

## **THE EYE OF THE FLY: PSYCHOANALYTIC GESTALTEN AND CHAOTIC ATTRACTORS IN LARGE GROUPS AND INSTITUTIONS**

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Cultural and socio-economic agents press psychoanalytic psychotherapy further from the seclusion of the doctor's office to encompass more and more the public space and services. Within this wider clinical horizon the therapy is called upon to tackle new individual and collective pathologies as well as, at times, the way of functioning of the public institutions themselves.

Other situations, such as for instance the teaching to psychology students, may place a psychoanalyst before a large group collectively wondering what in fact group conditions might be.

From the psychoanalyst's perspective, both the request for therapy and the request for formation, yield a relationship with a field turned as an investigation for the understanding of the unconscious. However, the conspicuous inclusion of realities belonging to other spaces, places or contracts, such as derived from the new and widened clinical horizon, undermines the traditional doctor-patient transferral relationship by bringing into it such external objects and values as institutional hierarchies, bureaucracies, economic optimization and the number of individuals involved in the field.

The standards of organization and comprehension, i.e. the traditional settings and models, must be therefore accordingly reviewed and attention must be paid to this new complex domain containing the chaotic, dynamic system of such large group in transformation.

### **COMPLEX INSTITUTIONAL MULTISTRATUM MACRO GROUP SYSTEM**

Within an institutional context, whether factual or hypothetical, therapeutical and didactic relationships occur in an organized macro group domain.

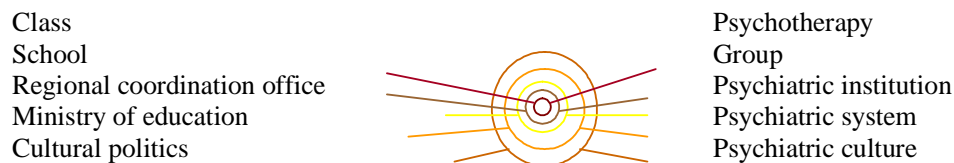
We shall attempt to map synthetically such domain.

*Didactic relationship*

*Therapeutic relationship*

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We may note that the above sets have the following characteristics:

1. They are concentric, “matrioska-like” systems enclosing the relational web.
2. Each level of either set is organized as an independent, transpersonal entity possessing its own gaze and its own state of consciousness within which it elaborates its own predicament conflicting, at times, with those of the other levels.
3. In each step, as we move from the containing to the contained levels, a modification of state of consciousness occurs. From the singular consciousness of the “Ego” to the plural, multi-focal consciousness of each of the different levels of the “Nos”.

The observation of a group may focus on its “work” aspect, that is to say the level at which the group itself define his *modus operandi*. Alternatively, it may focus on its “affective” aspect ( for Bion group in basic assumption), which is the level where his *modus vivendi* is experienced. These conscious or unconscious goals determine the cohesion of the group.

A request for training and a request for therapy both signify for the psychoanalyst a relationship whose object is the understanding of the unconscious. Either, thus, underscores a request for attention to the “affective” group.

## PSYCHOANALYTICAL VERTEX IN INSTITUTIONS AND GROUPS OF FORMATION

The use of this vertex implies the ability to prepare a complex-model inclusive of the very institution that provides the *setting* allowing the occurrence of *transfert* and the construction of *interpretations*.

I consider these instruments psychoanalytic form (Gestalten), since each of them constitutes a constant, interconnected system of the infinite individual and collective variants characterizing the infinite ways, both theoretical and practical, of all the possible occurrences of the analytical processes. These instruments are the steadfast reference points within a chaotic reality and grant possibility of order and analytical value to a work of knowledge.

Let’s now consider the institutional domain. There we detect a complex space-time dimension within which flow individual and collective entities agitated by forces structuring and interconnecting their mutual relations. Such relations are capable of outlining among those entities means of communication and matrices of external identity (language), and of internal identity (thought). We may then witness the building, in this new environment, of fresh, collective identities assembled from the complex aggregation of singularities. Such novel, emerging phenomena are therefore coherent with the complex group fields within which they were generated. Structures that aggregate single components in more complex

entities may be, for example: ideas, groups, tribes, reasoning, scientific societies or institutions.

## **THE INSTITUTION AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Let's observe now the institution of the psychotherapy and the concentric and overlapping frame of at least three of the mentioned levels of abstraction. As we focus from one to the other, their boundaries broaden and the internal entities, as well as relations among these internal entities, mute. Shifting from one level to another, we are confronted with a "catastrophic change" comparable to the altered vision resulting from a change of lenses in a microscope. The site of the observed object and its encompassing field suddenly disappear, to reappear totally transformed.

I'm speaking of a hypothetically synchronous observation. That is, one to encompass in our field of vision three overlapping operative levels of a poly-dimensional model. We can call these:

1. psychotherapy within the institutions
2. psychotherapy with the institutions
3. psychotherapy of the institutions

For each of the above three terms, with the broadening of the visual boundaries, the size of the institutional field that each of them comprises is also expanded. In order to integrate and expound it, i.e. in order to dynamically contain it, a parallel growth of the organizing power and know-how of the individual or collective entity viewing and containing the complex model from any of the three specific vertices, is also necessary.

Thus we are gradually facing up to the inevitable complication of the observed system, as it mutes from a dual to a plural one. And in this manner our "one to one" analysis is also expanded to a group, to a team, to an institution and all the way to social systems and cultural fields. All along this path the clinical and the political domains cannot fail to mingle and hybridise.

## **The Subjectivation of Entities**

For the analytical function to grow in these fields, somewhere, within the individual or collective entities, must form an identity capable of consciousness; that is attention to itself, to its outer boundaries, to the direction taken by its energy fluxes, to its relationships and to its own development. For this to happen the following items must evolve along the following guidelines:

*Vertex:* The point of view from which a perspective is organized.

*Entity:* The onlooker as individualized by the vertex

*Identity:* A feeling constructed within the boundaries of the on-looking entity.

*Consciousness*: The ability to understand the coherence and the separation of one's inner and outer selves.

*Sense*: The experience organised in spatial-temporal coordinates.

### **Psychotherapy within the Institution**

This is the most common of the above three levels; also the one of lowest plural complexity. The psychoanalyst meets his patient, often from the neurotic-borderline area, in a room within, and belonging to, the institution. The trim is, substantially, a traditional one. There is one exception however: the therapist has neither possession of, nor control over, the setting. This is totally owned by the institution. The institution controls space, times, contracts, roles and absorbs therefore all the transferral investments on the setting, either of the patient or of the doctor himself. His awareness of being a role within the institution, which he identifies himself reciprocally with, participates to the construction of his interpretative answers to the patient. A part that delivers only a partial answer, ambivalently contained in the institutional super-system. When operating within an institution therapists are always vectors of it.

From this vertex the institution appears prevalingly as a *setting*.

### **Psychotherapy with the Institution**

If the attended patient belongs to the psychotic area, the dual relationship explodes in the plural field. His fragmentary needs, and those of his entourage, are followed in different times and places (sometimes during the full 24 h. of a day if the patient is hospitalised) by several attendants who often gather to form a team. This may then develop into a collective group entity, to replace the therapist's single entity, and become the lieu of a possible vertex capable of clinical thinking. Such vertex is necessarily plural inasmuch it integrates in its compound identity the different transfers scattered over various roles, places and activities of the institution. Obviously in order to organize and stimulate the engagement of the team at this level, and to bear the setting, the team leader must be endowed with greater powers within the institution than in the previous configuration. The collective identity function will be so exercised by him (her) naturally, as he (she) gradually becomes capable of integrating the group's fragmentariness in a proper working organism. The very integration and construction of the team will form thus an interpretative model to confront and return to the pathological reality for a transformative identification.

From this vertex the institution appears to carry out the role of the therapist.

### **Psychotherapy of the Institution**

This third level represents the attempt by the therapist to comprehend, clinically and theoretically, the institutional and social fragmentation and confusion of the entire system dealing with psychic discomfort.

The setting could be, for example a scientific convention where, in the liberal spirit of group confrontation, experiences, emotions, thoughts and hypotheses converging from different transferral fields, would merge and struggle to build an interpretative model which would yield back a more comprehensible institution.

From this vertex the institution finally takes the role of the patient.

## The Eye of the Fly

Which gazes from which eyes then criss-cross to reconstruct the chaotic vision of the institutional or macro-group states? Where? Which complex vertex is the lieu of their integration from bi-ocular to poly-ocular vision?

Such gazes may be, for example:

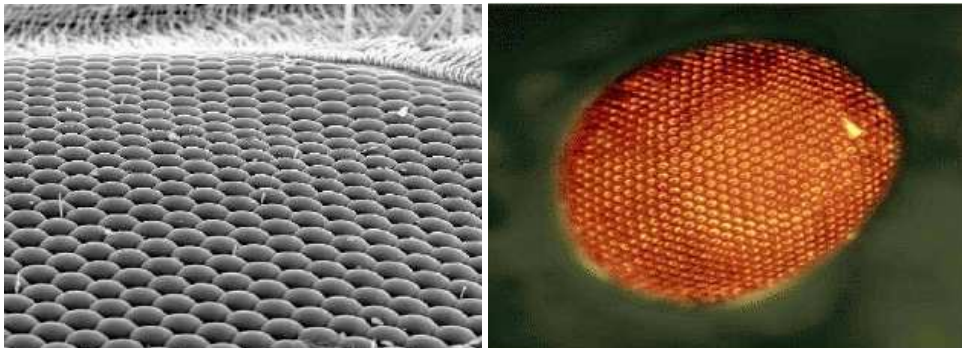
1. The gaze of the individual
2. The gaze of the couple (maybe an analytical couple)
3. The gaze of the group
4. The gaze of the institution
5. The social gaze staring at the institution
6. The gaze of specific cultures
7. The gaze of the meta-social warrants (Turaine)
8. The gaze of the meta-psychics warrants (Kaes)
9. The gaze of larger and larger systemic entities.

Every gaze originates from a vertex constructing its own perspective of all visible levels and, consequently, of every transpersonal entity.

Such different gazes from different eyes to different levels yield a chaotic reality of broken mirrors like the ommatidia making up the compound eye of a fly. The lieu of their poly-ocular integration corresponds to the psychics of the collective entities holding, simultaneously, all points of view.

Metaphorically this could be located in a Picasso canvass overturning the vertex of Rinascimental perspective and superimposing motion on it, thus cancelling space and time. The vertex of every point of the canvass contributes to the building of the new perspective.

The eyes of the fly may symbolically represent the fragmentation of the points of view.



As bi-ocular realities appearing to the human eye construct our perspective space, likewise the poly-ocular reality such as it appears to the complex vision of the entities within the complex multistratum space-time, builds their complex perspective of the hyperspaces where they exist.

## CHAOS AND COMPLEXITY IN THE POLY-OCULAR VISION

We are aware of the level of complexity and of the chaotic picture that the eye of a fly must integrate in order to avoid a psychotic reaction to a so fragmented reality. Yet, transpersonal entities, such as we enumerated, must be capable of integrating poly-ocular visions in parallel with the bi-ocular one possessed by each individual.

This course was traced by W. R Bion in what he called: PS→D.

If this bi, poly-ocular integration does not occur, the consequences may be: institutional psychosis, *burn-out*, problems of identity for the team and its members, closure in the pharmacological answer, conflicts among levels, envies and jealousies.

We can then state:

1. Every transpersonal entity has the vision of the eye of its vertex
2. The integrated set of all visions of all levels, lead us beyond the threshold of an altered state of consciousness. The plural one of the “Nos”.
3. The sum of the many levels of internal and external reality, as they appear to the sum of the many entities observing them, constitute the chaotic domain that we call “complex multistratum”.

## STATE OF CONSCIOUSNESS AND MULTISTRATUM

Within this clutter of roles and points of view among observers, observed objects and their mutual relationships, the three examined levels, which do not exclude additional ones, are constantly and simultaneously present and overlapping in every type of institutional analysis. They shape a “complex multistratum” in which, synchronically, slips our observation as, from a singular state of consciousness, it adapts to a plural one. It may be possible to give preference to one such level to the exclusion of all others; however such penchant could be bestowed on a roll call. But levels must be all recognised, because, at times, resisting the arrogant pressure of a theory, personified perhaps by a scientific society, is more difficult than understanding the behaviour of a patient who sees himself as the fruit of society’s ebullient values.

### Elastic Topology

The so described multistratum is a pulsating, multidimensional space-time as shaped in Poincaré’s topology. The structure of the mutual relations that link the entities transpierced by the dynamic flux of events of the multistratum, and interconnected through reciprocal bonds,

incur topologically equivalent elastic transformations. These, by folding them, extending them and twisting them, adapt them to the transformations of the milieu in which they are immersed.

Qualities exist in such topological transformations that cannot be modified and remain invariants. These are for example the intersections of lines or the holes that safe keep the identity of the original configuration.

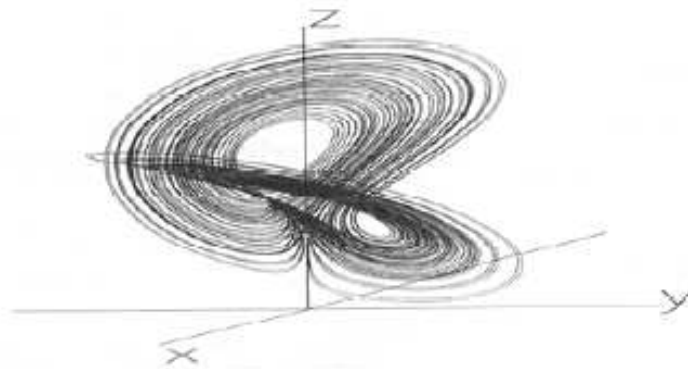
Setting, transfert and interpretation, if analytically observed in the polyadic multistratum context, are subject to continuous elastic transformations which, however, permit the invariant safekeeping of their phenomenical identity in the new configurations.

Setting, transfert and interpretation in macro-group condition are the coordinating instruments of all chaotic incidents occurring in the poly-dimensional multistratum. They build, within the turbulence of the collective mental phenomena, poly-focal structures of elastic stability. Also, for plural entities, it becomes so possible the progressive individuation of points of views, identities, consciousness, sense, in such domain whose metaphor is the Picasso's canvass.

### Strange Attractors

We can visualise the space-time multistratum, where the described collective mental phenomena occur, similarly to the domain that chaos mathematicians call: *space of phases*. The agents ordering chaos take the name of *strange attractors*. These are the set of trajectories towards which a dynamic chaotic system, that allow approaching more complex levels of order, evolves.

Their characteristic, here below graphically illustrated, is to all travel along similar elliptical curves that never overlap because the conditions of the numerous variants, present in the chaos, will never be identically repeated. Hence all entities, forces and mutual relationships within a complex group domain, fluctuate along these trajectories.



This is also the destiny of our three psychoanalytic instruments (Gestalten). Setting, transfert, and interpretation work as attractors of analytic sense inasmuch they allow the analytical function to operate. With them too we constantly witness similar phenomena that never overlap.

## Models

A model is generally used to answer to an operative query. The models of our three instruments answer, may be, to the following questions:

- *Model of setting*: Who stays with whom? When? Where? With what contract?
- *Model of transfert*: Which *elsewhere*? In which *here and now*?
- *Model of interpretation*: With what different language is re-visited and re-described an organisation if observed from a different vertex? (this to clarify a *sense* restructuring an adequate identity).

The answer, which is never exhaustive, can only help to better rephrase the question in order to fine-tune the model. If the answer does not surprise us, the question was not formulated to properly investigate the unknown and carry out the research. An answer that does not surprise us is obvious after all, one that, at least, we could have expected. Just as the answers, perhaps also the new models should surprise us (possibly shock us) in order to adapt to the field of investigation of the new realities.

## Setting

It is a virtual analytical structure; a simplification cut out from reality and built so that, within it, whatever may be imported from fantasy, may assume affective relational sense. That is to say the carrying out of the analytical function. It is an artificial space-time, inhabited by specific roles that legitimate a state of crepuscular consciousness, when in productive condition. The relation is here *other*, i.e. different from the reality surrounding it in the non-analytical day to day space-time.

The real place of the setting is the mind of the analyst who structures it. It is then exported in a transitional space, striding reality, which is either his office or even his appointment book. The conditions to be satisfied in order to realize a classical dual setting or a small therapeutic group are clear and codified. My queries here are as follows: what would it mean, and what would it be a setting adapted to carry on an analytical function with large groups and with institutions? And: how could the likely variants, needed to build it, be engaged and assembled?

## SUBJECTS, ROLES, SCENARIOS, OPERATIONS, LANGUAGES AT THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF THE MULTISTRATUM

Hence, which are the individual or the collective subjects among which transactions occur within large groups and institutions? And in what spaces these take place?

We are speaking of chaotic relations between chaotic entities in the chaotic space of the complex multistratum.

Will it be possible to perform reductionistic operations such as to allow a brain, structured by the sensorial tri-dimensions, to contain, as in a dream, a poly-dimensionality?



How can we gather such spread out and fragmented events? How can we simplify them to contain them without losing their sense? How can we narrate them in a linear language without losing their complexity?

To build a setting for large groups and institutions implies perhaps the construction of an elastic poly-dimensional structure capable of bearing, containing and elaborating events and entities placed in different sites of the multistratum. The above construction is then the lieu of the analytical function leading to the achievement of a new meaning and of a new identity.

A structure, with the characteristics of the *strange attractor*, capable of ordering chaos to the limit of the periodic equilibrium and succeeding in containing all possible variances of the complex phenomena.

## Transfert

We have seen that the *setting* is a reference structure with its own boundaries separating an internal from the external space. This allows identifying and recognizing the transfert as an emotional movement, imported from an *elsewhere*, expressing itself within those boundaries. Typically a transfert is, for the analyst, a diachronic phenomenon emerging from the patient's childhood story actualized in his (her) relation with the analyst. The transfert colours emotionally the budding points of view, the roles and identities as these emerge and intertwine their mutual relations in fantasy. It permits the recognition of the emotional content of reality as separated from fantasy by the outer rim of the setting.

In the molten multistratum domain characterising large groups and institutions, a temporal flow or a clear distinction between reality and the virtual world cannot exist. Fantasy is only one more level of possibility in the multistratum, and the diachronic transferral movement necessarily becomes synchronic. It moves, or maybe it simultaneously originates, and convolves in its movement all the levels and all the entities of the multistratum.

The affective movement, causing the whole structure to pulsate, represents its invariable part as preserved in the transformations driven by events and by the relationships formed by the specific contents of the different complex settings characterising all others levels of the multistratum.

## Interpretation

Analysis necessarily implies the cutting, fragmenting, splitting and dividing the complex entities into simpler components. This is the sense, in analysis, of free associations, of testimonies by members of a group and of the several chaotic events that may be observed at the many levels of the multistratum.

Tie and paste together these fragmented chips, give them a novel form revealing a new geometric and linguistic sense, is the task of interpretation as conceived in psychoanalysis.

For sense, normally an indicator of direction, to be analytically decoded and understood, it is perhaps necessary that all entities exchanging communications be defined and possess a certain degree of consciousness and reasoning: nor this must be unavoidably the way we

intend it. It is therefore essential to understand who speaks to whom and in what state of consciousness.

It could be difficult, especially for an individual, to intercept and decode the ways in which the complex transpersonal entities, that contain him, communicate and, maybe, construct forms or languages.

If non-variable is the sense detected by the structure, variable are the forms and the possible language used by the entities to build it. The same sense is equally interpreted by every analyst who formally adjust it to his own variants. That is to say to his cultural and emotional references and to the specific techniques he has learnt in training. This is even more so when speaking of unusual different settings such as groups, or of settings belonging to the multistratum. Interpretation then would result in the reassembly and connection of fragments so as to construct a form (Gestalt) capable to use any language to communicate a sense. Therefore the infinite, never overlapping ways and levels in which the interpretation is chaotically declined amongst its different interlocutors will necessarily be variable.