



My efforts here have been to organise a tremendous variety of specific images and behaviours around an archetypal tap root (*Urphänomen*) from which a *drive to be chicken* can be reissued in various new ways that might be of more use to contemporary life. For as it stands few metaphors derived from chicken being serve to meaningfully vitalise human experience. As such we can expect to be partly infected by the negative inflation of an archetypal force upon which we have organised and concentrated no conscious positive relation.

My difficult and singular task has been to realise an archaeology of the human psyche, aiming specially towards those primitive phenomena animating the interior archaic structures in the brain. For I am convinced of some prehistoric moment, bound up with the specific evolutionary destiny of the descent of mankind—and as such imprinted by pre-conscious phylogenetic memory in these innermost primitive and hairy psychical layers—where chicken behaviours corresponded to some great attainment as a success-species.

We will begin cautiously so as not to leave anyone behind though things will hot up considerably. But first, to impress upon you how

truly I see this symbol, that it has strained the techniques of the Jungian interpretive tradition to which I belong and caused me to stray. I am troubled by the idea that within all creation chicken would stand uniquely beyond what can be symbolically elaborated into the order of archetypal imagination. That something in chicken might forbid the human relational exercises by which the deep animating sensuality of its own archetype construction would be produced.

A set of ideas formulated by the Jungians insist upon a world-soul (*anima mundi*) working its enchantment through all creation as an immanent field of symbolic correspondences. The tradition offers me specific protocols and methodologies like active imagination, myth criticism, and dream interpretation for the interpretive uncovering of unique Soul-meaning potentialities in all phenomena. Mainly associative thinking. To this end, I have emptied out the pantheons of world religions in search of chicken gods but, pitifully, none have been set up to project qualities of the collective Soul. Not in the way that other animals have merited the special treatment of deification and symbolic sublimation. Nor is chicken given any special place in the history of figures or literary types or *dramatis personae*. A sexual dimorphic split of roosters from hens in the collective consciousness has massively diffused and frustrated the symbolic elaboration of chicken.

All signs point towards chicken as an especially limp phenomena belonging to that inchoate mass of discrete material in life that becomes neither true nor essential, that fails in passing from unsymbolised stupid being into the permanent virtual imaginative potentiality of the collective consciousness. A recent article from the field of the archaeological sciences: twenty-three billion chicken are alive at any given moment. Scientists have reason to predict that humanity's place in the fossil record for our specific slice of geologic time will be completely obliterated by chicken bones. Great wasteland of unsymbolised being, these fields of chicken depressions.

We must touch chicken being with our discourse. And we must be open minded. And as the most highly selved and individually distinctive beings in the universe, we must turn towards the apprehension of this object with the human psyche's remarkable developments of an aesthetic, individuating responsiveness to the

world. With an intense thrust of energy towards chicken we should be enabled in the reception of its specific distinctiveness.

*

Our close attention to chicken ethology and our cultivation of a nearness to its modes of intellection can offer a radical transversal and resonant cut through a specific register of experience from which we derive and in which we can see reflected a glorious range of drives and instincts. We must urgently be in relationship with this range of experience. And in doing so contribute to the formation of the vast potentiality of chicken and install that formation as a persistent structure in the imagination.

This cut through experience is bound up with a specific psychosomatics and physiognomics of chicken thought that offers profound relief from the burdens of ego-defensive consciousness structures governing human thought (*le moi*) and a wonderful estrangement from normative traditional models of philosophical consciousness which have for too long associated thought with dead psychosomatic metaphors such as grasping and weighing. These radical new thought psychosomatics describe a specific type of dissipated being and are felt in the awkward way a chicken anticipates incline walking, in the irregular angles and weight distributions of its physiology, in the twenty-four to twenty-six distinct vocalisations of which the chicken is capable, in the peculiar mechanics of *chicken head stabilisation*, in its flightlessness, and in its confused, flustered relationship to gesture and ornament given by its feathers.

We must visit these qualities since the negative pole of dissipated being and the degradation of the fantasy of the enlightened, free-thinking *moi* is already an inflation around which considerable psychic energy has gathered in the modern situation. I take Georg Simmel's telegraphic idea *Blasiertheit* (blasé affect) as the first illumination of this negative inflation in which gestures would come to lose their ease and fluency. Other modern writers would testify to the realisation that the human being's modes of comporting the body are historically variable, that the body internalises its social milieu at the biological level through corporeal automatisms. *Blasiertheit* labels a certain blank, vacant, or impassive quality of expression distinguishing these new characteristics of demeanour. In the wake

of this inflation, fellow analysts have relegated the human body's faithful externalisation of affect to the past and recognised the exterior to be splitting off from the psychological interior in a dual sense: concretely, in manners of public comportment, and abstractly, in a new kind of *binarius* between the unconscious and free-thinking conscious mind which theorised among other things that the inside cannot be read from the outside.



Organising conscious effort upon the positive archetypal pole of chicken's *tonic immobility*, its vulnerability to hypnotism, its availability to perplexity, reissues this inflation of dissociated affect in a set of promising new behaviours. Even as a defensive structure, here is a happy willingness to give up a semblance of free-thinking independent consciousness, against all modern ideologies of private calculation, self-promotion, and shrewd concealment of will. Meanwhile, the gyroscopic mechanics of chicken head stabilisation formalise this splitting of externalised gesture from psychological interior, such that the perplexed head with its blank stare may be pinned in impossible stillness while spasms of leg and twitches of wing are triggered beneath its neck. Whereas most embodiment traditions strain towards the unified body, we might productively theorise this malcoordination in the domain of high theory as something purposefully accomplishing scrambling and dissipation. For, these specific psychosomatics of thought, and their vitalist projections of gesture, consciously reorient 'the psychic depths' of unconscious life away from outmoded connective tissues

promised by psychoanalytic confessions of the interior, and outwards into the field of public being and public gestures. To run through a field in which your split off desires have been scattered like birdseed and in the malcoordinated gap (*décalage*) between stimulus, cognition, and gesture, where erotic and aesthetic being rise to fullness, to be in identification with a momentary intensity of feeling, and to spray out that feeling in a crude festival of hands and lips, places of doing and saying, to spray out that feeling in twenty-four to twenty-six distinct chicken vocalisations from clucking to growls. It is emancipatory to be in contact with this multiplicity in yourself—literature and art aspire to this type of dissipation. And art is of course very well-suited to collect and contain some of this malcoordination. The chicken woman who spits when she speaks is a spastic producer of cultural forms and ornaments. Her propensity, as evidenced by the chicken ballet in *La Fille Mal Gardée* and the Papageno couple in *Die Zauberflöte*, is towards genre, vaudeville, and pantomime—forms in which gesture overrides free-thinking independent consciousness in festive humiliation.



Walter Sickert, *Chicken*, c. 1914.
West-End actress and artist's muse. Clearly, deep in the medicine of chicken.

*

The construction of this chicken *Pathosformel* (pathos formula) as an emancipating figure has been meaningfully approached once before. Not in the writings but in the performances of the antique philosopher Diogenes, who with laughing radical relativism also brought chicken into the domain of high theory at the dawn of the history of ideas in

the West. After Plato designated the human being, distinct in his rationalism and intellect, as “a featherless biped,” Diogenes plucked a chicken and carried it into the lecture hall. “Behold,” he intoned, “Plato’s human.”

Nevertheless, humanism comes along with its creative defiance of animal states and forgets philosopher Diogenes who discovered the animal body in the human and of its gestures made an argument against the ideal abstractions of the Platonic dialogue. As an essentially plebeian reflection, Diogenes’ argument is simple, material, presentational. We imagine the plucked feathers still stuck to the unclean example-chicken’s pallid flesh, held there in the adhesive of some remaining chicken fluids. There is a clucking acid existentialism to his joke and a specific pantomimic materialism which accomplish, what has been described as, a pissing against the idealist wind of human reason.

I will take an example from the field of neurosis to re-stage this emancipatory function once more. The problem of repetition we all suffer from neurotically, which is a kind of entanglement of a special emotion linked to a special event, or a feeling of abandonment or violence you have experienced so intensively young, repeating it as a pattern until it is discovered, deciphered, cured. This repetition never announces itself as repetition, it announces itself as always different. As with a fraction in mathematics, the numbers change but the relation remains the same. But if you want to uncover a repetition in your life you have to reveal this ever-present *rappo*rt between numbers. The rationalist-scientific modern convention is to consult the expertise of the specialist whose training permits a transcendental overview of the symptomatological maze. It is from this height that the neurosis is identified. But there is another path. If you obsessively repeat something you can almost cure a neurosis because the neurosis cannot bear willed repetition. Automatic mindlessness of gesture is a perfect tool towards the identification of something repetitive buried in many supposed differences. This is the path of the flightless, earthbound chicken, excluded from fantasies of flight as a means of survival, lost in the corner and running up against the wall in spasms. I connect this also to genre.