

Three paradoxes and concentric circles

Clémence Ortega Douville

Index

Three paradoxes and concentric circles.....	1
Before you start.....	2
Thanks.....	3
Introduction.....	4
Inner.....	6
Situating.....	6
Paradox.....	8
Trauma.....	10
Whose is it ?.....	13
Reality.....	15
Terror.....	18
Finding the object.....	20
Mark.....	23
Family.....	25
First witness.....	25
Theft and symbolic consistency.....	27
World of words.....	29
The makings of family.....	31
Juggling with symbols.....	33
Shall it be male or female, say the cells.....	36
The other.....	39
Понимать (To understand).....	41
Mimèsis.....	43
Æsthetics.....	46
Social spaces.....	47
Different rules.....	47
Abstraction.....	50
Partial identity.....	52
Sanctuarising space : forbidden words and compartmentalisation.....	55
Society.....	60
Defining the limits.....	60
The Master, the Emissary, and the Kind-Faced Slave.....	63
A collective future.....	69
To conclude.....	72

Before you start

Endorsement by Darian Leader

This rich and thought-provoking book presents a series of questions about human embodiment, centred around what the author situates as three sensorimotor paradoxes. Combining perspectives from philosophy, psychoanalysis, neuroscience and many other disciplines, Clemence Ortega Douville invites the reader to consider issues of subjectivity, reflexivity, ethics and our positioning in social space starting from a focus on the human hand and our strange relation to it. Both part of the body yet somehow also alien to it, exploring the place of our hands opens up a number of pathways that converge on many of the issues that have been central to philosophy and, indeed, to psychoanalysis. What I like about Douville's work is the way that it encourages us to rethink concepts and theories that we might have taken for granted. Each chapter contains surprises, and no chapter follows any established dogma. Examples are taken from theoretical treatises as well as cinema, popular culture and everyday life, in a fascinating and often provocative blend, unique to the author. The breadth of Douville's references is impressive, as is the lively, enquiring style, and the infectious curiosity that she shows and, perhaps, communicates to her readers.

Thanks

As this book is the result of a ten year long riping, there would be lots of people I would like to thank. First of all, my parents, without whose support none of this would have been possible, for one needs material, moral and affective security to think in the long run. I thank you mom and dad for your ecological and political commitment that led me to a better understanding of our society's workings.

I would like to thank Darian Leader and Griselda Bazan for their unfailing participation and trust in giving room to my work, making all these ideas worthy of being heard.

I would like to thank my friends and family, that warm ecosystem without which I would not be able to breathe. Annabelle Gasquez first for her courage and sisterlike love. Marie-José Minassian, Paul Gontcharoff and Roland Guérin (thank you for Varela !) for having been first my teachers, then my irreplaceable friends and spiritual parent figures. Marco Familiar, Vincent Bénézet and also Aurore Zachayus for our distance friendship that teaches me a loving humility. Ornella Petit and Anna Rakhvalova for their spiritual minds and kindness. Maya Angelsen for her strength. Eric Maugy for his long musical friendship and for many cultural sharings. André Bon for the mark of his compositor's ear. To Leonardo Martin and the family for their friendship.

I thank all the girls of Deuxième Page and Polysème, as well as so many other associations for their uplifted spirit and work on feminist and cultural issues. I thank Frédéric Saffar and Christian Corre for assisting my Master during my time at the university years ago. I thank the collège Saint-Thérèse of Houilles, the EMMD Bezons, the lycée Les Pierres Vives of Carrière-sur-Seine and the université Paris 8 Saint-Denis for having been those sanctuaries during my formation since I was a child. To Ellen Dissanayake and her kind sharing.

I am sure that I forget many people who were important. I thank the people I loved and who taught me how to navigate on to my most intimate sense of life.

I thank my beloved Sacha for being in my life.

And I thank you, reader, for trying to make things change.

Introduction

Presumptuously, we stand here. By use of stand, we mean that standing *here* is not a senseless word. It is all but senseless, as we mean that we are situated here, in a world that is problematic.

Hence, what does it mean to *stand* here, somewhere, over the breach between two worlds, past and future, at the heart of what philosopher Hannah Arendt called a *Crisis in Culture* ? Apologies for that obscure beginning. However, from obscure we may start our way, because from the least we may begin.

What is poetry ? In a way, it is not about meaning. It is about speech. And about speech, it is about the speaker. That a speaker *exists*, is situated somewhere. What about I am the speaker ? Yet a speaker where there is neither meaning or direction. Only a sense that somewhere, a direction may be taken.

Poetry is the compass at the heart of everyone's situation.

This book is both a sad and a joyful book. It is sad, because it is what you can never prove. But it is joyful, because it appeals to the sense of the reader that something, somewhere, is right.

What if we told : 'to the question of how did human species get the chance to be, we have an answer' ? This is a sad affirmation, because you cannot prove that. But this is also a joyful statement, because somehow, something in the sense of it may be right.

This is a book for grand kids. People who never grew up in a proper fixed social encapsulation. Those who kept a mind open to what makes them *themselves*, to the influence societies' behaviour has over their responses to it.

It is a cascade that flows both ways. From the inner circle of one's own relation to their own body – in what psychoanalyst Donal W. Winnicott called the *non-communicable* part of their self – to the outward social spaces ruled by laws and language, each of those concentric spaces carries influence over the next.

The ideal unity of a whole society, a world, a kingdom, holds pressure on the heterogenous multiple social spaces that must compose its unity. Again, every adult learns to behave properly to those heterogenous spaces, what can be shown in modern sociolinguistic studies. What they experience in those spaces influences the way they behave in their closest social areas and families.

The way the families are composed by adults (or equivalent) adaptating their ways among the variety of those spaces has also an influence over the way maybe their children will perceive their behaviour. And then this goes in another new circle, because each child will adapt and respond to those influences individually more than by the teaching of abstract rules, but by impression.

The moral prescriptions will be effective to determine certain conducts that are told to be obligatory. However for the rest, we rely on the probability that our children would adapt 'naturally' to the proper ways, just by watching us do.

Then they would fit society again from this development.

The aim of this book is to present the three paradoxes theory that means that there is merely a sensorimotor display up to describe the probable process for our evolution into thinking beings. It has to do with the hands and it has to do with a paradoxical feature, that is a contradiction into the individuals' interaction situation with their environment.

But before we start, we must warn, that one must prepare themselves to be open and to give up some assumptions about language control and social pressure. One must admit to be out, or they would never get the point in observing their own being taught to be a proper human being.

It is presumptuous to speak like that, but it would be even more presumptuous to think one could go blind-folded into a way of thinking their own self into the world, without posing the question of how much the answer is in their hands.

So, in that case and in the position that is ours now, we must say before we start : it was never out of it, and will never ever be again.

Inner

Situate

Comme nous jouions

Nous avions oublié que nous étions.

See that you are holding a ball in your hand, in a nowhere land that would be hypothetical. You would have plenty of choices as to what to do with it. Many would be conventional. Some would be more a distressful call. You could drop the ball or throw it out. You could keep it in your hand and carry it like a treasure. Anyhow you would have to take it into account and in the meantime, your hand stands between this object and you.

But if you start wondering about this hand that carries the object, what does lie between this hand that *is* therefore an object for you attention, and you ? As you are focusing on your hand – let us say your right or left hand –, there is no *second* right or left hand to fetch the *first* one. If you use your left hand to fetch your right hand, it is already something else. You 'naturally' increase the dimensions of space, the modalities of your coordinations – you open to other possibilities.

But the fascination for the hand *as* an object is a moment, a moment where there is no other hand than your right or left. As it is a moment, it is a kind of relation that forms a structure, that you could fixate for a while, that is unique, a singularity. If you get your *other* hand into play, you break the singularity to come back to the general rule : that is that your movements are coordinated with your senses, what we call the sensorimotor system.

The sensorimotor system is the most inalienable and irreducible system of a live being, as if there is no sensorimotor functioning, there is no life expressed to the conditions of its appearing (theory of *emergence* in cognitive science, as opposed to computationism that saw the brain as a computer – the 'little man' inside – treating datas). If the sensorimotor is annulled, no individuality is expressed that means that the body may be physiologically *alive* but not the subject. Merely the cells of the body are active and may as well return to earth as soon as the integrity of the body as a biological *corps* is too gravely compromised.

Yet there is one way to alienate the sensorimotor functioning of the body of a soon-to-be human person. The sensorimotor, in the neurobiological way expressed by Francisco Varela's founding ideas, is *situated* in the modalities of their interaction with the environments that it is up to recreate. That means that any species, with their sensory and motor abilities as well as with their capacity to rely on different fluctuations in their environments, would express possibilities that are less prescribed by a situation than *enacted* by the individuals. The cognitive structure is inscribed and enshrined in the structure of their environment.

In that proscriptive view, mutations and evolutions happen by chance, as long as they don't compromise the species' ability to survive and reproduce. So let us get back to the ball you held, and let us see how possibly we could alienate the situation.

In a 'genuine' sensorimotor iteration, you would probably focus on the ball, drop it or throw it or keep it. (Should it be a small rock, it would be the same.) However, upright stance gave us an advantage that is that we may not *necessarily* have to pursue a motor function with our hands. As we stand and walk, somehow we may as well forget them ; that means that somehow, to use them implies that we are finding a special use requiring their implication other than their locomotor functions.

Then as you are dealing with your hands, finding useful things to do with them, you enter a dialogue with what it is that you are doing with them that is so special. But *why* is it so special ? It is because whenever you watch them do, you first focus on the object ; but then if you get further into the question, you realise where the dialogue is.

Dialogue, etymologically, means approximatively '*between logos*', which means that the dialogue is what happens *in-between* two individualities. Here, the first individuality is *me*, and the second is the ball or the rock. The hand is in-between, the medium, the connection, the modality of the dialogue. But if you get your attention on that hand that holds the rock, then what does guarantee the dialogue between your hand and you ?

When you focus on your hand that is holding the rock, you might as well drop the rock and stare at your hand open. What is in-between ? Nothing. As long as someone else doesn't require anything from you outside of it, the relation, the modality of the dialogue is yet undefined. Yet, so there can be a sensorimotor functioning, a modality for interaction must be found anyway.

Here, there is a profound contradiction, because the sensorimotor system cannot decide whether the action starts with the hand or with *me*. The hand is no longer the medium for the identification with the object, the ball, through the action mediated by the hand. But the hand, the agent of action, becomes the place for identification *inside of* a gap opened in the sensorimotor functioning, which requires a response to be made to the sollicitations of my environment.

However here, the response cannot be decided because the modalities of the relation are still undecided. To be decided, it should be provided with a meaning, which can only be set through the symbolic integration of some Other's gaze. Is the hand the agent of my action, or am I the agent of my actions *through* the hand ? The identification hand/action as a manifestation of the *self* forbids the separation of the hand as something alien... if not doing so by breaking the sensorimotor system, delaying and lagging the response (which is neurobiologist Gerald M. Edelman's criterium for self-consciousness's conditions of possibility) and then, doubling the consciousness of my own existence – so annulling the immediate priority of the Other over me.

Such is the postulate of the hand paradox theory, that proposes that the very conditions of possibility for the birth and development of the human mind should have relied on a significative and disruptive change in the structure of our species's *direct* and sustained environment.

Paradox

Parecían menos

Tál como eran

Los pañuelos que agitaban en el aire.

The modalities of interaction of most species with their environment are conditioned by the chain stimuli/responses, that inscribes them in the very matter of their reality and ecosystems. Then certain organised patterns of stimuli would be likely to provoke some coherent patterns of organised responses. It may depend at some point on the threshold of tolerable cohabitation with those solicitations from our environments.

I would find tolerable to 'cohabitate' with the sensation of tickling onto a certain point, for instance. Then I would engage a certain pattern of actions to cast away these sensations with their causes. However, no reaction can be predetermined, but likely to be elected on the spur of the moment. Epigenic conditioning always goes with ontogenic discoveries that each individual makes.

Let us come back to our ball. The ball is in my hand and onto a certain point, it doesn't feel so uncomfortable to hold it in my hand that much. However, after a little while, I would start to feel unpleasant sensations from the sustained contact with the surface of the ball or the numbness of not doing anything with it but the sweaty touch of it. I should rather find something to do with it and quick. Maybe simply put it in my other hand for a moment.

Because we don't want (usually) to destroy the ball. It is a manufactured object, someone spent some time on making it. It has a value bond to someone else. In other words, it is charged with a debt. Moreover, we know that a ball was designed for certain uses, therefore, I would be expected to follow one of the corresponding patterns to which the design certainly appeals.

All that to say that there is an incomfort, well looked into by psychoanalyst Darian Leader's book *Hands* (2017), that tells us that there is nothing 'natural' in using our hands the way we do. He had previously inspected the importance for individuals of putting a distance to objects and people, notably when speaking of psychosis.¹ 'Naturally', we would find no inconvenient then in dropping and abandoning the ball, throwing it anywhere or destroying it. Yet, being trained to respect the debt that we got toward others through manufactured objects, we would maybe feel reluctant to do so.

That is a preliminary step to think about the behaviours that we learn since childhood in our societies, about the objects that we are able to destroy or not. And to understand that, we may understand better that the very object of our hand(s) is something that we are not supposed to destroy nor drop nor throw away or tear apart, because otherwise we would simply hurt ourselves.

So let us think about this feeling of *having to do something* with our hands and most of all, having to relate to them. Because to *do* something with our hands is simple, we do it instinctively by expressing the sensorimotor activity of our body. We coordinate our movements with our senses and our hands mediate our movements towards objects. It is a constant looping of experience and memory that coordinates our relation to the world – as it would seem to be for the humanised robot, in animated film *Next Gen* (2018), who chooses to keep select memories of his girl friend from deletion as he is running out of hard drive space.

¹ In Darian Leader, *What is madness ?*, Pinguin Edition, 2011.

If we 'freeze' one of these movements in a moment, we would have a structure described as a subject-hand-to-object one. The hand(s) is in-between. Therefore the hand(s) is there not identified as *the* object but as the other one that the hand is aimed at, sent to grasp for. It is the identification of the subject with the action of grasping the object that makes the hand a suitable agent for my action. It then is a function of my expressing my body's sensorimotor expression rather than being an object of fascination and desire, something I would rather go for. As a function, I can forget my hands quite easily.

But if on the contrary I happen to stare at my hand(s) more carefully, as a shape before me rather than the details of it, I would find myself a bit dizzy. Why ? Again, because this time, I cannot send my hand to fetch and grasp the object, being the hand itself. There is not intermediary, no agent, no *in-between* to express my body's usual reaction to an outside object. The outward quality of the hand's 'normal' agency is being contradicted.

One would suddenly like to have an imaginary hand to fetch the first without using the one of their other arm, meaning their real *other hand*. Yet in the moment of the fascination, where I would have the reflex to send my hand go for the object that I see and want to possess – I cannot. I cannot because my hand cannot be *at the same time*, at the same moment, *the* object in my direct environment provoking my sensorimotor response AND the same agent of this response. I am blocked, and there occurs a sensorimotor paradox.

The stimulus of seeing my hand *as an object* triggers somehow the mechanism of a response. However in order for this object to exist I have to keep it still, that means not moving, that means not reacting, that means not deciding to do anything about it... if not an imaginary response. That is doubling the structure of reality, dialectically integrating though separating from the constant sollicitation of Others.

Because I need an intermediary agent, in an intermediary space, to organise a response to my (new) environment. As I cannot use my hand without removing it from my sight, I cannot use my mouth either without getting too close to my hand and then, again, make the *object* that is alien to me disappear. Like seeing myself in the mirror, I would realise the trick – that this is *only* me.

Therefore, I have to see my hand as something alien and thus doing, allowing the space in-between to exist where I am amputated from one arm. But in *that* moment that is a very precise moment, my aggressiveness, the energy of my body's usual expression is contained, and this contained aggressiveness becomes a form of violence – which is contained, yet potential aggressiveness.

Which means that a moral sense takes way where I have to decide, somehow, between a good solution and a less good solution, between 'succes' or 'failure', between 'right' or 'wrong', maybe between staying blocked in that position or resuming my usual wandering about.

In a seminary on Hermeneutics², French philosopher Paul Ricœur stated that because there was the violence, there was the morals. Yet he forgot to say that because there was the restriction of morals, there was a constraint of the free energy of the body's 'decisions' and then, a form of violence that can only be a moral violence.

Which means choosing between an apparently good or an apparently less good solution.

2 In Paul Ricœur, *Écrits et conférences 2. Herméneutique*, texts gathered and annotated by Daniel Frey and Nicola Stricker, p.74, Éditions du Seuil, coll. La couleur des idées, 2010.

Trauma

Growing and growing skin over the skin

Hatching under the thin fabric

Of the sea.

The body is the source of the sensorimotor workings as well as the medium for it. Which means that the body feels through the triggered senses, making room for a perception of their environment, that they then develop through perspective action.

One of the founding ideas of Francisco Varela was that the modalities of perception of each species's environment were not only determined by the capacity of the body to treat datas (as in the computationist vision of cognition). It was more than that the fact that those species perceive a certain vision of reality – as to the perception of colours for instance – only makes *sense* as they get to explore those environments. They then in a way *recreate* the modalities of their perceptions as they experience them.³

We see that in the definition of trauma that we would make here. *Trauma*, in the Ancient Greek etymology, means 'wound', the same way that it can mean 'defeat', for instance in battle. Which means that *trauma* has a context, and that the trauma has a history. There are large traumas and *slight* traumas.

Let us see for instance that a sensory perception is a *slight* trauma. Trauma isn't the shock that causes the wound. Trauma is the response *to* the wound. It is a way to cover up the defeat, the manner that the body finds ways to grow skin over it, to forget the former history of the wound.

One doesn't remember the exact situation of how it happens, but the memory that they kept from it and to which they adapted their practical and symbolic vision of reality.

So there is an initial situation, that is that an object *a* is hit by an object *b*. One is apparently passive during the shock, the other active. One metaphor we could use is that an asteroid crashes on the ground. The object *b* crashes on the object *a*. There is a direct impact, no mediation, and then, a mark.

The crater is the memory of the impact, we would call it *c*. Then we have : $a + b = c$. What is *c* ? It is that at the end of the impact, at the meeting point, *a* and *b* have been at least partly destroyed, merged into the result of their meeting. This result is the mark left on the ground, that is meaningful. The object *c* is *trauma*, because it is the memory left by the meeting, where *a* and *b* will be identified as related yet annulled. But that *c* isn't solely a pre-defined reaction, it is a total or partial ontogenic redefinition of the modalities in which the individuals deal with their reality, that is always unique.

There was no relation in fact, no intermediary between the two objects that could make a dialogue out of the situation, and thus the crash was inevitable. There has been a defeat in the mediation. Which means that we can eventually not relate but with the memory left of *this moment* of destruction. The trauma is the memory of a moment, where two identities have been annulled in a third one. Broken glass mirror may become flowers, as in Raoul Ruiz's *Klimt* (2005).

³ In Francisco J. Varela, Evan Thompson and Eleano Rosch, *The Embodied Mind*, 1991.

When a leaf touches your skin, you won't have a clue of what caused the sensation : was it the body ? Was it the leaf ? It doesn't matter, it only happens that on this meeting point, a third object emerged : the sensation itself, mediating and simplifying the situation where two objects met. Sensation, this slight trauma, is a response to an event – to a crash.

All those slight sensory traumas force the individual and their body to react to something that is neither the body or the external agent, but the sensation itself provoked by the two of them. The body reacts in the trauma that is the memory of the *moment*, a neural imprint that cannot be instantaneous but only a sensory response to a local shock. It then develops the individual's perspectives in the enrichment of their environments' texture, composed by this continuous emergence of sensory memories.

We don't work through the objects we are surrounded with but with those engaged memories we have of their meeting us. So goes with larger traumas that cause so much pain. There we need to elaborate a different narrative to the wound created by an impact, to give meaning to the marks that it left.

We cannot see the precise origins of the wound, nor be replaced in the exact moment where those *a* and *b* - *as numerous as they can be* - met. We can only elaborate a genuine memory of what caused the wound. The trauma works in time, as a response to the shock, which is not mediated nor then relatable. In the shock, the impact annulling the relation, in the middle, there is no room for a common intermediary object to be set.

The distance necessary so there can be a mediating object between the two parties has been reduced to a crush.

Then let us get back again to the ball we held. This ball is a *b*, but fortunately enough, we have got an intermediary, that is our hand that works between the ball and ourselves. What happens if we drop the ball and want to hold the *hand* the same way that we held the ball ?

We cannot *hold* the hand, that is held itself. There is no intermediary to do it but imaginarily, as a potentiality. There is only a direct meeting that is a non-relation because as we *want* this object to be a part of us, we cannot but annihilate it as *that* thing that would be *already* a part of us indeed. We want to turn something that is already a part of us into *a part of us*, into something we took, giving it a meaning by turning it into an object – however, we cannot go beyond the *feeling* of it, the impulse to do it, because we cannot remove the hand to grasp a phantom one.

There is trauma, because there is the direct impact of the will to take the object – the same will that *forgets* that it is all happening at the same time and at the same place. The perspective so makes it two separate things, two separate times as there would be a hand to fetch another one that would stay still where it *should be*, so the relation could work.

There is trauma, because the superimposed memory of the still hand becomes the mark, the imprint from which the imaginary would provoke the desire to trigger a response – that would be to engage this very hand to fetch the object.

The impulse is there, but the situation forbids it. If you send the hand away, then the situation is lost. There is a defeat, everytime – like little *Steven Universe's* unhappy attempts to correct the past by time travelling in order to attend to a concert with his dad (*Steven and the Stevens*, Season 1 Ep. 22). He would only multiply the same errors endlessly. But, meanwhile, there is a mark left, a wound created by the impossibility, **an accumulation of matter**. It is impossible but as a trauma, it is already a mediating response to this traumatic dead end.

It has struck the conscious that there could be two separate things : *me*, that is feeling an emotional distress, and myself, that has been set on a stage in front of me, stopping me from enacting a possibility that reveals impossible. In the meantime, the need for possible and actual motor responses – that have been delayed and lagged – provokes an increased insecurity, as a doubt on the identity of the alien hand settled.

I cannot separate my real hand from my imaginary one.

However, I created a sense, a meaning for a new kind of relation : I can tell how it *felt* to be on the brink of a fall from which nobody died nor was created, but an empty area between me and myself to be filled with an odd regret, a sense of unfulfillment.

The regret would be for a resolution of the scene with movement *without* making the scene disappear. How would you make the scene stay and though movement still come out ?

We wager, by keeping it imaginary, and then sharing it with actual others.

Whose is it ?

Tell me more about this little song

That we used to sing

When we were very young.

Whom does the object belong to ? A simple verification would prove to myself that my own hand belongs to me. By the way, how come there would be a dispute over such or such other object that would have to *necessarily* belong to me and to no other ? The affective bond to it surely would tend to identify the object so much with my own history that *this* object would surely belong to me more than to any other.

Nevertheless, I would observe as well that this one particular object might be one of a dispute between myself and some other party. And any random object would be likely to be taken by anyone without me objecting for one particular reason. But *that* object, that is special to me, that I have made special, could not be taken that easily from me without my protesting.

In the field of neuroaesthetics and anthropological theory of evolution, philosopher Ellen Dissanayake spent fruitful efforts to show that rather than semiological, the gest of making Art notably of one random object would have been a way to make such an object *special*. To '*artify*' reality would have been a way to associate with the imprint that we would have then left on our environment.

Hence a manufactured object, made by me or someone else, is somehow associated with the person who made it. It could be a virtual person, after distance and time cast away from them. Anyway should I be to take hold of it, I would be in debt. Then, how do I make myself comfortable with the debt I take out, and use the object nevertheless ? For instance, if I am doubting my property over my own hand for a second, who am I to owe for it ?

These questions may seem odd, but they are quite accurate if you look closer. Whom do I have to answer to if I do break an object that I would not be able nor authorised to break ? Someone stronger than me, who represents authority in the clan, community, society, family. I can try to hide it, but once I have known for myself that someone might discover what I have done, I know that I would have to answer for it.

However between myself and I, where can there be a secret ? There would be one if I pretended, even for a minute, that my own hand would not belong to me, but be something *outside of me*. If there is an *outside*, there might be an *inside*, and one might be impermeable to the other. Two times, two places, two speeds. Isn't, for instance, a metaphorical example that J. K. Rowling's Harry Potter first unaware of his connection with the notorious dark lord, as part of the latter's self would reside inside him ?

If I come to shut the sensorimotor interactivity down to this paradoxical point, all the intensity and anticipation of movement goes for the hand as *the* outside object. It all seems to go in a way '*faster*' than me as I am myself blocked in non-decision. I have to decide something, but at which moment, and what to do with it or maybe *beyond* it ? What does it open to ?

And then, what am I keeping behind while I am focused and fascinated by my own very hand ? And what with the others ? This is special, what I make with my hands in the end (paleontologist André Leroi-Gourhan's classics were all about it). I wish the others could see how

special it is. But of course, everyone else has hands as I have. Yet the making things out of them is more communicable, the same way that standing up defines more human beings than the size of their brain.⁴

To communicate the non-communicable is the hardest thing to achieve, and even, it is impossible. Unless you find common ground, like the young boy in M. Night Shyamalan's *The Sixth Sense* (1999) finally finds common ground with the ghost of a girl to uncover the culprit for her death. With common ground, you can create parallels, analogies, convergence, solicitations to converge to a common end. Then we try to sanctuarise, that means that every little special space that we create, we give it limits, specificity and identity.

I exist because I create a specificity in front of your eyes, and you show me that you see something that you understand, or might understand. The common object is all that we have got to prove that you and I both have limits, a clear sanctuarised space of our own, an identity. With this common object, we find common ground.

This is the best opportunity that we have ever had.

4 In André Leroi-Gourhan, *Le Geste et la Parole – Tome I : Technique et langage*, Ed. Albin Michel, 1964.

Reality

James James
Morrison Morrison
Weatherby George Dupree
Took great
Care of his Mother,
Though he was only three.
James James Said to his Mother,
"Mother," he said, said he;
"You must never go down
to the end of the town,
if you don't go down with me."

A. A. Milne, « Disobedience », 1924

Let us say now that I give you the ball. For a moment, a part of me is gone with it, taken with the possibilities of my actions with it. They become possibilities that *you* may enact. So my expectations about you enacting those possible actions would become part of my being ready for them to happen. This anticipation is imaginary, I cannot *make them* happen, but they would be contained into my *getting ready for them*.

We could say that there is something of a transference, of an identification. '*You would do what it would have been expectable for me to get on doing with the ball if I had it still in my hand.*' However, I don't, so it is you in charge for it maybe to happen, and I am waiting that it could be so, at least for a moment.

There is a continuity between the possibility of my actions with the ball in my hand, and the moment I pass the ball on to you and still get along with the feeling of having things to do with it if I still had it in my hand. Nevertheless, again, it is *you*, not me anymore. So you are the carer of the ball, but you might do otherwise than get along with my own expectations.

So there is an insecurity, because I am partly the ball in your hand now, as I am partly engaged in my expectations about the enacting of *what to do with the ball if it were still in my hand*. The distance between *the ball in my hand* that is not anymore and the ball in your hand that is a part of my expectation creates an odd relation. Will you be trustworthy and faithful to my expectations ? Will you get along with my caring for the ball ? Will you destroy my expectations and the part of me bearing them ?

It may seem far-fetched, but we are talking of a moment. As a moment, it is integrated in our daily life in a *chain* of sensorimotor stimulations, then passed on to those moments of expectation that are moments of *simulation*. My minding the becoming of the ball *simulates* for me the proper actions that I would be up to do if I had it in my hand. It creates an intimate relation where I *wish* I could seize it still though it is not in my hand anymore – like words and ideas, seizing some kind of reality even if the things that we mean are not here anymore to be grasped *for real*. Isn't that what makes part of the fascination that people tend to have for sports and video games, their participating stimulation, which also is a simulation of an actual physical participation ?

It leaves a negative imprint of what I could do without being in the situation to do it. The sensorimotor readiness is here, but the conditions in the physical world are not. Therefore I can only

imagine for a moment that I am still holding the ball, and that you may act the same as me.

Of course, those moments are psychotic moments. They happen all the time and to everybody. Only they are fractionated. It is all a matter of proportion. French child psychoanalyst Denis Vasse used to describe psychosis as the sheer identification of the subject with the object of their fascination, and thus as if their body envelop was symbolically not closed.⁵ The symbolic object kept on being part of a leak from their body-image to reality.⁶

In fact, it is about creation, because we identify then reality as a continuum from our bearing it, expecting something from it to happen. What I do, what I may do and what happens in real life form part of a same event in the psychotic moment. The *other* is not included as a subject pertaining to a common symbolic thread but as a *force* with an unsharable will.

In fact, as Darian Leader stressed in his study of psychosis, there are two moments in its pathological structure : the crisis in the person – 'I don't understand what is happening to me' – and then the strategies they develop to respond to the confusion in the fabric and structure of the reality they now perceive – 'how do I make sense out of *this* ?' Psychosis can be silent, not obvious to the outside eye, specifically because it is about the meaning of reality. Psychosis is the workings of the human mind when it is loose, cut from a common stable structure that would include the other as a possible referent for my potential action. On the contrary here, the other one cannot take on my action as much as *they are* the action itself turning against me.

When I am confronted to my own hand, there is a crisis for a moment because I cannot decide whether I will move it or eat it. If I move it, it disappears. If I eat it, I destroy it but I also hurt myself. So human species developed – that is the theory of the hand paradox – another strategy to answer to this new configuration : we let it happen. We let it be part of our reality, but silent. We let somebody else decide, knowingly, what to do with what we *might* only do. We passed on the ball to someone else, though we cared so much for it. And this person thus gets their name : *reality*, though a mystic form of reality, with a will of its own – the same kind reality than the *wilderness* that tackled early Euro-American authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne, in *The Scarlet Letter*.

What is reality ? Reality is an entity, formed by what we let be decided by someone else, or something else at least. A rock is there lying : I could take it and try to eat it, to make it a part of me as I may try to do the same with my hand – why couldn't it be transferred that way ? However, it is not for sure. I may as well let it be there for a moment, *someone else* may be trying to do something with it. *This* is reality, there is always someone else to decide what to do with it, someone else busy with reality. Reality doesn't belong to us only, because I might need someone other than me to help me sort myself out.

But why is it so important, that precision ? Because justly decision making may have become a problem in our *prehistory* (in the genealogical sense). It was no longer a matter of sensorimotor quasi-automatic response. It is not self-evident that I would not eat my own hand, however I would be tempted to try. Nonetheless, the question is posed : what is that thing that is now alien to me, that I can't determine ? Whose is that ? In *that* moment where I cannot decide what to do and if I can do something, I only need a third-party⁷ to decide in my place. Only a third-party could cut the bond that blocks it all.

For the object to remain – the hand fixed open in my vision, I need to be still and not to remove it from my sight. If I act, the scene, the situation will disappear. So I need precisely

5 In Denis Vasse, *L'ombilic et la voix*, 1974.

6 By 'symbolic object', we mean an object that can be subtracted from its physical use to become part of an abstract chain - Jacques Lacan's *chain of the signifier* so to be referred to.

7 The idea of a third party took a great importance in Jacques Lacan's theory of the stage of the mirror.

someone else to decide what to do, even if this someone else is imaginary, even if this someone else is the world around, that becomes a mysterious entity. And more, I am charged now with a potential action that has been blocked, that is contained, that becomes a referent, an object for itself, that I *relate* to something else outside of the closed relation to my own hand. The paradox stirs me out of my cage to the open.

Which means not only to transfer the expectation of one possible action to the object that I pass on to someone else. In fact, here I transfer the very necessity that I should act toward *anything* at all that may be able to respond and break the charm, the blocked situation. Anything that could bring an answer and help me resume with my ongoing life may be equated with that necessity.

Hence, that necessity is what makes this rock there not only a rock, but maybe a solution to one problem : what to do with this contained energy, this insecurity about me knowing that something has been disturbed ? The order of reality has been disturbed. Because I couldn't do *that*, assimilate my own hand, only because I couldn't do it without breaking the scene apart or hurting my own body.

Yet it was a fascinating moment because in a way it allowed me to measure my own strength, my own violence, my own energy for itself and no longer depending on enacting a response to one object of my surroundings, for one particular motive. Now, the motive is absolute. Now, the motive is *everything*. Now I have a first measure of my self as a *thing happening*, of my being here still, against my very will and at the same time, because of that same will, because of the necessity to *choose* action over doing nothing or doing nothing over action. But I still don't know what to do with this.

Because I don't yet know the world surrounding me and the other ones like me.

Terror

She bit. Must we blame her. abuse her.

Patti Smith, « seventh heaven », from 1970-1979 Early Work

We have spoken of a 'force', as to the object of the psychotic moment. A shape. Something beyond identification or common understanding. It would not seem odd now to allege that thinking is something about fear, which may take spectacular forms or more insidious ones. For instance, in Sebastián Lelio's film *A fantastic woman* (2017), everyone seems (even unconsciously) eager to get to see young transgender woman Marina Vidal's sex, as this would concentrate their fear of difference. The film avoids showing it to us, keeping it a mystery with its intimate place.

If you are blocked in a moment, stretched forever as it happens in the hand paradox situation, what does it look like also ? Fear. More especially, terror.

What is terror ? Sticking to the common definition, it would be 'that state of the mind which arises from the event or phenomenon that may serve as a prognostic of some catastrophe affright from apparent danger.'⁸

Fear is the general state of the body and mind of the person, regardless of its object. And terror is quite distinct from horror, which implies an organic and physiological repulsion. You would get horror provoking a throwing up from the inside, a need to expel something alien from the body. According to psychoanalyst Julia Kristeva, in horror, in the abject 'I am at the limits of my condition of living being. [...] It is not me anymore who expels, "I" is expelled.'⁹

Horror is one of something abject inside of an environment that I don't want to be close to me. There is a reaction, a defence from horror. It startles and shocks me but I am still able to identify something to step back from.

On the other hand, terror is everywhere when it is there. It is something dreadful *in* the environment itself. The surroundings themselves become, as a force, as a homogenous entity, a source of fear, something out of control, that I cannot protect from. Hence the political definition of terror, that is a state of the social and political atmosphere, which by the way can contain the horrors of war.

That means that terror paralyses us, because we cannot relate to an environment that would allow us to organise our responses on intermediary and common levels. The terror comes and gets intertwined with the structures of trauma.

There is no intermediary between the subject and the object of terror, which holds almightiness over the whole surroundings of the person. There is a direct line to it, a direct impact without any protection. The body and mind are bare from any protective space, and the impact of the *force* is direct, fearsome.

And as in the structure of trauma, there is an outcome in terror, that is the shape of terror, the shape of the menace, produced by interpretation and read in the forms and figures emerging from this personified environment. It is not only a reaction of fear to an unexpected event. It is the

8 *In* A Law Dictionary, Adapted to the Constitution and Laws of the United States. By John Bouvier. Published 1856.

9 *In* Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror* (in French *Pouvoirs de l'horreur*), Ed. Seuil, 1980, p.11.

anticipation of its happening *without being able to move* and decide a corresponding action, because the individual is blocked and paralysed in paradox.

What goes with the restrained and contained reactions and physiological entropy of the hand paradox's entailments, is terror, because while we are made unable to decide anything clear about what to do, the surroundings around become *one* and almighty ; because it is not coordinated anymore by my action and reactions to it. I am stuck at the bottom and abyss of the hole.

I could react in any normal time, but here I cannot anymore, and I am sunk into the limitless source of unpredictability that surrounds me. Hence I think, because thinking reestablishes a division of time and space, and a place for action, even virtual action. Thinking is a necessity to survive. Yet the imaginary has been struck by shapes that never were before.

Finding the object

Я не знаю
Но это не важно
В самом деле.
(*I don't know
But this is not important
Really.*)

Then what happens is that my environment becomes *one* and as I cannot respond correctly to my paradoxical situation, I am left back to the world disorientated. My responses become chaotic for a while and I am likely to use objects erratically for others, just because I need to enact the expression of a motor response to it.

I need to put some objects back in the middle between my surroundings and me, so those surroundings don't come into crushing me in my powerless state. I might express an excessive care for objects or living beings taken for others, in fact for a response to the cause of the terror and worry. This terror is the sudden fear out of being petrified into not being able to do anything in front of an extraordinary situation. One of today's best example is the crushing feeling one may feel before the announcements of upcoming ecological collapse.

The world is closing in on myself as I am reduced to the powerless state of the hand paradox. I have the urge, this force unexploited, contained to the edge of my body, but everything around becomes awaiting for me to decide anything. So I am going to leave this situation discombobulated and rush to anything that would be likely to allow me to express something out of that feeling of intense void.

Then, it becomes a question of degree, of creating various degrees of expression for that sudden care. This modulation of my care to objects would be given by experience and by an interpersonal moderation in my shared spaces with others, a collective modulation and agreement on the value of the objects I tie up to my distress.

We give meaning to objects that help us drive our care and worry back on to intermediary spaces of action, composed in coherent sensorimotor sequences or their mental image. The sensorimotor blocking of the hand paradox bringing uniformity to my surrounding environment, it entails that meaning is only given by the attribution of the subject's attention on peculiar and arbitrary objects. *This* rock must have something special so it allows me to drive my need for sensorimotor response on something *now*. The urgency on reestablishing something accurate on the sensorimotor level becomes everything.

But it is erratic, hence the importance of a third party and collective interactions so it becomes organised. Everyone from the group or a sub-group has to agree on the nature of the object. It has to happen also beyond the personal encounter that the subject makes with it, to get from a 'what is it to me ?' to a fair 'what is it ?', from imaginary impression to the stabilisation of a *reality* notion.

Do the others say 'yes' or 'no' to the object ? Is it something valuable to the group ? Is my curiosity rewarded ? My attention has to be driven on something, *anything*, but then I have to

actually *do* something with that. What action will do with such objects that are barely necessary for me to invest in the first place ?

That is where we try to get something out of anything, just for the sake of proving our erratic choosing right. However this seek is limitless if there are no others to bring us back to justification. The anguish of the void is the terror of sinking powerless state, of being lonely unable to react and organise a response to our surroundings. Diversity in the responses is then brought back by those who are the same as me, that I can identify and coordinate with, with whom I can look for analogies and resolutions.

My erratic solution for my worry led me to a bottomless seeking, because there was no way to assimilate, for instance, the rock as I would assimilate food. I made it special because I needed it to be special to *me*, because I needed it to help me express something out of terror. Yet it only brings me some more insatisfaction as it isn't bringing me a regular straight answer. It doesn't feed me nor kills my distress away. I only need to find back the regular patterns of the behaviour I adapted to the others like me, so then the rock can turn back to be *just a rock*.

It brings two worlds in : the one where I look at objects in my habitual environment as suddenly strange, and the one when I am brought back to the prime necessities of life. All of that is the point of the three paradoxes theory. As we rose onto bipedal stance, our hands progressively disappeared from our sight as our face got distanced from the ground and the objects of our seeking – such as food. Less and less used to help us walk, they were used mostly to bring the objects of our seek to our eyes, nose and mouth.

The first paradox of the theory is then a sensorimotor paradox, the one that occurs when I hold my hand still open in front of my eyes. It is not a phantasy, it is merely a sensorimotor contradiction that makes it impossible to decide which is the object and which is the agent of my action. They are both valid at the same time, and turn the enaction of sensorimotor sollicitation impossible without removing the hand (the sollicitating object) from my sight. I cannot respond adequately and that is barely bearable.

The second paradox is that when I actually say the word 'me' or the equivalent in other languages, the word is directed outwards at the same time that it means to reach an inward reality. When I am experiencing the strangeness of the rock lying there, I am experiencing a feeling that is barely communicable. But if I want to communicate it, I need to get *out* from this very experience to take into account the point of view of the other person that I try to engage. Then if I want to communicate this feeling of something really personal, I have to convince the other person that *it is*, that it exists.

To do that, I have to sollicitate an analogy from their perspective to mine, from *out* to *in*. I have to get out of my own point of view and perspective to reach means to communicate those very point of view and perspective. In the same way, when I want to share and communicate the reality and the source of every communicable thing that I could experience with others – the reality that there is a *me* –, then I have to use one particular mean that already implies that I take into account *first* the point of view and perspective of the other one that I am trying to communicate this reality with.

To express the *me*, I have to engage the *you*, and that is paradoxical because when I say 'me', I cannot but get out of it, and I am trapped outside in order to point it out from the other's point of view. Equally, when my brain is busy expressing the sensorimotor action of saying it, I can hardly experience the reality that I am trying to mean with a word. It is helpless, and it is only an analogy that I am trying to make from the outside. *Me* is a symbolic object to the others and language.

At last, the third paradox is related to the first ones, because it is the experience of seeing oneself in a mirror, having to stand still to one's own reflection as a stranger. It is also the

inadequacy of language to fit experienced reality out of this terror and anguish of void and silence. Meditation practices have worked on taming this anguish for centuries (even Po's master in animated film *Kung-Fu Panda 2* [2011] eventually found his 'inner peace'), with some success, yet mostly with a mystical perspective. However when given the first paradox, the mystic issue gets thinner on the powers of imagination.

With these elements in hand, we wish that it would be easier to understand the turning point of our evolution from the regular animal world to an exception based on an incapacitated privilege : we couldn't overcome that feeling, so we tried anyway.

Mark

*Like water ripples
On the sleeping surface
We echo the silent tune
Yet we leave no trace.*

Some other idea could lead us to a further theoretical development from the hand paradox situation. Something close enough from our ancestors on a daily basis simply was the ground. Progressively between primate-like crouched stance and upright stance, more things happened and were played on the ground. There was no infrastructure as we have today, putting things directly at hand level. No robots either, as many science-fiction stories tend to picture our future.

So let us think, what happens if you live in closer contact to the ground and happen to touch it more. You leave marks on a loose ground surface, like dirt. Therefore, let us go back to the hand paradox situation and what we supposed about it. I am in conflict with myself because of a contradictory situation created with my own hand. I then have to get something out of me or in. Something has to happen, because I don't know what to do with my own body in that moment.

Something has to be expressed from this sensorimotor blocking. I cannot stay blocked this way forever and I am dizzy for it. Contact, touch has been forbidden in this situation. To stare at my own hand, I have to neutralise it, to make it none so it can become an object for my intention ; but I cannot free it either without its vanishing. Anyway what I want, what I need, is to find back touch, feel, grasp. I'll take anything for that matter.

A rock is good. It is solid. But the sand is soft, the dirt finds my hand as to recover its whole shape. And then what happens when I pull it off the ground : it leaves a mark, an imprint, an *other* hand – *me* but not me – the hand missing. Which means that my attention has *something else* to focus on. The cause for my trouble has been displaced. It is not my hand, it is *this*, it, the mark of my being.

This is where the theory of the three paradoxes joins up with Ellen Dissanayake's work strongly. The mark left here, is no longer a consequence of my action, but a new object : a contact. My trouble in being indetermined meets the memory of having determined this, the moment of contact with something sure, certain, restablishing the need to touch and feel and be consistent with our sensorimotor nature.

It is possible that the symbolic was born here – and if not exactly here, somewhere sharing the same structure – where a resolution to an internal trouble meant the creation of another relation. It is the property of nostalgia, meaning *nost-algia*, 'the pain of the return', which implies that we never fully encounter the exact same thing back. Memory finds something similar, something that looks like it, but has trouble bringing back the whole situation when it happened before. A substitution, but an alien substitution, with a symbolic function.

One object and its attributes may summon the memory of a whole context, a whole environment and surroundings, like a *madeleine de Proust*. Here the mark of my own hand brings me back to the feeling of being powerless in front of my own manifestation. But it is here staying, as a moment, frozen but still loud, keeping the telling about this feeling.

But more importantly, it reminds me how it felt to find contact back with something troubleless, something steady and calm, like the page to write on, keeping us in memory. Memory in the dirt, quietly.

Family

First witness

Viens, viens avec moi

N'aies pas peur

Nous sortirons de la belle torpeur

Quand le soleil nous aura tu ses dons.

Of course, If I am one of my species, it is most likely that there would be *others* like me hanging around. It is even likely that someone would witness my behaviour, and *that* would become a 'behaviour' only when seen from an outside eye.

Formalisation takes way of a scene, either the scene of the response of my environment, the nervous drive of innate impulses or the observation of repetitions in what I see. For instance, I see one of my species, one that I am used to be in a close area with, or one that looks like them, and I see them occupied in the mazing of their own marks on the ground.

Maybe this is not that strange a scene. Maybe this one of my kind is just busy with things that would not be stranger from familiar ones. The ground is familiar. The crouching to it is familiar. Playing with my hands is familiar. But if the other one is lost in something familiar in an unfamiliar way, what does it tell me about them and myself ?

And if the other one notices that I am watching them, feels the proximity of my presence, in the tension of an abyssal bottomless seeking, maybe something would occur such as a form of melancholy. For they are recalled to assuring in a way their siblings that everything is alright, to bring balance back to the group.

The scene of the æsthetic experience is then the scene of a dream. Actions are not related to a specific sensorimotor chain anymore, directed to a biological need. The sensorimotor functions are being dismembered from a biological rooting, to become something detached, that one would have to relate to something else in order to find ground and contact again.

Then, the presence of the one that witnesses my day dream is also the one that wakes me up and pulls me into relating those dreamy detached actions to them, because they come to be the ground I need where something changes from step of disarray to step of familiar patterns. From the uprooting of the hand paradox to the recalling that the other one like me is a source of response, of meaningful action, there is therefore only the way to affective motion.

The break up with the biological stir brings out kind of a disorientation as to the level on which I am responding to my surroundings. Am I fully enacting my tight relation to them ? Have I been parted from them ? Am I more than that ? And what is more, the world, the others or my own body ?

That is where *the other one like me* comes up as a complete stranger first, because I have to recall what I have been into this world. And then this lapse of time, this lag between my being lost and my being refound, is all the room necessary for the symbolic evaluation to take place.

In this small delay between one register of abolition of the common rules to their reestablishment – where I *have to* repond to them –, there is an evaluation of how much worth it is, and how it is different from what I have just experienced. The movement between the two becomes the source of unexpected feelings such as grief and extasy for a situation where I can privilege dreaming over being driven by the moment – but to suspend it and let everything happen and go.

Theft and symbolic consistency

*"Nature" is what we see—
The Hill—the Afternoon—
Squirrel—Eclipse— the Bumble bee—
Nay—Nature is Heaven—
Nature is what we hear—
The Bobolink—the Sea—
Thunder—the Cricket—
Nay—Nature is Harmony—
Nature is what we know—
Yet have no art to say—
So impotent Our Wisdom is
To her Simplicity.*

Emily Dickinson, « 'Nature' is what we see », around 1866

Everyone as children experienced the feeling of theft, that something would be unlawfully taken from our hands while we thought it was ours. 'It is mine !', we claim. And we claim it as long as we feel that the stream of our relation to it is maintained. Depending on how deep this relation was rooted in our heart, it will or will not progressively fade away.

Symbolic theft is the feeling that the ground that we were creating relations between objects on was robbed away against our will. Because the will to create such relations establishes the basis for us to be active toward our environment, even though the self-evidence of this complex relationship has been jeopardised by mean of paradox.

The hand paradox itself is the experience of theft. The possibility to enact the sensorimotor ways has been taken away from me, and the ground with it that I was so certain of. The object in my hands becomes the reason that I can build a new kind of reality within my holding it close to me ; and to create a new kind of familiarity with that solely depends on me and the interpretation that I make of my perception.

Then the *other one like me* comes in and robs it again. Demanding attention from me though I was not willing to be fully there is stealing the moment away from the reassuring relation that I tried to recreate. Should they try to steal the object from me, I would complain and claim that 'it is mine'. And it would become true, though it is not in my hands anymore. For I am tied to it strongly.

What has been torn apart is not the property of the object to me. It is the relation to it that was substituting to something lost with the entire universe around. The strangeness of holding the object where something was missing – that is the automatism of sensorimotor enaction to my environment – replaces the mystics of being thoughtless.

Thoughts enter where the body cannot answer. The body cannot answer the hand paradox, but the image it creates is the image of the body taken and entangled into this world. Self-image, self-consciousness, self-representation mean a separation from what is my own in order to see it as something apart, different from me, alien. This non-coordinated fixed image of me in the mirror, is it really me ? In the same way, wasn't Ridley Scott and Hans R. Giger's *Alien* (1979) so frightening especially because in a way, *it looked like me* ?

Thinking is a process of alienation and psychosis that can only be counterbalanced by the fact that others like me would start joining me in my own state or a similar one, and reestablish relations within that state according to consistent similar beliefs. When enough have started wondering, a new common ground is found, but it is like a game : you need enough players so it becomes collective.

However, like in every game, not all may be fully aware of forming a group by following the rules. Then some may irrupt and steal the party. Relations that I established through similarities between animated and inanimated objects of my world may be denied by the theft, the abduction of the coordinate object.

If some kid takes the ball for themselves or if someone steals a piece of art from an exhibition, the whole set up is threatened. If someone takes away the rock that I made the impersonation of a living being in the world that I am recreating, not only it is taken, but as well my participation to the world, its meaning – and I am back to the void again.

The aggressiveness of that stealing implies the pain of losing the world again, of being denied a world of my own. Others may worry about my being discontent about it, but that is not theirs to fix. I need to be able to reset another order for my things to recreate relations again that would in their turn, permit the syntax of a world to exist.

The immersion of the living in their constant interaction with the environment which they recreate the possibilities of, is conditioning every moment of their lives, giving meaning. Therefore when this interactive constant recreation of sensorimotricity is jeopardised by such a thing as a sensorimotor paradox, imaginary relations become more than necessary to survive this collapsing.

Because I know that I am not supposed to destroy my own hand, unless I destroy a part of my own body. The image of the hand is symbolically consistent, because of its resistance to destruction. This is the first object to oppose symbolic consistency ; later they will become objects that I am not supposed to break, and that will therefore oppose their resistance to my doing anything to them. This will be the cause of a form of violence, rooted in moral setting.

The contained aggressiveness of moral restriction becomes its violence, which has no choice but to find aesthetic ways to shelter. When rules and relations are found to give meaning to the entropy of such a violence, a world of meaning is created. Then very often, a theft occurs by someone close to me first, breaking into the circle of the family cluster.

The theft of the object happens because the sense of those relations is not enough shared by the individuals of the group so that everyone *understands* its structure and necessity to exist. When the *world*, its structure is attacked, it is its members it separates and isolates again.

The coordination of set meaning to objects in the world, related by a new form of necessity through the resemblance to the interactions between people, allows the individuals to forget themselves again. The efficiency and interactivity of sensorimotricity is found back again even though sensorimotricity itself has been reconfigured.

The place of the individual inside of this new configuration allows a continuum to exist, taming the gaps inside it, creating such a continuity as for meaning never to break and collapse dramatically. Here comes the part of trauma, the layer of skin grown over the breach.

The first meaning of symbolic interpretation, thinking and language, is to provide continuity and a coherent world to the subject. Only the theft of that coherence makes this unity collapse ; and internal conflicts make roots.

World of words

What is that

That we hear

Is that the sound of tomorrow

Or is that from yesterday's spear ?

We often forget that words, as abstract as they can be, always take root in a fundamental and concrete experience. Psychoanalysis aimed at sorting out those fundamental origins in the meaning of words. Those meanings can remain secret to the subject as long as they can be. But by deconstructing all the layers of branches and leaves making a tree out of its trunk, you would eventually go back to the root and ground of every one of them.

Take a simple word and idea as flying. Would you be deprived from words, how would you express it and communicate this idea to someone else ? Possibly, how would you mime it ? What common experiences would you summon to share this idea ? What sequences of gestures and shared experiences would it take for you to be fully understood ?

We see that words, as simple as they can be, are always reminded to their conditional limit of referring to the same thing for at least two people – when it is about depriving them from words.

Then, what does it tell us ? It tells us that language is a network, and that as for every network, it only functions as a system of reference. In lacanian theory, it is the chain of the signifier. Each signifier is referring to another, which is doing the same. But the most interesting in lacanian thinking, that is inspired by linguistics, is that one signifier always carries away several different meanings. The signifier is polysemous according to the context for their interpretation.

If I say 'cat', I can refer to the zoological classification of the animal 'cat', I can refer to the experience I had of an actual cat or I can think of being a cat, behaving like a cat, and so on. Thus, the word 'cat' does not imply only one reality or experience, but several cohabitating together through the same vehicle.

Now if I say 'loyalty', I would refer to a general idea that is hold to be a grand noble one. But I might surely have in mind my experiences in friendship and love, recent or old, as for my deceptions and great rewards, or for the most ancient feeling of pain when I hurt my knee on the ground as a child and thought something close to : 'this ground is not nice to me'.

And this becomes interesting because we can be looking for a personal judgement hidden inside of words, often passing unnoticed. If I say 'cat', this word will not be neutral. But it doesn't necessarily have to do with whatever I think of the cat or cats in general. What I may have on the back of my mind is : 'does this cat mean that *some things* are or are not nice to me in general, that would define my whole life ?' The important thing is that there exist actual things that have or have not been nice to me and then, it becomes a turning point to every word in asking whether those things would come back to me again.

If I am thinking of loyalty – let us say that I am in fact thinking of the ground that scratched my knee –, this very memory only belongs to me. Because it happened at a time when I had no larger notion of my experiences having to be a debt to others referred to language, to the written

book of my own moral history. I did not play and hurt my knee because I was planning to set my life in a certain order in society. If there was a society, it merely was the restricted one of my family, which can be extended according to its structure.

If I think of the cat, it would be likely for me to think of some living being escaping the rules of moral obligations to others. And maybe I would like the cat to be aware of those obligations that I have to answer to, to be part of my wondering about them. Yet by telling about the cat, I can only contemplate the distance that I am setting between me and them, that is the distance of stepping back, of disengaging from the sensorimotor responses to my environment.¹⁰

Nonetheless, when I say 'cat', I am forgetting, I am obliterating something that I don't want to see. It happens in the same way that when I say 'me' in order to communicate the experience of being *me* to someone else, I have to get out of this very experience to put myself in the position of making the other *understand* what it is that I want to communicate with them. When I say 'cat', in a way, I always say another appearance of 'me'. I am recalling the place of the *me*.

Attention has been driven to the outside at a moment when it was clearly something *inside* of the subject that was revealed. It is always a balance of what is and has been nice or not to me, something of the pleasure principle, that is at stake in words. Because words are the stranger part in us. Words is having been taught to words, trying to reach the appeal to those others constituting a family around me – and sometimes their absence.

But more importantly, when I want to say *me*, I say 'me' that is a mean to convince the other of the existence of *something* inside of me that cannot be fully comprehended by the outside eye. The responses of the other to my trying to explain would give me clues that it is very difficult to pass the other's lack of full availability to what I am feeling. The other has other troubles, other concerns, other distresses and excitements.

So we can also find common experiences. But we cannot be relieved from the weight of being a *me*, the same way that I cannot be my own hand that I desire to eat and consume, to simplify into being absorbed. I cannot desire the *me* without absorbing the workings of desire itself towards something that *is not* me.

Words are polysemous because the first way out of the fundamental paradox of having such a thing as an alien hand has been a dead end. If we want to make it real, explainable to others, we have to illustrate our experience by getting out of it in order to see things from the other's eye – and then we realise that we left to point where there was situated a *me*. So there is no end in language, and that is why Jacques Lacan spoke of a chain, because it is always a manner of trying to get out of a body that we are stuck in invariably.

The world is thick with words ; and the density of language has to do with the density of its founding paradox. An impossible resolution.

10 Idea as well developed by French philosopher Etienne Bimbenet in *L'animal que je ne suis plus*, Ed. Gallimard, 2013.

The makings of family

Hablame de tu nombre

Amiga o amigo que te conozca

Hablame de tu nombre

Desde dónde vienes tú

Hasta ya que te vayas.

What do we make a family with ? A family is always chosen, or it is only people that you have to suffer. That is why maybe many films and series are about grouping or being clustered together with friends (as in the Wachowskis' precious series *Sense8* [2015]) that would constitute a 'second family'. Family, indeed, has to do with the network of meaning. It is something one would root their meaning into, to situate their own sense of their life. There is no family if the access to this situation is blocked and broken.

Family is the first space of liberty, of laws, or it is the first space for their breaking. Family can be steady, encouraging, absent or invasive. Inside of it, the subject can thrive, find balance, be loved or be denied, ignored or destroyed. But first it is a map of the world as it should be, because its members are supposed to be steady, not likely to be removed, kept alive after their death by remembrance.

Family is of the ones you imitate in the first place. The child mimes for responses, the delight of a present gaze, the distress of their disappearing, the terror of their anger. It is important to remember what family is about, because many species are tied to a familiar bond, but none other than ours make it a pattern for *all* things when their members are gone. Not only calling for their return, but using their memory to live up something else entirely, playing *them*.

We evoked the early experiences of things being nice or not to us. The interpersonal play between the child and the caretakers makes the learning of one's self. Their own image is composed by a series of attempts and responses ; composed like a mirror, but first a mirror forming through the reactions of my siblings to my doings.

From Lacan's third party to mimetic mother-infant interactional bonds in Ellen Dissanayake's studies, we keep finding traces of an evolutionary progress. Studies of maternal care, like French pedopsychiatrist and anthropologist H el ene Stork's *Enfances indiennes* (1987), show that around the world, many ways have developed to help children adapt to their environment and not perish alone.

Most surprising in this context are Aka Pygmy's lullabies¹¹. Contrarily to what we are accustomed to in Western cultures, Aka's lullabies are not the muffled tone type. They are more like yodelling, vocal and repeated chants, often collective, to put little ones to snooze. The tiredness comes with the endless repetition of the same melodic phrases, in spite of how nagging they might sound to the outsider's ears.

Then again, when the whole collective starts singing to soothe the babies' mood, what does

¹¹ You would find some moving video excerpts on YouTube typing 'berceuse pygm e Aka', like this one <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5yEikm4wKiY>

make family, if not the perception of a coherent ensemble, something one can coordinate and recreate a sort of circularity with ? Family comes with fluidity, when every one has to consent to the rules established collectively. If not, the family structure is dysfunctional. If the individuals cannot relate, the family breaks.

Hence it is symbolic, a space of liberty and laws, as long as those laws are fully accepted.

Then, what *made* family in the first place ? The necessity to keep a certain moment, a certain structure in a state of stability. When trying to express what the *me* is, what it is that we are experiencing with our paradoxes, we make up in a moment an ideal structure implying the fluidity and stability of a possible common understanding. If you understand me, what I am trying to share with you, then there is a common ground and what we share goes fluidly from one to another, circulating for enough time so that becomes a stable structure. A structure for meaning to refer anything else to.

A *family*, in every sense of the word, is the possibility to maintain contingent state of mutual relations stable. A *family of words*, a *family of species*, a *political family*, a *family out of people*. Then necessity establishes itself from a remaining stable order, out of contingency.

That is the direction of Francisco Varela's idea that prescription always comes after proscription. A space of liberty with few forbidden things (or you wouldn't be able to procreate or would die) often turns into a space of obligations with few spaces of freedom, imprinting a certain social conduct on their members.

There is nothing necessary in a family in the first place. Until the XVIIIth century in Western Europe, women in the upper societies would give up their children to nurses with no regard for any 'maternal instinct'.

But family happens whenever you desire to *keep* one order of things that was contingent first, to make it a general rule for your life, knowing that you hold on a tacit reciprocity : '*You help me understand myself better, by bringing some stable order to my life that I am able to choose.*' The ability to choose is central because it is the ability to situate oneself in an imaginary and symbolic body and to coordinate with them in the long-term.

There would be no time if there wasn't a family, because family means that you can come *back*. Family brings the past, the wall on one's back, because that is what you want to keep : something to give meaning to whatever is happening elsewhere, what should be saved or would be lost eventually. Then like sewing, it shapes the rhythm according to which the timing of your life is going to set, event after event, the myth and story of what and who you are.

Juggling with symbols

Fechas de revolución

Y de las iglesias caen las agujas

Es una fecha de revolución

Y las aguas de beber no se quedan más.

Inside of a group of individuals, you would find a community of values and rules that are understood and shared. A new individual born into this group would be introduced to such an environment, that is a selection of coherent behaviours, with constants and variables. But sometimes one or a series of unexpected events create a revolution inside of this coherent ensemble.

The training of the body to efficiently succeed in getting to what they want towards their environments channels the use of individual energy. Aggressiveness for instance is perceived as an actual aggression to the outside eye, while it was merely first an attempt from one individual to get something out of their body. To climb up a tree is an aggression to its branches, though it cannot respond to us in order to make us stop. To tickle a cat just to make it react can be perceived as a form of aggression. Yet again, it goes before being taught to the rules of reciprocity.

The teachings of morals take the way of learning their golden rule : 'you won't do onto others what you would hate to be done onto you'. Philosopher Paul Ricœur set it to be at the foundations of morals. Then 'because there is the violence, there is the morals' in order to prevent it. Except that violence itself is a moral conception, the conditions to its interpretation and existence.

Violence is a climate, a setting of conditions in which moral rules are not guaranteed anymore. Anyone can possibly and virtually exercise aggression over anyone else. It happens in a context where normally, one wouldn't expect it to be the case. Then violence is mostly the anticipation of an aggression, either a retained aggressive energy from the subject or the apprehension of one from the outside.

The balance of aggression inside of the group thus implies the learning of a certain codified social conduct, that is first taught amongst the family circle. There are objects that the child is allowed to handle, bite and twist as they please, like their cuddling toys (thoroughly investigated in by Donald W. Winnicott), and others that they must not touch, break or damage in any way. This teaching of the moral environment is first proscriptive – things that you are forbidden to do – and then progressively prescriptive – things that you are expected to do.

You are then progressively introduced to a certain social path by learning the conducts that you are supposed to follow. As pedopsychanalyst René A. Spitz noticed, mothers and/or caretakers have a great influence on promoting and rewarding adequate behaviours.¹² It becomes *behaviour* once transcribed as a patterned coherent sequence, constitutive of the individual's collective narrative into society. It creates a network for reciprocal evaluation.

Moreover, the injunctions and oppressive forces pushed onto the family structures and then the individuals are multifactorial, as stressed by philosopher and social activist Angela Davis in *Women, Race and Class* (1981). It all goes in concentric circles that communicate and resist to each

¹² Read René A. Spitz, *De la naissance à la parole*, PUF, 2002.

other.

Yet again, revolutions happen, reshaping the stability of the whole symbolic and political structure. French philosopher Étienne Bimbenet analysed that in term of *event*, which is likely to reconfigure our conception of what the world is and how it is ordered. And it is always a question of interpretation.

One of the risks in ethological studies for example is to over-interpret what you would observe amongst the variety of animal behaviour. The whole idea of causality has to be tempered. What would be the *reason* for such or such *behaviour* ? To speak of a behaviour means already that you have separated it from the rest of the conduct, formalised, sequenced and patterned it to make it a signal to be interpreted during observation.

And then, when you have got the signal, you are on your feet, not waiting but active, anticipating what is going to happen next, sometimes writing it forward, just as when one child would expect a certain action to respond to their own when they learn to play. *Are things correlated to me, reacting to me, entering an efficient dialogue with me ?* And if yes, how come it would not be the case anymore beyond a certain limit ?

That the cat would get bored with my solicitations, that would be kind of a revolution. It would upset a certain order of things that allowed me to establish patterns and then a form of language. I can only play with symbols when there is a possibility to switch some of them. If symbols, elements of my patterned environment, become suddenly unavailable, what am I to switch them with ?

When the child finds a hole where they expected to at least imaginarily find a concrete familiar object, what are they to trade it with ? How are they filling the gap between what they expected to be and what happened to be ? We see here that trauma enters in the way of suddenly juggling over the hole to fetch symbols indifferent to what has been lost. Their indifference to the case even comes as a blessing.

Whenever the breaking of one's expectation, trauma while grow a continuity by bouncing away from the crack, looking for a way to ease the lack of preconceived solution. The subject will eventually go for something else entirely to replace it, operating a substitution that would be none less than a way to get back to some understandable expectations.

When someone or something doesn't react the way it usually does toward us, in such an extreme measure that we cannot find in the details and variety of events in this behaviour some sign of the familiar whatsoever, we are pushed on to reconsider our expectation to the world around us. Trauma will then most likely use whatever is the closest to a familiar feature to bind it into a reassuring interpretation.

'Maybe they are angry, because...' *'They do that but they must love me because...'* And with the *because* we go pass the brutality of the event to accept the possibility of a new world, with a new order.

When old Pedro is being told by his land owner that his crops and house are going to be sold to a major company, in Mikhail Kalatozov's film *Soy Cuba* (1964), what he does first after the shock is to resume his work *tiredlessly* and then tell his children to go have fun in the village. Then he burns both crops and house and dies.

The announcement of his ruin is the shock, that comes like a blind spot of stupor. The world falls apart under his feet. Then he goes back to a familiar pattern, though twisted with pain and anger. Then he lies to his children to deal with his pain alone, trying to keep his own story from hurting, and gets rid of it.

The same goes with the ambiguity of rape when it occurs with a close member of the family. The family structure isn't supposed to allow *that*, yet that very event that should not exist makes it easier to switch over than to eventually make the family structure explode. It cannot be understood and taken up by others as we suppose that this wasn't expected to happen – to a greater extent when the person responsible goes on pretending to be a rightful member of the group.

A revolution happened, that has dramatic damaging effects. Yet as long as the event doesn't come into the collective narrative, it is up to the victim to adapt to this new configuration. Most likely, trauma will go on passing over the hole, switching a world to another. Because to forget that there is a hole, one has to change their perspective on their whole world. Then it is a trade between a world with a gap in its core and another that would exclude the existence of such an anomaly.

In this case, juggling with the symbolic is not only switching few symbols. It is juggling with completely and radically different universes which would either admit or exclude the possibility of violence in its structure.

Shall it be male or female, say the cells

*Shall it be male or female? say the cells,
And drop the plum like fire from the flesh.
If I were tickled by the hatching hair,
The winging bone that sprouted in the heels,
The itch of man upon the baby's thigh,
I would not fear the gallows nor the axe
Nor the crossed sticks of war.*

Dylan Thomas, *If I were tickled by the rub of love*

From experience, we could notice that whatever comes before our eyes must be reconsidered many times before to determine its direction. Everything has a center and a periphery. The first thing we learn is to mind what is around, not to disturb what or who must not be disturbed, then follow the right pattern.

The question of rape underlines that *someone* may want something from me. Then the question is, *what do they want* ? Most likely, they want to determine *me* as something that could be gotten, consumed, assimilated, objectified. How else could one's own feelings be denied ? And how the culture of rape could have reinforced the divisions between genders through so many generations ?

What are you being taught and how, when for instance your mother or your grand-mother has in their past endured rape ? How does it enter the fiber of your own education, or as slavery's trauma passed on through the genes and a persistent context¹³, even when nothing is being told, but just because somehow in the details, the conduct of the person is meaning something that wouldn't show otherwise but through the discrete emotional lense and in the silences ? And how have those conducts formed societies through the very organisation of the family structure ?

Let us say that two bodies meet, with no knowledge whatsoever of moral rules, get to know each other and come to sex eventually, maybe after a longer or shorter time. Let us imagine what the beginning of *family* would have been like, what could have been the sociology of gender in the earliest of human times. Maybe a connection to what Swiss psychoanalyst Alice Miller called the command to honour one's parents, the idea of a Father and a Mother and the division between them ? Or could it have meant that the people carrying their own body identified as female would have been more easily put aside from taking decisions in the name of the group as they would carry a child ? What would depend on them then ? Would they have been likely associated to the child as a form of symbolic and social possession of both ?

Let us rephrase. What if we put aside the question of gender and even sex as formalised categories, and ask : what was to be taken ? If we are picturing a time when family and society quite merged up into a reduced group of people, what would the relations of power and domination have been like within the group ? Would the structures of patriarchy, as they were thoroughly analysed,

¹³ Read bell hooks, *Teaching to Transgress : Rducation as the Practice of Freedom*, 1994, on the importance of the educational context.

for instance, by feminist writer Kate Millett since the 70's, have *necessarily* emerged ?

If we look at the organisation of the family now, we still measure the importance of providing food, shelter, security from the outside. Whenever the eventual state of danger decreases in our environment, greater time for idleness comes by. Yet, aggression is still possible at any time and anxiety never far, including within the group itself.

The tension line is that no matter how free the individuals may be to take some time for their own, they would still be up to respond to a sollicitation from the outside. However, whatever the manner in which most societies developed and organised, building up on the family and collective structures, most of the time some members of the group are more expecting than others to be interrupted in their wandering.

Structurally, as a social construction in most cultures, being a *woman* is somehow expecting to be interrupted by a dominant force. It doesn't say anything about gender itself, only about the pattern in which genders are set by conventions and rules.

But we will get to that later. We are now focusing on how gender structure and division is affecting the way early incorporation of the moral rules is being passed on from the parent/caretaker to the infant.

What kind of live interactions would some mother, knowing about those relations of domination, have with a growing human being ? We are merely asking those questions and keep the analysis on gender issues for another work. If we take on philosopher Judith Butler's idea¹⁴ that each individual in a way performs the gender norms in the symbolic order, *enacts* them the same way any living being enacts the possibilities of interactions offered by their environments, what does it say about the person that is the mother or caretaker, holding a baby, a little child, a soon-to-be young adult ? What does gender say to us about the emotional and affective resources of the individuals, entwined with the collective expectations ?

What does being a mother or a referent member of the (extended) family means ? And what about the eventuality of violence inside it ? What tensions build up the social structures of the family and the variety that their forms could take ?

We see now that all of these are representations and that like all representations, they are partly fictitious, imaginary, symbolic. Nonetheless, their intrinsic value is given by anchoring into our emotions.¹⁵ If we think of the recent studies according to which our emotional states would even affect our DNA structure (Elissa Epel, 2014), we can adjust our vision of emotions as : what happens in the gap between the paradoxical state of indetermination and the call for its resolution.

Emotions would happen between that suspension of sensorimotricity earlier studied and the symbolic call for a sustained attention toward *something* nonetheless, even without knowing exactly what *this* is. Our environment is thus doubled with the abstract memory stimulation of some usual neural responses to stimulations from outside our body. There is the representation emerging of something we would relate to, and the expectation of a certain situation resulting from the encounter with it. In this lapse of time, as we saw, body energy is mobilised and waiting to be expressed.

Gender categories are then themselves a synthesis of some situation, but which ? Would it be the division between who's taking and who is taken ? Who would have had the authority to provide the distribution of the roles in the symbolic setting ?

It is like in Sally Potter's film *The tango lesson* (1997), when the characters ask what it is to

14 In Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble : Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*, 1990.

15 See the heartfelt work done by Delphine Montera on the analysis of autism and the queer spectrum, in her documentary project *Autisme queer*.

be jew, if not feeling uprooted. Then what would it be to be a woman, if not knowing that you would have to occupy a symbolic space where you would be likely to eventually be taken, because of the social dialectic and formalised division of gender itself, allowing one's consent or not ? Further more, what would it mean to be a mother, if not also feeling that the life given is also the possibility of a life taken ?

The symbolic referent of the father is where Lacan set the referent of the *phallus* in the mid-50's (that changes later on). Because the image of the father means that the life given is a stranger life, first related to the women of the group, as the child would immediately be out of his hands. The *phallus* would be the value left, a stranger part of the body image and identity, a reward for the gift of the child to the social body. The *father* would remain set, in the patriarchal logic, when the child goes on their own. It doesn't have to do with the carried sex, merely with what is expected, what is patterned for a father to be in the very term and symbolic place of *father* in our societies.

Contrariwise, the *mother* – fiction that only exists because it is cristallised with the word and its symbolic function – loses the privilege of carrying the child whenever they are born. Virtually, the life of the child to be born depends on her and then, the social possession of the child is extended to the mother's, as the group should take care of the mother who should take care of her child. The vulva in itself becomes the symbol of what is loose and losing whatever is inside (child, blood and fluids), that is given away : a non-possession.

Therefore, *fathers* are accustomed to lose a lot of *women* when the woman embodies the possessive tense : they carry the possession of the group, as the child is given to the social body as a debt in exchange of its protection. Those fictious entities mean that whenever a *woman* exists, they are eventually lost to their children, as they are given away eventually to a larger ensemble.

The *men* category hasn't that much hold a quasi-general domination over gender division because of physical strength, but because they would in fact *lose* otherwise more than a *woman* has to lose, as a bit of their possession wish is given away, and they are not accustomed to be taken, then more discomfort to be aggressive for. Whatever the *woman* loses passes on to the child's life, in the terms of which we are accustomed to sacrifice the mothers to their children. Yet what the *father* loses with his children's life is the blind place of the *mother* where their mate used to be. Being used to sacrifice the mothers, there is an ambivalence as to the stability of the image of the woman embodying those symbolic prescriptions.

Women have been progressively erased from the political organisation of the family, and then society, maybe because of this instability. They could not be common to the *father* and to the child at the same time, and a sacrifice to society. And then we are back to our first paradox and the place in the middle becomes the switch : the place of the *father* is stuck where it cannot reach the child without passing the mother out, being in debt at least to a virtual sacrifice, letting operating substitutions take place. Hence a symbolic mobility where *women* are to stay put where *men* would imagine that they had to hold some control. This state of indetermination is a state of great vulnerability that we do not teach boys and men to feel comfortable with.

The function of the *mother* is then becoming a blank spot, where it cannot exist without the child, and hinders the *woman* as a category designed to remain available for gendered symbolic definition and virtual possession, because functionalised to breeding. When the *mother* replaces the *woman*, the *man* cannot but turn into the *father*, logically in the heterosexual pattern. However, they haven't lost as much as the space that has emptied where the *woman* was, and that *they* have to occupy in their turn to complete the structure of a control over possession. They were prepared to hold political advantage ; not to be alone in the moment when the feeling of social possession is taken away as a token to the social contract. Emotions are lifted up in the breach. But feared.

The complexity of this position is that the *father* has to accept somehow to *be* the *woman* in

her stead, but is often most likely to reject the opportunity. Monique Wittig's critic of heterosexual normativity¹⁶ pointed out the problematic influence of those categories. Again, they are fictitious if they are not enacted by the individuals, and we are merely here telling a tale about it. Then the *woman* symbolic figure fades away to the *mother's*, which occupies a clear function in the family structure.

The *father*, in loss of the *woman*, has to grieve a missing object, that they would eventually replace by something else entirely. Eventually, the *phallus* maybe and a position of self-referring authority, but that is none of an obligation of course.

Here, we set the blurring reflection for the moment.

16 In Monique Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, 1992.

The other

Другой, кого я не вижу
В зеркале, на меня глядит.
(*This other that I do not see
In the mirror looks at me.*)

What is the other ? The other takes many forms, because mainly they go beyond where we are. The other is the multitude that presents itself before us. Starting with the hand of our paradox, it is *I* and it is not *I* at the same time. Like when I see my own reflection in the mirror : '*It is I and it is not I at the same time.*' Then what is it ?

As we said, the word 'me' as well is a paradox. I cannot say 'me' and be the *me* that the word transvestites to another person. The 'me' is a gift that we want to make, the gift of the *me*. The gift of the substance that should prove that we are.

My own hand proves me that something exists outside that is present amongst the others. My own reflection in the mirror shows me that there is something stranger to me that is seen in synchronicity with me.

Learning the synchronicity between what I do, what I feel and what I see that is done to the outside eye is in the essence of the power of language. It is not only that someone else should comment that I see myself in the mirror ; it is that I learn the constant synchronicity between what happens here and what happens *there*.

The person *in* the mirror will always be there, because it is experienced in a fixated moment. The image exists *with* the mirror. That we learn that, that there is always a person in the mirror, a stable connection between all that happens and this, and that it should be alright that it stays, that creates a territory where there is always someone that is eventually going to answer to me.

We talk to ourselves all the time. In a way, once we have learnt how to adress a request to others, knowing that someone is always there that shows a presence to us is perturbing. There would be no such dialogue if there wasn't this distance induced by the sensorimotor paradox between what I do, what I feel and what I see. It tells me that the other is *like* me.

Yet the dazzling presence of the other would not exist without the separation : I cannot *be* what I see when I am considering what I am seeing as something that I would wonder about. If I am fascinated by my own hand, I cease *being* it for a moment. It is something else that I see. It is *another* thing. Stranger to me, yet with me at all times.

But then it would not matter if I hadn't someone else to answer to. If there wasn't *someone* next to me sollicitating me out of my maze, I wouldn't wonder whether my sibling just right there could not make part of my own questioning. I create my own world that is safe from things alien to me, but with what I make my own.

In the confusion, the person taking me out of my daydream is also the proof that my own reflection – should it be the one in the mirror or my own hand – is something that I can leave and find back later. It will stay there where it belongs.

Then, a territory is revealed, with a center. The center is where I can always find back someone like me that is another person that I could be if I were not myself. It separates my self from *myself* – something we should be convinced of, the self that we would talk about, that is in the third-party structure.¹⁷ As we have eventually to mind the other people in the room, in that place, in the community, we also have to learn how to leave this image that seizes us. We distance it progressively. Yet *who* are we talking about, *who* is talking when *I* am sollicitating an answer from someone else ?

It is the beauty of Lacan's mirror phase, but take it earlier. Let us say that someone took my rock, and that I want it back. I would say : 'Remember, it was *me* who found it first. It was in my hand, it was me it related to.' In the mirror where I see myself, I also say : 'Look, it is *me* who found it.'

So it is not only a matter of recognising myself in the mirror and being surprised that the other one would find quite natural that the two images – myself and my reflection – match. It is also that I am surprised that *this* moves and stays there, and that the distance between me and there can be played with.

Then I say : 'Look, how odd, it stays there as long as I look at it. Yet it moves whenever I try to reach it. I can never consume that distance, and it will always stay the case.' The presence of actual others won't help me reduce nor resorb the distance between me, what I feel, what I do, and me seeing myself as someone else, and that both would cohabit as long as I try to make it stop.

One's own reflection is never something very agreeable to linger on too long, as it isn't to gaze at one's own hand for much time. It is dizzy because it is paradoxical. We can never reduce the distance and keep the relation between the place of the *me* and the thing at the same time.

Either there is a relation, either it is removed. But I cannot *work* it and that is the thing : my reflection in the mirror, in my own hand or in the word 'me' will only bring the impossibility to be at the same time the first two parties. Either there exists *one* point of view that is selfless, fully immersed in my environment, or there exist two : one that I am, one that I see. Or maybe the one that I see seeing *me*.

The hand that I gaze is also the hand that feels what it touches and grasps, eventually the air and itself *feeling*. When I see myself in the mirror, I see myself being seen. Therefore I experience vulnerability, emotion, surprise, a halt in time where I used to act toward things.

Any of the three paradoxes – the hand, the 'me', the mirror – is defined by an exposition to vulnerability, that we often fight. Then the third party isn't only the other person that sees me seeing myself, it is also that I defend myself from being seen as unable to speak.

I would say : 'Look, *I* can speak.' But I am only diverting the other's gaze from me being unable to explain what it is that I am seeing. I cannot explain it, because it is the same thing as me at the time as I am. So what am I to explain first ? That I am, or that I have an image that looks the same as me ?

Would the other comprehend that ?

¹⁷ According to Jacques Lacan, the inclusion of someone else between myself and my own reflection in the mirror stage. This other person would be likely to comment on what we see.

Понимать (To understand)

Иногда я не понимаю, что ты говоришь

Тогда я себя спрашиваю

Что же это могло быть.

(Sometimes I don't understand what you say

Then I ask myself

What it could be about.)

How come people talk and we do or do not understand what they mean ? What is it about those sounds coming out of their mouths that we should or not interpret as something that enters our comprehension ? And what about those times where words sound empty of all meaning ?

The association between signifier and signified has been a subject to linguistics for decades now. We could dissect their intrications forever. In any case, we could say that they come with learning. They are or appear like unbreakable objects.

When the young child learns by being taught that *those* are the objects that they are allowed to use and twist, and *these* others those that they shouldn't, what do they learn ? They learn that the world is made of different matters : some are softly approached, others cost more effort.

The objects that I am not allowed to touch seem to carry more density. The prohibition to it grants them a restraint, and thus with the energy I contain, more symbolic density. These objects speak a language that I do not comprehend, because I cannot properly handle them.

People who are speaking things to me, as I am a child, they are moreover likely to handle me, to take me up in their arms and displace me as they please. I would maybe not understand that much the intention of someone looking at me but not touching me, keeping a sharp distance.

When someone is talking to you, whether as a live person or by writing, you would not only understand and interpret the play of words that builds up sentences. You would also manifest to yourself a set of intentions that usually go with body language.

When you are reading those sentences that I am now writing, you are surely reading it with a certain idea of how it would sound like if somebody else were to stand before you and say them, what tone they would use and what body expressions. You would not be able to read them in a totally neutral way, or this apparent neutrality would as well be an impression of neutrality.

Therefore we learn the meaning of words because it can be rooted to the apprehension of an intention. *Che vuoi ?* Repeated Lacan. *What do you want ?* I only need from an object to know that I could handle it and do what I please with it, even if I am not planning to do so because it would be pointless. Because I need to justify my actions. Why do some member of my family pick me up from one place to put me back some place else ? Some objects escape me.

For as soon as I am heading to a forbidden object, someone would retrieve me from it, I learn to live in a world where I am surrounded by objects that don't *exist* but as a second wall. The same way Donald Winnicott proposed that learning to be alone was learning to be alone *in the presence of someone else*, to learn to live in a world of objects is learning to live in a reduced

environment.

This *impoverishment*¹⁸ of our surroundings is forcing us to retrieve to the imaginary, to keep our energy for discovery to ourselves, to handle those images that cannot carry any sense to the body. Images disconnected from action.

The same happens with the hand paradox, as the image of the object – the forbidden hand that I cannot reach – gets uprooted from any possible action to it. And the same happens to both other paradoxes. I cannot apprehend nor be touched by my own reflection in the mirror, and I cannot grasp the *me* that I give to another with the word to mean it.

To *mean* is to borrow an intermediary space for representation, where I nor the other are, but can still exist and be recognised. It means that both of us are uprooted from ourselves to a symbolic projection of our selves ; and maybe the only thing that gives us meaning, is to know that we could potentially touch each other *because* we are still able to touch people – and because there are two people at least in this symbolic room of our relation.

The body needs to know that it could grasp things, that it is authorised to sensorimotricity, that somehow the prohibition to touch and handle things can be tamed by the privacy of one single relation – even the Wachowski's *Matrix* (1999) understood this necessity and intergrated it in their fictious world. There is a check up in every thought to determine where the body *is*, in relation to the images that are produced by those actions which I restrain myself from doing. If I am writing on my computer, I am not getting up – but I could – so the energy restrained from my not getting up goes into the writing on my keyboard. Energy stabilises by being derived.

When the child does not go to the object that is taken away from them, they would resume their intention toward something else, or start to whine in a disordered manner. The capacity to *work* on something comes from the capacity to derive the coerced energy from what you won't do *at the moment* to what you would surely be more encouraged to do. It all depends then on those things that your family and social environment would have encouraged you to do and are encouraged to do themselves.

You are not to touch *that object* now as much as you are encouraged to play with this one. One is close, the other must keep distant. It gives one a moral cartography of the world surrounding them.

When other people speak, it is alright that I don't understand what they say if I can relate to them otherwise. They can speak of subjects that I don't know about or speak a different language. They can even speak to me but in a way that I cannot relate to them at the moment of the exchange.

Sometimes, the person that is talking to me or to whom I am talking is looking at me so fixedly that it is like I am talking to myself in a mirror. I say 'me' but the other is *already* fixating the *me* where it belongs : *in* the body.

It doesn't get to them by the way that I expected them to take it away. I say 'me' so the other would know that it is *me* and then feel comfortable with resuming their lives. Not to put everything on *me*, but to confirm that our convention still exists. When I say 'me', I do not give away the *me* that I keep. I give away the word, so I would be sure that what it was aiming at stays untouched in a moral consent.

But when the other is *looking at me* in such a way that I *know* that they are aiming at it, the word is pointless, and I don't know what I mean anymore.

18 We here borrow from Sigmund Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920)

Mimèsis

The way thou look at me, I know

Is that I follow thy look.

We more gladly follow what moves. As children, we would try to catch the moving trail. When we see an object, even still, as we project our moving toward it, our intention to it, we charge it with the same imaginary preparation for movement : the projection of our own.

The reason why psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan could evoke the signifier as being part of a chain, one always sending back to another, is that we are not passive to an object. The capacity not to *actually* go to the object but to restrain this impulse, does not suppress the latter in the first place.

When our relation to our own hand put to paradox, the fact that we are tempted to the hand is a necessary condition that there is a paradoxical contradiction to it. An unsovable tension.

As we learn not to do anything that we would be tempted to do with our surrounding objects, we nonetheless cannot suppress that this temptation exists but is derived in a socially accepted conduct. The tension that pushes us to continually keep thinking to ourselves, trying to occupy our mind and body, is that we must maintain the stability of this conduct. To keep it contained in a delimited space.

We follow what moves and stimulates us, but mostly we are encouraged to be stimulated by our own selves, to quietly keep our wishes, thoughts and excitations to ourselves. Family structures have a hierarchy and we belong, at some time of our life, to its possessions. As part of the structure, we have to learn our place, as adults already are to keep theirs to both family and society.

In the room that is allowed to us, we have to learn how to keep things. We progressively gather our own space, our own world of objects. As infants, we learn to follow the movements and facial expressions of our mother or caretakers. In case we don't reach what we mean to follow, should it be our own projection on some object, we could always hope to reach someone's arms.

The capacity to play interactions between objects that we gather as being *our* objects, for instance our toys, is only possible because spaces have been discriminated. Some objects have been handed to us. As long as we stay quiet with *our* objects, making part of ourselves, a room is formed around us. That means that a line is drawn between this room where we play, and the other rooms where we are sent back from to the first.

There is a constant return *home* from outer spaces to our own, whether we like it or not. Because spaces are organised as a function of the family structure. So it has (in best cases) a life of its own, and this constant return, where our quiet place is also the place where *we won't bother others*, also contains a tension to those others that our own room lacks.

We find that in the structure of the *Fort-Da*, from one year and a half old Sigmund Freud's grandson playing with a spool, throwing it – '*Fort !*' – and pulling it back by the thread – '*Da !*'. In on time, the spool disappears there behind the furniture, in the other it comes back magically 'by itself', remotely, as if it were alive – or animated by an independent force such as one of the Jedi's.

The boy made the object come back *alive*. Freud did already analyse it as a way to play some derived anger at the mother's absence. We can moreover say that it is always this question of

inviting the adults and others in our room either way.

As we are dependent on their look, on their approval on our doing well or unwell, on their reactions to our behaving or not, we react as well as a space to which we expect their gaze to be invited to react and, luckily, to approve on what is going on so well in here. Mostly, we recreate situations where the experience of our interactions with them is made self-evident and commented. '*Bad girl !*' or '*No, you musn't do this !*', they say.

However sometimes, the security of this room is broken. There must be a room so what happens inside it is coherent, can be played with soundly and without interruption except for a beginning and an end. It has to be available for being thoroughly invested as a whole so it could be directed to the other world, the world of the adults, as a faithful representation : '*You allowed me this. Look how well I am doing here where you left me when you were gone !*'

In French pedopsychanalyst Denis Vasse's book *The umbilicus and the voice* (1974), the study of two children's analysis, one girl and one boy, was exposed. Both were diagnosed with a psychosis and in both cases, the analyst would sort out that the body-image of those children was fractured. In a way, it would have been as if this particular room for oneself was not allowed to be closed, as if someone was to take the objects away from them. They are not theirs, as there is no *me* in the other's eyes. They don't exist there nor can they collect the objects around them.

As we learn to know and describe, to define and determine ourselves as a function of how the others respond to our own image, whenever this separation between the others and *I* cannot happen, the *I* has no room to show for itself either. We collect a series of information about ourselves that are symbolic functions of what our self, our symbolic image *does* to the others. In this way, our body and others' reactions to our manifest presence inform us of what we symbolically and socially are and come to be.

Our physiomy, our shape and behaviour are interpreted as already agreeable or disagreeable and then, we are allowed or not to carry a room for ourselves in order to reflect on it. But we also need a public to this room, or we make a public of ourself, talking to ourself. We need that what we show *in* there would have some effect on our getting back to someone's arms *out* there.

The world of images cannot stand if it doesn't help us resume the course of what was happening outside of this imaginary room that we were to create from scratch. To see the image of a dog and to say : '*It is a dog !*', only has value if whom we directed the whole scene to would come to agree : '*Yes, of course, well done, it is a dog !*'

In front of the mirror, we would only find some kind of resolution whenever we would signal that there is *someone* there that looks at us, if the adult next to us would actually pay more attention to us rather than to our own reflection. The latter can be dismissed as *not real*. The easiness with which adults would dismiss whatever is not concrete to them would inform us that the *I* would always get back to them eventually... unless it doesn't happen and they are psychologically and morally absent to us – Winnicott's *not good enough* mother or caretaker.

There is a representation whenever there is a discrepancy between one room treated lightly and one room treated seriously : a contrast. Without contrast, there is no representation nor aesthetic experience. It is always a matter of what can or cannot be done and in what conditions, what tension lying in-between.

If I am gazing at my own hand, incapable of deciding anything about it, what is represented in this relation is that someone is bearing it in the mean time, in the middle, and that this someone is *me*. When I am pushed back to my room when the adults are in theirs, I cannot pertain to a perpetual sunshine of their looking at me and I would try to reproduce this gaze of theirs by

pretending that my own room is where they want (me) to be. They *should* be there looking.

The analogy is that if I am here myself in the middle, looking at myself standing in-between undecidedly, at the place where my caretakers won't lift me up to resume our previous dialogue, I am as well in the middle of objects a bit more distant to me than my own hands ; but in the same way that my parents are a bit more distant to myself. I am left alone, but what does 'alone' mean if not *not surrounded by others* ? It all goes enlarging because of the sense of space created by the absence – unless I am not allowed to physically and symbolically encounter a larger resonance to my being, for I would radically be forbidden the touch of others.

The more distant the others are from my room, the more I would have to recreate proximity with whatever objects are around. Only this distance only exists if it can be crossed to join the other side. Otherwise I would only be in what Lacan called the *imaginary*. A representation *without* contrast, deprived from an external referent, an incapacity to figurate to oneself what the other *is* – something that you could find in Toni Morrison's essays *The Origin of Others* (2017), with the history of the creation of an African-American identity in the context of slavery.¹⁹

In some case, this distance is blurred because we put too much of the other in our own room, and the distance is too reduced, too close, too overwhelming. We may think of Russian composer Dmitri Shostakovich, who used to sleep with a suitcase ready to runaway under his bed during the Soviet dictatorship of Staline. Then pieces like his 8th String Quartet reflect this permanent state of tension and oppressive omnipresence. Maybe that is what psychosis is about, not finding the right distance. The other that would consider my reflection as part of what is *not real*, doesn't make it clear that they prefer myself than this other one in the mirror. *They* don't introduce the necessary distance to it that I should need to build up representations of myself and my relations to the outside.

If they cannot show that *I* could get back to their arms after having been parted from them, by the fact that *there are* two worlds – one that is real to them, and one that is real to me – who am I to answer my being lost in-between to ? And whom am I to follow ? Them, or my own reflection ?

And whose hands are those if *they* don't love me ?

19 We could also wonder about the effect in pop-culture of Beyoncé and Jay-Z's (The Carters) musical video for their song *APES**T*, shot in the halls of the Louvre, in Paris. The gap between the Old Continent and the Young One's perception on the meaning of History is made consistent with identities built on both sides on the practice of slavery and power abuse. Open breach again between the affirmation of resilience in African-American culture and the damages of a still present form of institutional racism. Read Paul Gilroy's *The Black Atlantic : Modernity and Double Consciousness* (1993) on the subject.

Æsthetics

What is it that I see ?

What can you see there that I can't see ?

Æsthetic experience is rooted in stillness. The hand that I see is not that much of this hand than the fact that I would find myself frozen into fascination. It occurs because I am suspended in an endless expectation from sensorimotricity, and fixated on this point of concentration.

When I am listening to some music, watching a film or looking at an art piece, those may represent movement, but nonetheless I have to be receptive to it : the referent to æsthetic experience is the fixed point of the audience, a reference to interpretation, the perspective given to the viewer and listener.²⁰ That has been the point of abstraction in the Arts, quite radically since Marcel Duchamp and his bicycle wheel in 1913, or later on with John Cage's silent *4'33* (1952).

What if I am looking at some flower ? What would make me have some kind of an æsthetic experience out of it ? Mostly because I don't move. I could, but for some reason I don't, because I know that I don't necessarily have to at the moment or didn't *plan* to.

Learning the social rules, starting with the family rules, is learning the time in which things are done and to be done. We work with lapses of time that are coordinate. Then I am in one of those lapses where I am free to wander idly and I start gazing at that or those flowers. Why don't I move to something else, and where is the æsthetic experience ? Why do I *stay* there ? What does this experience resolve ? Anything else, because everything else is excluded. It is only one *moment* with those flowers. Then, why ? When was perhaps the earliest moment where one would wonder about what is around them and yet has to remain still, put, quiet ?

Maybe, at bedtime. When a child is sent to bed and knows that they *have to* stay in bed so their parents or caretakers would be happy, whatever happens around them is sometimes appearing odd. However, they are not likely to move out, except as a last resort.

When experiencing art or another kind of æsthetic moment, it is not that different. One is facing another kind of life, the life inside of the story that is told, how this music behaves or how free and mindless the flower seems. Yet one is not likely to move out to this other kind of life, since they have to answer to previous obligations to the people that they are tied to.

Family teaches that, however startled we can be by our incapacity to answer to what we see, we have to stay right where we are (otherwise this rule has to be broken). Æsthetic experience relies on the tension between being taken in something else's arms – and sometimes those are monsters, unknown forces around, later horror stories – and being faithful to the promise you made to behave.

Children know it better than anyone. What they see, is what they know they should not see. It goes since the early mystics of being surrounded by an universe that shows unknown forces greater than ourselves. The same is with the hand paradox, and that comes with a moral choice.

It is there, but I know that I should not count on it too much. I can see that there is something odd, yet it all should resolve with the return of the others whom I am tied to. Like Odysseus returned to Ithaca, we are allowed to travel for a moment where we are not ourselves but with the objects that we are tight to ; however there would be no story if there was no referring point, no place to embroider and sew it for. That is why we leave marks – books open and close.

²⁰ By the way, spatial formalisation is always a four-dimension one including the tacit inclusion of sound, the same way that music perception is spacialised.

Social spaces

Different rules

i am water
soft enough
to offer life
tough enough
to drown it away

Rupi Kaur, *milk and honey*, p. 137

Spaces are heterogenous. Not only they are physically different, but according to the organisation of societies, their rules are different. Those are mostly tacit, built up into the structure of what psychoanalyst Daniel Stern called an *implicit relational knowing*²¹.

As we saw, we learn with our prime surrounding family what is authorised and what is forbidden to do. However, those private rules inside of the family structure become concurrent or coefficient with the laws ruling the other social circles outside of the family structure.

One won't be seen in a favoured way behaving in such or such manner and in such or such spaces. In those spaces external to the family environment, our parents and substitute will officiate as guides and intermediary. They will introduce us to the new rules.

Therefore there are as well intermediary degrees to what we there learn : the interactional dynamic inside of home, the interactional dynamic outside of home and, more importantly, the moments and spaces of transition in-between – notably public spaces which are transitory spaces. Those are the moments where the two spaces meet. What I will have done outside is likely to have consequences inside of home, should they be good or bad consequences for me and others.

I am thus learning that what I do outside is going to determine what I am inside of the family structure. Which means that my private space, and what I am inside it, is going to be determined by what I do outside of it, as I would likely be to tell a story about it. Which means that both spaces become a reflection to the other, building my identity up on the way people are going to identify me in both spaces.

And then, the structure of my most private room for self-determination is going to be a space for all those representations.

That means that identity is conjectural and topological. For instance, Lee Daniel's film *Precious* (2009), inspired by Sapphire's novel *Push* (1996) and Ramona Lofton's true story, portrayed the life of a 16 year-old girl who has to endure several social, physical and psychological handicaps : she is a poor black girl in late 1980's Harlem, she goes to an alternative school to learn

21 See Karlen Lyons-Ruth & the Process of Change Study Group of Boston, Massachusetts, « Implicit Relational Knowing : its rôle in development and psychoanalytic treatment », *Infant Mental Health Journal*, Vol. 19(3), 1998, p. 282.

to write and read, she is obese and mother of a child with Down's syndrome because she was raped and impregnated by her father, living herself with an abusive mother, and last she is diagnosed HIV-positive. How is her identity made one piece out of this ? Those parts of her life story are as many fronts to struggle with and move forward with her own narrative.

Identity goes with the continuity of the third-party structure that permits one to tell their own story. If the community they are living in is reduced to the proportions of one extended family, they will learn differently to be someone to an uncle or an aunt than to their parents/caretakers, their brothers or sisters or grandparents, to their more distant cousins. Their identities would form different spaces, and they would be societies of their own.

In the context of extended social structures, the organisation of the community implied the setting of coherent rules, either tacit or explicit. The more explicit, the more we are likely to talk about it, the more it becomes specified as to its locations, associating the words of the persons as referring points.

When we talk about something, we give it some kind of reality in the world, because language is always directional, should this direction be vague. But some rules exceed the actual expression of language and go with the relational and symbolic experience to an irreducible extent.

When H el ene Stork describes the rituals of mothering in South India, those are not only a set of movements that are passed on to daughters in order to take care of their infants. They are also a series of interactions between them that will inform the infant of how their mother or other female members of the family would be likely to interact with them.

The idea of concentric circles is that both individuals and family spaces are codependent and influence each other, the same way that social groups and society do, with their intricated implications on family structures. Then the determination of the individuals' identity will depend as much on the character of the person as on who they are to be in all of those spaces – and which of them is going to take priority on the others.

We choose at a certain point not only who we are to be for ourselves, but where we are going to be recognised as *ourselves*, under which form, and how those different aspects of who we are are going to communicate. Nonetheless, there can only be balance between those heterogeneous spaces if there are enough intermediary ones to articulate a coherent discourse on how we do actually tie them up together.

For instance, if I am a child and I do bad at school, my eventual friends are going to soften the apprehension of this being told to my parents or caretakers. Then the moment of meeting between my parents and the teacher of the school will be a moment of waiting, my parents not being likely to sermon me right away in front of them. Then there would be the way back home and when home, the moment when my parents are going to tell me off. Then I am going to be sent back to my room and later, will be supertime and its likely embarrassing silence.

We see in that example that all those moments, all those sequences in oneself being scolded for some bad action or behaviour is integrating what is suitable or not to do in each of those spaces : the classroom, the playground, the teacher's or director's desk, the street on the way home, at home, at the table, in the bathroom brushing one's teeth and in the bedroom.

Most of those spaces are shared with others and obey to different sets of rules according to who is there and who is concerned by one's behaviour. And then again, we talk about *behaviour* because it would be normed by those rules about what to do or not to do in order not to disrupt the order of society and community. We ought there to keep on being exemplary of some kind.

However some moments and spaces function as airlocks between those places of moral authority. The relation between the private and the public is held in those transitional moments

where one passes through to the other. In fact, the middle-way is a way out when both public and private spaces cannot cohabitate together peacefully. The transitional spaces allow individuals to try various options, in time for them to make a decision as to how to get along with the public spaces.

Marie-Pierre Pruvot's testimony in Sebastien Lifshitz's documentary film *Bambi* (2013) is enlightening as to this necessity. Marie-Pierre Pruvot is a transgender* woman²² born in Algeria in 1935. As a child and until her 18 years old, the common rules of the community and society that she lived in was a source of conflict with her expression of womanhood, because of a deterministic vision of gender. She had no choice, if she wanted to live as woman, but to leave. Then even in Paris, it was only possible to fully develop her life first by working at the cabaret.

That is a specific example yet it shows, like in many situations, that in order for the living to exist, all the intermediary spaces are necessary – or it becomes such as in Pina Bausch's theatrical choreographies, withdrawn in self-nourishing irreducible combinations of gestures. Without this circulation, without the possibility of movement, most of the incompatibilities in the relations between antagonistic pairs would lead to the death of the relation itself.

It is simple dialectic, because a pair, a couple of equal forces meeting each other would mechanically only produce a static and still balance – the situation would be blocked and not require language of any sort. Then when the balance is here, if none takes advantage and breaks the relation up, the capacity to divert to a third space is not only an option – it is the necessity for a story to be told.

22 The use of the * is inspired by photographer Neige Sanchez's use in order to include all the diversity of gender identification.

Abstraction

'Un formidable déni de ce que parler, écrire, mettent en jeu des signifiants, perpétue un enseignement où se construisent, dans des « activités » sans fondations de sens, autant de petites tours de Babel qui s'effondrent une fois perdus leurs états de nécessité scolaire. [...] Face à toutes ces démissions implicites dans un nombre d'activismes débridés, [...] il y a ce qu'il faut bien considérer comme autant de miracles : tous ceux-là dont on m'a dit ou écrit qu'ils ont réussi à transmettre un savoir, un goût de savoir, c'est-à-dire un plaisir ou un bonheur du sens de ce savoir ; qu'ils ont apporté à l'imagination une nourriture spécifique mais suffisamment variée pour qu'à travers chacun elle se singularise ; qu'ils ont ouvert des mondes.'

Stella Baruk, Dictionnaire de mathématiques élémentaires, Ed. Seuil, « Préface », p. IV

The capacity to go for abstraction makes it a necessity to coordinate untied elements to some that are fixed. The latter are used as referents. When I am still, fixed myself by a sensorimotor paradox, all around me is moving. Yet it is not moving quite untied, but appearing to me in contrast to my being unable to move.

Abstraction, that goes with an æsthetic feeling, is a producer of images. What is an image ? An image is a coordinate representation, with a virtual beginning and end, with an implicit movement. It is not only a memory, it is a way how we fix a memory into an object that we coordinate with – like French writer Alexandre Jardin's *Coloriés* (2004) and their bodypainting, later remarkably brought to Theatre by Anapnoi Compagny.

To quote Francisco Varela again²³, all form of living possesses a form of memory, as a dog or a gorilla have a rich experience that entails their neural activity. However the capacity to summon a memory arbitrarily demands the capacity to use a way out of the individual being solely themselves in their experience. They have to use a trigger to their use of memory.

In *Les Coloriés*, those grown up children living on their island have for only rule to be governed by their games and the capacity to play, to recreate their own identities. The first thing that defines them is some *trait de caractère* that would introduce a liminal mark to come back to. Harold is miser, Cornelius is sneaky, Salomé is a bit slow, Ari is both tender and cruel – and Dafna knows well how to tell stories. The common rule not to fixate their conduct is what makes it all stick. The trigger to bring back a form of stability between them is then minimal.

To see oneself at two different places sets the conditions to develop the capacity for identity to be abstracted from momentary imperatives – as to the hand paradox, the experience of the mirror, the word 'me' or even, being taught the difference that it makes to be here or there. When suddenly I come to separate myself from my own hand, making it a manifestation of *myself seeing my self from an outsider point of view*, I get to discriminate spaces as there are an in and an out to it.

Coordination is not only here that I respond good enough to stimuli in order to catch my prey or whatever stimulates me, but that I situate myself as the center of something larger than myself. As I am still, the rest of the world around me becomes a source of heightened and denser sensory perception – because no motor responses are to follow.

As I broke the connection, the codependent necessity between sensory stimulus and motor response, delaying and lagging them, those sensory stimuli become more pregnant and overwhelming. However, I also become the center, the subject of that experience, as a prime emotional resource.

²³ *In the La Recherche magazine n°308, april 1998, <https://www.larecherche.fr/francisco-varela-le-cerveau-nest-pas-un-ordinateur>*

Then if I want to feel that again, I would have to summon this experience back. And with enough consistency, even integrate this relation between me and the world around without having to artificially reproduce this hand paradox situation. Just to aim at that object that was so entralling. Those others like me should surely feel something similar too. In any way, they look and feel stranger than they were before.

Then, as we begun with abstraction, we can now deduce that what I do see now from others, the same way that I perceive from my environment, is properly a 'behaviour'. As I am likely now to compare and analyse things around me as referred to a liminal experience where I am the center of my own, the way the others will appear to me would function as a sign and a signal for ongoing discrimination. An arbitrary coordination of my surroundings' perception can be introduced into my giving meaning to the world, when sensorimotor foundation has been put at stake.

I am perplexed by what happens around me while I am feeling the charge of something unusual and disturbing, feeling myself doubled, fractured in the inside and opened to a fundamental alienation. Thus the others will appear like a misunderstood movement. As I am made unable to express any consistent motor response, I would feel *everything* about the same way as an unified whole, because I can only bring the same response to it all – which is an absence.

We theoretically here get back on our feet as this absence is primordial in the theory of the signifier in psychoanalysis. Signifiers could potentially and eventually be applied and referred to any reality that we would wish to signify, because it is a way of response *instead of* an initial response that could not be anymore.

The automatism of sensorimotor enaction has been broken and stopped, then in those moments where others come by and sollicitate a reaction, I can only see how odd it is that I would feel so unlikely to do it. Space becomes undiscriminated, indifferenciaded, so the only way to organise it back again is to start back from the beginning, and learn how to express this new form of perception.

The feeling of terror coming with it goes with the abstract concept of the sublime, which is both combining dread and marvel. Because the world around becomes the reduction of one single mystic relation : the *me* and everything else.

Partial identity

Что не видишь

Ещё существует.

(What you do not see

Still exists.)

As social spaces imply different rules and are heterogenous, it is likely that adapting to those would mean expressing different possibilities for identification, that would often combine. Identity, after all, is found between what one is inside, that is non-communicable, and what they are recognised for by others.

Therefore, to borrow again from Judith Butler, we in a way perform our social identity. We do that sometimes so well, that we come to transvestite what we feel into the way we come to think that we should appear to others. The mask of identity is the mask of being taken for what happens to be convenient to those social spaces, what we identify as such from our (often traumatic) experience. And of course we are getting used of identifying people according to patterns – hence the disturbing effect of twin pairing, or close affiliation such as the Ibeyi singer sisters –, mostly to protect ourselves from any eventual harm before we get to know them, that would imply finding common ground through dialogue.

We could take one illustration of such effects in the 23 year-old American journalist Nelly Bly's pioneering undercover investigation inside Blackwell's Island asylum, in New York City, in 1887.²⁴ Once she succeeded in convincing the public institutions that she was mad, playing the part as well as she could, she was committed to the asylum to witness the horrific conditions there at the time.

However when inside the institution, she would stop acting and resume behaving 'normally', whatever she would do or say would be interpreted as a symptom of her madness. Once identified as 'mad', the suspicion over her being mad would overcome any reasonable sense of her being in fact quite sensible – as for many women in the institution, cast there for many other reasons.

Then the question raised of *acting an identity* is : whom are we acting for ? Of course, it is obvious if you are on a theatre stage, that you would play for the audience – or if you are like Virginia Woolf's *Orlando* (1928), living for centuries, you play for an era. That is one convention. But in whatever place in one's social life, it is in fact quite rare that they would express quite neatly their true feelings. Many original expressions of what happens inside them would be withheld and diverted from through one of those strategically summoned behaviour, which would be both patterned and seen as socially acceptable.

The rules of those various spaces (at work, on the streets, at restaurant, at friends', in a shop, at the hospital, at home, ...) would set their authority over their visitors, that holds with a moral convention : 'you won't disrupt the order that allows anyone here to cohabitate in a relatively sound atmosphere'. Again, 'because there is the violence, there is the morals'. Though as we said, the effort of prevention of disorder often turns into an uneven injunction to bend to the convention so to be

24 Read Nelly Bly, *Ten days in a Madhouse*, published by Ian L. Munro in 1887, <http://digital.library.upenn.edu/women/bly/madhouse/madhouse.html>

predictable as a person – that could potentially be one *soon-to-be* cast from society's tolerance.

Consequently, anyone would develop ways to comply to these injunctions, learnt as children already, in order to show that they would behave themselves – yet in most cases without enough distance from this necessary compliance to measure the degree of deception at play. Because as in the wide range of original self expression, only partial identifications are made – dependent on the needs of those spaces –, one would sometimes completely lose touch with what is idiosyncratic to them if they don't get to preserve 'a room of their own'.²⁵

Because there is eventually one and only space that would stay with its owner, and that is *in* the body and its image for the person, whose intimate life is not entirely communicable – but only partially through language of whatever kind. That is why no dialogue can occur between at least two people if there is no third space between them. Between the traumatic encounter of the bodies, no stable understanding and interactions by the means of language can happen without the identification of some similitude between two (or more) totally *distinct* people, as independent members.

The integrity of each must be preserved so the question of the threat, of the other's voracity to devour the *me* would be resolved – the *che vuoi* but as well the symbolic cannibalism on one another's space²⁶. Then as the physical and physiological motions inside the individual, that pertain to the perception of feelings, cannot be transferred to another body, only a system of equivalence can bring the possibility to share the idea that we have of them.

We place in the middle between the other and us, the image of what we feel that is able to be shared. Then we build a third common space there, with and thanks to which we would identify something as common, in order to settle our consented cohabitation.

In the conditions of the dialogue, we choose what we can share with the other, so we formulate the rules that would allow us to identify the common object – that is a transitional object between the other and myself – as well as our community around it. However, we do it by investing the means both from our social experience and whatever it is that is withheld in our private one.

The transition from what is private, inner and non-communicable to what is public, common and likely to be communicated, is only allowed because a convention is set on the terms of this transition. The ethics of the dialogue is that one won't put another's prime intimate and vital room at stake in their place and from the outside. What is given in the place of the common object that allows the dialogue, is a representation – and both participants must agree that they would see something similar.

So what is important here is not much that one would be identified *as something*, as a social identity that would become a symbolic object to be dealt with – but that the common object in the middle, this third object that is *not you nor me*, would be identified by both of us as a common and stable object to be preserved. By preserving it, of course, we preserve the stability and durability of our being here around it.

The consciousness of this symbolic intermediary space between the other and I would be vital to understand the difference between morals and ethics. We can see that the morals tends to present itself as absolute and external to the individuals, embedding them into the vast structure of the social spaces that it organises in a prescriptive way.

Morals only allows a partial vision in the expression of one's identity and identification. Meanwhile, ethics would admit the necessity to show inalienable rules that would preserve each

25 A kind regard to Virginia Woolf's work *A Room of One's Own*, 1929.

26 Read George Devereux, *Renunciation of identity*, 1967.

other's integrity and life – yet integrating the capacity of judgement according to what we would put in common willingly.

The social and symbolic determination of the other is there not as important as is their will to give importance and meaning to what we chose to share. This is central to psychoanalysis as it is important in society – and vital in anyone's life.

Sanctuarising space : forbidden words and compartmentalisation

Come
Come
brush the song of dance
with our wandering steps
Come
don't you worry
There is no assassin here, nor thief
There is no dictator
They are all allergic to the pollen of tango
Come
put your feet there where you feel euphoria
Don't fear the mines
But is there more desirable than to break oneself up in rhymes ?

Nessrin Karam al Khoury, « Dance »

Syrian poet born in 1983

What is a private space ? Normally, it is a safe space where a room for one's own can exist. The size of such a space and how much it comprises others never denies though that such a room must be able to stand for everyone. It is the limit and paradoxical point where nothing can be returned back to its place without time : damaging that space, is damaging the person who bears it.

It is an early training to notice and respect those spaces – the collective ones and the private ones –, quite in the same way that we learn how to put ourselves to sleep in quite an artificial way, tuning our clocks on the collective time.²⁷ Spaces, as well as the organisation of time, are compartmentalised, segmented and regulated. If then the delimitation of one's identity and its safety are denied in one of those social circles surrounding the person, what would happen in this one would impact the others.

Then, the closest circle should be damaged, the deepest the person gets hurt and the structure of meaning for anything else would surely collide with an impossibility to respond. The violence from not being able to respond – to terror or to a situation where moral conventions expect from us not to – creates a disorganisation.

For instance, if I can't stand the chewing noise of the person sit next to me on the train, it is most likely that I will not dare to tell them off so that they would stop. I cannot punch them in the face either. So as I cannot organise a proper direct response to what I would perceive as a trespassing aggression to my own private space, my body will be put on hold – and as it is, this would generate a violence, the energy of the body turning against itself, waiting.

²⁷ Read Darian Leader, *Why can't we sleep ?*, Ed. Hamish Hamilton, London, 2019.

There is a moral authority that is most of the time learnt and implicitly grants the right or not to respond to aggressions with an adequate or equivalent response. We may suffer a great deal from this incapacity ; yet we are much more worried about the aftermath of what would happen if we did react in a way equivalent to the disturbance that we suffer.

One's resilience to outer social or private circles, especially when they trespass our tolerance, would depend on the solidity and stability of the prime ones meant for privacy.

Let us say now that we are attending to a conference on whatever subject, for instance, on literature. It would happen somewhere we may not have anything to worry about, to hear and talk of a subject that interests us. But let us imagine that one of the speakers would start developing a discourse that would seem profoundly wrong to some of us and for moment, we would believe that everyone here would have the same reaction as we have.

Yet we realise that in fact, everyone else seems on the contrary quite enthusiastic about the ideas here developed and don't seem to see the problem. The space that was once safe, is now revealing something about the society and social circles that we are living in and with, that is deeply unpleasant.

Let us say now that you and I are women in this conference room, and suddenly, the person interviewed is a well-known writer, who has published a book on his collection of affairs with young women aged between 14 and about 22 years old, as it so happened on a French television set in the 1990's. The book has been released by a respected publisher and every guest on the stage is to comment this published journal on its literary features, comparing enthusiastically to Charles Baudelaire's the style of the writer.

(Fortunately that day in reality, it so happened that someone did speak out to rebel at the condescending slope the conversation had turned to. Literature, indeed, could not be a pretext to allow and let be ignored that this person most probably marked with trauma women well under age. Nonetheless, as a consensus seemed to be at play, that social manners were allowing to enter this delicate debate without raising any sense of reason but with flattery, no one except the outside eye of canadian writer Denise Bombardier was to interrupt the course of this uncanny situation.)

Let us say then that we would witness such a situation. Suddenly, behind the apparently safe space of social conventions, something less obvious is at play, hidden in the very structure of the consensus, that is constantly reinstalling relations of power and their organisation of time and space between the participants. The configuration of space, and social markers inside of the fragmentation and compartmentalisation of space, is redistributed.

There are *those who do not see the problem* (though they might feel that something odd is happening, but hold on to the hope that everything would come back to normal eventually) and *those who obviously see that there is a problem with this conversation*. Those who don't seem to see the problem would be privileged because they would not feel oppressed by the consensual and implicit contract they made with the speakers. The others will not feel the same way.

To make notice that something is wrong, the consensus has to be trespassed. The ethical choice would be to raise the voice when the moral tutor is vacant. Moral sense is learnt by the way of teaching from a source of authority – however, morality always needs an outside judge. If this judge is absent or partial to a cause that we, on our side, would judge wrong, morality would only turn into a system of power, often conditioned by the liberty of the dominant to use force against the then dominated other.

In such a case, if the ultimate space for one's identity is not sanctuarised and protected from denial and eventual destruction – as those young lives' in our example were so denied –, it is

unlikely that fragilised outer social and symbolic circles around would prevent anything from happening if they would not to be themselves duly sanctuarised. (And we need those spaces and all their colours.)

What we are witnessing here is the fragility of moral conventions when they only depend on a consistent authority to sanction the trespassing of its common laws. And shouldn't the first of laws, the Golden Rule be : 'you won't do onto others what you would hate to be done onto you' ?

Hence, there is a constant interaction between the inner space of one's own body and mind, the first intimate circle of the family, the various social spaces occupied or travelled and the organisation of the whole society. The resistance of those spaces depends on how much they impound or reinforce each other. Then if the moral order regulating them is in fact maintaining an uneven repartition of rights, including the one to occupy a fair space inside them and thus respecting everyone's legitimacy to be *safe* there, what does it say about the necessity of ethics ?

It all goes with the fact that as well as social and symbolic spaces are heterogenous, so are the rights and their observation inside them. Interestingly, the article 2 of French Civil Code mentions something, that a law only disposes for the future and is not retroactive. We can interpret that in the way that the law always sets up what is to be settled for the times to come. There is an injunction to watch for tomorrow's events and to be responsible to what hasn't yet been done. It proposes some ideal of an organised collectivity – *Liberté, Egalité*, and often forgotten *Fraternité*.

The legal and symbolic organisation of social spaces are therefore always moving slightly, mutating to adapt for future contingencies, however the societies we live in are rarely upset in such a critical way as war, change of political system or environmental catastrophe, at least in our Western countries, or in a subtle way that passes unnoticed. Yet is the silent extinction of animal, insect, bacterial and vegetal species less dramatic than the threat of a nuclear war ? Is the poisoning of a great part of the world's population by wide-spread multi-factorial pollution a least harm ? And what about the more and more pressing global warming ? Let us not pick on young ecological symbol Greta Thunberg and start looking at the facts.

Eventualities have to be prevented, hoping the best for oneself, anticipating the worst, often our wishes colliding with others'. The capacity to maintain perspectives that often goes along with the effort to maintain a stable vision of one's own identity and the others', gives us the sentiment of a continuity. How to create a coherent vision of the world out of fragmented and often contradictory spaces ?

Meanwhile, social spaces are always pressuring each other in order both to move forward and attempt to respect the moral clause we tacitly agreed on for *being part of one or several social spaces*, in society. In that conditions, what does it mean to sanctuarise them ?

As another example of discriminative organisation of time and space, study led by social psychologist Anne Dafflon Novelle²⁸ in 2006 shew that sex and age were the first categories mastered by young children to differentiate others. This would participate of what American psychologist Sandra Lipsitz Bem described as a 'cosmological' sexuotion of the universe.²⁹ Through symbolisation and language, we would tend to attribute gender characterisation to beings and things, and then develop contrasting pairs that would structure our symbolic organisation. Spaces would then also be distributed according to gender definition, reinforcing social hierarchies and

28 In Anne Dafflon Novelle, « Identité sexuée : construction et processus », in Dafflon Novelle (dir.), *Filles-Garçons : Socialisation différenciée ?*, Grenoble, PUG, 2006.

29 In Sandra Lipsitz Bem, *The Lenses of Gender : Transforming the Debate on Sexual Inequality*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1993.

racial divisions throughout their histories.

To illustrate this statement, the *sun* would be for instance interpreted in Western cultures as masculine and the *moon* as feminine, as we associate masculine traits to what is *active, firm* and *exterior*, and feminine traits to *passive, soft* and *interior*. Or a square would evoke some masculine feeling due to its rigidity, while a circle would evoke a more feminine and smooth tone. Those codes that organise the symbolic representations of gender also set a certain organisation of space, when streets and buildings manifest the erection of male power. The lack of symbolic structuration of the *vulva*, comparing to the large treatment spent on *phallic* symbolic structure tells us a lot on the way women's experience is made silent and justly lack such a sanctuarisation in practical right.

To corroborate such claim, another study collected testimonies about women using defence strategies in order to go out at night, constantly anticipating a possible attack.³⁰ It means that a certain organisation of society puts a part of the population at risk when potentially confronted to the other, as it comes to be systematic and thus, conditioned by an environment. Also in France, in parisian suburbs, groups of women have marched throughout streets and city project's to take note of how little these had been designed from women's use.³¹

It goes without commenting the gender division of work, that has been a theme for feminist analysis since the beginning of those movements. For many reasons codependent with the symbolic organisation of our societies, mainly based on binary symbolic oppositions³², public spaces reveal not to show the same rights for a safe room of one's own to anyone. In most parts, reactualisations of social darwinism still justify the law granting power and justice to the strongest : 'if I don't take what I can, someone else will ; so better be it me.'

But for the main part of the population, the relations of power depend on the scale of our little kingdoms. Conventions push us to observe a certain conduct in order to maintain social cohesion, and inside the gaps of what the laws do not define, we recreate rooms for self-definition. There are forbidden words for some situations according to conventions, as there are forbidden actions according to the law.

The ability to speak depends a great deal on how much some authority is going to guarantee that we could speak and defend our right to speak. Social spaces are as well organised as a function of whom is authorised to use physical and symbolic violence as a legitimate defence.³³ However as both forms of violence are correlated³⁴, we learn to compartmentalise space so as to induce a measure of predictability between them. And predictability is control of time, and therefore control of the distance put between own's own private space and reflected identity, and the others'.

Creating space is the way to witness a world that is mapped with those contradictions. Depending on the relations of power and dominance between people, as well as on the heterogeneity of the conceptions and experiences of shared spaces, one can feel more or less crushed between worlds. Because symbolic organisation of time and space is as much collective as it is deeply personal and connected to a representation of one's own body in one that is social.

What I do in one space may be forbidden in one other and so my own perception of identity would depend on whom I am to be responsible to. As the world that we witness is fractured, we can see the local effects of something global, however our capacity to change its whole narrative seems reduced.

30 In Condon S., Lieber M. and Maillochon F., « Insécurité dans les espaces publics : comprendre les peurs féminines », *Revue française de sociologie*, vol. 46, n°2, 2005, pp. 280-281.

31 Read for instance Guy Di Méo, « Les femmes et la ville. Pour une géographie sociale du genre », in *Annales de géographie*, n°684, 2012/2, <https://www.cairn.info/revue-annales-de-geographie-2012-2-page-107.htm>

32 Read as well François Héritier, *Masculin-féminin I. La pensée de la différence*, Paris, Ed. Odile Jacob, 1996.

33 Read Elsa Dorlin, *Se défendre : Une philosophie de la violence*, Ed. La Découverte, Paris, 2017.

34 Read Pierre Bourdieu, *Sur l'Etat : Cours au Collège de France 1989-1992*, Ed. Seuil, Paris, 2012.

Compartmentalisation, in order to identify spaces and times as open to representations, that we would control to a certain extent, allows us to summon a primary experience of organising space 'with our own hands' or symbolic substitutes. Yet there are things that we are allowed to take, and some others that we are not. The creation of the right or not to take is always dependent on the scale one would inhabitate and fit in the social world.

I identify with what I see in the mirror, but the fascination only stands at the condition that I do not move – so there would be a global image emerging that would not be perturbed by my acting to it, but separate from me : strangely, I can only identify with something that is different than me, so there could be some kind of a relation, of a mediation. If I start moving toward my own image, I realise the correspondence and then that it is in fact a trick of my senses. For the other one there to exist, I must not, just for a moment of mazing myself in my own reflection, feeling *strange from strangeness*.

The other's space takes on me when I am made unable to respond but when I do, the other would exist only as coordinated to my responding ; unless it is denied in my destroying its right to exist symbolically. That is why no dialogue can occur without intermediary spaces and common objects inside them.

To sanctuarise those spaces, is to create bridges between my fascination to what seems to be beyond me and that I cannot take, yet bound to me, and the mobility of outer spaces, open for a constant redefinition.

Society

Defining the limits

Fables of Faubus (1959)

Charles Mingus

(*Gunslinging Birds*'s 1995 version)

What is a frontier ? How do we define the limits of a coherent whole from another ? Then how do we differentiate an ensemble of symptoms from its environmental causes ? Those are questions that we would likely doubt that they would belong to a last section called 'Society' ; yet they pose the intriguing notion of fictitious identity.

A political State is a fiction³⁵, as well as society. The idea of a whole containing intrinsic organs is the fiction (we could say the fixation) of a *moment*. It all seems to stick together in a moment of contingency that we extend to the state of a coherent form, supported by an ensemble of social and moral laws. Those laws and rules introduce the idea of a local and general limit to our doing inside the body of society. This itself requires the formation of an abstract memory.

Memory is quite a creative process, otherwise the imaginary would not be possible, as we would not be able but to be reminded of things as they were to us – a memory of *trauma* that would pass directly on to its sensorimotor application. On the contrary, memory once abstracted from its enactional entanglement is partial, incomplete, imperfect as we recall it to our mind – and the cognitive system is still busy being stimulated by its interactive environment.

This is what we can learn from the connection between the imaginary activity and the hand paradox. It is about being in two places at the same time : with the images that we summon from our selective memory and yet still present to the world around us – *I am the hand and not the hand*. Hence, imagining and thinking are about the capacity to operate a superimposition of two images, two places, two ways of being situated at the same time : there, and though *not there*.

Yet again, it is still about being taken in a *moment* where a fiction occurs. And a territory is justly opened between those two options.

Let us take a painting, whatever painting, like for instance Johannes Vermeer's famous *Girl with the Pearl Earring*, or Théodore Géricault's *The Raft of the Medusa*, or else Frida Kahlo's 1947 *Self-portrait*, or Amrita Sher-Gil's *Group of Three Girls* (1935). They would all picture one single moment, whether veridical or mythical. The contour of their inside shapes and organisation would give us some example of what is an *identity*.

One would recognise immediately the painting and say : '*This is that painting.*' Some other will just be caught by what is represented. Some would see nothing but shapes brushed on a canvas. However from what you see, you could draw a map that would allow you to navigate inside the space there open in front of your eyes. You would situate yourself as one member of a moment of meeting.

35 Cf Pierre Bourdieu, *op. cit.*

Let us now switch to some early experiences. A child will often try to trespass a rule (for instance by saying a forbidden word) and wait for their tutor's reaction. One will then try to establish an approximative definition of their environment that would condition their own evaluation of the meaning given to action. The line is given by the outside, but provoked by an intentional event coming from one's will to enact some impulse to *do things*. Doing things is making them exist.

Then, when the line is set, when the frontier is experienced and defined, this will become a *limit* to further action. *I* provoked the emergence of a limit where there was none or a tacit one, and then this limit is feeding me back so that I would come up myself with a new response. The latter would include and acknowledge the existing limit.

Hence the only response that I can give would be a redefinition of what was once a limit into a new or *renewed* act of creating my own norms for action interpretation ; which are always themselves an approximation, and maybe a better approximation than the last. That would become the context for my reading the action and the next, its situation and teleonomy – *'I am aiming there'*.

For instance, space is a fiction, which is a fiction for action, a moment that is extended, one Augustine's *distensio animi* – thus it is *read* in a certain 'direction', evaluated in a certain amount of time. When I see a vase, the evaluation of its shape, even instantaneous, is in fact highly directional, because it conditions the distance that it would take for me to handle it.

Sensorimotor evaluation becomes part of the fiction that both fixates an image – that would form a coherent and identical shape – and yet integrates in this fiction the movement that it would require to *make something happen* out of it. I *touch the vase* to know if there is a limit to it and once the memory of its shapes, I acquire the conviction that there *is* indeed a limit to the object. This limit allows me to evaluate a corresponding situation of my own for further action.

The process recreates an environment for circulating feedback and interpretation, that would stimulate the sensorimotorlike neural conditioning : reading space is possibly handling space and then, a (symbolic) object only exists when associated with the memory of some potential interaction with it. Sensorimotricity is the most irreducible and neutral feature of our living experience. It says nothing about the *value* of what happens with it, but on its primary conditions.

Yet thanks to that, the possibility for action is conditioned by a timely memory that would help us evaluate the predictability of our environment's response, establishing identity and familiarity. Then reinforced, this predictability becomes knowledge, as the capacity to create a fiction out of it sets in. Because knowledge is a way to envision the world as a superimposed map, palimpsestic. This is how one situates beings and things in their symbolic perception of space. It is a to-and-fro that we don't make nor have to, but that is frozen out of time in one of those precious *moments*.

Those moments that we can identify, they constitute what we meant with the personal quality of *nostalgia*. Nostalgia is an elementary feeling, because it is the traumatic mark of being frozen in the recognition of an object that would not be followed by a corresponding action. A world changes in the mean time, and the action is just figured *in* the recognition of the object, made identical to our participation in experiencing its presence *there*.

Playing games with the imaginary permits to introduce an extended form of predictability and knowledge on the symbolic level, where it hasn't been *proven yet* in reality but could be. Then scales, approximations and anthropomorphisms enter in the way for interpretation and representation – by process of identification and comparison. We associate objects with our being situated, in a moment of coexistence of both the possibility of an action and its possible realisation.

It is a constant reactualisation and expectation about how we deal with our presence to

reality, a play between what is fixed and what is mobile, tension and its release. Not being able to *do* something and thus making it *really* exist, letting a limit emerge to our reactions to it, that we would internalise *without* necessitating an outside participant, but being our own outsider inside of a specific memory sollicitation – those are the foundations of the imaginary structure.

Thus it would allow its structuration to language and the symbolic, key to introduce the presence of others in an inside kind of world.

The Master, the Emissary, and the Kind-Faced Slave

La nuit dans mon dos me pousse vers d'autres soleils.

Le sol ne donne plus de droit.

Je dois sauter devant.

Au-delà de la mer, l'horizon est trouble.

Le pays natal ne m' imagine pas.

La porte est grande ouverte, comme ma déchirure.

'Des racines nées', Kiyémis, 2018

'Modern right is inseparable from the notion of State because it was born with it, with lutherian reform and the consequences it led to all over Europe. The birth of the State changed the right completely because it revolutionised the exercise of power, both private and public. The State brought up to it all the disseminated powers of feudal society ; everywhere, it signified a concentration of power. [...] So doing, it liberated man from the domination of private powers'.³⁶

Such a definition of the State is of course a definition of principle and a historical perspective. The progressive separation of the State from civil society in the XVIth century, consistent with the birth of capitalism, is as much a fiction as was one of the '*roman national*', concept of patriotic narrative destined to consolidate young French Republic in the 1880's.³⁷ Such vision of what happened or is happening in the world and society is less a complete and thorough insight on what *is really happening* than a wish to apprehend it, to lead it in a certain way – and to maintain a certain order among the relations of power inside it.

In his preface to Jean Carpentier and François Lebrun's *Histoire de France*, historian Jacques Le Goff was explaining to the reader something similar, that the interest of the public for the History of France came 'to a large extent from the care born with the acceleration of history, the anxious desire not to be cut off from our roots, the need to anchor in the long run our quest for individual and collective identity, not to become orphans of the past, while the history of our country is the first object of the actual appetite of French people'.³⁸

Speaking of a 'quest for individual and collective identity', Jacques Le Goff inevitably took a paternalist turn. He posited himself as a cornerstone figure for the self-achievement of French people's memory through a national self-conscious education, though he was surely aware of propaganda reductions and the ultimate danger anachronism is to History.

In reality, if there is one thing we learnt from Thomas Kuhn's epistemological effort³⁹ is that even Sciences such as Physics are subjugated to a system of belief ; and then a way to describe our

36 In Elisabeth Zoller, *Introduction au droit public*, Ed. Dalloz, 2013, p.13. My translation.

37 Read Benoît Bréville and Evelyne Brieyllier, « *L'illusion de la neutralité* », in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, « Manière de Voir », August-September 2019, p.4.

38 In Ed. Du Seuil, 2000 (1987). My translation.

39 In Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 1962.

reality, no matter how precise it could be, always pertains to a partial vision of the kind of future that we want. In a way, it is much like psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist's revisiting of the theory of the two hemispheres of the brain.⁴⁰ Much more than a separation reason-emotion, which puts the two on an equal level, opposed like Eros and Thanatos in a Good and Evil register, McGilchrist suggests a radically different approach.

According to him, the right hemisphere of the brain would participate of a broad vision of reality, based on experiential memory – he would call it metaphorically the Master –, while the left one would be sent by the first one for more specific tasks – the Emissary. The example he takes is that of a bird eating crumbs on the ground. The bird would be both focused on the one task of eating – the right hemisphere – and keeping an awareness of their surroundings in case of danger.

Iain McGilchrist's proposition gives two different registers to the functioning of the brain : one that is conscious of the individual's situation in their environment, the other that is allowed to forget it in order to execute a series of dedicated sensorimotor interactions. It seems quite natural then that in the paradoxical state human being is placed with the doubling of the imaginary – this lag in the timing for response –, the apprehension of symbolic general surroundings would be constantly associated with a primary need for immediate execution – a constant tension between long- and short-term vision.

In fact, we don't have much choice, as the only vessel that we have to experience it is our own body – and that the latter was formed with a highly affective and traumatic memory. We cannot apprehend whatever narrative about reality without implicating a deeper part of us that simply wants to do things.

In her personal story of Spanish Civil War, between 1936-1938, Argentinian activist Mika Etchebehere told a scene from the POUM militia life where some fellow improvised soldier couldn't be taken out of his sleep. Laying curled up on the ground, the man slowly emerged after being splashed with water, but eventually sprang up when Mika Etchebehere was to shout at him : *'The armoured train is coming.'*⁴¹

This sentence acted like a magic word. Concentrated in the image of the train was contained the perspective of a progress in the anarchist militia's struggle against Francisco Franco's army. So it was a promise, a collective promise that would lead to a possible liberation from a precarious and dangerous state.

As well, in his conferences about the *Nanas infantiles* (1928) – the lullabies –, Spanish poet Federico García Lorca explained that many of them sung by poor women in Andalusia contained in fact very cruel lyrics – in some of them, the mother wished the death of the child, seen as a burden. The wish here was less cast against the child themselves but against the prison of abandonment, the father having gone away, in a context of great material and social precarity.

Yet there was in it the vision of being freed from this precarious state that allowed the individual to hold on to the hope that the insecurity of being left alone in misery would be gone for good – though being aware that no miracle would happen, only a mid-term solution. In the mean time, nothing could be said, for much of what was around was a desert of friendship. Without an acceptable story to be told to anyone that would help improve one's situation, the law of silence often imposes itself as the inevitable option.

The militiaman's dream, whom seemed 'to have forgotten the war', could not be told – only could he catch up the common signal of a train coming for technical support. The poor mother's fate

40 In Iain McGilchrist, *The Master and his Emissary : The Divided Brain and the Making of the Western World*, 2009.

41 In Mika Etchebehere, *Ma guerre d'Espagne à moi*, Ed. Milena/Libertalia (Ed. Denoël), 1976, p.75.

could not be told but to the child, her only interlocutor, to lighten up the burden. In a similar and more contemporary way, neither is there an easy story for French army to tell and explain their criticised implication in the horrors of the Rwanda war between april and july 1994.⁴² Nor is there any to solve the difficult legacy of colonisation and slavery without acknowledging the geopolitical interests still in place for them not to be solved.

The question of the unsaid entered the realm of domination in the system of a political narrative.

Why, o why are we discussing such a matter *here* ? Because none of the matter that we discuss here, including the first subject of this book that is the theory of the three paradoxes, is neutral – because it is always the subject of an individual as well as a collective interpretation and always taken in a perspective that is political, cultural, and eventually social as it contributes to a hierarchy of social class.

Because the image of the one who *says*, who pretends to say something of value, is subject to the responsibility of creating or contributing to the image of a possible future. To quote Paul Ricœur again, 'the power of metaphor proceeds of the one of the poem as a totality'.⁴³ Which means that whatever meaning given to an event reported by speech always implies the totality of the speech's interpretative world.

Let us go back to the danger of anachronism in historical studies, as well as to the danger of misinterpreting non-Western cultures' events through our cultural perspective. What if I say : 'I have the solution for one beyond age question ?' One would answer : 'maybe you do.' But then, what do we do with that *exactly* ? How does it effectively change out perspective ? And how much can it make our vision of our reality(ies) more adequate, more open, more just ?

The ethics of our work is that none of the things that we reported here are right, if they are not common to all the public. To be right, it has to improve the quality of our common conditions of life durably.

But look at the soft propaganda theory, the one of public relations, the one ingeneered since the end of the First World War in the United States with Wilson government's Creed Commission and such a man as Edward Bernays. There was a man who contributed to change the way politics were made, by theorising the *manipulation of public opinion in democracy*.

Inspired by social psychologists Wilfred Trotter and Gustave Le Bon, as well as Graham Wallas and Walter Lippmann, this double nephew of Sigmund Freud used the theory of the unconscious at the service of what he called *the invisible government*. The latter included both political machinery and corporations – but analysed as a very complex and intricated organism where social hierarchy was at play ; above any member of society, you could find someone muttering the line they ought to follow in their ear. Edward Bernays's job was simply to make the sources shaping this complex network of interest the less visible and yet the most efficient possible – so it could appear like the most natural thing in the world. And this is historical.

His idea was quite simple. He started with Le Bon's statement that no dialogue could be set with the masses on the register of reason, but of emotions ; and with this idea that in a political system like democracy, you needed the consent of the population – then all that was to do was to create, to *ingeneer* this consent.

Yes, you leave the opportunity for the population to *choose* whatever they would like to buy,

42 Read Philippe Leymarie, « *Le grand malaise de l'armée française* », in *Le Monde Diplomatique*, « Manière de Voir », juin-juillet 2019, pp.40-41.

43 *Op. cit.*, p.120. My translation.

how to behave or whom to vote for ; but in the mean time you create all the conditions so they would do such things, buying from or voting for the direction that was already decided in high places, mostly corporate and political lobbies.

For instance, if the American Tobacco Company hires Bernays to obtain the inaccessible half of the market represented by women – who were not allowed to smoke in public –, he would ask a psychoanalyst what cigarettes represent to women according to him. This psychoanalyst answering that it would represent the penis and then, power, Bernays would organise a march of women lighting cigarettes at the 1929 New York's Eastern Sunday Parade, and then make them say to the press that they were lighting the 'torches of freedom'. In one single event, the image of women smoking became a symbol of female emancipation, and then the market was open, by the soft power of modern propaganda. And this Mr. Edward Bernays wrote books about it – one (*Crystallizing Public Opinion*, 1923) ended up in Goebbels's library in 1933.

What is important here is that we still live in that society, and that any divergence from the line is considered dissident. Then there are two ways to deal with dissident voices : to crush them by the use of physical violence (which we discussed earlier), or to divert attention. This option is the soft propaganda option, that is combined with what journalist Naomi Klein called the *Shock Doctrine* (2007).

Which means : how to create crisis to shock people, either wars, social or economical crisis to excite their need for a *logical* response (even a false one based on impulsive immediate trigger) and a coming back to order ; in the mean time, you make them accept extraordinary measures that would later on become the rule. Then voices are silenced in the confusion, as it happened in France recently with the 'yellow vests' manifestations, where the unitarian and pacific protests were eventually broken by the introduction of violence. Yet, more insidious is the breaking of the distance for analysis and long-term projection by introducing a symbolic violence and denaturing the collective structures.

One example to support the case : those last years were very important to women because those were the years of the Me Too movement. One specific setting of intra- and extra-cultural oppressions was declared not acceptable anymore, nor could it be kept silent, accepted, tolerated and only to be coped with by the principal interested : here, women. It was a chaotic time but the opportunity to remind, as for many systemic oppressions that affect minorities according to gender, sexuality, racial, social or environmental privileges, that those are still real.

What do you see now ? Look at the sports channels. More female football. More female rugby. More female everywhere in that department. But everywhere else in all the fields of women's social rights, nothing moves on or worse, it goes backwards – as it goes as well for LGBTQ+ rights or for the migrants' to survive. Still yet, attention is diverted, because miraculously, women won more visibility in sports – and thus women will likely buy more sportswear and be happy exercising, looking socially attractive and acceptable, and keep their mouths shut.

Yes, this is a good thing that women and men, young and old, could get more examples of how gender should not be a limitation to expression and equal access to rights. However it cannot be an excuse to wipe off all the rest.

The same goes on with the cinema. In her critique⁴⁴ of *Wonder Woman's* reboot (2017), French journalist Annabelle Gasquez pointed out the double language of putting a woman figure on front. It may be pleasurable to see a woman of action on screen, but we would still notice that this representation is in fact supported by a narrative structure and production designed by men and largely stereotyped. The heroine is portrayed as a combinaison of two binary antagonists : a passive

44 Read on cultural webzine Deuxième Page, « *Wonder Woman, et les limites du féminisme marketé* », <https://www.deuxiemepage.fr/2017/06/15/wonder-woman-limites-feminisme-markete/>

and compassionate woman with the temper of a man (meaning the capacity to action). No in-between is there allowed to express a real identity. The zone in-between is justly the place for collective thinking.

But the cynism of those ways of handling disruptions in the social masses is much graver as it is damaging the very conditions that there could be life on Earth. In his 1998 article called *L'essence du néolibéralisme*⁴⁵, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu analysed the strategy of neoliberal ideology as the destruction of the collective structures, from the unions to the States. Then we go back to the intermediary spaces, those same spaces that would allow anyone to settle in their own place and though respecting others', but are systematically destroyed.

If you erase all those intermediary spaces, leaving only the top (reminder : at the beginning of the year 2019, 26 people on earth detained as much wealth as did half of the world's poorest part of the population) and the bottom, generating crisis and inequalities all the way long, then you create a state of precarity and of constant anxiety and anguish.⁴⁶

Yet, you are smart, because you learnt about soft propaganda and then, you leave enough a fringe of comfort, you bring back the slightest touch of security to people in a context of chaos and disorder, so that they would accept and hold on to that least measure of peace that you leave. Most people are standing on the breach between the tension to success promoted by the (social) media and the abyss of bannishment, of being cast out of the party.

People want to be at the party, because nobody wants to be left alone and the means to enjoy life are being more and more concentrated in the hands of the happy few. So then you leave them the cheap party, the one that one would try to reproduce without the means to really do it, depriving them from the real means to build a proper society in the long term, that would at least respect something such as each other's 'natural rights' (as it was called at the time of the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* and dear to Jean-Jacques Rousseau). Because to build in the long term, you need all the intermediaries to support your progress ; not to live in a world where nothing that you can do is supported but by a virtual currency ; but a world that would allow the stable existence of common objects that would imply not simply you nor me, but potentially everyone.

The fact is that keynesianism is not that vital anymore in neoliberal economical dogma, for John M. Keynes's conjunctural idea of State intervention has been reduced to a shrivelled stone. But it is mainly because there is not much more economy than that, or that it became difficult to decide of the scale of economical structures. Outsourcing, robotisation, financiarisation and monopoly of the great groups, increasing mergings of firms and fiscal optimisation have blurred the contours of what economy means today. As for the connection between the governments and the population, the distrust in the effect and value of vote, the distance separating us from the owners of the compagnies giving us jobs make it difficult to climb the intermediary scales to dialogue.

There is no local and proximity working in a society of monopoly – and we let the little ones die for a delusion of aristocracy.

Let us take one last example in agriculture. Today, most of the agriculture structures on our territories have been externalised with the increase of urban centers and the industrialisation of the farms. Pushing farmers to debt, investing in heavy infrastructures to fit the norms and receive subventions (from the European Union for example), we have changed the shape of our country sides and the network of our food production as well as our social and environmental anchor.

45 In Le Monde Diplomatique, mars 1998, <https://www.monde-diplomatique.fr/1998/03/BOURDIEU/3609>

46 Read as well lawyer and journalist Juan Branco's analysis of the concentration of French medias in the hands of a corporate oligarchy, in *Crépuscule*, Ed. Au Diable Vauvert / Massot, 2019.

The circuits of distribution have become more and more long circuits, and the supply centers depend on the stability of both production and distribution efficiency. If any crisis in any of both, the capacity for people to buy food, especially in the cities, will be at stake (and a country such as France knew such a crisis in 2006, with only 62 days of food report stock).

But now, the ecological crisis that we are experiencing today and for the days to come, that has been generated by human activities, is questioning not only our impact on the planet, but the way we conceive our territories and their organisation. If you look at a structured spider web, you would agree that its structure would collapse if enough of the points were to be damaged. The web needs all the intermediary levels of its structure to be resilient. One simply needs to cross the points to meet the other end. If you cut the road, they can't.

The question of short-circuit distribution and local production for agriculture, as well as of envisioning a way to cultivate that would be both chemical-free and coherent with the ecosystems' dynamics, this is such a model for society that would make it more stable and more resilient for the future. Livable for all. Nonetheless, it would mean breaking with a political, economical and social society model built on a system of monopolies and domination – with impacts for countries of the 'North' and more for those of the 'South'.

The point of all this is that, as French President Emmanuel Macron said in 2017, 'there are people who succeeded, and people who are nothing'. Saying that, you would find a *résumé* of that ideology that such a man represents.

But we are part of this world. If our ecosystems collapse, we collapse. No phantasy of almightiness and success will change that. Except that when all local cultures will become unsustainable, we will have no other choice but to buy from greenhouse and artificial cultivations. No other option, no alternative will be left, because earth and water will be too polluted, because all life will be extinct from the soils and the climate too erratic and extreme.

Therefore, we will only end this chapter on this one simple question. If we are to propose any valid idea of how humanity did begin, with the capacity to think and create like we do, what are you going to do with it ?

A collective future

Я здесь

Всегда.

(I am here

Always.)

On July 17th 2019, quite recently, Amazon's boss Jeff Bezos, the richest person on the planet (125 billion \$, according to the Bloomberg Billionaire Index) declared on American television channel CBS that he was investing millions of dollars on space technology to prevent Earth from destruction.⁴⁷ His motives, he explained, were that : 'We humans have to go to space if we are going to continue to have a thriving civilization. We have become big as a population, as a species, and this planet is relatively small. We see it in things like climate change and pollution and heavy industry. We are in the process of destroying this planet. And we have sent robotic probes to every planet in the solar system — this is the good one. So, we have to preserve this planet.'

Interesting fact, the article passing on the information titled « Jeff Bezos : I spend my billions on space because we're destroying Earth ». The effect of such a claim may have the one of a bomb. As a subtitle, one would easily interpret : '*the destruction of our planet is a fact, nothing is going to stop it and we are not going to avoid it nor slow our conquest down* – but the richest part of the population will eventually flee to outer space.'

This is shock doctrine. Why? Because you can see the direct effect of the title's interpretation, that will circulate on the internet and social media, often without people reading the article, and this will contribute to this maintained and constant flux of alert signals keeping the population in a state of excitation and anxiety.

Then when you would eventually read the article, Jeff Bezos would have his reasons declared about externalising industry in space so not to pollute the planet and then sending back the products there on Earth. The idea exposed is also that some people will *choose* to live on Earth, and others to live off Earth.

And then the scandal triggering effect of the title is drawn in an apparently more moderate discourse, where it would not be about fleeing our burning Earth anymore, but enlarging the production zone in order to only use the planet as a 'residential zone'. Emotionally, the excitation from anger will decrease suddenly in a kind of resignation, as the self-evident motive for it will be swept away ; and one would start to think, in the confusion of too great a contrast, that such a speech is in fact quite sensible, rational. It would leave an option for those who cannot fly up to space. The rich people are not the bad people, they are thinking of the common good.

See here, by doing a bit of media literacy, how this mechanical play on emotions works. You create a monster so to put people in a state of sideration, pain, fear and anger, and then, you swamp it up in an intermediary measure, that you control. It is like convincing someone that it is not so bad to be punched, even real hard, just after having shot them. It is all done by creating huge contrasts of emotions, in order to settle back in one less strong, but strong enough to do good damage.

47 Read CNBC Make It article <https://www.cnbc.com/2019/07/17/why-jeff-bezos-spends-billions-on-space-technology.html>

Because what Jeff Bezos doesn't say, is that not everyone will benefit from this capitalistic vision of the future. Not everyone will '*choose*' to stay or go. And those who will stay will still be caught in one seriously damaged planet – and be fed by what ? Consuming what ? Living in air-conditioned closed infrastructures ? Living a policy of extraction to the elitist getaway, for a two-classed society ? And on whose back ? Indebted minorities become the vast majority of a new environmentally penalised South ?

It is like Annabelle Gasquez's analysis of Pixar animated film *Coco* (2017).⁴⁸ Little Miguel visits the realm of the Dead, but the latter strangely resembles our society, based on fame and social class. Being a film about loss and mourning, it then doesn't leave space for loneliness and emptiness – except for those who are forgotten and downgraded. In other words, the show must go on, and the machine must never stop.

In this last chapter, we did not want to close the debate. It must stay open. The writer nor the reader are solely concerned by the *public thing* – but we all are (and no, Mr. Putin, social liberalism is not *dead*). That is why understanding where we came from can be nothing else but enlightening the way that we will go.

The fact is that we cannot evacuate the affective part of our human experience – according to psychoanalyst John Bowlby, *attachment* would even be primary to child development, to their protection and survival, feature that the Harlow spouses found as well among ape species.⁴⁹ If so, it would only aim at reinforcing positions of power and domination, maintaining pressure on Hegel's *slave*. Something as trivial as the control of one's smell may be part of a very complex way to abstract emotions from collective interactions, as suggested by psychologist Rachel Hertz.⁵⁰ Smell is the elementary signal for what is *good* or *bad*, pleasurable or unpleasurable.

However there is a gap between a vision of collective living that would be permissive and yet respectful to all, and the other that would be based on the prescription of domination structures on some non-chosen and delusive collective cohesion. To get back to agriculture, sanitary crisis are the best way to impose drastic norms and forbid informal exchanges – as the selling of local country seeds⁵¹ – but we still need to eat and produce our food. We are pushed in the way of social darwinism that says that in a system of great pressure, the more adapted will be selected to survive.

We discussed already the matter of political and social inequalities. Now let us discuss a bit how we can respond to it. French philosopher Etienne de La Boétie wrote, in his *Discours de la servitude volontaire* (1548), as speaking of the tyrant : '*I don't want you to push him or shake him, but only do not support him anymore, and you will see him, like the great colossus to whom we stole his base, of his own weight collapse and break down.*'⁵² The structure is all, and it is topological.

It is also interesting to consider Parisian communal revolt led by *prévôt des marchands* Etienne Marcel in 1356-1358, in the context of the Hundred Years' War that opposed the French House of Valois and the Kingdom of England over the ruling of the Kingdom of France. The *mouvement communal bourgeois* to take power over Paris against the monarchy is part of a long

48 Read on Deuxième Page, « Coco de Lee Unkrich et Adrian Molina, si le deuil impossible de notre enfance nous était conté (2017) », <https://www.deuxiemepage.fr/2019/07/18/coco-film-pixar-disney-critique-2017/>

49 Read Jean-Luc Renck and Véronique Servais, *L'éthologie : Histoire naturelle du comportement*, Ed. Seuil, 2002, pp. 292-293.

50 *Ibid.*, p. 299.

51 Read L'Humanité, « Biodiversité. Le Conseil Constitutionnel interdit la vente de semences paysannes. », December 23rd 2018, <https://www.humanite.fr/biodiversite-le-conseil-constitutionnel-interdit-la-vente-de-semences-paysannes-665494>

52 In Etienne de La Boétie, *Discours de la servitude volontaire*, Ed. Librio, 1548, p. 15. My translation.

tradition in France. Later on, the 1648's *Fronde* against monarchic power in its turn marked young king Louis XIV dramatically : he eventually moved the center of his command out from the Louvre on to Versailles. In a similar way had Charles VII distrusted the Parisian people at the end of the Hundred Years' War. France progressively found unity since Louis XIV's settlement of his military power and later on with the development of the concept of *État-Nation* (reinforced in the XIXth century by Jules Ferry's law on secular and obligatory school) by tying up fragmented regions to national identity.⁵³ But the center of the political power is still looking at the capital's uprisings with a frowned look.

But this, as well, is a narrative, that we choose here to make an example of how the imaginary works to give means to action. What there is to say is that the only response to political domination is a collective political proposal. We 'who are nothing' represent a mass of living beings with enough to lose, and that is why enough precarity is created with a slight fringe of comfort left : to maintain pressure and yet still obtain the population's consent. However, the environmental crisis is pushing us in a temporality of war – because of the imminent danger, and because of its anthropological, industrial and political causes.

Don't be wrong about it, this is a book of war, in a time of war, where ideas may lead the way or shut it down. But this way, as we are all living on the same planet, can only be collectively chosen.

By way of preface to her collection of poems *Requiem* (written between 1935 and 1940, but first published in 1963), Russian poetess Anna Akhmatova told this story of hers. She was waiting, as she did for seventeen months, at the prison line of Leningrad where her son was detained, during the oppressing reign of the *lejevchtchina*. One day, a woman with 'what was once her face' came to her and asked to her ear in a whisper : 'Can you describe *this* ?' To what Akhmatova answered : 'Mory.' (*I can.*) And the woman smiled.

If you can put a word on one reality, in whatever language capable of describing it, as language shapes our reality and culture, you would open a common space for consideration. This space would also be a time for acknowledging our common presence to things. It acknowledges that we delay our responses to mark reality with our time given to it.

Time is precious, time is counted⁵⁴ and time is what is stolen from us when we are to put our energy to survive in precarity. There is no time to think there, to envision a broad perception of reality, as we are kept busy with immediate tasks.

This book hopes nothing more but to give back this time to everyone, so it could be collectively organised again and that, eventually, we could make the right choices about our common future.

53 In 1539, Villers-Cotterêts order already enshrined French language as the official one for printing.

54 Read Darian Leader, *Why can't we sleep ?*, *op. cit.*

To conclude

All this needs a proper conclusion. Unfortunately, we cannot. So I will include a more personal tone to it. We are taught to apprehend things in their linear way. We are told stories and we tell stories ourselves, more especially *to* ourselves when we think. Often, we think of what people would eventually say about us, that would situate us in the social and symbolic ensemble. We try to mend reality with it.

However, this narrative is often to be reevaluated. History changes, and that is why perhaps we tend to be so fascinated about fictions of time travel and rewriting History. Because it permits to face some paradoxes and to confront logics. That is to say, to confront the way we tell our own stories.

Story telling is linear, because we cannot present two individualities at the same time and acknowledge them as individualities without separating them. One event would eventually follow another. But in another hand, we know of the unconscious that it fixates and polarises our way to perceive those things.

As Darian Leader put it so neatly⁵⁵, the unconscious addresses us and keeps us awake. Not to relive a traumatic memory in its temporality, *trauma* would often grow a substitutive and symbolic one instead, often shaped in one specific image or detail from then, chosen in the surroundings of the scene. Breaks in the narrative create monsters in time and space, and in the consistency of our body image. We perceive ourselves through the meaning of our actions in the symbolic world.

Horror writer H. P. Lovecraft was obviously xenophobic, and he wrote stories about monsters that belonged to the unspeakable. Because one thing language does is giving shape in time and space. Between the thin distance of what is said and the situation of the body, as the speech occupies the moment when it is spoken, the body's integrity is left safe, distracted from.

We speak so that in the mean time, nothing else would occur, and least of all the unknown. The fear of decomposition and putrefaction is then less about the terror of a horrific vision, but the incapacity to occupy space and time whenever this takes place. The terror is not in the image, it is in the absence of protection from it. We are being so much taught to consider what is real through what can be developed in a logical and linear meaning, that it appears too difficult to do without.

Meditation practices are a discipline in themselves, specifically because it needs us to go against the natural course, not of the living that is permissive and chaotic, but of the way meaning is provided through fiction and symbolic ordering – even in the field of scientific description.

The approach of the unconscious dynamics tells us about how much some marks create a form of stillness in our lives, a referential that we need to acknowledge. Because meaning is moving constantly. It is a distraction from the bodily origin of language itself. We want the stories told to concern every possible one before we even think of the fact that our body permits us to create them.

In fact, the sacred as the dreadful both infer a breakdown in the structure of language that maintains a distraction from the uniqueness of the body, that makes it vulnerable. As we saw, we cannot resolve our own body image without collapsing with it. We have to make it something else.

Yet the singularity of the body in the place of the living is much more worth to acknowledge than the fact that we are indebted to the makings of stories. Those should bring and unite those singularities up together around possible common issues. Only then we could be closer to a truth that would not need more words than those it would require to listen to.

55 In *Why can't we sleep ?*, *op. cit.*

One other paradox in our societies is that as vertical social and political hierarchies tend to crush people below them on the moral level, there is a also moral injunction not to show the liberty to damage your own body or body-image in those same normed spaces. As the body cannot reflect the moral distress nor bring to it a proper response, tension can come to a point where it becomes unbearable.

The liberty to use our body to reflect our moral disposition should be our first liberty, though vampirised, or else safeguarded in the realm of counter-culture. It may be as well something to think of.