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# The Symbol: Or Beyond the Phenomenon<sup>i</sup>

*“reflection is a system of thought no less closed than insanity, with this difference that it understands itself and the madman too, whereas the madman does not understand it.”*

*(Merleau-Ponty,  
Phenomenology of Perception, p 27)*

*On the threshold of this so called “fundamental” investigation, I cannot hide a little anxiety. Between my starting point, the symbol as a psychoanalytic fact, and my endpoint, the symbolic structure of the universe, the journey is full of hazards. Have I avoided all of these? To presume so would be vain and reckless.*

*My task took inspiration from my spiritual masters; Freud, Husserl and Ferenczi. I owe them everything, including the courage to continue their thought. The final aspirations of these three masters were, respectively, to explain the “genetic horizon” of phenomena, to go back to earlier sources of the psyche and to extend psychoanalytic methodology to the natural sciences. This triple aspiration is also my goal.*

*The unwieldy and incomplete outline presented here requires a lengthy elaboration. This is why it is better to criticise it from the outset. I hope the reader will excuse the equivocations and brevity of this hasty presentation. Your patience in reading will be my true reward.*

## Chapter I

### The sense of the symbol as beyond the phenomenon

#### 1. THE SYMBOLIC TEXT

We are accustomed to dealing with symbols as an archaeologist would dealing with documents in an unknown language. What is given is a “thing” that carries meaning. Some people have the convenient belief that all we need to do is add meaning to the “thing” (its support), the semantic signification to the hieroglyph, for us to claim a successful deciphering. If, however, Freud had been content to simply establish a “symbolic key”, he would have done nothing but convert one system of signs into another, which would in turn reveal its secret. In reality, reading a symbolic text does not end with identifying a one-to-one correspondence between terms. To complete the work of deciphering, it is necessary to re-establish the entire functional circuit, implicating a multiplicity of subjects, in which the symbol-thing only acts as a relay. It is a matter of recognizing that the symbol has a status greater than its operation in language, communication or expression. It is also to consider its extraordinary effect as an integral part of the entirety of human reality. In other words, *to “understand” a symbol requires that it be replaced in the dynamism of its functioning in relation to objects.*

We therefore propose a first distinction. On the one hand the symbol-thing is considered as a hieroglyph, or symbolic text, a symbol *dead as a symbol*. On the other hand, the symbol is understood in its function, that is, as *the operating symbol*, animated by meaning and presuming concrete subjects functioning together as a whole. *To interpret a symbol means converting the symbol-thing into an operating symbol.* As such, a *thing* should never be taken as the symbol for another *thing*. To simply say that a “snake” symbolizes the “phallus” is to reify the symbol, as certain psychoanalytic patients do to avoid living its actual operation.

## 2. THE SYMBOLIC OPERATION

The symbol is not a symbol in isolation but is an operation of the subject in relation to its objects. The subjective pole of this relationship functions provi-

sionally as a succession of desires and accomplishments. To use the previous example, contextual associations can reveal a repressed infantile desire seeking its equivalent in the fantasy of appropriating the “phallus”, a fantasy blocked in turn by a counter-desire (a fear, for example, whether or not this is related to an imaginary figure).

This double functioning, which opposes a desire to a counter-desire, could produce a complete blockage in *interest*. To substitute this impossible double-functioning, the symbolic operation generates a third function that is symbolic in relation to the first two, thus resolving the conflict. The meaning of the symbol-thing “snake” could be rendered thus: “You see, there is no question of me grasping a snake.” More explicitly: “I desire to manipulate an object detached from the body (besides, it is not detached from a body as an autonomous being) but your prohibition prevents me. A “snake” is presented instead, resembling the thing I really desire in all aspects, except it instils in me fear and disgust.” This is a first level of interpretation. Of course, the wish to seize the “phallus” will turn out to be a phantasy, that is, a type of language, or an “infantile theory” that refers to an underlying conflict in desire. The difference between the two levels is that the “snake” represents the drama at the verbal level, while the gesture of seizing the “phallus” emerges from non-verbal language, realising the drama at the motor level.

In the case of hysterical conversions (blindness, deafness, hysterical paralysis and so on), symbolic functioning is only distinguishable from phobic symbolism in that it is not the conflictual desire that passes from motor action to the level of the verbal sign, but the prohibited word that is realized in the emergence of desire. The desire for introjection then finds an equivalent in the introjection of what is forbidden as speech.

It is evident that putting the phantasy into verbal or non-verbal language as represented or enacted drama, refers to a conflict of a radically different nature that has left a gap in self-elaboration; a conflict and gap where all symbolization is, in the last analysis, articulated. It is for simplification that we momentarily leave aside the key problematic of conflict in introjection whose relief is the ultimate goal of what we call desire and for which fantasies are mere contingencies.

### 3. THE TWO MOMENTS OF SYMBOLIZATION

If symbolization means substituting incompatible functioning for new and higher-level functioning, then it seems necessary to put the symbolic operation back to the level where its development begins.

We have seen in the example cited, that this development is motivated by the dynamism of a conflict. The solution necessarily brings something new, so it is time to show what this novelty consists of.

The first aspect reveals the ascent of an operation on the motor plane to the level of representation. What representation means here is not a direct, affective hallucination of desire, but the animation of a linguistic sign through its visual staging. It is verbal language that constitutes the starting point of the visual representation. The two levels to be distinguished here are those of a motor function that is enacted and one that is verbalized. It is therefore understandable that the word, and then the image it produces, can open ways to conflict-free functioning, especially through the safe handling of the word-image.

We can see that the symbol consists not of the “*snake*”-“*phallus*” equivalence, but of the visualization of the word “snake” through which we stage for somebody (the imago) the horror of touching the phallus even though the speech which is dramatized is equivalent to the prohibited motor action. The difference between motor and verbal levels is of the same order as the distinction between acting-out and verbalization that confronts the analyst. The symbol here substitutes for the prohibited action, speech that satisfies both the desire and the imago.

Through this, we understand a second aspect of symbolization: its *indetermination*<sup>ii</sup> with respect to the antagonistic functioning that is its motive. In the absence of symbolization, the conflict would remain stuck at the motor level, although its promotion to the verbal plane brings with it additional problems. In other words, we present to the imago “a *snake* phobia” but also, “nostalgia for the inaccessible” or even “divine or castrated love”. All of these solutions offer detours to realizing the barred motor action for which verbal communication was invented as a substitute. In this process, speech again suggests a dou-

ble-sided action, with one face turned towards the imago and the other towards desire. We might say that there is indetermination in the conflicting elements: the specific action has become a word with an equally specific verbal meaning; word and meaning being multivalent instruments for evoking the perceptual process targeted by desire. *The very passage from one level to another renders the functioning indeterminate to be then redetermined in a contingent mode* (e.g. the snake phobia). Furthermore, “snake” in its turn becomes one meaning among other associations: “rat”, “mouse”, “cockchafer” (The rat particularly frightens me). In reality, symbolization is not constituted by substituting one “thing” for another. It is instead the resolution of a distinct conflict by transposing it onto a plane where its incompatible terms undergo an indetermination that can then be harmonized in a new functioning that creates a new determination. This is why, in chosist<sup>iii</sup> terminology we can see that the “higher” (later) symbolizes the “lower” (earlier) and that the infinite variety of symbolic texts corresponds to a limited number of elements symbolized. (see Ernest Jones “The Theory of Symbolism” 1916 [1918])

*Indetermination and redetermination appear to be essential moments of symbolization, the former implying the development of an operation and the latter the possibility of choosing a particular mode from all those that the indeterminacy made possible.*

#### 4. TRANSPHENOMENOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

What we have just witnessed is the transition from conflict to symbolic functioning. To take another step towards our objective of understanding the psychoanalytic symbol as an original model, we must first demonstrate that if the current or potential functioning of every symbol is a substitute for other incompatible or inhibited functions, this functioning, then, is the necessary result of inferior modes of symbolization. To recognize this is to claim the epistemological originality of the symbol’s specific status as the object of psychoanalysis.

The psychoanalytic approach gives access to the symbol’s proper dimension, so long as it refuses to alienate it or reduce it to subjective “experience”. Psychoanalysis can free itself from the deficiencies of both subjectivism and objectivism, to wilfully espouse a perspective that, for want of a better term,

we could call *imaginal*.<sup>iv</sup> This designates the particularity that results from demoting consciousness, the Cartesian ego and even the phenomenal; consciousness and ego are considered partial aspects of a synergy to which several other inner agencies also intervene. Conceived as the fusion between a repressing action and what is repressed (the “return of the repressed”) it is the psychoanalytic conception of the symbol that specifically draws together the different aspects of this new perspective. The meaning of the symbol is not available to the subject because of repression, and neither can it be given objectively in, for example, a behavioural psychology. This is because, for its meaning to find resonance, the observer needs to participate with their own imaginal structure. We can note in passing that this notion of resonance is radically different from *Einfühlung* (empathy) which is as much tainted by subjectivism as it is from purely objective observation. It operates by setting in motion the unconscious through hearing conscious content; or better still, resonance happens when the contents encountered in consciousness, induce through their peculiarity an unconscious complementarity (i.e. an imaginal structure).<sup>v</sup> If the meaning of the symbol does not surrender itself to objective or subjective understanding, it is apprehended instead through a resonance proper to psychoanalytic listening as this occurs in the transference *relationship*. It is then manifest as a moment in the subject’s imaginal functioning, a moment revealed by the analyst’s “non-alignment” (although not, of course, their non-resonance). Now, the unconscious that is induced through resonance provides us with the imaginal conflict that gave birth to the conscious aspect of the symbolic solution. In the privileged situation of psychoanalysis, therefore, the meaning of the symbol bursts out as an allusion to its genesis. The original dimension of psychoanalysis consists precisely in this mode of genetic deciphering, which is both *trans-objective* (the symbolic text, given objectively, is *internally* “deciphered” as the genesis of functioning) and *trans-subjective* (“deciphering” does not take place in the *subject* themselves, but through the mediation of *another*). As Freud states, “the data of conscious self-perception... have proved in every respect inadequate to fathom the profusion and complexity of the processes of the mind, to reveal their interconnections and so to recognize the determinants of their disturbances” (“An Out-

line of Psychoanalysis”, 196). By this we mean that *the psychoanalytic situation replaces the symbol in its actuality with its imaginal operation*. The transphenomenal character of the symbol as the proper object of psychoanalysis is responsible – in the absence of a precise designation of its original status – for a certain theologisation of the psychoanalytic object. This inclination shatters the absurdity of purely subjective or purely objective formulations in paradoxes that appeal to clinical experience, referring to some magical, mystical, initiatory knowledge for which the analyst would be the officiating priest. It does not seem that this was Freud’s project, who, more than once, compared metapsychology to physics, at least in its scientificity. For our part, we do not intend to theologise our experience of resonance, but to thematize it instead. The mystical positions in psychoanalysis, along with the purely technical positions, constitute “resistances” in comparison with the advent of a new radical project inscribed in the Freudian approach, still to be realized in the revolutionary transformation of culture.

## **5. ALL FUNCTIONING IS SYMBOLIC. EXPLORING THE TRANSPHENOMENAL SCIENCES**

After this detour toward *transphenomenal* specificity (that is, the symbolic operation considered in terms of both its trans-subjective and trans-objective aspects) we return to the problem posed understanding the symbol as an original model. If all symbols demonstrate the function of resolving a conflict through the iteration (or potential iteration) of the act of indetermination, then we can also say that there is no functioning that does not somehow attempt to resolve a conflict and which does not operate in indetermination regarding some incompatibility; in a word, all functioning would necessarily be symbolic.

We could rightly object to this way of posing the problem, in that our initial example of the psychoanalytic description of the symbol might only give the appearance of novel development in the creative transition from the level of conflict to resolution. In children, is play not created in advance as the pre-



formed potential for this passage? Is the child not born with the language ability that emerges in a predictable pattern soon after the development of motor coordination? In this way, symbolization would merely be one functional process among others that includes movements between levels, but according to a predetermined programme of maturation. There would be no real innovation, or to put it another way, there would be no *aptitude* for innovation. Functioning would remain virtual and far from being its origin, symbolization would itself be only one type of functioning.

To describe this functioning, Freud had to answer the question: What must we be for the phenomenon of symbolization to be possible? This created the notion of a psychic apparatus (a first and then a second topography), an apparatus truly capable of producing symbols. Following Freud, the answer we seek is no longer about the nature of what produces the symbolizing function, but clarification of the very conditions of its operation. In other words, if the psychic apparatus in question constitutes the paradigm of symbolic functioning, then the conflicts in its first instituting, its protogenesis, is conceivable.

*The symbolized is always the symbol of an inferior symbolized. Through this, we catch sight of the necessity that every symbolic operation supposes other symbolic operations as its foundation.*

If each symbol derives from symbolic functioning, the extent to which all functioning is symbolic in nature remains to be seen. The very idea of functioning implies both a *current and potential iteration*. What does it mean to constitute functioning as an *iteration*? It means to constitute *how* iteration happens, *its mechanism* and necessary condition. More specifically, to establish *the new functioning* (which, as we know, always stems from inhibited functioning), *its mechanism of iteration must in some way include the initial conflict*. The mechanism of iteration, however, *is not* this conflict, only its replacement. It is also not the entirety of the new functioning but is instead its *condition of possibility* or *sufficient reason*. This brief analysis adequately highlights the symbolic character of any mechanism of iteration that all types of functioning require.

This conclusion already implicates the *entire programme of dialogic science: with a given "thing" or "lived" experience (symbolic text), it is a question*

*of restoring the implicit functioning and the genesis it refers to. The fundamental question to be answered is this: How do I position myself so that objective and subjective facts are revealed to me as an integral symbolic operation considered from the moment of its genesis? Or again: How can we take a phenomenon back to the underlying symbolism that motivated it?*

## *Chapter II*

# *The archaeology of the symbol*

## **6. THE ARCHE-LOGY OF THE SYMBOL AND FREUDIAN PSYCHOANALYSIS**

The preceding developments that relate the genesis of the symbol to other symbols, makes us legitimately suspicious of an infinite regression. To escape this, it is necessary to establish the central idea of primary symbolism. The problem of the *arche* (*arkhé*) cannot be avoided by using an “always already” description of eidetic memory. As much as we want to extend the analysis of the *phenomenon*, it still retains its phenomenality. The phenomenon as it “appears” is a sign of otherness *in* the phenomenological subject that leaves the experiencing ego searching for standard themes. From this limitation of the phenomenological field, enigmas like “inactual acts”, “passive synthesis”, “the other one like me there”<sup>vi</sup>, remain at the level of description. The impossibility of explaining the genetic horizon of phenomena<sup>vii</sup> without going beyond phenomenology, would condemn thinking to a sterile taxonomy of transcendental *facts*. The question of the *arche*, however, specifically interrogates the enigmas of transcendentalism to discover the foundations of the transcendental phenomenon’s residual actuality. Additionally, we must endeavour to show why the phenomenon escapes all genetic consideration and how it both hides and manifests its origin. It goes without saying that the notion of genesis here

does not imply the time that it is intended to generate, and that its retrospective metaphorical character will need to be justified later. The challenge of infinite regression is equivalent to the “always already” of phenomenology.

We must remember that the symbol always contains something *extra* in comparison to the symbolized. This extra is due to an inhibition that is now included in the new operation. When we go back from a given symbol, we will always find *less* in the lower and earlier symbols. This is the classical route from the complex to the simple.

Alongside this *decreasing complexity* and following the same regressive path, it is also apparent that inferior symbolisms are *increasingly determined*. (see chapter 3). *The first symbol, the Arche<sup>viii</sup>, must therefore present the maximum of simplicity and the minimum of indetermination.*

Both the unique and universal character of the symbolic structure allows us to glimpse the ontological scope of interrogating the *Arche* as first symbol. If we can rightly say that each step in human progress implies an ontology, then our psychoanalytic starting point necessarily leads us to uncover the latent ontology of psychoanalysis. It is unsurprising to note, therefore, that despite his refusal of philosophical ambition, Freud had worked closely with the problem of the *Arche* (see “*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*”). We can only regret that his ignorance of Husserl alongside his scientific prejudices made him miss an obvious and fitting solution to the problem.

Particularly pertinent here is the benefit that could have been obtained from the concept of repetition compulsion, which in Freud’s view, reproduced through an “elasticity of living matter”, an initial trauma. It is obvious that, apart from the quantitative aspect, trauma and conflict have the same structure; the inhibition of an operation. Similarly, reproducing the effects of trauma *in its absence* requires the creation of an instrument of iteration. Here we have the very structure of the symbol that Freud repeatedly described with reference to dream representations as well as the psychoanalytic conception of symptoms. We can demonstrate in all of Freud’s examples (traumatic neurosis, the “fort-da” game and fate neurosis) that the repetition compulsion is always a *symbolic repetition*.

There is every chance, therefore, that by overlooking the symbolic character of the repetition compulsion, Freud’s research on the archaeology of vital

functioning remained illusory in its character. His views were based on the intuition that conflict, ultimately the tension between a “life instinct” and “death instinct”, was at the heart of his entire oeuvre. If only these two concepts could dispel accusations of anthropomorphism, the original tension between two poles would be more difficult to dispute; even if it meant proposing “duality”, “pole” and “tension” as metaphysical mythology. But how can we characterize what was before the beginning in phenomenal terms? It would be entirely in keeping with psychoanalytic doctrine to denote this “tension” as *original anxiety*. There is also nothing to prevent the names Eros and Thanatos being given to the “poles” of this original anxiety. It will suffice to remember that concrete life cannot be reduced to one or even two mythical antagonists, but that it has an additional and irreducible element, the symbol.

## 7. ORIGINAL ANXIETY AND THE DYADIC STRUCTURE OF THE ARCHE

How do we characterize original Anxiety in rigorous terms when it is devoid of any substrate? Not simply a new myth. It is at least a metaphorical expression that represents, by analogy, *the impossibility of being*, or, if we prefer, *active non-being in tension with being*. It is also possible that this original Anxiety is pure fiction and that it can only be considered as a limit-idea (like zero in mathematics) which does not exist in itself but is essential for operations.

It is, however, fair to say that Freud’s notion of the id, the “kernel of being”, ignores anxiety, or, in Freud’s more nuanced terms, “despite being capable of generating the sensory elements of anxiety, it (the id) cannot use them”. Indeed, if when traversing mediations, anxiety in humans reaches the true kernel, it would be the disappearance of the human as human, or – the advent of a “mutation”.

As the impossibility of being, original Anxiety is unthinkable and unspeakable. It is, however, the foundation of being and thinking. Being is defined as sameness, identity and iterability; it is the “result” of *constitution*, a constituent act that emerges from Anxiety. The originating Act is as inaccessible as Anxiety itself. For us, the beginning, the *Arche*, will be neither Anxiety nor the Creative Act, but primal Being. *The advent of being and identity is only possible in*

a *symbolic mode*. In formal terms, we can say: A *is* A only if in some way A *implies* B in the form of a negation, which is to say, if A symbolizes *with* B. (Although, by symbolizing *with* B, it specifically symbolizes the original Anxiety where the two “poles” are still united in their “tension” towards being. We can see that a singular symbol is not in itself sufficient for being. If it is what it is by implying what it is not, the permanence of the articulation requires that what it is not is also a permanence, an identity (B)).

This structure just described needs additional explanation. To say that A refers to B means that it is not closed in on itself but must somehow *communicate* with B. *For A to be A and not B it must itself accomplish this act of discrimination*. This is precisely its symbolizing operation. To discriminate, however, at least *two* are needed. It is within A, therefore, that the not-B quality (i.e. the quality of B negated) must be given. The instance that reunites A with the negated form of B, that is, the pole of A which negatively refers to B, is the most archaic form of the Ego. *Ego function, therefore, consists in representing what it is not by operating and maintaining a cleavage capable of dragging being out of original Anxiety*. In other words, the *Arche-Ego* is both the symbol of Anxiety and symbolizes *with* the Other for which it is also the negative. The Ego’s foundational act is to *discriminate* itself from the Other. *Its being is thus the indefinitely iterated affirmation of this otherness and in this way, it remains non-thematic*.

So far, our reflections on the structure of the *Arche-Ego* have gone little beyond the framework of transcendental idealism. The time has come then to move into our own perspective of genetic and transphenomenal realism. We can no longer be content to simply register the meaning of alterity for the Ego. Instead, we must look for the intrinsic character of the Other in itself, considered like the Ego.

Indeed, if the Ego is only possible in its discrimination from the Other, the Other, as it emerges from the cleavage of original Anxiety, must be able to assert itself through the negation of its own Other. In other words, the Other must also be able to symbolize with its Other, by symbolizing the same original Anxiety. The Other will therefore be, in turn, Ego. This means that the

emergence of the Ego is, from the outset, intersubjective and as such is a figure complemented through a Dyad (it is worth noting that Husserlian idealism remains fundamentally “monadic”).

## 8. THE OPERATION OF THE ARCHE

How do we understand the complementary functioning of the original Dyad? “At any given moment”, the two terms of the Dyad “threaten” to merge and regress in Anxiety. Immediately, the first moment of (symbolic) fusion incites one and then the other of the protagonists to affirm, through reiteration (also symbolic), the original act of cleavage. This pulsation of symbolic fusion and separation creates elementary time (the first sequence not yet thematic) in the *alternation*.

We understand that *the implication of the Other in the Ego creates the symbol of the fusion and thus Anxiety*. Insofar as the emergence of the symbol overcomes Anxiety, we give it an instrumental role regarding a telos, to effectively prevent the fusion. It seems more rigorous, however, *not to introduce a teleological element into the constitution of the symbol*, and confine ourselves to noting its effects; the potential for anxiety. Subjective functioning must, on the contrary, appear on the phenomenal plane as obviously teleological, if only because it is articulated within time. Each pulsation phase seems to anticipate the next as its immediate telos, and symbolic substitution is used to avoid fusion. We also understand that *the symbol’s intrinsic requirement is to operate without ever fulfilling itself*. It must neither dissolve into the original fusion nor effect a complete separation.

## 9. THE ORIGINALITY OF THE TRANSPHENOMENOLOGICAL THEORY OF THE DIALOGICAL ARCHE

We have seen that the symbol emerges simultaneously with the advent of Ego, Time and the Other. The idea of the symbol, therefore, is inseparable from this triple articulation. The same is also true for Ego, Time and the Other, which, of course can be used individually to describe all phenomena. Each of

these points of view, however, only reveals a partial aspect. What combines all these aspects instead, is a dialogic conception of the symbol and its operation

What is the relation of this new theory of the symbol to the phenomenology and psychoanalysis that inspired it? We find in this theory the most elementary structure of intentionality described by Husserl; through an *actuality*, the elementary subject anticipates and aims for a *potentiality*. This phenomenological formulation, however, still does not reveal the (transphenomeno-dialogical) sense of intentionality, the symbolization of Anxiety. On the other hand, we also find in our symbol theory the Freudian schema of repression and its product, the psychoanalytic symbol. The “symbolic return of the repressed” would be an adequate definition of the model we are proposing. The originality of the transphenomeno-dialogical point of view is not this. It consists instead of the purposeful explication of the *dyadic* (intersubjective) structure of the symbolic operation from its most primal form, the *Arche*.

As the outline of an ontology, the preceding considerations nevertheless have an operational and heuristic purpose. Building a model of elementary being is only justified if it affords us better knowledge of the world and ourselves. The purpose of an operational ontology is not to provide definitive solutions but to serve as a continual guide to research.

The following chapters are devoted to outlining this task.

## Chapter III

# The genesis of symbolic structures

### 1° Integrative symbolism

#### 10. THE CONCEPT OF THE ENCOUNTER AS A PATHOLOGICAL PRINCIPLE

We would be deluded to think that we could follow the genetic path that leads from the *Arche* to us “20<sup>th</sup> century humans”. At the very least, however, it is possible to indicate some markers and directions. What matters much more to us than the reconstruction of a concrete genesis, which is ultimately interminable, is the now unavoidable obligation to look behind “phenomena” and “being”, for their underlying symbolic operation. In addition to this, the symbolic operation must itself be understood in its emergence from the conflict (the incompatibility) that it symbolizes, which corresponds with the anxiety that interrupts its functioning.

How does conflict arise in this operation? What is certain is that once conflict happens, it creates disorder at a given level of functioning, whose possible types we can now systematically study. This would be the specific task of a transphenomenal *pathology*, an auxiliary genetic science whose objective is to determine specific *disorders* and their consequences for the system of symbolic operations in which they are likely to occur. To consider the higher forms of symbolization in relation to the original Dyad, we must engage with the question of pathology.

The central principle of pathology can be stated as follows: *a symbolic system can only encounter another symbolic system at its own level*. This principle should inspire us in our attempts to account for the passage from the *Arche* to the level of symbolization immediately above. (See Freud’s “An Outline of Psychoanalysis”, SE.XXIII, 195. “We have thus established a right to arrive at an understanding of the normal life of the mind from a study of its disorders – which would not be admissible if these pathological states, neuroses and psychoses, had specific causes operating in the manner of foreign bodies.” In other words, to suffer a trauma, we must be *susceptible*, and the study



of disorders must reveal the general structure of susceptibility. Humans can only be affected at the human level, even in somatic illness. This remark could similarly guide a transphenomenological reconsideration of ethical foundations).

According to the principle of the encounter, the original symbolic system, the Dyad, has no possibility of suffering disorder except through encountering another Dyad. After what we have said about the permanence of functioning (the physiological iteration) there is no need to further justify the idea of disorder to elucidate the nature of the constitutive act: *any modification to functioning must be motivated.*

## 11 THE MULTIPLICITY OF ARCHAI

It remains for us to explain the existence of multiple Dyads at the outset that are similar and capable of “meeting”. To do this, we merely need to invoke the operational nature of our ontology. We would then see that the notion of multiplicity is quite natural for the ends we are pursuing, and that our only requirement is the fertility of our hypothesis. To be precise, this operational coverage has no other purpose than to dispense with an unnecessary presentation of our transphenomenal method. In fact, the notion of multiplicity is understood here as trans-subjective and not in the same way as realist or idealist philosophers. *Subjectively*, the notion of multiplicity is implicated in the very life of each term of the Dyad (in a non-thematic way) as a distinction between the actual and the potential. *Objectively*, we can establish that the distinct and complementary duality of the two terms is a phenomenon that is, in principle, accessible to our senses (The symbol is a reality). From a trans-subjective perspective, however, these are not two types of “experience” (actual or potential), and neither are they two phenomena detectable by appropriate instruments. Instead, they are two *subjects* in physiological interaction (in this use of the term *subject*, it is a question of noting a subjection to the Other; a phenomenal reality that is incomplete by definition).

The entire life of the Dyad is not just given to one of its terms, and neither is it given to a “scientific” observer. It is only revealed through transphenomenology, directly and simultaneously situated in each term of the duality, and

then, as we will see, in a multiplicity of subjects. If disorder is the starting point for the constitution of the Foreigner and the Other in a *subject*, then a transphenomenal perspective presumes this disorder in another subject and studies the encounter itself in the functional (physiological) complementarity of the protagonists. Beginning from transcendental idealism, and thanks to its movement towards the *Arche*, transphenomenology is therefore able to establish intersubjective physiological sets.

In this perspective, to speak of *disorder* is also to speak of an *agent*, that is, another *subject*. The notion of genesis implies disorder, which also includes the idea of multiplicity.

## 12. THE GENESIS OF INTEGRATIVE SYMBOLISM: THE TETRAD

According to the cardinal principle of pathology, the original Dyad can only meet with another original Dyad. What possibilities does this situation create for suffering? Disorder signifies the inhibition of functioning. The prior question can therefore be posed in more rigorous terms: To which disorder in one of the protagonists (the phenomenological perspective) does what intersubjective synergy (the transphenomenological perspective) correspond? We have seen that the members of a Dyad acquire their individuality thanks to a symbolism (a symbolic functioning) that anticipates (through symbolic achievement) fusion with the Other, and thus repeats the action of the original cleavage. The symbolic pulsation (deriving from symbolic functioning) of anticipations and realizations, therefore, constitutes the intrinsic temporality of each term of the Dyad. For disorder to happen within this temporality, the encounter between two Dyads needs to happen at subjective moments that are somehow out of phase with each other. Let us consider two Dyads,  $D_1$  and  $D_2$ , each made up of the respective protagonists,  $A_1, B_1$  and  $A_2, B_2$ . Each term would in turn include the symbolization of its complement denoted in lower case so that  $D_1 = (A_1 b_1, B_1 a_1)$  and  $D_2 = (A_2 b_2, B_2 a_2)$ . Let us indicate by – and + the first and second phases (anticipation and realization) and observe that

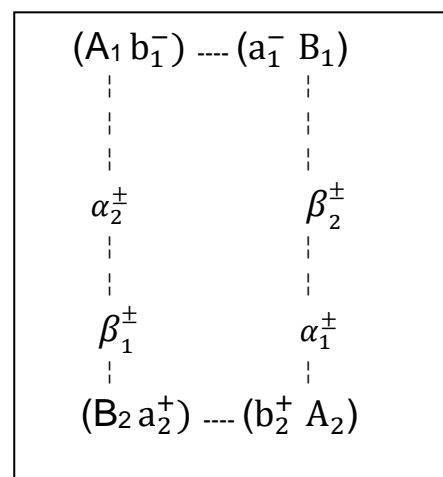
the encounter between  $D_1^-$  and  $D_2^+$  takes place unexpectedly and is not anticipated by any of the protagonists,  $A_1, A_2, B_1, B_2$ . When  $D_1^-$  encounters  $D_2^+$  the intra-dyadic conjunction is as follows;  $(A_1 b_1^-)$  and  $(B_1 a_1^-)$  are in the process of being split, while  $(A_2 b_2^+)$  and  $(B_2 a_2^+)$  are fusing. This necessarily results in a complete blockage of symbolic operations and the imminent dissolution of constituted symbolism, which produces a regression to original Anxiety. This regression may not be immediate, because the protagonists only meet through their respective symbols.

In other words,  $a_1^-$  encounters  $b_2^+$  and  $a_2^+$  at the same time as  $b_1^-$ . The tension that arises in this way is different from original Anxiety. It happens at the level of symbolic functioning and its origin is detectible and available to genetic study. We will call it *symbolic anxiety* or just *anxiety*. How is the double conflict between  $a_1^-$  and  $b_2^+$  on the one hand, and  $a_2^+$  and  $b_1^-$  on the other, likely to be resolved? It will come as no surprise that we are again offered a model of cleavage. This cleavage, it must be understood, happens between symbols of opposite signs that would otherwise inhabit each other. It is a cleavage accomplished – as we saw in the first Dyad – through the symbolic inclusion of its complement. According to these principles, the elaborated formula of the tetrad that results from the encounter of two out of phase Dyads, will be as follows:

#### Formula for out-of-phase Dyads

$$\begin{array}{c} (A_1 b_1^-) \dots (a_1^- B_1) \\ \hline (B_2 a_2^+) \dots (b_2^+ A_2) \end{array}$$

#### Formula for the Tetrad



$\alpha_1, \alpha_2, \beta_1, \beta_2$ , designate new symbolisms that emerge from the cleavages. Examining the formula for the Tetrad, we first note that the symbols of

opposite signs (connected by the vertical dotted lines) are no longer in direct contact but *mediated* by the symbols in Greek characters. In other words, to be  $A_1$ , which means to be *not*- $B_1$  ( $= b_1$ ), it must first assert itself as *not*- $a_2$  ( $= \alpha_2$ ). But what is  $\alpha_2$  if not a mode of  $A_1$  itself, the mode precisely by which it is negated in  $B_1$ . *Through the new symbolization ( $\alpha_2$ )  $A_1^-$  takes in the Other and integrates it in a symbolic mode ( $A_1$ ).* But there is more. *In the functioning of  $A_1$ , the successive moments  $b_1^-$  and  $b_1^+$  are somehow simultaneous through  $\alpha_2$ .* When  $b_1^-$  is not “valid” because of its encounter with  $a_2^+$ , or  $b_1^+$  is invalidated through  $a_2^-$  (a second moment of out of phase pulsations), in its indetermination,  $\alpha_2^\pm$  potentializes the two successive modes proper to  $b_1$  (that is,  $b_1^-$ ,  $b_1^+$ ). Here we recognize the work of *self-indetermination* as an essential moment in the symbolic operation.  $\alpha_2^\pm$ , therefore, has twice the value. The double potential that it harbours is *redetermined* in its successive articulations.

As an example, the redetermined symbolism  $\alpha_2$  – which corresponds with the structure of the symbol “snake” – is a way of saying *no* to  $a_2^+$ , while being  $b_1^-$  and anticipating  $a_1^-$ . To understand the redetermined symbol  $\alpha_2^-$ , it first needs to be brought back to its indeterminate form and then to the conflict that generated it. What we have just described is the genesis of second-degree symbolic functioning, or *integrative* symbolism.

We could explain the achievements of this genetic leap at some length, but instead insist on only one point: that the transphenomenal character of symbolization is both non-mechanistic and non-finalistic. What would be mechanical in the invention of new symbolisms? What would be final in the unending compulsion that presides over this invention? What we are witnessing here is the invention of the laws of functioning, the invention of ends, the invention of time and of self-indetermination. In a word, it is the invention of “freedom”. But this invention is itself not “free”. It obeys the universal laws of constitution that govern the genesis of all possible symbolic organizations.

## 2° Reflexive Symbolism

### 13. THE THEMATIZATION OF SUCCESSION. A DEGREE OF FREEDOM

The theory of symbolic organizations still needs completing. We have merely highlighted some of its foundations and suggested the spirit in which research should be undertaken. We do not yet know what sensory phenomena correspond with a life of integrated symbolism, and perhaps we need to establish this relationship through certain micro-physical data. We are convinced, however, that the day when the *phenomenon* is joined to its underlying symbolism will mark a turning point for all the natural sciences.

In the meantime, two research paths remain open; on the one hand, elaborating the theory of symbolic organizations, and on the other, the psychoanalysis of higher symbolism. The following considerations can only anticipate what the junction of these two extreme domains will be in the continuity of the *concrete genesis*.

Even without the elaboration of a pathology of integrative symbolism, we can still make some assertions. In any encounter with Dyads or other integrative symbolisms, the Tetrad now knows, thanks to its relative indetermination, to integrate them and form more complex organizations. This is without even having to move to a higher level of symbolization. What may cause disorder (an anxiety-provoking conflict) within a complex integrated organization - it is easy to sense this - is the lack of coordination of the synergistic functions specific to the integrated symbolisms, previously referred to by Greek letters. In fact, to the extent that they are met by greater numbers, their bivalent indetermination ( $\pm$ ) can no longer suffice.

Resulting from integrative conflicts, the new symbolism will symbolize these conflicts through indeterminate fractures in the very function of integration. It will thematize this in one aspect; that of making the succession obvious (-+). The new symbolism will necessarily be constituted in such a way as to convert into the present the succession of integrative conflicts that have already occurred. It will therefore "know" how to anticipate complex configura-

tions from the sudden appearance of a few elements. From this level, the operation will thus present a clearly intentional structure and in its indetermination will already resemble a "feedback" system with the ability to perform trials and correct errors, thereby implying an elementary form of *reflexivity*.

It should be noted that *reflexive symbolism* only thematizes a feature already contained in the operational *Arche*, but when it happens, it nonetheless presents unpredictable novelties in relation to it. This fertility of transphenomenology is essentially due to a double-criteria; the dyadic formulation of the *Arche* and the conception of the genetic passage of the *Arche* to higher symbolic forms.

Before concluding with a sketch of reflexive symbolism, it is necessary to highlight a key point; it is a question here of a complex intersubjective organization, operating at a level analogous to that of reflexivity. The synergy of the individual symbols that make up the organization is so close that it must be considered a higher individuality. What gives reflexive synergy its subjective character is the *thematic* ("conscious") functioning of the organization in regard to the redetermination (involving a non-thematic *choice*) of the commitment to a particular "path". Such a subject, therefore, has a certain *degree of freedom*, or *thematic quality*, or even "*field of consciousness*". This quality is measured by the variety of "anticipations" it is capable of, as well as its ability to assimilate new circumstances, without leaving its current level. At the integrative level, the possible dyadic combinations could only give rise to a limited number of variants (variants which the theory of symbolic organizations has the task of defining). The same is not true for reflexive levels, where the degree of freedom allows for an almost unlimited number of variations.

#### 14. THE TRANSPHENOMENOLOGICAL MEANINGS OF TELOS AND THE NUCLEIC STRUCTURE OF SYMBOLISM.

Although, for obvious reasons, we have not been able to delve into the workings of reflexive symbolism, we have identified a few features that are

sufficient to consider a genetic pathology at this level. We have seen that reflexive symbolisms are not anticipations of a single accomplishment but of a *succession of achievements*, such that any incompatibilities that may arise at any moment in the synergistic chain of achievements are figured *in advance* through current operations and concerns.

There is an equivalence therefore between the anticipatory symbolism in the present and the sequence of achievements that must take place in the future (having been constituted as an instrument of iteration). Thanks to this equivalence, during possible encounters between reflexive systems, incompatibilities manifest themselves in anticipatory symbolisms *even before* conflicts are realized through accomplishments. These conflicts thus unfold as if anticipated in advance and the new symbolism that directly results from them at the thematic level will have all the characteristics of a teleological invention designed to prevent conflicts that have not yet happened. This does not rule out the fact that such conflicts first occur at sub-thematic levels, which will nonetheless be echoed at the thematic level. Only then will a new and conciliatory symbolism of the conflict emerge, bringing, of course, the requisite changes to the lower levels. *Everything happens as if there were thematic anticipation of an ad hoc solution, which is to say that a true symbolization, strictly limited to the thematic level, and the resulting modifications in the sequence of future achievements is already, in fact, involved. Teleology must be conceived as an illusion due to the fact that the higher symbolization implies and realizes in some way the organization of all the achievements that it results from and that determine and make possible its future iteration. To go from teleology to symbolism is to go from the phenomenal to the transphenomenal.*

Because of the central function of thematic symbolism, we propose to designate it the *kernel*, and from now on we will talk about the *nucleic* structure of symbolic systems. Similarly, we will call the organization of sub-thematic levels the *horizon* (of chains of accomplishments). The kernel is always present as the horizon is realized gradually according to the system's functional requirements. To express prior developments in this new terminology, we can say that *ultimately, conflict moves to the nucleic level (the principle of centrip-*

*etal action*) and all new symbolization, therefore, proceeds from the kernel. Finally, *any modification of the kernel involves a related modification of the horizon (the principle of centrifugal action)*. These two principles express and articulate the holistic nature of symbolic organizations.

On a final note, for the sake of clarity, the kernel is the seat of self-indetermination, while redetermination is nothing other than the re-actualization of the horizon.

### 3° *Duplicative symbolism*

"...in the course of our efforts at building up psycho-analysis we have also made some important biological discoveries and have not been able to avoid framing new biological hypotheses."

Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis", SE.XXIII, p.195

## 15. *THE GENESIS AND OPERATION OF DUPLICATIVE SYMBOLISM*

Like all other stages of genesis, we must again resort to pathology. Among the many disorders likely to arise within a reflexive structure, we will consider only one that is particularly remarkable, where the kernel is somehow cut off from all or part of its horizon of potentialities. Because of an inhibition of nucleic functioning, anxiety develops within the amputated kernel and produces either a regression to the *Arche*, or a new symbolization. It is possible, of course, that this isolated kernel may encounter other symbolic organizations from a lower level. In this case, there are two possibilities: either it is compatible with the symbolisms encountered and thus able to assimilate them to its own requirements by incorporating them into its *virtual* horizon and restoring integrity, or else incompatibilities arise forcing it to carry out new symbolization that generates a new structure. But what happens *before* the isolated kernel has had reconstructive encounters? At the very moment when it should symbolize *with* the chain of achievements corresponding to its horizon, each



nucleic element is, dare we say, *isolated* from its complement and unable to achieve or even engage its functional cycle. The element in question will only be saved from original Anxiety by splitting itself internally. In the absence of any horizon, this cleavage must necessarily reach each element of the kernel to form a kind of symbolic self-envelopment. In its redoubled relation to itself, this function is ultimately equivalent to a complete symmetrical kernel. What is repeated in the constitution of this new symbolism is, ostensibly, the first act of generating the original Dyad. At this level, however, the splitting has different effects. First of all, unlike the Dyad, it is not a question of the simultaneous emergence of an Ego-function and its reciprocal and complementary Counter-function, but of the *creation from itself of a Counterpart* to replace these amputated functions. Secondly, we can point out that the relationship of symmetrical, specular symbolisms is no longer truly complementary, but merely - forgive the image - narcissistic. Indeed, Duplication has not radically altered the structure of the kernel. Where favorable encounters happen, it still has the ability to constitute a horizon of potentialities around it, but this time, instead of being a single kernel as before, it appears in two "copies", or better, in two complementary functions; a horizon for its kernel and a kernel for its horizon. The complete physiological cycle could therefore be described as follows:

*Step one:* The kernel duplicated by Splitting recreates a double horizon determining the separation of two complete individuals, each with a single kernel. We must note, however, that the two copies thus formed meet the requirements for complementing the dual function specific to symbolic self-envelopment. *Step two:* As a result of duplication, the kernels acquire an additional functional requirement; to operate in relation to a symmetrical complement. There will thus be a real *conflict between the requirement to govern the horizon and the opposed requirement to be isolated from it and to start duplication again*. The conflict is resolved thanks to the provisional creation of a symbolism of self-reliance which has the effect of temporarily interrupting functional contact with the horizon. *Step three:* Symbolic isolation sets in motion the reduplication of the kernel, which, once completed, returns us to the first stage.

Duplicative functioning thus becomes suitable for organizing lower symbolisms on which it "feeds" (see below).

We can observe that in relation to the symbolisms already described, duplicative symbolism presents a radically new aspect: its functioning includes the multiplication of individuals as an effect.

## 16. TRANSPHENOMENOLOGY AND BIOLOGY: LIFE AND SEXUALITY

If our transphenomenological hypothesis is correct, the genetic constitution that we have just sketched corresponds to what naive naturalism would designate as the appearance of "vital phenomena". Indeed, the model of creation just proposed implies the two classic criteria of "life"; "assimilation" and "reproduction". While remaining on the phenomenal level, we can add that *"life" begins with a duality of "living" subjects* and, furthermore, that despite a rigorous reciprocal homology of their functional elements, *the two subjects are not identical, but are in some ways complementary*.

We have just seen how each operation of the Kernel is coupled with a requirement for self-envelopment, and how the complementary horizon, now split, produces a superfluous Kernel. Each duplication, therefore, confronts us with a horizon-produced-by-a-Kernel and a Kernel-produced-by-its-horizon. This implies analogous operations but in opposite directions; that is, a symmetry.

This observation is not without importance, considering that it is seen as *foreshadowing sexual duality*. Only transphenomenology allows the hypothesis that life and sexuality are coeval, thus opening considerable scope for experimental research. Similarly, at the level of biological morphogenesis – an exemplary phenomenal science – a large number of phenomena, such as radial or bilateral symmetry, certain asymmetries as well as other morphological configurations (like the figurative elements of mitosis) could be unified in a transphenomenological explanation. Conversely morphogenesis itself could aid in the development of a genetics of physiology and pathology. We are perhaps not as far as we think from the day when the mutual enrichment of empirical knowledge and transphenomenal construction come together in authentic understanding, at least in the field of biology.

## 17. *LATENCY AND SLEEP: ESSENTIAL BIOTIC VIRTUALITIES*

In addition to intradyadic complementarity (sexuality) – recognized as an essential characteristic of archebiosis - another equally remarkable characteristic is notable; the ability of the kernel to disconnect from its horizon and put itself in a state of latency. We have seen that such disconnection is a necessary step in duplication and only repeats the arche-trauma of the duplicative level, namely, the amputation of the horizon. Any phenomenon of latent vitality is structured by an autotomy operating a temporary disconnection of the horizon from the kernel. At the level of aggregative symbolisms, the genetic kernel's latency makes the cycle of maturation possible (see below). Similarly, sleep and hibernation can be understood as thematic level disconnections that ultimately derive from the arche-latency, coeval and coessential with primitive duplication.

From the perspective of temporalization, the alternation between the connection and disconnection of the kernel-horizon (inner kernel-horizon for latency and outer kernel-horizon for sleep) constitutes the transphenomenal basis of thematic temporal experience. Indeed, on the transphenomenal level, connection anticipates disconnection and *vice versa*, as long as they are part of the same overall symbolic operation. However, as we have just seen, one of the three phases of arche-duplication is nucleic self-complementation in the disconnection from the horizon. This means, in other words, that sexual arche-fusion goes hand in hand with arche-latency, or arche-sleep. If we qualify this phase as ecstatic, we can see that the ultimate meaning of Ferenczi's analogy between orgasm and sleep has its roots in their initial coessentiality.

## 18. *THE NOTION OF THE RANDOM COMPLEMENT AND THE EXTERNAL HORIZON*

For the moment we must limit ourselves to a summary explanation of duplicative symbolism. The essential feature of "vital phenomena" appears to us as the anxiety of lack, symbolized in the duplication of self. In the same way, the required reconnection has itself become anxiety-provoking. Here we have the ambiguous structure of the first Desire. By satisfying it, we cannot avoid symbolizing the anxiety of trauma at the same time (consider the autogenous isolation of the kernel from the horizon). While, in earlier symbolisms, kernel and horizon were indissolubly linked in an immutable operating structure, here the need for recompletion introduces the notion of a *random encounter with the complement*. When there is the need to repeat the full cycle of duplication, a constant supply of appropriate complements is required. Any lack in this *nourishment* is symbolized in the kernel, re-structuring the horizon according to the principle of centrifugal action.

It is conceivable, for example, that a lack of nourishment causes the Splitting off of an isolated element of the kernel, producing – when the moment is right - what appears phenomenally as a "reserve". The task of transbiology<sup>ix</sup> would be specifically to restore vital phenomena to motivated symbolic functions, and here, it is not too much of a risk to claim that the immense variety of vital structures is the result of *ad hoc* symbolizations of lack and concrete trauma. We understand, therefore, that each lack and each trauma symbolized in the subject, corresponds with possibilities of *reconstitution* and then de-constitution, forming together an *external horizon* or *lifeworld* for the subject, like a mirror.<sup>x</sup>

In this lifeworld, however, other subjects resulting from this duplication play a central role. As a place of lack and completion, they constitute for each other both *nutrition* and a *threat*.

Symbolizing *with* the lifeworld includes the relation of the subject to other duplicative systems *nearby*. Because of duplication, any new symbolism formed is transmitted to each duplicate and the multiplication of individuals goes hand in hand with the diversification of *phyletic strands*.

## 19. INTERNALIZATION OF THE EXTERNAL HORIZON

It is not our intention to anticipate what transbiology, the science of the genesis and functioning of duplicative symbolisms, might one day be. Instead, we will simply identify some concepts involved in previous developments. In particular, the leap made here from reflexive symbolism should be emphasized. This includes the symbolic presentation of appropriate successions, which "anticipate" impracticable "paths". However, the random character of its *external horizon* allows duplicative symbolism to bring to awareness not only what is definite, but also future *possibilities*. The future is anticipated in each possible mode; reconstitution, de-constitution or deficiency-related. Engagement in one of these does not remove the other two but retains them in the background. Nonetheless, we can understand the tendency to *internalize the external horizon* in so far as it is subject to deficiency (See the notion of "reserve" above). Similarly, the nucleic symbolism of de-constitution manifests itself in the internal horizon as an anticipated self-de-constitution (for example "membrane formation") and not as a final action "forming a protective layer". This is no more teleological than putting in "reserve", when this is required by the nucleic symbolization of trauma.<sup>xi</sup>

## 20. PROSPECTIVE RECAPITULATION IN PALINGENESIS

Attention needs to be drawn to a second aspect of duplication, the need for *seriation* in the reconstitution of the internal horizon. The symbolization of a particular deficiency or trauma depends on what is already constituted in the horizon. During nucleic duplication ontogeny will necessarily have to reproduce, in a determinate order, certain stages of phylogeny. The fact remains *that at the nucleic level all the steps are given in advance*, and thus the "recapitulation of phylogeny" is organized *ipso facto* according to the requirements of nucleic compatibility, combined in the present. The unfolding of time in ontogeny is only a reflection of the restructuring of the kernel in the genesis of each new symbolism. As the entire nucleus is necessarily modified, its projection into the temporal dimension will only demonstrate the stages of the nucleic constitution in its final state. The fact that each stage of ontogeny is understood in relation to both the preceding stages and the final stage, means

that we call it *prospective recapitulation*. Through this, a new dimension in the physiology of symbolism is produced. Duplicative symbolism considered at one stage of its iteration is not understood through genetic considerations alone but requires *prospective palingenesis* as an additional viewpoint.

Finally, a third aspect of duplicative symbolism is linked to its dual character; the exhibiting of complex temporality on the one hand and the randomness of the external horizon on the other. This aspect is given by the successive awakenings of demands on the external horizon in parallel with serial actualisations in the internal horizon. Considered in relation to their objects, these requirements correspond to what is usually referred to as *need* and, as modes of symbolization serialized in the internal horizon, they also cover what is meant by the term *instinct*. *Need and instinct are therefore prescribed at the nucleic level and it is not surprising to see them transmitted through duplication.*

#### 4° *Aggregative symbolism*

### 21. THE FOUNDATION OF "EPIGENESIS"

Duplication produces duplicates that are proximal, and each individual is found in a variety of proximal relationships with other individuals. As long as these relationships are conflicting, they are symbolized in the kernel (as a possibility).

It is also true that *any* conflict concerning the external horizon of a single member of the aggregate is symbolized in various ways. This happens in each kernel according to the principle of reciprocal effects (centrifugal and centripetal), such that, an artificially isolated member of the aggregate is able to *induce* in its direct descendants the mode of symbolism corresponding with their respective *position*. Through this it is able to realize the *palingenesis* of the integral structure from which it has been isolated. (Consider the twig-like structures of Hydrozoan colonies)

We see that this conception corroborates, underpins and fleshes out empirical theories of "epigenesis". Merely summarizing the observation of facts and experiences, epigenetic theory remains entirely unintelligible as long as it seeks to reduce these things to a physicochemical basis, and it is a miracle if we see in this the effects of a teleology. On the contrary, it is illuminated in a new light when we consider it as a special but necessary case of the symbolic structure of all functioning.

## 22. THE GENESIS OF THE SYNOPTIC CENTER AND THE NUCLEIC STRUCTURE OF THE AGGREGATE. THE SENSORY-MOTOR FUNCTION?

Let us continue explaining the aggregative symbol. Each kernel symbolizes its relationship with neighboring individuals which extends its internal horizon. Having symbolized all inter-individual conflicts, and echoing any new local conflicts in each individual, the aggregate emerges as a higher individuality. This is not always the case though and will only happen if it *presents itself in its entirety as a kernel-horizon structure*; in other words, if it symbolizes as a totality with the entirety of the *external* horizon. Studying its topology, however, highlights the possibility of privileged *positions* within the aggregate, nodal points, affected multiple times and on several sides by the same local conflict and spreading across all individuals.

Having symbolized the conflict - not as a single conflict, but as a succession of interdependent conflicts – such a *position* acquires a "panoramic vision" of the entire aggregate structure through the symbolic presentation of this succession. This vision is completed when similar conflicts arise at different points in the aggregate, imposing a variety of successions in turn. Under these conditions the nodal point becomes a real *center of localization*, but there is more. Now, whenever a conflict occurs at a given point, it will be *localized* before it is symbolized. From then on, the nodal point could be the beginning (because of the principle of centrifugal action) of the mobilization of existing and coordinated potentialities or, in case of failure, of the constitution of

new symbolisms that involve an entire region with an *existing* unity of organization. Potential associative pathways are thus formed between places of disruption and places of action ("reflexive" assemblages). Progressive indetermination of these pathways creates *the ability* to carry out mobile assemblages between various disruptions and their associated actions (the level of the "conditioned reflex"). The paradigm of "association" (of "passive synthesis") establishes the connection between a *locus* and a conflict. Thanks to this synopsis, the solution of the conflict can be subsequently *displaced* in relation to the places where it occurs (For example, sensorimotor phenomena).

What is remarkable in this mode of symbolization is *the coordinated effect that starts from a center of synergistic symbolisms*, giving the illusion of an *ad hoc* teleological function.

Without venturing further into our genetic conjectures, we can see how an aggregative symbolism can present a nucleic structure at the level of the aggregate itself. From a central symbolism, we also see the possibility of constituting real peripheral "organs" grappling with specific problems. Under these conditions it is obvious that *no peripheral symbolism is constituted in isolation, without it being at the same time "coordinated" by the "synoptic" center*. In other words, symbolization not only takes place at the level of individuals but also at the level of the aggregate considered in its entirety.

### 23. THE GENETIC CENTER OF THE AGGREGATE AND PALINGENESIS

Having established the possibility of a nucleic structure of aggregative symbolism, the status of the aggregate kernel in relation to lower nucleic structures still needs to be understood.

What we can say with certainty is that, insofar as it meets the criteria of nucleic symbolism, the aggregate's synoptic center is a structure produced by a series of indeterminations, which are then redetermined in its internal and ex-



ternal horizons. However, if the *center* (the kernel of the aggregate) is an individual (or collection of individuals) and has other individuals as its internal horizon, then every one of the central or peripheral individuals retains its individuality (that is, its own internal kernel-horizon structure). As for the nucleus of the synoptic center, it has a paradoxical status, in that *it is the extent to which it is highly redetermined at the level of individuals that enables it to assume its function of self-indetermination at the aggregate level*. The ability to redetermine itself, on the other hand, implies the prior existence of symbolisms of indetermination at the individual level. Ultimately, an individual indetermination must somewhere correspond as a pre-condition to the functional indeterminacy of the synoptic center. This amounts to saying that the functioning of the aggregate, coordinated by a synoptic center, must be symbolized in at least one of the individuals that comprise it and whose duplication is, therefore, suitable for reconstituting the entire aggregate as a double. We call this individual the *genetic center* of the aggregate. If the synoptic center is nucleic in relation to the aggregate, the genetic center constitutes the kernel of the synopsis itself, the latter being the internal horizon of the former. "The core of our being, then, is formed by the obscure id, which has no direct communication with the external world and is accessible even to our own knowledge only through the medium of another agency." (Freud, "An Outline of Psychoanalysis", p.197)

At the human level, the function of the id corresponds to that of the genetic kernel. A first clearly thematized differentiation between the genetic kernel and the synoptic center (the id and the self), however, occurs at the level of aggregative symbolism. In humans, the self will further differentiate through imagoic self-love into ego and superego. In our language, the internal horizon of the id is the self.

As for the synoptic center, when Freud says that the ego develops from the cortical layer of the id (ibid., 197), he gives it the status of a secondary kernel and, once again, pre-emptes the systematic considerations of transphenomenology.

Nevertheless, there will be a difference in principle between the two nucleic structures. The synopsis is a functional center within the already formed ag-

gregate, whereas the genetic center brings together, as conditional potentialities, the entire temporal horizon of the successive stages of palingenesis. This difference is effective from the outset. Because of the kernel's tendency to push back into the horizon, conflicting elements throughout phylogenesis are aided by appropriate symbolisms to transmit the future shape of the aggregate to the synoptic horizon and its coordinating function. Practically, the genetic center only communicates with the aggregate through the synoptic organ. As a result of genetic kernel's growing indetermination, the possibilities for redetermination at the aggregate level increase even more. They can be represented by a tree-diagram whose trunk shows the state of self-indeterminate totipotency, with the end-branches being the fully redetermined state. At this moment in the palingenesis of the aggregate, all individuals are redetermined in their reciprocal horizons. *The novel fact here is that once an individual is functionally redetermined in a given context, the return to indeterminacy necessary for a reversible palingenesis is no longer possible.* If unimpeded, its duplication will relate to its current state. In other words, an individual - once redetermined according to the requirements of its *position* – can only duplicate individuals in conformity with what it is. A topological modification must, however, result from each multiplication, inducing further novel redeterminations, until the palingenetic advent of the final form of the aggregate.

## 24. PHYLOGENY AND THE GENETIC CENTRE

If the functioning of the aggregate is inter-individual, its genesis is intra-individual. As for this genesis, we can allow ourselves the following hypothesis: imagine an insoluble conflict happening within an aggregate endowed with a synoptic center. Because of the state of irreversible reciprocal redetermination of functional individuals, the conflict spreads to individuals who have remained in a state of indetermination. It is only within these that the conflict has the chance of finding a solution in an unprecedented symbolization. In this case, the aggregate may become disorganized, but the indeterminate individuals

that have resolved the conflict will resist the disorganization and reconstitute new aggregates with novel, non-conflicting symbolisms.

Once again, this is not the place to go into the details of this genesis, but it is important to remember this: according to our hypothesis there is no real inheritance of "acquired characteristics". Conflict that arises within a generation never appears to be resolved within it in a transmissible way, but only in subsequent generations. In other words, the solution to an aggregative conflict is not ontogenetic but phylogenetic. Indeed, if an ontogenetic solution was likely to intervene, without reaching the genetic center or without being symbolized there, it would have no means of ensuring its transmission.<sup>xii</sup>

## 25. THE MEDIATED EFFECTIVENESS OF SYMBOLIZATION

Another aspect of our hypothesis that should be emphasized is the far-reaching and mediated *effectiveness* of the symbolizations instituted in the genetic center. How can this capability be understood?

We have seen the coexistence in an aggregate of two different centers, one governing ontogenetic *maturation* by gradually redetermining its descendants (*vertical synergy*), and the other continually regulating the overall operation of the aggregate in relation to an external horizon through functional retermination (*horizontal synergy*). Consequently, the phylogenetic pathology that a being endowed with both genetic and synoptic centers may present, is necessarily two dimensional. It is as if, instead of closing their loops as they complete themselves, the functional cycles take one more step and develop like a spiral. Each conflict located within this spiral will have to be defined according to the double dimension: 1. The vertical dimension, identified as *maturational conflicts*, involving the palingenetic process; 2. The horizontal dimension, comprising *functional conflicts* in relation to the external horizon or "life-world" (that is, the set of obstacles and random complements of a vital sym-

bolism). The vertical aspect is *chronological* and defines the *moment* of conflict in the course of the maturation cycle, while the horizontal aspect is *topographical and locates* the place of conflict in the internal horizon (in regard to its complementarity with the external horizon). When the conflict appears to be resolved in the next generation, it will be at the corresponding point of the new spiral (this is *the law of the diachronic insertion* of symbolisms born of a vertical conflict).

Everything happens as if the genetic center has a mysterious prescience of what the synoptic center needs in order to implement instinctual assemblages adapted to the external horizon at the right time, despite having no direct experience of this. In fact, it happens each time there is a new indetermination at the genetic center that corresponds with a new synoptic symbolization. This is how sensory discrimination and motor adaptation translate the progressive functional indetermination of the synoptic center into increasingly rich and multiple potentialities; this is itself dependent on the indetermination that the genetic center ultimately achieves. How can we be surprised by the similarity of the genetic center's various concentric horizons when these result from their direct or indirect symbolization? There must be an obvious correspondence between the symbolisms formed at the genetic center and those which are redetermined as a synoptic center, and then finally between these and the external horizon of the aggregate. This stratification of correspondences is one of the fundamental characteristics of the living being and gives the appearance of a teleology. This impression is accentuated by the timely establishment of *ad hoc* symbolisms during palingenesis, which follow the law of diachronic insertion. There is not a "property", an "organ" or a "function" of the living being endowed with two centers, that does not amount to the symbolization of a two-dimensional (vertical and horizontal) conflict in the genetic center. It emerges from conflicts that occur within a structure and obey immutable laws, particularly the claim that all conflict can be resolved through symbolization.

*The capacity* of symbolism to resolve the conflict from which it was born is its very essence. The manifold nucleic structure of the higher organism, the concentric interweaving of internal-external horizons around the genetic kernel (current or potential) and, finally, the constitution of this from conflicts

transmitted by synoptic mediation, each illustrate how the stratified and coherent effectiveness of all levels of symbolization is born. Any symbolism, whether it operates in a mediated or immediate way, remains in a rigorous complementarity with the contemporary lifeworld. If there is an ultimate aim or purpose, it is not defined by, or as, transcendence. It is inscribed in the very essence of symbolism, because there is no symbol that does not resolve a conflict.

And there is nothing that is not a symbol.

## 5° *Social symbolism*

### 26. *THE GENESIS OF THE APTITUDE FOR LEARNING*

For every symbolism, a conflict, and for every conflict, a symbolic solution. This is also the case at the level where the operation of sensory-motor association is symbolized. The genesis of possible derivative structures is therefore necessarily prescribed. By following the path of self-indetermination, the genesis must bear upon associative modes, representing the highest level here. The association or *synthesis* takes place passively according to ready-made combinations. Thus, in perception, the synthesis of "profiles", so well described by Husserl, can be somehow instituted.<sup>xiii</sup> Sensory bilateralization effectively produces an *automatic conflict of different yet simultaneous profiles*; the conflict awakens (redetermines) a mode of symbolization (the paths of synthesis) that is already constituted. Similarly, just like the automatic sequence of instinctual actions that is slowly awakened at a particular moment of contact with the external horizon, the succession can also be the object of a congenital and phylogenic organization of associations (see, for example, the cycle of the dog tick, cited by Uexküll). It is precisely when the phylogenetic organization of associations is conflicted to the point of affecting the genetic center that the associative pathways come to symbolize the conflict, becoming increasingly indeterminate. Whether it is the simultaneity of profiles or the

sensorimotor succession in conflict, indetermination will effectively multiply the perceptual possibilities of the present and the serial potentialities of the future. The process is the same as it is for epigenesis; the development of potentialities, with *conditional* redeterminability. This time, however – and such is the originality of this symbolization – the combination is no longer phylogenetic. On the contrary, it occurs (possibly in a reversible way, by being able to invalidate itself) in the ontogeny of the individual. A consequence of this indetermination is that what until then had happened in the anxiety of the genetic center, will henceforth only occur with *quasi-anxiety* in the synoptic center. We have just described for the most part, therefore, a possible genesis of the aptitude for “learning”, through the indetermination of associative paths.

## 27. SIGNITION<sup>xiv</sup>

Knowing how to learn is knowing how to symbolize conflict. Here, creation happens to avoid anxiety. To benefit or suffer detrimentally from our learning is to perform a function, to apply to particular cases what is already known in general terms. We *know*, for example, that one perception “announces” another, that satisfaction or danger can be “read” in advance through a particular object perceived. This *knowledge* defines the “lifeworld” of an individual (“when there is this, I must do that”). The symbols of desire or fear, formed in the external horizon, thus become *signs* of imminent contentment or a warning that pain threatens. Of course, at the outset, it is a *past of only potential significance* that is associated with a meaningful present, which can in turn become the precursor to a similar present through repetition. It is in this way, that the past can relate to the present. What presides over the association of the two is *affect* - a state of lack or fear, a state of overcoming anxiety (pleasure) and so on - through which the “lifeworld” becomes meaningful and is constituted in a set of premonitory signs. This world will be *articulated* all the more because for each state of conflict we will have *retrospectively* chosen a warning sign which will stand in for the corresponding affect. *Signition*, therefore, is not really the *creation* of symbols, but instead a *process* of symbolization. It is no less effective, however, in that it allows us to eliminate emotional conflict

through prevention and enriches the lifeworld with reference points and meanings.

## 28. PHYLOGENETIC LEARNING

If this is the case, it is questionable whether organisms that have attained a certain ability in signification (an aptitude for onto- and phylogenetic perfectibility), still have the opportunity to achieve a new genetic leap forward, or whether this is only possible in principle. In other words, does the achievement of the organism's "adaptability", not permanently protect the genetic center from anxiety? Let us summarize what we already know about genetic possibilities and the physiological structure of higher organisms. For symbolisms formed within the genetic center to pass into the synoptic center as *processes*, new modes of symbolization are required to make this passage possible but in a way that is increasingly indeterminate. *The genetic center, therefore, necessarily functions at a degree of indetermination "one notch" higher than that of the synoptic center.* It is then easy to imagine the possibility of varied "adaptive" redeterminations that are free from genetic anxiety to the extent that the genetic center knows how to continue its dialogue with the "lifeworld". *Knowledge* alone, however, cannot *create*; a conclusion we also come to when looking at the physiological structures of higher organisms. Effectively, the genetic center symbolizes with the synoptic center (its internal horizon). This, in turn, exists in a double symbolic complementarity with the rest of the organism on one hand, and the "lifeworld" (or external horizon) on the other. These concentric complementarities work synergistically. The types of conflict likely to affect these organisms are foreseeable by them and classified in advance. An organismic system "devised" in this way - which is to say that it can reorganize itself from its genetic center (autoplastic) - has no other motive than to modify itself and achieve at least a new leap in genesis.

## 29. THE SYMBOLISM OF THIRDNESS<sup>xv</sup> AS A GENETIC BOND

However inexplicable it seems, it is indisputable that this leap exists, as it appears in our human life and in human societies in general. The originality of the social does not simply reside in the group, whether it is organized or not. "Others" are part of the external horizon of many lower organisms and nothing in theory prevents the relationship to "others" being regulated according to the requirements of congenital "adaptation". In all these cases, the relationship "to others" is governed by instincts, "emerging" at the level of the genetic center (see animal "societies"). Similarly, the functional complementarity of sexual partners or of parents and offspring is found, congenitally fixed in advance, as an elementary form of sociality in animal. According to Husserl, the originality of human societies lies in the fact of communication (*kommunikative Umwelt*). However, on closer examination, indirect signitive mediation does not go beyond the framework of "adaptability" and is found - it seems - in bees, just as it is in higher vertebrates. Another criterion, also Husserlian, for the necessary and sufficient condition for sociality would be the aptitude for *Einfühlung* (empathy). But, again, we are not dealing with a human privilege. The effects of empathy are found in many animal species, from complex ways to protect offspring, through tricks to outwit the enemy, to feints in animal fights.

What seems, on the other hand, to distinguish human society decisively is the fact that no relationship between individuals is conceivable without reference to a *third term of the relationship*; a third term that can be real or imagined, but that is always effectively *absent*. In his *New Introductory Lectures*, Freud summarizes his conclusions on what he calls "group psychology". This psychological group is "a collection of individuals, who have introduced the same person into their super-ego" (SE. XXII, p.67). The problem of the proto-genesis of the social, therefore, coincides with that of the ego-id-superego triangle, whose relational prototype is the Oedipal configuration.

This common relationship with a Third Term, as Eugène Dupréel called it in works that are already old, is a *complementary social relationship*. Psychoanalysts, in turn, call it a *triangular relationship*. If no social act is conceivable



without reference to Thirdness (or its representatives), how does it present itself? We mainly note its coercive force, its dignity and value; characteristics that greatly outweigh the respective qualities of the individuals united under its sign. It both obstructs and facilitates desire, while also providing an object of and comfort from fear. Its most important role, however, is to settle conflicts. It is the Judge of judges that delivers both mercy and punishment. Its effectiveness is universal and used for all purposes. Whether absent or imaginary, it is considered, on the whole, as an emanation of the individuals themselves.

Emanating from individuals, the Third Party is thus a self-regulating symbolism in the same way as all the symbolisms we have so far studied. Like all symbolisms, it has its referential identity, its functional multiplicity, its efficacy in resolving conflicts and, most obviously, a conflictual origin. Finally, it orders and directs all the lower symbolisms that it subordinates. Through its effects, the individual is promoted to a “person” and the lifeworld promoted to a *cultural world*. *No one can dispute the reality of Thirdness without implicating this reality in the very act of challenge* (this is definitely a non-reic<sup>xvi</sup> yet immanent reality – or better, a kind of orientation of immanent reality towards a corresponding transcendence, the true object of a positive onto-theology, for which psychoanalysis has paved the way). Let us note here that any solipsistic endeavor comes up against this ultimate contradiction: we cannot be *solus* (alone) and *ipse* (oneself) at the same time. To say that I am alone in the world I need an interlocutor.

The reality of Thirdness, as the immanent polarization of individuals and not a transcendent reality, thus appears as the very foundation of social reality. We will call the way in which individuals symbolize with Thirdness, *social symbolism*.

We will leave it to the reader to develop these considerations and to note that all human culture is based on various modes of social symbolism, complementary with Thirdness.

### 30. THE PHYLOGENY OF SOCIAL SYMBOLISM

We now have to consider the best method to shed light on the phylogeny of social symbolism. This method will be the same as the interpretation of the symbol in psychoanalysis. It will proceed through four related questions: 1. What is the nature of the conflict before it is symbolized? 2. How is this latent conflict implicated in the symbolism studied? 3. What are the nature and effect of symbolization? 4. What are the synchronic and diachronic coordinates of the conflict on the spiral of palingenesis?

Let us try to answer these questions by starting with the last one. It is through language that two individuals refer to Thirdness. We can, of course, conceive of the invention of a rudimentary language without appealing to Thirdness. For this rudimentary language to take the form of human language, however, this reference is essential. It is a well-known that if, for whatever reason, a human infant fails to acquire speech before the age of 5-6 years, they irreversibly lose the ability to acquire it later.

We can conclude from this that the conflicts which led to the phylogenic invention of language must be situated at a period of palingenesis corresponding with the "anal stage" of psychoanalysis. This assertion stems from an application of the law of diachronic insertion discussed above. We also know that any symbolization transmissible by heredity must occur before the genetic center matures. This confirms the localization of phylogenic conflict at an early age.

Our investigations are therefore limited to possible conflicts at the age considered. The aptitude for language, the awakening of which we situate at the "anal stage" must be only one aspect of a more general instinctual composition. We can go so far as to hypothesise an instinct to be used by Thirdness, an instinct whose very instrument is language. Our problem is thus circumscribed a little more and defined as genetic research on Thirdness or the social instinct.

What are the immediate effects of the Thirdness instinct considered at the time of its formation? We can say from the outset that its effects are on others and that its instrument is objectivation. Thirdness's first objectivation is merely a "naming" (in the most general sense), but its evocation has a magical effect on the complementary partner. The "naming" - a phoneme corresponding to a distressing situation, for example - still provokes behaviour in the other, even

when it is evoked *outside of this situation*. It is the child who can sever the phoneme from its (situational) significance, allowing the Name to take on an additional sense – the proper social meaning – that acts on the other through Thirdness. Without insisting on this Name's processes of formalization, we can easily recognize here a simplified schema of the advent of cultural language. Thanks to language, there is a cleavage in the inter-individual relationship that, by evoking the different modes of Thirdness, allows for a reciprocity of appropriate actions between subjects. We can note a final effect of language in that modification of the other takes place at a distance, without the need for direct physical action.

Through this last remark we address the second question, namely how the symbolization of Thirdness implicates the conflict from which it was born. It is an action on the other, but at a distance. Attracting the other or making them flee, conquering or saving them, obtaining satisfaction, or using them as an instrument, all this is done without physical action. Of course, this designates direct action itself as the conflictual moment. The idea that comes to mind is that an action rendered impossible is replaced by a lesser action that is not as direct or explicit.

To interpret a symbol, we must also consider its "manifest content", which in this case, is the Name-of-the-Third [*Nom du Tier*]<sup>xvii</sup>. This is where the symbol is effective in relation to the other, and where it is a question of the effect that the evocation of the Name produces on the other. To have recourse to it, the child must connect their physical conflict with the relationship of the adult to Thirdness. For the child, the adult must experience Thirdness with the same anxiety that compromises their expression of bodily desire. In other words, the child interprets their impossible desire as a definite mode of being (also in relation to Thirdness) which is achieved precisely by proclaiming its Name. The child thus obtains a double benefit: the direct benefit of overcoming anxiety and the lateral benefit of acting on the adult.

It remains to be seen what event arouses the contradictory and unrealizable instinctual desire in the child, which is negated and expressed at the same time in a phonetic action that evokes Thirdness. The question thus posed (and can it be posed any differently?) already implies the unequivocal answer. This event can only be the child witnessing the adults' embrace in a way that

inhibits physical identification and prematurely awakens the immature instincts for copulation. To be more precise, the scene that the child witnesses is not necessarily a sexual scene, it can also be the scene of a fight. Whatever the embrace is, it has the same effect: to make the patterns of identification chaotic, just like the instinctual composition of the sexual act.

Considered from the adult's point of view, the child's cry has two opposed consequences; it is detrimental when it disturbs the sexual act, but beneficial when it ends a fight. From generation to generation, adults - themselves formerly children – become aware of the interpersonal efficacy of the Name-of-the-Third which they then know how to use in its absence. Its dual character, both beneficial and detrimental, is subject to symbolic manipulations that give rise to customary obligations and prohibitions. We will not be surprised to learn that the most archaic prohibitions are sexual, nor that the child, in their omnipotence, must undergo symbolic castration (initiation) to be admitted into the community. A social group is therefore formed under the sign of Thirdness and continues to be recreated according to external conflicts (encounters with other groups, war, cataclysm) and internal conflicts (conflicts between generations, group expansion and so on). As the group changes, so does the form of the imago that governs it. Thanks to the transcendence of Thirdness, the group can complement it as it wishes with increasingly varied modes of symbolization, all the while modifying it. The social symbolism, whose hypothetical genesis we have just outlined, has a very high degree of freedom. Not only can it redetermine itself according to concrete requirements, but it still knows how to become ever more indeterminate. It is as if it possessed virtually the full scale of possible self-indetermination, and only had to climb the rungs of the ladder over the centuries. Human functioning doubles the two-dimensional spiral of biological symbolisms with a new dimension that gives it an indefinite opening. This dimension is not unique to the group but constitutes an additional coordinate to situate any conflict affecting individuals.

### 31. *THE ONTOGENY OF THIRDNESS. THE "PRIMAL SCENE" AND "ORIGINAL SCENE"*

To support our hypothesis of deriving social symbolism from an original scene experienced by the phylogenetic infant, we can invoke an after-the-fact presumption.

Clinical psychoanalysis knows an unchanging fact that is highlighted in all cases relating to pathologies of Thirdness. We are speaking here of so-called “primal scene” affects which can be present in neurotic patients even though their biography establishes the impossibility of having witnessed such a scene. We can suppose that these affects correspond to an instinctual pastiche of the original scene, a kind of congenital conflict, that creates the necessary condition for socialization. This conflictual arrangement is normally resolved by accepting the demands of a functional Thirdness (the father, for example), a requirement that allows for the nourishment of the instinct. When symbolized satisfactorily, the “primal scene” conflict splits into a double non-conflictual relationship: with Thirdness and with the Other.<sup>xviii</sup> Only then does singular affective identification become possible and social integration begin. What happens in pathological cases? The Thirdness instinct is not fostered at the right moment or is encouraged in contradictory and inconsistent ways. Instinctual frustration is then added to congenital conflict, which leads to further antagonisms that we designate *maturational conflicts*. What interests us about these facts is the observation that all neuroses present both “primal scene” conflicts and disorders of social integration. Although this is only a partial aspect of complex neurotic formations, many psychoanalysts ascribe a valuable therapeutic criterion to the overcoming of “primal scene” anxiety.

## 32 FINAL REMARKS: THE PATHOLOGY AND THERAPY OF SOCIAL SYMBOLISM

Social pathology lends itself to two different and complementary approaches. The first is sociological and considers a group, whether simple or complex, in relation to Thirdness and questions the nature of both extrinsic and intrinsic pathologies that are likely to inhibit social functioning. Remember that the latter cannot be reduced to iteration but exercises in a renewed way its ability for self-indetermination (self-advancement). A static society is a sick society, as is a society in huge turmoil. A healthy society can be recognized

by the extent to which the paths to continual self-advancement are encouraged institutionally. We have no perfect example of such a society, but the fact remains that its demand is prefigured - positively in the form of a wish, or negatively in the form of refusal - in all social movements.

The second approach to social pathology is psychoanalytic and centered on the individual, considered in their double relational polarity that involves Thirdness and the Other simultaneously. The pathologies brought to the attention of psychoanalysts are not necessarily those that provoke conflicts, but those which prevent them from being symbolized at the social level. Symbolizing at this level means that an open, creative solution, replaces a repetitive one. This would be a fairly precise meaning of the psychoanalytic term *sublimation*. The ontogenesis of the social ego is accomplished by a progressive awakening - in connection with the occurrence of *timely* endogenous and exogenous conflicts - of the instinct to sublimate.<sup>xix</sup> To sublimate is not the same as to adapt. When subjected to adaptive coercion, the vast majority of individuals find their uniquely human instinct frustrated. There is also another way to put the sublimation instinct to sleep; to systematically suppress essential maturational conflicts. The resulting frustration is not otherwise lacking in inventing conflicts from scratch. In either case, the disorder boils down to situations where the awakening or flourishing of social symbolism is opposed. The gap thus produced in the instinctual fulfillment of a particular stage of development, gives rise to anxious anticipations of impotence, the only possible mode of symbolizing *maturational conflict*. In relations with the Other, this state of affairs manifests itself in the *guilt of the desire for accomplishment*, as well as in defensive stances against this guilt.

The goal of psychoanalytic therapy is to restore the instinct for sublimation. Sociological therapy must aim towards an identical end; to institutionalize the optimal conditions for sublimation. In both cases, the path can be debated, but no person of good faith will question the end goal.

N. A.

*Paris, April-September, 1961.*

<sup>i</sup> “The Symbol: or Beyond the Phenomenon” translates perhaps Nicolas Abraham’s most important early text “*Le symbole: ou l’au-delà du phénomène*” originally published in 1962 and collected in his posthumous 1978 collection *L’Écorce et le noyau* (Paris: Aubier Flammarion). In this translation, footnotes without attribution are from the original text. Where I have added notes to clarify more ambiguous terms or unfamiliar concepts in the translation, I begin these with the initials TG.

<sup>ii</sup> TG - This translates Abraham’s term *in-détermination* better than the more obvious “indeterminacy” as it suggests a more active process of rendering the symbol indeterminate, that will be more useful as the term is developed here.

<sup>iii</sup> TG - This is a term coined by Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) to describe an object-fetishism that he saw as pervading a realist scientific approach. In a different context it is also used to describe the fiction of Alain Robbe-Grillet (1953-2008) who uses obsessive descriptions of inanimate objects to produce narrative effects instead of the more typical tropes of characterization, temporality and dramatic action.

<sup>iv</sup> TG - Imaginal here translates *imaginale* in the original. It refers to the transphenomenal processes underpinning the emergence and understanding of the symbol that cannot be reduced to object or subjective explanations. Unlike Abraham’s use so far of “*imago*” as the inner and unconscious representation of a key figure in infancy, this is not a realm of images (as one meaning of the term suggests) although it explores the operations through which conscious images emerge. A more useful understanding is taken from the metamorphic processes of lepidoptera where the imaginal stage describes the final emergence of the butterfly or moth in its adult form (also the *imago*). This analogy bristles beneath the surface of Abraham’s text as the metamorphosis of lepidoptera suggests processes that are hidden (in a chrysalis), in which there is a complete decomposition of the caterpillar form through cellular collapse and the re-emergence of a butterfly or moth as a brand new and superior form. The movement between indetermination and redetermination in the symbolic operation parallels this transition, with the avenues of higher potentiality being inscribed in silences in the lower form – in lepidoptera, dormant imaginal cells are activated to form the butterfly from the organic matter of decomposition. Transposed into the realm of psychoanalytic listening (clinical and theoretical) the metamorphic process is more uncertain and difficult to locate using the usual tools of subjective or objective enquiry – its processes are both hidden and indeterminate. Abraham describes the new senses and capabilities required to engage with the symbolic operation in terms of resonance and unconscious communication and the always ambiguous reveries that result.

<sup>v</sup> This resonance was described as the basis of aesthetic experience in a talk given at Cerisy-la-Salle for a conference on “Art and Psychoanalysis” in 1962 (See Abraham’s text “Psychoanalytic Aesthetics: Time, Rhythm and the Unconscious” in *Rhythms: On the Work, Translation, and Psychoanalysis*. California: Stanford UP, 107-132)

<sup>vi</sup> TG – These terms refer to Husserl’s phenomenology and generally denote enigmatic things and mechanisms that form the (unconscious) substratum of phenomenological experience.

<sup>vii</sup> TG – Abraham is again drawing on his expertise in phenomenology (especially Husserl) here. The distinction between *descriptive* and *genetic phenomenology* Abraham uses is a distinction between the classification of various mental phenomena and a search for its cause. The genetic horizon of phenomena is precisely this turn towards causes – or more specifically causal operations.

<sup>viii</sup> TG – Note how Abraham capitalises *Arche* at this point. French psychoanalysis capitalises distinctively psychoanalytic terms as standard practice, a point that Abraham explores in detail in his 1968 text “The Shell and the Kernel” (1994, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 79-98). We can see here the change from a phenomenological to a psychoanalytic-transphenomenological register, as also happens with related terms in this text such as Dyad, Ego, Other and Anxiety. I will maintain Abraham’s uses of capitalisation in every case in this translation.

<sup>ix</sup> TG – In his text “Systems Theory, The Key to Holism and Reductionism”. *BioScience* 24(10), 1974, G. Becht notes, “Biology is...above all, the doctrine of ‘real’ intra-individual living systems. Transbiology, therefore, becomes the doctrine of extra- and interindividual living systems” (573).

<sup>x</sup> TG – The term “lifeworld” (*Lebenswelt*) here is borrowed from Husserl and has two senses. The first is to denote the set of beliefs that form the intentional background of a subject from which his or her actual acts make sense. Secondly, there is a social dimension to this that is increasingly important in Abraham’s usage. Here, the lifeworld denotes the way members of a social group create a common “homeworld” that can be looked upon as a system of cultural and linguistic meanings that provide an *a priori* framework for interpreting the world according to categories and objects provided by this structure.

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<sup>xi</sup> See “*Parenthèses*”, in Abraham’s “*Pour introduire l’Instinct filial*”. *L’Écorce et le noyau*. (1978, p.335)

<sup>xii</sup> We can observe that in our terminology, the genetic center corresponds with the "germ", the external horizon with the "soma" and the synoptic center to the "nervous system" of biologists.

<sup>xiii</sup> TG – For Husserl, when we perceive an object, we see only one aspect, or “profile” (also “adumbration”) of it. Our intention, however, is directed toward the object as a whole; the kernel of what is actually presented. Our perceptual profile, therefore, anticipates other possible profiles of the object that could be perceived (inner horizon) as well as other objects that formulate the environment of what we perceive (external horizon). With every “given” of perception, co-givens are also anticipated that create the intentional fullness of object-perception. Perceptual experience of an object is not only constituted by what is given but also by expectations of how it will look from different profiles.

<sup>xiv</sup> TG – Abraham uses “*la signation*” in the original text as a neologism to refer to how the symbolic operation creates meaning and references points in the lifeworld so that potential conflicts can be better anticipated. It also denotes how the symbol can manage these conflicts should they occur.

<sup>xv</sup> TG – I translate Abraham’s “*tiers*” here as “thirdness” (and sometimes “third term” when it suits the grammar) to denote its lack of a specific object, or at least the supplementary status of that object – the term is functional. *Thirdness* has more recently become a particularly prominent and useful designation of the triangular structures that proliferate in psychoanalysis and stretch beyond a simple Oedipal dynamic. A generation after Abraham’s writing, thirdness has been developed in a way that is pre-empted here, especially in the work of André Green (see his *On Private Madness*, 1986)

<sup>xvi</sup> TG – In his description of the phenomenology of aesthetic experience, Etienne Souriau (*La Correspondance des art* [Paris: Flammarion, 1947], pp.45-72) determines that the study of aesthetic objects must proceed according to three degrees or planes of existence: the phenomenal (how it appears to the senses), the reic and the transcendental (an appreciation of the inexpressible content). The reic is the world of being and things that art produces through its sensuous play in bringing qualia together in different harmonies.

<sup>xvii</sup> TG – The nomination that issues from cultural language and carries its rules and conventions. Readers will hear the resonance between Abraham’s *Nom du Tier* and Lacan’s *nom du père* introduced in his 1955-6 seminar, *The Psychoses*. Lacan’s term denotes both the function and prohibition of the father-figure in the Symbolic Order and becomes more detached from his person as the concept is developed. As such, the resonance with Abraham’s *Nom du Tiers* is more than just phonological, although Thirdness here is opened beyond the subjection of individuals to cultural patriarchy and has a distinct creative function as well as the imposition of law.

<sup>xviii</sup> TG – the authority figure that haunts the scene (the Third Term) and institutes rules, accepted meaning in language and, ultimately the superego plus the others in the scene (the mother and father) who are positioned under its sign and with whom the child can now identify less chaotically.

<sup>xix</sup> The ability to sublimate deserves the name of instinct insofar as it results from an indetermination operating from the genetic center and it requires complements (inhibitions) from the external horizon (of the social group). Furthermore, according to our hypothesis, the sublimation inserted into sexual development cannot be separated from the sexual instincts, precisely for which it would alter its course in the direction of indetermination.