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AGGRESSIVITY IN PSYCHOANALYSIS

The preceding report concerned the use we make of the notion of aggressivity in the clinic and in therapy. It remains to me to prove to you whether or not this notion can be developed into a concept capable of scientific use, that is to say, capable of objectifying facts of a comparable order in reality, or, more categorically, of establishing a dimension of experience whose objectified facts may be regarded as variables.

All of us here share an experience based upon a technique, a system of concepts to which we remain faithful, partly because this system was developed by the man who opened up to us all the ways to that experience, and partly because it bears the living mark of the different stages of its elaboration. That is to say, contrary to the dogmatism that is sometimes imputed to us, we know that this system remains open both as a whole and in several of its articulations.

These gaps seem to focus on the enigmatic signification that Freud expressed in the term *death instinct*, which, rather like the figure of the Sphinx, reveals the aporia that confronted this great mind in the most profound attempt so far made to formulate an experience of man in the register of biology.

This aporia lies at the heart of the notion of aggressivity, the importance of whose role in the economy of the psyche we are only just beginning to realize.

This is why the question of the metapsychological nature of the death tendencies is continually being discussed by our theoreticians, not without contradiction, and often, it must be admitted, in a somewhat formalist way.

I would just like to make a few remarks, propose a number of theses on the subject. They are the fruit of years of reflexion on the veritable aporia of the doctrine, and of the feeling that I have on reading many of these theoretical studies of our responsibility in the present evolution of psychology in the laboratory and as treatment. I am thinking, on the one hand, of the researches of the so-called behaviourists, who, it seems to me, owe their best results (slender as they often are in comparison with the apparatus with which they surround themselves) to the often implicit use they make of categories introduced into psychology by psychoanalysis; and, on the other hand, I am thinking of the kinds of treatment, given to both adults and children, that might be grouped together under the heading *psychodramatic* treatment, and which seeks its efficacy in the abreaction that it tries to exhaust on the level of play, and in which, again, classical psychoanalysis provides the principal underlying notions.

THESIS I

Aggressivity manifests itself in an experience that is subjective by its very constitution.

It would be useful to return to the phenomenon of psychoanalytic experience. In approaching first principles, this reflexion is often omitted.

It can be said that psychoanalytic action is developed in and through verbal communication, that is, in a dialectical grasp of meaning. It presupposes, therefore, a subject who manifests himself as such to the intention of another.

It cannot be objected that this subjectivity must necessarily be obsolete according to the ideal fulfilled by physics, which eliminates it by means of the recording apparatus – though it cannot, incidentally, avoid the possibility of personal error in the reading of the result.

Only a subject can understand a meaning; conversely, every phenomenon of meaning implies a subject. In analysis a subject offers himself as being capable of being understood, and indeed *is* capable of being understood: introspection and supposedly projective intuition do not constitute here the vitiations of principle that a psychology, taking its first steps along the path of science, has regarded as insuperable. This would be to create an obstacle out of abstractly isolated moments of the dialogue, when one should be concerning oneself with its movement: it was Freud's great merit to have taken risks in this direction, and then to have overcome them with a rigorous technique.

Can his results form the basis of a positive science? Yes, if the experience is verifiable by everyone. But this experience, constituted between two subjects one of whom plays in the dialogue the role of ideal impersonality (a point to which I shall return later), may, once it is completed, and providing that it fulfils the conditions of efficiency that may be required of any special research, be resumed by the other subject with a third subject. This apparently initiatory way is simply a transmission by recurrence, which should cause surprise to no one, since it springs from the very bipolar structure of all subjectivity. Only the speed of diffusion of the experience is affected by it, and although its restriction to a particular cultural area may be a matter of dispute, everything would indicate that its results may be sufficiently relativized to provide a generalization capable of satisfying the humanitarian postulate that is inseparable from the spirit of science.

THESIS II

Aggressivity in experience is given to us as intended aggression and as an image of corporal dislocation, and it is in such forms that it shows itself to be efficient.

The analytic experience allows us to feel the pressure of intention. We read it in the symbolic meaning of symptoms, as soon as the subject throws off the defences by which he disconnects them from their relations with his daily life and his history, in the implicit

finality of his behaviour and his rejections, in his unsuccessful acts, in the avowal of his privileged phantasies, and in the riddles of his dream life.

We can measure it partly in the demanding tone that sometimes underlies his whole discourse, in his unfinished sentences, his hesitations, his inflexions and his slips of the tongue, in the inaccuracies of his descriptions of events, irregularities in his application of the analytic rule, late arrivals at sessions, calculated absences, and often in recriminations, reproaches, phantasmic fears, emotional reactions of anger, attempts at intimidation; the true acts of violence being as rare as the combination of circumstances that has led the patient to the doctor, and his transformation, accepted by the patient himself, in a convention of dialogue, would lead one to expect.

The efficacy proper to this aggressive intention is manifest: we constantly observe it in the formative action of an individual on those dependent on him; intended aggressivity gnaws away, undermines, disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death: 'And I thought you were impotent!' growled a mother, suddenly transformed into a tigress, to her son, who, with great difficulty, had admitted to her his homosexual tendencies. And one could see that her permanent aggressivity as a virile woman had had its effect; I have always found it impossible, in such cases, to divert the blows away from the analytic enterprise.

This aggressivity is exercised within real constraints of course. But we know from experience that it is no less effective when given expression: a severe parent is intimidating by his or her very presence, and the image of the Punisher scarcely needs to be brandished for the child to form it. Its effects are more far-reaching than any act of brutality.

After the repeated failures of classical psychology to account for these mental phenomena, which, using a term whose expressive value is confirmed by all its semantic acceptations, we call images, psychoanalysis made the first successful attempt to operate at the level of the concrete reality that they represent. This was because it set out from their formative function in the subject, and revealed that if the transient images determine such individual inflexions of the tendencies, it is as variations of the matrices that those other specific images, which we refer to by the ancient term of *imago*, are constituted for the 'instincts' themselves.

Among these *imagos* are some that represent the elective vectors of aggressive intentions, which they provide with an efficacy that might be called magical. These are the images of castration, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, bursting open of the body, in short, the *imagos* that I have grouped together under the apparently structural term of *imagos of the fragmented body*.

There is a specific relation here between man and his own body that is manifested in a series of social practices – from rites involving tattooing, incision, and circumcision in primitive societies to what, in advanced societies, might be called the Procrustean arbitrariness of fashion, a relatively recent cultural innovation, in that it denies respect for the natural forms of the human body.

One only has to listen to children aged between two and five playing, alone or together, to know that the pulling off of the head and the ripping open of the belly are themes that occur spontaneously to their imagination, and that this is corroborated by the experience of the doll torn to pieces.

We must turn to the works of Hieronymus Bosch for an atlas of all the aggressive images that torment mankind. The prevalence that psychoanalysis has discovered among

them of images of a primitive autoscopy of the oral and cloacal organs has engendered the forms of demons. These are to be found even in the ogee of the *angustiae* of birth depicted in the gates of the abyss through which they thrust the damned, and even in the narcissistic structure of those glass spheres in which the exhausted partners of the garden of delights are held captive.

These phantasmagorias crop up constantly in dreams, especially at the point when analysis appears to be turning its attention on the most fundamental, most archaic fixations. I remember the dream of one of my patients, whose aggressive drives took the form of obsessive phantasies; in the dream he saw himself driving a car, accompanied by the woman with whom he was having a rather difficult affair, pursued by a flying-fish, whose skin was so transparent that one could see the horizontal liquid level through the body, an image of vesical persecution of great anatomical clarity.

These are all initial givens of a *Gestalt* proper to aggression in man: a *Gestalt* that is as much bound up with its symbolic character as with the cruel refinement of the weapons he makes, at least at the earlier, craft-stage of his industry. It is this imaginary function that I should now like to elucidate.

I should state at the outset that to attempt a Behaviourist reduction of the analytic process – to which a concern for rigour, quite unjustified in my view, seems to impel some of us – is to deprive it of its most important subjective givens, of which the privileged phantasies are the witnesses in consciousness, and which have enabled us to conceive of the identification-forming *imago*.

THESIS III

The springs of aggressivity decide the reasons that motivate the technique of analysis.

In itself, dialogue seems to involve a renunciation of aggressivity; from Socrates onwards, philosophy has always placed its hope in the triumph of reason. And yet ever since Thrasymachus made his stormy exit at the beginning of the *Republic*, verbal dialectic has all too often proved a failure.

I have emphasized that the analyst cured even the most serious cases of madness through dialogue; what virtue, then, did Freud add to it?

The rule proposed to the patient in analysis allows him to advance in a blind intentionality that has no other purpose than to free him from an illness or an ignorance whose very limits he is unaware of.

His voice alone will be heard for a time whose duration remains at the discretion of the analyst. In particular, it will soon become apparent, indeed confirmed, that the analyst refrains from offering any kind of advice or trying to influence the patient in any particular direction. This constraint would seem to run counter to the desired end, and so must be justified by some deeper motive.

What, then, lies behind the analyst's attitude? The concern to provide the dialogue with a participant who is as devoid as possible of individual characteristics; we efface ourselves, we deprive the speaker of those expressions of interest, sympathy, and reaction

that he expects to find on the face of the listener, we avoid all expression of personal taste, we conceal whatever might betray them, we become depersonalized, and try to represent for the other an ideal of impassibility.

In such behaviour we express not simply the apathy that we must have brought about in ourselves if we are to understand our subject, nor are we simply preparing the oracular form that our interpretative intervention must take against this background of inertia.

We wish to avoid the trap that already lies concealed in the appeal, marked by the eternal pathos of faith, that the patient addresses to us. It carries a secret within itself. 'Take upon yourself,' the patient is telling us, 'the evil that weighs me down; but if you remain smug, self-satisfied, unruffled as you are now, you won't be worthy of bearing it.'

What appears here as the proud revenge of suffering will show its true face – and sometimes at a moment decisive enough to enter the 'negative therapeutic reaction' that interested Freud so much – in the form of that resistance of *amour-propre*, to use the term in all the depth given it by La Rochefoucauld, and which is often expressed thus: 'I can't bear the thought of being freed by anyone other than myself.'

Of course, at a deeper level of emotional demand, it is participation in his illness that the patient expects from us. But it is the hostile reaction that guides our prudence, and which inspired Freud to be on his guard against any temptation to play the prophet. Only saints are sufficiently detached from the deepest of the common passions to avoid the aggressive reactions to charity.

As to presenting our own virtues and merits by way of example, the only person I have known to resort to such reactions was some establishment figure, thoroughly imbued with the idea, naïve as it was austere, of his own apostolic value; I well remember the fury he unleashed.

In any case, such reactions should hardly surprise us analysts; after all, do we not point out the aggressive motives that lie hidden in all so-called philanthropic activity?

Yet we must bring into play the subject's aggressivity towards us, because, as we know, these intentions form the negative transference that is the initial knot of the analytic drama.

This phenomenon represents in the patient the imaginary transference on to our person of one of the more or less archaic *imagos*, which, by an effect of symbolic subduction, degrades, diverts, or inhibits the cycle of such behaviour, which, by an accident of repression, has excluded from the control of the ego this or that function or corporal segment, and which, by an action of identification, has given its form to this or that agency of the personality.

It can be seen that the slightest pretext is enough to arouse the aggressive intention, which reactualizes the *imago*, which has remained permanent at the level of symbolic overdetermination that we call the subject's unconscious, together with its intentional correlation.

Such a mechanism often proves to be extremely simple in hysteria: in the case of a girl suffering from astasia-abasia, who for months had resisted various kinds of therapeutic suggestion, my person was immediately identified with a combination of the most unpleasant features that the object of a passion represented for her; it should be added that her passionate feelings were fairly strongly marked by an element of delusion. The subjacent *imago* was that of her father, and it was enough for me to remark that she had lacked paternal support (a lack which I knew had dominated her biography in highly

dramatic fashion) for her to be cured of her symptom, without, it might be said, her having understood anything, or her morbid passion being in any way affected.

These knots are more difficult to break, we know, in obsessional neuroses, precisely because of the well-known fact that its structure is intended particularly to disguise, to displace, to deny, to divide, and to subdue the aggressive intention, by means of a defensive decomposition very similar in principle to that illustrated by the stepping and staggering techniques employed in military fortification at the time of Louis XIV – indeed, a number of my patients have themselves resorted to metaphors of military fortification to describe the workings of their own defences.

As to the role of aggressive intention in phobia, it is, as it were, manifest.

It is no bad thing, then, to reactivate such an intention in psychoanalysis.

What we try to avoid by our technique is allowing the patient's aggressive intention to find the support of an idea of our person sufficiently elaborated for it to be able to be organized in those reactions of opposition, negation, ostentation, and lying that our experience has shown us to be the characteristic modes of the agency of the ego in dialogue.

I am characterizing this agency here not by the theoretical construction that Freud gives of it in his metapsychology, namely, as the *perception-consciousness* system, but by the phenomenological essence that he recognizes as being in experience the most constant attribute of the ego, namely, *Verneinung*, the givens of which he urges us to appreciate in the most general index of a prejudicial inversion.

In short, we call ego that nucleus given to consciousness, but opaque to reflexion, marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-satisfaction to 'bad faith' (*mauvaise foi*), structure the experience of the passions in the human subject; this 'I' who, in order to admit its facticity to existential criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretences and *méconnaissances* to the concrete problematic of the realization of the subject.

Far from attacking it head-on, the analytic maieutic adopts a round-about approach that amounts in fact to inducing in the subject a controlled paranoia. Indeed, it is one of the aspects of analytic action to operate the projection of what Melanie Klein calls *bad internal objects*, a paranoid mechanism certainly, but one that is here highly systematized, filtered, as it were, and properly checked.

It is the aspect of our *praxis* that corresponds to the category of space, however little it embraces that imaginary space in which the dimension of the symptoms that structures them as excluded islets, inert scotomas, or parasitical compulsions in the functions of the person is developed.

To the other dimension, the temporal, corresponds anxiety and its effects, whether patent as in the phenomenon of flight or inhibition, or latent as when it appears only with the motivating *imago*.

Again, let us repeat, this *imago* is revealed only in so far as our attitude offers the subject the pure mirror of an unruffled surface.

But let us imagine what would take place in a patient who saw in his analyst an exact replica of himself. Everyone feels that the excess of aggressive tension would set up such an obstacle to the manifestation of the transference that its useful effect could only be brought about extremely slowly, and this is what sometimes happens in the analysis of prospective analysts. To take an extreme case, if experienced in the form of strangeness

proper to the apprehensions of the *double*, this situation would set up an uncontrollable anxiety on the part of the analysand.

THESIS IV

Aggressivity is the correlative tendency of a mode of identification that we call narcissistic, and which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world.

The subjective experience of analysis immediately inscribes its results in concrete psychology. Let us indicate simply what it brings to the psychology of the emotions by showing the signification common to states as diverse as phantasmatic fear, anger, active sorrow, or psychasthenic fatigue.

To pass now from the subjectivity of intention to the notion of a tendency to aggression is to make the leap from the phenomenology of our experience to metapsychology.

But this leap manifests nothing more than a requirement of thought which, in order to objectify the register of aggressive reactions, and given its inability to seriate this leap in a quantitative variation, must understand it in a formula of equivalence. This is the use we make of it in the notion of *libido*.

The aggressive tendency proves to be fundamental in a certain series of significant states of the personality, namely, the paranoid and paranoiac psychoses.

In my work I have emphasized that one could co-ordinate by their strictly parallel seriation the quality of the aggressive reaction to be expected from a particular form of paranoia with the stage of mental genesis represented by the delusion that is symptomatic of this same form. A relation that appears even more profound when – I have shown this in the case of a curable form, self-punishing paranoia – the aggressive act resolves the delusional construction.

Thus the aggressive reaction is seriated in a continuous manner, from the sudden, unmotivated outburst of the act, through the whole gamut of belligerent forms, to the cold war of interpretative demonstrations, paralleled by imputations of noxiousness which, not to mention the obscure *kakon* to which the paranoid attributes his alienation from all living contact, rising in stages from a motivation based on the register of a highly primitive organicism (poison), to a magical one (evil spells), a telepathic one (influence), a lesional one (physical intrusion), an abusive one (distortion of intention), a dispossessive one (appropriation of secrets), a profanatory one (violation of intimacy), a juridical one (prejudice), a persecutive one (spying and intimidation), one involving prestige (defamation and attacks on one's honour), and revenge (damage and exploitation).

I have shown that in each case this series, in which we find all the successive envelopes of the biological and social status of the person, retains the original organization of the forms of the ego and of the object, which are also affected by this series in their structure, even to the spatial and temporal categories in which the ego and

the object are constituted, experienced as events in a perspective of mirages, as affections with something stereotypical about them that suspends the workings of the ego/object dialectic.

Janet, who demonstrated so admirably the signification of feelings of persecution as phenomenological moments in social behaviour, did not explore their common character, which is precisely that they are constituted by a stagnation of one of these moments, similar in their strangeness to the faces of actors when a film is suddenly stopped in mid-action.

Now, this formal stagnation is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge: that which constitutes the ego and its objects with attributes of permanence, identity, and substantiality, in short, with entities or 'things' that are very different from the *Gestalten* that experience enables us to isolate in the shifting field, stretched in accordance with the lines of animal desire.

In fact, this formal fixation, which introduces a certain rupture of level, a certain discord between man's organization and his *Umwelt*, is the very condition that extends indefinitely his world and his power, by giving his objects their instrumental polyvalence and symbolic polyphony, and also their potential as defensive armour.

What I have called paranoid knowledge is shown, therefore, to correspond in its more or less archaic forms to certain critical moments that mark the history of man's mental genesis, each representing a stage in objectifying identification.

By simple observation we can obtain a glimpse of these different stages in the child's development. A Charlotte Bühler, an Elsa Köhler, and, following in their footsteps, the Chicago School have revealed several levels of significative manifestations; but only the analytic experience can give them their true value by making it possible to reintegrate the subjective relation into them.

The first level shows us that experience of oneself in the earliest stage of childhood develops, in so far as it refers to one's counterpart, from a situation experienced as undifferentiated. Thus about the age of eight months, we see in these confrontations between children (which, if they are to be fruitful, must be between children whose age differential is no more than two and a half months) those gestures of fictitious actions by which a subject reconducts the imperfect effort of the other's gesture by confusing their distinct application, those synchronies of spectacular captation that are all the more remarkable in that they precede the complete co-ordination of the motor apparatuses that they bring into play.

Thus the aggressivity that is manifested in the retaliations of taps and blows cannot be regarded solely as a playful manifestation of the exercise of strengths and their employment in the mapping of the body. It must be understood in an order of broader co-ordination: one that will subordinate the functions of tonic postures and vegetative tension to a social relativity – in this regard, one might mention Wallon's remarkable work, which has drawn our attention to the prevalence of such a social relativity in the expressive constitution of the human emotions.

Furthermore, I believed myself that I could show that on such occasions the child anticipates on the mental plane the conquest of the functional unity of his own body, which, at that stage, is still incomplete on the plane of voluntary motility.

What we have there is a first captation by the image in which the first stage of the dialectic of identifications can be discerned. It is linked to a *Gestalt* phenomenon, the

child's very early perception of the human form, a form which, as we know, holds the child's interest in the first months of life, and even, in the case of the human face, from the tenth day. But what demonstrates the phenomenon of recognition, which involves subjectivity, are the signs of triumphant jubilation and playful discovery that characterize, from the sixth month, the child's encounter with his image in the mirror. This behaviour contrasts strikingly with the indifference shown even by animals that perceive this image, the chimpanzee, for example, when they have tested its objectal vanity, and it becomes even more apparent when one realizes that it occurs at an age when the child, as far as instrumental intelligence is concerned, is backward in relation to the chimpanzee, which he catches up with only at eleven months.

What I have called the *mirror stage* is interesting in that it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject originally identifies himself with the visual *Gestalt* of his own body: in relation to the still very profound lack of co-ordination of his own motility, it represents an ideal unity, a salutary *imago*; it is invested with all the original distress resulting from the child's intra-organic and relational discordance during the first six months, when he bears the signs, neurological and humoral, of a physiological natal prematuration.

It is this captation by the *imago* of the human form, rather than an *Einfühlung* the absence of which is made abundantly clear in early infancy, which, between the ages of six months and two and a half years, dominates the entire dialectic of the child's behaviour in the presence of his similars. During the whole of this period, one will record the emotional reactions and the articulated evidences of a normal transitivity. The child who strikes another says that he has been struck; the child who sees another fall, cries. Similarly, it is by means of an identification with the other than he sees the whole gamut of reactions of bearing and display, whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviour, the slave being identified with the despot, the actor with the spectator, the seduced with the seducer.

There is a sort of structural crossroads here to which we must accommodate our thinking if we are to understand the nature of aggressivity in man and its relation with the formalism of his ego and his objects. It is in this erotic relation, in which the human individual fixes upon himself an image that alienates him from himself, that are to be found the energy and the form on which this organization of the passions that he will call his ego is based.

This form will crystallize in the subject's internal conflictual tension, which determines the awakening of his desire for the object of the other's desire: here the primordial coming together (*concoirs*) is precipitated into aggressive competitiveness (*concurrence*), from which develops the triad of others, the ego and the object, which, spanning the space of specular communion, is inscribed there according to a formalism proper to itself that so dominates the affective *Einfühlung* that a child of that age may mistake the identity of the most familiar people if they appear in an entirely different context.

But if the ego appears to be marked from its very origin by this aggressive relativity – in which minds lacking in objectivity might recognize the emotional erections caused in an animal solicited, incidentally, in the course of its experimental conditioning, by a desire – how can one not conceive that each great instinctual metamorphosis in the life of

the individual will once again challenge its delimitation, composed as it is of a conjunction of the subject's history and the unthinkable innateness of his desire?

This is why, except at a limit that even the greatest geniuses have never been able to approach, man's ego can never be reduced to his experienced identity; and in the depressive disruptions of the experienced reverses of inferiority, it engenders essentially the mortal negations that fix it in its formalism. 'I am nothing of what happens to me. You are nothing of value.'

And the two moments, when the subject denies himself and when he charges the other, become confused, and one discovers in him that paranoiac structure of the ego that finds its analogue in the fundamental negations described by Freud as the three delusions of jealousy, erotomania, and interpretation. It is the especial delusion of the misanthropic '*belle âme*', throwing back on to the world the disorder of which his being is composed.

Subjective experience must be fully enabled to recognize the central nucleus of ambivalent aggressivity, which in the present stage of our culture is given to us under the dominant species of *resentment*, even in its earliest aspects in the child. Thus, because he lived at a similar time, without having to suffer from a behaviourist resistance in the sense that we ourselves do, St Augustin foreshadowed psychoanalysis when he expressed such behaviour in the following exemplary image: '*Vidi ego et expertus sum zelantem parvulum: nondum loquebatur et intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu conlactaneum suum*' (I have seen with my own eyes and known very well an infant in the grip of jealousy: he could not yet speak, and already he observed his foster-brother, pale and with an envenomed stare). Thus, with the *infans* (pre-verbal) stage of early childhood, the situation of spectacular absorption is permanently tied: the child observed, the emotional reaction (pale), and this reactivation of images of primordial frustration (with an envenomed stare) that are the psychical and somatic co-ordinates of original aggressivity.

Only Melanie Klein, working on the child at the very limit of the appearance of language, dared to project subjective experience back to that earlier period when observation enables us nevertheless to affirm its dimension, in the simple fact for example that a child who does not speak reacts differently to punishment or brutality.

Through her we know the function of the imaginary primordial enclosure formed by the *imago* of the mother's body; through her we have the cartography, drawn by the children's own hands, of the mother's internal empire, the historical atlas of the intestinal divisions in which the *imagos* of the father and brothers (real or virtual), in which the voracious aggression of the subject himself, dispute their deleterious dominance over her sacred regions. We know, too, the persistence in the subject of this shadow of the *bad internal objects*, linked with some accidental *association* (to use a term that we should accept in the organic sense that it assumes in our experience, as opposed to the abstract sense that it retains in Humean ideology). Hence we can understand by what structural means the re-evocation of certain imaginary *personae*, the reproduction of certain situational inferiorities may *disconcert* in the most strictly predictable way the adult's voluntary functions: namely, their fragmenting effect on the *imago* of the original identification.

By showing us the primordially of the 'depressive position', the extreme archaism of the subjectification of a *kakon*, Melanie Klein pushes back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification operate, and in particular enables us to situate as perfectly original the first formation of the superego.

But it is of particular importance to define the orbit within which, as far as our theoretical reflexion is concerned, are ordered the relations – by no means all elucidated – of guilt tension, oral noxiousness, hypochondriacal fixation, even that primordial masochism that we exclude from our field of study, in order to isolate the notion of an aggressivity linked to the narcissistic relation and to the structures of systematic *méconnaissance* and objectification that characterize the formation of the ego.

To the *Urbild* of this formation, alienating as it is by virtue of its capacity to render extraneous, corresponds a peculiar satisfaction deriving from the integration of an original organic disarray, a satisfaction that must be conceived in the dimension of a vital dehiscence that is constitutive of man, and which makes unthinkable the idea of an environment that is preformed for him, a ‘negative’ libido that enables the Heraclitean notion of Discord, which the Ephesian believed to be prior to harmony, to shine once more.

When speaking of the problem of repression, Freud asks himself where the ego obtains the energy it puts at the service of the ‘reality principle’ – we need look no further.

There can be no doubt that it derives from the ‘narcissistic passion’, if, that is, one conceives of the ego according to the subjective notion that I am proposing here, as conforming with the register of my experience. The theoretical difficulties encountered by Freud seem to me in fact to derive from the mirage of objectification, inherited from classical psychology, constituted by the idea of the *perception/consciousness* system, in which Freud seems suddenly to fail to recognize the existence of everything that the ego neglects, scotomizes, misconstrues in the sensations that make it react to reality, everything that it ignores, exhausts, and binds in the significations that it receives from language: a surprising *méconnaissance* on the part of the man who succeeded by the power of his dialectic in forcing back the limits of the unconscious.

Just as the senseless oppression of the superego lies at the root of the motivated imperatives of conscience, the passionate desire peculiar to man to impress his image in reality is the obscure basis of the rational mediations of the will.

The notion of aggressivity as a correlative tension of the narcissistic structure in the coming-into-being (*devenir*) of the subject enables us to understand in a very simply formulated function all sorts of accidents and atypicalities in that coming-into-being.

I shall now say something about how I conceive of the dialectical relation with the function of the Oedipus complex. In its normal state, this complex is one of sublimation, which designates precisely an identificatory reshaping of the subject, and, as Freud wrote when he felt the need for a ‘topographical’ co-ordination of the psychical dynamisms, a *secondary identification* by introjection of the *imago* of the parent of the same sex.

The energy for that identification is provided by the first biological upsurge of genital libido. But it is clear that the structural effect of identification with the rival is not self-evident, except at the level of fable, and can only be conceived of if the way is prepared for it by a primary identification that structures the subject as a rival with himself. In fact, the note of biological impotence is met with again here, as is the effect of anticipation characteristic of the genesis of the human psyche, in the fixation of an imaginary ‘ideal’, which, as analysis has shown, decides the conformity of the ‘instinct’ to the physiological sex of the individual. A point, let it be said in passing, whose anthropological implications cannot be too highly stressed. What concerns us here is the function that I

shall call the pacifying function of the ego ideal, the connexion between its libidinal normativity and a cultural normativity bound up from the dawn of history with the *imago* of the father. Here, obviously, lies the import that Freud's work, *Totem and Taboo*, still retains, despite the mythical circularity that vitiates it, in so far as it derives from the mythological event, the murder of the father, the subjective dimension that gives this event meaning, namely, guilt.

Freud shows us, in fact, that the need to participate, which neutralizes the conflict inscribed after the murder in the situation of rivalry between the brothers, is the basis of the identification with the paternal Totem. Thus the Oedipal identification is that by which the subject transcends the aggressivity that is constitutive of the primary subjective individuation. I have stressed elsewhere how it constitutes a step in the establishment of that distance by which, with feelings like respect, is realized a whole affective assumption of one's neighbour.

Only the antidialectical mentality of a culture which, in order to be dominated by objectifying ends, tends to reduce all subjective activity to the being of the ego, can justify the astonishment of a Van den Steinen when confronted by a Bororo who says: 'I'm an ara.' And all the sociologists of 'the primitive mind' busy themselves around this profession of identity, which, on reflexion, is no more surprising than declaring, 'I'm a doctor' or 'I'm a citizen of the French Republic', and which certainly presents fewer logical difficulties than the statement, 'I'm a man', which at most can mean no more than, 'I'm like he whom I recognize to be a man, and so recognize myself as being such.' In the last resort, these various formulas are to be understood only in reference to the truth of 'I is an other', an observation that is less astonishing to the intuition of the poet than obvious to the gaze of the psychoanalyst.

Who, if not us, will question once more the objective status of this 'I', which a historical evolution peculiar to our culture tends to confuse with the subject? This anomaly should be manifested in its particular effects on every level of language, and first and foremost in the grammatical subject of the first person in our languages, in the 'I love' that hypostatizes the tendency of a subject who denies it. An impossible mirage in linguistic forms among which the most ancient are to be found, and in which the subject appears fundamentally in the position of being determinant or instrumental of action.

Let us leave aside the critique of all the abuses of the *cogito ergo sum*, and recall that, in my experience, the ego represents the centre of all the *resistances* to the treatment of symptoms.

It was inevitable that analysis, after stressing the reintegration of the tendencies excluded by the ego, in so far as they are subjacent to the symptoms that it tackled in the first instance, and which were bound up for the most part with the *failures* of Oedipal identification, should eventually discover the 'moral' dimension of the problem.

And, in a parallel fashion, there came to the forefront the role played by the aggressive tendencies in the structure of the symptoms and of the personality, on the one hand, and, on the other, all sorts of conceptions that stressed the value of the liberated libido, one of the first of which can be attributed to French psychoanalysts under the register of *oblativity*.

It is clear, in effect, that genital libido operates as a supersession, indeed a blind supersession, of the individual in favour of the species, and that its sublimating effects in the Oedipal crisis lie at the origin of the whole process of the cultural subordination of

man. Nevertheless, one cannot stress too strongly the irreducible character of the narcissistic structure, and the ambiguity of a notion that tends to ignore the constancy of aggressive tension in all moral life that involves subjection to this structure: in fact no notion of oblativity could produce altruism from that structure. And that is why La Rochefoucauld could formulate his maxim, in which his rigour matches the fundamental theme of this thought, on the incompatibility of marriage and sexual pleasure (*délices*).

We would allow the sharpness of our experience to become blunted if we deluded ourselves, if not our patients, into believing in some kind of pre-established harmony that would free of all aggressive induction in the subject the social conformisms made possible by the reduction of symptoms.

And the theoreticians of the Middle Ages showed another kind of penetration, by which the problem of love was discussed in terms of the two poles of a 'physical' theory and an 'ecstatic' theory, each involving the re-absorption of man's ego, whether by re-integration into a universal good, or by the effusion of the subject towards an object without alterity.

This narcissistic moment in the subject is to be found in all the genetic phases of the individual, in all the degrees of human accomplishment in the person, in an earlier stage in which it must assume a libidinal frustration and a later stage in which it is transcended in a normative sublimation.

This conception allows us to understand the aggressivity involved in the effects of all regression, all arrested development, all rejection of typical development in the subject, especially on the plane of sexual realization, and more specifically with each of the great phases that the libidinal transformations determine in human life, the crucial function of which has been demonstrated by analysis: weaning, the Oedipal stage, puberty, maturity, or motherhood, even the climacteric. And I have often said that the emphasis that was placed at first in psychoanalytic theory on the aggressive turning round of the Oedipal conflict upon the subject's own self was due to the fact that the effects of the complex were first perceived in *failures* to resolve it.

There is no need to emphasize that a coherent theory of the narcissistic phase clarifies the fact of the ambivalence proper to the 'partial drives' of scopophilia, sadomasochism, and homosexuality, as well as the stereotyped, ceremonial formalism of the aggressivity that is manifested in them: we are dealing here with the often very little 'realized' aspect of the apprehension of others in the practice of certain of these perversions, their *subjective* value, in actual fact very different from that given to them in the existential reconstructions, striking though they be, of a Sartre.

I should also like to mention in passing that the decisive function that we attribute to the *imago* of one's own body in the determination of the narcissistic phase enables us to understand the clinical relation between the congenital anomalies of functional lateralization (left-handedness) and all forms of inversion of sexual and cultural normalization. This reminds one of the role attributed to gymnastics in the 'beautiful and good' ideal of education among the Ancient Greeks and leads us to the social thesis with which I will conclude.

THESIS V

Such a notion of aggressivity as one of the intentional co-ordinates of the human ego, especially relative to the category of space, allows us to conceive of its role in modern neurosis and in the 'discontents' of civilization.

All I wish to do here is to open up a perspective on to the verdicts that our experience allows us in the present social order. The pre-eminence of aggressivity in our civilization would be sufficiently demonstrated already by the fact that it is usually confused in 'normal' morality with the virtue of strength. Understood, and quite rightly, as significant of a development of the ego, its use is regarded as indispensable in society, and so widely accepted in moral practice that in order to appreciate its cultural peculiarity one must penetrate into the effective meaning and virtues of a practice like that of *yang* in the public and private morality of the Chinese.

If necessary, the prestige of the idea of the struggle for life would be sufficiently attested by the success of a theory that could make our thinking accept a selection based only on the animal's conquest of space as a valid explanation of the developments of life. Indeed, Darwin's success seems to derive from the fact that he projected the predations of Victorian society and the economic euphoria that sanctioned for that society the social devastation that it initiated on a planetary scale, and to the fact that it justified its predations by the image of a *laissez-faire* of the strongest predators in competition for their natural prey.

Before Darwin, however, Hegel had provided the ultimate theory of the proper function of aggressivity in human ontology, seeming to prophecy the iron law of our time. From the conflict of Master and Slave, he deduced the entire subjective and objective progress of our history, revealing in these crises the syntheses to be found in the highest forms of the status of the person in the West, from the Stoic to the Christian, and even to the future citizen of the Universal State.

Here the natural individual is regarded as nothingness, since the human subject is nothingness, in effect, before the absolute Master that is given to him in death. The satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the desire and the labour of the other. If, in the conflict of Master and Slave, it is the recognition of man by man that is involved, it is also promulgated on a radical negation of natural values, whether expressed in the sterile tyranny of the master or in the productive tyranny of labour.

We all know what an armature this profound doctrine has given to the constructive Spartacism of the Slave recreated by the barbarism of the Darwinian century.

The relativization of our sociology by the scientific collection of cultural forms that we are destroying in the world, and also the analyses, bearing genuinely psychoanalytic marks, in which the wisdom of a Plato shows us the dialectic common to the passions of the soul and the city, may enlighten us as to the reason for this barbarism. What we are faced with, to employ the jargon that corresponds to our approaches to man's subjective needs, is the increasing absence of all those saturations of the superego and ego ideal that

are realized in all kinds of organic forms in traditional societies, forms that extend from the rituals of everyday intimacy to the periodical festivals in which the community manifests itself. We no longer know them except in their most obviously degraded aspects. Furthermore, in abolishing the cosmic polarity of the male and female principles, our society undergoes all the psychological effects proper to the modern phenomenon known as the 'battle between the sexes' – a vast community of such effects, at the limit between the 'democratic' anarchy of the passions and their desperate levelling down by the 'great winged hornet' of narcissistic tyranny. It is clear that the promotion of the ego today culminates, in conformity with the utilitarian conception of man that reinforces it, in an ever more advanced realization of man as individual, that is to say, in an isolation of the soul ever more akin to its original dereliction.

Correlatively, it seems, for reasons, I mean, whose historical contingency rests on a necessity that certain of our preoccupations make it possible to perceive, we are engaged in a technical enterprise at the species scale: the problem is knowing whether the Master/Slave conflict will find its resolution in the service of the machine, for which a psychotechnique that is already proving rich in ever more precise applications will be used to provide space-capsule pilots and space-station supervisors.

The notion of the role of spatial symmetry in man's narcissistic structure is essential in the establishment of the bases of a psychological analysis of space – however, I can do no more here than simply indicate the place of such an analysis. Let us say that animal psychology has shown us that the individual's relation to a particular spatial field is, in certain species, mapped socially, in a way that raises it to the category of subjective membership. I would say that it is the subjective possibility of the mirror projection of such a field into the field of the other that gives human space its originally 'geometrical' structure, a structure that I would be happy to call *kaleidoscopic*.

Such, at least, is the space in which the imagery of the ego develops, and which rejoins the objective space of reality. Yet does it offer us a place of rest? Already in the ever-contracting 'living space' in which human competition is becoming ever keener, a stellar observer of our species would conclude that we possessed needs to escape that had very strange results. But does not the conceptual area into which we thought we had reduced the real later refuse to lend its support to physicist thinking? Thus, by extending our grasp to the confines of matter, will not this 'realized' space, which makes the great imaginary spaces in which the free games of the ancient sages moved seem illusory to us, vanish in its turn in a roar of the universal ground?

Nevertheless, we know where our adaptation to these needs proceeds from, and that war is proving more and more to be the inevitable and necessary midwife of all progress in our organization. Certainly the mutual adaptation of adversaries, opposed in their social systems, seems to be progressing towards a competition of forms, but one may well wonder whether it is motivated by an acceptance of necessity, or by that identification of which Dante in the *Inferno* shows us the image in a fatal kiss.

In any case, it would not appear that the human individual, as material for such a struggle, is absolutely without defect. And the detection of 'internal bad objects', responsible for reactions (which may prove extremely costly in machinery) of inhibition and forward flight, a detection that has recently been put to use in the selection of shock troops, fighter forces, parachute and commando troops, proves that war, after teaching us

a great deal about the genesis of the neuroses, is proving too demanding perhaps in the quest for ever more neutral subjects in an aggressivity where feeling is undesirable.

Nevertheless, we have a few psychological truths to contribute there too: namely the extent to which the so-called ‘instinct of self-preservation’ deflects into the vertigo of the domination of space, and above all the extent to which the fear of death, the ‘absolute Master’, presupposed in consciousness by a whole philosophical tradition from Hegel onwards, is psychologically subordinate to the narcissistic fear of damage to one’s own body.

I believe that there is some point in stressing the relation existing between the dimension of space and a subjective tension, which in the ‘discontents’ (*malaise*) of civilization intersects with that of anxiety, approached so humanely by Freud, and which is developed in the temporal dimension. The temporal dimension, too, should enlighten us as to the contemporary significations of two philosophies that seem to correspond to those already referred to: that of Bergson, for its naturalistic inadequacy, and that of Kierkegaard for its dialectical signification.

Only at the intersection of these two tensions should one envisage that assumption by man of his original splitting (*déchirement*), by which it might be said that at every moment he constitutes his world by his suicide, and the psychological experience of which Freud had the audacity to formulate, however paradoxical its expression in biological terms, as the ‘death instinct’.

In the ‘emancipated’ man of modern society, this splitting reveals, right down to the depths of his being, a neurosis of self-punishment, with the hysterico-hypochondriac symptoms of its functional inhibitions, with the psychasthenic forms of its derealizations of others and of the world, with its social consequences in failure and crime. It is this pitiful victim, this escaped, irresponsible outlaw, who is condemning modern man to the most formidable social hell, whom we meet when he comes to us; it is our daily task to open up to this being of nothingness the way of his meaning in a discreet fraternity – a task for which we are always too inadequate.

NOTE

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