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Psychology's Ontology as Antinomy

Kant's antinomies have proved a puzzle to thinkers. The great author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* believes that there are some statements concerning which the affirmative and the negative can be defended with equally valid proof and logically correct arguments. But these double statements present each two contradictory affirmations of which only one side can be right; or if both are right they must be affirmed according to the sense which we attach to the words or as we interpret the meaning of the proposition. Antinomies are contradictory, and, according to Kant they express a deeper truth than reason can fathom.¹

Psychology has historically been fragmented in terms of what the field takes to be the ontological status of its subject matter, i.e. psychological phenomena, which has created problematics for the fields intra/interdisciplinary consistency and coherence as a science. The present project assesses how this fragmentation is due to competing naturalist and non-naturalist explanations of consciousness in philosophy of mind, which will further shown to be an implacable debate. Such implacability might indicate that establishing a unifying ontology for psychology is impossible, however, it will be argued that such an unsatisfactory acquiescence can be abated in explaining the logic of consciousness possessing ontological subjectivity within the natural world as an *antinomy*. The concept of antinomic understanding is given to us by the philosopher Immanuel Kant, who denotes antinomies as rationally paradoxical conclusions that inevitably emerge in explanation wherever there is an opposition of facts (or beliefs) between which the respective opposites are both simultaneously true even though their opposition makes them *prima facie* incompatible. Understanding the question of psychology's unified ontology as antinomic concerning the status of consciousness indicates us towards clarifying psychology's unique field of study, wherein what is most intriguing about Kant's assessment of antinomies is how he deduced the logic of antinomic inevitabilities in ontology as forcing rationality into deeper levels of philosophical understandings.

¹ (Carus, 1915) p.2.

The overarching goal of this thesis project is to elucidate fundamental philosophical paradoxes as persistent in the ontology of our lived-experience as psychological beings, and that such insights should serve as the unified ontological grounding in guiding psychology's field of practice. Such a meta-scientific task is called for given that the field of psychology has historically been fragmented in terms of what the discipline takes to be the ontological makeup of psychological phenomena. Recognizing this, the present project observes how this disunity can be explained by a misunderstanding of the paradoxical underpinnings within psychological inquiry, and that an ontological unity for the field as an independent science² might be achieved in understanding psychology's content as philosophically *antinomic*.

The notion of *antinomic* understanding is given to us by the philosopher Immanuel Kant, whereby an antinomy denotes rationally paradoxical conclusions that emerge in explanation wherever there is an opposition of facts (or beliefs) between which the respective opposites are both simultaneously true even though their opposition makes them *prima facie* incompatible. In unpacking psychology's ontology as *antinomic*, however, what is most intriguing about Kant's assessment of paradox is how Kant also perceived the inevitability of antinomies forcing rationality into deeper levels of philosophical understandings. Thus, I argue that in the pursuit of a unified ontology for psychology we are forced into meaningfully engaging with these paradoxes as the grounding, legitimizing, and guiding references for psychological understandings.

² This is stated in consideration of psychology being a field that is unique from fields like the biological sciences which study the physical makeup and mechanisms of behavior. In other words, is there meaningful phenomena unique to the field of psychology in studying the mechanisms and understandings of our psychological natures?

With this task in mind, the current project undertakes an assessment of the possibility of a unified ontology for psychology, a unity which I argue is shown to not only be feasible but desirable for the discipline. From this, it is argued that the question of psychology's ontology breaks down within the problem of explaining *consciousness* as a phenomenon within the natural world. It is at this level of explaining consciousness that an antinomic account of psychology's ontology is motivated given the apparent irresolvable explanatory impasse that persists within the dichotomous debate of naturalism (materialism) and non-naturalism (dualism). By utilizing Kant's understanding of antinomies as a point of departure in understanding the rational consequences of such explanatory impasses, it will be further advocated that a dialectical logic and phenomenological engagement with our ontological status as paradoxical *Beings* is necessitated. In particular, I propose for psychology's adherence to the dialectical strategies of Georg Hegel as a guide to the field's meaningful understanding of the paradoxical conditions we inhabit as psychological beings in regards to assessing mental health and dysfunction.

1. a. PSYCHOLOGY'S ONTOLOGY: *Why care about ontology in psychology?*

For the sake of brevity, questions of ontology in philosophy can be said to deal with the issues of *reality* and *Being*, whether such things exist independent of our perceiving them, and whether there are any universal truths that can be discerned about them. For example, we can reference the familiar philosophical project of French philosopher Rene Descartes's (1596-1650) skepticism on the informational veracity his five senses report to him on facts about the world. Within Descartes's questioning of whether or not all of sensual reality is really just an illusion (i.e. whether the chair he sees sitting in front of him is not the perceptual trick of some little

deceptive demon), Descartes sets for himself the goal of finding a truth which cannot be doubted. Following this standard, Descartes eventually posits a singular rational truth about the mind that he considers as being irrefutably certain: *that although I can be deceived as to the content of my sensual perceptions about the external world, I cannot be deceived about the very fact that “I” must exist in order to even be potentially misinformed about the content of my thoughts.* Through this line of logic Descartes declares his famous maxim ‘*I think, therefore, I am*’, also known as “the Cogito.” For Descartes, it is this aspect of being an “I” that *thinks* which serves as the bedrock for all knowledge, which he deems as undeniable within all our epistemic and metaphysical claims about ourselves and the world.³ Thus, for the present project’s purposes, in understanding the particulars of ontological questionings we will similarly consider ontological principles as conditions for knowledge that are *necessary* truths that universally underlie and structure our capacities for understanding reality and its composition.

It is worth acknowledging, that at a cursory glance, practitioners in the field of psychology might be skeptical as to the relevance of ontological questions contributing anything positive or informative to psychological practice. A clinician might rightly have the attitude that undergoing a skeptical dialogue of whether the chair a client is sitting in is *real* independent of human perception completely misses the pragmatics of treating the unique and particular problems clients are seeking treatment for. Such ontological questions seem to lean more towards certain mysticisms and superfluous musings than they do towards lending informative insights

³ Although it should be said that many have discredited the internal tenability of Descartes’s ontological conclusions resulting in dualism, outlining his classical example is helpful in portraying the general stakes of ontological questionings that concern the present project.

that have practical relevance for psychological practice.⁴ Lingering questions thus persist of what legitimacy philosophy can claim to being relevant for effective practice and theory within the field of psychology, and to what it is that we are asking about psychology when investigating its ontology? An offhand rebuttal to these cursory skepticisms, however, might be given by imagining some simple clinical cases involving clients who are considered to be psychotic or delusional.

In a case study offered by Agarkar (2012) there is a hospitalized patient with psychosis who is non-violently refusing to participate in treatment by arguing against the disruptiveness of their own condition. The patient in question emphatically denies that there are any perceptual disturbances in his physical or mental behavior, even despite the patient's observable fits of physical convulsions along with his hyperbolic claims that the public is constantly judging him and is "out to get him." In such cases, when confronted with delusional and contentious claims regarding the patient's own health, we can imagine the psychotic patient claiming that nothing that is observably happening to them is actually real, that it is all an illusion, and that maybe even the clinician is a part of the scheme to persecute and confuse them. From these perceptions, the patient might therefore adhere to the claim that the clinician possesses no legitimate authority in asserting what is real and what is not in regards to whether the patient truly requires treatment/ counseling. Similar issues might arise in cases of paranoia as well, wherein a patient doesn't deny the existence of *all* reality as an illusion, but merely denies the clinician's interpretation of

⁴ Aversive sentiments to philosophy's practical relevance to psychology were even held by Sigmund Freud (the founder of the psychoanalytic practice), wherein in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*, he claims that philosophy has no immediate influence on the majority of human interests, and that it is merely reserved for the musings of a select few in their ivory towers (Freud, 1989).

that reality. In either case, there is a question of how effective treatment can proceed against such resistances offered by a patient.

In understanding such delusions, research has indicated that such cases are not merely defensive mechanisms of avoidance, but that an interaction of threat perception, emotional processes, and (critically) internal reasoning biases are what give rise to such delusional affects (Chadwick et al., 2005; Allen et al., 2006; Freeman, 2007). Thus, it would appear that clinical treatment methods must not only be equipped to assuage the symptomatic perceptions of threat and persecution but also address the internal reasoning mechanisms that fundamentally inform the patient's delusions about reality. It is at this level of addressing, and relating to, the internal reasoning mechanisms of patients that philosophy can pragmatically inform effective therapy, given that the type of ontology a clinician adopts in responding to such issues can positively or negatively effect therapeutic dialogues, decisions, and outcomes. Indeed, as Edwin Hersch's *From Philosophy to Psychotherapy* (2003) warns in his observations on particular therapy methods:

If we are not "philosophically careful" in cases like (delusion and paranoia), we as clinicians may inadvertently trap ourselves by going to far in well-meaning attempts to be democratic, pluralistic, and empathetic with respect to the patient's own experiential world... A response like this could move us perilously close to a 'therefore, anything goes,' position, one that could prove untenable on closer inspection.⁵

Given such concerns, it would appear that our point of departure in pursuing the ontological underpinnings of psychology must start with a metascientific investigation, wherein we assess not only the phenomena that psychology purports to investigate, but also whether the method of psychology's investigations is problematic in its assumptions. It is to this very type of philosophical questioning that philosophers of science such as Feyerabend (1976), Kuhn (1962),

⁵ (Hersch, 2003) p.31.

and Quine (1953) drew attention to in regards to the content of any scientific endeavor being beholden to particular axiomatic assumptions about reality. The stakes thus become quite high concerning a psychologist's naive adoption or adherence to an unreflective ontological paradigm, and in confronting this, psychology as a discipline is faced with the question of what it takes to be the ontology of psychological phenomena.⁶

1.b. PSYCHOLOGY'S ONTOLOGY: *Psychology's disunity and the question of relativism*

Psychology's specific field of scientific inquiry has generally been described as the science of behavior, experience, and mental processes (Henriques, 2013; Sodorow, 1998; Gray, 1991), but in regards to an explicit ontology of what *makes up* these psychological phenomena, psychology has generally neglected such concerns throughout its history (Yanchar & Hill, 2003). This neglect has led to what some have called a crisis of disunity in psychology, wherein the field's apparent ontological ambiguity and methodological fragmentation has been taken as problematic for the discipline's intra/interdisciplinarily cohesiveness as a science (Toulmin, 1977; Viney, 1989; Staats, 1999).⁷ Even further, this disunity has led to the predicament of incommensurability concerning the findings and investigative methods within the discipline's

⁶ We can also observe such philosophical concerns underlying the recently swelling contemporary psychological movement that advocates for the necessity of the philosophical insights in understanding psychosomatic conditions like depression and anxiety as ineffable lived experiences that must be parsed out through intersubjective dialogues of rationality and empathy (Ratcliffe, 2014, Gallagher, 2012). However, such advocacies have typically lacked an explicit ontological position informing their philosophical observations in psychological practice, and instead they offer mostly correlational commentaries within the theoretical consistencies between the two disciplines.

⁷ Some theorists have argued that the lack of ontological unification within the psychology is not problematic, but has rather given a degree of scientific freedom to explore via empirical verification what types of research and methodologies work best (Heidbreder, 1933; Feyerabend, 1976). However, as Calvin Schrag (1983) trenchantly warns, such attitudes unreflectively resign psychology to an unfounded methodological pretension that sacrifices the field's theoretical clarity by letting the methodology of strict empiricism guide its practice.

multitude of sub-fields, each of which might assume radically different and disparate ontologies on what they consider to be relevant and meaningful psychological phenomena (Goertzen, 2008).⁸

In addressing these anxieties, the question of whether such a unification is feasible for psychology can be parsed out in terms of psychology being adherent to either realist vs. relativist paradigms of philosophical understanding. In basic terms, the debate between realism and relativism deals with the question of whether there are universal truths independent of our minds (realism) or whether all truths are merely subjective to the time, place, and person perceiving them (relativism)? Delineating the two perspectives, a realist in psychology might hold that there are universal psychological features which structure the experiences of all individuals, and that it is by these universal features that psychology can assess and validate various psychological phenomena.⁹ On the other hand, a relativist would deny that such universal features are justifiably knowable or informative given the persistence of our individual subjectivities limiting our psychological experiences and knowledge claims to mere perspectivalism. In other words, relativists maintain that the *meaningful and explanatory* components of a person's psychological makeup are circumstantial, wherein the relativist outrightly rejects the possibility that ontology is

⁸ This line of questioning has led many psychologists to draw empirical conclusions about such psychological phenomena that may end up asking the same questions but come to radically different conclusions concerning what content should be taken as meaningful and Real. Where one clinician might try to solve a client's depression by assuming that the root of the problem stems from client's own unique and relative subjective experience in their relations to themselves and to the world, another psychologist may claim that such strategies are merely arbitrary band-aids that ignore the actual neurophysiological foundations of the disorder that must be addressed and manipulated in order to effectively guide psychology's advancement as a science of objective study and practice.

⁹ For example, an ontological realist might contend that the world being composed of physical entities is a necessary assumption underlying our understandings of reality, and that the components underlying our psychologies are merely physiological. Thus, such a psychological realist might contend that empirical measurements of neurophysiological mechanisms are the best methods of capturing and reporting the material *truths* of psychological reality. See Dummett (1978), Railton (1989), and Devitt (1991) for further discussion on varying realist theories in contemporary philosophical discussions.

even a meaningful intellectual pursuit (for reference of such severe relativisms, see Kornblith, 2000; Devitt, 2005).

This rough outline is an oversimplification of the multitude of variant realist and relativist theories within psychology, but what can be crucially observed is that the claims of relativism reject any pursuit of a unified ontology for psychology as feasible. Despite this outright rejection, however, many commentators discussing the ontological disunity of psychology typically neglect the question of relativism, given that most of the field's theoreticians unreflectively presume realism as underlying psychology's paradigms of theory and practice (Yanchar & Hill, 2003; Sternberg & Grigorenko, 2001). This proclivity towards realism has typically been explained by psychology's historical predilection towards scientific empiricism (Schrag, 1983), but it has been argued that this proclivity lacks any justification beyond appeals to methodological pragmatics (Marsh & Boag, 2014).¹⁰ This adherence to mere pragmatics has arguably been the underlying cause of psychology's theoretical fragmentation, wherein a *whatever works* attitude has underlaid the field's justificatory sentiments. However, pressing questions concerning psychology's ontological unity have become salient counter the field's unreflective realist disposition with the emergence of popular relativistic psychological theories within social constructionism (Gergen, 1985), discourse analysis (Potter & Wetherell, 1987), and feminist psychology (Riger, 1992). In light of this, if we take a unified ontology to be of serious concern for psychology, an addressing and assessment of the question of realism vs. relativism for psychology is called for. Indeed, as according to the relativist, if psychology lacks any meaningful universal validity standards on

¹⁰ Such a criticism of unreflective adherence were also observed by the psychotherapist Rollo May against clinical psychology, wherein he noted there to be a trend of simply justifying one's clinical therapies based upon apparent empirical success of different therapeutic gimmicks (knowledge *that*) that do not question the logic behind their therapy's effectiveness (Schneider et al., 2009).

how to judge psychological phenomena, then it would appear that there is little credibility to psychological investigation being based upon verifiable objective insights concerning its understandings of its own content or methods of investigation.¹¹

Against the relativist's vexing ontological disunity, however, rejections of the relativist's core position do not have to be limited to a simple "cuffing of the ears."¹² However, in assuaging such relativist skepticisms against a unified ontology for psychology, we must look to how the relativist paradigm has sought to carve out an argumentative foothold in its critique of empirical psychologist's and philosopher's adherence to *Principle of Inferential Justification* (PIJ). Specifically, the PIJ argues that the legitimacy of our knowledge claims are derived from inferences to empirical evidence which make those knowledge claims valid and correct:

(PIJ): To be justified in believing one proposition P on the basis of another proposition E, one must be (1) justified in believing E and (2) justified in believing that E makes probable P.

Although the above phrasing of the PIJ is stated in philosophical jargon, we can easily unpack how the relativist might derive their argument from the epistemic consequences of empiricism's

¹¹ It must be said that relativism at the level of ontology is different from relativism at the level of epistemology, wherein the former denies the possibility of ontology and of even justifying the existence of reality independent of human perception, while the latter denies that we can have absolute knowledge about external objects that exist independently of human perception. Keeping this distinction in mind, it is to the former ontological skepticism of relativism that I aim to explicate the absurdism of the relativist skeptic's argument.

¹² I use this term only because some advocates for empirical pragmatism have argued that the skepticism of ontological relativism shouldn't concern the sciences, and that scientists are perfectly justified in simply focusing on the parts of empiricism that have lent to scientific success (Kitcher, 1993; Worrall, 1989). However, such arguments are only valid in terms of explaining how it is that science appears to advance itself despite the threat of ontological ambiguity, and as critical theories as Van Fraassen's (1980) *The Scientific Image* incisively remind us, such concessions to relativism by the empirical scientist only leaves the empiricist the recourse of settling for a pragmatic *empirical adequacy* in their claims concerning realism via the empiricist strategy of justification. Relativists are thus allowed to argue on solid ground that our explanatory models within the sciences, psychology, and philosophy, will never be able to possess the realist validity criteria they claim to in being able to parse out and address inconsistent and incommensurable theories within their respective fields. Thus, according to the relativist, science's only criteria for assessing such competing theories must adhere to limited appeal-to-the-best explanation theories like fallibilism (Peirce, 1955) or reliabilism (Goldman, 1994).

standard of justification. In particular, relativists argue that this empirical method of validating knowledge claims cannot claim any universal or ontological truths given that such empiricisms spiral into an infinite regress of justification that nullifies any claim to objectivity or realism.¹³

For myself, however, there is a simple recourse in effectively assuaging such relativist skepticisms against the possibility of a unified realist ontology for psychological investigation. In particular, as many philosophical critics of the relativist's position point out, the relativist's skepticism concerning the impossibility of any ontological grounding for knowledge claims makes the relativist's own adherence to the logic of their own argument absurd.¹⁴ Indeed, as the epistemologist Richard Fumerton's *Metaepistemology and Skepticism* (1995) comments in its critical review of skepticism:

A skeptic who is in the business of undermining the presuppositions about the rationality of our beliefs must be careful that the foundations on which the skepticism gets built are not undermined in the process.¹⁵

If the skeptic implicitly accepts the principle of inferential justification, then to be justified in reaching a skeptical conclusion, each step in the reasoning process must itself be justified. But if one has no (ontological) justification for believing anything about the

¹³ If, as according to the PIJ, all epistemic justification is inferential then for a person to have a justified belief in some proposition *P*, that person must legitimately infer *P* from some other proposition *E*₁ (in scientific terms, theory *P* must be supported by data *E*). Observing (2) in the PIJ, however, *E*₁ could only justify a person's belief in *P* if it was the case that the person were justified in believing *E*₁, and given the PIJ, the only way for a person to do that would be to infer *E*₁ from some other justifiable proposition *E*₂. *E*₂ would then in turn have to be inferred from some other proposition *E*₃, which must be justified, so on, *ad infinitum*.

¹⁴ For example, we might look to the Kantian argument that rejects the solipsism of the ontological idealism by pointing out that the logic of any argument extends from the concept of a self-aware subject making a claim that is temporally successive in its logic (i.e. if *a* then *b*), and that only the assumption of something *nonmental* (other than mind) can provide a backdrop wherein the relations of past, present, and future might exist within the self-aware subject making such a claim. In other words, the assumed self-awareness operating even within the solipsism of the ontological relativist would be absurd and impossible without an assumption and awareness of enduring *nonmental*, *temporal*, and *spatial* objects other than the *self*. For a more modern interpretation of this argument see Strawson's (1959) philosophical piece *Individuals*, which follows a similar logical vein in justifying its argument.

¹⁵ (Fumerton, 1995) p. 47.

past... how could the skeptic be justified in believing the premises of the skeptical argument?¹⁶

Additionally, in particular relevance to the field of psychology, there are strong contentions that any psychological theory that assumes a relativism at the ontological level is susceptible to this achilles heel of internal self-refutation, as Fletcher's *Realism Versus Relativism in Psychology* (1996) comments:

...in sawing off the branch that holds up the values of rationality, truth, and belief in the world that is independent of human cognition, relativists apparently fail to realize that they are perched on the same part of the branch they are busily attempting to sever. A strong relativism is self-refuting, and is hence, not tenable.¹⁷

This simple *reductio ad absurdum* argument against relativism at the ontological level is enough, I maintain, to reject relativism's critique concerning the impossibility of ontology.¹⁸ Observing the *absurdism* of relativism, we are thus inexorably directed towards discerning psychology's underlying ontological basis, wherein we are in pursuit of uncovering the formal universal structures of psychological phenomena in terms of what it is about our nature that makes us susceptible to such states and experiences.

¹⁶ (ibid., p.49)

¹⁷ (Fletcher, 1996) p. 416.

¹⁸ Beyond all this abstract theorizing against relativism, however, we can also be reminded of the clinical practicality in possessing familiarity with the argumentative absurdism of ontological relativism in offering informative insights for practitioners when confronted with claims of radical subjectivism. Further, we can also shelve relativist theories such as social constructivism, discourse analysis, and feminist psychology in our exploration into the ontological underpinnings of psychology since these theories profess a grounding in empirical relativism. This is not to say that these theories do not offer unique, pragmatic, and meaningful insights into understanding and deconstructing the subjective-social contexts and influences that inform psychological behavior and phenomena. However, as to the ontological concern of what the field of psychology takes to be its unified content and epistemic criteria of investigation, such theories offer little recourse for explicating a unified ontology of psychology that goes beyond such deconstructions (for further discussion about the epistemic limits of social constructivism and feminist-empiricism beyond being deconstructionist analyses see Anderson, 1995; Lazreg, 1994; Eichler, 1980).

2.a. THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *The realist question of psychology's ontological content within the naturalism vs. non-naturalism debate.*

Ontological realism at its most basic premise maintains that there are universal ontological principles concerning the metaphysical make up the world independent of the mind, and that there are universal ontological truths concerning our apprehensions of the world. However, within such paradigms there is now the question of what entities can be said to make up that reality occupied by psychological beings. Do we consider only physical entities to be those things that are real, or are there entities in reality that cannot be reduced to physical explanations but that we still take as being ontologically unique and meaningful (i.e. consciousness, mental states, Cartesian souls, etc.)? Are the structures of our psychological understandings conforming to strictly physical explanations about the world, or is there something beyond such materialism that must be appealed to? In addressing these questions, I argue that it is to the reductionist debate of naturalism vs. non-naturalism that the crux of psychology's ontological inquiry can be made explicit. However, it must be unpacked as to why it is to the question of naturalism vs. non-naturalism that such an ontological analysis ultimately bottoms.

As was previously mentioned, psychology has generally presumed a realist position in maintaining that a world inclusive of human minds is a world that is independently real and that there are universal truths (predominately considered as scientific truths) concerning the content of that world. Given this assumption, psychology has also commonly held the position that what it is that exists in reality are strictly physical entities, a position which has been termed *naturalism* in philosophical discussions regarding the composition of reality and our

explanations of phenomena within the world (Stanovich, 1992). The position of naturalism thus holds that the universal foundation for knowledge claims can only be legitimated via appeals to physical, mechanistic, and reductionist explanations of how and why things exist, interact, and manifest in reality (for specific naturalist theories particular to psychology see Jacobi, 1830; Churchland, 1995; Notterman, 2000).¹⁹ Given the predominance of the naturalistic perspectives throughout the history of psychology, however, there have also been competing schools of thought that have rejected this concrete commitment to reductionist explanations in psychology (Reil, 1803; Giorgi, 1970; Yalom, 1980; Rogers 1985). In particular, these theorists claim that meaningful phenomena like the experience of being conscious, and the possession of a mental life, are not totally reducible to physical explanation. What is therefore foundational for non-naturalists, is our universal condition as *mental subjects* and that it is from this position of being an irreducible conscious agent that psychology should derive the necessary ontological principals that structure the content of psychological investigation.²⁰

Given this explanatory divide, an investigation confronts us in terms of whether psychology's purpose is to explain behavior and the *lived-experience* of consciousness in the most general sense (e.g. Giorgi, 1970; van Kaam, 1966), or whether psychology simply uses behavior as evidence strictly for studying the mind in terms of the neurophysiological processes

¹⁹ For example, a naturalist would explain the occurrence of something abstract like the emotion of 'happiness' in terms of the particular neuro-chemical processes in the brain that result in the manifestation of the *feeling* of happiness in a person. Any other explanation of the emotion, such as being a non-physical thought or mental state, appears unjustifiable and illegitimate according to the naturalist, given that there is no way to justify such non-physicalist explanations about the constituency and existence of the emotion if we ontologically accept that only physical phenomena are what make up the world.

²⁰ For example, according to the non-naturalist, the emotion of happiness has meaningful content as a phenomena that goes beyond it just being a neuro-chemical manifestation, but as something that is abstractly experienced. Thus, non-naturalists contend that there must be forces in reality that are Real and meaningful which cannot be reduced to physical explanations if we are to take seriously the subjective experiences of conscious agents within the natural world.

and mechanisms that underlie those capacities (e.g. Taylor, 1998; Gibson, 1979; Churchland 1995)?²¹ Indeed, if the subject matter of psychology is generally taken to be the description and explanation of behavioral/conscious states, then what psychology takes to be the metaphysical components that comprise such states can be seen as fundamentally defining the types of theories, research, and practices that the field deems as legitimate pursuits of inquiry. Thus, in seeking to analyze this disagreement in terms of naturalist vs. non-naturalist ontological theories in regards to psychology's field of inquiry, I argue that it is to the question of naturalism that the very heart of what of psychology takes itself to be explicitly trying to explain is revealed. It is at this level of assessing the dichotomous theories of naturalism and non-naturalism in explaining *consciousness* that the ontology of psychology ultimately bottoms out, and It is also at this level that I will argue the antinomy of psychology's ontology as paradox is revealed.

2.b. THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *Consciousness and its ontological emergence in the world*

To paraphrase Searle et al. (1997), the crux of the naturalism vs. non-naturalism debate can be seen as lying within questions of how we formulate an ontological accounting of our

²¹ This line of questioning has further led to epistemic quandaries where the debate is framed in terms of internalist (non-naturalist) vs. externalist (naturalist) theories of knowledge concerning how it is we validate knowledge claims from foundational truths about the world in either being foundational within facts about the external world or being foundational in facts about the internal rational mechanisms of the mind apprehending the world.

being conscious beings that relate epistemically to the world.²² For the sake of addressing this question concisely, I will also be following the general definition that John Searle offers in his aptly named comprehensive study, *Consciousness* (2000):

Consciousness consists of inner, qualitative, subjective states and processes of sentience or awareness. Consciousness, so defined, begins when we wake in the morning from a dreamless sleep and continues until we fall asleep again, die, go into a coma, or otherwise become “unconscious.”... It includes everything from feeling pain, to perceiving objects visually, to states of anxiety and depression...²³

In such basic terms, Searle’s preliminary definition of consciousness is one that neatly captures the distinctive features of consciousness in being qualitative, subjective, and unified.²⁴ Even though there are contentious debates concerning the minutia of each of the features of qualia, subjectivity, and unification, for our present purposes we can adopt this general sense of what it

²² It is important to note that both the naturalist and non-naturalist strategies seek to establish certain epistemic and metaphysical foundations for knowledge and understanding, and in so doing they respectively try to locate these foundations within two different loci within the metaphysical makeup of the world. Such interests in establishing non-inferential foundations for knowledge can be understood as reactionary to the absurdism of relativism, wherein respective realist paradigms perceive it as essential that knowledge rest upon sort of foundational-ontological truth that justifies all subsequent epistemic judgements about the world. However, we should also be wary of whether this fetishism with foundational knowledge will lead us to further problems in exacting the ontology of psychology in so much as whether such foundational notions are necessary. Indeed, it might be shown that this fetishism with foundationalism may be the very thing that forces us to an antinomic understanding of ontology, and where the paradox of psychology’s underpinnings becomes apparent.

²³ (Searle, 2000) p. 559

²⁴ Although there have been other modern definitions of consciousness, wherein some authors use it to denote only experiences of “self-consciousness” (Kriegel, 2004), or that consciousness is merely second order-mental states that reflect about the phenomenal experience of baser mental states (Rosenthal, 1986), what Searle’s basic definition succinctly captures is that there is a genuine experiential phenomenon of being conscious in our ordinary understanding of what it is to be *conscious Beings*.

is we mean when we use the term *consciousness* in ordinary language.²⁵ Assuming this definition, we can move to the pressing issue of investigating consciousness in terms of naturalist vs. non-naturalist ontologies explaining how it is that we should understand the *emergence* of consciousness within the world. In particular, theories seeking to explain the emergence of consciousness in the fields of psychology, neuroscience, and philosophy, have revolved around what has been called the *neurobiological problem of consciousness* (Edelman, 1992; Hammeroff 1998; Pribram, 1999; Feinberg, 2012), which asks how is it that brain processes generate conscious states and how are those states realized in brain structures? It is to this question of consciousness that naturalists and non-naturalists can be seen as tracing their fundamental disagreement in regards to their respective ontological explanations of what we can say makes up real and psychologically meaningful phenomena in the world.

2.c. THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *The neurobiological problem of consciousness.*

As will be recalled, naturalists contend that all meaningful phenomena and objects that exist in reality are of strictly physical composition, and that it is only through our physical explanations of such entities and their interactions between one another that our attention and

²⁵ Without going into too much of a terminological diatribe, the feature of qualitiveness can be understood as the *feeling* of possessing (being in the thoughts of) an experience, such as listening to a symphony, tasting a sorbet, or even the phenomenological experience of being conscious. Such experiences possess *feelings* (sensations, thoughts, etc.) for the agents experiencing them, and these feelings are what is denoted by the qualitative feature of consciousness (for further discussion on qualia see Chalmers, 1995; Churchland, 1985; Nagel, 1974). The feature of subjectivity, simply put in a single sentence, denotes that conscious states only exist when they are being experienced by some subject (for a comprehensive review of subjectivity in psychological literature see Revonsuo, 2009). The last feature of unity denotes how conscious experiences qualitatively experienced by a subjective agent consist within a unified conscious field in as much as they are experiences of *that* particular agent. Supporting this last feature have been particular psychological studies on split-brain patients by Gazzaniga (1998), which have lent convincing credence to the legitimacy of experiential unity being a distinct feature of consciousness, wherein split-brain patients appear to possess two conscious minds inside one skull (for further discussion on the concept of mental unity, see Bayne 2004; Feinberg, 2000).

credulity should be devoted. From this position, one naturalist strategy of explaining consciousness is to simply *explain away* consciousness by arguing that consciousness merely *appears* to be a real phenomenon, but in actuality is metaphysically illusory. This particular strategy argues that consciousness is a phenomenon whose emergence should be understood as reducible to particular neurophysiological building blocks within the brain, akin to the phenomenon of color reducing to particulars of light reflectances.²⁶ In other words, if consciousness is just an illusory phenomenon, then its emergence as an ontologically unique entity that *subjectively experiences* phenomena need not be explained in the first place (for examples of reductionist and eliminativist strategies, see Hooker, 1981; Churchland, 1981; Tye, 1999). Another popular naturalist strategy that attempts to solve the neuro-biological problem of consciousness is a materialist argument that, while not denying the ontological existence of consciousness, maintains that consciousness is merely a higher order cognitive phenomenon that can be reduced and causally traced to particular neurobiological processes. This particular naturalist account asserts its argument by appealing to the growing field of scientific evidence that appears to show that proper neurological functioning is what is necessary for agents to be conscious, and that even conscious states of being emotionally elated or angry are ultimately caused by lower level neurobiological processes (Dennett, 2001; Koch, 2004; Singh & Singh, 2011).

What can be seen as motivating such naturalist accounts is an adherence to a strictly materialist ontology, wherein consciousness is not some immaterial soul, but can be adequately explained as a physical manifestation of a complex functioning neurobiology. It has been noted,

²⁶ This theory of color vision is referenced from Land, E. H. (1971).

however, that such materialist and reductionist strategies rob the field of psychology, as a purported science of psychic health and behavior, of any unique content of inquiry distinct from the physical sciences. Indeed as Daniel Robinson's *The Logic of Reductionistic Models* (1995) argues:

Let me say only that reductive strategies of the materialistic stripe have *always* been either declared or undeclared wars on psychology, for such strategies have as their principal objective the elimination of all psychological entities from the domain of the actually existing. This is why it is so ironic, if not pathetic, to witness contemporary psychology lusting after them.²⁷

It is against such questionable reductionist consequences that psychological non-naturalists draw contention by decrying the naturalist's naive marginalization of the subjectivity of possessing observer dependent experiences that cannot be fully explained by an observer independent-science of tracing neurobiological processes (Chalmers, 1995). This particular motivating concern for the non-naturalist is succinctly captured in a paragraph of Globus's *Unexpected Symmetries in the "World Knot"* (1973):

The ontological claim that mental events are strictly identical with neural events unfortunately coalesces the perspectives of both subjective (S) and objective (O) observers. The term "mental events" implies the perspective of S who has the mental events immediately given by direct acquaintance (without inference), whereas the term "neural events" implies the perspective of O who is presumably the brain of S. Thus O cannot have S's mental events by direct acquaintance because they are private to S; for example, O cannot experience S's pain... Mental events contain no information about any neural embodiments, for example, S's pain does not have the typical characteristics of physical objects in that S cannot see his pain or touch it. Nor is there anything about pain which seems at all like neurons... it does not appear that the brain in any way codes or represents in any way its own structure.²⁸

In congruence to this sentiment, Searle's *The Rediscovery of the Mind* (1992) also summarily states in its critical analysis of the materialist's reductionist strategy:

... it is a general feature of such (materialist) reductions that the phenomenon is defined in terms of the "reality" (physicalism) and not in terms of the "appearance". But we can't make that sort of appearance-reality distinction for consciousness because consciousness

²⁷ (Robinson, 1995) p. 6.

²⁸ (Globus, 1973) p.1129.

consists in the appearances themselves (for agents). *Where appearance is concerned we cannot make the appearance-reality distinction because the appearance is the reality.*²⁹

Thus, it is this crucial feature of subjectivity, of being a *Being* which possesses consciousness, that non-naturalists tout as being a metaphysical phenomenon that naturalists cannot reject as real and meaningful but yet appears to be neurobiologically irreducible to the mere material facts of neurobiological processes.

In response to these criticisms, however, naturalists have contended that the non-naturalist's claim for the irreducibility of consciousness carries the untenable consequence of adopting a metaphysics that allows for the existence of things like spirits, ghosts, and souls in order to explain what consciousness *is* if it is not a strictly material phenomenon of neurobiological processes. Thus, naturalists argue that in embracing the non-naturalist's position, what we end up with under such circumstances is consciousness being considered an ontologically distinct entity from the rest of physical reality, bearing the seemingly absurd contention that there are categorically distinct mental substances that relate to an external physical world. From this, naturalists are quick to point out that such dualist ontologies are plagued with the seemingly irresolvable question of how our ontologically distinct mental representations cohere with facts our interact with objects that exist out in the external world of physical entities.³⁰

²⁹ (Searle, 1992) pp.121-122.

³⁰ In other words, how can two ontologically distinct categories of reality (the mental and the physical world) interact with one another if they are fundamentally distinct entities that adhere to their own laws of interaction, composition, and emergence? How can conscious agency seemingly have causal influence over physical actions if there is this divide between the physical and mental worlds? How might facts about the physical world be taken as valid or real for conscious beings if being conscious means being metaphysically distinct from the natural world you are apprehending and perceiving?

What can be critically gleaned from the above synopsis of the naturalism debate is how the naturalists and non-naturalists draw their lines against one another via the apparent explanatory shortcomings each respective side holds as persistent and undermining against the other. In particular, naturalists are skeptical of the non-naturalist's position because of its apparent ontological consequence of dualism, while non-naturalists are skeptical of naturalist accounts due to consciousness's apparent irreducible feature of subjectivity. In light of this, there have been advocates within both the naturalist and non-naturalist camps that have decided to bite the bullet in adhering to their explanatory strategies of accounting for consciousness (i.e. Chalmers embracing dualism or Churchland outright denying the neurobiological problem of consciousness as an actual ontological problem). However, there have also been thinkers that have claimed that the debate between non-naturalist and naturalist strategies is one that revolves around a false-choice between dualism vs. materialism in explaining the ontological existence of consciousness.

2.d. THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *Non-reductive physicalism, and its attempt to resolve the problem of consciousness*

The modern paradigm strategy of mitigating the dualism vs. materialism dichotomy in explaining consciousness can be seen as germinating in Searle's (1997) accounting of consciousness as being simultaneously considered a causal consequence of the neurobiological processes of the brain, and as possessing the irreducible feature of ontological-subjectivity.³¹ In

³¹ I refer to Searle's reconciliatory strategy as "paradigmatic" since it is under his general outline of explaining how conscious can both by considered as an emergent physical phenomena and yet still resist physicalist explanation, that modern discussions of non-reductive physicalism take as their reference point (For examples see McGinn, 1989; Van Gulick, 1993; Kim, 1989).

particular, Searle contends that, while consciousness is a biological phenomenon, it is of a unique sort distinct from other physical entities:

On the view that I am proposing, we should reject those categories (dualism vs. materialism) altogether. We know enough about how the world works to know that consciousness is a biological phenomenon caused by brain processes and realized in the structure of the brain. It is irreducible not because it is ineffable or mysterious, but because it has a first-person ontology. The traditional mistake that people have made in both science and philosophy has been to suppose that if we reject dualism, as I believe, we must, then we have to embrace materialism. But on the view that I am putting forward, materialism is just as confused as dualism because it denies the existence of ontologically subjective consciousness in the first place. Just to give it a name, the resulting view that denies both dualism and materialism I call biological naturalism.³²

In such terms, Searle argues that his position of non-reductive naturalism allows for the continuing legitimacy of the scientific ontology of materialism in causally accounting for how it is consciousness emerges in the world via neurobiological processes, but yet also accounts for the apparent explanatorily irreducible features of consciousness (i.e. ontological subjectivity). However, in exploring the questionable tenability of Searle's non-reductive materialist strategy, Searle's biological naturalism has found itself susceptible to persistent critiques that recite the same plaguing explanatory tensions of materialists and dualists as applicable to Searle's theory.

Firstly, it is critical to understand that under his concept of biological naturalism, Searle sees consciousness simply as a *macro-feature of a micro-system*. Just as the feature of liquidity is a phenomenon in a world that is composed of non-liquid particles, or that digestion is a phenomenon that occurs via chemicals that do not digest, consciousness is a macro-feature that is emergent (but not reducible) to the micro-system of neurobiological processes (Searle, 1992). However, as many theorists have pointed out (Kim, 1989; Chalmers, 1996; Dretske, 1997; Jackson, 2004), Searle's argument by analogy is only metaphorical, and doesn't fully account for explaining the emergent feature of ontological subjectivity beyond the dualism-materialism

³² (Searle, 2000) p. 567

dichotomy. Indeed, as Tarik (2009) succinctly describes of the shortcomings in Searle's non-reductive physicalism:

... solidity, liquidity, photosynthesis, etc. are macro-features explicable by features of physical micro-elements and the structural dynamical relations among them. In contrast, the mental with its properties of subjectivity and consciousness can never be explicable by features of physical particles and fields *as we know these physical items from our contemporary science*. It is as if one hoped that the properties of lines, squares, and points could eventually explain the property of having weight. Maybe, in the future, physics will acknowledge that the physical particles have some special, elementary, quasi-mental properties but only then consciousness would clearly be just another property of physical systems like solidity and photosynthesis.³³

Otherwise put, the emergent properties of liquidity or photosynthesis are easily understood as products of their respective micro-elements given that the macro-features of liquidity and photosynthesis share the same type of metaphysical properties of mass, energy, etc., as the micro-elements that comprise them. However, the same cannot be said of Searle's conception of consciousness as a macro-feature, given that Searle argues that consciousness does not share the exact same properties as its micro-elements in the neurobiological processes of the brain, but that it possesses something more (i.e. ontological subjectivity). As such, all reconciliatory strategies that go along the same vein as Searle's strategy, appear susceptible to this plaguing explanatory impasse in accounting for consciousness's ontological status within the natural world.

2.e. THE QUESTION OF CONSCIOUSNESS: *The explanatory impasse of consciousness.*

Given the above exegesis, I contend that despite our best theories and explanations, we are lapsed into a seemingly unsatisfactory situation of accounting for the irreducible phenomenon of our own subjectivity within the materialist structures of the natural world. Indeed, the very subjectivity that makes us psychological appears to defy our best scientific

³³ (Tarik, 2009) p. 43.

understandings we have about the physical world, yet still persists as an inescapable condition which necessarily underlies our capacity of undertaking such empirical investigations in the first place. Thus, it would seem that it is within this impasse of accounting for the phenomenon of consciousness that modern philosophy of the mind finds itself inexorably embroiled, either side seemingly forced into biting explanatorily unsatisfactory ontological bullets in attempting to account for the ontology consciousness.³⁴

In light of such an impasse, it might be tempting to throw up our hands concerning the question of consciousness persistently presenting us with the dilemma of its own explanation, and that metaphysics as a field has failed us in offering a satisfactory accounting of our own ontology as psychological beings. To be sure, if the field of psychology takes upon itself to be the study of mental states, behavior, and the phenomenological essence of experience (Yanchar & Hill, 2003), then it is at this very same ontological impasse of accounting for consciousness that the underlying ontology of psychology similarly finds itself occupied with. As the phenomenologist Edmund Husserl tellingly forewarns in his *The Crisis of European Sciences* (1970):

The difference between empirical (materialist) and transcendental subjectivity (dualist) remain(s) unavoidable; yet just as unavoidable, but also incomprehensible, was their identity. I myself as transcendental ego, “constitute” the world, and at the same time, as soul, I am a human ego in the world. The understanding which prescribes its law to the world is my transcendental understanding, and it forms me, too, according to these laws; yet it is my -- the philosophers -- psychic faculty... If this is supposed to be not an actual absurdity but a paradox that can be resolved, what other method could help us achieve

³⁴ As Matthew Ratcliffe comments in his *The Problem With the Problem of Consciousness* (2014), p.490: “Consciousness is not just a matter of having a subjective perspective within the world; it also includes the sense of occupying a contingent position in a shared world. From within this experiential world, we manage to conceive of the world scientifically, in such a way that it fails to accommodate the manner in which we find ourselves in it. Hence the real problem of consciousness is that of reconciling the world as we find ourselves in it with the objective world of inanimate matter that is revealed by empirical science.”

clarity than the interrogation of our inner experience and analysis carried out within its framework...? Can psychology be indifferent here? Must it not deal with all of this?³⁵

Indeed, I would similarly contend that the problem of consciousness is a problem of paradox, and that without a new framework that offers an explanatory trajectory, rhetorical repetition will continue to pass as progress in pursuit of psychology's unified ontology.

Given this impasse, the stage has thus been set for my own argument that psychology's ontology should not be parsed out within such dichotomous theorizing, but that we can rather parse out a unified ontology of psychological phenomena in terms of *understanding* the logic of consciousness's paradoxical nature rather than trying to *solve* it. Indeed, it is this persistent paradoxical tension in our understanding of ourselves as conscious beings that I take as the underlying explanatory feature of psychological life. However, before unpacking this claim, it must be made clear why the impasse in explaining the nature of consciousness persists, and whether this paradox in understanding ourselves as conscious beings reveals new insights into understanding psychology's underlying ontology. To achieve this, I will appeal to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant and his understanding of what he saw as the necessary emergence of such paradoxes in ontology and metaphysics. Kant's insights will thus serve as my own point of departure in carving out an understanding towards explicating a unified ontology for psychology given consciousness antinomic nature.

3.a. FACING PARADOX: *Kant and the project of ontological speculation*

In Kant's own time (1724-1804) the field of philosophy found it self embroiled in a dichotomous debate (not too unfamiliar from our own) concerning the ontological structures of

³⁵ (Husserl, 1970) p. 202

validity in knowledge claims about reality. Amongst Kant's contemporaries, there were the Empiricists who held that the mind was simply a blank slate upon which our experiences of the empirical world wrote upon and in reference to which we justified knowledge. On the other side there were the Rationalists, who held that there were innate or purely rational ideas about the world that made empirical knowledge sensible, making such innate concepts the foundations of understanding. Within this debate, Kant sought a way to resolve the division that had implacably occupied his contemporary philosophical environment, within which Kant was particularly spurred on by the skepticisms of the empiricist David Hume who questioned whether the pursuit of unconditional/universal knowledge was even justifiably rational.³⁶

The keen insight offered by Kant in reaction to Hume's empiricism lies in how Kant proposed a logical discrimination between purely *formal* and the *sensory* forms of thought. For example, whereas Hume treated the concepts like space and time (which dictated cause and effect relations out in the world) as discernible properties *possessed* by objects, Kant saw space and time not as properties that existed out in reality of which we made inferences about (as in the PIJ), but were rather formal structures onto which our apprehension of objects in reality conformed to. In light of this observation, Kant held that space and time (and consequently the objectivity of cause and effect relations) were of a type of knowledge that was formal and *a priori* within understanding, and that outside of the structures of space and time, reality became

³⁶ It must be said that while Kant claims to have been awoken from his "dogmatic slumber" by Hume's piercing critiques against our notions of necessity, Kant also sought to rectify and address the philosophical concerns of other philosophers like John Locke (who rejected the rationality of innate ideas) and Berkley (who argued that knowledge about the world independent of observer perception was impossible to hold or justify).

non-sensical.³⁷ Thus, within his discrimination between the *formal* and the *sensory* within epistemology, Kant introduced a new trajectory for philosophical thought which acknowledged that while universal knowledge about the world independent of the human mind may be elusive, one could still justify particular universal knowledge claims concerning the forms of apprehension that determined the necessary structures that knowledge operated within.³⁸

Although it is generally held that Kant addressed Hume's skepticisms on universal knowledge, it is also commonly recognized that Kant's solution to Hume's critiques introduced an entirely new set of problems for philosophical thought that Kant would ultimately fall short in solving himself. However, without going into too long of a historical diatribe into the complex facets of Kant's philosophical thought, it would serve us well to look into the specifics of Kant's philosophy that serve as piercingly insightful to our concerns of addressing the paradoxes of consciousness's ontology. Specifically, Kant termed the project of investigating the formal nature of ontological principles as a project of "speculation," wherein, as he states in the first paragraph of the first *Critique*: by submitting ourselves to speculation we go in search of what is

³⁷ To further address this complicated notion, as Kant elucidated in his *Critique of Pure Reason*, epistemology necessarily apprehends the objects of empirical perception as existing within space and in time, for without such a formal structures to how we perceive reality our understandings would lack any enduring resource or reference from which to connect the succession of consciousness's own phenomenal experiences from one temporal moment to the next. If consciousness is something that involves a representation of content/properties out-in-the-world, whose succession of mental representations persists within a singular subjectivity, then there could be no conception of consciousness understanding itself as *consciousness* (i.e. Descartes's Cogito) without an assumption of a spatial and temporal objectivity from which consciousness can orient its successive experiences of reality over time. Thus, for Kant, the parameters of temporal understanding consciousness assigns to the succession of its own experiences therefore dictate a logical conclusion concerning the spatiality of the objects consciousness perceives, for without spatial relations there is no time, and without time there is no consciousness.

³⁸ This Kantian understanding concerning the nature explanation can thus be observed in our present concerns within the debate over the problem of consciousness, wherein although the ontological subjectivity of consciousness may be a necessary assumption in our understandings of the world, it is questionable whether such an a priori truth about the structures of understanding bear any meaningful insight into how we understand phenomena *out* in the world.

unconditioned (undeniable) in understanding what it is we can reasonably know about ourselves and the world.³⁹ Most critically, it is Kant's contention that the "speculation" of making ontological principles explicit ultimately leads to *antinomic* (rationally paradoxical) conclusions, from which I plan to motivate my own position of meaningfully addressing the impasse of consciousness in explicating psychology's underlying ontology. Firstly, however, it must be made clear what the specific nature of antinomies are, how they come to be, and what meaning we can infer from their inevitability.

3.b. FACING PARADOX: *The nature of antinomies*

Kant's notion of antinomic explanation in his critical philosophy is generally understood as a conclusive paradox that is rationally arrived at when we try to grasp unconditional and ontological truths about the world.⁴⁰ To offer an example of the antinomic conclusions assessed by Kant, we can look to the specific antinomy described in Kant's *Analytic of the Teleological Power of Judgement* in the Third Critique between naturalist and non-naturalist explanations of biological *organisms* in nature. In this particular analysis, Kant is speculating on what it is that metaphysically *makes* an organism (i.e. a plankton, dog, tree, etc.) a distinct particular entity in nature apart from other natural entities, however in unpacking the logic behind the antinomic condition of offering a natural explanation for organisms, it is first helpful to discern what Kant understood as the notion of *natural purpose* in organisms.

³⁹ Kant outlines speculation as being concerned with the unconditional truths of asking four particular questions: *What can I know? What should I ought to do? What should I be hopeful for?* And finally, out of assessing the first three, *Who are we?*

⁴⁰ A similar case which we observed in how naturalists and non-naturalists persistently find legitimate explanatory shortcomings against one another in their respective criticisms

An organism, according to Kant, constitutes an organized being whose physical parts and functional processes contribute to the sustainability of the organism as a whole of those functional parts. According to Kant, these processes of internal functional sustainability, can be understood as participating in a type of reciprocal causation within which each functional part contributes to, and is the cause of, each other functional part that (as a working whole) maintains the compositional unity of all the parts within the organism. This condition of reciprocal causation is therefore the organism constituted as a *natural purpose*, i.e. the purpose of *causing* itself to persist in its unified functional structure (as a plankton, dog, tree, etc.). As Kant succinctly puts it: “I would provisionally say that a thing (organism) exists as a natural end if it is the cause and effect of itself.”⁴¹

For Kant, understanding organisms in nature as natural purposes is the only way we can take ourselves as being able to describe organisms meaningfully, since without such a *purposeful* conception of organisms we would have no way of definitively distinguishing one organism from another (i.e. a tree’s natural purpose of self-causation/organization is what makes it conceptually distinct from a dog).⁴² The conception of natural purpose, according to Kant, is thus an unconditional presumption in our understanding of organisms as distinct entities in nature. However, Kant is also aware that while natural purposes may be an obligatory conception in our explanations about organisms in nature, such an ontological conception of organisms being

⁴¹ (Kant, 2000) p. 371.

⁴² To elucidate his point, Kant offers the example of a tree as a *natural purpose* in terms of the tree as an organism possessing three criteria: (i) self-organization: the growth and interaction of a tree’s functional parts is caused by the organizational structure of the tree as a whole; (ii) self-reproduction: a tree is capable of securing the existence of other similar organisms in terms of structure and function as it does with producing an acorn; (iii) and self-nourishment: as in how tree takes nutrients from outside of itself and converts it into the organic substance by which the tree is composed (Kant, 2000) pp. 371-372.

internally self-determining entities appears to be at odds with our empirical understanding of how the world is mechanistically organized and exclusively composed of physical entities that are determined via external determinations of objects within a casual nexus of object interaction.⁴³ Thus, according to Kant, if we necessarily must accept the explanatory premise of natural purposes in organisms, we also seem forced to accept the fact that there are non-physical forces (akin to Aristotelean theories of natural teleology) in the world that are not reducible to physical explanation. In such terms, our necessary explanatory presumption of organisms possessing the irreducible property of *natural purpose* (being self-causing entities) appears to contradict the mechanistic descriptions of the physical sciences we presume and utilize in measuring phenomena in nature. It is this ontological tension that leads Kant to offer what he refers to as an “antinomy of judgment” between our mechanistic explanations of nature and our recognition that some objects (organisms) in nature resist strictly materialist explanation and must appeal to teleology in order to meaningfully explain the existence and manifestation of

⁴³ A allegorical example to help how we might further understand this ambiguity in explanation can be observed in Plato’s preliminary analysis of the “City of Pigs” in the *Republic*, wherein Plato observes how an economy appears to sustain itself through the mutually actualizing and complementary occupations divided amongst laborers. However, as Plato notes, it should not be said that the unity of the entire economy as a whole is the goal, end, or aim of any of the particular laborers in their various occupations operating as individual organs within the sustenance of the body. Rather, it is an indifferent yet self-actualizing nature operating within the “City of Pigs” sustaining economy, from which Plato observes the occupational interdependence of internal causation without any external force or rule compelling such interactions. In the same way, so too might the notion of natural purposes be understood as implicitly operating within the organization of organisms in the natural world adherent to the laws of external and efficient causality.

those organisms.⁴⁴ It is to resolving such tensions that Kant sets as task, yet just as we observed in the explanatory inconsistencies in Searle's reconciliatory account of consciousness, Kant's solution of transcendental idealism inevitably faces questions of whether such ontological paradoxes are truly solved or just obfuscated further.

3.c. FACING PARADOX: *Foreshadowing a way beyond mere contradiction.*

Much more can be said about the unique nature of antinomies in our explanations of ontological principles, but for present purposes, however, what the above exegesis has hopefully made explicit is the paradoxical nature of antinomies as well as their apparent emergence as dilemmas in our explications of ontology and metaphysics. Relating such insights back to our concerns of ontological unity in psychology, unpacking the explanatory impasse of consciousness as antinomic will be insightful to how it is we potentially go about understanding the conditions of psychology's methodology not only from a diagnostic and research perspective, but most critically within clinical therapy. Thus, it is important to once again remind ourselves that the stakes of such ontological conclusions for psychology concern the broader orientation of

⁴⁴ The inevitability of contradiction in explanation can be identified as persistent throughout the entirety of Kant's critical philosophy. *What can I know?* According to Kant, we know with objective certainty what are the certain conditions for knowledge about reality (i.e. Space and Time, free agency, etc.), but yet by the same token we must conclude that, despite our objective conclusions about the conditions and structure of knowledge, we can know nothing objective about the world independent of the subjective human mind. *What should I ought to do?* According to Kant, we ought to do what rationality commands of us according to what is unconditionally true about our epistemic engagements with the world (referring back to *What can I know?*), which dictate certain moral relations to others. However, such moral guidance via Kantian rationality assumes that we have free will guiding our decisions, which is a presumption we lack *good-reason* to objectively believe in. *What should I hope for?* For Kant we can rationally hope for a world where our happiness lines up with our behaving virtuously, yet although rationality demands this conjecture about our assessment of what *happiness* is, there is no evidence or good reason that we live in world where this is true (i.e. I can potentially behave virtuously and be rather unhappy) or that we can freely actualize such circumstances. *Who are we?* We are rational creatures who must think of themselves as possessing freedom and self-causation, yet we also acknowledge that we are natural (physical) beings, and our rational condition of freedom/self-causation appears to go against everything we empirically know about how the natural world and how our physical compositions operate mechanistically.

the field towards a unified understanding of psychology's subject matter: i.e. *what are* the structural features of psychological phenomena and *what is it* to be psychological beings. With this task in mind, it is the goal of these final sections to contend that the skeptical anxieties one may purport against conceiving psychology's ontology as antinomic can be mollified beyond mere hand waving. In particular, this effort towards assuaging such anxieties will be pursued through the utilization of the dialectical understandings of the post-Kantian philosopher Georg Hegel in his assessment of our phenomenological conditions as paradoxical beings within the natural world.⁴⁵ Thus, it will be argued that in applying Kant's insights into the nature of antinomies, and subsequently Hegel's method of determining the phenomenological consequences such paradoxes demand in our understanding of ourselves in the natural world, psychology can achieve an explanatory insight towards meaningfully grounding our ontological understandings of consciousness and psychological phenomena.

4.a. AN ANTINOMIC ONTOLOGY: *Further understanding psychology within the logic of antinomies.*

As a brief reminder before pushing forward, an antimony in explanation is understood as a conclusive paradox that is rationally arrived at when we try to grasp unconditional and ontological truths about the world. In reviewing the relevant literature in psychology and philosophy regarding the explicit ontology of our own *mindedness*, such a condition can

⁴⁵ In other words, rather than taking such paradoxical conclusions concerning the explication of psychology's ontology as merely presenting an insoluble philosophical puzzle, and therefore positing only an irrelevant absurdism, transcendentalism, or idealism, I will contend that dialectical explications akin to Hegel's method reveal a phenomenological understanding that can offer profoundly meaningful insights into the legitimacy and pragmatics of psychological practice and inquiry beyond the limited theories of mere social programming or neuro-physiological computationalism, and the metaphysical mysticisms of particular new age psychotherapies.

hopefully be observed within the seemingly inescapable conceptual dilemma that persists in our accounting for consciousness's emergence as an entity that is physically manifested within the world, yet holistically defies strictly materialist explanations. To further clarify this insight, I think it is helpful to frame the apparent explanatory impasse in accounting for the emergence of consciousness to the final question of Kant's speculative method: i.e. the question of *Who are we?* Indeed, I do not think it is a stretch to contend that the question of consciousness (the feature of subjectivity that formulates our capacities for experience, knowledge, and understanding) is a question that goes to level of asking what it is that composes our very own *Being* in the most fundamental of ontological senses. In such terms, psychology now faces the explanatory horizon of unpacking what it is to be a psychological being who is naturally incorporated in the world yet who's defining feature of subjectivity defies explanation via the natural features of that world.

With such trajectories in mind, it must now be unpacked in what way explaining psychology's ontology as antinomic offers an explanation that itself is not susceptible to the explanatory implacability of naturalism vs. non-naturalism debate? To be sure, Kant saw the conceptual dilemmas within ontological speculation to be an ever recurring problem for philosophy, ultimately resulting in the failure of metaphysics as an investigative enterprise of explaining the world as it truly is. As Kant remarks:

(We enter) a dialectical battlefield in which the side permitted to open the attack is invariably victorious, and the side constrained to act on the defensive is always defeated.⁴⁶

It may perhaps be moving and instructive to watch such a drama for a while; but the curtain must eventually descend. For in the long run, it becomes a farce. And even if the actors do not tire of it the spectator does, for any single act will be enough for him if he

⁴⁶ (Kant, 1998). p. 394.

can reasonably conclude from it that the never-ending play will go on in the same way forever.⁴⁷

However, although Kant saw the problems of speculative philosophy to be persistent paradoxes, he did not think that this implied that such problems are meaningless, reducing us into relativist skepticisms. Rather, Kant perceived that the very production of these antinomies revealed a deeper meaning relevant to our rational and ontological understandings of the world:

The antinomy of reason may, however, be really profitable to our speculative interests, not in the way of contributing any dogmatical addition, but as presenting to us another material support in our critical investigations... It enables us to see that the proofs of antinomy are not mere sophistries—are not fallacious, but grounded on the nature of reason, and valid—under the supposition that phenomena are things in themselves... This transcendental dialectic does not favour skepticism, although it presents us with a triumphant demonstration of the advantages of the skeptical method... And although the result of these conflicts of reason is not what we expected—although we have obtained no positive dogmatical addition to metaphysical science—we have still reaped a great advantage in the correction of our judgements on these subjects of thought.⁴⁸

In other words, although the conceptual dilemmas of our rational metaphysics in explicating the ontological principles about our conscious selves do indeed result in paradox, they are not thus meaningless, but rather are essential to *who we are* in confronting the paradoxes of our existence as rational beings (for further discussion on this point in Kant's philosophy see Beck, 1967).⁴⁹

Kant called the conceptual process by which such philosophical dilemmas are produced “dialectic,” compelling Kant himself to pursue an accounting of the world that resolved these explanatory tensions given what he saw as their unavoidability.

⁴⁷ (Kant, 1991) p.88.

⁴⁸ (Kant, 1781) pp. 356-357.

⁴⁹ Similar insights are offered by Husserl, wherein he states in his *The Crisis of European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology* (1970), pp.151-152: “We perform the epoche (phenomenological reflection) as a transformation of the attitude which precedes it not accidentally but essentially (ontologically), namely, the attitude of natural human existence which in its total historicity, in life and science, was never before interrupted. But it is necessary now, to make really transparent the fact that we are not left with meaningless... What must be shown in particular and above all is that through the epoche a new way of experiencing, of thinking, of theorizing, is opened to the philosopher; here situated *above* his own natural being and *above* the natural world, he loses nothing of their being and their objective truths...”

To achieve this accounting, Kant argued that we must reconceptualize our notions concerning the origins of knowledge wherein our theories of knowledge are not exclusively categorized as either being derived from the *form* (the rational principles of understanding that underlie experience; i.e. ontological subjectivity) or the *content* (what the objects of our experience are in themselves reported to us empirically), and that the nature of antinomies demanded a different sort of accounting that transcended such categories of explanation.⁵⁰

In light of this, Kant thus saw such antinomies as pointing towards a new type of transcendental method of explanation that would provide a means of circumventing both the skepticism Kant thought followed from empiricism,⁵¹ and a dogmatic metaphysics which he believed unwarrantedly presumed a meaningful and necessary connection between the forms of rational thought and their objective content out in the world.⁵² Kant's solution to this problem was his transcendental idealism, wherein the validity for subjective experience did not rest on some metaphysical assumption about the objective nature of the world, but rather rested upon objective features of natural minds apprehending that world within an intersubjective community of consciousnesses that similarly experienced and validated the world within necessarily presumed

⁵⁰ Failure to recognize the antinomic relation between the a priori logic of our own subjectivity, and the empirical logic of our material constituency within the world, according to Kant, will tragically result in a perpetual *misinterpretation* (or an *amphiboly* as Kant puts it in his discussion of Leibniz in the *Critique of Pure Reason*) between the various dichotomies of explanation that emerge as antinomies in understanding. As one might observe, this is the very ambiguity we observed in the philosophy of mind debate concerning our accounting of consciousness as either merely a neurobiological phenomena or as a transcendental ontological subjectivity, a condition where both sides continually talk past one another within an endless circle of explanatory shortcomings. For further interpretation of this dilemma in Kant's philosophy see Sally Sedgwick's *Hegel on Kant's Antinomies and Distinction between General and Transcendental Logic* (1991).

⁵¹ A situation we observed in earlier sections concerning the limits of relativism and empiricism.

⁵² A similar concern to what we observed in the naturalist's critique of dualism's inability to explain how our abstract mental representations of reality justifiably mapped onto the physical makeup of the world.

a priori truths (Kant's *Kingdom of Laws*) about the makeup of the world.⁵³ Without getting too far into Kant's transcendental turn, however, the key insight I want to take away from Kant's analysis lies within his recognizing the explanatory demands antinomies place upon our ontological conceptions of knowledge and understanding. From this, we should be able to see how psychology itself is similarly faced with a new horizon in understanding its own ontology as paradoxical beyond the categories of mental forms and physical contents. Indeed, within such an antinomic understanding, consciousness's relation to the world ceases to be merely something which the *external* world *appears to* consciousness, but rather consciousness as a phenomenon exists *within* the world and is forced to explain its own psychological nature dialectically.⁵⁴

4.b. AN ANTINOMIC ONTOLOGY: *Looking ahead to new explanatory horizons*

⁵³ This strategy of establishing validity criteria through a pre-given intersubjective understanding of how we experience the world is akin to the later language philosophers of Wittgenstein, Sellars, and Davidson, who all accorded epistemological significance to the inseparability of knowledge of other consciousnesses, self-knowledge, and knowledge of objects. Just as in how the private language argument claims that communication is contingent upon interlocutors and references that are deemed and recognized as communal objective references for meaningful experience to occur, Kant argues that the objectivity of experience similarly posits that in order for subjective experience to occur such necessary intuitions and judgments must be recognized as pre-given (a priori). However, as is a similarly noted critique of the language philosophers, such Kantian contentions seem to limit objectivity to the subjective realm of communal consciousnesses (or language users) and thus appears sacrifice the sought after objectivity about the world independent of the rules of the language game. In such terms, what we get appears more as a type of relativist holism than an objective criteria measure of the world. The tricky part for Kant was how he could argue for shifting our focus away from direct questions about objectivity to investigating the structures of *knowing*, yet still maintain that he hadn't collapsed our notions of realism into the subjective mold of being mere relativistic representations (as in the idealism of Berkeley).

⁵⁴ Such a condition draws similarities with Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* and Martin Heidegger's concept of *Dasein-dwelling* concerning how it is that consciousness occupies the world as a pre-given to all explanations about the world. However, it should be said that both Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty do not explicitly unpack the underlying logic of consciousness's *journey* of revealing this phenomenological condition of being within the world as a pre-given for explanation, but rather both philosophers only claim that this pre-given aspect of *Being-within* is something that should be deemed relevant for experience and explanation. Neither Heidegger or Merleau-Ponty effectively explain why such conditions are pre-given and how it is that logic arrives at, and ultimately demands, our recognition that such pre-givens are relevant and revealed as such. Herein applies Sellars critique concerning the myth-of-the-given, which is a critique Hegel moves beyond (Winfield, 2009).

Given my interpretation of psychology's ontology as antinomic, as well as what we can observe as explanatorily demanded from such antinomies, psychology as a field would be well served in unpacking the methodological consequences of its paradoxical underpinnings if its interest in a unified ontology is to be pursued. It is towards this end that I contend that such endeavors should look to the post-Kantian philosopher Georg Hegel who pursued philosophical insights into engaging with, and living out, these paradoxical conditions in our understandings of ourselves within the world. In particular, Hegel saw the impossibility of categorically resolving such paradoxes not as a threat to science or rationality itself, but that such paradoxes were the underlying conditions that gave meaning and explanatory power to our capacities as rational (psychological) beings.

Although Hegel takes his cue from Kant in accounting for the persistence of such antinomies, Hegel's strategy of addressing the antinomic conditions of our own rationality is radically different from Kant's own. Where Kant saw the paradoxes of rationality as problematic to our capacities of making the world intelligible (thus resulting in Kant's offering of his transcendental idealism and his noumenal/phenomenal distinction), Hegel did not think that such paradoxes were things to be overcome or solved, but were something to be embraced and engaged with as the structural features of reality that gave force and reason to our notions of understanding. Distinctively, Hegel was concerned with how we *lived* out such paradoxes and how in turn we reflectively understood our phenomenological place as psychological entities within the world. As Terry Pinkard (2011) notes in contrasting Kant and Hegel's conclusions in light of such antinomies:

Overall, Kant held that the world and ourselves must ultimately be a mystery, even if by virtue of the Kantian critical philosophy, we can understand why it must be a mystery and why in principle the mysteries are not resolvable. At the heart of the mystery is the

metaphysical commitment that we are free, rational (subjective) beings in a world that seems to defy the very possibility of there being anything like free rational beings (or beings with *consciousness*). Hegel, on the other hand, argued that there is no reason in principle that we should believe that the world must remain a metaphysical mystery to us. (It may remain mysterious in countless other ways, but its alleged metaphysical mystery should be moved beyond.) The contradictions we encounter when we think metaphysically --that is, unconditionally-- about the world at first seem to reveal something about us, not the world, but in thinking about “us,” we come to understand that these contradictions also tell us something about our world and in particular about nature, agency, and history.⁵⁵

In other words, for Hegel we are not searching for some ultimate metaphysical knockout punch (like the materialists vs. dualists) that will conclude all metaphysical projects in some categorical or foundational truth, but rather that such endeavors are always in the process of being accomplished given our nature as *Beings* who seek to ontologically understand themselves within the natural world.⁵⁶ The paradoxes of our antinomic ontologies are thus not epistemological errors that terminate in the explanatory diametric of objective/subjective distinctions, but that the antinomic tensions of contradiction reveal a further understanding of ourselves as psychological beings in unity with the natural laws and *wholeness* (or Absolute, as Hegel calls) of the world.⁵⁷

⁵⁵ (Pinkard, 2011) p.187.

⁵⁶ Hegel's concept of despair directly relates to the circumstance of consciousness's perpetual pursuit in attempting to categorically understand itself as a unified whole within the world. Indeed, this is the very thing that is confronted in Hegel's notion of the unhappy consciousness in his *Phenomenology of Spirit* §455-457, wherein the unhappy consciousness stagnates in despair of being persistently frustrated in its pursuit of understanding itself as a unified whole within the world. Such despair, however is assuaged and reconciled within consciousness's intersubjective engagement as a self-consciousness with other self-consciousnesses. However, this longing for unity is never fully reposed and the pursuit of the unhappy consciousness for unity persists and permeates all stages of consciousness in Hegel's philosophy.

⁵⁷ In Hegel's *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* (1991), pp. 35-37, 55, Hegel discusses the logic of this notion of our psychological subjectivity *willing* its own freedom *from* and *within* the natural world, wherein the agency of our subjectivity should not so much be understood in terms of arbitrary mystic origins, but is rather revealed to be better understood in antinomic terms of being more of a law-like freedom (or as a “second-nature” as Hegel terms it). Through this, Hegel might be seen as traversing the dualist/materialist divide in understanding subjectivity as apart of the world that doesn't reduce psychology to either a mysticism or neurobiological determinism.

So what would a Hegelian accounting for the paradoxes we encountered in attempting to explain consciousness look like? Firstly, Hegel argued that consciousness is metaphysically forced to recognize itself as paradoxically embodied in the natural world as a subjectivity that gives rise to itself through its reflection upon itself as an embodied subject.⁵⁸ Put other wise, Hegel conceived of consciousness not as a subjectivity that relates to the external world in being a respectively self-isolated entity, but that consciousness is a subjectivity which emerges out of nature due to the objective features of how the natural world organizes itself.⁵⁹ However, given that consciousness must understand its own embodied nature from the position of its own ontological subjectivity consciousness must persistently undergo a dialectical engagement with

⁵⁸ Richard C. Winfield's *Hegel and Mind: Rethinking Philosophical Psychology* (2009), pp.34-35, unpacks Hegel's notion of consciousness's emergence as an embodied subject out in the world, which Winfield sees as allowing Hegel to escape the problematics of mind/body dualisms: "Hence (for Hegel), the physical realization of the mind cannot be posited by mind, for mind cannot posit anything without already being embodied. For this reason, the mind's relation to the body never consists of being a cause of bodily events. That would reinstate a mind/body duality, where mind acts upon not its embodied self, but a body different from itself. Mind must instead be thought of as being self-cause, *developing* as something encompassing the body and the bodily processes of the mind-endowed individual. Only as self-cause of an embodied unity, that is, as self-determined, can mind be the corporeal cause of something else, namely effects generated by the influence of its corporeal actions upon other things, whether inorganic objects, plants, or animals, with varying degrees of mental endowment."

⁵⁹ We can think of this notion in contrast to Aristotle's concept that *psyche* (consciousness) is a principle of life out in the natural world, which therefore also afforded things like plants consciousness under Aristotle's conception of nature. In contrast, for Hegel, consciousness is something that potentially emerges *out of* nature, wherein consciousness proceeds to understand itself in this emergence not as something that was foundationally apart of the make up of the natural world, but merely possessed a propensity to emerge. This anthropological process of understanding consciousness is the main goal Hegel set for himself to explicate in his propaedeutic text *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, wherein the origins of consciousness's understanding is traced and unmasked beyond the pursuit of metaphysical foundations for consciousness. This why Hegel is prone to say confusing things like "consciousness emerges for consciousness within and from the world."

itself understanding the world *as it is for consciousness as apart of the world*.⁶⁰ This dialectical condition of consciousness, for Hegel, allows for us as subjects to achieve a profound phenomenological insight into the paradoxical nature of our ontological place as psychological beings within reality which goes beyond pursuing foundationalism of dualism/materialism concerning our epistemic and metaphysical statuses.⁶¹

Given Hegel's phenomenological and dialectical approach in understanding the antinomy of consciousness, it is my contention that within engaging the questions of psychology's ontology through a Hegelian lens we may unveil and tame the metaphysical mysteriousness of our own ontology as psychological beings which have eluded popular discussions in psychology and philosophy of mind.⁶² As Hans Gadamer interpreted of Hegel's dialectical insights, there is a

⁶⁰ As Terry Pinkard (2011) p. 18, notes in his account of Hegel's conception of consciousness interpreting itself within the paradox of being both substance and agent within the natural world: "We are self-conscious, self-interpreting animals, natural creatures whose 'non-naturalness' is not a metaphysical difference (As that, say between spiritual and physical 'stuff') or the exercise of a special form of causality. Rather, our status as *geistig*, as 'minded' creatures is a status we 'give' to ourselves in the sense that it is a practical achievement. Indeed, continuity with the natural world (specifically, with animals) is at the center of Hegel's Aristotelian conception of the mindful agency more than it could possibly be for either Augustine or Kant (or any of their voluntarist comrades)... Hegel holds that human agents, by virtue of thinking of themselves as animals, thereby become special animals, namely, self-interpreting ones, and, as we have noted, that makes all the difference."

⁶¹ Hegel himself recognizes this point in his *Philosophy of Nature* (§ 246), stating that our logical reflections upon the antinomic nature of our own ontology forces us to make the distinction between the starting point of undertaking the endeavors of science, which rest firmly within empirical determinants about the world, and the science itself, which rests upon the our philosophical and *a priori* insights into the architecture and structural assumptions of science. In such terms, it would be better to understand Hegel's middle ground approach between speculative and empirical philosophy as being *meta-empirical*.

⁶² The entirety of Hegel's writings in their vast multitude can be seen as reiterating this common theme of *taming* paradox within its various manifestations in knowledge. For example, Hegel's text the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, offers an explication of the logic underlying our own consciousness as objectively paradoxical, wherein the rationality of our own ontology as psychological beings defies all foundational interpretation of knowledge (internalism vs. externalism) in how our conception of consciousnesses persistently *negates* itself through our being an entity that is both substantive and agentive. Such a condition makes us social "amphibious animals" within the ontological makeup of the world. See Terry Pinkard *Hegel's Phenomenology: The Sociality of Reason* (1996), for a fuller explication of the Hegelian concept of living out these antinomic conditions within social constructions of an intersubjective normative space.

preserving power within the logic of paradox, wherein he states in his *Five Hermeneutical*

Studies concerning Hegel's dialectical strategy:

“For Hegel, the point of the dialectic is that precisely by pushing a position to the point of self-contradiction it makes possible the transition to a higher truth which unites the sides of that contradiction: the power of spirit lies in synthesis as the mediation of all contradictions.”⁶³

Indeed we can observe such an example in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* in how he describes consciousness's process of understanding itself through its engagement with objects out in the natural world, wherein the unconditional contradiction of subject/object opposition is revealed as underlying consciousness's very conception of itself (its identity) as a phenomenological object of reflection:

I am I, my object and my essential reality is ego... But since it rests on this appeal, it sanctions the truth of the other certainty, viz. there is for me another; another than “I” is to me object and true reality... Only when reason comes forwards as a reflexion from this opposite certainty (antinomy) does its assertion regarding itself appear in the form not merely of a certainty and an assurance but of a truth... the category, which heretofore had the significance of being the inmost essence of existence (object) -- of existence indifferent to whether it is existence (object) at all, or existence over against consciousness -- is now the essential nature or simply unity of existence merely in the sense of a reality that thinks.⁶⁴

In such terms, a Hegelian dialectical accounting of such paradoxes sees our conscious condition as being *Beings* who ask, who question, and who are apart of the natural world, but also separate themselves from the reductionist logic of this world via our own mindedness in reflecting on the

⁶³ (Gadamer, 1976) p. 105.

⁶⁴ (Hegel, 2009), pp. 108-109.

world, which ultimately regrounds consciousness within the world.⁶⁵ What it is to be a psychological being for Hegel is to be a being that is tied up in the dialectical process of revealing the antinomies of our shared, intersubjective, conscious relations to the natural world.⁶⁶ In other words what it is to possess a *psychology within the world* is not something that can be defined within the finite categories of form (dualism) or content (materialism), but it is to be a Being that is persistently in the process of *becoming* in its engagement with the persistent dialectical process of its own antinomic disclosure of itself to itself.⁶⁷

Given the observation of psychology's own antinomic condition at the level of explaining consciousness, it can hopefully be observed that a Hegelian dialectical method of engaging with our antinomic condition as psychological beings indicates a new trajectory for practicing psychology that avoids the pitfalls of traditional and contemporary discussions of psychology's

⁶⁵ From the basis of his metaphysical arguments within the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, Hegel also takes his analysis further in his *Science of Logic* and his *Philosophy of Nature* where he dissects how meaning can persist within such paradoxical conceptions of consciousness apprehending the world. Winfield (2009) p.4, describes how these three seminal works in Hegel's thought relate to one another in developing the unique logical system that Hegel argues as necessary given consciousness's antinomic understanding of itself within the world: "...Hegel predicates the systematic theory of mind upon the successive investigations of the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, the *Science of Logic*, and the *Philosophy of Nature*. Before mind can be addressed, the *Phenomenology of Spirit* must provide access to the systematic philosophy by eliminating as principle of knowing the opposition of consciousness and its appeal to the given. The *Science of Logic* must then furnish a presuppositionless self-development of categories, establishing the determinacies that any account of reality incorporates and further qualifies. Finally, the *Philosophy of Nature* must unfold the idea of physical reality, which any other realities contain."

⁶⁶ Kenneth Westphal's book *Hegel's Epistemological Realism* (1989) shows how Hegel's dialectical conception of consciousness does not sacrifice Hegel's notion of realism into an abstract idealism or relativistic community of knowers, but rather still preserves such realist notions of the world existing independently of consciousness(es).

⁶⁷ Winfield (2009), p.132, offers some insight into how it is this revelation in Hegel's philosophy concerning how consciousness comes to comprehend itself and the world beyond the dichotomous distinctions, allowing Hegel to escape the problematics of Kant's transcendental philosophy as well as shortcomings of even modern philosophers of language like Davidson who try to give a privileged foundation to language as an a priori schema: "Consequently, when Hegel offers his *Phenomenology of Spirit* as an introduction to philosophy proper, he is not engaging in some preliminary investigation of the conditions of meaning or knowledge, from which objectivity can be constituted. Rather, Hegel there observes how the foundational knowing of consciousness fails to justify its own knowledge claims, making manifest how the representational framework of cognition cannot legitimate its guiding claim that knowing must always have a presupposition, some given that counts as its standard."

ontology.⁶⁸ Although Hegel's language can be cryptic at best, within his *Lectures on Aesthetics* we can glean this overarching insight of Hegel's on our *lived experiences* of being both *substance* and *agent*:

(The opposition for consciousness) emerges in a thorough-going cleavage and opposition between what is *absolute* and what is external reality and existence. Taken quite abstractly, it is the opposition of universal and particular, when each is fixed over against the other on its own account in the same way... in the spirit it appears as the contrast between the sensuous (physical) and the spiritual (mental) in man, as the battle of spirit against flesh, as the harsh opposition between inner freedom and the necessity of external nature... between theory or subjective thinking, and objective existence and experience. These are oppositions which have not been invented at all by the subtlety of reflection or the pedantry of philosophy; in numerous forms they have always preoccupied and troubled the human consciousness... the modern intellect produces this opposition in man which makes him an amphibious animal, because he now has to live in two worlds which contradict one another.⁶⁹

In such terms, psychology might thus claim an ontologically informed understanding of its own sciences, rather than being in a state of ontological disunity depending on different adherences to false theoretical dichotomies of either being strictly observational (empiricism) against purely speculative (metaphysical), or in understanding psychological phenomena in strictly mental or physical terms. As Hegel tellingly phrases in his *Philosophy of Mind* (§406) when offering a brief analysis of his dialectical framework informing psychological discussion on psychological dysfunction: “mental illness is not merely to be compared with physical illness, but is more or

⁶⁸ There have been some theorists that have linked the Hegelian metaphysics and dialectic as anticipating and elucidating some concepts in psychoanalysis (Whitebook, 2008; Green, 1999; Orange et. al, 1997; Hyppolite, 1971; Ricoeur, 1970), but as Macdonald (2011) notes, such connections are usually limited to locating correlational insights, or are deeply focused on the moments of intersubjective recognition and power-plays occurring in Hegel's master-slave dialectic (which such theorists typically utilize allegorically to elucidate certain psychoanalytic methodologies). This is not to say that I am not in kindred spirit with such theorists, however, Hegel's metaphysical grounding of his dialectical method within how consciousness's antinomic ontology is revealed and shown to underlie our conceptual and psychological architecture, as I have attempted to argue, offers a much more fertile soil in understanding and legitimizing particular therapeutic insights that are not just limited to psychoanalysis. An exception to psychoanalytic theorists who narrowly draw upon Hegel's philosophy to map out the structures and methods of psychoanalytic practice would Jon Mills's (2002) *The Unconscious Abyss: Hegel's Anticipation of Psychoanalysis*, wherein he lucidly and studiously traces Hegel's notion of the unconscious throughout Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* and *Philosophy of Mind*.

⁶⁹ (Hegel, 1998) pp. 53-54

less bound up with it,” continuing to say (§408): “the curative method is partly physical and partly psychological. In some cases the former alone is sufficient; but in most cases it is necessary to supplement this by psychological treatment which, in its turn, can sometimes effect a cure by itself. There is no known remedy universally applicable for the physical side of treatment.” Through such understandings, we thus might gain insight into the persistent tension that drives our personal and social comprehension of ourselves as psychological beings, taming the antinomic dilemmas not as paradoxes of frustration (as observed in the naturalist/non-naturalist debate) but as an explanatory and revealing dialectical lens into our own psychological ontologies of understanding and experiencing.

5.a: THE HEGELIAN UPSHOT FOR PSYCHOLOGY

The main goal of this thesis was to argue that an antinomic account of psychology’s ontology should be adopted given the irresolvable ontological tensions of our contemporary explanatory efforts in accounting for consciousness via materialist or dualist paradigms. It has hopefully been shown that something akin to a Hegelian dialectical system is necessary in accounting for the unique logic such paradoxical conditions demand in our explication of psychology’s underlying ontology of what it is to be a psychological *being*. Even further, such an antinomic accounting would arguably appear to be psychology’s unique field of scientific interest: i.e. explaining the lived experience of psychological beings as antinomic within the natural world. However, looking forward, psychology cannot only be concerned with revealing psychology’s ontological features and structures of understanding, but also how it is that we ourselves (as thinking beings) phenomenologically engage with such ontic-principles in

understanding our own *Being* in terms of mental health and dysfunction. Such self-awarenesses in relating our antinomic interpretation of psychology's ontology to psychology's practice and theory are piercingly insightful in determining what the upshot of all this Hegelian musing might offer for the discipline.

It is thus my concluding contention that through this project's metascientific reflection upon psychology's ontology as antinomic, that the operant diagnostic and clinical theories of psychology might be assessed beyond the ambiguous disunity of empirical pragmatism. For example, within the field of clinical psychology, there have been a litany of theories concerning the importance of intersubjectivity between client and patient in addressing dysfunctional pathologies and disruptive life experiences (for a review and examples of such intersubjective theories in clinical and psychotherapeutic treatment see Stolorow and Atwood, 2014; Orange, 1997; Sucharov, 2013; Hersch 2003). Such theorists have argued for the essential efficacy of such intersubjective approaches, yet their claims to the legitimacy of intersubjectivity being a valid and efficacious therapeutic practice only adheres to speculation and case study observation.⁷⁰ However, it should be noted that through Hegel's dialectical understanding of the psychology's ontology as antinomic, we might discern and legitimize such intersubjective

⁷⁰ Hegel's engagement with the tension of paradox in consciousness's phenomenological engagement with its own ontology can be seen as offering an ontological grounding to the psychotherapeutic insights offered by many phenomenological psychologists who claim the resolution of such internal tensions as essential for effective therapy within a recognition of intersubjectivity concerning our experiences of the world (Hersch, 2003; Yalom, 1980; Bateson, 1962; Haley, 1963). However, almost all of these phenomenological and existential psychotherapeutic strategies similarly do not engage with the question of paradox at the ontological level, and even further they all presume a stance that the tensions one experiences in being embroiled and internally embattled with the conflicting demands of psychic contradictions are tensions that need to be resolved, overcome, or transcended (as in the Kantian method) for the implementation of effective therapy to occur. This observation does not mean that the clinical strategies such existential theorists adhere to should be rejected, but rather that their therapeutic effectiveness in engaging with the questions of ontological ambiguity and intersubjectivity would be more effectively explained via the Hegelian recognition of how we phenomenologically engage with and live out such antinomies, rather than how we solve them.

frameworks as essential to structuring our understandings of ourselves and the world.⁷¹ In particular, Hegel's *Philosophy of Mind* offers such a dialectical assessment of how we must understand the intersubjective logic of consciousness being aware of itself as a self-consciousness in its relations to others and the world:

Here there is a self-consciousness for a self-consciousness, at first immediately as one of two things for another. In that other as ego I behold myself, and yet also an immediately existing object, another ego absolutely independent of me and opposed to me. (The suppression of the singleness of self-consciousness was only a first step in the suppression, and it merely led to the characterization of it as *particular*.) This contradiction gives either self-consciousness the impulse to *show* itself as a free self, and to exist as such for the other : - the process of *recognition*.⁷²

Universal self-consciousness is (thus) the affirmative awareness of self in an other self: each self as a free individuality has his own 'absolute' independence, yet in virtue of the itself from that other. Each is thus universal self-conscious and objective; each has 'real' universality in the shape of reciprocity, so far as each knows itself recognised in the other freeman, and is aware of this in so far as it recognises the other and knows him to be free. This universal re-appearance of self-consciousness - the notion of which is aware of itself in its objectivity as a subjectivity identical with itself and for that reason universal - is the form of consciousness which lies at the root of all true mental or spiritual life... This unity of consciousness and self-consciousness implies in the first instance the individuals mutually throwing light upon each other. But the difference between those who are thus identified is mere vague diversity - or rather it is a difference which is none. Hence its truth is the fully and really existent universality and objectivity of self-consciousness - which is *Reason*.⁷³

It is within this very antinomic condition of consciousness becoming self-conscious of itself within the recognition of the *other* that intersubjectivity is revealed as an ontological structure to

⁷¹ In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 455-457, Hegel describes how consciousness confronts its own metaphysical fragmentation in being both substance and agent, resigning it to frustration (and as Hegel puts it: being an *unhappy* consciousness) in its pursuit towards a unified understanding of itself. This state of frustration eventually leads consciousness to the necessary recognition of itself as a self-consciousness intersubjectively within a community of other self-consciousnesses. For a more thorough interpretation on Hegel's notions on intersubjectivity through his concept of reciprocal recognition being the constitutive medium through which human life operates and organizes its understandings of self, objectivity, and normativity, see Redding's (1996) *Hegel's Hermeneutics*.

⁷² (Hegel, 1894) § 430.

⁷³ (*ibid.*, § 436-437)

the possibility of knowledge and self-awareness.⁷⁴ In such terms, we might see how the practicing theories of intersubjective psychological methods can potentially claim ontological legitimization in terms of the therapeutic efficacy of intersubjective recognition achieving self-understanding and clarity of one's pathological and behavioral relation to themselves, others, and the world.⁷⁵

Beyond intersubjectivity, however, there are a multitude of psychological theorists that make trenchant arguments about the nature of our lived experience within the world being fraught with contradictory and paradoxical tensions, but there is little more than silence in justifying *WHY* such psychological relations, states, and pathologies are ones we *experience and* occupy. Again, utilizing the insights and method of Hegel's dialectics we might permit ourselves an ontological strategy of deciphering a unified logic within the fragmented sub-disciplines of psychology. For example, such ontological legitimizations could be seen as explaining the speculative theories of self psychologists in their understandings on the *drama of life* fluctuating between the tenuous poles of the subjective-autonomous and the objective-prohibitive, which

⁷⁴ Even further, such insights concerning the logic of intersubjectivity would appear to lend further explanation into psychology's therapeutic emphasis of empathic dialogue interactions and ascriptions. Indeed, Hegel's dialectical analysis on the antinomic logic of intersubjectivity offers an ontological lens to assess the various theories of empathy that either claim that such empathic relations are merely a mental state replication shared between at least two individuals (Stueber, 2006; Goldman, 2011; Coplan, 2011) or whether empathy is a process of phenomenologically adopting another's mental state as one's own and the reascribing it back to the other (Stein, 1989; Thompson, 2007; Zahavi, 2007).

⁷⁵ For further explanation on the ontic-structure of intersubjectivity and Hegel's unique insights on the concept, see Winfield (2006) *Self-consciousness and Intersubjectivity*.

shape our sense of personal identity (Kohut, 1977; Stechler and Kaplan, 1980; Gergen, 1991).⁷⁶

Even further, as in the theories of existential-phenomenological psychotherapy, Sartrean-existential psychology, Husserlian-phenomenological psychology, etc., we might dialectically navigate the trivial distinctions such fields set upon themselves simply based on the proprietary jargon and rhetoric of their adherents.⁷⁷ Similar conclusions might be made and legitimated for the theories of Medard Boss's (1979) concept of Daseinsanalysis, Karl Jaspers' (1913) approaches to psychopathology, or Irvin Yalom's (1980) existential psychotherapy, wherein what each theory takes as philosophically intuitive concerning our psychic and contradictory tensions in relating to the world, might be epistemically legitimated in a synergistic unified grounding of understanding psychology 's ontology as antinomic.

For a more in-depth example, we might look to Irvin Yalom's paradigm shifting *Existential Psychotherapy* (1980), which establishes a comprehensive clinical approach based upon his existential phenomenological perspective. In particular, we can observe how Hegel's dialectical unpacking of psychology's antinomic condition, underlies and informs Yalom's own stated tenants of existential psychology. As Yalom's theory states:

⁷⁶ Within such theories of self-psychology, psychic or behavioral dysfunction is seen as result of an incompatibility between how one conceptualizes their internal subjective strivings against the limitations and prohibitions enforced against by the objective world. Such a tension might thus be aptly understood as grounded and rooted within the basic ontological tension dialectical consciousness encounters in metaphysically understanding itself as a free ontological subjectivity which is embodied in a physical world beholden to mechanistic laws of interaction. For example we can see such Hegelian dialectical insights as cashing out the inner logic of Heinz Kohut's (1977) *The Restoration of the Self*, wherein Kohut postulates a theory of psychodynamic and developmental progressions in how we confront the emergence of our self-identities within the tensions of our conceptions of infinity and finitude. Lacking an ontological basis for such insights, however, Kohut might find legitimacy beyond the seemingly intuited reasonableness and case study observations by appealing to Hegel's dialectical unpacking of consciousness's antinomic nature. In particular it is to Hegel's notion of the unhappy consciousness struggling with its finite and infinite conceptions of itself in relation to the world, wherein the unhappy consciousness confronts its condition of being in a state of *perpetual becoming*, that Kohut's theories might find philosophical grounding.

⁷⁷ For further discussion on the multitude of variant existential therapies superficially distinguishing themselves from one another, see Rollo May (1958) *The Origins and Significance of the Existential Movement in Psychology*.

(Existential Psychotherapy) is a model that posits that there are forces in conflict within the individual, and that though, emotion, and behavior are the resultant of these conflicting forces. Furthermore *these forces exist at varying levels of awareness*; some, indeed, are entirely unconscious.⁷⁸

The existential position emphasizes... *a conflict that flows from the individual's confrontation with the givens of existence*. And I mean by "givens" of existence certain ultimate concerns, certain intrinsic properties that are a part, and an inescapable part, of the human being's existence in the world.⁷⁹

In clinically confronting what Yalom deems as the conflicts that flow from an internal confrontation with the givens of our existence, we can see how something akin to the Hegelian dialectical logic of addressing our antinomic condition as psychological beings is explanatory of the anxieties and frustrations Yalom gives credence to. In particular, Hegel's notion of *the unhappy consciousness* in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, where consciousness is in a state of *despair* that seeks *reconciliation* upon facing the conflicting notions of understanding itself within the world, can be seen as metaphysically explanatory to Yalom's concepts of conflict and tension that underlie the psychic health of individuals.⁸⁰ Indeed, Hegel's own summary of consciousness in his *Philosophy of Mind* argues that based upon how subjectivity organizes and understands itself, there will always be certain essential tensions of contradiction and opposition that manifest vividly in mental dysfunction but are still preserved and persistent in a "healthy" rational mind:

... (T)he main point in derangement is the contradiction which a feeling with a fixed corporeal embodiment sets up against the whole mass of adjustments forming the concrete consciousness. The mind which is in a condition of mere *being*, and where such being is not rendered fluid in its consciousness, is diseased... The right psychical treatment therefore keeps in view the truth that insanity is not an abstract *loss* of reason

⁷⁸ (Yalom, 1980) p.6.

⁷⁹ (ibid., p.8.)

⁸⁰ For further analysis of Hegel's notion of despair and the logic of the unhappy consciousness as it goes through the stages of its own recognition of itself see John Russon, *The Self and Its Body in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (1997), pp. 15-29.

(neither in the point of intelligence nor of will and its responsibility), but only derangement...⁸¹

Psychiatric theorists (Sadler et al., 1994; Mender, 1994), who have been recently noting the limits and paradoxes of strictly naturalist and cognitivist notions of the mind that pervade diagnosis, might similarly draw justificatory insights from Hegel's dialectical approach to psychology. For example, in the psychosomatic conditions of schizophrenia, anxiety, and despair, such disorders have been observed as derivative from frustrations or detachments over existential relations to objects, persons, and their meanings within reality. In particular, it has been argued that what underlies these psychopathologies is a person's understanding of their own subjective immersion within the world being severely disrupted.⁸² In particular, Binswanger's (1963) and Prentky's (1980) theories on how we should understand the human psyche as healthy or dysfunctional fluctuating between the conceptual poles of *constriction* and *expansion*,⁸³ might also be efficaciously explained in appealing to Hegel's dialectical insights on how it is that we cope with our *amphibious and paradoxical natures* as both substance and agent. Indeed, within what limited writings Hegel has on his thoughts concerning mental disorders and *madness* in his *Philosophy of Mind* (§ 382, § 406, §408), we can observe Hegel's anticipations of these sentiments on psychic tension in his notion of understanding insanity and rationality not as

⁸¹ (Hegel, 1894) § 408.

⁸² See Martin Wyllie *Lived Time and Psychopathology* (2005) for a fuller review of these psychopathologies through the lens of existential and phenomenological understandings of the *lived experience* of such disorders.

⁸³ Wherein these poles represent our the variant psychical stances that interact and create tension in how we orient ourselves towards space and time out in the world. See Henri F. Ellenberger *A Clinical Introduction to Psychiatric Phenomenology and Existential Analysis* (1958) for further discussion of the existential psychologist's understanding of space and time as universal dimensions of human experience.

opposites but that the healthy mind is upon the same phenomenological spectrum in its engagements with anxiety, alienation, contradictions, and “infinite pain” as the insane individual.

Taking this insight even further, in exploring how Hegelian dialectics might ontologically unpack a specific psychosomatic disorder, we may look to the *alienating* dimensions modern clinical theorists ascribe to the phenomenological experience of depression. In particular, such theorists have claimed that the etiological psychic tension that underlies depression lies in a depressive’s inability to phenomenologically reconcile what they perceive as internal contradictions demanding opposing commitments in their relations to the world (Shenk, 2001; Ratcliffe, 2014). Such oppositions have been described as placing the individual in tragic circumstance of helplessness which nullifies all feasible future potentialities that the individual might hold for themselves (Serban, 1975). These experiential depictions of alienation in depression by existential theorists have usually lacked an ontological investigation into the pathology, but within Hegel’s own writings we might find such a foothold in explaining the structural psychic tensions depressives report experiencing. Indeed, one of the longest sections of Hegel’s *Phenomenology of Spirit* is even titled “Spirit in It’s Alienation” wherein Hegel discusses how we must ontologically confront a sense of alienation in divulging our antinomic natures as consciousness. Within this divulgence consciousness finds itself in a metaphysical state of contradiction via understanding itself as both and irreducible ontological-subjectivity and as embodied substance within the natural world. It is within this confliction that Hegel describes how consciousness is overcome with a sense of purposelessness and isolation in its relations to

the world.⁸⁴ However, Hegel also contends that it is only in confronting the tensions of this alienation that a genuine reconciliation and overcoming of such anxieties can be achieved (sounding very much like a therapeutic method of gradual exposure therapy utilized in treating PTSD):

Subjective spirit's (consciousness's)... finitude begins to come out with this distinction (between itself as agent apprehending the world and as substance within that world), and, at this same time, the contradiction and the appearance of alienation commences... and the deeper one goes to the truth to which spirit in itself relates itself (paradoxically)...the more alienated it is in its own eyes within this present moment. However, it is only from out of this alienation that it attains its genuine reconciliation.⁸⁵

In such terms we might be able to legitimate particular psychological insights into the phenomenological aspects of depression as a lived experience that manifests itself temporally and can be traced to a disruption in understanding our ontological relations to the world within false dichotomies that compel a sense of helplessness through contradiction.⁸⁶

Even more telling from these observations, however, is how we might draw an allegorical comparison within the attitudes of the mental health industry in relation to the different approaches Kant and Hegel offer in addressing the tensions of antinomies. For instance, we can reference the sentiment that a person's aberrant behavior or mental dysfunction is something that is abnormal or erroneous and therefore must be replaced by some more functional pathology or neuropsychiatry that can be prescribed to the patient (whether that be through intrusive therapy

⁸⁴ Such descriptions bear stark resemblance to Grotstein's (1990) theories concerning a patient's pathology in confronting the perceived infinitude of psychosis underlying a patient's sense of helplessness or desperate construction of delusional fantasies.

⁸⁵ (Hegel, 2004b) p. 383.

⁸⁶ Within a similar vein, ontological insight via Hegel's dialectics might also be gained concerning the ontology of anxiety in underscoring the assessments of Paul Tillich's (1952) *The Courage To Be*, wherein Tillich conceives of anxiety as a persistent psychological tension that underlies our ontology as human beings. In particular, Tillich is critical of the notion that anxiety is something to be expunged and eliminated in the psychic life of the neurotic anxious analysand. Rather, Tillich strives to show such anxieties as persistent and necessary features in our understandings of ourselves within the world which must be confronted courageously and authentically to achieve self-affirmation, and ultimately reconciliation, within the ontologically persistent nature of the anxiety of life.

or pharmaceuticals). Such a sentiment might draw motivational parallels to Kant's transcendental idealism replacing and fixing the errors of metaphysics that presented themselves as rationally aberrant antinomies. In contrast, we might observe Hegel's sentiment that such tensions in our categories of understanding are not really tensions that compel mutually exclusive antagonisms in how we understand the world (i.e. dualism vs. materialism), but rather reveal such dysfunctions as derivative from misapprehending the systems of knowledge we were always operating in. Such Hegelian insights would appear amenable to those of the phenomenological and existential persuasion in psychology, wherein psychosomatic disorders are perceived as derivative from phenomenological misunderstandings, delusions, or false dichotomies that generate such psychic conflicts. Most importantly, a Hegelian dialectical understanding of psychology's ontology offers us a feasible and grounded analytical tool box by which to assess the insights of our engagements with the question of psychology's content and method in assessing psychopathologies.⁸⁷ Such ontological grounding also offers us a criteria in parsing out theories or attitudes that are inconsistent with such an ontology either by assuming a fundamental dichotomization between our notions of subject to object relations or our notions

⁸⁷ In just one example, Schneider's *The Paradoxical Self* (1999) theory study on how it is within the structures of paradox that we confront ourselves and the world (where our understandings of mental health and dysfunction operate in terms of either coping through meaningful engagement with such paradoxes or taking one diametric to an extremism) becomes a profoundly powerful over-viewing analysis if it is put into the framework of the metaphysical and ontological observations offered by Hegel concerning our dialectical engagement with understanding ourselves as consciousness. Such insights into understanding psychology in its paradoxical nature no longer just become helpful descriptors that appear to map onto our analysis of psychological phenomena, but rather such a paradoxical lens becomes necessitated given the nature of understanding and the ontology of our conscious selves.

concerning the content of the mental and the physical (as in the strict materialist and dualist divide).⁸⁸

CONCLUSION

What I have hoped to show through this project is that the pursuit of an ontological grounding for psychology is not only feasible but desirable, and that the ontological status of psychology's field of inquiry comes down to the paradox of consciousness, which demands a particular dialectical approach that parses out the logic of its antinomic meanings. Although, it must be said that in this project can only offer a cursory glance into the Hegelian, hermeneutical, and phenomenological strategies that psychology might look towards given its antinomic ontology, in observing the consequences of what such antinomies demand of our explanations about ourselves as psychological beings within the natural world, it can hopefully be observed what new trajectory modern psychology should look towards in engaging authentically with its own antinomic ontological underpinnings. What I have aimed to make clear throughout this project is that psychology should understand itself as susceptible to antinomic dilemmas of ontological explication within its pursuit of understanding the relations of our *consciousness* to the world concerning what it is the field takes to be psychologically meaningful and real within the metaphysics of a world occupied by conscious beings. However, as I previously stated before, while the goal of this project was to reveal psychology's underlying ontology as antinomic, I also intended to indicate towards a larger paradigm for psychological practice that

⁸⁸ As in the cases of rejecting Daniel Schacter's (1996) theory of memory representationalism, or Otto Kernberg's (1995) *object relations theory* that he posits as underlying psychotherapeutic practice. Such theories which have been rejected based upon their explanatory limitations might also be shown to be ontologically inconsistent with the dialectical logic of how knowledge and understanding are structured.

engages with the antinomic conditions of our own consciousness in understanding ourselves as conscious-beings and our broader shared human condition of being conscious beings who must understand themselves as paradoxical antinomies within the world. Indeed, I aimed to engage such questions through the literature of not only modern psychological theorists but also within the contemporary literature of philosophy of mind to explicate these antinomic conditions, conditions which many contemporary analytics have overlooked. Thus, by neglecting to address this ever persistent antinomic tension underlying our ontological explications of ourselves as psychological beings, it is my contention that many modern theorists in philosophy of mind and psychology run the risk of resigning themselves to being naive adherents to the paradigms they claim to ascribe to.

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