
Aggressiveness in Psychoanalysis

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The preceding paper presented to you the use I make of the notion of aggressiveness in clinical work and therapy.¹ That notion must now be put to the test before you to determine whether or not we can wrest a concept from it that may lay claim to scientific usefulness—in other words, a concept that can objectify facts that are of a comparable order in reality or, more categorically, that can establish a dimension of analytic experience in which these objectified facts may be regarded as variables.

All of us here at this gathering share an experience based on a technique and a system of concepts to which we are faithful, as much because the system was developed by the man who opened up all of that experience's pathways to us, as because it bears the living mark of its stages of development. In other words, contrary to the dogmatism with which we are taxed, we know that this system remains open as regards both its completion and a number of its articulations.

These hiatuses seem to come together in the enigmatic signification Freud expressed with the term "death instinct"—attesting, rather like the figure of the Sphinx, to the aporia this great mind encountered in the most profound attempt to date to formulate one of man's experiences in the biological register.

This aporia lies at the heart of the notion of aggressiveness, whose role in the psychical economy we appreciate better every day.

That is why the question of the metapsychological nature of the deadly

tendencies is constantly being raised by our theoretically inclined colleagues, not without contradiction, and often, it must be admitted, in a rather formalistic way.

I would simply like to proffer a few remarks or theses inspired by my years of reflection upon this veritable aporia in psychoanalytic doctrine, and by the sense I have—after reading numerous works—of our responsibility for the current evolution of laboratory psychology and psychotherapy. I am referring, on the one hand, to so-called “behaviorist” research that seems to me to owe its best results (insignificant as they sometimes appear compared to the sizable theoretical apparatus with which they are framed) to the often implicit use it makes of categories psychoanalysis has contributed to psychology; and, on the other hand, to the kind of treatment, given to both adults and children, that might be placed under the heading of “psychodrama,” which looks to abstraction for its therapeutic power—trying to exhaust it at the level of role playing—and to which classical psychoanalysis has, once again, contributed the actual guiding notions.

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THESIS I: *Aggressiveness manifests itself in an experience that is subjective in its very constitution.*

It is, in fact, useful to reconsider the phenomenon of psychoanalytic experience. In trying to get at the basics, reflection upon this is often omitted.

It can be said that psychoanalytic action develops in and through verbal communication, that is, in a dialectical grasping of meaning. Thus it presupposes a subject who manifests himself verbally in addressing another subject.

It cannot be objected to us that this latter subjectivity must be null and void, according to the ideal physics lives up to—eliminating it by using recording devices, though it cannot avoid responsibility for human error in reading the results.

Only a subject can understand a meaning; conversely, every meaning phenomenon implies a subject. In analysis, a subject presents himself as capable of being understood and is, in effect; introspection and supposedly projective intuition are not the *a priori* vitiations that psychology, taking its first steps along the path of science, believed to be irreducible. This would be to create an impasse out of moments that are abstractly isolated from a dialogue, whereas one should instead trust in its movement: it was to Freud’s credit that he assumed the risks involved before overcoming them by means of a rigorous technique.

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Can his results ground a positive science? Yes, if the experience can be verified by everyone. Now this experience, constituted between two subjects, one

of whom plays in the dialogue the role of ideal impersonality (a point that will require explanation later), may, once completed—its only conditions having to do with the capability of this subject, which is something that may be required in all specialized research—be begun anew by the second subject with a third. This apparently initiatory path is simply transmission by recurrence, which should surprise no one since it stems from the very bipolar structure of all subjectivity. Only the speed at which the experience spreads is affected thereby; and while it may be debated whether the experience is restricted to the region in which a specific culture reigns—although no sound anthropology can raise objections on that score—all the indicators suggest that its results can be relativized sufficiently to become generalizable, thus satisfying the humanitarian postulate inseparable from the spirit of science.

THESES II: *Aggressiveness presents itself in analysis
as an aggressive intention and as an image of corporal dislocation, and
it is in such forms that it proves to be effective.*

Analytic experience allows us to experience intentional pressure. We read it in the symbolic meaning of symptoms—once the subject sheds the defenses by which he disconnects them from their relations with his everyday life and history—in the implicit finality of his behavior and his refusals, in his bungled actions, in the avowal of his favorite fantasies, and in the rebuses of his dream life.

104 We can almost measure it in the demanding tone that sometimes permeates his whole discourse, in his pauses, hesitations, inflections, and slips of the tongue, in the inaccuracies of his narrative, irregularities in his application of the fundamental rule, late arrivals at sessions, calculated absences, and often in his recriminations, reproaches, fantasmatic fears, angry emotional reactions, and displays designed to intimidate. Actual acts of violence are as rare as might be expected given the predicament that led the patient to the doctor, and its transformation, accepted by the patient, into a convention of dialogue.

The specific effect of this aggressive intention is plain to see. We regularly observe it in the formative action of an individual on those who are dependent upon him: intentional aggressiveness gnaws away, undermines, and disintegrates; it castrates; it leads to death. “And I thought you were impotent!” growled a mother with a tiger’s cry, to her son, who, not without great difficulty, had confessed to her his homosexual tendencies. One could see that her permanent aggressiveness as a virile woman had taken its toll. It has always

been impossible, in such cases, for us to divert the blows of the analytic enterprise itself.

This aggressiveness is, of course, exercised within real constraints. But we know from experience that it is no less effective when conveyed by one's mien [*expressivité*]: a harsh parent intimidates by his mere presence, and the image of the Punisher scarcely needs to be brandished for the child to form such an image. Its effects are more far-reaching than any physical punishment.

After the repeated failures encountered by classical psychology in its attempts to account for the mental phenomena known as "images"—a term whose expressive value is confirmed by all its semantic acceptations—psychoanalysis proved itself capable of accounting for the concrete reality they represent. That was because it began with their formative function in the subject, and revealed that if common images make for certain individual differences in tendencies, they do so as variations of the matrices that other specific images—which in my vocabulary correspond to antiquity's term "imago"—constitute for the "instincts" themselves.

Among the latter images 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, emasculation, mutilation, dismemberment, dislocation, evisceration, devouring, and bursting open of the body—in short, the imagos that I personally have grouped together under the heading "imagos of the fragmented body," a heading that certainly seems to be structural.

There is a specific relationship here between man and his own body that is also more generally manifested in a series of social practices: from tattooing, incision, and circumcision rituals in primitive societies to what might be called the procrustean arbitrariness of fashion, in that it contradicts, in advanced societies, respect for the natural forms of the human body, the idea of which is a latecomer to culture.

One need but listen to the stories and games made up by two to five year olds, alone or together, to know that pulling off heads and cutting open bellies are spontaneous themes of their imagination, which the experience of a busted-up doll merely fulfills.

One must leaf through a book of Hieronymus Bosch's work, including views of whole works as well as details, to see an atlas of all the aggressive images that torment mankind. The prevalence that psychoanalysis has discovered among them of images based on a primitive autoscopy of the oral organs and organs derived from the cloaca is what gives rise to the shapes of the demons in Bosch's work. Even the ogee of the *angustiae* of birth can be

found in the gates to the abyss through which they thrust the damned; and even narcissistic structure may be glimpsed in the glass spheres in which the exhausted partners of the “Garden of Earthly Delights” are held captive.

These phantasmagorias crop up constantly in dreams, especially when an analysis appears to reflect off the backdrop of the most archaic fixations. I will mention here a dream recounted by one of my patients, whose aggressive drives manifested themselves in obsessive fantasies. In the dream he saw himself in a car, with the woman with whom he was having a rather difficult love-affair, being pursued by a flying fish whose balloon-like body was so transparent that one could see the horizontal level of liquid it contained: an image of vesical persecution of great anatomical clarity.

These are all basic aspects of a gestalt that is characteristic of aggression in man and that is tied to both the symbolic character and cruel refinement of the weapons he builds, at least at the artisanal stage of his industry. The imaginary function of this gestalt will be clarified in what follows.

106 Let us note here that to attempt a behaviorist reduction of the analytic process—to which a concern with rigor, quite unjustified in my view, might impel some of us—is to deprive the imaginary function of its most important subjective facts, to which favorite fantasies bear witness in consciousness and which have enabled us to conceptualize the imago, which plays a formative role in identification.

THESIS III: *The mainsprings of aggressiveness determine the rationale for analytic technique.*

Dialogue in itself seems to involve a renunciation of aggressiveness; from Socrates onward, philosophy has always placed its hope in dialogue to make reason triumph. And yet ever since Thrasymachus made his mad outburst at the beginning of that great dialogue, *The Republic*, verbal dialectic has all too often proved a failure.

I have emphasized that the analyst cures through dialogue, curing cases of madness that are just as serious. What virtue, then, did Freud add to dialogue?

The rule proposed to the patient in analysis allows him to advance in an intentionality that is blind to any other purpose than that of freeing him from suffering or ignorance of whose very limits he is unaware.

His voice alone will be heard for a period of time whose duration depends on the analyst's discretion. In particular, it will soon become apparent to him, indeed confirmed, that the analyst refrains from responding at the level of giving advice or making plans. This constraint seems to run counter to the desired end and so must be justified by some profound motive.

What, then, lies behind the analyst's attitude, sitting there as he does across from him? The concern to provide the dialogue with a participant who is as devoid as possible of individual characteristics. We efface ourselves, we leave the field in which the interest, sympathy, and reactions a speaker seeks to find on his interlocutor's face might be seen, we avoid all manifestations of our personal tastes, we conceal whatever might betray them, we depersonalize ourselves and strive to represent to the other an ideal of impassability.

We are not simply expressing thereby the apathy we have had to bring about in ourselves to be equal to the task of understanding our subject, nor are we striving to make our interpretative interventions take on the oracular quality they must possess against this backdrop of inertia.

We wish to avoid the trap hidden in the appeal, marked by faith's eternal pathos, the patient addresses to us. It harbors a secret within itself: "Take upon yourself," he tells us, "the suffering that weighs so heavily on my shoulders; but I can see that you are far too content, composed, and comfortable to be worthy of bearing it."

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What appears here as the arrogant affirmation of one's suffering will show its face—and sometimes at a moment decisive enough to give rise to the kind of "negative therapeutic reaction" that attracted Freud's attention—in the form of the resistance of *amour-propre*, to use the term in all the depth given it by La Rochefoucauld, which is often expressed thus: "I can't bear the thought of being freed by anyone but myself."

Of course, due to a more unfathomable heartfelt exigency, the patient expects us to share in his pain. But we take our cue from his hostile reaction, which already made Freud wary of any temptation to play the prophet. Only saints are sufficiently detached from the deepest of our shared passions to avoid the aggressive repercussions of charity.

As for presenting our own virtues and merits as examples, the only person I have ever known to resort to that was some big boss, thoroughly imbued with the idea, as austere as it was innocent, of his own apostolic value; I still recall the fury he unleashed.

In any case, such reactions should hardly surprise us analysts, we who expose the aggressive motives behind all so-called philanthropic activity.

We must, nevertheless, bring out the subject's aggressiveness toward us, because, as we know, aggressive intentions form the negative transference that is the inaugural knot of the analytic drama.

This phenomenon represents the patient's imaginary transference onto us of one of the more or less archaic imagos, which degrades, diverts, or inhibits the cycle of a certain behavior by an effect of symbolic subduction, which has excluded a certain function or body part from the ego's control by an accident

of repression, and which has given its form to this or that agency of the personality through an act of identification.

108 It can be seen that the most incidental pretext is enough to arouse an aggressive intention that reactualizes the imago—which has remained permanent at the level of symbolic overdetermination that we call the subject’s unconscious—along with its intentional correlate.

Such a mechanism often proves to be extremely simple in hysteria: in the case of a girl afflicted with astasia-abasia, which for months had resisted the most varied forms of therapeutic suggestion, I was immediately identified with a constellation of the most unpleasant features that the object of a passion formed for her, a passion marked, moreover, by a fairly strong delusional tone. The underlying imago was that of her father, and it was enough for me to remark that she had not had his support (a lack which I knew had dominated her biography in a highly fanciful manner) for her to be cured of her symptom, without, it might be said, her having understood anything or her morbid passion having in any way been affected.

Such knots are, as we know, more difficult to untie in obsessive neurosis, precisely because of the well-known fact that its structure is particularly designed to camouflage, displace, deny, divide, and muffle aggressive intentions; it does so by a defensive decomposition that is so similar in its principles to that illustrated by the stepping and staggering technique that a number of my patients have themselves employed military fortification metaphors to describe themselves.

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

Thus it is not inadvisable to reactivate such an intention in psychoanalysis.

What we try to avoid in our technique is to allow the patient’s aggressive intention to find support in a current idea about us that is well enough developed for it to become organized in such reactions as opposition, negation, ostentation, and lying that our experience has shown to be characteristic modes of the agency known as the ego in dialogue.

109 I am characterizing this agency here, not by the theoretical construction Freud gives of it in his metapsychology—that is, as the “perception-consciousness” system—but by what he recognized as the ego’s most constant phenomenological essence in analytic experience, namely, *Verneinung* [negation], urging us to detect its presence in the most general index of an inversion owing to a prior judgment.

In short, by “ego” I designate [1] the nucleus given to consciousness—though it is opaque to reflection—that is marked by all the ambiguities which, from self-indulgence to bad faith, structure the human subject’s lived experience of the passions; [2] the “I” that, while exposing its facticity to existential

criticism, opposes its irreducible inertia of pretenses and misrecognition to the concrete problematic of the subject's realization.

Far from attacking it head on, the analytic maieutic takes a detour that amounts, in the end, to inducing in the subject a guided paranoia. Indeed, one aspect of analytic action is to bring about the projection of what Melanie Klein calls "bad internal objects," which is a paranoiac mechanism certainly, but in this context it is highly systematized, in some sense filtered, and properly checked.

This is the aspect of our praxis that corresponds to the category of space, provided we include in it the imaginary space in which the dimension of symptoms develops, which structures them like excluded islets, inert scotomas, or parasitic autonomisms in the person's functioning.

Corresponding to the other dimension, the temporal, is anxiety and its impact, whether patent as in the phenomenon of flight or inhibition, or latent as when it only appears with the imago that arouses it.

Again, let me repeat, this imago reveals itself only to the extent that our attitude offers the subject the pure mirror of a smooth surface.

To understand what I'm saying here, imagine what would happen if a patient saw in his analyst an exact replica of himself. Everyone senses that the patient's excess of aggressive tension would prove such an obstacle to the manifestation of transference that its useful effect could only be brought about very slowly—and this is what happens in certain training analyses. If we imagine it, in the extreme case, experienced in the uncanny form characteristic of the apprehensions of one's *double*, the situation would trigger uncontrollable anxiety.

THESIS IV: *Aggressiveness is the tendency correlated with a mode of identification I call narcissistic, which determines the formal structure of man's ego and of the register of entities characteristic of his world.*

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The subjective experience of analysis immediately inscribes its results in concrete psychology. Let me simply indicate here what it contributes to the psychology of the emotions when it demonstrates the meaning common to states as diverse as fantasmatic fear, anger, active sorrow, and psychasthenic fatigue.

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

But this leap manifests nothing more than a requirement of our thought which, in order now to objectify the register of aggressive reactions, and given our inability to seriate it according to its quantitative variations, must include

it in a formula of equivalence. That is what we do with the notion of “libido.”

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

In my work I have emphasized that there is a correlation—due to their strictly parallel seriation—between the quality of aggressive reaction to be expected from a particular form of paranoia and the stage of mental genesis represented by the delusion that is symptomatic of that form. The correlation appears even more profound when the aggressive act dissolves the delusional construction; I have shown this in the case of a curable form, self-punishing paranoia.

Thus aggressive reactions form a continuous series, from the violent, unmotivated outburst of the act, through the whole range of belligerent forms, to the cold war of interpretative demonstrations. This series parallels another, that of imputations of harm, the explanations for which—without mentioning the obscure *kakon* to which the paranoiac attributes his discordance with all living things—run the gamut from poison (borrowed from the register of a highly primitive organicism), to evil spells (magic), influence (telepathy), physical intrusion (lesions), diversion of intent (abuse), theft of secrets (dispossession), violation of privacy (profanation), injury (legal action), spying and intimidation (persecution), defamation and character assassination (prestige), and damages and exploitation (claims).

I have shown that in each case this series—in which we find all the successive envelopes of the person’s biological and social status—is based on an original organization of ego and object forms that are also structurally affected thereby, even down to the spatial and temporal categories in which the ego and the object are constituted. The latter are experienced as events in a perspective of mirages, as affections with something stereotypical about them that suspends their dialectical movement.

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

Now, this formal stagnation is akin to the most general structure of human knowledge, which constitutes the ego and objects as having the attributes of permanence, identity, and substance—in short, as entities or “things” that are very different from the gestalts that experience enables us to isolate in the mobility of the field constructed according to the lines of animal desire.

Indeed, this formal fixation, which introduces a certain difference of level, a certain discordance between man as organism and his *Umwelt*, is the very

condition that indefinitely extends his world and his power, by giving his objects their instrumental polyvalence and symbolic polyphony, as well as their potential as weaponry.

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

We can glimpse its stages in children by simple observation, in which Charlotte Bühler, Elsa Köhler, and, following in their footsteps, the Chicago School have revealed several levels of significant manifestations, though only analytic experience can give them their exact value by making it possible to reintegrate subjective relations in them.

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The first level shows us that the very young child's experience of itself—insofar as it is related to the child's semblable—develops on the basis of a situation that is experienced as undifferentiated. Thus, around the age of eight months, in confrontations between children—which, if they are to be fruitful, must be between children whose difference in age is no more than two and a half months—we see gestures of fictitious actions by which one subject renews the other's imperfect gesture by confusing their distinct application, and synchronies of spectacular capture that are all the more remarkable as they precede the complete coordination of the motor systems they involve.

Thus the aggressiveness that is manifested in the retaliations of slaps and blows cannot be regarded solely as a playful manifestation of the exercise of strength and their employment in getting to know the body. It must be understood within a broader realm of coordination: one that will subordinate the functions of tonic postures and vegetative tension to a social relativity, whose prevalence in the expressive constitution of human emotions has been remarkably well emphasized by Wallon.

Furthermore, I believed I myself could highlight the fact that, on such occasions, the child anticipates at the mental level the conquest of his own body's functional unity, which is still incomplete at the level of volitional motricity at that point in time.

What we have here is a first capture by the image in which the first moment of the dialectic of identifications is sketched out. 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 right from the first months of life and, in the case of the human face, right from the tenth day. But what demonstrates the phenomenon of recognition, implying subjectivity, are the signs of triumphant jubilation and the playful self-discovery that characterize the child's encounter with his mirror image starting in the sixth month. This behavior

113 contrasts sharply with the indifference shown by the very animals that perceive this image—the chimpanzee, for example—once they have tested its vanity as an object; and it is even more noteworthy as it occurs at an age when the child lags behind the chimpanzee in instrumental intelligence, only catching up with the latter at eleven months of age.

What I have called the “mirror stage” is of interest because it manifests the affective dynamism by which the subject primordially identifies with the visual gestalt of his own body. In comparison with the still very profound lack of coordination in his own motor functioning, that gestalt is an ideal unity, a salutary imago. Its value is heightened by all the early distress resulting from the child’s intra-organic and relational discordance during the first six months of life, when he bears the neurological and humoral signs of a physiological prematurity at birth.

It is this capture by the imago of the human form—rather than *Einfühlung*, the absence of which is abundantly clear in early childhood—that dominates the whole dialectic of the child’s behavior in the presence of his semblable between six months and two and a half years of age. Throughout this period, one finds emotional reactions and articulated evidence of a normal transitivity. A child who beats another child says that he himself was beaten; a child who sees another child fall, cries. Similarly, it is by identifying with the other that he experiences the whole range of bearing and display reactions—whose structural ambivalence is clearly revealed in his behaviors, the slave identifying 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 aggressiveness in man and its relation to the formalism of his ego and objects. It is in this erotic relationship, in which the human individual fixates on an image that alienates him from himself, that we find the energy and the form from which the organization of the passions that he will call his ego originates.

Indeed, this form crystallizes in the subject’s inner conflictual tension, which leads to the awakening of his desire for the object of the other’s desire: here the primordial confluence precipitates into aggressive competition, from which develops the triad of other people, ego, and object. Spangling the space of spectacular communion, this triad is inscribed there according to its own formalism, and it so completely dominates the affect of *Einfühlung* that a child at that age may not recognize the people he knows best if they appear in completely different surroundings.

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But if the ego seems to be marked, right from the outset, by this aggressive relativity—which minds starved for objectivity might equate with an animal’s emotional erections when it is distracted by a desire in the course of its exper-

imental conditioning—how can we escape the conclusion that each great instinctual metamorphosis, punctuating the individual's life, throws its delimitation back into question, composed as it is of the conjunction of the subject's history with the unthinkable innateness of his desire?

This is why man's ego is never reducible to his lived identity, except at a limit that even the greatest geniuses have never been able to approach; and why, in the depressive disruptions constituted by reversals experienced due to a sense of inferiority, the ego essentially engenders deadly negations that freeze it in its formalism. "What happens to me has nothing to do with what I am. There's nothing about you that is worthwhile."

Thus the two moments, when the subject negates himself and when he accuses the other, become indistinguishable; and we see here the paranoiac structure of the ego that finds its analog in the fundamental negations highlighted by Freud in the three delusions: jealousy, erotomania, and interpretation. It is the very delusion of the misanthropic beautiful soul, casting out onto the world the disorder that constitutes his being.

Subjective experience must be fully accredited if we are to recognize the central knot of ambivalent aggressiveness, which at the present stage of our culture is given to us in the dominant form of *resentment*, including even its most archaic aspects in the child. Thus, Saint Augustine, because he lived at a similar time, without having to suffer from a "behaviorist" resistance—in the sense in which I use the term—foreshadowed psychoanalysis by giving us an exemplary image of such behavior in the following terms: "*Vidi ego et expertus sum zelantem parvulum: nondum loquebatur et intuebatur pallidus amaro aspectu conlactaneum suum*" ("I myself have seen and known an infant to be jealous even though it could not speak. It became pale, and cast bitter looks on its foster-brother"). Thus Augustine forever ties the situation of spectacular absorption (the child observed), the emotional reaction (pale), and the reactivation of images of primordial frustration (with an envenomed look)—which are the psychical and somatic coordinates of the earliest aggressiveness—to the infant (preverbal) stage of early childhood.

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Only Melanie Klein, studying children on the verge of language, dared to project subjective experience into that earlier period; observation, nevertheless, enables us to affirm its role there in the simple fact, for example, that a child who does not yet speak reacts differently to punishment than to brutality.

Through Klein we have become aware of the function of the imaginary primordial enclosure formed by the imago of the mother's body; through her we have the mapping, drawn by children's own hands, of the mother's inner empire, and the historical atlas of the internal divisions in which the imagos of the father and siblings—whether real or virtual—and the subject's own

voracious aggression dispute their deleterious hold over her sacred regions. We have also become aware of the persistence in the subject of the shadow of “bad internal objects,” related to some accidental “association” (to use a term concerning which we should emphasize the organic meaning analytic experience gives it, as opposed to the abstract meaning it retains from Humean ideology). Hence we can understand by what structural means re-evoking certain imaginary *personae* and reproducing certain situational inferiorities may *disconcert* the adult’s voluntary functions in the most rigorously predictable way—namely, by their fragmenting impact on the imago involved in the earliest identification.

By showing us the primordial nature of the “depressive position,” the extremely archaic subjectivization of a *kakon*, Melanie Klein pushes back the limits within which we can see the subjective function of identification at work, and she especially enables us to situate the first superego formation as extremely early.

116 But it is important to delimit the orbit within which the following relations, some of which have yet to be elucidated, are situated in our theoretical work—guilt tension, oral harmfulness, hypochondriacal fixation, not to mention primordial masochism which I am excluding from my remarks here—in order to isolate the notion of an aggressiveness linked to the narcissistic relationship and to the structures of systematic misrecognition and objectification that characterize ego formation.

A specific satisfaction, based on the integration of an original organic chaos [*désarroi*], corresponds to the *Urbild* of this formation, alienating as it may be due to its function of rendering foreign. This satisfaction must be conceived of in the dimension of a vital dehiscence constitutive of man and makes unthinkable the idea of an environment that is preformed for him; it is a “negative” libido that enables the Heraclitean notion of Discord—which the Ephesian held to be prior to harmony—to shine once more.

Thus, there is no need to look any further to find the source of the energy the ego borrows to put in the service of the “reality principle,” a question Freud raises regarding repression.

This energy indubitably comes from “narcissistic passion”—provided one conceives of the ego according to the subjective notion I am proposing here as consonant with the register of analytic experience. The theoretical difficulties encountered by Freud seem, in fact, to stem from the mirage of objectification, inherited from classical psychology, constituted by the idea of the “perception-consciousness” system, in which the existence of everything the ego neglects, scotomizes, and misrecognizes in the sensations that make it react

to reality, and of everything it doesn't know, exhausts, and ties down in the meanings it receives from language, suddenly seems to be overlooked—a surprising oversight on the part of the man who succeeded in forcing open the borders of the unconscious with the power of his dialectic.

Just as the superego's insane oppression lies at the root of the well-founded imperatives of moral conscience, mad passion—specific to man, stamping his image on reality—is the obscure foundation of the will's rational mediations.

The notion of aggressiveness as a tension correlated with narcissistic structure in the subject's becoming allows us to encompass in a very simply formulated function all sorts of accidents and atypicalities in that becoming.

I shall indicate here how I conceive of its dialectical link with the function of the Oedipus complex. In its normal form, its function is that of sublimation, which precisely designates an identificatory reshaping of the subject and—as Freud wrote when he felt the need for a “topographical” coordination of psychical dynamisms—a *secondary identification* by introjection of the imago of the parent of the same sex.

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The energy for that identification is provided by the first biological surge of genital libido. But it is clear that the structural effect of identification with a rival is not self-evident, except at the level of fable, and can only be conceptualized if the way is paved for it by a primary identification that structures the subject as rivaling with himself. In fact, a note of biological impotence is met with again here—as is the effect of anticipation characteristic of the human psyche's genesis—in the fixation of an imaginary “ideal,” which, as analysis has shown, determines whether or not the “instinct” conforms to the individual's physiological sex. A point, let it be said in passing, whose anthropological import cannot be too highly stressed. But what interests me here is what I shall refer to as the “pacifying” function of the ego-ideal: the connection between its libidinal normativeness and a cultural normativeness, bound up since the dawn of history with the imago of the father. Here, obviously, lies the import that Freud's work, *Totem and Taboo*, still has, despite the mythical circularity that vitiates it, insofar as from a mythological event—the killing of the father—it derives the subjective dimension that gives this event its meaning: guilt.

Indeed, Freud shows us that the need for a form of participation, which neutralizes the conflict inscribed after killing him in the situation of rivalry among the brothers, is the basis for identification with the paternal totem. Oedipal identification is thus the identification by which the subject transcends the aggressiveness constitutive of the first subjective individuation. I have stressed

elsewhere that it constitutes a step in the establishment of the distance by which, with feelings akin to respect, a whole affective assumption of one's fellow man is brought about.

118 Only the anti-dialectical mentality of a culture which, dominated as it is by objectifying ends, tends to reduce all subjective activity to the ego's being, can justify Von den Steinen's astonishment when confronted by a Bororo who said, "I'm an ara." All the "primitive mind" sociologists scurry about trying to fathom this profession of identity, which is no more surprising upon reflection than declaring, "I'm a doctor" or "I'm a citizen of the French Republic," and certainly presents fewer logical difficulties than claiming, "I'm a man," which at most can mean no more than, "I'm like the person who, in recognizing him to be a man, I constitute as someone who can recognize me as a man." In the final analysis, these various formulations can be understood only in reference to the truth of "I is an other," less dazzling to the poet's intuition than it is obvious from the psychoanalyst's viewpoint.

Who, if not us, will call back into question the objective status of this "I," which a historical evolution peculiar to our culture tends to confuse with the subject? The specific impact of this anomaly on every level of language deserves to be displayed, and first and foremost as regards the first person as grammatical subject in our languages [*langues*]*—*the "I love" that hypostasizes a tendency in 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 a determinative or instrumental of the action.

Let us not pursue here the critique of all the abuses of the *cogito ergo sum*, recalling instead that, in analytic experience, the ego represents the center of all resistances to the treatment of symptoms.

It was inevitable that analysis, after emphasizing the reintegration of tendencies excluded by the ego—those tendencies underlying the symptoms it tackled at first, most of which were related to *failed* Oedipal identification—should eventually discover the "moral" dimension of the problem.

Parallel to that, what came to the fore were, on the one hand, the role played by the aggressive tendencies in the structure of symptoms and personality and, on the other, all sorts of "uplifting" conceptions of the liberated libido, one of the first of which can be attributed to French psychoanalysts under the heading of "oblativity."

119 It is, in fact, clear that genital libido operates by blindly going beyond the individual for the sake of the species and that its sublimating effects in the Oedipal crisis are at the root of the whole process of man's cultural subordination. Nevertheless, one cannot overemphasize the irreducible character of narcis-

sistic structure and the ambiguity of a notion that tends to misrecognize the constancy of aggressive tension in all moral life that involves subjection to this structure: for no amount of oblativity could free altruism from it. This is why La Rochefoucauld could formulate his maxim, in which his rigor concurs with the fundamental theme of his thought, on the incompatibility between marriage and delight.

We would be allowing the cutting edge of analytic experience to become dull if we deluded ourselves, if not our patients, into believing in some sort of pre-established harmony that would free social conformity—made possible by the reduction of symptoms—of its tendency to induce aggressiveness in the subject.

Theoreticians in the Middle Ages showed a rather different kind of penetration when they debated whether love could be understood in terms of a “physical” theory or an “ecstatic” theory, both of which involved the reabsorption of man’s ego, the one by its reintegration into a universal good, the other by the subject’s effusion toward an object devoid of alterity.

In all of an individual’s genetic phases and at every degree of a person’s human accomplishment, we find this narcissistic moment in the subject in a before in which he must come to terms with a libidinal frustration and in an after in which he transcends himself in a normative sublimation.

This conception allows us to understand the aggressiveness involved in the effects of all the subject’s regressions, aborted undertakings, and refusals of typical development, especially at the level of sexual realization—and more precisely within each of the great phases that the libidinal metamorphoses bring about in human life, whose major function analysis has demonstrated: weaning, the Oedipal stage, puberty, maturity, and motherhood, not to mention the involitional climacteric. I have often said that the emphasis initially placed in psychoanalytic doctrine on the Oedipal conflict’s aggressive retortions in the subject corresponded to the fact that the effects of the complex were first glimpsed in *failed attempts* to resolve it.

There is no need to emphasize that a coherent theory of the narcissistic phase clarifies the ambivalence peculiar to the “partial drives” of scotophilia, sadomasochism, and homosexuality, as well as the stereotypical, ceremonial formalism of the aggressiveness that is manifested in them. I am talking here about the often barely “realized” apprehension of other people in the practice of certain of these perversions, their subjective value actually being very different from that ascribed to them in the otherwise very striking existential reconstructions Sartre provided.

I should also like to mention in passing that the decisive function I ascribe to the imago of one’s own body in the determination of the narcissistic phase

enables us to understand the clinical relation between congenital anomalies of functional lateralization (left-handedness) and all forms of inversion of sexual and cultural normalization. This reminds us 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: *This notion of aggressiveness as one of the intentional coordinates of the human ego, especially as regards the category of space, allows us to conceive of its role in modern neurosis and in the malaise in civilization.*

Here I want to merely sketch out a perspective regarding the verdicts analytic experience allows us to come to in the present social order. The preeminence of aggressiveness in our civilization would already be sufficiently demonstrated by the fact that it is usually confused in everyday morality with the virtue of strength. Quite rightly understood as indicative of ego development, aggressiveness is regarded as indispensable in social practice and is so widely accepted in our mores that, in order to appreciate its cultural peculiarity, one must become imbued with the meaning and efficient virtues of a practice like that of *yang* in the public and private morality of the Chinese.

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Were it not superfluous, the prestige of the idea of the struggle for life would be sufficiently attested to by the success of a theory that was able to make us endorse a notion of selection based solely on the animal's conquest of space as a valid explanation for 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 it initiated on a planetary scale, and that he justified its predations with the image of a *laissez-faire* system in which the strongest predators compete for their natural prey.

Before Darwin, however, Hegel had provided the definitive theory of the specific function of aggressiveness in human ontology, seeming to prophesy the iron law of our own time. From the conflict between Master and Slave, he deduced the entire subjective and objective progress of our history, revealing in its crises the syntheses represented by 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 nil, since the human subject is nothing, in effect, before the absolute Master that death is for him. The satisfaction of human desire is possible only when mediated by the other's desire and labor. While it is the recognition of man by man that is at stake in the conflict between Master and Slave, this recognition is based on a radical negation

of natural values, whether expressed in the master's sterile tyranny or in work's productive tyranny.

The support this profound doctrine lent to the slave's constructive Spartaism, recreated by the barbarity of the Darwinian century, is well known.

The relativization of our sociology by the scientific collection of the cultural forms we are destroying in the world—and the analyses, bearing truly psychoanalytic marks, in which Plato's wisdom shows us the dialectic common to the passions of the soul and of the city—can enlighten us as to the reason for this barbarity. Namely, to employ the jargon that corresponds to our approaches to man's subjective needs, the increasing absence of all the saturations of the superego and ego-ideal that occur 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 guises. Furthermore, in abolishing the cosmic polarity of the male and female principles, our society is experiencing the full psychological impact of the modern phenomenon known as the "battle of the sexes." Ours is an immense community, midway between a "democratic" anarchy of the passions and their hopeless leveling out by the "great winged hornet" of narcissistic tyranny; it is clear that the promotion of the ego in our existence is leading, in conformity with the utilitarian conception of man that reinforces it, to an ever greater realization of man as an individual, in other words, in an isolation of the soul that is ever more akin to its original dereliction.

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Correlatively, it seems—I mean for reasons whose historical contingency is based on a necessity that certain of my considerations make it possible to perceive—we are engaged in a technological enterprise on the scale of the entire species. The question is whether the conflict between Master and Slave will find its solution in the service of the machine, for which a psychotechnics, that is already yielding a rich harvest of ever more precise applications, will strive to provide race-car drivers and guards for regulating power stations.

The notion of the role of spatial symmetry in man's narcissistic structure is essential in laying the groundwork for a psychological analysis of space, whose place I can merely indicate here. Animal psychology has shown us that the individual's relation to a particular spatial field is socially mapped in certain species, 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 other's field that gives human space its originally "geometrical" structure, a structure I would willingly characterize as *kaleidoscopic*.

Such, at least, is the space in which the imagery of the ego develops, and which intersects the objective space of reality. But does it provide us a secure

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basis? Already in the *Lebensraum* (“living space”) in which human competition grows ever keener, an observer of our species from outer space would conclude we possess needs to escape with very odd results. But doesn’t conceptual extension, to which we believed we had reduced reality [*réel*], later seem to refuse to lend its support to the physicist’s thinking? Having extended our grasp to the farthest reaches of matter, won’t this “realized” space—which makes the great imaginary spaces in which the free games of the ancient sages roamed seem illusory to us—thus vanish in turn in a roar of the universal ground?

Whatever the case may be, we know how our adaptation to these exigencies proceeds, and that war is increasingly proving to be the inevitable and necessary midwife of all our organizational progress. The adaptation of adversaries, opposed in their social systems, certainly seems to be progressing toward a confluence of forms, but one may well wonder whether it is motivated by agreement as to their necessity, or by the kind of identification Dante, in the *Inferno*, depicts in the image of a deadly kiss.

Moreover, it doesn’t seem that the human individual, as the material for such a struggle, is absolutely flawless. And the detection of “bad internal objects,” responsible for reactions (that may prove extremely costly in terms of equipment) of inhibition and headlong flight—which we have recently learned to use in the selection of shock, fighter, parachute, and commando troops—proves that war, after having taught us a great deal about the genesis of the neuroses, is perhaps proving too demanding in its need for ever more neutral subjects to serve an aggression in which feeling is undesirable.

Nevertheless, we have a few psychological truths to contribute here too: namely, the extent to which the ego’s supposed “instinct of self-preservation” willingly gives way before the temptation to dominate space, and above all the extent to which the fear of death, the “absolute Master”—presumed to exist in consciousness by a whole philosophical tradition from Hegel onward—is psychologically subordinate to the narcissistic fear of harm to one’s own body.

I do not think it was futile to have highlighted the relation between the spatial dimension and a subjective tension, which—in the malaise of civilization—intersects with the tension of anxiety, approached so humanely by Freud, and which develops in the temporal dimension. I would willingly shed light on the latter, too, using the contemporary significations of two philosophies that would seem to correspond to the philosophies I just mentioned: that of Bergson, owing to its naturalistic inadequacy, and that of Kierkegaard owing to its dialectical signification.

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Only at the intersection of these two tensions should one envisage the assumption by man of his original fracturing, by which it might be said that at

every instant he constitutes his world by committing suicide, and the psychological experience of which Freud had the audacity to formulate as the “death instinct,” however paradoxical its expression in biological terms may be.

In the “emancipated” man of modern society, this fracturing reveals that his formidable crack goes right to the very depths of his being. It is a self-punishing neurosis, with hysterical/hypochondriacal symptoms of its functional inhibitions, psychasthenic forms of its derealizations of other people and of the world, and its social consequences of failure and crime. It is this touching victim, this innocent escapee who has thrown off the shackles that condemn modern man to the most formidable social hell, whom we take in when he comes to us; it is this being of nothingness for whom, in our daily task, we clear anew the path to his meaning in a discreet fraternity—a fraternity to which we never measure up.

Note

1. Apart from the first line, this text is reproduced here in its original form.