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Mind and Pleasure

a neurosemiotic approach to aesthetics

"One unconsciously disguises man's physiological needs, covering them with a coat of ideal objectivity, of pure idea; one pushes it so far it brings fear; and I have so often asked myself if philosophy, in general, has not been until this day a simple exegesis of the body, a simple mishapprehension of the body." (Nietzsche, 1886)

Even though classical epistemology has trained us to think that the pleasure we get from a work of art has been planned by the artist who "created" it, that every sign in it refers to his or her godlike Ego, the materialist revolution of the nineteenth and twentieth century has brought about a reverse point of view. In modern times, the user has been put in the driver's seat, so to speak and that was quite a setback for the connoisseur.

The world of Art used to be hierarchized in such a way that the Artist was at the top, at its purest Art was a *thing for artists*; then it fell in the hands of *hermeneutics*, the connoisseur reached the top of the pyramid. Art was then *a thing for critics*. Then art became business and the user the most important player in the game. Art becomes *a thing for the artist in the user*. Some are in it for the money, some for knowledge (power), and some others for sheer enjoyment.

What is the next step? Who will inherit this *thing* called Art from the hands of the user? Logically it has to be the artist again? In a world where art is available everywhere, some artists have to make art that is not "marketable" in order to keep alive the concept of art itself. But then the only way the user has to stay on top is to switch from a self-indulging cathartic pleasure (enjoying) to a more demanding self-asserting hermeneutic pleasure (learning). Maybe in a near future users will become themselves creators? More likely Henri Laborit is right when he writes that future society will be clearly separated in two classes: the creators and the consumers. If there is any logic in Aristotle's, and because "poets are like us" or "the same as us", poetics will reach again the top of the pyramid and persons will become "artists of themselves", like the most attractive characters of Shakespeare's dramas¹.

In the classical epistemology science and art were closely linked. In J.S. Bach's times, for instance, music was as much a science as it was an art. But nowadays after science took over the art field, even sport has become art. A burst of violence in a televised hockey game induces self-indulging erotic pleasure of *sympathizing with the same*. Football watching is still science, if you know the codes and if you can make out the strategies. It is a sport for connoisseurs; hockey (with free boxing and wrestling in it) is a sport for consumers. In other words

¹ c.f. H. Bloom,

hermeneutics are still active in football watching and they are dead in hockey watching, where they have been replaced by pure aesthetics. You don't need any special knowledge to have a catharsis; it is in the reach of every normally constituted person. And you are entitled to any pleasure you may seek, as long as it doesn't prevent someone else from seeking his or her own.

Nowadays, as Richard Rorty puts it, "we use signs", and we define pleasure as a physical reaction to a mental activity. It is not because one is a rationalist that he or she seeks the self-asserting pleasure of knowing; one becomes a rationalist because his or her mind takes the habit of that kind of pleasure. As the mind of an idealist takes the habit of the self-absorbing pleasure of ecstasy (autotelic pleasure), the mind of a materialist has the habit of morbid pleasures such as shock and horror.

The pleasure we seek determines the mental strategy we use to obtain it. In the field of art appreciation, these strategies are called aesthetics and a person's aesthetics define his or her personality much more than an abstract symbol does. A sign of identity, like a name, gives us more information about language than it does about the physical existence of a person. From a semiotic point of view, personality is not given at birth as is a person's genetic pattern or DNA, it is constructed in relation with avoided pains and sought after pleasures.

The semiotics of thinking, with the help of neurosciences inquiries, allows us to determine three levels of thought corresponding to syntax, semantic and pragmatic behavior in mental activity : the logical ground or structure, the mythological illustration of such mental structures and the aesthetics. The structure of the brain determines the type of mental activity; the discursive mind analyses and reflects in the realm of symbols, and it succeeds in doing so by excluding material signs such as emotions. On the other hand, the holistic mind imagines and dreams as long as it is not prevented to do so by the symbolic censure of rationality.

Consequently the study of myth has to be shifted from literature to psychology; a myth is not so much a story we use to describe human behavior, it is a mental strategy common to individual thinking and collective cultural memory. That is why instead of giving a hero or god's name to a myth, like we do when we refer to the myths of Oedipus, Dionysos or Jesus-Christ, we shall identify basic behaviors in relation with fundamental beliefs. Someone who believes that every person is unique cannot logically believe that all persons are the same; the first abides to the myth of *originality*, (s)he tends to sacralize a difference that cannot be verified, the last abides to the myth of *indifferenciation*, (s)he tends to sacralize sameness. Someone believing that a person is only what his or her parents were cannot believe at the same time (s)he is destined to be "completed" by a soul mate. The myth of *heredity* keeps separated the human and the divine; the myth of *complementarity* tends to blend them in the same super-human and quasi-divine

existence. Thus the myths of originality and the myth of indifferenciation define one another as do the myths of heredity and complementarity; they are opposing couples of mental activity. To each one corresponds a philosophical attitude.

Where symbols are considered the only legitimate signs, rationalistic idealism stands as the only thinking possible, that is the only mental activity reckoned as thinking. When symbols are aided by illustrative indexes, the human mind elaborates what is called metaphysical idealism. Where indexes are the signs in use, materialism is the kind of thinking, pessimistic or *morbid materialism* if it excludes the use of symbols and denounces their non-materialistic nature, and *optimistic materialism* if it let the mind find a way to combine the use of indexes and the use of symbols. The human brain has the ability to separate concepts and images and to use them independently; with exclusively symbolic concepts it can elaborate rational or *analytical thinking* and with exclusively indexical images distil what we dare call *somatic thinking*; but it also has the ability to mix signs of essence (symbols) and signs of existence (indexes) in *reflective* or *imaginative* thinking.

Pleasure or catharsis is physical but it has to be prepared by thinking. In the field of aesthetics, experimental science usually practiced in the limits of laboratorial objectivity and speculative sciences usually practiced inside symbolic language come together. Specialists of the brain and specialists of thinking have to find a common ground, and the study of thinking as sign production and sign handling in the brain certainly gives them one.

1. mental signs

We think with signs. In the course of the twentieth century neurosciences have explored the chemical and physical aspects of this sign production in the human brain. Great neuro-physiologists, particularly John C. Eccles (Nobel Price for medicine 1963) and Robert W. Sperry (Nobel Price for medicine 1981) have paved the way to neurosemiotics. The ongoing research in that specific field of neurology keeps challenging the boundaries of our knowledge of the human brain.

In the epistemology of the "open conversation" (Rorty) of modern times hermeneutics, the semiotic "tools" proposed by C.S. Peirce, the basic principles of his symbolic logic, if not the sophisticated neological ramifications of his system, have been one of the landmark of pragmatism. Peirce's basic triad of *icon*, *index* and *symbol* has been adapted by a majority of scholars in philosophy and psychology, and they are now common ground in any field of research having to do with signs. The realistic views of pragmatism bring about the possibility to question the values without smashing them down, like the pessimistic negators of the nineteenth century did, and allows the classical triumph of reasoning inside the boundaries of a not so destructive materialism, often used as philosophical method in ironic aesthetics of the twentieth century. The tragic vision of pessimism still seeps in the cracks of the wall, but the new optimistic thinking challenges materialism as it "plays the game", knowing very well that these entities he deals with mentally, the essence or identity of the Self for instance, might simply not exist physically. In the field of meaning, optimistic materialism takes over the idealistic tradition of according more value to symbolization (abstraction) than indexicalization.

In the course of the romantic era, hermeneutics have been modeled after the mimetic poetics, a kind of treasure hunt or the upstream journey to the author's indented meaning. Nowadays hermeneutics tend to turn away from myth and theory, it links together the physical event of catharsis and the semiosis. Meaning doesn't have to be dug out of the past, it can also be constructed and used in the future.

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The pragmatics of reception becomes the ground level of any theory of representation. Actors have now to know more about the "customers" in the seats of the theater than about the "poet" who wrote the text their part is taken from. Nowadays theatergoers and actors belong to the same world, they attend the same event. The author might be present; he or she is not an issue for a catharsis

² Hobbes, Leviathan
U. Eco, Sémiotique et Philosophie du langage,

orientated spectator. The "person" who wrote the lines the actors perform now belongs to another world, a mythical world of pure symbol. But some people have had enough of symbols, they go the theater in search of *vision*; they want to experience events happening in front of them as if they were taking part of it. The imagination of such contemplative or *ecstatic spectators* takes over the reasoning. In order to see and hear "real" things the cathartic oriented spectator has to let go of his obsession with a logical solution.

Some other go to the theater in search of comforting memories and human bounding or moral solace. For them the violence of logic is preferable to the self indulging pleasure of compassion; they are *heroic spectators* who hide their fear by knowing the ending in advance, for instance, or by maintaining disbelief all threw the performance. The heroic spectators of classical art feel uneasy with a non-concluding argument, because they believe they are guardians of moral order or members of the cultural squad and that as such they are entitled to some explanation. They want their piece of information. The tragic spectator will love the same work of art precisely for the opposite reason: because it follows the line of his own asymmetry. Some spectators are looking for explanations and some others for sensations.

In the field of thinking, especially in the metaphoric theater of the brain, a set of mind processes metaphorically named after the classical notion of *spectacle* (representation and reception), there is a tendency to have the last word. People who crave for this pleasure have a rationalistic aesthetics; they think of art as useful and they keep gathering information's about the artist or the object itself as long as they can use them in their own "show" or discourse. Their rationalistic aesthetics gives the critical pleasure of knowing more value than the erotic pleasure of enjoying the usual "known". These people are not only those who would go to a conference instead of watching a hockey game; they are also, among hockey fans, the ones who know all the names, the numbers and the statistics, and watch a game only to get a chance of naming it all. Some other people might go to a conference hoping they will faint when the speaker will appear, bewitched by his or her actual beauty; they have a Romanesque aesthetics and they would go to a hockey game for the same reasons.

Fortunately there is also in human thinking a tendency to open up freely to any new experience. Some people like to be taken away and they come to art with an apprehension of redemption; they want to be lifted in the heights of the *sublime*. Some others walk away from this highly demanding *anterotic* pleasure and, quite "blasés" in most cases; ask of Art to be a shocking negation.

In order to bridge the gap between the idealism of the worried thinker and the realism of the hedonistic thinker, the semiotic study of brain activity has now to link together some very appropriate propositions from the field of neurosciences and some of the basic data of sign systems research.

neurosciences:

- 1) each one of the brain hemispheres have specific functions
- 2) each one of the brain hemispheres can work on its own (intra-hemispherical relations)
- 3) the two hemispheres can work together (inter-hemispherical relations)

semiotics:

- 4) *icons* representing by virtue of resemblance;
- 2) *indexes* representing by virtue of physical contact or causality;
- 5) *symbols* representing by virtue of a law.

Knowing what signs are and mostly how they work is a very useful knowledge, it certainly helps to keep a meaningful contact with two millennia of idealistic ideology, but the semiotics of thinking must now put aside the confrontation between essentialists, who believe the Self exists as an entity independent from the brain, and the hard line materialists who believe the Self is but a mental representation of the control power of the brain on its own functions.

The new task of semiotics is not so much to show anything, but to bring together all of these opponents, believers and deniers of the Self's existence.

The mental signs can only be described in comparison with the signs we see, hear, smell or touch. We use logical signs or concepts for analytical thinking, those are conventional signs of essence or symbols; and we use analogical signs or images for imaginative thinking; these are indexes, contextual or physical signs of existence, taken from the physical experience of life or from icons of it kept as memory.

Both the conventional symbol and the physical index rely on a basic ironical sign.

Iconicity in a sign is a *firstness* as Peirce would put it. In mental activity, it can be used in a logical way, every time a mind tries to reach a certain order in meaning. In such an icon "the likeness is aided by conventional rules" (2.279).

«In all primitive writing, such as the Egyptian hieroglyphics, there are icons of a non-logical kind, the ideographs. In the earliest form of speech, there probably was a large element of mimicry. But in all languages known, such representations have been replaced by conventional auditory signs. These, however, are such that they can only be explained by icons. But in the syntax of every language there are logical icons of the kind that are aided by conventional rules...» (2.280)

The logical icon is a sign of essence. It helps the discursive mind to focus.

To establish the likeness between a sign and its object, the mind has to compare the two. Comparing things with the intention of sorting out the *one* that fits the topic is quite different from comparing with the intention of giving an example. In the first case, the "abstractive operator" of the mind works with and co-operate with the "reductionist operator", and the "binary operator" in order to focus on an acceptable interpretation³, one that the mind can use as symbol. In the case of someone using iconicity to give an example, or illustrate a concept, the mind is opening up and reaching out to multiple interpretations; the "abstractive operator" co-operate this time with the "holistic operator". When we're trying to give a clear description of something or have a clear grasp of it, we tend to limit the number of adequate interpretants. As the reasoning realist sees it, we start with the *particulars* and round them up in a categorical sign of essence, a general idea or *universal* (*katholon*). We shall refer to these bonding signs as logical icons. They are basic signs of the cognitive mind without which symbolization could not be performed.

We use the logical icon to infer from likeness. But the resemblance here between the sign and its object is "not at all in looks; it is only in respect to the relations of their parts that their likeness consists". The icon of such likeness is an "array", like an algebraical equation, "*it exhibits (...) the relations of the quantities concerned*" (2.282)

The logical icon is a sub-linguistic categorical sign that has a distributional function: among the possible beings, one human being conventionally referred to as a person. The *personal pronoun* that refers to the actual speaker or to the person he or she is referring to constitute the *indexical part* of the logical icon. The *concept* of what is believed to be or generally known as a human being constitute the *symbolic part* of that kind of sign. But in order to use the logical icon "person", in real life or in imaginary conversations, there must be an experience of speech and vision.

What we shall refer to as *analogical Icons* are the non-logical Icons. They are signs of existence and they belong to Peirce's second class of signs, "those by physical connection". (2.281) Analogical icons are used every time someone adds a sign of physical contact, a personal feeling, to a conventional sign. In the kind of thinking where the illustrative mind, starting with the general idea, builds by adding *particulars*; we tend to let go the proliferation of interpretants.

In his attempt to give examples for every category of signs, Charles Sanders Peirce comes up with "a feeling of red" as an illustration of a *qualisign*, that is a sign of essence. It « denotes by virtue of some common ingredient or similarity. » (2.254) As such a qualisign is also an icon. It cannot be interpreted if it is not compared to something somehow similar to it.

³ c.f. A. Newberg, E. D'Aquili et XX, 2007, *Why God won't go away*,

The user must master the knowledge of certain categories, "numbers", "operations", before he can think of a specific sign. But the kind of iconicity used in symbolization is different than the iconicity used in indexicalization. In the process of indexicalization, the illustrating mind, using imaginative and somatic thinking, visualize forms that look like the objects they represent. This kind of sign we shall call the *analogical icon*. In such a sign iconicity is not used to limit the possibilities of meaning, like in the logical icon, but it is used as a distributional device, to enhance the meaning by proliferation of "interpretants".

An important question pops up: How can a feeling be a sign? To feel is not necessarily to *have* a feeling. You can feel the « heat » of the vibrating red without having a feeling of « red ». And furthermore, is Peirce's « red » necessarily metaphoric? Is he referring to something the mind sees behind closed eyes, like the dots in Rimbaud's poem *Le Poète de Sept Ans*?

«...et dans ses yeux fermés voyait des points.
...and behind his closed eyes he was seeing dots»

As a qualisign, the feeling of red has no symbolic content. How do I feel? To know it, I have to put words (symbols) on a state of mind that is mostly physical. Such thinking involves feeling. Among the indexes produced by the holistic mind, a certain number can refer to the same object, if they are triggered to do so by the discursive mind. That is why the more I think over what makes me suffer, the more I trigger pain. But I can also attain great joy by concentrating on what makes me feel good.

The colour whose vibration, be it mental or actual, is *like* the light, tends to contrast with darkness. The clear side of « things », not as clear as the sun, unless it sets on a hot summer night, nor the moon, unless it rises on a fall evening, more like flames of a fire...or blood, is the «same» colour as what is known here through recollection. But as soon as you name the vibration, and call it red, you use a symbol, a conventional bond between a sign, the phonetic utterance of the word « red », and a meaning, the mental habit of experimenting the colour red, naming all these different things and, with the help of the illustrative mind, coloring them red.

In the right brain, as the discursive mind operates the symbolization of the memorized experience of actually seeing red, the holistic mind can visualize red without sounding the word « red » or even thinking with the concept « red ». This kind of sign is devoid of symbols. But in order to explain or illustrate such a sign, Peirce had to use symbols: the letters « r », « e » and « d », and the word "red" itself.

The part of the mind operating visualization, the mental « place » where opinion (*gnomê*) is made, involves emotions. What Aristotle called the proof (*pistis*), it is the product of the *apodictic* function of thinking (*dianoia*) taking place in the left hemisphere of the human brain. He called *apophantic* thinking what we know goes on mainly in the right hemisphere. Neuro-sciences have demonstrated how the right hemisphere specializes in *spatial* tasks as well as emotional responses. And this right

brain thinking, partly intra-hemispheric and partly inter-hemispheric, has an indexical ground. That is to say it produces mainly indexes, signs of existence referring to their object « by virtue of being really affected by that Object » (2.248).

The **holistic** mind, when it closes on itself and does not cooperate with the discursive mind, has an *intra-hemispheric* activity we shall call **somatic** thinking. There is no direct contact between this intra-hemispheric activity of the holistic mind, totally devoid of symbols, and the analytical thinking of the discursive mind, dealing exclusively with symbols.

If the right hemisphere of the brain takes part in an *inter-hemispheric* activity, we shall call this activity of the holistic mind **imaginative** thinking. In the left brain, the inter-hemispheric activity is reflective thinking. And only through reflective or imaginative thinking can indexes be mixed with symbols.

Inter-hemispheric activity uses iconicity to establish a link between indexes and symbols. *Symbolization* is the principal function of reflective thinking. The natural tendency to explain brings the discursive mind to an intra-hemispherical brain activity called analytical thinking. But no mentally balanced human being can use this computer type of thinking exclusively; you would have to stop the natural outpour of indexes. Some pre-recorded sub-logical signs that may well be produced by somatic thinking, find their way through reflective thinking. *Indexicalization* is the principal function of imaginative thinking. It is a second degree operation. The natural outpour of indexes in somatic thinking is the first degree operation. You don't need to have learnt anything to see something in your mind: it happens by itself and one thinking person sometimes grasps some of it to use it as a ground for constructing meaning.

Reflective thinking is the inter-hemispherical activity of the left brain. It uses indexes in the field of symbols and treats them as symbols. Logic icons, such as « person » « thing » or « colour » are used by the discursive mind to trigger the outpour of indexes from the somatic mind. The non stopping production of indexes, a constant flow, out of which some are used by the discursive mind to build the Self, is the unconscious part of thinking.

As the inter-hemispheric activity of the right brain, **imaginative thinking** uses symbols in the field of indexes, and it treats these symbols as indexes. Through the imagining activity, the holistic mind incorporates symbols in the making of images without necessarily importing their contextual settings and their semantical ties. The law on which the conventional sign is based, does not have to be known by the imagining mind to assure the efficiency of a symbol, especially when it is used as an index. A qualisign such as a feeling of "red", the brackets are Peirce's, "is any quality in so far as it is a sign" (2.254). According to Peirce, it is a sign of essence referring to "a mere logical possibility"(2.254), but the feeling of "red" can also be regarded as a physical sign of existence, something like an hallucination. It has no *meaning* until it is seen by human eyes and submitted to the different functions of the human brain.

the use of the logical icon "person" in personification

“To be or not to be that is the question
Whether t’is nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles...”
Shakespeare, *Hamlet, prince of Denmark*,(3, 1)

Ego and Self have to be distinguished from one another. As sign, the symbol *Ego*, what I refer to as my identity, is a conventional sign: it gives information about me by comparing something of me to already known information about other people. It is not the qualities found in me that make what I am different from another person, it is the functioning of the Ego's *identity* or symbolic essence and the Self's *ipseity* or indexical existence of the body. In a person's mind, an "animal" and a "god" are working together and against each other. Unified consciousness is only unified by convention. What I call myself can sometimes refer to non-symbolic feelings and emotional response. The indexical signs of the brain do not help constructing the Ego, but they give direct access to the *Id* inside the Self, the bodily thinker of Nietzsche's *gay science*. But discovering the illusionistic nature of the Ego doesn't necessarily mean you deny the existence of the Self, no more than saying that the spirit is a certain "state of energy" or a "field of possibilities" implies there is no difference between mind and matter.

The logical icon "person" helps the critical mind to produce a concept (conceptual set of signs) of the Self. The Self as symbol of the whole of the individual human being, or person, is a conventional sign; it refers to the unified consciousness.

When we assume that the person is one, we make an inference, and when this inference leads to a belief, it gives way to a thinking process called myth. We use the illustrating activity of the holistic thinking as if it were symbolic.

When we imagine the features of a fictional person, a "person" we refer to in our reflective mind, and we give symbolic value to mental indexes in order to have more pleasure imagining this person. We use the demonstrative activity of the analytical and reflective thinking as if it were indexical material.

The belief in the Self is a very good example of a *myth*. It wouldn't occur if there wasn't first a failed use of symbol. The thinker referring to himself as "I" cannot prove the actual existence of this unity of consciousness he feels as one, most of the time anyway. He fails to verify the validity of the Self as a universal sign of the unified consciousness. He ends up inferring its existence in order to believe in "him" or "her"-Self. To have a good opinion of one's Self is to put to sleep self-criticism, to avoid verification in the search of self esteem. Myth is a function of feeling better.

The Self as symbol of the whole of the individual human being, or person, is a conventional sign of the unified consciousness. The logical icon helps the critical

mind to produce a concept (conceptual set of signs) of the Self. And since the wholeness of the Self cannot be proven, it has to be felt.

Technically speaking the mental process called inference is a symbolization. It implies the use of symbols, just saying the word "house" is to use a symbol, but symbolization also establishes a logical link between the symbols and the categorical signs implied in speaking. The result of symbolization is metaphor. If someone uses the word "house" referring to a kind of music and you didn't know about it, you would miss the point because you don't know the *law*. In the mind of the speaker referring to house music symbolization takes place; in the mind of the bewildered person left out of "it", there is only verbal use of a symbol: the word "house".

Discursive or critical thinking occurs chiefly in the left hemisphere of the human brain; it involves analysis or, when the analyzing has been done previously, verification. From a semiotic point of view, this part of thinking is mostly symbolic; it is used in reasoning counting or demonstrating. The intra-hemispherical relations of the left brain submit indexes to symbolic rule. As it concentrates on abstraction, analytical thinking has no use of "physical" signs; it changes indexes into logical icons. You can think about something without visualizing it, only by using a mental device called a logical icon. With practice, you get very good at it, and very quick. You control so well your reasoning ability that you can let go of the logical control in order to be "had" by images and obtain an intense feeling. When myth occurs, suspension of disbelief is proportionate to the pleasure of catharsis.

From a rationalistic point of view, symbolization is the main conquest of the human mind, but the submissive mind or somatic thinking has also to be taken in account if we want to reflect on the whole of thinking, including emotions and mental states that are not discursive, non-analytical thinking.

When the *discursive mind* let go of analytical thinking, or at least some process like verification, and gives in to the overwhelming wholeness of an image or a feeling, the *holistic mind*, take over and, through the process we shall refer to as *myth*, it allows the discursive mind to work with its silent partner. The intra-hemispherical activity of the holistic mind is basically the index producing somatic thinking. Through different channels, signs that have no resemblance to anything recorded by the senses and stocked in the memory, like a baby's dreams or the luminous dots one sees behind shot lids, are exchanged between the symbol specialized left brain and the index specialized right brain. When there is an inter-hemispherical collaboration, somatic thinking works its way through imaginative and reflective thinking and gives us mental vision.

Myth is a mental preparation for belief. The discursive mind infers the existence of someone or something and the holistic mind uses this non-verified symbolic data to reach a sense of wholeness. A "sense" is not something you can easily describe with symbols; it is thinking with images and emotions. The balance of the human brain needs its fair share of such "physical" signs. When we have no

workable concepts to satisfy the need for clarity and order in the discursive mind, we turn to myth, our inference leads then to belief in the Whole. But when our opinion becomes more important to us than the truth they stand for, the unbalanced mind tends to exaggerate the factualness of what symbols refer to. Someone believing that buildings called "houses" got their name from a kind of music is, first and for all not very well informed but chiefly what we shall call a myth user. The misuse of myth can lead to excessive symbolization. The myth of science as sole access to truth, for instance, leads to a mongruous piling of documents.

Myth is a useful way to have access to ones imagination without having to go through the many censoring gates of reasoning. It can become the stepping stone of the believer: the blinding of Oedipus is the consequence of too much reasoning.

We *use* signs⁴. But even if we admit that man creates God in his resemblance, we do not necessarily deny the existence of the Unthinkable. The more we reduce the Unthinkable to a concept, the less we can visualize or hear "him" or It. The same for the Self, the more we use it, the more we believe in it, the less we need the realistic revelation of its illusionnistic nature. God and the Self are sets of signs based on the use of the logical icon "person", they are spiritual "beings" whose existence is determined by the brain activity, but since their existence cannot be proven by the standards of discursive thinking, they feed on emotions.

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The problem of God's existence is a semiotical problem. Science tells us that ideas, images and feelings are signs. So everything we can learn, know or say about God has to do with signs. Even the infinity of God has to be produced as a concept in the mind. The *will* to be or not to be sets the question, the same for man and God. Whether it is nobler in the mind to boast the *Self* and hide the lie of the mythical creation of one's Self, or reach out for the Unattainable and suffer the slings and arrows of deception. God's existence, like one *Self*'s for that matter, doesn't have to be verified as truth, as long as it works for the mind as myth.

Myth is a habit of the mind, something you cannot trace to its origin, something whose existence cannot be proven. Myth is how the mind works when, aiming at a global image, it skips the verification of the analytical mind to indulge in holistic thinking. When we have beliefs, a special type of *mental behavior* is going on in our mind; the image takes over the concept. We cannot achieve mental grasp and prove the actual existence of what we believe in, but none the less we set it as truth and use it as a moral guide in our own existence. The French expression *une image vaut mille mots* says it all, an image is worth a thousand words. Holistic thinking allow variations: the *image* opens the mind to free *illustration* and tend to reduce the use of concepts to its basic form of demonstration. In semiotic terms, myth

⁴ Richard Rorty, Lumps...

is thus a mental activity involving both symbolization in the discursive mind and indexicalization in the holistic mind.

This conception of myth as mental strategy took over the romantic conception of myth as history. Since Freud saw the link between ancient Greek literature and human brain functions, his interpretation of *Oedipus* was a big blow to literature. Domestic psychology was built on simplified Freud. In the time of the first successes of socialism, the Commune of Paris or the Bolshevik revolution in Russia, tragic aesthetics had drawn art users to ultimate realism, nihilism. As Nietzsche puts it, the philosopher becomes an artist; and the artist-philosopher becomes his own healer. It is a promethean position, a step away from the ruling god, Zeus or the like, towards individual freedom.

Claude Lévi-Strauss went a step further out of classical epistemology by proposing a definition of myth as *structuring force*, active in the human mind before it appears as a primitive narrative form.

Nowadays, with the help of neurosciences, semiotics allows us to link together philosophical inquiry, psychological mythology and neurophysiological experiments in a common anthropological study of the human brain. This approach also allows us to use myth and allegory, not as literary devices, but as common functions of the mind.

Aristotle's *dianoia* (thinking) had two functions: *deiknumi* (demonstration), the production of proof (*pistis*), and *apophainô* (illustration), the production of opinion (*gnômê*). The network of intra-hemispherical and inter-hemispherical relations of the human brain, as described by Roger W. Sperry, does not work differently: the left brain produces language and obeys to time sequences; the right brain produces images and does not obey time sequences. Each hemisphere has proven to be specialized in certain tasks: the left brain is believed to be the home of the discursive mind and the right brain the home of the holistic mind.

But can you produce proof or opinion by using only the left or the right side of the brain? Demonstrating and illustrating are complex sets of thoughts and feelings that could not be produced independently by one *or* the other half of the brain but have to be "concocted" by a team. The demonstrative function of the left hemisphere needs an illustrative support if the holistic thinking is to produce a global image of understanding. On the other hand, the illustrative function of the right hemisphere, if its "visual" production is ever to mean something, has to rely on a demonstrative support. Even if the hemispheres are highly specialized, the interaction remains vital in a healthy brain. The split brain experimentations in the field of neurosciences has fully documented this view (J.E. Bogen, J. Eccles, M.S. Gazzaniga, G.M. Edelman, J. Ehrenwald, H. Hécaen, D. Kimura, L. Israël, G. Lanteri-Laura, R.S. Sperry, P.J. Vogel).

How does this interaction works? With the help of C.S. Peirce's sign triad we can start to describe the sign sets produced independently by the discursive brain or

the holistic brain, as well as the sign sets produced jointly by the two hemispheres in the process of inter-hemispheric communication. Speculative semiotics can be of great help in sorting out the different sign sets and comparing them, but it also leads to a mechanical conception of thinking that leaves God and his human counterpart the *Ego* “jobless”, since the brain can function more freely without them. God and *Ego* are not active entities possessing their own will, but signs, sets of signs employing both proof and opinion, they are a combination of symbols and logical icons produced by the discursive mind (combining analytical and reflective thinking), and a combination of indexes and analogical icons produced by the holistic mind (combining imaginative and somatic thinking).

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Naming God is dangerous. It has been forbidden in different religions because it is believed to lead to tragic consequences. Swearing is considered a blasphemous act; it is forbidden by one of the *Dekalogon*'s commandment and for the catholic religion, it is a deadly sin. But how are we to understand the relation between the world and ourselves if there is no one to show us how to come into being? That is the question. To come into being has to be done *somewhere*. The mind could not think up a “nowhere” without using some sign to do so. We then have to create a sign for the *question of being* itself, and thus the most ontological sign has to be the question mark. The interrogative sign represents the possible identification of the *Self* with the “I” (*Ego*) and the projection of the fictitious unity made up with these parts as the ideal Subject, what the psychologist would call the *Super-Ego*. We can say about this “subject” what Nietzsche says about the Will, that it is a complicated thing, something that “only as word is a unity”⁵.

In the third place, the interrogative sign represents the falling back of the deceived mind, if it was left without an answer. The soul is no longer in the quest of truth, it knows it is doomed to matter-reality; it looks now for an intense letting go and yields to Nature all responsibility of judgment. The “incarnation” of the *Super-Ego*, as that of Jesus-Christ, leads to indifferenciation, the part of human *psychê* psychology calls the *Id*.

To believe is to do certain semiotic operations in the mind: to aim at a certain pleasure (the relief of individual responsibility in the anerotoc pleasure of adoring) and to avoid a certain type of pain (the morbid pleasure of self destruction). To believe in God is to have an opinion; it is not at all based on a verification produced by the analytical thinking. On the contrary, to believe is to neglect verification in order to be comforted by an emotionally charged image. From an aristotelian point of view, it is to move from proof (*pistis*) to opinion (*gnômê*) by a shortcut way, letting in emotions and covering up rational weaknesses. From a semiotic point of view, it is

⁵ *Jenseits von Gut und Böse*, 19

letting the meaning take over the meant, letting in the illustrative indexicalization of the holistic mind, and helping its *magical* realizations by freezing the rationalistic eagerness of the discursive mind.

On the other hand, to prove God's existence, one has to verify every bit of information and try to apply logical standards to holistic thinking, even to emotional outburst. Such attempt has been made by Thomas Aquinas, but it is doomed to fail, since it proceeds backward, trying to conceal images into concepts. It fails as proof, but it can be a success as allegorical illustration.

Any visible or audible index of something or someone out there has to be compared to my own experience of life in order to mean something to me, because only through iconicity can these indexes be attributed to the *other* in the world.

Considering (using) as *a* reality what we know is *only* a fiction, it is creating myth. When we use the logical icon "person" to help us jump to the symbolic level of any conclusion concerning God, we built a bridge over the contradicting elements of that special being; but that bridge is necessarily made of abstractions. The only way to give God a body is to imagine how its body would be if It were a person like us. Believing is switching from proof (*pistis*) to opinion (*gnômê*), it is using myth to bring the imaginative mind to an emotional state that no longer has ties with the reasoning mind.

For ages, the idealists have presumed that God existed *for real*, that is in the material reality, that can be grasped by intuition if not audible to the ear and visible to the eye. After having thought of Him or It, they deduced Its existence by comparing it to their own, and constructed a concept of God, or rather a constellation of concepts about God. But their rational grasp of It had to be constructed on some *ground*. Any symbol has to be linked to a logical icon, what traditional logic would have called a universal premise, present in the mind at the moment of the abstraction or "subjectification" (Peirce, 2.248). The root-sign or grammatical ground of the personification of God is the logical icon "person" to which the analytical mind adds a conventional sign like the name "God","Allah" or "Yaweh".

The reality of God is only provable by taking out of the definition of reality its material contingency; every thing real necessarily has a body. If God is believed to exist without a body, someone is *imagining* things. There is a hoax: the discursive mind is staging its own play, and the holistic mind, or magical thinking, by taking this play for reality, is driven to fall for its illusionistic trap. If reality is not restricted to the realm of beings with bodies, then God may exist *for real*.

To "switch" from symbolic concept in the analytical thinking to indexical *image* in the holistic mind is to create a *myth*, it involves a certain usurpation of the demonstrative function of the discursive brain, a "stolen language" (R.Barthes: 72). If the mythical conception of God is carried on by the imagining mind, the creation of the world by the one God becomes allegory. God has It's own humanlike life; It is doomed to die, his body chewed and swallowed by Nature, the ultimate

indifferenciation of the world, like the “I” (*Ego*) drawn back and let to rot in the somber *Id*, a kind of under-self “where” the mind produces signs that are not related (by anyone, not even the *Self*) to anything else. If there ever was such a thing as a collective subconscious (Jung), it would produce this kind of non-verbal signs: indexes, signs of existence, like feelings.

To conceive God as a person is the real problem, because the terms “God” and “person” are contradictory. By definition, a person is a sign of iconicity, to be a person is to be *like* all other person in the world, and God is, by definition *unlike* others, one and unique. The rational grasp of God is only possible through the magical induction of its personification. The identity of a person is made up (constructed), it covers *lie 1*: that my “I”(*Ego*) is the same person as my *Self*, by *lie 2* : that thought is god given and independent from the body. Thus, to believe in God implies lying twice, knowingly, once about myself and once about God.

The first lie is Descartes’s *Cogito ergo sum*, the thinking subject assumes that it is the whole being: I think thus I am, but the whole of what I am not my thinking. There is more to my *Self* than my *Ego*; there is more than my identity, there is – I was going to write *my!* – ipseity (Ricoeur: 1990). The *sum* implying the *Ego* and relating to the verb *cogito* is a sum indeed, of reel existence, material signs of what we are used to call life. But to think that this sum comes from thinking, is bad thinking, at least unsatisfying thinking, from a pragmatist’s point of view; it leads to rationalistic idealism. For a materialist or a semiotician, the thinking process cannot be independent from the body, for the body is the *ground* on which the “I” (*Ego*) is built. Further more; reasoning is not the whole of thinking. The discursive mind would not function if it was not nourished by images, such as logical icons (inter-hemispherical messenger) submitted by reflective thinking to intra-hemispherical specialized thinking (analytical).

The second lie is a platonic view, it leads to metaphysical idealism. Some things – and God is certainly one of them - are believed to exist even if they do not have a body that could be seen and touched by people. If someone wants to eradicate all lies from his thinking and have only truths and nothing but truths to deal with, he better leave out the topics of God and *Ego*, for they cannot be tackled by the brain as any sensitive experience could be, they are constructed as means to sooth the never satisfied discursive mind, always triggered by its highly specialized master of symbols (analytical thinking), and to exhilarate the binding urge of the holistic mind driven by its highly specialized master of indexes (somatic thinking).

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Different from the question the prince of Denmark had to answer about his own existence as human, the question of God’s existence is a matter of opinion, the mind is free to believe in God, but it cannot avoid believing in the *Self*, if it is to try

to prove anything. The proof of God's existence can only be made if symbols are used in the process by the thinking *subject* (that is the *Self*, when it is wearing the mask of the *Ego* and sometimes even pretending that it is not related to the *Id*).

A symbol is, according to Peirce, a "conventional sign" (2.297) that "have a general meaning", "denote an individual" and "signify a character" (2.293); it is a law, a habit that represents "by virtue of its being understood" (2.304). But from a rationalistic point of view, the only matter there is to God itself is Its name (symbol), the three letter printed on a sheet of paper or pronounced as the word is uttered. Some sign might look like it's made of the same real solid matter the world is made of, but it's always made of *neuronal matter* in the brain. God is an abstraction resulting from a logical operation of the discursive mind to which is attached a certain amount of images (sign systems that have an indexical nucleus) destined to make God seem real, so that our belief in It lifts us in an optimistic opinion of It called faith.

God is a mythical being, and as such it is a being that must hide its "true nature", that is its non-material probable existence, in order to be named or imagined as an existing thing in reality. To understand God, you have to create *It* from scratch, you have to use an iconic ground, violently hiding the mimicry under layers of symbolic approximations that all pretend to be the truth, and force into existence the fictitious person you are conceiving. Thus the conventional sign "person", whose conventionality doesn't count so much as its indexical function, is a *logical icon*, a sign who's iconicity is "helped by conventional rules" (Peirce, 2.280). In order to grasp the specificity of God through analytical thinking the discursive mind needs a non-symbolic sign to start it out. The discursive mind could not operate the abstraction without a concrete, solid and actual sign perceived by the senses or kept in memory. Without the help of a conventional shifter like *quid* or "he Who", God cannot be made understandable.

A sign like "he who" helps create the concept of God. By adding conventional signs, characters (*ethê*) and abstract generalities to the logical icon "person", we force God into existence as we do our own "I" (*Ego*). We assume God is a person, an individual being having an interior life (like us), but no material body (unlike us). And the irony of it all is that we know this assumption might be fictitious, but we overlook its fictitiousness to *grasp* something with our discursive mind and obtain the gratification that comes with it.

Faith in God or in one self has to do with the production of images in the holistic mind. Thus the sentence "I think of myself so I am" is a mythical statement; the *Ego* steals the *Self's* show, so to speak. If the imagining mind goes on pretending that the difference of who I am is god given or predestined by some transcendental mind, it operates as it does when it puts a long white beard to God's face; it allegorizes the myth of the "I" (*Ego*) as a "unique" person by indexicalizing its symbolic (conventional) content. The *Self* knows very well that it walks with a mask (*persona*) – "*larvus proteo*" says Descartes in his third *Méditation* - but in order to

be called into existence, the *Ego* has to be identified by others. So the reflecting *Self* has to cover up the claims of the physical *Self*, in order to create the concept “I” (*Ego*), it has to hide the resemblance and the humanity to put forward its uniqueness. But with all the resemblance between the world and the human being, the *Self* would be overwhelmed if it could not transform the logical icon “person” into the mythical symbol “I” (*Ego*).

The *Self* has to be used as a ground for any personal utterance if the meaning is to be understandable. The making of God is a switch or a transfer of such kind: the longing for historical proofs of God’s existence only stresses the symbolic essence of the *object* whose existence we need to believe in. If God was obvious, like our psycho-physical experience of life appears to be, we wouldn’t need to prove its existence.

The thought of oneself as *Ego* symbolizes the human individual; it separates the *ground* of the sign (its materiality) and its *object* (what it represents) and bind them together with a new conventional relation. This kind of make-believe, by which the alleged unity of the individual person is set forth, is indispensable to analytical thinking, specially if the thinking mind aims at self esteem and exaltation of the symbolic “I”(*Ego*).

But can you think of God without naming *It*? Can you think without words (symbols)? When God’s mask (*persona*) is removed, when the analytical mind finds out that the Supreme Being is not a person, that the logical icon “person” was only used as a ground for symbolization, you can think up a concept of non-person agent like Nature.

In the process building the concept of God, allowing someone the self satisfying rational grasp of the “I” (*Ego*), the mental activity is shifted to image making or indexicalization. As an image, God becomes a globality that challenges the validity of any rational definition, but as a rational concept, God is everything that is not evil, It is everywhere except in Hell. There is a contradiction between the two propositions included in this definition of God: *being everything* and *not being evil* are not equivalent.

If “the object of the myth is to give a logical model in order to solve a contradiction” (Lévi-Strauss, 254), then God is a myth, a concept metaphorically used as an image. In the process of making the myth, two contradictory linguistic relations are bridged by one in which they *appear as* identical. A being that is Man *and* not human (animal, god, sky), or ded *and* alive at the same time, in the same oneness, has to be a mythical creature.

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The personification of the Sky or the Earth is a good example of a simple symbolization The biological functions of human reproduction are symbolized by

opposing forces or “persons”, such as Venus and Mars, Moon and Sun. But the god Uranus is much more than the personification of the Sky. To think of him or of his “wife” Gaia as persons who lead a humanlike life brings the analytical mind outside of its limits; they become images, living images like phantasies.

The Sky is much more than a concept; it is a complex set of signs. The logical icon “he who” is used by the analytical mind as an indexical shifter, then some conventional quality like “person” is added to it. This type of reflective abstraction is called symbolization.

At that stage of human thinking the Sun God is a symbol. But if some action is involved, if this person-like symbol is thought of as doing something, there is a creative word game; the analytical mind with the help of prerecorded (?) logical icons, invents a fictitious existence. There is a myth, a crossing over the logical border of the discursive mind. In the case of the Sky god Uranus, he prevents the out coming of his children by laying constantly on the Earth. But this only lasts until his genitals are cut and...

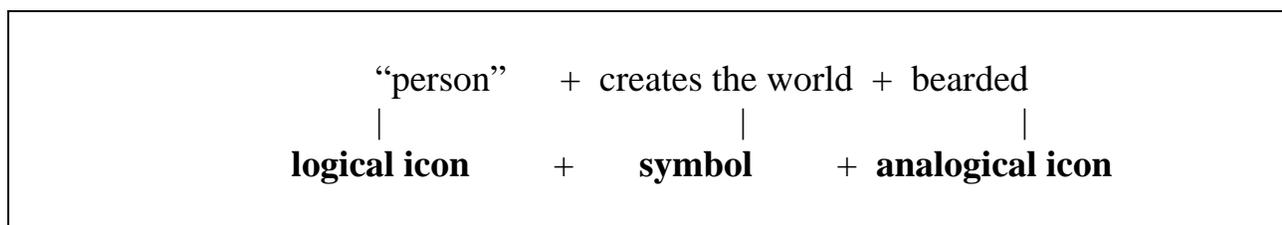
As soon as the holistic mind is allowed to make his illustrative contribution to the myth, symbols are projected into metaphors and allegory prevails, it hinders the rational quest of the explaining mind to a supporting role. If we did not lie about the reality of God, if we did not presume of Its existence, we could not bring the analytical mind to enjoy the rational grasp of explaining something of the world, and neither could we bring the holistic mind to the ecstatic and *anterotic* pleasure of being part of one world.

Myth is a fictional representation of what goes on in the mind: the left half of the brain takes in charge the demonstrative function of thinking through symbolization of a logical icon, and the right half of the brain takes in charge the illustrative function through indexicalization of symbols. To imagine, with forms and colors, the young Jesus in the shop of his father Joseph or Mary crying on the corpse of her ded son is to “bring back to earth” a God that would otherwise remain conceptual.

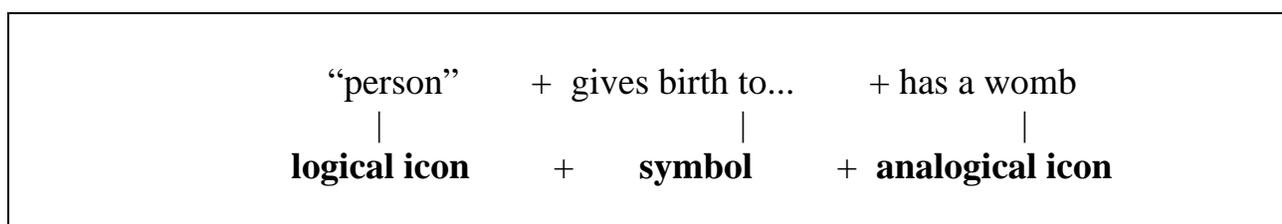
As long as we exist as persons, God exists as a knowable person-like being. If something in us we cannot prove, but know from experience, is not pure matter, not even pure living matter, but virtual matter, then there has to be something in God that is not pure abstraction or pure essence, something that has some kind of existence, as an image having a certain power over the matter (ground) that we are, that all existence is. The *icon* (an image resembling its model by reproducing its real proportions) is useful to draw conclusions or prove something (*pistis*); the *eidôlon* (an image through which real presence manifests itself and at the same time is felt as irremediable absence, (J.-P., Vernant : 1979, p.111) is useful to bring the imagining mind to move its material user to tears or fear, to have sensations produced by opinion (*gnomê*). God is a phantasm made of the *eikôn* of a “person” and the *eidôlon* of overwhelming “power”; It is build by adding indexical images to the combination

of a logical icon (person) and a symbol (maker of the world); It is both a sign of recognition in the demonstrative process of the symbol-centered discursive mind, and a sign of submission of the analytical *Ego* to the illustrative process of the index-centered holistic mind.

From a semiotic point of view, God is :



Nature is:



Does someone turn me on because he is my type or is it the other way around? If the type that is "mine" is determined by desire then it does not necessarily need to have a name. I construct a "god" or a "goddess" with the memories I have from my experience of this ideal person, possibly through various experiments. But in order to turn me on, a sign or a set of signs has first to become a habit. Even in an unexpected encounter, the turn on of the senses is a kind of recognition (*anagnorisis*) of “my type”. Through the images I show myself of him or her, I induce my analytical mind to submit to the power of an indexicalized symbol. In the most acute moments of spontaneity or sheer presence to the world, you can find traces of analytical thinking. And if you look at it the other way around, you would always find metaphors and images in any rational and scientific attempt to explain life or existence. The symbol is the nucleus of a sign system designed for explanation; the index is the nucleus of a sign system designed for illustration.

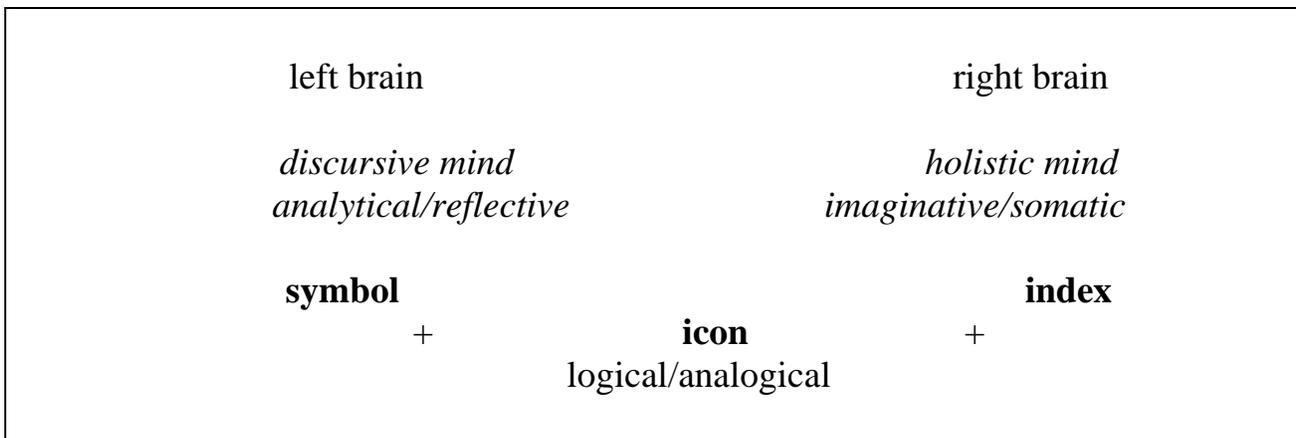
As a law, a symbol “necessarily governs” or “is embodied in individuals” (2.292). The analytical mind seeks to pin down every single sign to one single meaning; it would be otherwise impossible to explain anything or to be understood while explaining something to someone else.

The holistic mind seeks wholeness and globality felt and embodied. The realization of a dream, its coming through, hinders the power of the images over the imagining mind. This can be easily verified in masturbation: once the pleasure is obtained, the fantasy loses (temporarily) its grip on the holistic mind. As the image becomes real, as a person experiences the ideal “other” in reality, as the divine is

incarnated in the human, its existence is no longer symbolic, since the moved imagination produces concrete proof of it.

God is thus made of mental signs that have in common: that they are produced by the brain and that they are related to the structure of the brain, but are distinguished from one another by being strongly specialized in intra-hemispheric or inter-hemispheric communication.

The intra-hemispheric communication of the left brain specializes in symbols; that of the right brain specializes in indexes. The inter-hemispheric communication of the brain specializes in icons, logical icons in symbolization and analogical icons in indexicalization.



Iconicity is everywhere, it is in the construction of myth through indexicalization, it is also in the deconstruction of allegory through symbolization; it is present in a demonstrative thought as in a dream. Therefore it cannot be one of the two opposing signs of the brain. Since it cannot figure as one of the intra-hemispheric specialization, it has to be a connecting sign. In the dynamic of thinking, the icon makes possible or support in the discursive brain the exchange of information between the highly specialized analytical thinking and the less specialized reflective thinking. In the holistic brain, it supports in a similar fashion the exchange between the highly specialized somatic thinking and the less specialized imaginative thinking.

Is conceiving God as a person and imagining It as Father or wise old man a acquired or a natural behavior? It would of course be impossible to establish the acquired part of the logical icon “person”, but the oneness or the white beard are obviously acquired cultural features. Personification is cultural, but it occurs at the very root of the human thinking. The icon is used by the left brain to recognize the learned and memorized data, in order to identify the parts of what it is analyzing. The icon is also used by the right brain in the illustrative function of thinking;

connections are established between symbols and indexes. God is a “person” whose “body” is the living world.

Iconicity functions here in the exact opposite way as it does in personification: instead of trying to explain the concrete existence of the world by abstraction, the thinking tries to bring an abstract concept into the concrete world by comparing a symbol to an index. The illogical aspect of a statement such as “God is a person whose body is the world” has to be covered by metaphor, because the reality of such a person is doomed to be deconstructed, at least doubted by the rational mind. For the holistic mind, God is not different from any other phantasm of imaginative thinking. But we have to distinguish the logical icon (used as a *ground* to the demonstrative symbolization) from the analogical icon (used as a *ground* to the illustrative indexicalization). The logical icon is a limiting device assuring the reduction of possible *interpretants* to the only one acceptable in the view of analytical thinking. The analogical icon is a multiplying device fostering the proliferation of *interpretants* in imaginative thinking. Thus, iconicity plays a different role in the discursive mind and the holistic mind; it is helped by conventional rules in the making of symbols and by natural rules in the making of indexes. The choice of how God looks is conventional, since It as to look like something or someone. To polytheist Greeks or monotheist Christians, God is conceived as a person; to Egyptians, It might have looked like a ram headed bull; to atheists, It is a Nothingness. But Nothingness has to *look like* something else in order to be conceived or imagined. The description of Nothingness is always a harsh task, because the only tools we have to do it are analytical; and the rational grasp of what is not is only possible through comparison with things that are.

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To say that God thinks up the world and is thus present in the thinking of mankind, is to be an idealist, a rationalistic idealist if God is believed to be modeled on the *Self*, and a metaphysical idealist if the *Self* is believed to be modeled on God. But there is a difference between the thinking of mankind and the thinking of God. Divine thinking has an effect on matter, it creates the real world from scratch, it is *magic*. The world is conceived as the dream of God, a Force or a source of Energy soon to be called Nature. To believe so is to be a metaphysical idealist. On the other hand, to say that reason, as the demonstrative function of thinking, is god given and that human thinking embodies divine thinking is to be a rationalistic idealist.

To say that God is dead (Nietzsche), or that He had turned His back on Man (Hölderlin) is pushing the allegory of God’s administration of the world to a point where the soul has to rush back in and down inside. The pleasure aimed at then is a kind of masochistic shrill.

Materialism in its pessimistic phase we can call “morbid realism” denounce the irreality of the fictive personality of God, it denounces all myth. To have faith in oneself as a person playing a role in society is to make use of myth that is to induce an existence to something we know is an abstraction. It is something like Coleridge’s “suspension of disbelief”, we fool ourselves into believing in God in order to obtain the satisfaction of ecstasy, the movement of the soul (*psuchê*) from an “up” state of the inside being to the “up” state of the outside being.

To believe in God because every one else does is to target the erotic pleasure of ordinary self satisfactory imitation, the basic character of humanity according to Aristotle. But the Question remains to the analytical mind, aiming at the critical pleasure of self exaltation in the rational grasp of God’s identity. The problem is that God’s name is “he Who” or *Quid*, it reflects like a mirror and sends back the questioner to himself.

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There are four different ways of using signs in the mind, four different ways of combining the attention or indifference of the discursive mind to one self or the world, with the attention or indifference of the holistic mind to the world and one self. When the discursive mind focuses on the world, with the impression of looking down and out, the holistic mind has to focus on the Self

Every movement of the soul occurs in time, it has a starting point and a goal; it starts with a *desire* and ends with a *pleasure*. But it also have to be made in reference to the topography of the body, its highs and lows, it’s interior and exterior. The movements of the soul triggers the production of signs: the discursive mind produces symbols, when the soul feels high and in-drawn (*exaltation*), and symbolized indexes such as logical icons, when it feels like going out and down (*compassion*). When the soul feels down and in-drawn (*isolation*), symbols intervene in the freely flowing production of indexes. And when it feels high and out-going (*elevation*), the thinking is concentrated on the indexicalization of symbols; the imaginative thinking uses analogical icons to enhance the feeling of wholeness targeted here.

THINKING

<p>analytic</p> <p>state of inward up going attention to one's self</p> <p>symbol</p> <p><i>myth</i></p>	<p>analytico-holistic</p> <p>state of outward up going attention to the world</p> <p>analogical icon</p> <p><i>allegory</i></p>
<p>state of outward down going attention to the world</p> <p>logical icon</p> <p><i>memory</i></p>	<p>state of inward down going attention to one's self</p> <p>index</p> <p><i>feeling</i></p>
<p>holistico-analytic</p>	<p>holistic</p>

The rationalization of art consuming in the post industrial world is mostly due to a shift from an ironical aesthetics to a rationalistic aesthetics. In the works of Walt Disney, for instance, a dying kind of realism gives way to a returning idealism using art as an individual power gaining process allowing individuals to take part in the hermeneutic conversation of the world. The tackiness of everything "cute" in what we will call the *primitive style* is tied to a self-indulging aesthetics of someone who might have heard of high art but prefers the common man's simple pleasure. Art where commercial ties are carefully hidden, like the actual "mass" of the transparent or reflecting glass, is always produced as a magic trick, an illusion where the artist's individuality has to be disguised and a mass effect has to be produced

Turning his back to realism, Disney aims at "high art", with an ironical humility that paves the way to classicism.

In the works of Cai Guo-Qiang, on the other hand, a dying king of modernism gives way to neo-classicism. The artist is masked anew. Hidden behind is depictive work, the artist avoids signing in every stroke of his chisel or brush: his or her trade is not self expressive, it is life depicting. The distinction of his individuality lies in his ideas, in the personal use of symbols: the numerous knives and forks stung in the two wooden crocodiles, and in what was called the *Invisible Monument*, the makeshift pigeons (doves) laying dead at the foot of the transparent glass they were tragically fooled by. The artistic statement here has its hand held back by ongoing tragic aesthetics; the artist is not using his personality as a sign of his art, he or she is aiming at the rationalistic aesthetics of classicism in the context of ironical aesthetics of modern art.

When we speak of art for the masses as a result of industrialization, we imply that the *piece* of art is reproduced massively, therefore that it is not *unique* as it has been asked to be under the rule of Apollo, the order and symmetry abiding god of classicism. But it can also imply that the materiality of the work of art is something the consumer looks for in his search for a specific pleasure. The pleasure of consuming the *same* work of art as your neighbor is related to the metaphoric interpretation of "mass"; the actual mass of the object is replaced, as a figure of speech, by a figurative use of "mass".

Whenever the human proliferation is seen as a problem, art becomes a magic solution, it brings about the commonness and warmth of humanity, but it does so by overlooking the non-realism of its oversimplified content. When the actual mass of a work of art becomes its message, when its matter becomes its meaning, the pleasure of the user is no longer erotic. It is not so much from caressing the actual stone that the user gets his pleasure, it is by acknowledging the artist's idea. No more self-indulging ignorance but self-asserting recognition of the artist's originality or

unicity. The ironic aesthetics of the self-indulging art users tend to pin a positive meaning to the term *pop art*: progress and industry are still seen as ways to help art accomplish its social task, but in the rationalistic aesthetics of the twenty-first century, the user asks for knowledge. He has no other way of justifying his self-indulgence; the truth is what he or she learns through the emotional experience of art. The person involved here aims at a different pleasure altogether: the critical pleasure of knowing. This pleasure of the happy few implies a certain cruelty towards those who do not know and also a good deal of hidden fear of the unknown.

In the process of obtaining the morbid pleasure of self-depreciation, the contradictory emotions are neutralized. Tragic Aesthetics focuses on the inward down going movement of the soul

When Shakespeare was putting on the stage a Wall, it could only be on a fictitious stage. The speech of this Wall is only acknowledgeable through the speech of the tinker Tom Snout. This wall is made of non-symbolic and furthermore non-metaphoric matter, it stands as a contradiction. Being highly symbolic it is also lowly materialistic. This wall is uttering a truth that can be verify at all levels of thinking.

The double symbolization leads to indexicalization, like mathematical negations resulting in a positive addition. The strategy used by the discursive mind to obtain the anterotic pleasure of *wholeness* combines suspension of disbelief and self-indulging idolization. The Wall is there because I hear and see an actor play the role of Snout.

metaphor 1 (the actor plays the role of Snout)

metaphor 2 (Snout plays the role of the Wall)

The physical metaphor of the actor pretending to be someone else; the hidden term is here the *reality* of the spectator. Through suspension of disbelief it is replaced by a second degree reality, that of a theatrical event, where the world and the Self are not seen as different. The hermeneutic competence of the spectator relies on his or her ability to recognize the world on stage.

As for the second metaphor, where The Wall is a substitute for the hidden or masked Snout, it is a conceptual metaphor. The user has to know much more. If I don't know the meaning of the words "loam", "roughcast" or "stone" of verse 160 (V, 1), I cannot make out the meaning of this metaphor.

Reference to theater making in Shakespeare theatrical poetry is not uncommon. It shows the clash between medieval modernism and Renaissance classicism. Shakespeare shows us the strings of the puppets with a modern arrogance defying classical rules. Like Holbein's feet first dead Christ was defying medieval iconography, Shakespeare's Wall defies classical mimetism. Shakespeare

prepares the erotic pleasure of recognition, but since he sets the illusion inside the limits of the actual theater event, he delivers instead the critical pleasure of rational grasp. Still in touch with tragic aesthetics of his predecessors and in the heights of sixteenth century's ironical aesthetics, Shakespeare's *primitive* style can be seen as a sign of classicism.

A similar switch from a tragic aesthetics to a ironic aesthetics was taking place when Walt Disney created his cartoon masterpieces. Classical symmetry chases away the last traces of morbid materialism by imposing an oversimplified ironical aesthetics. The centauress hiding her breast to the eye of the camera in *Fantasia*, is Walt Disney drawing the lifting of an arm at the exact place where he could have drawn a woman's breast. He winks at moral latitude while respecting the moral rule of art; and this is typical of ironical aesthetics.

self assertive critical pleasure baroque style <i>rationalistic aesthetics</i>	self-abandoning anerototic pleasure academic style <i>Romanesque aesthetics</i>
self indulging erotic pleasure primitive style <i>ironical aesthetics</i>	self destructive morbid pleasure panic style <i>tragic aesthetics</i>

1.

The *rationalistic* quest for an explanation of the world focuses on the demonstrative or apodictic (*apodeiknumi*) function of human thinking (*dianoia*) and submit the illustrative or apophantic (*apophainô*) function to a supporting role. The

pleasure aimed at here is the exaltation of the “I” (*Ego*), a movement taking the soul from a state of *outward attention to the world*, the normal state of the discursive mind, to a state of *inward indifference to one self*, a movement ***outside in and up*** that coincides with the myth of scientific objectivity. Iconicity is helped by conventional laws to produce symbols. The philosophy drawn from this egocentric production of symbols can be called *rationalistic idealism*, it is build around the myth of the “I” (*Ego*)’s originality. The *exaltation* of the “I” (*Ego*) ends the movement that starts with the indifferenciation of the *Id*. The fear of isolation pushes the *Self* into compassion (self pity) and, from there, the *Self* pushes the mythical “I” (*Ego*) into existence. The specific pleasure attached to this psychic movement is the *critical* pleasure of self assuring rational seizure. It contains a certain amount of violence and might be regarded as a cruel pleasure. In the field of art consuming, this type of mental behavior is called rationalistic aesthetics and it feasts on baroque style.

2.

The *ecstatic* fusion of the analytical mind, located in the left side of the human brain, with the imagining mind, located in the right side, stresses the illustrative function and submits the demonstrative function to a supporting role. The pleasure targeted here is the evacuation of self consciousness in the transcending wholeness of the world as it is seen or imagined by the holistic mind; it implies a movement taking the soul from a state of *inward indifference to oneself* to a state of *outward indifference to the world*, a movement ***inside out and up***. Iconicity is here helped by what we can call natural laws, in other words our physical experience of the world helps us create images of materially existing things, symbols are then helped by indexes. The philosophy drawn from this production of indexed symbols, or illustrated ideas, can be called *metaphysical idealism*. Love as the myth of reciprocity is built here as a bridge between the divine and the human. God given and heaven sent, Love has nothing to do with the materialistic self satisfying urge for sex; in order to believe in Love, the imagining mind has to hide this urge, and produce indexed symbols like phantasms (involving the use of analogical icons such as “world” or “whole” used to fool the analytical mind into an illusionistic game of submission). Only a metaphysical approach to sex, like that of the Tantra yoga, neoplatonic friendship mostly experienced through sublimation, can really transform the sexual urge into shared spirituality.

The *elevation* of the soul starts in compassion. Then the soul is driven, through the exaltation of the “I” (*Ego*), to project a double masked figure, a kind of allegorical *Super-Ego* whose lifting power is imagined in the right side of the brain. It ends in the *anterotic* pleasure total fusion in the global whole. (Anteros is the half-

brother of Eros; one is the offspring of Venus Urania and the other the offspring of Venus Pandemon.).

For such a Romanesque aesthetics, the longed for realm of the sublime is reached through the use of academic style.

3.

The *tragic* defeat of the analytical mind resulting in the indifferenciation of abstracted identities and leaving the holistic mind to the sole production of indexes (signs that represent by virtue of “being really affected by” the Object of what they represent or by virtue of the law of causation) aims at the pleasure we can compare to yogic nirvana, the perfect immobility in concentration. Unlike ecstasy, this movement of the soul goes *outside in and down*, from a state of *outward non-attention to the world* to a state of *inward attention to oneself*. Iconicity is of no use here, since the holistic mind, freed from any analytical bound, produces raw images, random indexes, and blends the Self with the rest of the world. The philosophy drawn from this production of indexes can be called *morbid materialism*; it is built around the myth of indifferenciation. Deconstruction, nihilism and pessimism are different ways of denying the truth of any rational grasp. The morbid realism of Samuel Beckett or Cioran are good examples of this.

The *isolation* of the soul starts as the subject is created. The analytical mind knows it is lying, but dares overlook it in order to project the “I” (*Ego*) in the image of the *Super-Ego*. The soul is doomed to be deceived by this makeshift God whose materiality is nothing but virtual neural matter, it is drawn back or pulled down to the matter the soul (*psychê*) and the physical body (*soma*) is made of. In this movement of the soul, the masochistic pleasure of self denial empowers the index making mind. Tragic aesthetics and freak style are thus linked together by the morbid pleasure of self-destruction.

4.

The *ironic* make-belief of the awakening analytical mind, like that of a child, is game like thinking. The movement taking the soul from a state of *inward attention to oneself* to a state of *outward attention to the world*, a movement *inside out and down*, like if the soul was opening caring arms to the world, aims at self satisfying recognition of resemblance, it focuses on iconicity. It is the most common thinking and also the most childish attitude towards the world. The philosophy here can be called *moderate materialism* that builds around the myth of heredity, a kind of naive realism, as opposed to the morbid realism of the tragic defeat of the soul.

The *compassion* of the soul starts in elevation, but as the metaphoric nature of all essence deceives it, the soul has to go through Hell, and from this state of

indifferenciation where all being loose its individuality and nothing is conceivable, it is drawn to the re-comforting feeling of sameness. But as soon as the iconicity of a person, as individual token of the human being, is confronted with the mythical uniqueness of the “I” (*Ego*), compassion becomes self-esteem and the soul is soon to be exalted again. Self gratifying erotic pleasure is attached to this specific movement of the soul.

In the process of analytical thinking, memory is used to move the soul from a inward and down going attention to oneself as identical with the world to an outward state of attention to the world. In other words, memory is the part of the analytical thinking that is functionally dependant of the holistic mind. Myth is used as a means to move the soul (*psuchê*) from unconscious memory of perceptions past and kept through the use of logical icons, such as “person”, to the imaginary projection of oneself in the allegory of the divinized “I” (*Ego*), since the rational grasp of oneself as *Ego* gives way to it. Though the use of analogical icons, such as “god”, “life”, “energy” or “nature”, the soul reaches a state of pure delight, a kind of rapture of the *Self* in ecstasy, that feels like relief from earthly burden.

In the process of imaginative thinking, allegory is used to move the soul from an outward and up going state of *non-attention to the world* to a state of *non-attention to oneself*, and feeling is used to move it from there to a state of attention to oneself as part of the world, the *Id* as Freud would put it, a kind of confusion out of which the soul is moved again, if stimulated to do so, to a state of “normal” attention to the world that seems less down going than a fall. Memory is thus what compassion is made of, a feeling imbedded in the majority of reasonable minds, an imagery where language is the rule. Bad feelings are thoughts in the realm of feelings; they do not belong. Balanced thinking has to let the soul go from one state to the other, without avoiding nor favoring any, except when specific tasks are imposed on the brain for esthetical purposes.

Our will to believe triggers the transfer from a context of logical iconicity, where concepts are made of symbols, to a context of analogical iconicity, where images are made of indexes. God is a semiotic object created by the cultural animals called *Homo sapiens* in order to move the body and bring it to the anterotic pleasure of letting go. With the help of the holistic mind’s indexicalization, the symbols assembled in the myth of God’s existence are masked like Descartes’s *Ego*. Signs of essence, like “creator of all beings” or “master of the universe”, are charged with signs of existence such as “beard” and “robe”. To get an anterotic kick out of God, the mind “dresses up” the inconceivable being as a bearded father or a mother-like Nature.

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