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FREUD'S THEORY OF REALITY: A CRITICAL ACCOUNT

EDWARD S. CASEY

IT WOULD BE A NATURAL TEMPTATION to contrast philosophy and psychoanalysis in the following fashion. Philosophy may be regarded as characteristically preoccupied with the problem of *reality*. The history of philosophy from the pre-Socratics to the present can be interpreted as a series of attempts to conceptualize the ultimately real as *Physis*, Form, Absolute Mind, Being, or whatever. Psychoanalysis, by contrast, may be regarded as exhibiting an overriding interest in *phantasy*. One of the central implications of its most startling discovery, the unconscious, is that we possess unknowingly a continuous phantasy-life which acts to defend against or to fulfill in imagination our basic instinctual desires. A major goal of psychoanalytical therapy is thus to expose unconscious phantasies so that we may better understand their motivation and import. When they are in fact laid bare, they are seen to represent various modes in which we evade, deny, disavow, or distort reality. Consequently, where the *telos* of philosophical inquiry appears to be knowledge of reality, the aim of psychoanalysis would be the uncovering of unconscious phantasies which depart from the real.

Yet such a contrast fails to provide an adequate account of the full scope of either philosophy or psychoanalysis. On the one hand, philosophical inquiry is not wholly pre-empted by the question of reality; it may also extend into the realm of phantasy, as can be seen in Plato's effort to determine the epistemological value of *eikasia* or in Husserl's consideration of *Phantasie* as a basis of insight into essences. On the other hand, psychoanalysts are as concerned about reality as they are about phantasy. Indeed, one of the key phrases of psychoanalytic therapy is "adaptation to reality." The reason for this concern with reality is clear: if phantasies are modifications or distortions of the real, it is imperative to discern what the character of reality is, especially since it is held out as the standard of a sound state of mental health.

In spite of this manifest therapeutic concern with reality, theoretical discussions of the nature of reality by psychoanalysts have been rare and are usually directly creditable to Freud's seminal ideas on the subject. Moreover, these ideas are for the most part uncritically accepted and repeated; and if they are rejected, they are typically repudiated without reasons being offered. Thus a truly *critical* consideration of Freud's notion of reality has been notably lacking in psychoanalytic writings. Furthermore, philosophers who have concerned themselves with psychoanalysis have been equally remiss in treating Freud's theory of reality as such.[1] The present paper attempts to clarify and criticize this theory, which merits discussion both because of its considerable influence on later psychoanalysts and because of its intrinsic philosophical interest. With regard to this interest, we shall see that Freud's conception of reality, while psychological in origin and intent, nevertheless possesses unmistakable philosophical roots as well as troublesome philosophical implications.

Hence the aim of this essay is not to question Freud *qua* philosopher of reality, but to explore the philosophy of the real which is found explicitly and implicitly in his work. That this work is permeated by philosophical presuppositions and even by express philosophical claims is incontestably evident. That Freud himself harbored deeply philosophical ambitions is perhaps less well known in view of his attacks upon philosophy as a species of "hysteria" and of "paranoia."[2] Not only do we witness a pronounced speculative streak in his metapsychological writings, but we also have Freud's own testimony to his philosophical bent. It is not insignificant that he termed his first great theoretical syn-

[1] For an example of a post-Freudian discussion of reality by a psychoanalyst, see Hans W. Loewald, "Ego and Reality," in *International Journal of Psychoanalysis*, XXXII, No. 1 (1951), 10 f. (Hereinafter cited as "IJP.") For a discussion of Freud's conception of reality by a philosopher, see Paul Ricœur, *Freud and Philosophy*, trans. D. Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), pp. 261 ff., 324 ff. See also Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (New York: Vintage, 1962), p. 117 ff.

[2] On philosophy as hysteria, see Freud's comment in *Minutes of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society*, ed. H. Nunberg and E. Federn (New York: International Universities Press, 1962), I, 149-151. On philosophy as paranoia, see *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, trans. and ed. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1957-1966), XIII, 73. (Hereinafter citer as "SE.")

thesis—i.e., Chapter Seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*—his "philosophical chapter." [3] But even before this, he wrote to Wilhelm Fliess:

> When I was young, the only thing I longed for was philosophical knowledge, and now that I am going over from medicine to psychology I am in the process of attaining it.[4]

One of the primary ways in which Freud sought such philosophical knowledge was by constructing a theory of reality. It is to an examination of this theory that we must now turn.

I

It is a striking fact that Freud, who used the term "reality" (*Realität*) constantly, never attempted to offer a comprehensive definition of the term. This apparent negligence is due in large part to two of Freud's most fundamental assumptions. The first is that the ultimate nature of reality is in principle outside human ken: "Reality will always remain 'unknowable'." [5] Whether the reality in question is mental or physical makes no essential difference; in either case, what Freud calls "the real state of things" cannot be known. The reason for this is that for Freud anything we can be said to *know* must be capable of full presentation in sensory perceptions, and our knowledge cannot transgress the inherent bounds of these perceptions. Thus we are limited to representing the real instead of discerning it directly. Freud credits Kant with this basic insight:

> Kant warned us not to overlook the fact that our perceptions are subjectively conditioned and must not be regarded as identical with what is perceived though unknowable.[6]

He regards as one of his most significant moves the extension of Kant's insight to the unconscious: "In its innermost nature, [the unconscious] is as much unknown to us as the reality of the

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[3] Sigmund Freud, *The Origins of Psychoanalysis*, eds. M. Bonaparte, A. Freud, E. Kris (New York: Basic Books, 1954), Letter 115. (Hereinafter cited as "*Origins.*")

[4] *Ibid.*, Letter 44 (dated February 4, 1896).

[5] SE XXIII, 196.

[6] SE XIV, 171.

external world." [7] Freud also endorses the phenomenalist consequence of Kant's epistemology, in which knowledge and experience are limited to appearances: "like the physical, the psychical is not necessarily in reality what it appears to us to be." [8]

The second major assumption held by Freud with regard to the question of reality is even more important for our purposes, to wit: reality is synonymous with external reality. This assumption is logically distinct from the first one. For a strict phenomenalism, whether reality is predominantly external or internal to the human percipient is a matter of comparative indifference, for externality and internality are only secondary characteristics of the phenomenally real. The constituents of phenomena, e.g., sense-data, can equally well construct an "inner" or an "outer" world. In either case, the resultant reality is merely a more or less coherent whole composed of such constituents, which may refer to each other but not directly to anything more ultimate. In spite of this inherent limitation of phenomenalism, Freud opts for the primacy of the external world by assuming that the primary—and perhaps the only—sense of reality is the external. The equation between reality in general and external reality is made quite explicitly, though without argument, in this revealing passage:

> And we are now confronted with the task of investigating the development of the relation of neurotics and of mankind in general to *reality*, and in this way of bringing the psychological significance of the *real external world* into the structure of our theories.[9]

In effect, the real and the external come to mean to same thing. What is the significance of this seemingly arbitrary move? Before we can see this, we must explore more deeply the meaning of the term "external reality."

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[7] SE V, 613. In italics in the original.

[8] SE XIV, 171. On this point, Freud is by no means consistent, for he sometimes says that the ego is in "direct contact with the external world" (SE XXIII, 199). He also allows the ego to effect a "real alteration" of the "real circumstances in the external world" (SE XII, 219). No qualification is made to the effect that the external world with which we are thus in contact and which we may modify can be for Freud only phenomenal in nature and not ultimately real.

[9] SE XII, 218. My italics.

In general, we may say that external reality signifies for Freud the realm of obdurate fact as ruled implacably and without exception by the laws of natural science. But external reality includes much more than this summary statement can indicate. We may conceive of it more fully through a series of three contrasts:

(a) *fact vs. phantasy*—the external realm is that of "hard fact" which cannot be altered by mere wish or imagination. The nature of external reality is brittle and unbending in contrast with the malleability of phantasy, which Plato characterized by saying that "the stuff of imagination is easier to mould than wax." [10] What Freud will call "the world of phantasy" is strictly independent of the world of fact. Hence Freud sometimes refers to external reality as "actual reality." [11]

(b) *material vs. psychological*—external reality *qua* material is the physical world regarded as the proper object of natural science. Freud often assumes that the principles of physics must apply to psychological phenomena. The real as material is determined solely by the joint validations of scientists; any other assessment of it is "psychological" in the perjorative sense of subjectively biased.

(c) *social vs. individual*—the social is that aspect of the external world which is constituted by rules, customs, and institutions. Like scientific laws, these factors seem to the individual to be simply "given." This is especially the case for the neurotic: "the real world, which is avoided . . . by neurotics, is under the sway of human society and of the institutions collectively created by it." [12]

This series of brief contrasts is by no means exhaustive. None of the three positive characteristics of external reality reveals by itself *all* of this reality in the manner of a Spinozan attribute. Each is rather a partial reflection of the externally real, a unique facet through which reality is represented in man's experience. But there is a certain cumulative effect from these facets taken together: the experience of the externally real as alien and hostile to the individual human being. As a consequence, the externally real takes on an austere character as something *over against which* the individual stands. The individual does not embrace, but *confronts*, such a reality, from which he is fundamentally estranged. In this perspective, man is necessarily alienated from

[10] Plato, *Republic*, trans. F. M. Cornford (New York: Oxford University Press, 1960), p. 316.
[11] SE XIII, 159.
[12] *Ibid.*, 74.

the real, which he can only represent and never finally intimately know. It becomes comprehensible why he should attempt to overcome this diremption from reality through various types of wish-fulfillment: through phantasy and hallucination, neurosis and psychosis, art and religion. It is no wonder that in Freud's view man makes a "world of phantasy" for himself, setting it aside as a private preserve free from the harsh demands of a prohibitive and punitive external reality.

Freud's interpretation of reality fits under a general definition of modern realism as "the view that material objects exist externally to us and independently of our sense experience." [13] For Freud, however, the compass of the real includes other human beings as well as material objects. Yet externality is the main feature of both types of object; and this externality implies that the real as a whole is: (1) temporally prior to the developing human organism, (2) spatially outside the body of this organism, and (3) outside the sphere of the organism's immediate influence. These three senses of externality are rarely specified as such by Freud, but they underlie his entire position. From an epistemological standpoint, this position cannot be characterized as either naïve or direct realism because of its tacit phenomenalism: we do not perceive or know directly the ultimately real. Yet Freud does not adhere to a *pure* phenomenalism either; however unknowable the real may finally be, it nevertheless acts as a *cause* of the perception and knowledge which we do have of its phenomenal manifestations. Thus it would be most accurate to designate Freud's epistemological position as one of causal or representative realism. The foundation for Freud's version of this familiar position is found in his theory of external reality. For it is in the face of an ultimately alien reality that human beings are limited to representing its phenomenal aspects. Only such a reality can act as the efficient cause of perception through the emission of what Freud calls "external stimuli" acting as "indications" of the presence of material and social objects.[14] As we shall see, Freud

[13] R. J. Hirst, "Realism." In Paul Edwards, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), VII, 77.

[14] For the notion of "external stimuli," see SE XIX, 238; SE XIV, 134. For the notion of "indications of reality," see SE I, 285, 325-328, 330, 371-374, 378, 383-384.

ends with an epistemology in which all representations are merely "repetitions" of perceptions, and in which these perceptions are themselves wholly derivative from a determinate external reality. In this model of how we come to know the world, there is a natural tendency to equate the external and the real:

> It is, we see, once more a question of *external* and *internal*. What is unreal, merely a representation and subjective, is only internal; what is real is also there *outside*.[15]

The dogmatic tone of this pronouncement gives the impression that Freud is merely defining terms to suit his purposes. But in fact he believes that he has sound reasons for holding a position of representative realism whose primary basis is a distinction between external and internal.

These reasons are to be found largely within Freud's dominant conceptual framework—the developmental perspective. For Freud, the meaning of a phenomenon is to be sought primarily in its *origins*. Thus his habitual "predilection for the prehistoric" found a natural expression in what he came to call "genetic psychology." [16] Rather than merely dismissing the claims of this psychology as subject to a misguided genetic fallacy, we should take a closer look at Freud's main hypothesis as to the course of early human development. A careful examination of this hypothesis will reveal the foundation for his view of reality as inexorably external. The hypothesis recognizes three stages in the growth of the human ego, the only aspect of man that develops in any significant sense and the only aspect that is capable of contact with external reality:

> (i) the "original reality-ego." This is the primary state of the neonate, who enters the world as almost wholly dependent on the care of others. The neonate is subjected to two sets of stimuli: "external," those which he can eliminate by a "specific action" such as screaming for help; and "internal," those which cannot be escaped by any motor action because they proceed from within his own body. The differentiation of these two sorts of stimuli becomes the basis for all subsequent

[15] SE XIX, 237. Here and elsewhere, I have changed "presentation" to "representation" as a more accurate translation of *Vorstellung*.

[16] *Origins*, Letter 103; SE XII, 233.

distinctions between external and internal, even though we cannot yet speak strictly of an external or internal object or world.[17]

(ii) the "pleasure-ego." Any tension that cannot be discharged by specific actions is soon handled by the infantile ego through hallucinatory wish-fulfillment. This takes the form of introjecting into oneself all that aids this discharge and projecting all that frustrates it. Thus all that is pleasurable comes to reside in the ego as "good" and all that is unpleasant is cast outside as "bad." With this move, the world loses its character of "indifference" and takes on the specific attributes of being bad, alien, and external. The identification of these attributes with what frustrates the ego is enough to constitute it as a world filled with distinct objects: "the external world, objects, and what is hated are identical." [18] For what we project as hateful has to possess some minimal definiteness: we may flee stimuli, but we hate objects.

(iii) the "definitive reality-ego." This stage is called forth by the increasing complexity of life's exigencies. When we can no longer rely on another person, flight, or projection to deal with basic needs, we must undertake to fulfill them on our own. Moreover, we must fulfill them in fact, not merely in hallucination. Thus "reality-testing" arises as a means of distinguishing between what is externally real and what is hallucinatory. Such testing involves the use of thought to determine whether a given internal representation answers to anything external. This is done by comparing representations of memory or imagination with perceptions. Thus the object of representation is tested to see if it is "perceptually identical" with the object of an external perception. In this process, the distinction between internal and external is at once presumed and deepened. For the perceptual object which is the aim of reality-testing is conceived as wholly definite and independent of the individual ego's needs and thoughts. It thus assumes the epistemological distance that is definitive of external reality as fully determinate.[19]

In this sequence of stages, there is an increasing differentiation of the ego from its surrounding world. Both ego and world assume a progressively more definite form so that the two end up as sharply demarcated realms. One realm is filled with instincts, affects, thoughts, and memories; this is the internal world of the ego. The other realm is the external world of distinct and definite objects. It is through successive reality-testing that this rigid and lasting dichotomization of experience comes about, for to

[17] See SE I, 297; SE XIV, 119, 136.
[18] SE XIV, 136. See also SE XIX, 236-237.
[19] See SE XIV, 134 ff.; SE XIX, 235-239; SE XII, 219-221.

know the difference between hallucination and valid perception is to know the difference between inner and outer worlds. Reality-testing is thus defined as "a function of orientating the individual in the world by discrimination between what is internal and what is external." [20] It is only when this discrimination has become habitual that we can speak of the dominance of the "reality principle" over the "pleasure principle." The latter holds sway only over the pleasure-ego; thereafter, its direct gratification must be inhibited and delayed in order to adapt to the increasing demands of external reality. For it is *this* reality that is prescribed by the dictates of the reality principle. In terms of this principle, the only objects that count as real are those located in the external world; for only these objects are capable of causing the perceptions which shore up mental representations. Thus Freud's representative realism is essentially linked to the dominance of the reality principle; and both notions are built on a conception of reality as exclusively external in the three senses to which we pointed above. The world of the definitive reality-ego is temporally prior to and spatially outside this ego, and it is a world that is resolutely independent of the ego's desires and needs. This external world finds its prototype and perfect image in an inhuman Nature which in its splendid isolation is oblivious to human concern. In this respect, Freud's notion of external reality is a late avatar of the rationalist dream of a substance that is *causa sui*: a being that is perfectly self-sufficient, conceivable only in its own terms, and indifferent to finite human existence. It is only appropriate that Freud came to call external reality "*Ananke*," the stern goddess of Necessity.[21]

II

If this harsh *Weltbild* depicts Freud's official theory of reality, it is nevertheless not fully representative of his concrete observations of the real. The austere externalism of the reality principle does not do justice to Freud's masterful descriptions of the inner lives of his patients. In these descriptions, reality rarely figures

[20] SE XIV, 223.
[21] See SE XIX, 168, 185; SE XXI, 53.

as something *an sich* to which we must rigorously adapt in a prescriptive and inhibiting fashion. If Freud does speak of "adaptation to the reality principle," he nevertheless sees the concrete process of adaptation as a much more flexible affair than the strict division between ego and external reality allows.[22] But a meaningful critique of Freud's theory of reality must do more than point to discrepancies between the theory and practice of psychoanalysis. It must look for flaws within the theory of reality itself. In Freud's case, these flaws take the form of significant inconsistencies. To exhibit some of these, we shall now examine two areas in which a heterodox vision of reality emerges within Freud's own theorizing.

A. Within the theory of ego-development itself, we can discern elements in each of its stages which point in a quite different direction from that indicated by the orthodox reality principle. (I) For the original reality-ego, the external world is not only "indifferent"; it is questionable whether it is yet distinguishable from the ego at all. Freud sometimes labels this state of undifferentiation "primary narcissism" and sometimes as "oceanic feeling."[23] Both terms point to the fact that "the antithesis between subjective and objective does not exist from the first."[24] When we consider that for Freud the distinction between subjective and objective corresponds precisely to that between ego and external world—as is shown in the phrase "Subject (ego)—Object (external world)"[25]—we realize that the state of undifferentiation undercuts this fundamental dichotomy: a dichotomy with which the official theory of ego-development begins in terms of the distinction between external and internal stimuli. No such distinction could be made by the neonate if what it experiences is a fluid state of nearly total lack of differentiation. The positing of this state also calls into question the notion that ego-development aims at the ultimate dominance of the reality principle. For Freud also claims in this connection that "the development of the ego consists in a departure from primary narcissism and gives rise to a

[22] SE XII, 226.
[23] SE XIV, 74; SE XXI, 64 ff.
[24] SE XIX, 237.
[25] SE XIV, 133.

vigorous attempt to recover that state." [26] Even if it is true that this attempt at recovery of oneness with the world usually meets with failure in the adult, it is telling that Freud can at least entertain the possibility of such a *nisus*. For in this light, the reality principle, instead of possessing its own intrinsic motivation, would act as a *defense against* the goal of re-merging with external reality.

(II) The pleasure-ego also admits of a more radical interpretation, as when Freud states that "originally the ego includes everything, later it *separates off an external world from itself*." [27] If this is the case, then the external world cannot be seen as pre-existent, but is rather a product of the pleasure-ego's own activity of projection. This suggests an image of the pleasure-ego as a kind of Fichtean Ego, from which the Non-Ego is gradually separated off. Freud's ingrained realism is here put to the utmost strain, and he can maintain his realist propensity only by characterizing the act of projection as hallucinatory. Yet such projection is a very peculiar sort of hallucination, for it is responsible for the externality, hostility, and alienation which will come to characterize the definitive nature of reality. Can a mere act of hallucinatory projection account for such abiding and universal traits? This seems doubtful. In any case, it is clear that once the world has been established through separation from the self, Freud will not allow it to be re-assimilated or created anew by the ego. Any late attempt at world-creation is considered psychotic. Thus if productive idealism is present at all in the human project, it is restricted to the single hypothetical stage of the pleasure-ego. But precisely this exceptional state of affairs makes questionable any absolute distinction between ego and external reality as well as the idea that external reality has an inherent temporal priority over the ego.

(III) Even though the reality principle becomes securely ensconced at the stage of the definitive reality-ego, there are at least two areas of its activity that succeed in escaping the direct influence of external reality. First, the very cognitive processes by which reality-testing is effected are capable of their own

[26] SE XIV, 100.
[27] SE XXI, 68. My italics.

autonomy. In his early *Project for a Scientific Psychology*, Freud calls this autonomy "thought-reality," a type of reality which has its own criteria of objectivity.[28] Secondly, the mind is also capable of setting aside a "world of phantasy" which functions independently of external reality without being a mere distortion or denial of it. Freud compares it to a "reservation" and describes its genesis thus:

> With the introduction of the reality principle one species of thought-activity was split off; it was kept free from reality-testing and remained subordinated to the pleasure principle alone.[29]

Thus both pure cognitive thought and phantasy are capable of eluding the dominance of the reality principle.

All three stages of ego-development, then, involve significant exceptions to, or departures from, the standard theory of this development. Indeed, the very notion of developmental stages implies that for each type of ego there is a different sense of reality. The implied correlation of ego and world at each stage points to a relativity of experienced reality, that is difficult to reconcile with the monolithic character of reality which is entailed by the identification of reality with external reality.[30] This identification is thrown into considerable doubt if it can be established that there are in fact distinctly different *types* of reality experienced by the ego as it develops: a point to which we shall return. In any event, it is certain that Freud did not himself admit this consequence. Nor did his speculations on the state of primary undifferentiation, on projection, on pure cognition or phantasy lead him to alter his fundamental theory of reality as ineluctably external. The harshness implied by this theory remained unmitigated in the face of his own emendations of detail.

B. We find the same stubborn restrictiveness in the case of Freud's theory of objects. Since objects are presumed by Freud to belong exclusively to external reality, we are led to the con-

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[28] See SE I, 373.

[29] SE XII, 222.

[30] On the notion of different types of reality implied in psychoanalytic theory, see R. Laforgue, "The Ego and the Conception of Reality" in IJP, XX (1939), 403 ff., as well as the same author's *The Relativity of Reality* (New York: Nervous and Mental Disease Monographs, No. 66, 1940).

clusion that the only admissible type of object is the external object. But here we must pose the same question as a contemporary psychoanalyst: "must one assume with Freud that the term object always and necessarily implies the external world?" [31] Is not one of the essential discoveries of psychoanalysis that objects cannot be limited to those which impinge on us from outside the body? Just as a closer look at the theory of ego-development has made us suspicious of the claim as to the external world's *temporal* priority, so here we must question the *spatial* independence of the objects which we experience. Is it the case, as Freud claims, that there are "clear and sharp lines of demarcation" between the ego and its objects? [32] Freud himself recognized that in the object-relation of love such lines of demarcation become indistinct: "at the height of being in love the boundary between ego and object threatens to melt away." [33] What nearly happens in love does in fact occur in psychosis:

> Pathology has made us acquainted with a great number of states in which the boundary lines between the ego and the external world become uncertain or in which they are actually drawn incorrectly. . . . [T]he boundaries of the ego are not constant.[34]

Freud hedges his realist position here by implying that there are *correct* lines of differentiation which the normal person respects. But this is certainly not true for the original reality-ego or for the pleasure-ego, both of which lack definite boundaries. Even the definitive reality-ego has to allow for the possibility of objects penetrating its perceptual and cognitive barriers. For its very "character-formation" is dependent on the internalization of loved and admired objects, and its super-ego is said to be created through the introjection of the father. The introjected objects which we acquire through such identification and internalization are experienced as at once inside our body and yet outside our most intimate

[31] Roy Schafer, *Aspects of Internalization* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968), p. 74.

[32] SE XXI, 66.

[33] *Ibid.*

[34] *Ibid.* The influence of Paul Federn is evident here.

sense of self.[35] Finally, it should be mentioned that there are many objects of ordinary experience which refuse to be tied down to a precise spatial location within that experience. Some objects may change their felt location with regard to being inside or outside us, as in times of unusual stress. Others possess an essentially indeterminate location which cannot be pinpointed on an internal-external scale, e.g., the free-floating objects of day-dreams which hover *before* us and yet are still felt to be *within* us.[36]

We may draw two conclusions from this brief discussion of objects. First, the extensional meaning of the term "object" cannot be limited to instances of external objects. The latter constitute only one type of objects of experience; i.e., those that are distinct from each other and definitely located in space and time. Even if it is true that the definitive reality-ego orients most of its activities in terms of such objects, this does not entail that the world as a whole is composed of them alone. Secondly, we may infer from the examples given above that there is no single basic sense of externality or internality which fits all cases. There are various types and degrees of the external and the internal, and we cannot say *a priori* that a single type (such as that which is outside our body) is more fundamental than the rest. At most, we might establish a rough gradient of such types; but this gradient itself would always be both conventional (as oriented with respect to a specific beginning point, e.g., the developing ego) and provisional (as subsequent experience may yield kinds of externality or internality which contradict those so far recog-

[35] On this point, see Schafer, *op. cit.*, pp. 80-81. Here introjects are so highly cathected that we cannot flee them by any "specific actions." Thus they constitute a clear case of objects with an aspect of externality which nevertheless will not submit to what Freud calls the "sound objective criterion" of elimination by muscular movement (SE XIV, 136). Rather than rejecting such objects, we should reject the criterion. See Schafer, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

[36] In imagining generally, we find this basic indeterminability of location. See my "Imagination: Imagining and the Image," in *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* (June, 1971). A special case of indeterminate objects is represented in what D. W. Winnicott calls "transitional objects" such as dolls, which for children are not external or internal in any clear fashion. See Winnicott's "Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena" in IJP, XXXIV (1953).

nized). Therefore, Freud's identification of all objects with external objects—an identification which he refused to abandon in spite of his recognition of significant exceptions—is an inadequate basis for describing fully our experience of objects in their manifold character.

III

Thus far, we have examined two of the ways in which Freud's strict and programmatic notion of external reality may be open to modification from within psychoanalytic theory itself. A close scrutiny of ego-development and the notion of the object has shown points at which the austerity of the reality principle might be tempered. But if hypotheses like primary narcissism or internalization suggest a possible softening of this principle, they nonetheless did not convince Freud himself of the need for radically revamping his basic view of reality as intransigent Necessity. If Freud thus refused to dilute his conception of external reality itself, the only other way to diminish its monolithic character would be to recognize *another* type of reality. Freud had first pondered this possibility in 1895 with the concept of "thought-reality," only to abandon it immediately. In this section, we shall consider Freud's only sustained attempt to posit an alternative to external reality.

It was Freud's early research into neurosis and dreams that suggested to him that a second basic type of reality might require recognition. He called this other type of reality "psychical reality," but he had suspected its presence long before he baptized it with this name. The crucial event in this respect was his rejection of the seduction theory of the origin of hysteria. When he announced to Fliess in 1897 that "I no longer believe in my *neurotica*," he realized that phantasies disguised as apparent memories lay behind hysterical symptoms.[37] This was an epochal discovery, for it meant that hysteria might be wholly psychogenic in origin without the need for an actual event as an initial cause. Freud was thus led to conclude that:

[37] SE I, 259 (Letter 69).

> there are no indications of [external] reality in the unconscious, so that one cannot distinguish between truth and fiction that is cathected with affect.[38]

But Freud did not immediately envision the full significance of this insight, and he continued to support the supremacy of external reality by positing "hereditary predisposition"—i.e., a constitutional, biological factor—as the ultimate pathogenic cause. It was only from the retrospective viewpoint of 1914 that he was able to make a much more radical inference:

> The firm ground of reality was gone. . . . [Hysterics] create such scenes [of seduction] in phantasy, and this psychical reality requires to be taken into account alongside practical reality.[39]

In fact, it is the firm ground of *external* reality that is shaken when it is recognized that phantasy is capable of constituting a psychical realm with an autonomy and consistency of its own. Although this realm certainly does not have the demanding character of biological exigencies, it does have an inherent force and coherence which entitle it to be termed "real."[40]

The presence of psychical reality is not limited to cases of hysteria. There is an entire series of phenomena in which we encounter such reality. Let us review briefly four of these: dreaming, neurosis, psychosis, and art. (*a*) Most people experience psychical reality primarily in dreams, which present us with nocturnal hallucinations. A dream presents itself as a scene of action whose convincing character is such as to make us believe it is real. It is above all the sensory character of dream-hallucinations that leads us to imagine that we are experiencing an actual situation:

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[38] *Ibid.*, 260.

[39] SE XIV, 17-18. On the notion of primal phantasies, see Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, "Fantasme Originaire, Fantasmes des Origines, Origine du Fantasme" in *Temps Modernes*, No. 215 (1964). (English translation in IJP for 1968.)

[40] Laplanche and Pontalis define "psychical reality" as "that which in the subject's psyche presents a coherence and resistance comparable to that of material reality." (Jean Laplanche and J. B. Pontalis, *Vocabulaire de la psychanalyse* [Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1968], p. 391.

> Dreams construct a *situation* out of these [sensory] images; they represent an event which is actually happening. . . . [Thus in dreams] we appear not to *think* but to *experience*; that is to say, we attach complete belief to the hallucination.[41]

Nevertheless, the psychical reality of dream-life is severely limited; not only is it patterned closely from the day's residues of perceived external reality, but it is found only in a restricted sector of our lives. (*b*) We must turn to pathological phenomena to find a situation in which psychical reality encroaches upon and may even substitute for external reality. A neurotic is a person for whom the predominance of the psychically real, a predominance which is normal in childhood, continues into adult life. In turning away from external reality, the neurotic prefers a state in which his thwarted instinctual wishes are represented as satisfied. This state is characterized by psychical reality. Thus Freud says that "in the world of the neuroses it is psychical reality which is the decisive kind." [42] (*c*) In the case of psychosis, there is an active attempt to "remodel" or "reconstruct" external reality by forging a new reality. This new reality is no longer attached to an aspect of external reality as in children's play or neurosis; instead, "it attempts to put itself *in the place of* external reality." [43] To do this, the psychotic must generate his own perceptions to replace those he would normally receive from external reality; he does so by hallucinating in a full-blown and extravagant manner. (*d*) The artist too creates a new reality with which to replace external reality. But the artist remains at the level of phantasy instead of going all the way to hallucination. Thus he does not run the risk of confusing the psychical reality which he creates in works of art with the external world:

> He creates a world of phantasy which he takes very seriously—that is, which he invests with large amounts of emotion—while separating it sharply from [external] reality.[44]

Hence the artist aims at enriching the world of phantasy which belongs to normal human development. Like the normal person and unlike the psychotic, his indulgence in psychical reality is not

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[41] SE IV, 50.
[42] SE XVI, 368. In italics in original text.
[43] SE XIX, 187. My italics.
[44] SE IX, 144.

enjoyed at the price of losing meaningful contact with external reality.

All four of the phenomena which we have just seen to exhibit psychical reality have a common basis in the *unconscious*. In each case, it is unconscious mental activity which makes possible a departure from external reality. This is due to the operation of the primary processes, which have their primary locus in the unconscious. For it is the regressive structure of the primary processes, along with the formal mechanisms of condensation and displacement, that enable significant distortions of external reality to occur in psychical reality. Since the primary processes thus constitute the latter, Freud concludes that "the unconscious is the true psychical reality." [45] For in the unconscious, there is a normal, and not merely a psychotic, "replacement of external by psychical reality." [46] This replacement occurs naturally because of the character of the basic constituents of the unconscious: wishful impulses. These impulses seek instantaneous fulfillment in the psychical reality of phantasy or hallucination:

> If we look at unconscious wishes reduced to their most fundamental and truest shape, we shall have to conclude, no doubt, that psychical reality is a particular form of existence not to be confused with material reality.[47]

In this seminal statement, we notice that Freud is taking care not to identify the entire unconscious with psychical reality. Only its "nuclear" contents—i.e., instinctual wishes and their fulfillments by primary processes in phantasy or hallucination—qualify as psychically real. Expressly excluded from psychical reality are mere "transitional or intermediate thoughts," and the idea that there might be more than one type of psychical reality within the unconscious is rejected.[48] In any case, it is with the notion that the unconscious (as thus qualified) is the true psychical reality that Freud does full justice to the claim that he had made many years before:

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[45] SE V, 613.

[46] SE XIV, 187.

[47] SE V, 620. Freud underlines "psychical" and "material."

[48] *Ibid.* The edition of 1909 had the following clause, which was deleted in all later editions: "psychical reality too has more than one form of existence." (See fn. 1 on *ibid.*, 620.)

> Reality—wish-fulfillment. It is from this pair of opposites that our mental life springs.[49]

The contrast between reality and wish-fulfillment is in effect that between external and psychical reality, which are here accorded an implicit equality. For external reality is the realm of wish-frustration, and psychical reality is the domain of instantaneous wish-fulfillment. Both types of reality are seen as necessary.

The equal status of psychical and external reality which is here suggested was to be short-lived. For Freud increasingly stressed the primacy of the external demands of life. *Ananke* was promoted from being a mere synonym for laws of nature to a place of honor in the Freudian pantheon: external reality became something before which the only proper attitude is that of submission.[50] As a consequence, psychical reality lost its standing of putative equality with external reality, and Freud ended by branding it as merely "internal": which was in effect to condemn it to futility and pathology.[51] Yet even at the time when psychical reality was first recognized, Freud could not fully commit himself to its apparent equality with external reality. At the very moment when psychical reality was posited to explain the pathogenic potency of hysterical phantasies, he was simultaneously attracted to an alternative notion: that of "primal phantasy." In this speculative hypothesis, the hysteric does not fabricate scenes of seduction by a parent out of pure imagination. Instead, he revives genetically transmitted memory traces of an actual act of seduction which occurred many generations before him in prehistoric times. Freud comments:

> It seems to me quite possible that all the things that are told to us today in analysis as phantasy . . . were once real *occurrences* in the primaeval times of the human family.[52]

Hence what we take to be the psychical reality of individual phantasy may turn out to be merely the transcription of the pre-

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[49] SE I, 278 (Letter 105).

[50] See SE XI, 125.

[51] See SE XXIII, 76. Freud claims that when an "internal psychical reality" dominates over external reality, the basis for psychosis is present. This is to denigrate psychical reality still further.

[52] SE XVI, 371. My italics.

historical reality of the human race. This pre-historical reality, as an aspect of social reality, belongs to the total complex of external reality, whose supremacy is thus reinstated.

Furthermore, it can be questioned if any of the four phenomena examined above poses upon closer inspection a serious challenge to this supremacy. The hallucinatory character of dreams is directly dependent on day residues and memory traces: hence on external perception. Further, the belief which we accord to dreams as quasi-perceptual experiences is patterned on ordinary perceptual belief in external reality; this follows from Freud's principle that "belief in reality is bound up with perception through the senses." [53] In neurosis and psychosis, there is the same tacit privilege of external reality. Both are expressions of a "rebellious id" which refuses to accept the instinctual renunciation demanded by the reality principle. Both represent strategies to foil this principle, but neither succeeds. Neurosis is thus characterized in invidious terms as an "*over*-accentuation of psychical reality in comparison with material reality." [54] The psychotic does not succeed in his project of constructing a new reality, since he remains dependent on the external reality which he tries to replace: "in a psychosis, the transforming of [external] reality is carried out upon the psychical precipitates of former relations to it." [55] And the psychotic is finally limited to making merely "internal changes" which Freud describes as "autoplastic" in comparison with the "alloplastic" activity of the normal person, who alone alters the externally real. Similarly, the artist is restricted to creating a world of phantasy which, whatever its formal perfection, is likened in its lack of efficacity to day-dreams or children's play.[56] Moreover, the value of art is located by Freud in its ability to lead us *back* to external reality:

> [The artist] finds the way back to reality . . . from the world of phantasy by making use of special gifts to mould his phantasies into truths of a new kind, which are valued by men as precious reflections of [external] reality.[57]

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[53] SE XIV, 230.
[54] SE XVII, 244. My italics.
[55] SE XIX, 185.
[56] See SE XII, 222 ff.
[57] SE XII, 224.

We are also reminded that the artist is often motivated by the possibility of rewards in external reality such as "honor, power, and the love of women." [58] Thus *for him*, creative phantasies are a means of re-entering external reality in an improved material or social position; while *for us*, the world of artistic phantasy serves only as a refreshing respite from the grim demands of external reality. Freud even questions whether our apprehension of the phantasy world of art is essentially different from ordinary perception:

> We adapt our judgement to the imaginary [i.e., psychical] reality imposed on us by the writer, and regard souls, spirits, and ghosts as though their existence had the same validity as our own has in material reality.[59]

This statement contains all the ambiguity of Freud's position: does psychical reality have "the same validity" as material reality in the sense of an *equal* validity? Or does it have "the same validity" in that it is necessarily experienced *as if it were* material reality? There can be little doubt that Freud himself would finally choose the latter alternative: psychical reality draws our attention only when it appears deceptively *like* external reality. Either we confuse psychical reality with this reality, as in dreams and psychosis; or the two types of reality are essentially similar, as in neurosis and art. In neither case is psychical reality allowed to constitute a truly autonomous realm; like the "souls, spirits, and ghosts" to which Freud refers, its constituents are derivative from and thus dependent upon the material realm: psychical reality is in the end more the shadow of external reality than its equal.

IV

With Freud's failure to admit psychical reality to full equality with external reality, we have observed the final triumph of the external over the internal. Not even the domain of the uncon-

[58] SE XVI, 377.
[59] SE XVII, 250.

scious, the most distinctive discovery of psychoanalysis, is allowed to challenge the realm of external reality in its supposed supremacy. Thus we witness again the pattern which was observed in Freud's treatment of ego-development and the object: even though the rigid schema of external and internal cannot accommodate certain phenomena which defy description in such dualistic terms, Freud ends by reaffirming the schema in spite of the phenomena, which are thus demoted to the status of the merely "exceptional." Yet it is highly questionable whether notions like primary narcissism, internalized objects, or psychical reality deserve such a fate. Far from being at the margin of the psychoanalytic project, they are in fact at its very center. Hence it becomes clear that the dichotomizing of reality into the unequal terms of external and internal is open to serious objection within psychoanalysis itself. And if the resulting primacy of external over internal reality does not allow for some of Freud's own most trenchant insights, a radically different conception of reality is called for. Before we indicate what such a conception might be, we must consider the following fundamental shortcomings in Freud's position.

(i) The equation of reality with external reality implies either that what exists outside one's mind and body is somehow *more real* than what exists within, or that the externally real is the *only* reality. Yet neither consequence is acceptable in view of Freud's own theoretical framework. On the one hand, there are "internal" factors within this framework, such as instinct, which are just as determinative of an individual's development as external reality: "the deepest essence of man is instinctual impulse." [60] Other inner factors such as unconscious memory or the preconscious basis of language cannot justifiably be considered as less real than material or social factors. On the other hand, it is unnecessarily restrictive to claim that there is only *one* type of reality which acts as the metaphysical basis for all such internal functions. As we have seen, Freud himself argues plausibly, though non-committally, for a second kind, and there is no reason for denying still further kinds. And even if we prefer to keep

[60] Freud, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1924), Vol. X, 322-323.

"reality" as a singular term, we can nonetheless speak of various orders or modes of the real.[61] In any case, a metaphysical pluralism is preferable to the monistic closure of Freud's realism of the external.

(ii) An important consequence of Freud's predilection for the externally real is that the formal laws that apply to it become *a fortiori* the laws that must pertain to all lesser realities. Since external reality is for Freud most fundamentally material, the laws of physics become paradigmatic for all other laws. This priority of physical law leads directly to the mechanistic descriptions of mind for which Freud is so often and so rightly reproached. For it is sheer dogmatism to consider it necessary "to furnish a psychology that shall be a natural science: that is, to represent psychical processes as quantitatively determinate states." [62] Even when Freud gives up this express aim, he continues to draw on physicalistic models, merely transposing them into mentalistic terms: e.g., what is called "Quantity" in the *Project for a Scientific Psychology* becomes "psychic energy" in *The Interpretation of Dreams*.[63] Yet phenomena such as repression, sublimation, or disavowal call for quite different models from those constructed out of concepts covertly taken from physics. Thus a pluralism of conceptual schemes is called for.

(iii) It is noteworthy that within psychoanalytic theory the notion of external reality corresponds strictly only to the "definitive reality-ego." Thus it accounts only for the apogee of human development, an apogee that is achieved by alert reality-testing alone. Yet this leaves unexplained what sorts of reality correspond to the other stages of development and to other states of adulthood than the experience of adaptive reality-testing. Consequently, even when we remain within a dualistic schema which requires correspondence between reality and ego states, the notion of external reality is not sufficient. If we were to be less dualistic in conceiving reality, we might speak of different *senses* of reality

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[61] On this question, see Paul Weiss, *Reality* (New York: Peter Smith, 1949), pp. 161 ff.; *Modes of Being* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1958), ch. 1. See also William James, *The Principles of Psychology* (New York: Dover, 1950), Vol. II, 287.

[62] SE I, 295.

[63] *Ibid.*, 295-297 and Appendix C; and SE V, 599-601, 610-611.

as we mature and even as we change mood; for we can possess different senses of reality without being committed to a strict belief in the external existence of what we feel to be real. As changing and changeable, such senses of reality would answer to both the metaphysical and the conceptual pluralism which we have recommended in (i) and (ii). They allow for a flexible relation to the real which is excluded in the idea of reality-testing. For it would no longer be a matter of testing a single alien reality, but of coming to know various realities or various modes of a plurivalent reality in manifold and non-prescriptive ways: and we come to know the real at least partly by sensing what the real is. Such sensing of the real is more descriptive of both childhood and adult reality experiences, since it includes affective and subliminal dimensions which are ignored or denigrated in Freud's stress on the cognitive character of reality-testing.[64]

(iv) A final shortcoming in Freud's notion of external reality is to be found in the epistemological position into which Freud is forced by this notion. Since the externally real is seen as the primary source of being and meaning, our perceptual apparatus is geared to focus on it. The perceptions which result from this act of attention become in turn the unique origin of mental representations: "all representations originate from perceptions and are repetitions of them." [65] Thus knowledge for Freud comes to be built on a series of progressive internalizations. Its two main elements, things-presentations and word-presentations, are conceived as species of cathected memory-traces, thus as tributary from external perception.[66] It should be said in Freud's defense that he did not adopt a mere copy theory of perception. He is usually careful to distinguish between memory-*image* and memory-*trace*; while only the former implies resemblance between thing and representation, Freud gives the crucial role to the latter.[67] Moreover, memory-traces are not considered to be quasi-engrams with a one-to-one relation to perceptions; instead, they

[64] On this entire question, see Avery D. Weisman, "Reality Sense and Reality Testing," in *Behavioral Science*, III, No. 3 (1958), 228 ff.

[65] SE XIX, 237.

[66] See SE XIV, 201-203. Here I keep "presentation" for *Vorstellung*.

[67] See *Ibid.*, 208.

range themselves in different "systems" and function as "signs." [68] Therefore, what Freud calls the "conscious representation of the object" is a complex mental entity composed of thing- and word-presentations which are in turn built on memory-traces of various kinds.[69] Nevertheless, such a conception of representations leads to an epistemological solipsism in which our contact with the world that surrounds us is at best tenuous and distant. The perceiver is seen as a monadic being with a rigid "protective shield" which definitively separates him from the outer world.[70] We are left in the paradoxical position of being unable to perceive anything beyond our own representations. Consequently, there is no way to know if our representations are truly "representative" of the external world, since we have no means to link or compare the two. Freud allows this representativity only with regard to our representations of instincts, which well up inescapably from within and are known through special "instinctual representatives." [71] But his theory of perception proper estranges us from an external reality whose very nature is to be alien to man. The resulting solipsism of the perceiver both reflects and reinforces his theory of reality as exclusively external.

All of the above shortcomings stem ultimately from the restrictive character of Freud's conception of external reality. They indicate an imperative need to replace this conception with a more judicious theory. For "external reality" simply does not do justice to the very world of human experience into which Freud saw so deeply. It suggests that the real is perpetually beyond our most searching grasp. Like the objects which we pursue vainly in dreams, the real recedes with each advance on our part. As strictly external, it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to represent adequately. There seems to be no effective way to know it intimately, since we are limited to testing it blindly by emitting small quanta of psychic energy. We are so encased in our well-defined ego that the externally real forever eludes our embrace. One suspects that in this respect Freud has

[68] See SE I, 233 ff. (Letter 52).
[69] See SE XIV, 201.
[70] See SE XVIII, 237-238; SE XIX, 230.
[71] See SE XIV, 148, 152.

blurred the distinction between phenomenal and noumenal which he elsewhere professes to respect. The result is that what is supposed to be only phenomenal is in fact infected by the alien character of the noumenal so that there is no way of *reaching* the former through perception or action. External reality finally becomes so external to man that it is indeed alien and alienating, hostile and threatening. It is not surprising that the punitive figure of the father, with his ultimate threat of castration, comes to stand for external reality in the family situation. For the externally real is no less awesome or inscrutable than this towering, terrifying father, who embodies the reality principle for the child. It is no wonder that external reality becomes identified with the bad and hostile and that we come to flee it in dreams, neurosis, and art, all of which allow a modicum of pleasure. But is reality only and always harsh, demanding, and prohibitive? Is it not also receptive, yielding, and malleable: an open and continuing source of pleasure, perception, and knowledge?

If we are to reject the notion of external reality, I would suggest that we begin by distinguishing between two different types or modes of reality: objective and experiential. By "objective reality" I mean a realm of definite entities—material, social, or even psychological—regarded as potential objects of scientific knowledge. The objectively real would be that toward which a consensus of impartial inquirers tends. In Peirce's model, these inquirers "converge" on the objectively real without always, or perhaps ever, attaining it as such. This kind of reality is not always or necessarily experienced; it may possess only posited or constructed status without losing its objectivity. In any case, the idea of objective reality allows both for Freud's concern for scientific objectivity and for his skepticism with regard to the ultimate knowability of the real. It would include most of what he would have ranged under "external reality" without the invidious implications of this term. But Freud's passion for the scientifically objective led him to neglect the second type of reality which we must also recognize: the experiential. Or rather we should say that once again he failed to follow his own lead. In a single obscure footnote, he speaks of "the distinction between testing with regard to reality (*Realitätsprüfung*) and testing with regard to immediacy (*Aktua-*

litätspräfung)." [72] This distinction, which was to have been developed in an essay which was never published, is on the right track. It foreshadows the distinction which we drew above between reality-testing and sense of reality. For the term *Aktualität* connotes not only immediacy but also presence and efficacy. Perhaps the best translation for it would be "actual presence" in a sense that would contain an echo of what William James called the "stinging" quality of experience.[73] Reality as actual presence is the world as *experienced* in the fullest sense: as present to oneself, rather than alien or elusive; as actual, rather than past or absent; as a power or living force, rather than a mere object of representation or knowledge. Thus experiential reality would include, in James's words, "whatever things have intimate and continuous connection with my life." [74] Only such a reality would make possible that "more intimate bond between the ego and the world about it" of which Freud spoke in *Civilization and its Discontents*: a bond for which his theoretical apparatus has no place.[75] Experiential reality, as the scene of intimate actualities, involves the presence and influence of things and human beings in a sense that is not sufficiently captured even by a notion such as "object-relations" within Freud's libido theory.[76] For it is a world of close and reciprocal interaction. This interaction does not take place between the discrete and separate objects of a wholly external reality, but between persons and things which as experienced may lack distinct boundaries.

In spite of Freud's failure to recognize it as such, the conception of reality as experiential is by no means unknown in this century. A number of philosophers and psychoanalysts have advocated similar notions: Heidegger's "being-in-the-world," Husserl's "life-world," Hartmann's "immediate world of experience," and Erikson's "actuality." [77] Different as they are in

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[72] SE XIV, 233, n. 2.

[73] William James, *op. cit*, 297.

[74] *Ibid.*, 298.

[75] SE XXI, 68.

[76] See SE XIV, 249.

[77] See, *inter alia*, Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, trans. J. Macquarrie and E. Robinson (New York: Harper, 1962), Sections II and III; Edmund Husserl, *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. David Carr (Evanston: Northwestern

detail, such notions adumbrate a view of reality or world that is a significant departure from Freud's theory. For example, definite locatability is no longer regarded in this view as a requisite feature of being real. Not only may objects in the experiential world have no precise location, but the very dimensions of space and time may change: thus time may itself "become." This does not mean that experienced reality is inherently arbitrary or capricious. Reality as actual presence does not necessarily lack pattern or regularity, though it does not possess the definiteness of the objective reality which corresponds strictly to laws of nature.

Nor is it the case that Freud's own fundamental distinctions have no place in such a conception of reality. (*a*) The very distinction between "external" and "internal" which is so troublesome when absolutized may retain a contextual or functional validity. As Roy Schafer says:

> distinctions between being inside, being outside, and being indeterminately 'there' must be maintained by psychoanalysts for the sake of descriptive accuracy, theoretical clarity, and technical precision.[78]

But the cautionary "for the sake of" is too easily forgotten by most psychoanalysts, as Schafer himself illustrates in referring a few pages later, without qualification, to "the outside temporal world" and to "the external object." [79] These terms have meaning only in the open and variegated context of the experiential world. (*b*) Freud's implicit distinction between the ultimately real, the phenomenally real, and mental representations may also be preserved within the theory of an experiential world. It is a matter of re-interpreting these terms so that the ultimately real becomes what is outside the compass of experience (e.g., pure constructs in physics or the unconscious *an sich*); the phenomenally real becomes the world as experienced in its qualitative richness; and representations become the means by which we

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University Press, 1970), *passim*; Heinz Hartmann, "Notes on the Reality Principle," *Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, XI (1956), 46; Erik Erikson, *Insight and Responsibility* (New York: Norton, 1964), ch. 5. See also: Schafer, *op. cit.*, p. 74 (on "psychological life-space").

[78] Roy Schafer, *op. cit.*, p. 125.

[79] *Ibid.*, p. 128, p. 129.

are acquainted with the phenomenally real. Retaining this three-part distinction has the virtue of not allowing us to confuse the noumenal and the phenomenal—a confusion to which we have seen Freud to be all too prone—and of not cutting off the epistemological subject from the world of experience.

In short, if Freud's realism is to be truly "representative" and not merely "representational," we must re-conceive his vision of reality. A genuinely representative realism is one in which the real is regarded as *present* to the perceiver: actual in his experience, and not only re-presented in it. When perception is interpreted along strictly representationalist lines, there arises the trap of epistemological solipsism into which Freud falls unwittingly. But if perceptions may be representative in the sense which he reserved for "instinctual representatives"—which are psychical *delegates* of their somatic source—then the percipient is able to maintain meaningful contact with his surrounding world. The "Perceptual-Conscious system" would no longer function as a sheer protective barrier, but as a means of communication with a world which is expressed, and not merely indicated, in perception. In this way, the ego is not forced into the defensive posture of having to await the proper "indications of reality" to signal the presence of an external reality which it cannot perceive as such. On the contrary, reality comes to delegate *itself* in the ego's representations, expressing itself in them. It is this move from the indicative to the expressive mode of representation that is entailed in adopting a view of reality as experiential.[80] In a world in which reality is genuinely expressed, the reality-ego would no longer be restricted to a "definitive" function whereby it must determine through reality-testing the difference between perceptions which are valid and those which are hallucinatory. For truly representative or expressive perceptions would themselves be capable of exhibiting this difference. This is not to deny that it may appear in various degrees of disguise which must then be overcome; but it is to affirm that there is a possibility of finally

[80] For the distinction between indication and expression, see Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (New York: Humanities Press, 1970), I, 269-296. Cf. also Jacques Derrida, *La voix et le phénomène* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1967), *passim*.

grasping perceptual truth directly and without the mediation of stimuli, indications, and strictly internal representations.

The primary basis for this revised view of perception and representation is a radical reconception of the relationship of human beings with the world they experience. For this relationship is not an exterior one in which two distinct and disjunct entities—characterized as external and internal, or as material and psychical—awkwardly and mechanically connect at their respective peripheries. It is rather a dialectical relation of partial inclusion and mutual influence which is capable of constituting a single but complex whole. Within this whole, there are no ultimate terms which exclude each other, but rather poles which interrelate in an intimate and plural fashion. For the sake of simplification, we may call one of these poles "human being," the other "the world." But neither pole is a simple singular entity, since the pole of human being includes both man (as species) and the self (as individual) while the world-pole contains humans *qua* other, natural things, and artifacts.[81] Nor is either pole self-enclosed: each is an open unity which permits interlocking engagements with the other. Out of these engagements emerge open-ended units which have the character of "experiences." Such experiences are themselves richly complex; they are not uniquely characterizable as "conscious," "unconscious," or "instinctual." They may alternately and even simultaneously exhibit any of these features, as well as many more. No theory of experience, then, can capture or fix a *single* essence for the nature of the interaction between human being and world. For these poles, while possessing identities of their own within specific contexts, are examples of what Merleau-Ponty calls a "presumptive unity on the horizon of experience." [82] They are in touch with each other in a way that transcends the indicative and achieves the expressive. In the experiental world, the poles are finally co-manifestational and co-constitutive, for it is a question not of the effect of one *on* the other but of mutual animation *through* each other.

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[81] For an elaboration of this notion, see my article, "Man, Self, and Truth" in *The Monist*, LV, No. 2 (1971), 221 ff.

[82] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. C. Smith (New York: Humanities Press, 1962), 219.

In conclusion, we may say that it is only such a dialectical and open view of reality that will do justice to human experience as a whole. For this experience is basically relational rather than monadic, open instead of closed. If this is indeed the case, we cannot accept Freud's theory of external reality, with all that this implies of the exclusive, the protective, and the prohibitive. The concrete human experience which Freud described with such astonishing clinical insight calls for a different model of reality than the one he put forward. The model which has just been proposed offers a way not only to overcome the strict dualism of external and internal but also to preserve Freud's momentous discoveries of primary narcissism, internalization, and psychical reality. For these three phenomena would no longer be merely exceptional within a vision of reality as experiential. They would regain the place in the experiential world which they were denied in Freud's notion of external reality.

To proffer the model of experiential reality is not to claim that there are no decisive differences or boundaries between the experiencer and his world. It is certainly true that we outgrow any initial state of undifferentiated oceanic feeling, and some objects of experience do not cease to be resistant to our human projects. The notion of a dialectical relation between human being and world does not imply a perfect harmony in which error, evasion, or illness would be excluded. But it does point to an *affinity* between the two poles of experience, an affinity which is an effective basis for the intimate bond between ego and world which Freud posited without sufficient support in his theory. Freud's mistake in this respect lay first in reducing each pole of experience to a caricature of its true complexity, and then in supposing that the relationship between the resulting residues could be understood exclusively in terms of the external and the internal. This is indeed one possible relationship, and we cannot deny the fact that human experience is often dichotomized in this way, resulting in qualities of harshness, hostility, and alienation. But the scope of man's experience also admits of other types of relationship which are characterized by such different qualities as receptivity, amicability, and cohesiveness. A place must be found for these characteristics alongside those represented by Freud's stern goddess of Necessity. One of the aspects of human existence

is certainly its demanding character; but this is not the only or even necessarily the primary human experience of the real, which wears more guises than Freud's theory of reality can encompass or account for. Thus we must replace this theory with one that is more accurately reflective of human experience as a whole. Then a more adequate conceptual foundation for Freud's unmatched insights into the unconscious roots of human reality will become possible. Then too philosophy and psychoanalysis might more fully recognize their reciprocal relevance: a mutual significance to which Freud's own lifework so eloquently attests.

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