

8710ADTE060

Affects and Symbols

Transcription by R. Doran of 87100DTE060

Affects and Symbols

1 Affects are related to objects, to one another, and to their subject.

(a) To objects: one desires food, fears pain, enjoys a meal, regrets a friend's illness.

(b) To one another inasmuch as affects vary with objective variation: one desires, hopes for, enjoys the good that is absent, sought for, present; one fears absent evil, becomes disheartened at its approach, sad in its presence.

To one another inasmuch as affects vary with objective variations in personal relations: love, gentleness, tenderness, intimacy, union; hatred, harshness, violence, cruelty, alienation; offence, repentance, satisfaction, forgiveness; offence, contumacy, judgment, punishment.

[handwritten: direct] To one another inasmuch as they conflict: desire despite fear, hoping against hope, joy mixed with sadness; love despite hate, gentleness despite harshness, tenderness despite violence, intimacy despite cruelty, union despite alienation.

(c) To the subject inasmuch as affects are the actuation of the orientation, affective capacities, affective dispositions, affective habits of the subject.

*Quidquid recipitur ... De gustibus non disputandum.*

Differences in age, in sex, in education, in state of life, in temperament, in existential concern, result in differences of affective response to the same objects.

More fundamentally, there is in the human being an affective development that may suffer aberrations; the history of that process terminates in the person with a determinate orientation in life, with determinate affective capacities, dispositions, habits.

2 A symbol is the object of an affect inasmuch as it reveals the orientation and affective development of the subject.

From assumptions about normal behaviour in a given class of people, one can infer from objects what the corresponding affect should be. E. g., you have something to be afraid of.

From actual objects and actual affective responses, one can infer what the orientation, affective capacities, affective dispositions, affective habits of a given individual *in fact* are.

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In both inferences there is presupposed the threefold correlation that connects affects with objects, with one another, and with the subject.

However, in the first case one acknowledges only to disregard the relation between affects and subject: one acknowledges this relation by introducing the abstract *normal* subject; and by that step one removes from consideration the actual subject with his orientation and affective dispositions.

In the second case, on the other hand, one makes no abstract suppositions about normality. One considers actual objects and actual affects to infer what the orientation and dispositions of the subject are.

Such actual objects may be real or imaginary, and if imaginary, they may be thought to be real or known to be imaginary.

These differences are of secondary moment. What is of primary moment is the reality of (1) the affects and (2) the dispositions actuated by the affects. For the symbol is the object, not in its reality, but in its capacity to reveal the dispositions of the subject. This revelatory capacity resides no less in the imaginary than in the real object.

Indeed, this revelatory capacity resides primarily in the imaginary object, for the image is the product of the subject and his dispositions, all the more the less that real situations are influencing him. Hence the peculiar significance of dreams, of reverie, of works of art, of rituals, stories, etc.

It remains that the reality of the object has a secondary significance. For it serves to bring to light (1) the modification of behaviour resulting from the subject's dispositions, (2) the extent to which such dispositions corrupt rational judgments on the reality of objects, (3) the extent to which rational judgment and will are incapable of changing at their pleasure the affective dispositions of the subject.

3 Symbols of the same affective orientation and disposition are affectively undifferentiated.

Hence, (1) they are interchangeable, and (2) they may be combined and organized to increase their intensity and reduce their ambiguity.

Because symbols are effectively undifferentiated, they appear to be at variance with the logical principle of identity. Properly, the symbol is prelogical in the sense that logical considerations are not yet operative. The sword and the sceptre will be distinguished once rationality comes into play. But from an affective viewpoint they are undifferentiated and so, as far as affect is concerned, they are interchangeable.

Because equivalent symbols combine and are organized to enhance their intensity and to achieve their mode of univocity, there comes to light the difference between symbolic and aesthetic significance. The monsters of mythology are just bizarre.

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4 Compounded affects call for compounded symbols.

E.g., opposed affects (courage and terror) call for opposed components in the symbol (St. George and the Dragon).

Since for any given affect there is apt to be a range of equivalent symbols, it follows that compounded affects may express themselves in a range of ranges of compounded symbols according to the mathematical law of combinations.

5. Affective development or aberration involves a transvaluation and a transformation of symbols.

It involves a transvaluation inasmuch as what before was moving now is not moving, and what before was not moving now is moving.

It involves a transformation of symbols inasmuch as the new affective capacities, habits, dispositions of the subject have their own symbolic expression. E.g., the conquest of terror relegates the Dragon to insignificant fancy but it brings forth the meaning of Jonah's whale that swallows harmlessly and soon restores to everyday living.

6 Inversely, symbols that do not submit to transvaluation and transformation reveal a block in development. It is one thing for a child, another for a man, to be afraid of the dark.

7. Affective development has its goal in maturity, i.e., in an integration, a balance, a readiness to meet any situation, that reveals the subject to have found the orientation, to have developed the capacities, to have acquired the habits and dispositions that fit him for his life.

The symbols of affective maturity are synthetic to the point that they contain contradictory components. They involve a *coincidentia oppositorum*, which may be mitigated by alternation (withdrawal and return), by a historical perspective relating a different past to the present, by a progressive perspective relating the present to the future.

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Elementary Symbols (G. Durand, *Les structures anthropologiques de l'imaginaire*, Grenoble 1960)

1 They are elementary in the sense that their occurrence appears to be universal (separated primitive tribes, ancient history, contemporary poets). Hence they are distinct from the Freudian type of symbol which rests on a clinical basis and arises in the accidents of individual biography or cultural history.

Again, they are elementary because their universality indicates that they do not take into account the specific developments of higher cultures or higher religions.

Finally, they are elementary in the sense that they supply a general background that reveals the nature and functioning of symbols. It is on such a background that an understanding of more highly developed or of aberrant symbolization is best approached.

2 Symbols of fear, horror, terror. Therio-, nycto-, cata-morphiz.