Passion and Knowledge

PSYCHE

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Everything that exists within what we call *thought* is not formalized or formalizable, that is, comparable to a mechanical operation (Churchs thesis). Rather, all that exists within thought brings both human imagination and human passion into play.

I have already written quite extensively on the imagination, [1] so I shall limit myself here to recalling the essential points. At the two extremes of knowledge, but also constantly in the middle, stands the creative potential of the human being, namely the radical imagination. It is the radical imagination that presents an outside world formed in this way and not otherwise. It is this radical imagination, too, that creates the axioms, postulates, and fundamental schemata that underlie the constitution of knowledge. And, finally, it is radical imagination that is constantly furnishing the hypotheses-models, the ideas-images, that nourish every breakthrough and every elaboration. Now, this imagination, in itself and in its basic modes of operation, as well as the social imaginary that is its counterpart on the social-historical level as creation of the anonymous collective, is neither formalized nor formalizable. Certainly, it always also contains—like everything that is—an ensemblistic-identitary (or, for brevitys sake, *ensidic*) dimension. [2] Yet, in its operations as well as in its results, the essential thing is not to be found there, any more than, in a Bach fugue, is the essence in the arithmetical relations among tones.

Why is a computer unable to replace the human mind? Because the former is devoid of imagination.

Because, therefore, it can neither go beyond the rules that make it function nor go back before they were laid down (unless, precisely, one has specified this as a rule, and obviously, in this last case, it would be impossible for the computer to posit a new rule capable of leading to meaningful results). And because it is devoid of passion and therefore incapable of suddenly changing its object of inquiry on account of some new, hitherto unsuspected idea of which it has become enamored along the way. None of these deficiencies can be made up for by random operations.

The Paradoxical Relation Between Passion and Knowledge

At first glance, it seems absurd to bring together the terms *passion* and *knowledge*, which seem to exclude each other absolutely. A moderately educated individual, bolstered, moreover, by most philosophers, would probably affirm that this relation could only be a negative one, passion (as well as the imagination, the "mad woman in the attic") only being able to perturb or to corrupt the labor of knowledge, which is said to require instead scholarly coolness and detachment. It would be easy to answer this individual that every great work of knowledge has been moved by passion and tyrannical absorption with a single object—from Archimedes, who was killed after refusing to let his circles in the sand be disturbed, to the frantic last writings of Évariste Galois, who scrawled his theorems on paper all night long before his fatal duel. Our hypothetical, but not implausible, interlocutor could offer us the rejoinder that he did not intend the passion for knowledge itself, which bears on the object of knowledge or on the truth, but extrinsic, impure passions: envy, hatred, and resentment, love

of money, power, or even glory, or yet again, and perhaps especially, the extension of the researchers egoism to "his" ideas and "his" results.

Remembering our Hegel, we could answer him that, as in other domains, in this domain, too, the cunning of reason knows very well how to bring the least noble passions into its service. How many times has a rivalry between masters or schools, with cloudy motives (Newton-Leibniz, Kronecker-Cantor, etc.), played a driving role in the development of knowledge? Today especially, who would dare maintain that the passion for power, for renown at all costs, and even for money are not powerful stimuli for scientific research—as our contemporaries utter rage to be first abundantly shows? We can, and should, delve into a deeper stratum and, to that end, give a more rigorous meaning to the term *passion*. It can be said, along with Piera Aulagnier, [3] that there is passion when the object of pleasure is transformed into an object of need—in other words, when the object is one that could not be missed, when the subject cannot conceive her life without the possession of the object, its absorption, its pursuit, in a sense, ultimately, without identification with the object of the passion, which has become a matter of life or death. Does such a relation exist in the domain of knowledge? Certainly so. It is not only experience that shows this; there are, so to speak, a priori considerations that oblige us to admit that there can be no nonroutine work of knowledge without passion thus defined, without the subjects total dedication to his object.

But what, in the case of knowledge, is this object? Knowledge begins with the interrogation *What is . . . ?*, or *Why . . . ?*, and so on, but becomes knowledge, even in the case of philosophy, only if it leads to certain results. We must insist on this last point in an age when people are talking only of questioning [*interrogation*], indetermination, deconstruction, and weak thought. [4] What, then, is cathected in the passion to know? The first answer that presents itself is, obviously: the truth. And there is no need to enter into a philosophical discussion of the question *What is truth?* in order to affirm, as a first approximation, that the truth has to do with the *results* of knowing. But it is here that the paradoxes reemerge. The passion for truth cannot be separated from the passion for the results in which this truth is incarnated or seems to be incarnated for the researcher, the scientist, or the thinker. Now, this truth can lead her, and most often does lead her, to a fixation on these (her) results, with which she more or less identifies —to the point that any calling them into question can be felt by her as a calling into question of her own identity, her very being. The subjects narcissism necessarily extends outward to encompass—and this is so not only in the domain of knowledge—what the subject has produced, objects henceforth of a categorical and unconditional cathexis.

Yet this cathexis, which transforms the truth into an object of possession and so often becomes, in philosophy especially but not exclusively, attachment to a system, stands in contradiction to the initial motive and driving force of the search for truth. It cannot help but halt the movement of interrogation, preventing the latter from turning toward its results, and still less from turning back on the postulates that rendered these results possible. Here we find one of the roots of various dogmatisms and fanaticisms in the domain of knowledge.

Here we have a dilemma. Either one becomes passionate about the results—without which the truth remains but a phantom (or, at best, a Kantian regulatory idea, with the antinomies that follow therefrom)—at the risk of becoming fixated on these results or one becomes passionate about the search for the truth itself, therefore ultimately passionate about boundless interrogation, at the risk of forgetting that this interrogation would then remain suspended in midair for lack of any fixed points. Is there any way out of this dilemma? The answer to this question is many-sided. On the philosophical plane, it imposes a new idea of the truth as an

open relationship between an interrogation and its results, as a *sui generis* movement going back and forth between processes and pauses, between excavation and encounter ("correspondence"). On the psychoanalytical plane, it obliges admission of a singular, and historically new, type of cathexis, the cathexis of self as creative source and of the activity of thought in itself as such. [5] Under what conditions can knowing be cathected as process and activity and not simply as result? And to what extent can one cathect oneself as origin and actor of this process?

Philosophical Aspects

If you told me, "Socrates, we are acquitting you, but on the condition that you abandon this search and no longer philosophize . . . ," I would tell you . . . that I shall not stop philosophizing . . . the unexamined life is not livable (*o de anexetastos bios ou bi« tos*). [6] Undoubtedly, Socrates dies on account of several factors and motives, but above all because examination and interrogation have become the object of his passion, that without which life is not worth living. Let us note this point well: Socrates is not speaking of truth; he has always proclaimed, albeit in an ironic fashion, that the only thing he knew with certainty was that he knew nothing. He speaks of *exetasis*, examination, inquiry. The two strands we have loosened stand clearly apart here: passion, which makes its object worth ones life; and the nature of this object, not as possession but as quest and inquiry, examinative activity.

In the *Phaedrus* and especially in the *Symposium*, in the mouth of Diotima, Plato sets amorous passion, Eros, at the base of knowing—as well as, moreover, at the base of everything that is truly worthwhile in human life. Aristotle begins his *Metaphysics* with the famous phrase, "All human beings, by their nature, desire knowledge." The contrast with modern times is striking: excepting Spinoza, for whom knowledge of the third kind, true intuition, is *amor Dei intellectualis*, intellectual love of substance (and still it must be remarked that the term *intellectualis* curiously attenuates the term *amor*), one notices that from Descartes to Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger, not to forget Anglo-Saxon philosophy, knowing becomes a strictly intellectual affair. We shall illustrate this point by a single example, that of Immanuel Kant.

Kant, as one knows, poses the question of the "human beings interests," and lays out this question in three moments: What can I know, what ought I to do, what am I allowed to hope for? His huge elaboration of the first moment becomes an investigation into what he calls the transcendental conditions of knowledge, in other words, into the question: How are synthetic a priori judgments (necessary and nontautological judgments) possible? From the point of view of interest to us here, the outcome of this investigation is the construction of a transcendental ego, wherein the "imagination" plays a certain role. But this role, which is subordinated to the requisites of an assured and certain form of knowing, consists in the perpetually unchanging production of forms that are given once and for all. At the same time, this transcendental ego necessarily is, by its very construction, totally disembodied, and not somatically but psychically. It is a mental machine— today, we would say a sort of computer. There are, moreover, two computers rather than one, and they do not communicate with each other. Indeed, Kant establishes an abyssal divide, a split between transcendental subject and psychological subject. The former is supposed (postulated) to function under the sole requisite of producing a priori judgments; the latter is subjected to the laws of empirical psychology and therefore emits judgments that are not motivated but determined (in the natural-sciences sense) by psychical causes. Despite some of Kants expressions (as when he speaks of the Schematism as an "art hidden in the depths of the human soul"), [7] it cannot even be said that

this soul is, in him, split in two; it must rather be said that, for him, the soul is entirely on the side of pure fact (subject to the question *quid facti*) and looks hopelessly toward the other edge of the abyss, where the transcendental requisite and the Idea of a pure morality (they alone being capable of responding to the question *quid juris*) shine forth. At best, there is a split between a transcendental consciousness (or a practical reason)—about which it is not known whether it represents a pure, inaccessible "ought to be" (in which case, we are given over to empiricist relativism) or the effectively actual reality of "us men," *wir Menschen* (we would then be totally outside nature)—and the empirical psyche, which, even when it speaks the truth (or does what is good), can speak it (or do it) only for bad (empirical or impure) reasons. In the field of knowledge, in any case, this empirical soul could be only a source of perturbations and errors, when, for example, the "empirical imagination" or, still worse, the passions, interfere (yet, one wonders how) with the functioning of the transcendental consciousness.

Cutting a long discussion short, we have to limit ourselves to a few assertions that the preceding remarks will have rendered at least plausible.

What really matters to us is the effectively actual knowledge of effectively actual subjects, not a transcendental phantom or an inaccessible ideality. The following paradox is but apparent: exclusive preoccupation with such an ideality can end only in skepticism and solipsism.

These effectively actual subjects are always socialhistorical subjects. Their sociality and their historicity are not scoria, accidents, or obstacles but, rather, essential positive conditions for their having access to any knowledge. This is so already because there is no thought without language and because language exists only as social-historical institution.

These effectively actual subjects are also subjects in the full sense of the term. They are not mere products of social-historical conditions but, rather, subjects for themselves and, more particularly, human psychisms.

Let us take a step back and ask a question. What are, not the conditions of possibility, but the components of the effective actuality required for any being-for-itself (from a bacterium to the human) to exist and to undertake any activity whatsoever? The effectively actual existence of a for-itself implies that the latter:

- creates a world of its own, a "proper world," that it itself places itself therein, and that, at a minimum, it interacts with the substrate of this world according to the modes dictated to it by the constitution of its proper world;
- pursues certain objects and flees from other ones (for, without that, it would cease to exist); and
- valuates, positively or negatively, the objects and results of its activities.

Let us translate this now into the language of the human psyche. The psyche has to itself create an image of the world and of its place in this world. It has to desire and detest. It has to feel some pleasure with the objects it desires and some displeasure with the objects it detests.

But also, the psyche can exist only if it is socialized. That means that it receives, in the main, its image of the world and of itself, its cathected objects, its evaluative criteria, and its sources of pleasure and displeasure from the society in which it finds itself.

These images, these objects, these criteria are cathected in a passionate way by the singular psyche as well as by the social collective in which it finds itself submerged. And without this cathexis, neither one could exist. These considerations are neither empirical nor transcendental. They appertain to the ontology of individual and collective human being and to the ontology of the human beings relation to the world it creates and that it makes be in making itself be. This being and this relation exist only as social-historical. Here we have the central dimension of all these questions. We are going to broach one of its aspects briefly.

Belief, Knowledge, Truth

This passionate cathexis of ones self-image and ones image of the world, of which we have spoken, does not yet, in itself, relate to any kind of knowledge. It appertains to the domain of belief. Belief is everywhere there is human being, as individual and as collectivity. Living is impossible without a pragmatic belief in the being-thus and regular flow of the things of the world. We share such belief, undoubtedly, with every living being— even if we are the sole ones for whom it is more or less explicit and conscious. For humans, however, this belief goes far beyond the perceptibility [*lêtre perceptible*] of the things of the world and of their relationships. [8] It is also and especially belief in the significations that hold together the world, society, and the life and death of individuals. It is the subjective side of the imaginary institution of society. Nearly all of its contents (or objects) are social in origin and nature; they are individual only in a marginal and accidental way, inasmuch as they depend on individual experience and idiosyncrasies. That is why they are almost everywhere, almost always, unquestionable.

One can call into question this or that material fact, not societys imaginary significations. The institution of society has always been grounded on and sanctioned by religion, in the broad sense of the term; [9] and no believer will place in doubt the dogmas of his religion. Even in societies more or less released from the grip of religion, like some contemporary societies, there is an innumerable quantity of ideas a normal citizen would never place in doubt. He believes in them—without necessarily knowing that he *believes* (he believes that he *knows*).

In the strict sense that alone matters to us here, knowledge begins when a process of interrogation and inquiry starts that calls into question the beliefs of the tribe and thus creates a breach in the metaphysical niche the collectivity has itself constituted. Certainly, it is necessarily propped up [*étayée*] on belief: as Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg underscored, the strange goingson in general relativity and quantum theory presuppose the world of common everyday experience and must be confirmed in that common everyday world. Knowledge, however, questions belief and, as a general rule, subverts significations and the system by which established meanings are given.

To be sure, the distinction is not always as clear-cut in effectively actual history, and intermediate zones exist between the two. To take the most eloquent example, in the three monotheistic religions the content of beliefs can become an object of investigation—generally, one about the "true meaning" of the sacred texts—that has fed some long-standing scholarly disputes (and a good number of massacres, too). Yet this interrogation is necessarily bounded, in the mathematical sense of the term: it always has to remain within the postulate of the indisputable —because revealed—ultimate truth of these texts. [10] Belief, like knowledge, is a creation of beings-forthemselves —living beings, the psyche, society. But belief is established in closure. It suffices that belief allow the for-itself under consideration to exist within the world; indeed, belief constitutes its vital setting. That is why, in the simple living

being totally, and in humans in its instrumental part, belief has to be, in one manner or another, adequate to what is. This constraint ceases, however, when we consider the truly important part of human beliefs—their imaginary part, the part that has to do with signification. For the latter, the sole constraint of import is the closure of meaning, the "capacity" to respond to every question that can arise in the society under consideration.

It is this closure that is broken through interrogation and the process of knowledge. Of its own accord, knowledge subjects itself to another constraint, that of *logon didonai*—giving an account of and reason for —and rejects everything that avoids the question. This constraint can be itemized in the following two exigencies: internal coherence and an encounter with what is. These two exigencies already, in themselves, raise new questions. For this reason alone, interrogation is unending.

How can such an activity be cathected by the subject? What meaning does it have for the psyche? These are the questions toward which we are now going to turn our attention.

Psychoanalytical Aspects

The following particular psychical activities—believing, thinking, knowing—ought to form a central object of preoccupation for psychoanalytic theory. After all, they are the very presuppositions for its existence. And yet, an elucidation of these particular psychical activities was hardly ever broached by Freud, and that elucidation remains, among his successors, nearly in the same state as he left it. [11]

In his first conception of the problem (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*), [12] Freud invokes a drive for knowledge— *Wisstrieb*—whose status, it must be recognized, is strange, to say the least. According to what Freud writes elsewhere (*Triebe und Triebschicksäle*, 1915), the drive is "the frontier between the somatic and the psychical": [13] it necessarily has a "somatic source" and a "delegation" into the psyche by means of a representation (*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz des Triebes*). It is difficult to see what a "somatic source" of a "drive for knowledge" might be. It certainly has to be recalled that in 1907 Freud did not yet possess a worked-out theory of the drives and that what is at issue in the *Three Essays* as well as in *The Theories of Infantile Sexuality* is the child's sexual curiosity.

That certainly furnishes this "drive" with a certain psychoanalytic respectability, but it does not allow one to bridge the enormous gap that separates infantile sexual curiosity from religion, cosmological theories, or theorems about prime numbers. Why do cows not have religion— and why do sexed animals in general not produce infantile sexual theories and even seem devoid of all curiosity on this topic, going instead, in general, straight to the point? The answer would no doubt—or, in any case, ought to— be that, in animals, the sexual function is fully "instinctual," that is, its paths and goals are predetermined, constant, assured, and functional, whereas in humans we are dealing, precisely, not with an "instinct" but with a "drive."

What is to be said of this difference that, after all, from the Freudian outlook governs the difference between animality and humanity? Neither his 1915 text nor the other ones ever directly confront this question. We may note, rather, in Freud both a number of sketches of an answer and something like an avoidance of the problem.

At one of the extremes is situated the "biologistic" response, which, when pushed to the limit, would lead to the erasure of this difference. Freud certainly did not do that, but it may be asked what pushes him to extend the struggle of Eros and Thanatos to the entire kingdom of living beings and, in particular, to believe that he had also discovered the "death instinct" in the most elementary organisms. [14] At the other extreme is situated the admission, several times repeated, that we know nothing about an essential quality of at least one part of human psychical phenomena: the quality that is consciousness.

At times, the invocation of "our God Logos" (*The Future of an Illusion {SE,* vol. 21, p. 54}) makes one think that he is postulating one irreducibly human attribute, which would be rationality. But obviously, rationality does not imply consciousness (every predator acts rationally), and consciousness does not imply rationality (as is shown by the most perfunctory observation of human behavior, both individual and collective). The founding myth of *Totem and Taboo* could at the very most account for the origin of a specific "religious" belief, not for consciousness, for explicit rationality, or for the activity of knowing. It hardly needs to be added that neither could one link the movement of knowledge to that other "instinct," selfpreservation, which is itself also universal among living beings—not even by sticking on it a genetically higher form of "rationality" in the human sphere, for such a "rationality" could lead, at best, only to the growth of a purely functional and instrumental form of knowledge that would remain enslaved to the satisfaction of perpetually identical "needs."

It is important to dwell on this question here within the very parameters set by Freud. Why would there be—why, in fact and in effect, *is there*—in human children a sexual curiosity that is absent among the young of other mammals? And why does it lead to such bizarre infantile sexual theories? It would be laughable to claim that the cause of this is the "secretiveness" of parental sexual activities among humans; childrens observation of animal sexual activities has been the rule in all human societies, with the (unclear) exception of the nurseries of some welloff city-dwelling layers of Victorian society. "Sexual curiosity" could spark off a search only as a function of another factor, which we shall tackle straight away.

Freud nevertheless furnishes—involuntarily, it could be said—the framework within which we can bring reflection to bear on our question.

Above, I wrote that Freud never faces head-on a discussion of the difference between animality and humanity, and that is indeed the case. If, however, it is understood correctly, his 1915 text on "Instincts [*sic*] and their Vicissitudes" offers within itself the beginnings of a response. The drive—whose source is somatic, but which, in order to make itself heard by the psyche, has to speak the latter's language—induces in this psyche a representation that acts as delegate or ambassador (*Vorstellungsrepräsentanz des Triebes*). Up to this point, there is no difference from what goes on in the animal psyche. The difference appears when one notices—which Freud did not do, though it is true that this was not at that moment his topic of investigation—that this representation is constant in the animal and variable in the human. Without fear of being mistaken, we can affirm that, for each animal species, the "representative" representation of the drive is fixed, determinate, canonical. Sexual excitation is provoked, each time, by the same stimulating representations, and the very unfolding of the act is, in the main, standardized. (The same could be said of nutritional needs, and so on and so forth.) While there are exceptions, these really are exceptions or aberrations. In humans, however, the exception is, so to speak, the rule. In psychoanalytical terms, there is no canonical representative of the drive across the whole species, nor even for the same individual in different circumstances or moments.

To the question *Why this difference?*, the answer is not hard to find: The function of representation—an essential component of the imagination—always furnishes the animal with the same products, whereas this function is released, liberated, or driven mad, as you wish, in the human. The living being in general possesses a functional imagination whose products are fixed and settled; the human possesses a defunctionalized imagination whose products are indeterminate. This goes hand in hand, in the human, with another decisive trait: representational pleasure tends to overtake organ pleasure (a daydream can be as much a source of pleasure as an act of coitus, if not more so). This fact is in turn a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for the emergence of another process that is uniquely characteristic of humans (and whose importance, as well as obscurity, Freud recognized): sublimation. For the human being, cathexes of objects and of activities that not only procure no organ pleasure and could not procure any, but whose creation and valuing are social and whose essential dimension is nonperceptible, are a source of pleasure (and are capable of dominating biological needs or even of standing in the way of ones mere self-preservation). [15]

This elucidation can and must be complemented on the basis of another element sifted out by Freud (already in the *Three Essays*): the desire for "mastery" of reality (and already that of the subjects own body). What are the status and origin of this desire for mastery? And what is its relation to sexual curiosity? The answer to these two questions leads us to leave Freud behind (but not, I think, to betray him). The desire for mastery is the offspring and the transposition into "reality" of the originary narcissistic omnipotence, the omnipotence of the monadic subject [16] (which, under the name "magical omnipotence of thought," Freud rightly rediscovered in everyone's Unconscious, that of children as well as that of adults).

Now, at its origin, and always in the Unconscious, this omnipotence is, let us note, omnipotence over representations (for the psyche, representation is the genus, "reality" the species), and it is in the service of the pleasure principle, which is the cement of meaning. At the psyches origin, a "sensible/meaningful [*sensée*]" representation is a representation that is a source of pleasure, and a representation that is a source of displeasure is senseless/meaningless [*a-sensée*] (like a cacophony). Here we have the matrix of meaning: everything holds together; everything has to hold together; and this holding-together is something sought after, positively valued, a source of pleasure. Organ pleasure itself is the holding-together of the object as source of satisfaction and the erogenous zone as seat of this satisfaction. Coitus is copulation, or reunification of the separated (see Aristophanes in the *Symposium*).

On the other hand, the basic intention of sexual curiosity in the child is to respond to the question: Where do children come from? This is an abstract and generalized formulation of the question: Where do I come from? And this question has meaning only as background for an interrogatory investigation of origin—which is one aspect and one moment of the question of *meaning* (an aspect and a moment of the causes of and conditions for meaning). More than milk or sleep, the psyche demands meaning; it demands the holding-together, *for* itself, of what presents itself to the psyche as apparently disordered and unrelated. The question of the origin is the question of order and of meaning in the temporal ("historical") dimension. The question of the origin perforates the plenitude of the present; it presupposes, therefore, the creation of a temporal horizon properly speaking (which is a work of the subjects radical imagination): that is, a horizon upstream, birth and commencement, and a horizon downstream, horizon of the project but also of death. Of course, this temporalization can occur only in step-by-step combination with the socialization of the psyche, which furnishes it

with a more and more differentiated world and which compels it to recognize this ever more differentiated world. But that aspect cannot retain us here.

To respond with an infantile sexual theory to sexual curiosity is therefore, on the part of the child, to try to instaurate the mastery of her thought over her origin, in other words, to sketch out a meaning for her history. This is what will later be prolonged into a question about the origin of everything, a question to which socially instituted theology and cosmology will always give an answer. Let us put it another way: Sexual curiosity tends toward a certain form of mastery, and mastery as such always also has sexual connotations. (The ways in which all this is also related to a kind of instrumental mastery—to which Freud attached great importance, as is seen in *The Future of an Illusion*—cannot retain us here.) Whether we are talking, therefore, about sexual curiosity, mastery, or sources of pleasure, the break with animality is conditioned by the emergence of the radical imagination of the singular psyche and of the social imaginary qua source of institutions, therefore of objects and activities capable of nourishing sublimation. This emergence destroys the animals "instinctual" forms of self-regulation, adds representational pleasure to organ pleasure, gives rise to the exigency of meaning and of signification, and responds to this exigency through the creation, at the collective level, of social imaginary significations that account for everything that can, each time, be presented to the society under consideration.

Borne and conveyed by socially instituted, desexualized, and essentially imperceptible objects, these significations are, under penalty of death or madness, cathected by singular subjects. It is the process of this cathexis and its results that we are to call *sublimation*. [17] Sublimation, however, is a condition for there to be knowledge, not knowledge itself. For, in almost all societies, its objects are unquestionable *beliefs*: the world rests on a great tortoise, or God created it in six days, after which time he rested, and so on and so forth. These beliefs guarantee a saturation of the exigency of meaning by giving an answer to everything that can be, in a sensible/meaningful manner for this society, an object of questioning. And they ensure a *closure* of interrogation by instaurating an ultimate and catholic source of signification. In order to elucidate the origin of *knowledge*, we have to go further.

Knowledge and Passion for the Truth

Let us dare to contradict Aristotle. What the psyche, as much as society, desires, and that of which they both have need, is not knowledge, but belief.

The psyche is born, certainly, with the exigency of meaning. Or rather, it is born in that which, for it, is meaning and will remain the model for meaning its whole life long: that is, the closure of the psychical monad upon itself and the plenitude accompanying it. Under pressure both from corporeal need and from the presence of another human on whom satisfaction of this need depends, closure and plenitude cannot help but be ruptured.

Nonsatisfaction of need does indeed appear and can appear only as non-sense ("the end of the state of psychical quiescence," Freud writes). [18] Therefore, the person who ensures satisfaction of this need is straight away erected into a position of the Master of meaning: that is, the Mother, or her placeholder.

In its initial form, interrogation is a moment in the psyches struggle to exit from the senseless/ meaningless and from the anxiety to which this senselessness/ meaninglessness gives rise. (The senseless/meaningless can appear at this stage only as a threat of the selfs destruction.)

To this anxiety, the search for mastery responds in the form of the mastery of meaning (which, at the outset, is effectively total as "hallucinatory" or "delusional" mastery).

The search for meaning is a search to bring into relationship [*mise en relation*] the entire dust cloud of "elements" that presents itself, bound together with the

pleasure that comes from the more or less successful restoration of the integrity of the psychical flux: that is, a reestablished coalescence of representation, desire, and affect. Considered from the psychoanalytic point of view, *that* is the meaning of meaning, and it is not difficult to see how it relates to the meaning of meaning in philosophy (the *eudaimonia* of the theoretical life).

Searching and interrogation generally reach the saturation point via the social imaginary significations the human being absorbs and internalizes during this tough schooling process that is its socialization. And these significations themselves are almost always instituted in *closure*, for the exclusion of interrogation is the first and best means of ensuring the perpetuation of their validity.

It will be said that "reality" might call them back into question—but "reality" itself *is*, for each society, only in its being caught within the network of significations instituted and interpreted by this network. Only significations that are purely "instrumental"—or, better, only the instrumental dimension of certain significations— can sometimes be short-circuited by the "reality"-testing.

What, then, is passionately cathected is instituted social "theory," namely, established beliefs. The mode of adherence is here precisely that of *believing*, and the affective modality of this believing is *passion*, which manifests itself almost always as fanaticism. Passion is in effect brought to its maximum intensity on account of the fact that the socialized individual has to, under penalty of being faced with his own non-sense and with the nonsense of all that surrounds him, identify himself with the institution of his society and with the significations that society incarnates. To deny the institution or to deny these significations is, most of the time, to commit suicide physically and, almost always, to commit suicid psychically. The obvious underside of this passion, of this boundless love for self and ones own is the hatred of all that denies these objects, namely, the hate of the institutions and of the significations of the others and of the individuals who embody them.

Such has been, such is the state of humanity almost everywhere, almost always. We would not be speaking of knowledge as opposed to belief, however, if this state had not sometimes been ruptured. And it effectively has been broken up at least two times, in ancient Greece and in Western Europe , after which time the effects of this breakup have become potentially accessible to every human being and to every human collectivity.

We cannot know "why" such a break has occurred.

And to tell the truth, the question has no meaning. The rupture has been creation. We can, however, be more precise in characterizing its content. As a resurgence of a kind of interrogation that no longer accepts being saturated by socially instituted responses, this break is conjointly: creation of philosophy, or an indefinitely open calling into question [*mise en question*] of the idols and certainties of the tribe, even if we are talking about a tribe of wise men; and creation of politics as democratic politics, or the equally open challenging [*mise en*

cause] of the effectively actual institutions of society and opening of the interminable question of justice; and finally, and perhaps especially, cross-pollination of these two movements. [19] If we restrict ourselves to the domain of thought properly speaking, what henceforth becomes an object of passion is the search itself, as the term *philosophia* itself says so well. Not already acquired wisdom guaranteed once and for all, but love or Eros of wisdom.

There is a threefold condition for this passage to be effectuated. The three {elements} are ontological, socialhistorical, and psychical in character.

Clearly, the knowledge process presupposes two conditions that have to do with being itself. Curiously, only one of these two has especially been put forward by the inherited philosophy. For there to be knowledge, at least something of being must be know *able*, since obviously no subject of any kind would ever be able to know anything about an absolutely chaotic world. Being, however, must also be neither "transparent" nor even exhaustively knowable. Just as the mere existence of beings-for-themselves assures us that there are a certain stability and a certain orderedness to at least one stratum of being—its first natural stratum, the one with which the living being deals—so the existence of a history of knowledge has its own weighty ontological implications.

This history shows in effect that being is not such as it would be if an initial interrogation or a first effort at attaining knowledge could exhaust it. If one pursues this line of questioning, one will note that these facts are thinkable only by positing a stratification or fragmentation of being. [20] The social-historical condition has to do with the emergence of open societies, namely, ones that are such that established institutions and significations can be called into question and ones in which the knowledge process itself as such would be positively cathected and valued. Given that the institution of society has effectively actual existence only in being borne and conveyed by individuals and in being incorporated, so to speak, within them, this amounts to saying that the emergence of such societies entails and presupposes the educational formation of individuals capable of sustaining and deepening the interrogation.

Finally, if, as has been said, what the psyche desires above all is not any form of knowledge [*le savoir ou la connaissance*] but, rather, belief, a question of capital importance arises in relation to the psychical conditions of possibility for knowledge [*connaissance*]. What can the supports and the objects of cathexis be within the field of knowledge that are capable of having a meaning from the properly psychical point of view? Here, curiously, the psychical support can be only a narcissistic passion, though one that presupposes a transubstantiation of ones cathected self-image. The self is no longer cathected as the possessor of the truth but, rather, as source of, and incessantly renewed capacity for, creation. Or, what boils down to the same thing: the cathexis spreads to the activity of thought itself as apt to produce true results, yet beyond every particular given result. And this goes hand in hand with another idea of truth, both as philosophical idea and as object of passion.

The true no longer is an object to be possessed ("result," as Hegel said precisely), [21] nor is it passive spectacle of the play of Beings veiling and unveiling (Heidegger). The true becomes creation, always open and always capable of turning back upon itself, of forms of the thinkable and of contents of thought capable of having an encounter with what is. The cathexis is no longer cathexis of an "object," or even of a "self-image" in the usual sense, but of a "nonobject/object," activity and source of the true. The attachment to this truth is the passion for knowledge, or thought as Eros.

[*]The main ideas of this text have supplied the matter for lectures at the following conferences: "Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Neo-Fascism and Anti-Immigration Politics: Trends in Europe and the United States," San Francisco, May 6, 1995 (organized by the Psychoanalytic Institute of San Francisco and the University of California at Berkeley), "Guérir de la guerre et juger la paix," P aris, June 23, 1995 (organized by the University of Paris-VIII and the Collège International de Philosophie), and "Paysages de la pensée française," Rome, October 24, 1996 (organized by the French Embassy). It was considerably reworked for a lecture given as part of the "Die Konstruktion der Nation gegen die Juden" symposium, Mülheim, November 26, 1996. [The present version is based on the original English-language typescript of this lecture, dated September 1996, and incorporates changes and additions that appear in the version prepared by the French Editors. Editorial changes to the English typescript suggested by Joel Whitebook and Fuyuki Kurasawa were examined, considered, and incorporated when deemed appropriate. Kurasawas version, which appears to be missing several passages of original text, which includes others not indicated in the final printed French version, and which sometimes testifies to an unfamiliarity with standard Castoriadian and Freudian terminology as well as to lack of knowledge of common French phrases and English-language editorial practices, was published in a special "T ribute to Cornelius Castoriadis," *Free Associations*, 43 (1999): 402-15; additionally, some text included in the Kurasawa typescript seems to have been dropped by the *Free Associations* typesetter. (See, also note 10, below, this chapter.) Efforts to contact Kurasawa both before and after publication were unsuccessful. "Haine de soi, haine de lautre" appeared in *Le Monde*, January 9, 1999, pp. 1 and 13. It had already appeared as "Les racines psychiques et sociales de la haine," *Guérir de la guerre et juger la paix* (Acts of the International Philosophy Colloquium held at UNESCO, June 21-23, 1995), ed. Rada Ivekovic and Jacques Poulin, preface by Daniel Janicot (Paris: LHarmattan, 1998), pp 257-73, and it was reprinted in *FP*, pp. 183-96. —T/E]

[*]Lecture read in the Summer of 1991 at the Spoleto Festival and published in *Diogène*, 160 (October-December 1992): 78-96. [A translation by Thomas Epstein, which has been consulted on occasion, appeared in *Diogenes*, 160 (Winter 1992): 75-93. "Passion et connaissance" appeared in *FAF*, pp. 123-40. —T/E]

[1]See "The Discovery of the Imagination" (1978), and, more recently, "Logic, Imagination, Reflection" (1988), both now in *WIF*, pp. 213-45 and 246-72. Concerning the latter text, see now "Imagination, imaginaire, réflexion," *FAF*, pp. 227-81. [This last text is described as a "weaving together" of "Logic, Imagination, Reflection," mentioned above, and "Radical Imagination and the Social Instituting Imaginary" (1994), which was reprinted in *CR*, pp. 319-37. —T/E]

[2]On this term, see, for example, "The Logic of Magmas and the Question of Autonomy" (1981), now in *CR*, pp. 290-318.

[3]Piera Aulagnier, *Les Destins du plaisir* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1979), pp . 14 and 163ff.

[4]*Il pensiero debole* (Weak thought), ed. Gianni Vattimo and Pier Aldo Rovati (M ilan: Feltrinelli, 1988). — T/E

[5]See my text, "Epilegomena to a Theory of the Soul which has been presented as a Science" (1968), *CL*, pp. 3-45.

[6]Plato *Apology* 29c-d and 38a. Twice in the *Apology*, Socrates envisions the case of his being offered acquittal (or exile), but on the condition that he keep quiet, and twice he refuses.

[7]Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason* (first division, book 2, chapter 1: "Of the Schematism of the Pure Concepts of the Understanding"), trans. F. Max Müller (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1966), p. 123. — T/E

[8]Because of this, belief goes well beyond Merleau-Pontys "perceptual faith" and conditions it. [Note added by the author.]

[9]See "Institution of Society and Religion" (1982), now in *WIF*, pp. 311-30.

[10]Augustine (*Confessions* 12.16) thus agrees to discuss matters with all possible opponents, though not with those who reject the authority of the Holy Writ.

[11]It is out of the question for us to consider here the secondary psychoanalytic literature on the question—which, moreover, has not contributed much that is new. One notable exception is to be found in the works of Piera Aulagnier. See, in particular, in addition to the book cited in note 3 above: *The Violence of Interpretation: From Pictogram to Statement* (1975), trans. Alan Sheridan (Philadelphia : Taylor and Francis and East Sussex, England : Brunner-Routledge, 2001), and *Un Interprète en quête de sens* (Paris: Ramsay, 1986; Paris: Payot, 1991).

[12]*Gesammelte Werke* (= *GW*), vol. 5, pp. 95-97; *Standard Edition* (= *SE*), vol. 7, pp. 194-97. In fact, as one knows (see the Editors Note, *SE*, vol. 7, p. 126), the sections on the sexual theories of children in the *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexu ality* were added in the 1915 edition. But that changes nothing about the texts argument, for this addition just resumes, in the main, what he was saying in a text from 1907, *Über infantile Sexualtheorien* (*GW*, vol. 7, pp. 171-88; "On the Sexual Theories of Children," *SE*, vol. 9, pp. 207-26), adding to it the notion and the term *Wisstrieb*, of which it is said that "it cannot be counted among the elementary instinctual [*sic*] components, nor can it be classed as exclusively belonging to sexuality," but that "its activity corresponds on the one hand to a sublimated manner of obtaining mastery, while on the other hand it makes use of the [libidinal] energy of scopophilia [or, of the desire to see, *Schaulust*]," *GW*, vol. 5, p. 95; *SE*, vol. 7, p. 194. The question of the drive to know or of the drive to seek, in Freud, of its nature and of its privileged object (sometimes it is the question "Where do children come from?," sometimes that of "What is the difference between the sexes?"), and of the development of these notions in the history of his thought would merit a long examination that cannot be undertaken here.

[13]In "Instincts [*sic*] and their Vicissitudes" (*SE*, vol. 14, p. 12), the phrase appears as "the frontier between the mental and the somatic." —T/E

[14]See, for example, *GW*, vol. 13 , p. 269, (*Das Ich und das Es*) = *SE*, vol. 19, p. 41 (*The Ego and the Id*); vol. 14, p. 478 (*Unbehagen in der Kultur*) = *SE*, vol. 21, p. 119 (*Civilization and its D iscontents*); vol. 16, p. 22 (*Warum Krieg*?) and 88 (*Endliche und unendliche Analyse*) = *SE*, vol. 22, pp. 210-11 ("Why War?") and *SE*, vol. 23, p. 243 (*Analysis Terminable and Interminable*).

[15]See chapter 6 of my book *IIS* (1975), especially pp. 311-20 of the English-language edition, as well as "The State of the Subject Today" (1986), now in *WIF*, pp. 137-71, and "Logic, Imagination, Reflection," already cited in note 1.

[16]See, in chapter 6 of *IIS*, pp. 273-311 of the English-language edition.

[17]See the texts cited in note 14. The term *sublimation* appears for the first time in Freud in his *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

[18]A search of the Index to the *Standard Edition* did not turn up this precise quotation. See, however, vol. 3, p. 132n1, regarding "psychical quiescence. " —T/E

[19]It is undoubtedly in this conjunction and cross-pollination of theoretical research and properly political (*instituting*) activity that the singularity of the W est is to be sought, as contrasted with the more or less acosmic or apolitical philosophies of Asia and with the "democratic" but "closed" institutions of certain archaic societies.

[20]See my texts, "The Ontological Import of the History of Science (1985) and "Time and Creation" (1988), now in *WIF*, pp. 342-73 and 374-401.

[21]"Of the Absolute, it must be said that it is essentially a *result*, that only at the end is it what it is in very truth," G. W. F. Hegel, Preface to *The Phenomenology of Mind*, trans. J. B. Baillie (New York and Evanston: Harper Torchbooks, 1967), p. 82 (emphasis added).