

Psychoanalytic Process, the Paradoxes of Self-Reference and Intermediacy¹

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Here is Freud on psychoanalytic process in 1913: “The analyst . . . cannot determine beforehand exactly what results he will effect. He sets in motion a process . . . He can supervise this process, further it, remove obstacles in its way, and he can undoubtedly vitiate much of it. But on the whole, once begun, it goes its own way and does not allow either the direction it takes or the order in which it picks up its points to be prescribed for it . . .” (12, 130). On repetition and working through in 1914, Freud writes, “As long as the patient is in the treatment he cannot escape from [the] compulsion to repeat . . . The working through of the resistances may in practice turn out to be an arduous task for the subject of the analysis and a trial of patience for the analyst. Nevertheless it is a part of the work which effects the greatest changes in the patient . . .” (12, 150, 155).

Here is an example of what Freud meant, an example that does not require any information about the patient, because it concerns the psychoanalytic process itself. The patient is in the terminal phase of a very long analysis. As almost always happens in the termination phase, the patient revisits the basic conflicts that brought him/her to treatment. As I listen to the patient speak of these issues one day, I think of an interpretation I have made many times before. I hesitate, feeling that at this point I should not be saying the same thing yet again. But then I think, no: this is what the material calls for. So I make the interpretation, and the patient responds: “I know you have said that over and over. But this time it’s different.” I am surprised, and so is the patient. Something unpredictable has happened. It concerns repetition and difference. One cannot predict when repetition will make a difference.

When Freud speaks of the unpredictability of the analytic process, and of the necessity of repeated working through, he is not thinking about unconscious process itself in terms of repetition and difference. Repetition for him is the obstacle to change, not the condition of change; he would not be thinking about unpredictability as a condition of repetition and difference. For Nietzsche (1968), however, chance, repetition and difference are necessary elements of a theory of unconscious processes. For Heidegger the thinking of process itself is a thinking of time, of time as auto-affective (1990), self-referential: “time temporalizes itself”

(1996, 302). Time has to be auto-affective because it cannot be thought as either subjective or objective. It is between them, intermediate. All of this to explain why my topic is psychoanalytic process, self-reference, and intermediacy. I think that the future of psychoanalysis as a clinical endeavor depends upon these concepts.

I will approach my topic through a few pages from Derrida's essay on Mallarmé, "The Double Session, first published in *Tel Quel* in 1971. Although its topic is mimesis, Derrida specifies from the outset that he will also explore what he calls "*l'entre de Mallarmé*," the "between" of Mallarmé, i.e. the intermediate. At a crucial moment, Derrida analyzes the "between of Mallarmé" in terms of self-reference and undecidability (chance), leading him to compare what he is saying about Mallarmé to ideas from Gödel and Freud. A surprising juxtaposition.

Derrida is demonstrating how Mallarmé undermines the traditional understanding of mimesis. If mimesis implies a reference to what is imitated, Mallarmé's writing "plays out a difference. . . without referent" (219). It performs a "perpetual allusion." As allusion without referent, the only thing it can allude to is "itself in the process of alluding" (219; my emphasis) This self-referential process is ludic, "a game conforming only to its own formal rules." As self-referential, it has no inherent truth. But this does not mean that it is false, "an error. . . or illusion" (219). In other words, it concerns reality—it is not an illusion—but cannot be judged true or false in conventional terms. Derrida says that "*by analogy*" (his emphasis), he is calling the reality of this process "undecidable." The analogy is to Gödel: "An undecidable proposition, as Gödel demonstrated in 1931, is a proposition which, given a system of axioms governing a multiplicity, is neither an analytical nor a deductive consequence of those axioms, nor in contradiction with them, neither true nor false with respect to those axioms" (219).

In the next paragraph, Derrida says that undecidability is not a function of "some enigmatic equivocality," nor of a contradictory meaning of primal words—a reference to Karl Abel's pamphlet on this topic. Here Derrida appends a footnote, in which he says that he is referring "less to the text in which Freud is directly inspired by Abel (1910), than to *Das Unheimliche* (1919), of which we are here, in sum proposing a rereading" (220, n32). I believe that this is Derrida's first reference to "The Uncanny." He will say many things about it in the years to come, although he will never devote a specific text to it, nor to Heidegger on the uncanny. Notice the progression: Mallarmé's self referential process of allusion, intermediacy,

undecidability, Gödel, Freud. And the statement that “The Double Session” is a rereading of “The Uncanny.” Derrida goes on to explain why. “We find ourselves constantly being brought back to that text by the *paradoxes* [my emphasis] of the double and of repetition, the blurring of the boundary lines between ‘imagination’ and ‘reality,’ between the ‘symbol’ and the ‘thing it symbolizes, the references to Hoffman and the literature of the fantastic, the considerations on the *double meaning* [Derrida’s emphasis] of words. . .” (220, n32).

To speak of Gödel and to reopen “The Uncanny” give me pause. I have no expert knowledge of mathematics, and so much has been said about “The Uncanny.” It is tempting to leave it where Derrida leaves it: Gödel and Freud on paradoxical undecidability. But Derrida is posing an intriguing problem. What might it mean to reread “The Uncanny” via an analogy to Gödel in relation to paradoxical self-referential processes?

Derrida refers to Gödel’s undecidability, but does not mention Gödel’s larger point, the crux of the two “incompleteness” theorems. I will try to explain. Let us start with Gödel’s first incompleteness theorem: “One can (assuming the [formal] consistency of classical mathematics) even give examples of propositions. . . which are really contextually [materially] true but unprovable in the formal system of classical mathematics” (cited in Goldstein, 155-6). This immediately implies that it is impossible to prove the consistency of a system of arithmetic from within that system—hence its incompleteness. In other words, true but unprovable—undecidable—propositions produce the incompleteness of arithmetic, supposedly the very model of an axiomatic system. It would take too long to explain the background debates in mathematics that set Gödel on the path to incompleteness. Suffice it to say that Hilbert’s work on the foundations of geometry had proposed that geometry can be formalized if arithmetic can be formalized. It had seemed that this was a realizable goal, that arithmetic could be proven to be both complete and consistent, until certain paradoxes in set theory—most famously Russell’s “the set of all sets that are not members of themselves”—proved uneliminable. Hilbert found this intolerable. Gödel proved that it was the nature of mathematical reality. As Rebecca Goldstein puts it, “Gödel subverted Hilbert’s program of eliminating paradox by using paradox in the very structure of his proof” (164). He proved that there are unprovable truths.

Not only did Gödel prove that paradox was mathematical reality, the mechanisms of his proof depended upon the self-referential nature of paradox. “The affinity between the incompleteness result and self-referential paradox is. . . very deep, since every proof of

incompleteness has some version of self-referential paradoxicality lurking around in the background” (Goldstein, p. 165, n.5). The mathematical technicality here is the numbering system invented by Gödel. This numbering system allows “propositions to engage in an interesting sort of double speak, saying something arithmetical and also commenting on their own situation with the formal system” (Goldstein, p. 176). This explains why Derrida can use an analogy to Gödelian undecidability, self reference, and paradox to illustrate Mallarméan self referential allusion. Derrida, at this phase of his career, is also much interested in words which themselves have double, contradictory meanings; he found a consistent pattern of use of such words in the philosophical treatment of the relation between writing and language itself. Derrida has carefully specified that this has nothing to do with something like “the antithetical meaning of primal words.” Rather, these words themselves mark the undecidable, paradoxical processes Mallarmé and Gödel are describing, and that Freud encounters when he examines the uncanny. In fact, *Unheimlich* itself is such a word, an important point for Freud.

A few basic points from *Das Unheimliche* (1919). Speaking of the uncanny effect of the double, Freud says: “. . . the subject identifies himself with someone else, so that he is in doubt as to which his self is, or substitutes the extraneous self for his own. In other words, there is a doubling, dividing and interchanging of the self” (17, 235). The very next sentence reads: “And finally there is the constant recurrence of the same thing. . .” (*ibid.*). It is not clear in context whether Freud sees that doubling itself is repetition; rather he seems to be making a list of uncanny effects. He goes on to cite Rank on the theme of the double, particularly the idea of the double as insurance against destruction of the ego. This is what led the Egyptians to make images of the dead in “lasting materials”—i.e. as indestructible doubles of the once living person. Freud comments that ideas of indestructibility derive from “the soil of unbounded self-love, from the primary narcissism which dominates the mind of the child and of primitive man. But when this stage has been surmounted, the ‘double’ reverses its aspect. From having been an assurance of immortality, it becomes the uncanny harbinger of death” (*ibid.*).

Freud pursues the theme of uncanniness in relation to primary narcissism on the next page. “When all is said and done, the quality of uncanniness can *only* [my emphasis, *nur* in the original] come from the fact of the ‘double’ being a creation dating back to a very early mental stage, long since surmounted—a stage, incidentally, at which it wore a more friendly aspect. The ‘double’ has become a thing of terror. . . other forms of ego-disturbance. . . can easily be

estimated along the same lines as the theme of the ‘double.’ They are a harking back to particular phases in the evolution of the self-regarding feeling, a regression to a time when the ego had not yet marked itself off sharply from the external world and from other people. I believe that these factors are partly responsible for the impression of uncanniness, although it is not easy to isolate and determine exactly their share of it.” New paragraph: “The factor of the repetition of the same thing will perhaps not appeal to everyone as a source of uncanny feeling” (17, 236). Again, from doubling to repetition.

Freud’s reasoning is that the psychological origin of the uncanny double can only be primary narcissism, the stage at which there is no division of internal and external, subject and object. To use Freud’s later expression (1941) “being the breast precedes having the breast” (23, 250). If one *is* the breast, however, there is “doubling, dividing, and interchanging of the self.” One *is* as the repetition of oneself. Since doubling is also dividing, one *is* as the difference of oneself. Every self-referential paradox has this structure: it is always in difference from itself, and hence practices a kind of double speak. Freud does not account for the transition between the “friendly” and terrifying aspects of uncanniness. Perhaps it is more accurate to say that as the possibility of doubling and dividing, primary narcissism, the relation of the baby to the breast, is in and of itself “friendly” and terrifying. The overall point, as indicated in Freud’s gerunds—*doubling*, *dividing*, *interchanging*—is that this is a self-referential process. So we circle back to Derrida on Mallarmé’s self referential process of allusion, the analogy to Gödel, and the rereading of “The Uncanny.”

Derrida had said that Mallarméan allusion is not illusion, but neither is it real in the sense of being objectively true or false. Confronted with exactly this implication of mathematical reality, Gödel famously took it as vindication of Plato on the reality of a pure, abstract realm accessible only by reason. However, it is a strange Platonism that would have to include the reality of neither true nor false self-referential paradoxes. On the other side, we all know Freud’s arguments for psychoanalytic positivism. But it would be a strange positivism that would have to include the reality of uncanny doubling, dividing repetition at the heart of unconscious processes—primary narcissism as the only possible origin of uncanniness. One of the most important implications of Derrida’s juxtaposition of Mallarmé, Gödel, and Freud is that the reality each describes cannot be transcendental or empirical. In all his readings of “The Uncanny” Derrida has emphasized Freud’s statement that literature “is a much more fertile

province than the uncanny in real life, for it contains the whole of the latter and something more besides, something that cannot be found in real life. . . . The somewhat paradoxical result is that *in the first place a great deal that is not uncanny in fiction would be so if it happened in real life; and in the second place that there are many more means of creating uncanny effects in fiction than there are in real life* “ (17, 249). Freud is noting a paradoxical result about the relation between “real life” and fiction as concerns the uncanny. Is he stumbling upon an aspect of reality that is as paradox, that is fictive, but not in the sense of illusion? Can we extend this idea to primary narcissism as the possibility of uncanniness--fictive, neither true nor false, but real? Paradoxical, undecidable, and unpredictable?

Let us step back for a moment, and not forget that Freud mainly understands uncanniness in terms of the return of the repressed—the unfamiliar at the heart of the familiar. The return of the repressed has two aspects: return and repressed. The latter is content—sexuality, aggression, wishes, fantasies, etc. The former is process—return itself, repetition. When one thinks of clinical process in Freud’s sense, on the whole one thinks of interpretation of fantasy, wish, drive, anxiety, defense, transference, and especially transference-resistance. From Freud’s point of view, such clinical process justifies psychoanalytic positivism. When he speaks of repetition, the repetition compulsion, and return, he does not consider repetition as a process, a self-referential, paradoxical process, although he hints at this in “The Uncanny.” Nor does he ever link the process of repetition to the very repetitive process that is psychoanalysis itself, in the literal sense of the return of the patient to the analyst’s office over a long period of time. But it is precisely this repetition that unpredictably makes a difference. This is the impersonal process—it is the same for every patient—that enframes the intensely personal, content oriented nature of most of what transpires between patient and analyst. The hypothesis I am trying to develop is that the reality of the impersonal process is the reality of self-referential, undecidable, intermediate primary narcissism. When analyst and patient meet in what I am deliberately calling this transitional space, repetition makes a difference. The objective presence of the patient in the analyst’s office by no means guarantees such a meeting, but without the repetitive return to the analyst, it cannot occur at all. While this might seem tautological—of course if the patient does not go to the analyst no analysis takes place—I am suggesting that the therapeutic effect of analysis depends as much upon the reality of

impersonal, unpredictable, paradoxical process as it does upon the interpretation of personal, causal content.

I have thought for a long time that this way of conceiving psychoanalytic process not only requires the deconstructive thinking of difference and repetition, but also puts psychoanalysis into dialogue with those areas of science which think in terms of paradox, intermediacy, doubling, difference, and repetition—again a strong implication of Derrida’s linkage of Gödel and Freud. One can go back to Freud in the *Project* (1895) and to his thinking about brain-mind to say more about these impersonal aspects of psychoanalytic process. When Freud made unconscious memory formation dependent upon the process he called *Bahnung*, “pathbreaking,” “breaching”—a sense completely lost in the translation of *Bahnung* by “facilitation”—he used the vocabulary of difference and repetition, as Derrida demonstrated long ago in “Freud and the Scene of Writing” (1978). Derrida however did not pay attention to another aspect of *Bahnung*: what Freud calls the “experience of satisfaction.” Briefly, Freud thought that when the baby is fed, an unconscious image is stored in a pathway opened up by *Bahnung*. My idea is that one also has to consider *Bahnung* in relation to primary narcissism, or even “being the breast.” In other words, the context in which *Bahnung* occurs as difference and repetition is the context in which there is no subject or object. Hence, the process is auto-affective, self-referential. I think this is why Freud later saw the origin of the uncanny in primary narcissism, and why *Bahnung*, even if “friendly,” itself implies doubling and dividing of the self. And when Freud says in the *Project* that the experience of satisfaction is the origin of a relation to the world and to thought, such that we always cognize in relation to an other (I, 331), I think he is providing a model for the psychoanalytic process itself. One makes a difference in the other when they repeatedly join in the uncanny space of primary narcissism. Here I am combining Freud’s speculations about the brain with some of his psychological thinking. Strikingly, there are aspects of contemporary thinking about the brain that situate such processes in neuronal matter itself, which was Freud’s intent in the *Project*. I want to speak of some of this thinking, mainly to see what kind of language scientists find themselves having to use to describe such unusual aspects of reality.

The great evolutionary thinker of contemporary neuroscience is Gerald Edelman, who dedicates *Bright Air, Brilliant Fire* to Darwin and Freud. His aim is to apply Darwinian ideas about populations to how mind emerges from the matter of the brain. Edelman’s point of departure

is a neurological fact about the brain: even though the brain gets input from the sense organs, and produces output via its connection to muscles and glands, the major portion of the brain receives input from other parts of the brain, and gives output to other parts without direct connection to the external world. The brain is “in touch more with itself than with anything else” (19). The brain is primarily auto-affective, “a self-organizing system” (25). The “matter of the mind interacts with itself at all times,” and this is the possibility of memory (29). Call it neurological primary narcissism.

Edelman explains how “neurological primary narcissism” produces memory. Like Freud in the *Project*, but from a different point of view, he is concerned with the neurology of memory, the mechanics of memory. He starts with an elaborate comparison to the immune system. As a “recognition system,” the immune system must have “memory” in order to function. The memory of the immune system is clearly not psychological, but cellular. Originally, the theory was that a foreign molecule transferred information about its shape and structure to the antibody molecule, and then removed itself, leaving a “cookie cutter” shape to which identical foreign molecules could bind. This apparently commonsensical theory turned out to be wrong, and was replaced by a much more counterintuitive theory. Roughly speaking, a foreign molecule encounters “a population of cells, each with a *different* [author’s emphasis] antibody... It binds to those cells. . . having antibodies whose combining sites *happen* [my emphasis] to be more or less complementary to it. When a portion of an antigen binds to an antibody with a sufficiently close fit, it stimulates the cell. . . bearing that antibody *to divide repeatedly* [my emphasis].” These cells are clones, i.e. doubles. Hence, “the whole process is one of differential reproduction by clonal selection” (77). The cellular memory of the immune system depends upon a chance encounter in an originally differentiated population, division, doubling, repetition. Call it cellular *unheimlichkeit*. As Edelman puts it, the immune system is a “molecular recognition system that is noncognitive. . . Like evolution it has a generator of diversity..., a means of perpetuating changes by a kind of heredity (clonal division)” (78).

What does this have to do with the neurology of memory? Edelman thinks that memory itself is a “selective recognition system,” working according to principles like those of the immune system. As in the immune system, “diversity exists beforehand” in the matter of the brain (79-80). The “enormous variation,” and “stochastic [i.e. probabilistic, statistical] fluctuation of cell movement, extension and death, involves not single neurons, but populations

of them” (hence the Darwinian resonance) (83). During behavior, synaptic connections are strengthened or weakened biochemically. “This mechanism, which underlies memory. . . effectively ‘carves out’ a variety of functioning *circuits* [author’s emphasis]. . .” (83-85). Call it “biochemical *Bahnung*” in an originally differentiated population. (Recall that Freud had postulated that the possibility of *Bahnung* depends upon the originally differentiated resistances of *psi* neurons to incoming stimuli.) Finally, via a process Edelman calls “reentry,” neuronal groups receive stimuli and form “maps. . . connected by massively parallel and reciprocal connections” (85). Edelman describes this connectivity in irreducibly complex language: “...each cell contacts cells in its own group and in other groups. . . [producing] the dense intrinsic connectivity of groups... each cell therefore receives inputs from cells in its own group, from cells in other groups, and from extrinsic sources” (88). The first two forms of connectivity—input from cells in its own group and from cells in other groups--describes the “self organizing” or auto-affective or self-referential functioning of the matter of the brain. The reentry or mapping process is like the clonal reproduction of the immune system, but is also the link between noncognitive and cognitive recognition. So we have a noncognitive, auto-affective, differentiated, doubling and dividing process as the possibility of cognitive memory. This infrastructure of memory shares important features with *Bahnung* in primary narcissism: auto-affectation in an originally differentiated structure. Unlike most of Freud’s thinking about unconscious determinism, Edelman’s conception of memory is probabilistic, unpredictable. Recall that clinical process itself is unpredictable. I am comparing the non-cognitive infrastructure of memory described by Edelman to the infrastructure of analysis, to the possibility of repetition making a difference in the intermediate “space” of primary narcissism.

One of Edelman’s aims is to debunk the myth that the brain functions like a computer. He shares this aim with Roger Penrose, although he disagrees with Penrose’s account of brain-mind interaction. Penrose is a fearless speculator. *The Emperor’s New Mind*—i.e. the imaginary clothing of the brain in a computer model—is a complicated voyage through mathematics, some of the further reaches of quantum theory, and brain research. Gödel is again onstage, and so are considerations of intermediacy. A few examples, again to emphasize the kind of thinking and language used to describe what I am calling infrastructural processes.

Penrose undertakes a mathematical demonstration of why the brain-mind cannot function like a computer by going back to Alan Turing, the inventor of computers, who

demonstrated that it is impossible for computers, necessarily operating according to rules, algorithms, to solve certain problems about computers themselves. Penrose reminds us that “Turing found his argument after studying the work of Gödel. Gödel himself was well aware of the Russell paradox, and was able to transform paradoxical reasoning of this kind. . .” (111). Penrose also wants to explain how we can grasp this non-logic of logic. He says that we “see [author’s emphasis] the validity of the Gödel proposition. . . though we cannot derive it from the axioms. The type of ‘seeing’ that is involved. . . requires a mathematical insight that is not the result of the purely algorithmic operations that could be coded into some mathematical formal system” (110). Restated: “. . . what was historically perhaps the most important part of [Gödel’s] argument. . . [was] the ‘undecidability’ of the consistency of the axioms. My purpose. . . [is] to show that a specific Gödel proposition—neither provable nor disprovable using the axioms and rules of the formal system under consideration—is clearly seen. . . to be a *true* proposition” [author’s emphases] (116) “True” here means mathematically real. This was why Gödel considered himself a Platonist, and so does Penrose. But this is a Platonism of the undecidable, of a reality whose “truth” is *between* the usual senses of true and false, objectively real and not real.

Penrose’s most controversial step is to extend this conception of reality to brain-mind via quantum theory. He is very clear that contrary to popular opinion, quantum theory does not simply concern subatomic processes, but the world we inhabit. He says: “The very existence of solid bodies, the strengths and physical properties of materials, the nature of chemistry, the colours of substances, the phenomena of freezing and boiling... these, and many other familiar properties, require the quantum theory for their explanations. Perhaps, also, the phenomenon of consciousness is something that cannot be understood in entirely classical terms. Perhaps our minds are qualities rooted in some strange and wonderful feature of those physical laws which *actually* govern the world we inhabit, rather than being just features of some algorithm acted out by the so-called ‘objects’ of a *classical* physical structure. Perhaps, in some sense, this is ‘why’ we, as sentient beings, must live in a quantum world, rather than an entirely classical one” (226). To take the most famous examples, this would mean that Heisenberg’s uncertainty, which introduces an impossibility into deterministic measurements, and Bohr’s complementarity, which introduces a transitional relation between apparent opposites, describe

the reality of brain-mind. This reality can be seen in the way Gödel and Penrose call “Platonic.”

There is a wonderful contradiction here. Penrose accurately links quantum phenomena to the actual world. As he writes about the most familiar example of complementarity: “How is it that light can consist of particles and of field oscillations at the same time? These two conceptions seem irrevocably opposed. . . [T]he dichotomy between particles and field that had been a feature of classical theory is *not* respected by Nature. . . Somehow Nature contrives to build a consistent world in which *particles and field-oscillations are the same thing!* Or, rather, her world consists of some more subtle ingredient, the words ‘particle’ and ‘wave’ conveying but partially appropriate pictures” (230-1). This is why Bohr and Heisenberg considered themselves positivists. They were describing the real world. But their positivism is just as strange as Gödel’s Platonism. What is a positivism of uncertainty and complementarity? Of the reality of intermediacy?

There are many other examples of intermediacy in quantum theory. Again, contrary to popular opinion, subatomic processes are not completely probabilistic, nor are macroscopic processes completely deterministic. For instance, on the subatomic level, as Max Born put it, the motion of particles follows probability laws, but the probability itself propagates according to the law of causality (Pais 258). This is akin to Penrose’s statement that nature comprises something between particles and wave, and so inevitably something between chance and causality. Born took an image from Einstein to describe the relation between a wave field and light quanta. The way in which the wave field *determines the probability* of a light quantum makes it virtual, spectral, literally a “ghost field” (ibid.) Dirac, describing processes of photon—light particle—scattering, found simultaneous absorption and emission of energy, which appears to violate the principle of conservation of energy. However, there is no actual violation because the principle does not apply. The principle does not apply “because of the transient existence of the intermediate state. . . whence its alternative name: virtual state” (Pais 338). Pauli had to describe certain anomalies in emission from the atomic core by postulating “a peculiar not classically describable two-valuedness [*Zweideutigkeit*, literally double meaning] of the quantum theoretical properties of the valency electron” (Pais 272).

I am deliberately using examples which recall Derrida: the between of chance and causality, virtuality, spectrality, double meaning. Arkady Plotnitsky has in fact articulated the

theoretical links between Gödel, quantum theory, and Derrida, and has extended them to psychoanalysis. He writes: “The undecidability of mathematical logic [Gödel] does not lead strictly to complementarity as uncertainty does in quantum mechanics; but it does suggest, metaphorically, the possibility—and perhaps the necessity—of a kind of undecidable complementarity. The latter may be found in Derrida, where it indicates a relation to, and dependence—theoretical, metaphorical, and historical—on both models, that of Gödelian logic and that of quantum mechanics” (71). Plotnitsky advocates an integration of the rethinking of matter with the Freudian unconscious via Derrida, particularly via Derrida’s reading of the *Project*. For Derrida, because Freud’s brain-mind model makes all perception a condition of the trace, of *Bahnung*, it functions according to the temporal-spatial process of *differance*. I want to bring all of this to bear on some of Penrose’s thoughts about brain-mind.

Penrose is much taken by experiments which have demonstrated what he calls the “time delays of consciousness” (439). Briefly, experiments in which subjects were either asked to perform an action voluntarily, or were passively subject to brain stimulation, have shown a significant interval between brain activity and action performed or sensation felt. No subject was consciously aware of this interval (441). Penrose: “. . . the ‘time’ of all one’s ‘perceptions’ is actually delayed by about half a second from the ‘actual’ time—as though one’s internal clock is simply ‘wrong’ by about half a second or so. The time at which one perceives an event to take place would then always be half a second *after* the actual occurrence of that event. This would present a consistent, albeit disturbingly delayed, picture of sense impressions” (441-2). Penrose says that we are probably “wrong when we apply the usual physical rules for *time* when we consider consciousness. . . I think that it is possible that a very different conception may be required when we try to place conscious perception into a conventionally time-ordered framework” (443). Returning to the topic of how one “sees” something that is demonstrable but not perceivable, (the question he raised about Gödelian undecidability), Penrose restates his Platonic convictions about a timeless, transcendental realm accessible only by reason. Here, it seems to me, he is unable to envision that the other thinking of time he is after is precisely one which thinks the primacy of delay, as per Derrida’s reading of the *Project*. Even if Penrose cannot take this step, he lucidly envisions the way in which such seeing is complicated by the mainly self-referential nature of brain processes: “. . . it is hard to see how one could begin to develop a quantum-theoretical description of brain action when one might well have to regard

the brain as ‘observing itself’ all the time. . . when that theory arrives, [it] will be even further from having a conventional space-time description” (446). The time of the brain observing itself all the time, the time of self-reference, is *differance*.

What does all this heavy lifting have to do with ordinary analysis? I am suggesting that the unpredictability of the analytic process is a function of the self-referential, paradoxical, intermediate time-space of primary narcissism. I am overlapping the materially self-referential, transitional, doubling and dividing processes articulated by Edelman and Penrose with the psychologically self-referential, transitional, doubling and dividing aspects of primary narcissism and uncanniness. Necessarily personal and causal interpretations can make a difference only by virtue of the impersonal and non-causal function of the repetitive process of analysis itself. Clinically, this is what distinguishes psychoanalysis from psychotherapy. Without the literal repetitiveness of frequent sessions with a neutral analyst, it is not possible for a patient to interact with the analytic setting itself such that an auto-affective, differentiating process will occur. Loewald (1988) reminds us that “neutral” itself does not simply mean objective, but maintaining a differential tension between patient and analyst, and that the word itself etymologically means “neither the one nor the other”—i.e. is paradoxical. Again, paradoxical and differential. I am also suggesting that this kind of thinking about analytic process situates it in what I have called the strange Platonism of self-referential paradox and the strange positivism of undecidability, complementarity, transitional and virtual processes. This is the reality of the fictive in the strong sense of not being illusion, the reality of uncanniness, of something like what Winnicott calls the “substance of illusion” (1975, 233). Clinically, this reality is not revealed in verbal associations, but can be seen in the interactions of the patient with the analytic process and setting themselves. Only a non-conventional thinking of time and space, the intermediate difference and delay of self-referential paradox, explains the possibility of psychoanalytic change—“this time it’s different.”

If these propositions are justified, they open the possibility of integrating psychoanalysis, deconstructive thought, and aspects of science into a discipline of unconscious, intermediate, paradoxical auto-affective processes. This would be a discipline of the reality of such processes, the reality of Gödel’s “strange Platonism” or of Bohr and Heisenberg’s “strange positivism,” of Freud’s literary science, and its unpredictable practice of repetition.

¹ This is the text of a lecture delivered at Rutgers University, October 2009, in the “Analytic Crossings” series. I have left it unchanged, except for this note. I used the occasion of this lecture to begin to sketch out thoughts I hope to develop in the future. But I am entirely aware of the sketchy, rhapsodic nature of my argument here.

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