, as if one could be simply unconcerned with one's social standing, totally aloof from the social regimes of recognition through which one becomes intelligible to oneself and others and acknowledged as a participant in and salient bearer of the consequences of collective practices — perhaps one can say that this form of necessity is *conditional* in the sense of being a fundamental condition for the form of life in which one values one's capacity to value and realize one's values through self-actualizing social performances, a condition for leading a life. And if one does not value oneself in this sense, nothing else *can* matter. Such is the necessity of a material apriori.

16. Whether and to what extent social reification and fragmentation impede successful self-narration is a question that will have to be left for another occasion. On this, cf. J.M. Bernstein (1984) *Philosophy of the Novel: Lukacs, Marxism, and the Dialectics of Form* (1984).

17. In part, the (depleted, overburdened, insecure, yet sometimes compelling and felicitous) authority of psychoanalysis in fragmented and reified conditions of modernity is sourced in its capacity to keep narrative practice, thus subjectivity, alive — partially, precariously. That its authority is conditioned by modernity's destitution of narrative practice is one reason to consider psychoanalysis a historical discourse of suffering and healing *under conditions of modernity* rather than a metaphysical discourse of universal truth.

18. Gertrude Stein, whose flair for autobiography is well known, perhaps knew this best of all. Cf. Stein (1933) *Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*.

19. When it comes to explicit narrative self-elaboration, who or what prompts us to tell out stories and the when and where — broadly, the power dynamics — of invitations to confessional intimacy or self-revelatory confiding surely condition the accounts that ensue. Emphatically but not exclusively, explicit narrative self-elaboration, however much an occasion for narcissistic jubilation, is always guilty and estranging: one never quite fits the terms and schemas in which one gives an account of oneself. Cf. Denise Riley (2000) *Words of Selves*. Self-narration implicates us in a persistent disquietude, is endemically inconclusive.

20. Cf. Heidegger (1962 [1927]) *Being and Time*, p. 369.

21. For a compelling demonstration of how wide-ranging inconsistency can be compensated by strict coherence and consistency with regard to a select few

matters, and how paired down the context of social corroboration can become, see Edward Albee, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*.

22. Klein might deny this and insist that there are innate ideas such as “the breast” — the point is not uncontroversial. However, even Klein from time to time refers to the status of her statements as “hypothetical inferences” (cf. Klein 1944, p. 775 and Rosen-Carole (2011) *Lacan and Klein, Creation and Discovery*).

23. Cf. Ian Hacking (1995) *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory* for intriguing examples regarding multiples. Hacking argues that “[t]he disorder becomes a way of seeing childhood and its terrors. It is not that one split early in life in order to cope. Rather, in therapy, one begins to see oneself as having split at that time in order to cope We should not think of multiplicity as being strictly caused by child abuse. It is rather that the multiple finds or sees the cause of her condition in what she comes to remember about her childhood, and is helped thereby. This is passed off as a specific etiology, but what is happening is more extraordinary than that. It is a way of explaining oneself, not by recovering the past, but by redescribing it, rethinking it, refeeling it The soul that we are constantly constructing we construct according to an explanatory model of how we came to be the way we are” (93-4).

24. As Freud puts the point, “Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, emerge; they were formed at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of the memories themselves” (SE 3: 322). Or as he says in a letter to Fliess, “the material present in the form of memory traces [is] subjected . . . to a rearrangement in accordance with fresh circumstances to a reinscription . . . the memory is present not once but several times over . . . laid down in various kinds of indications” (6 Dec 1896). Or from another angle, “Truthfully returning to a reverie does not involve a faithful correspondence to a past state of affairs, but rather a sort of re-creation, allowing again the freedom of movement. Recalling the reverie is calling it forth, regenerating meaning.” (Friedlander, 2004, p. 27). Also cf. Sartre (1961) *Psychology of Imagination*, esp. p. 198.

25. Bracketing cases of ideological saturation.

26. Cf. Judith Herman (1992) *Trauma and Recovery*.

27. Plato initiates this type of criticism, e.g., in the *Meno* where Socrates queries whether we can find or even make sense of searching for a unity or pattern in particulars without (in some sense) prior experience of the unity or pattern. Kant continues this form of critique and gives it a modern cast when he claims that the “unity of synthesis according to empirical concepts would be altogether accidental, if these latter were not based on a transcendental ground of unity. Otherwise, it would be possible for appearances to crowd in upon the soul, and yet to be such as would never allow of experience. Since connection in accordance with universal and necessary laws would be lacking, all relation of knowledge to objects would fall away” (CPR A 111).

28. Cf. Bion (1962). On Gitelson's account, "Just as the mother is the target for the child's drives and, in her capacity as auxiliary ego, guides their form and function — thus introducing the operation of the reality principle — so does the analyst draw the focus of the unconscious tendencies with which a patient enters analysis and, in his diatrophic function, provides the irrupting instincts and revived developmental drive with direction and purpose" (1973, 324).

29. "One of the things psychoanalysis means in calling itself a science is that analyst and patient may make genuine discoveries about how the patient sees things, what she wants, phantasizes, believes, remembers, and so on, consciously *and* unconsciously" (M. Cavell 1993, p. 74).

30. Cf. SE10:186.

31. As is well known, narcissistic patients in particular may employ narrative as a privileged form of defense against transference and free association.