1 Preliminary comment

The purpose of this entry is to serve as record of a particular period in my intellectual life. It contains what originally were the scattered notes of a rereading of the presocratic philosophers. At the time, I was simultaneously studying the ninth volume of the *Complete works* of C.G. Jung. The coincidence of these separate studies conferred the notes with a rather peculiar tone—so much, in fact, that their content appears to me strange and almost pointless.

Even so, the core intuition that propelled me to write them, and to organize them into a single study, remains kindled and strong within me. I am speaking of the suspicion that human experience, even across its wide range of cultural and spatio-temporal differences, tends to structurally identical patterns of representation. To put it differently, I mean the idea that there exists a symbolical counterpart of instinct, that there are innate tendencies of symbolic representation—perhaps the byproduct of the emergence of symbolic faculties in instinctive animals. This is what I loosely mean by *archetypical* images. Instinct and archetype are here understood to be enantiomeric.

Archetypes are not eternal symbols floating in the soul of man. They are, if anything, a biological tendency. Every human faculty varies within a limited range—nothing distinctly human could otherwise exist. I am currently putting in writing a survey of the existing evidence in favour of this "collective unconscious". I shall refer any discussion on this matter to that upcoming work and disregard it for the time being.

In less general terms, the notes focused on the figure of Anaximander. I suspect the philologist will find these writing unbearable. In every symbolic or mythical aspect of presocratic philosophy, he sees a persian or egipcian influence, an oriental breath infusing some exotic tone into otherwise natural and empirical claims. Needless to say not all philologists believe this—Nietzsche and Colli, for example, disregard it—but even those who don't fail to explain these mysterious elements in a satisfactory manner. I did provide in these notes, I think, sufficient reasons to justify why these approaches are insufficient. But I must confess to now doubt of the value that a psychological approach to presocratic philosophy may produce. I fear all these notes ended up being nothing but a literary exercise.

2 Introduction

Presocratic thought, in spite of tremendous efforts over the last two centuries, remains in almost total obscurity. Aristotelian exegesis, which sees in it nothing but a rational attempt at describing the , casts its shadow over practically all philology. Granted, part of the presocratic tradition was a genuine effort for discerning the natural properties of the world. But the fact that, in every philosopher, the most natural postulates were derived, as a general rule, from some mythical ground which was the corner stone of his doctrine, suggests that this part was also the most superficial. Every is ultimately arbitrary and irrational, and none of them can be explained as a strictly scientific *intellectio*. They are cosmogonic images of speculative nature, whose resemblance with mythological expressions make them worthy of the epithet of *mythical*. In Anaximander's and Anaxagoras' , for example, this is particularly clear. Philologists have tried

to explain this mythical aspects in three different ways.

a. The first consisted in trying, sometimes with admirable intelligence, to show that these mythical expressions were in truth strictly rational—or simply assuming this was the case. Thus, for example, Hesiod's is the logical regression from complex to simpler elements (Gigon, 1971), Anaximander puts the earth at the center of the universe compelled by a geometric intuition (Jaeger, 1933), and Aristotle teaches that Thales chooses water as the by virtue of its transmutability. But it is illicit to project a naturalist spirit to postulates that, taken by themselves, are closer to myth than to empirical observation. The case of the presocratic philosophers is not all that different from that of alchemy, sometimes described merely as a pre-scientific study of matter, when undoubtedly it is also a symbolic universe (Jung, 1944; Roob, 2014).

b. In other cases, the mythical grounding of presocratic philosophy was recognized, but nothing was seen in it but a proper aristocratic diversion of the Dionysian and drunk Greek spirit. That was the stance of Nietzsche and Colli, for example. This hypothesis, however, has two problems. First, it misses the tremendous resemblance between the symbolic expressions that appear in presocratic philosophers and those of many other myths. It is not the time to point this resemblances out, but we shall deal with some of them in a moment. They show that, in what comes to its irrational aspect, presocratic thought is not all that original, and that what is attributed to a properly Greek amusement might turn out to be universal representations. Secondly, the symbolic expressions that are thus explained have, in truth, very little in common with with the typical worldview of ancient Greeks. This will become clearer when describing point *c*.

c. The third explanation consists in the appeal to some eastern influence—be it Persian, Babylonian, or Egyptian. This hypothesis deserves our attention the most, because it is the most plausible. It is a fact that presocratic Greece was in continuous contact with other peoples, so much so that many presocratic philosophers were colonial agents or travelers themselves. But it is imperative to observe that, for the Greek, nature was the total expression of the divine. The gods were not agents of miracles, but the force that kept the wheel of natural order turning. Religious feeling was engrained in objective reality and not in the portentous. This is why Otto (1929) claimed that the Greek worldview had, as a basic character, a "natural ideality or ideal naturality", and Gigon (1971) made the clever observation that the characters of the *Theogony* were not brought about because they were gods, but because one cannot obviate the regions represented by them in a wholesome picture of reality.

The eastern sentiment, quite contrarily, was that objective reality was not the background of the divine, but the illusory veil that separates us from it. The divine delve on an immaterial realm that only coincided with sensible reality by means of occult correspondences. The immaterial soul, a matter of little importance to the Greek, had a preponderant role. Thus, while the Greek conceived himself to be a member of an objective reality where the divine was clear and manifest, the eastern man conceived reality to be the dream that distorts the divine essence and from which he was to free himself. Where the Greek saw the organic and manifest, the eastern man guessed but a symbol and a mystery. The first looked at the sun and saw the warm glow of Apollo, who lived beyond the sea. The latter saw in it a light that existed only because it had been created by his own sense of sight.

Granted, it is vain to describe the religious spirit of two peoples in such a brief note. However, the synthesis above should suffice to show that the Greek conception of reality was radically opposed to that of eastern peoples, and that it provided to them a complete perspective of the world, a sufficient framework of experience. Whence, then, would the Greek spirit be so susceptible to eastern influence? For, indeed, if an individual is, so to speak, touched by an idea, there must be something in him susceptible to that touch, and the same can be said of a people. If the phenomena that concerns us were reduced only to the peculiarities of Greek culture, we should expect the latter to be quite impenetrable to eastern religious sentiments—in a manner analogous to the way in which we are deaf to a foreign language. The matter is even more problematic when we consider, as we said before, that at the moment in which presocratic philosophy was flourishing, Greece, far from being weakened or in crisis, found itself in an intense period of colonial expansion and power (Lane Fox, 2007). It was besotted with pride and without any need of incorporating foreign myths that were, on top of everything, radically incompatible with those of its own. If eastern peoples played a part, they did so incidentally, but not sufficiently nor, ultimately, necessarily.

A hypothesis that may fill this voids and avoid this flaws must not project over symbolic expressions a rational or empirical character, on top of explaining its anti-idiosyncratic nature and resemblance with other myths. My conjecture is that the different cosmogonies exposed by presocratic philosophers are archetypal images, whose expression in other traditions has been pointed out, but whose influence in presocratic philosophy was overlooked by a hermeneutic tradition not accustomed to such psychological concepts. I do not deny that the discovery of the was a genuine enterprise—I only claim it was propitious to the projection of parallel psychological developments by virtue of the mysterious and complicated nature of the cosmogonic and astronomic phenomena in question, on one hand, and by the lack of a scientific method that protected, so to speak, the inquiry from psychological contamination.

In relation to the meaning of *archetype*, or archetypal image, I must once more refer the reader to the entry *On archetypes*. For the psychoanalytic conception, which I do not follow entirely, I refer him also to both tomes of the ninth volume in Jung's *Complete works*. As a quick summary, I should only say that by *archetype* I understand phylogenetically determined, evolutionary archaic, and affective patterns of representation. That we share a common affective substrate with, at least, all mammals, is an established scientific fact (Panksepp, 2000; Panksepp and Gordon, 2003; Panksepp, 2005; Panksepp, 2011). Furthermore, neuroscience has gathered some evidence in favor of the existence of some of the specific archetypes theorized by Jung (Alcara et. al., 2017). Of course, such evidence is inconclusive and should be carefully interpreted.

Archetypes are not a metaphysical idea, a mystical intuition, nor an abstraction. They are—so I believe—a psychological fact. The advancement of neuroscience in the production of evidence must necessarily be accompanied by the study of their concrete cultural and behavioral manifestations. They are relevant for individual and social life because the structures mediating primitive, affective behavior are, as far as we can tell, also those modulating the construction of meaning—as it is evidence by the obstinate appearance of archetypal images in myths and cosmogonies. They are, in all probability, the product of "value-encoding neural systems" (Panksepp y Burgdof, 2003) associated to the

articulation of meaning.

I will focus on Anaximander for two reasons. Firstly, a study of this sort over the whole corpus of presocratic thought is a colosal endeavor, far beyond my capacity and time. (I should comment to my reader: I write only a very limited number of hours per week, and devote almost all of my time to my scientific endeavors.) Secondly, Anaximander wrote one of the most famous fragments of ancient philosophy; namely, the fragment D-K 12 A 10, whose cosmogonic character makes its comparative analysis somewhat easier.

3 Anaximander

The fragment of interest comes from Plutarch[1] :

¿Anaximandro ... dice que lo infinito es la causa de la generación y destrucción de todo, a partir de lo cual —dice— se segregan los cielos y en general todos los mundos, que son infinitos. Declara que su destrucción y, mucho antes, su nacimiento se producen por el movimiento cíclico de su eternidad infinita... Dice también que, en la generación de este cosmos, lo que de lo eterno es capaz de generar lo caliente y lo frío fue segregado, y que, a raíz de ello, una esfera de llamas surgió en torno al aire que circunda a la tierra, tal como una corteza [rodea] al árbol; al romperse la [esfera] y quedar encerradas [sus llamas] en algunos círculos, se originaron el sol, la luna y los astros.

Anaximander teaches that the origin of all things is "the infinite", also translated as the Unlimited or the Undetermined. In this principle, all pairs of opposites are contained, and so are all worlds, which are released from it. The Unlimited produces the world in a continuous fashion—it is not the creator at a sole and distant point in time, but the perennial and continual agent of the generation and extinction of things—it is *el fondo del movimiento cósmico.*

From the Unlimited, a "seed" (ó, "that which is ... capable of generation") of light and night was segregated. The word ó is an important subtlety. From the Unlimited did not sprout light and darkness, but that which engenders them. Light and night thus constitute the original opposition, begotten by the seed that segregated from the Unlimited. From a psychological perspective, one is tempted to say this is a projection of the immemorial separation of consciousness from primordial unconscious existence, similarly to the words of God: "*let there be light*". It is said that light and night covered the Earth like the cortex would a tree and in a double layer. Light was the interior layer—night was the exterior one. But the husk of light was teared appart—we are not told how nor why—and the fire that once was total was dispersed in small spherical shapes. Those are the stars and *astrums* we observe.

The world to which the seed is thrown, the cosmic state in which this primordial segregation occurs, is the empty space, the mythical that is first proposed in Hesiod's *Theogony.* The word does not express, as Ovidio thought, an aleatory mess. It means something along the line of *cavity* or *cleft.* It was used, for example, to denote the wide opening of a mouth or the aperture of a cave. Its formulation as primordial state is a widespread and well documented archetypal motif. *Gensis 1:2* speaks of the abyss that was shadow only: "*And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep*". The primordial Hunger in the *Vedas*, insofar as hunger is a state of inner emptiness, or the universal symbol of the cave as a transformation place—this is, of gener-

ation by means of prior destruction—are also related to Hesiodic . It is worth mentioning, although briefly, the role of Mercury in alchemy, which Paracelsus said to be "*the concealer of the rest [of things]—their corporeal vessel* (...)—" (Paracelsus Ed, 2018). But what concerns us now is that, in Anaximander, it is the seed of light and shadow what alters that primordial state. That seed only is what induces content and shape in the original void, covering the world with the double layer of its fruit.

It must be said that, from a psychological perspective, the emergence of consciousness is both an individual and a collective phenomena—it is a phylogenetic and an ontogenenetic development. It is clear that unconscious life precedes consciousness, and that the latter emerges from the latter in a continuous fashion—this is, by changes of *degree* and not of nature. But awareness of thought came much later than thought itself, and the emergence of consciousness is matricidal, insofar as the flourishing of understanding comes with the relegation of an entire form of life to a realm of absolute obscurity. Thus, in Anaximander, from the Undetermined sprouts the initial contradiction of day and night, conscious and unconscious life. This emergence, though expressing form- and content-aquisition by means of resolving the original and, quite literally, producing a world—this is, though being a creative act—also creates a tension inherent to the separation of a unity into irreconcilable opposites. This tension seems to be what the tearing of the light sheet expresses, which the philosopher never explains and is, to my eyes, the result of an irrational intuition. Thus, the primordial unity of light is also destroyed—and this immediately after being conformed.

This dissemination of the original light into smaller spheres can be, on its turn, associated to a different psychological fact. The *self* archetype, expressed in the divine source of the Unlimited, is not only an archetype but, insofar as it expresses a totality, union and source of all the rest. Indeed, what psychoanalysis has termed *individuation* can be thought of symbolically as the union of dispersed lights into a single great luminary. These are two opposite forms of totality: the primordial unconscious where everything is, so to speak, undivided—the final integration of opposite poles. The first is the primordial origin, the latter the ultimate end. In this sense, they imply each other as logical necessities. This might be one of the most peculiar aspects of the *self* archetype, if it truly exists—that is, that it expresses as a return to a pristine state of harmony and, at the same time, a positive and forward-looking synthesis.

The image of the dispersed luminosities finds another parallel in the *scintillae* of medieval alchemy. These are subtle flashes of light present in the "substance of transformation", associated to the *anima mundi* and the Holy Spirit. These two notions are different modulations of a unique intuition; namely, that of the hidden and numinous force that drives the world. It is no mystery then that the concept of *scintillae* was associated to them, insofar as it conduces—and in some sense spiritualizes—the process of alchemical transformation. Kunrath calls these luminosities "*mundi futuri seminarium*". They are "semillas de luz diseminadas en el caos".

The *self* archetype is abundant in modulations of various nature. Insofar as it points to the totality of the psyche, it is, in general, the intuition expressed by every form of monism or monotheism. Diogenes of Apollonia, for example, postulated either the Undetermined or the *air* as principle, according to different sources. The philologic discussion interests us not, for if he spoke of air he did

so not as a material principle—this can only be an Aristotelian mistake—but as engendering breath, as that air of life that was insufflated into every thing existent. It is, then, quite identical to Anaximander's principle, at least from a psychological perspective. Simplicius of Cicilia quotes Diogenes in a passage of his *Physics* (151, 20-153, 5):

¿ Me parece (...) que todas las cosas que existen son alteraciones de lo mismo, y que son lo mismo. (...) Pero todas estas cosas se generan a partir de lo mismo, como alteraciones diversas en diversos momentos, y vuelven hacia lo mismo.

But we can even abandon the Greek world, where the philologists contents himself with tracing a more or less clear chain of influences. In the *Bṛhádāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*, the primordial Death, which is Hunger, creates a mind. The new-born mind conceives the following thought: "*que yo tenga un* ātman". The *ātman* is a clear modulation of the self archetype, insofar as it points to the psychological self in its absolute totality, the "transcendent"and "non-transcendent" planes integrated. It is the breath that vivifies all things. As such it relates to the *scintillae* of medieval alchemy and Diogenes' air. The first wish formulated by this primordial mind is, then, a total and unified identity. We are then told of the emergence of the first man, the *Puruṣa*: "En el principio sólo era el ātman. Y no habiendo otro salvo él mismo, pensó y se dijo: "Soy yo". De ahí que su nombre sea 'yo'".

This "yo", this "I", refers not to the self but to the ego, the subject of consciousness. Thus, with this thought, from the primordial *ātman* the *Puruṣa* is formed. We find once again that the formation of consciousness, expressed in the creation of the first man, implies a lost of unity in the psyche, which is teared into *ātman*=self y *aham*=ego. This intuition is the one projected by Anaximander when he speaks of the production of light and night from the ó. This disruptive and disintegrating character is what is expressed in the tearing of the light cortex into smaller and disseminated spheres.

Of the *Puruṣa* we are also told that it has "a thousand eyes". Ignacio de Loyola speaks of a vision that frequently became to him: a glow that sometimes took the shape of a snake, and seemed filled of shining eyes. Monoimo the Arab teaches that the primitive man possessed "many faces and many eyes". Caesarius of Heisterbach says of the *Anthropos*, the first man, that it was like a sphere and had eyes everywhere (*ex omni parte oculata*). Angela of Foligno, en one ocassion, saw in the host "dos ojos esplendidísimos tan grandes que parecía que de la hostia solamente quedaban los bordes". She also recalls: "(...) una vez no ante la hostia, sino en la celda, se me aparecieron ojos con tan gran belleza y tan deleitables que ciertamente no creo que pierda nunca la alegría".

The association between the emergence of consciousness and phenomena involving multiple lights is not, as we see, unusual. Its vinculation with the *self* seems clear insofar as it occurs in experiences of connection with the divine (be it in the Christian host or the Vedic *ātman*). It is worth mentioning here that, once more, we observe the double character of the archetype—its tone of primordial phenomenon and of ultimate truth. As a last comment, this small luminosities, expressed in polyoftalmic or astronomical visions, probably refer the fragmentary phenomena of consciousness, while the greater light (the divine eye or the sun as the eye of God, the *scintilla una* Kunrath spoke of, etc.) is a modulation of the *self*. That these luminosities have in general a spherical shape corresponds to the unifying and integrating sense of the archetype, and

we find this in Anaximander too, since from the huks of light, small fires are dispersed "in some circles". Hippolytus of Athens also tells that, according to Anaximander, "the *astrums* we see are generated as a circle of fire, separating from the fire of the world, each surrounded by air".

What I mean to record here, then, after so many examples, is that Anaximander's doctrine is not at all original. It fits perfectly with a mythological motif of extensive documentation. Even in the idea that the principle governs all things, which appears in Diogenes also, the parallel with the eye motif is evident, insofar as the capacity to see it all is the hyperbolic form of government. So, God has eyes that "están sobre el camino del hombre" and "is always watching everything we do" (*Job, 34:21*), and Chronos is "the one that sees it all"to Sophocles and "the devil that everything sees"in certain Greek funerary inscription. Argos Panoptes, the thousand-eyed giant, is a guardian and protector.

The archetype, naturally, is not confined to ancient mysticism. Emerson, for example, spoke of a mysterious sphere that is and is not always the same.

¿ Genius studies the causal thought, and, far back in the womb of things, sees the rays parting from one orb, that diverge ere they fall by infinite diameters. Genius watches the monad through all his masks as he performs the metempsychosis of nature. Genius detects through the flies, through the caterpillar, through the egg, the constant individual (...).

The primordial sphere, the thought that is the cause of all that is existent, is the *principia*—it is the Pythagoric monad in relation to which every death is but a transmigration—it is the hidden Individual of the phenomenical world. To be and not to be always the same is synthesis of opposites, a common trait of the archetype, insofar as the *self* is not a principle of perfection, but of completeness. The totality of the psyche is precisely that: a totality. Therein lay all shadow and all light, the chthonic and celestial worlds. That Anaximander considers the opposites as contained in the Undetermined is, therefore, consistent with the general phenomenology of the archetype. The symbol of Christ, to name a familiar one, has a distinct enantiodromic nature. The coming of the Antichrist is not a mere prophetic dream, but the product of a psychological law that took Christian mysticism to the idea of a coming reign of shadow. This is particularly manifest in Gnostic thought, among which we may point a particular passage of the *Pistis Sophia*. When Jesus was a child, a spirit that proclaimed himself to be his brother, descended onto Mary. It looks just like Jesus, and she confounds the spirit with him—but he comes from the inferior regions of Chaos. When reminding Jesus of this episode, Mary tells him of the spirit: "he embraced thee and kissed thee, and thou also didst kiss him, and you became one".

Similarly, Angela of Foligno says that, when she heard the Holy Spirit, she wanted to see if she could forget this voice that spoke onto her, and tells: "I started looking at the vines, so as to forget those words (...), and wherever I would turn I would tell myself: 'This is my creature'. And I felt an ineffable divine joy".

The mystical experience was so strong that she felt the whole of creation belonged to her as it originally belonged to God. But immediately after she says: "And then to my memory came all my sins and my vices, and I saw in my nothing but sins and defects".

To Angela of Foligno, the simultaneity of the sweet mystical experience and the assault of her vices and sins onto her memory was shocking. We have

mentioned the Gnostic intuition of the inseparability of Christ and Antichrist, but here we find ourselves with a spontaneous experience of this intuition in a catholic christian, who probably never thought the voice of the Holy Spirit could come accompanied by such horrendous darkness. But if we understood anything about the *self* archetype, such simultaneity cannot surprise us. The experience was hardly interpretable from the framework of catholic dogma, but from a psychological perspective it is impeccably consistent. In general, and in accordance to what we have thus far exposed, the archetype manifests as affected by "equal yet opposite forces".

The exposition of so many examples is not an act of vain erudition. With some luck, I have produced a decent record of the similarities between Anaximander's doctrine and countless other myths. I have nothing else to say, insofar as the whole matter is still obscure to me, and the more I advance with these notes the more I mistrust my own conclusions. I should prefer to close my notes on Anaximander here and resume then in another period of my life, when some of these ideas have matured in my mind. I an contempt to have put in writing that was happening in my mind as I restudied presocratic philosophy.