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OMNIPOTENCE AND THE PSYCHE: ON A NEW PSYCHOANALYSIS

DANI PARK

73 Pages

In the first chapter, I propose a new psychoanalytical framework in which the subject is driven by a need for omnipotence. Omnipotence, which is redefined in my framework, propels the subject to overcome the Father, or the awareness of self that arises due to psychological maturation and sophistication. I also introduce a psychological development that is defined by the entrance of the subject into different stages (Womb, Eden, Wandering), which are punctuated by events (In-the-Beginning, Fall, Death) which transition the subject into the next stage. Lastly, I introduce my own topographical model of the self in which the subject is constituted by the Me, or the current state of the subject; the I, which is the idealized, fantasized self that can overcome the Father; and the Myself, or the space between the Me and I that contains the inherent contradictions of the self. In the second chapter, I discuss social relations as divided between relations of love and relations of oppression. Drawing on theoretical writings of past thinkers, I build upon the previous chapter to argue that the subject, through the empathic position, must make a choice as to how she views others. Because of the ontological primacy of the subject deriving from her subjective development, the subject comes to see others as her Shadow; she unconsciously adopts the view that only she is ontologically authentic, and others are thus reduced to self-operating machines. These machines are then primed to be converted to Limbs, which together form the Body without Image necessary for the subject to overcome the Father and return to the state of Eden. Lastly, I argue that anathema to this is love, which presupposes

the elevation of the Shadow to a position as her ontological equal, thus precluding any possibility of the other as Limbs. This mutual opposition necessitates their convergence and confrontation at the Altar, in which either the subject or her Shadow is sacrificed and laid to serve as the foundation for a relation of either love or oppression.

KEYWORDS: Desire; Father; Omnipotence; Me; Myself; Psychoanalysis.

OMNIPOTENCE AND THE PSYCHE: ON A NEW PSYCHOANALYSIS

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OMNIPOTENCE AND THE PSYCHE: ON A NEW PSYCHOANALYSIS

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I would like to personally thank the members of my committee who made this process an absolute joy. This paper is dedicated to my family, who made all this possible, and especially to my mother, who made all things possible.

D.P.

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CHAPTER I: ON THE OMNIPOTENT STRUCTURE OF THE SELF

Introduction

The famed psychoanalyst Karen Horney once wrote, “To find a mountain path all by oneself gives a greater feeling of strength than to take a path that is shown” (Horney, 1970, p. 36). It is in this spirit that this paper is dedicated: to find a new path rather than to trudge through the well-worn routes of past thinkers.

I introduce a new developmental theory of the psyche and self which focuses on the role causation plays in the formation of the psyche and subjectivity. Known in its totality as the *omnipotent theory of development*, this theory is a far cry from that originally developed by Freud at the turn of the last century, for, unlike with Freud, I argue that the subject’s ontology is crucial to the development of the psyche; it is an inversion of the Cartesian claim—I *am*, therefore I *think*. Heavily inspired by theological and literary elements, this theory attempts to explain the self using the structure of causation to explain why, at her core, the subject must cause. Furthermore, the omnipotent theory has three main stages, or states, of being: the Womb, Eden, and the Wandering. Interspersed between each stage are what I refer to as events, or transitions, which propel the subject onto the next stage of development: In-the-Beginning, the Fall, and death.

Central to the development of the self is the Father, which, unlike the paternal figure of both Freud and Lacan, is not related to a male figure—or, indeed, any figure—but rather to the inability of the subject to cause everything. This paternal presence, in turn, forces the subject to exist in a state of causal incompleteness, and therefore serves as the foundation for the subject’s innate drive to overcome the Father and return to a natural state of omnipotence.

Lastly, I will introduce a topological model of the self composed of the Me, Myself, and I. In doing so, I hope to introduce a self that, through her innate drives, is constantly at odds with reality. By doing so, my model helps to explain that certain features of modern capitalist societies, the most prominent being rapid technological advances, can be viewed not as a fluke or an idiosyncratic characteristic, but as inherent and “natural” to selfhood in the collective drive to overcome the Father.

This paper is, undoubtedly, an ambitious project, limited in both its space as well as its scope to a general introduction. There will therefore be many topics of both psychoanalytical and philosophical concern that will not be covered. However, it is my hope that, through this general theoretical framework, many of these topics may be covered in later papers and discussions.

The Womb

Crucial in understanding the eventual emergence of selfhood and its structure is the concept of *severance*, or the process by which the tripartite self is conceived. The subject as a fetus as a still undifferentiated form is indistinguishable from its host in both the figurative (there is no separation of consciousness from an Other) and literal (the fetus is physically inseparable from the womb) sense. I call this state the *Womb*, in which the subject lacks consciousness to desire as well as the deficiency necessary to form desire because the subject simultaneously does and does not exist.¹ In this state, the subject cannot “be” *because there is no differentiation at all*. Thus, the subject (S) and Other (O) are exactly the same:

$$S = \pm O$$

¹ Lacan states that “the crushing of demand in [the course of] satisfaction cannot occur without killing desire” (Seminar VIII, 239). Desire arises from the lack of something.

In other words, the subject and Other exist in a state of nothingness (defined as the lack of differentiation):

This state of the Womb continues as long as the Other exists as the totality of the subject's emergence and possibility within it; that is, as long as the Other acts as the environment within which the subject can exist without limitations or objections to being.

In this regard, the Womb seems to have much in common with the Lacanian theory of the Imaginary. In this realm:

...the infant imagines a condition of absolute unity in the dyadic relation to the mother, in which no distinction exists between self and other, or subject and object. In order to achieve subjecthood, the infant must come to recognize itself as separate, as part not whole. In other words, in order to occupy the 'I' position, the infant must recognize the existence of that which is not-I. Lacan argues that a significant step in this process occurs with the mirror phase, when the infant comes to recognize its reflection in the mirror (either the literal mirror or the 'reflection' of the self given back to the infant by the perceptions of others) (Brontë and Nestor, 1995, p. xxxi).

According to Lacan, through the mirror stage, the foundation of subjectivity is set. In the Imaginary, the "absolute unity" that defines the relation between mother and child necessitates a state in which distinctions are nonexistent and, indeed, impossible.

However, although the Womb has some similarities with the Imaginary, there does exist a notable difference, namely that there is no "absolute unity" in the state of the Womb. For this notion of unity implies the integration of two distinguishable entities into one. Even if it is

“absolute”, the concept of unity is utterly impossible in the Womb, for there *does not exist two separate entities* in the form of the subject and the Other which endure as an absolute singularity. Individuation, as the process through which distinct objects can arise through the imposition of ontological boundaries, is entirely absent in the Womb. This means that the subject and Other exists, not in absolute unity, but absolute *equality*; the subject and Other do not exist outside of, or apart from, itself, as the equation above signifies. Thus, there cannot be such a thing as a subject or an Other: neither individuation nor signification can penetrate the Womb.

Yet, because of the impenetrability of individuation, the Womb, unable to be anything other than itself, contains the sum totality of all manifestations or potentialities of being through an infinite combination of equalities. In other words, because the structure of the Womb consists in both relations of equality and, subsequently, the impotence of individuation, any variable, which itself is impossible, must be equal to everything as well as itself. Thus²:

$$S = \pm S = \pm O$$

It is important to note the nature of contradiction in the Womb. The fact that the subject and Other cannot be distinguished in any way because such means of distinction are unavailable means that contradictions—unacceptable for the psyche and its constitution through the act of experiencing—not only flourish but are a necessary element of the Womb. For without individuation, an element in the Womb necessarily is its own negation of being—contradiction—meaning that the non-individuated subject necessarily conforms to its own ontological antithesis.

This can be seen in the structure of equality itself. The subject and Other in an equality are the same thing, yet they concurrently maintain their separateness as well. For the collapse of

² This equation simply states that the impossible “subject” (S) is itself and its contradiction ($\pm S$), as well as all possible manifestations of being (O).

the Other into the subject not only presupposes the supremacy of the subject, but also that the Other is something that remained differentiated from it; the same holds true for the subject into the Other. Thus³:

$$(S = O) \neq S$$

$$(S = O) \neq O$$

Given this inherent contradiction, the subject and Other are bound together in pure singularity by the sheer force of equality: anything less, like mere unity, cannot suffice.

This ability of the Womb to contain contradictory elements of being serves as an inherent counter to the tendency towards individuation. Individuation, as a process, demands a sense of ontological capabilities which arise from the will to be. For that, one would need a subject with autonomy. Certainly, contradiction exists *now*, but the ability to eventually collapse this contradiction through an exertion of autonomous decision-making becomes a defining element of individuation. In other words, individuation can only occur when the possibility of an Other that can contain or house the contradictory elements which still exist as the residual consequence of the imprint of the subject in reality is realized *as an actual possibility*. Thus, the Other and its presence becomes crucial in the process of individuation, and its absolute denial in the realm of the Womb effectively serves to abolish individuation and all of its means of expression in reality.

It is important here to note that this fundamental inability for individuation to occur also means there is an absence of desire within this realm. As the Womb precedes the subject (as well as forever denies its ontology), the subject has little to no relation to the Womb at all. Thus, any supposed feelings—especially those that seek the presumed comforts of the Womb—are mistaken or are the result of an intense desire to regress to what the subject may believe to be her

³ It should be noted that these equations are not assertions of predicate logic (as logic collapses in the Womb) but rather illustrations meant to demonstrate the nature of the Womb and the paradoxical structure of equality in this state.

“beginning”. This means an incontrovertible refutation of many of the theories regarding the womb, especially the famous (or infamous) theory of *regressus ad uterum* by Sándor Ferenczi, who argues, in part, that the process of sexuality and its various expressions develops in an attempt to return to the comforts of the mother’s womb:

If now we survey the evolution of sexuality from the thumbsucking of the infant through the self-love of genital onanism to the heterosexual act of coitus, and keep in mind the complicated identifications of the ego with the penis and with the sexual secretion, we arrive at the conclusion that the purpose of this whole evolution, therefore the purpose likewise of the sex act, can be none other than an attempt on the part of the ego—an attempt at the beginning clumsy and fumbling, then more consciously purposive, and finally in part successful—to return to the mother's womb, where there is no such painful disharmony between ego and environment as characterizes existence in the external world (Ferenczi, 1968, p. 18).

While it is tempting to adopt this theoretical position in light of how one may “perceive” the mother’s womb, such assumptions, I would argue, are themselves projections of fantasy which are applied retrospectively. As I will argue later, any desire to return to the fetus consists of the desire to return to a period before the emergence of the Father.

Lacan posits another important theoretical reasoning for this desire for the Womb: there is a deeply profound desire to return to an impossible synthesis. As Anthony Wilden writes, “...the subject’s profoundest desire to be ‘One’ again (to control the Other to whom he becomes subjected) is totally and absolutely irreducible. It is this desire for what is really annihilation (non-difference) that makes human beings human” (Lacan and Wilden, 1968, p. 191). This desire, which is at once impossible and inevitable, produces a longing for the state of the

Imaginary, “The subject *is* the binary opposition of presence and absence, and the discovery of One—the discovery of difference—is to be condemned to an eternal desire for the nonrelationship of zero, where identity is meaningless (Lacan and Wilden, 1968, p. 191).

However, as with Ferenczi, the same criticism stands: there is no means through which any such desire arises for this impossible synthesis with the mother. The subject finds its being, and therefore any locus and formation of desire, forever denied in the state of the Womb; she therefore finds no loyalty to or desire emanating from this state.

The structure of the Womb is that of a synthesis of binary elements in opposition.⁴ As the Womb contains the totality of possibilities, it must contain both something and its antithesis, only capable of collapsing if one of the two elements are either abolished or transformed into something that lacks its antithesis. However, the Womb, although maintaining the impossibility of an individual subject, also contains the elements of potentiality of that very subject. Before the subject-Other dichotomy, the Womb houses the subject-as-Other and the Other-as-subject.⁵ This means that the element of the subject is there, but is simultaneously denied by the element of its antithesis in the form of the Other; it can be said to “exist”, but in a manner conducive to its own nonexistence. Ontologically then, the subject in the Womb can be said to assert, not itself, but its Other. In doing so, the Womb can preserve its status containing all possibilities; in this sense, the Womb can be said to be highly stable and static, for as long as the subject asserts its Other and vice versa it cannot be ontologically independent from its antithesis—the contradiction is forever tenable! Thus, the subject can only go so far as to

⁴ This can be demonstrated clearly through set notation:

$$Womb = \{x \mid x \in A \text{ and } x \in \neg A\}$$

⁵ More specifically, the Womb *is* the subject-as-Other and the Other-as-subject, as any distinction arising from the Womb would itself be a form of individuation that is impossible.

preserve and present itself as a possibility in the Womb. There, it exists alongside the Other and the consequent individual as the eventual synthesis.

Yet, if the subject can preserve herself only as a possibility and nothing more, then the question of how it can be that such an eventuality can emerge as a stable and predictable event must be answered. To this, the answer can be said to lie in the mother, whose own ontological and subjective existence acts as the very foundation upon which the possible subject becomes the inevitable subject. In other words, it is the mother whose existence operates as the ontological surrogate for the possible subject; the subject “latches” onto the mother’s body, and her body becomes the point of synthesis for the mother and the subject. It is in this manner that the subject, who is inseparable and indistinguishable from the mother in the Womb, can simultaneously maintain herself as a possibility and an inevitability. In many ways, this is obvious: we know that pregnancy leads to the birth of a child. Yet it is this stage of pregnancy, in which the subject is not considered separately from the mother, which serves as the crucial precursor for the ontological assurances of the subject from which subsequent stages of development can occur.

The containment of the Womb of utter contradictions also plays a role in the absence of any desire. In the case of the Womb, such absence of desire emerges due to the inability of relations to establish causation, precisely because such relations themselves presupposes the very individuation that is impossible in the Womb. It is certainly true that there is no desire because the pre-individuated subject is incapable of lacking anything, but this lack in turn is denied any means of expression, namely through that of causal assertions, in the Womb. This, as we will see, will stand in stark contrast to the state of Eden, to which we now turn.

In-the-Beginning

Alone, the Womb exists as a highly stable state.⁶ After all, equality is the most stable of all structures. Like thermodynamic equilibrium, what is needed is an external or “intrusive” event that fundamentally alters this stability. In my theoretical framework, this intrusion comes in the form of physical childbirth. It is through the literal expulsion of the child from the womb that forces the transformation and subsequent reconfiguration of the equality structure that constituted the Womb. Structurally, what differentiates In-the-Beginning from mere birth is the symbolic and ontological significance the former entails.

In-the-Beginning is not so much a stage of psychological development as it is an event of consequential significance. Chronologically in between the states of the Womb and Eden, In-the-Beginning collapses the synonymy of the subject and Other, for ontological equality is no longer tenable in the Womb. What results from In-the-Beginning is the replacement of ontological equality for that of symbolic equality, which fully develops in the state of Eden. However, symbolic equality, as we will see, is not a suitable replacement, and the ever more complex structuration of desire as the subject develops becomes too much, leading to the collapse of the truly omnipotent subject and confrontation with the Father.

The physical birth of the child represents the very first ontological—and psychological—assertion: the subject, once purely theoretical, is now a real and distinguishable part of reality. With this single assertion—that the subject *is*—the Womb is no more. All the potentialities have collapsed under the pressures of an emergent ontology. The child is no longer a *could-be* but an *is*, and it is this change that propels the subject into the state of Eden.

⁶ This can be compared to the concept of “stable elements” in chemistry, or thermodynamic stability, in which a system has reached an equilibrium with its surrounding environment. In this state, the system is more or less conserved (preserved) unless acted upon by an outside force. See McNaught, A. D., & Wilkenson, A. (Eds.). (2014). The IUPAC compendium of chemical terminology. *Stable*. <https://doi.org/10.1351/goldbook>

Furthermore, In-the-Beginning denotes not only the entrance of the subject into Eden, but also the necessary reconfiguration of the structure of the subject. Granted, such reconfiguration occurs in Eden, but the occurrence of In-the-Beginning marks the infeasibility of the current subjective structure of equality. As we shall see, causation as a substitute structure is not nearly as stable: it must always “be in motion” due to the various elements which mark its composition, unlike equality which only need refer to itself.

However, as much as In-the-Beginning marks a point of upheaval and transformation, it is also the very point from which the subject as a discernable entity is actualized. As stated before, the subject in the Womb was merely a potentiality, simultaneously possible and impossible. From In-the-Beginning onward, the establishment of the psyche is set and, lacking the contradictions of the Womb, can progress due to the possibility of the subject to *experience* a significant development.

Eden

The next stage happens in the period between In-the-Beginning and the emergence of the Father. In-the-Beginning denotes the transformation of the relation between subject and object from absolute equality to that of two separate entities that must somehow replicate the previous state. The beginnings of the severed subject, or one which is wrenched away from the state of the Womb after birth, has emerged. The mother, which had once served as the absolute environment for the subject, is now externalized and individuated in the form of the differentiated-(m)Other.⁷ Whereas the mother in the state of the Womb sustained the child in a passive, biological sense

⁷ The term “(m)Other” is used to indicate both the synthesis and distinction between the mother, who up until now served as the physical structure within which the Womb is sustained, and the Other, in which the potential subject is simultaneously maintained as a possibility and an impossibility. In the Womb, the two are closely intertwined; this does not change in the state of Eden.

(there was no conscious exertion of energy and resources directed at the subject), the (m)Other now reverts to an *active* role in which the subject is cared for in its entirety through conscious efforts. The subject has entered the state of *Eden*.

Eden is a transformative stage, one in which the focus shifts from a realm obsessed with its ontological position to a psychological one. In other words, while the Womb is concerned with existence of the subject as merely one of the sum totality of possible existences, the state of Eden, imbued with the presupposition that the subject already *is*, can now shift to psychological, or mental, development because such realm is now not only possible, but necessary in dealing with its shifting position in regard to the Other. Furthermore, the reconfiguration of equality into causal relations consisting of the subject and Other brings about consciousness, for the existence of an external reality calls for a negotiation between the subject and Other: this is what I refer to as *experience*.

Experience can only emerge when there exists a harmony, or synchronicity, in which the subject must accept the logic of an externalized reality which demands, without compromise, a singularity of being or, more specifically, a singularity to which being can attach. As this new reality can only be sustained through the adoption of boundaries that unequivocally delineates between and among objects—reality itself being the aggregation of specific singularities and therefore a singularity itself—the subject must adopt this form in order to engage with a now-alien Other that was once inseparable from herself. This singularity, in turn, facilitates the merging of all ontological possibilities into a specific subjective perspective which constitutes the “experiencer” who then can experience.

It is at this point that the concept of infantile omnipotence begins to materialize as a reconfiguration of equality. Melanie Klein (1921 [1919]) notes the sense of omnipotence that the

child believes herself to have specifically because of its relation to and its bestowment of omnipotence onto the parent. While in agreement, I argue further that omnipotence at this stage arises from the trait that is more or less continued from the Womb—the negation of desire through the prevention of deficiencies—in conjunction with the development of primary narcissism in the subject. In primary narcissism, the subject’s own “libido is directed toward his or her own body and its satisfaction rather than toward the environment or objects”.⁸ However, such a narcissism being directed towards itself must necessarily imply the existence of something that directs such libidinal energy: the subject.

The emergence of infantile omnipotence and the subject can only happen through the significant reconfiguration of the relation involving the (m)Other and the subject. The (m)Other, serving as the Other that provides, fulfills all the needs of the subject, whose libidinal energy is free to be directed toward herself. However, this new relation—superficially similar to the original relation in the Womb—is inferior, for while omnipotence is guaranteed in the Womb, it is achieved in Eden *as long as* the child’s every need is fulfilled. This is far from the certainty in the Womb; although the (m)Other diligently tries to fulfill the subject’s every need, it is ultimately unsustainable.⁹ Eventually the (m)Other yields to the Father.

Before discussing the introjection of the Father, however, it is important to note that the act of severance and the subsequent rise of infantile omnipotence is crucial to understanding the transformation of the association between the mother and child into that of a *causal* relation. The literal separation of the mother and child—a feature distinctly absent in the Womb—forces the *symbolic* separation of the (m)Other and child into that of a dyadic distinction in which the two

⁸ “Apa Dictionary of Psychology,” American Psychological Association (American Psychological Association), accessed December 20, 2021, <https://dictionary.apa.org/primary-narcissism>.

⁹ The link between the physical act of birth and anxiety is not a particularly new concept in psychoanalysis. For instance, Freud writes, “Birth is both the first of all dangers to life and the prototype of all the later ones that cause us to feel anxiety, and the experience of birth has probably left behind in us the expression of affect which we call anxiety” (Freud, 1971).

exist as a separated synthesis in constant need of ontological and psychological precedence. In other words, the literal severance of the child from the womb through birth forces the actualization of the possibility of the *subject as an ontological and psychological assertion independent of the mother*. Thus, whereas the subject is impossible in the state of the Womb, severance initiates the process by which the subject becomes inevitable.

It could certainly be implied that a subject emerges from the (m)Other and is therefore causally beholden to it. However this is not the case; such a statement actually exhibits the *inverse* of the relation that materializes in the state of Eden, namely one in which the subject causes the (m)Other! This can be explained by the negation and dismissal of a spatiotemporal (and therefore objective) notion of causation in favor of what I refer to as *subjective, or subject-centered, causation*, in which causal relations are always defined and bound in relation to the subject. This form of causation arises from severance and the role of the (m)Other in fulfilling the needs of the child and further acting as the main prophylaxis preventing the formation of lack in the child. Because of this relation, the subject does not come to see herself as the causal result or effect but rather the cause itself of the (m)Other in the state of Eden.

But how can this subjective causation come to terms with an objective one—one which reality seems to demand? An apple on a table, for example, is not *caused* by the subject but exists seemingly independently of the subject and her actions and being. The answer lies in experience, for by experiencing the apple¹⁰ the subject severs whatever objective existence the apple maintained within reality and inserts herself as the cause of said apple. Through experience the subject can always transform objective causal relations into subjective causal ones. In fact, the funneling of all of reality through experience means that *every* objective relation is changed

¹⁰ Experience in this instance is synonymous with the act of perceiving the apple.

into a subjective relation and that the subject, as the one who experiences, must exist prior to and therefore serve as the creator, or causer, of reality.

Experience thus places the subject as the *antecedent* to reality and therefore the cause of it in general. It is to this end that I refer to subjective causation—it is not the actual *belief* that the subject is the cause of everything, but rather that, through the structure of experience, the subject forever serves as the cause of her reality. In other words, subjective causation is to be found *within* the very structure of experience and therefore reality, rather than as a result of it. This, of course, means that subjective causation can never be altered or altogether abolished without also committing the same to the subject herself.

This form of causation is further perpetuated by the inevitable inability of the (m)Other to fulfill all of the needs and subjective desires of the child. Lack, once impossible in the Womb, is now an inevitability, one which forces the subject to define, and be defined by, her failure to maintain the subjective status of omnipotence. However, by having the subject as the source of causation, all subsequent relations—the very presence of which implies the failure of the continued state of Eden—sustain the subject as the originator, thus implying a return to omnipotence. Thus, rather than completely sever ties to any notion of omnipotence and accept her limitations, subject-centered causation *preserves* omnipotence¹¹ by reconfiguring it as a possibility that, although lost at the moment, can be obtained once again.

However, for the time being, the subject, severed and faced with an Other that can no longer provide for the subject in her totality, must face the unresolved—and irreconcilable—truth that she is no longer *the* singularity of existence: she must now encounter the Father.

¹¹ This causal structure demands a reconceptualization of omnipotence as well. By omnipotence I do not mean what is traditionally defined as “maximal power”.# Rather, I argue that omnipotence is the state of no desire; the state in which desire cannot arise because there is nothing from which desire can arise. The foundation of desire—the indication of a deficiency—is utterly absent in the state of omnipotence. Omnipotence thus is not the presence of something but the absence of anything.

The Rise of the Father

The Father, it should be said, is not and should not be confused with the presence or role of the father in the traditional nuclear family. Freud depended on the distinct gender roles of the father and the mother in the psychosexual development of the child: the father in this sense is reduced to that of a “rival” for the sexual desire for the mother. This later culminates in severe anxiety, in which:

The boy at the phallic phase has identified himself with his penis. The high narcissistic evaluation of this organ can be explained by the fact that just at this period it becomes so rich in sensations, and distinct tendencies actively to pierce with it come in the foreground... The fear that something might happen to this sensitive and prized organ is called castration anxiety (Fenichel, 2014, p. 119).

However, just as the Oedipus complex requires reformulation, so too does the Father. In my conceptualization, the term Father has only a superficial etymological attachment to the original usage of the word in its gendered presuppositions.

The Father now represents the *event* in which the (m)Other can no longer sustain the relation of the subject with herself: this is when lack in the subject becomes too great for the (m)Other to bear. The Father can be said to be the *effect* of this incapability. In other words, the Father emerges once the illusion of omnipotence—and the structure that maintains it—can no longer hold.

The emergence of the Father also demands the final separation of the (m)Other and the Other. Before, in both the Womb and Eden, the (m)Other was utterly indistinguishable from the Other; the caretaker and the Other are one and the same. With the Father, however, the (m)Other and the Other are made to be two distinct entities. The (m)Other is reduced to the role of

caretaker or “parent”, a representation which is eventually further reduced to that of another subject, imbued with limitations.¹² This reduction of the parent to a status synonymous with the subject leads to the realization that the parent, once conceived of as omnipotent, is now in the same position as the subject, and is therefore incapable of overcoming the Father and transcending the limitations imposed by Him. The subject must therefore search elsewhere for the return to Eden.

The Father manifests itself in the form of desires. For the first time in the life of the child, she experiences a lack in her being—she experiences something that is not a part of herself but she yearns for it to be. Yet, without the Father, the subject would have no established mechanism for coping with this experience. As a result, the subject, when faced with lack, or the knowledge of the separation of herself from the Other, would collapse under the now-irrelevant structure of equality. In this sense, desire can be redefined as a yearning to reincorporate an object as part of the subjective body. Or, to put it another way, a yearning to take back the object—once a part of herself—from the firm grip of the Father.

The general disruption caused by the Father also precipitates the splintering of the once unified psyche into a conscious and unconscious realm. If the Father existed purely in the conscious realm, the subject, and subjectivity, would be rendered unbearable, for the overt awareness of Him would necessarily entail an existence in which the subject could never overcome her own limitations but accept them without question, thereby eliminating the will that is necessary for the subject’s continued drive to live. By casting the Father out of the conscious realm into the unconscious, the subject preserves as a possibility the hope that she will overcome Him and return to Eden. She is certainly aware of her limits, but the absence of the Father means

¹² No longer is the parent imbued with omnipotence but is seen as merely a “part” of the Other. An inability to accept the truth that the parent too is limited by their subjectivity leads to a general collapse or incompatibility with the new reality.

that the subject can approach these limitations with the hope that she may (and will) push past these limits.

The Father also means that, for the first time, the subject must direct attention towards something that is not herself. The subject, having only had to direct her energy to an Other that is herself, had no need—or recourse—to conduct affairs with anything outside of herself; she is the totality of her existence insofar as she is not aware of anything apart from her. The Father represents a rude intrusion, for His presence means that the subject now has an object external to her; she must now direct her focus onto something *other than* herself. The resulting awareness of this distinction—that she is not the Father—necessarily leads to the conclusion that the subject too is distinct: she is not the totality of existence but merely a part of it. It is this awareness by the subject of her own distinction that leads to the imprisonment of the subject within the *Image of the Father*.¹³ The Image maintains and regulates the boundaries of distinction formed which limit the realm of the subjective and thus allow for subjectivity to emerge from an otherwise indistinguishable Other; the Image symbolizes the inherent constraints of casual capabilities of the subject that defines her relation to the Father and later, reality. It is within this Image and its confines that consciousness emerges through the distinction of the subject and the Other.

Through the Image, the subject can now emerge with a more or less structured psyche, albeit one that is undeveloped. Yet the allowance for the presence of the Father threatens to upend subjective causation, for if the Father caused the subject, then the Father also causes the very things that the subject asserts as her effect. The (unconscious) ceding of causation to the Father produces a highly conflicted perspective, one in which subjective causation is preempted by a paternal causation and experience is replaced by determinism. The subject, in turn, exists in

¹³ Hereafter referred to simply as the Image.

a highly ambivalent state in which her innate drive to overcome the Father clashes with her unconscious knowledge that the Father is the cause of her existence.

This situation can best be seen in cases of depression in which the subject and Father are conflicted over the role of causation: both desire to be the cause of reality. In depression, symptoms manifest as, "...feeling sad, anxious or hopeless. The condition can also cause difficulty with thinking, memory, eating and sleeping" (Cleveland Clinic, 2020). Within my theoretical framework, these symptoms can be classified within the depressive-assertive paradigm. Feelings of hopelessness and anxiety can arise as the subject, who unconsciously ceded causal authority to the Father, loses any semblance of control of the reality which before she had readily molded. The subject becomes alienated from her own reality and, subsequently, from her own existence; she exists within a reality that is not hers with a subjectivity that is not hers.

This paradigm and the ontopsychological assumptions underpinning it has its commonalities with the psychoanalysis of Roy Schafer, who too was concerned with the concept of human *agency*, in which, "The thread...was the struggle to reestablish the *person* as the agent of his experience—to reassemble the *subject* that has been dispersed in the creation of psychoanalytic understandings" (Mitchell and Black, 2016, p. 247). By doing so, the subject can, through structured psychotherapy, reassert causation and repress once again the Father to the unconscious. For Schaffer:

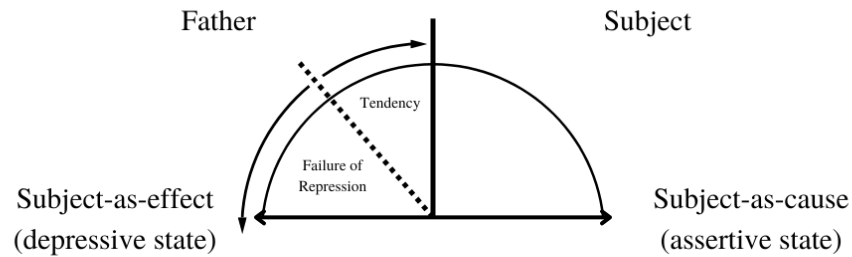
Her objectionable experience of herself and her world is not simply given or discovered; she is dedicated to keeping both herself and her world just this way. She is the agent of her world, the designer, the builder, the interpreter, yet she disclaims her agency and thereby feels herself to be at the mercy of her situation and her fate. As the analyst

comes to understand and experience herself as the agent of her (internal and external) world, it becomes possible for her to imagine herself making other choices, acting in the world and organizing experience in a more open, more constructive fashion (Mitchell and Black, 2016, p. 247).

In certain cases, though not all, the inability to assert causation leads to an inability to comprehend and engage with reality. From this perspective, suicide can indeed be seen as a viable, albeit drastic, means of escaping this contradiction.

Figure 1

Model of the Depressive-Assertive State



The Father and the Oedipus complex

The Oedipus complex plays a crucial role in my theory of the psychosocial self; it is through the Oedipus complex that the Me and the I (discussed later) are differentiated. Moreover, it is the main mechanism through which the subject, in a narcissistic relation with herself, is forced to engage with a reality brought about by the externalization of the Other.

Freud initially conceptualized the Oedipus complex in order to explain the incestuous desires of the son for his mother. Freud writes:

When after this [the child] can no longer maintain the doubt which makes his parents an exception to the universal and odious norms of sexual activity, he tells himself with cynical logic that the difference between his mother and a whore is not after all so very great, since basically they do the same thing. The enlightening information he has received has in fact awakened the memory-traces of the impressions and wishes of his early infancy, and these have led to a reactivation in him of certain mental impulses. He begins to desire his mother herself in the sense with which he has recently become

acquainted, and to hate his father anew as a rival who stands in the way of this wish; he comes, as we say, under the dominance of the Oedipus complex. He does not forgive his mother for having granted the favour of sexual intercourse not to himself but to his father, and he regards it as an act of unfaithfulness (Freud, 1989, p. 391-392).

What specifically deserves mention is the role the father plays in the Oedipus complex: as a sexual rival who stands in the way of the boy's desire for his mother. It is the threat posed by the father, in the form of castration, that forces the boy to direct his sexual desires to other women.

Needless to say, this conception of the Oedipus complex has been subject to much criticism and revisions, especially from feminist and queer theorists.¹⁴ However, to ignore such a valuable concept is to throw the proverbial baby out with the bathwater. Instead, the Oedipus complex deserves, not rejection, but reformulation in light of the relation between the subject and the state of Eden and the causal structure of subjectivity that results.

The state of omnipotence can only be sustained if the subject exists in an absolute synthesis with the Other. In other words, the subject, in being omnipotent, can never be *aware* of the Other, for such a realization of the Other would necessarily imply the Other as something that is separate, and therefore distinct, from the subject. This sudden awareness is what I refer to as the *eating of the forbidden fruit*—the subject is aware of a distinction that precludes her continued existence in Eden. This would result in a fundamental contradiction in which the Other, which in its current form exists to sustain the subject in the state of omnipotence, also serves to produce lack in the subject.

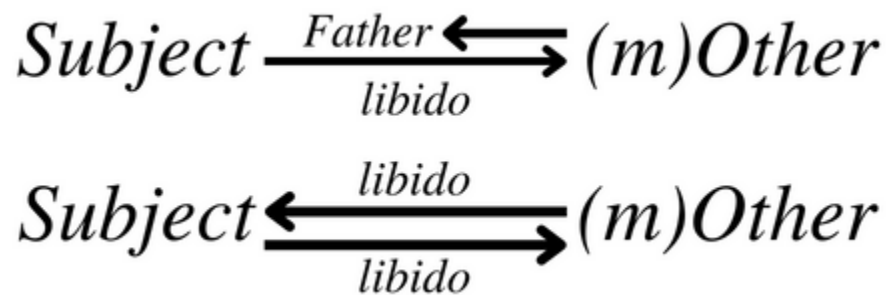
The Oedipus complex fundamentally restructures sexuality as well. Initially, the child in Eden directs her libido towards an Other that is herself (the (m)Other); her only expression of

¹⁴ For a particularly poignant critique of the Oedipus complex and traditional gender roles, see Shenkman, G. (2016). Classic psychoanalysis and male same-sex parents: A reexamination of basic concepts. *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 33(4), 585–598.

sexuality is an autoeroticism between herself and Other. However, in the aftermath of the Father, she now directs her libido to an externalized Other, one which is produced by distinction. This distinction causes a breakdown of this autoeroticism due to the position of the Father as an obstacle preventing the reciprocity of libidinal forces. Whereas the child continues to direct her libido at the Other, the Other, now separated, cannot reciprocate due to the inability of the Other to maintain its subjectivity in the face of the Father—the reduction of the (m)Other to the Other robs it of its subjective agent and therefore the ability to return the libidinal forces directed at it. The Father therefore serves as a catalyst for a new form of sexuality, or the structure and subsequent expression of the libido directed at this new Other. Because the libido is at the heart of the drive for omnipotence (discussed in greater detail in the section dedicated to the Wandering), sexuality and its various expressions are the primary means by which the subject not only represses the Father but also overcomes the Father.

Figure 2

Pre- and Post-Oedipal Structure of Sexuality



For the first time, the emergence of the Father brings awareness that the subject is distinct—that there exists something that is apart from her and that she is aware of such.¹⁵ The subject, realizing the implications of this awareness, must deal with this immediate threat in some manner, lest it destroys Eden altogether. She *represses* this awareness, but does so in a manner completely different from the repression usually thought of in psychoanalysis—she *embeds* this repression into her very being.

Through the embedding of the Father into the very ontology of the subject the Father becomes the foundation for the psyche itself. In fact, this ontological repression is necessary for the psyche, for it is in the hidden acknowledgment that the subject is not omnipotent—that she has limitations—that allows for the psyche to become structured in anticipation of engagement with reality. This, of course, means that the subject cannot “uncover” this particular repression—through introspection or therapy— but can nevertheless intuit the influence of the Father. (For instance, we wish to do things that are impossible not because the idea itself is necessarily impossible but because our current conditions prevent its actualization.) Through repression, the threatening existence of the Father is tempered by the rise of a hope that the subject can return to an Eden before His intrusion. However, it should be noted that the repression of the Father does not automatically return the subject to Eden—she cannot undo awareness of the Father—but it does recover the possibility that she may return; hope is sufficient for the formation of the main drive towards omnipotence.

The repression of the Father is the most fundamental repression possible—through embedding the Father the subject comes into being as the Father. The subject cannot separate and “extract” herself from the Father, for to do so would be a contradiction in the most fundamental sense in that the subject would have to find a perspective that is external to herself in order to

¹⁵ This is the foundation for anxiety, which is structured according to this awareness.

“see” the Father. Thus the Father is immune from the usual mechanisms of defense: traditional methods like splitting and introjection are rendered meaningless in this realm. What this entails is the bounding of the subject in the Image, the bounds within which the subject can exist and engage with her external reality.

The Fall and the Nature of Events

The emergence of the Father at the moment in which the Other cannot hold also marks the *Fall*, or the point in which the subject can no longer exist in the state of Eden; it would be perhaps more appropriate and accurate to state that the emergence of the Father precipitates the Fall. The actualization of the Father and the awareness of distinction brought about from the eating of the forbidden fruit immediately precedes the Fall due to their causal tie, for the presence of the Father makes the aforementioned state of omnipotence impossible and demands the progression of the subject into a new phase of development.

Structurally, the Fall has much in common with In-the-Beginning, for both constitute at their cores the singularity of an event. In other words, both the Fall and In-the-Beginning define and sustain the transition from one stage to the next. It would be more accurate to state that these events are imbued with the very contradiction which make the stages preceding them untenable. Thus, if the Womb is structured according to equality ($S = O$), then In-the-Beginning is structured such that it is expressed as the direct contradiction of the Womb ($S \neq O$). Moreover, the succeeding stage should not be seen as detached or unaffected by the events preceding it, for the structuring of these events provides the foundation upon which the next stage develops. It can be said that the next stage is as much an attempt to reorganize the preceding stage so as to maintain its key essence while also acting in accordance with the event as it is the emergence of

a new structure. Thus, while In-the-Beginning makes the structure of the Womb impossible for the new state of Eden, the Womb serves as the object of desire from which Eden attempts to replicate in its own constitution. The result: the state of Eden ($S \Leftrightarrow O$) is the product of the attempt to conceive a new Womb without conflicting with In-the-Beginning; it, like all subsequent stages, is the result of compromise. Thus, Eden has transcended the Womb by incorporating elements of its antithesis into an assertion that the subject and Other, although no longer *purely* equal, are now engaged in a closed, binary relation of differentiated equivalents in which the subject causes herself through her inseparability with the Other. In this exact manner, Eden too collapses in the presence of its contradiction—the Fall:

$$(S \Leftrightarrow O)$$

which represents the demise of Eden through its negation of its structural premise.¹⁶

Lastly, it is important to note that there exists a certain level of determinism at play with regards to these two events. This determinism is inevitable, for both are derived from necessary and predictable ties to corresponding moments in reality—In-the-Beginning arises from birth and the Fall from physical incapacities.

Furthermore, the structuring of these events as direct contradictions forces the subject through development; unlike Freud, who posited that certain personality traits arise out of the subject “being stuck” in a particular stage of psychosexual development, I argue that no subject is ever stuck in a particular stage. Rather, they are propelled forward by the structure of each stage and their corresponding antithesis. Whether or not the subject is *prepared* for such is the question; many neuroses and psychoses develop due to the propulsion of the unprepared subject into the next stage of development.

¹⁶ The signs \Leftrightarrow and \Leftrightarrow do not and should not be taken to mean what they usually do in predicate logic as “not logically equivalent” and “equivalent”, respectively. Rather, they should be taken to mean reciprocity of causal relations between the subject and Other in which one causes the other.

The Wandering

At the heart of the state of Wandering is the inherent and forever inescapable contradiction between subjectivity, the realm in which the subject is the sole cause, and a reality hostile to the very notion of omnipotence; a reality which thwarts any attempts at synthesis with an omnipotent causer. This constant tension means that the Wandering is always in a highly dynamic state in which causation is seemingly within the subject's grasp and yet forever remains elusive.

This elusiveness is born out of the specter of *death*. Death can be seen as the denial of subjective causation or, to put it differently, death represents the utter inability of the subject to cause and is therefore equated with the specific cessation of subjectivity. (This does not mean one is dead when one sleeps or is otherwise unconscious, for the mind continues subjective causation through dreams). Death is the antithesis of the state of the Wandering that exists *within* it:

Wandering: $S \Rightarrow O$

Death: $[S \Rightarrow O (S \not\Rightarrow O)]$

The fact that death as an event exists within a developmental stage indicates one of many idiosyncratic features characteristic of it. Death is not a passage to a next stage or transformation; there is no stage for which death can act as the transition. As such, death becomes embedded within the very state of the psyche, for this embeddedness means that the specter of death cannot be separated nor forgotten—death is an event of which the subject is made *aware* and therefore *prepares* to face. She cannot afford to ignore it, for she too is aware of the cessation of her subjective existence in death. As a result, the psyche produces intricate defense mechanisms, the

hope being that she can, in some way, escape her inevitable fate. These mechanisms, though complex, can be organized into two distinct categories: destruction and creation.

All means of destruction and creation are attempts to collapse the contradiction of the state of Wandering and finally overcome the Father, albeit in different ways. For Freud, these two categories were a notable part of his later writings, namely his dichotomy of Eros and the death drive.¹⁷ As he notes:

The opposition between ego drives and sexual drives changed into an opposition between ego drives and object drives, both libidinal in nature. This, however, was replaced by a new opposition between libidinal (ego and object) drives and others that may be posited in the ego, and which are perhaps evincible in the destruction drives. In the course of our speculations, this opposition changes into the antithesis of life drives (Eros) and death drives (Freud, 2003, p. 295).

Libido in this sense can be reduced to the primitive drive through which both Eros and the death drive develop, albeit in opposing and contradictory ways.

Destruction can be interpreted through the desire to abolish the fundamental contradiction embedded with her existence in the Wandering through the literal elimination of an Other that refuses to accommodate subjective causation. By destroying, the subject hopes to collapse the contradiction between death and the structure of the Wandering.

Furthermore, the death drive allows the subject to impose causation in the domains of reality that reject or otherwise resist her.¹⁸ By channeling her frustrations through destructive acts, the subject has *created*—she is the cause of destruction. In other words, this means that

¹⁷ Credit should be given where it is due: the pioneering psychoanalyst Sabina Spielrein was the first to coin the term and concept in her paper “Destruction as the Cause of Coming Into Being” (1994).

¹⁸ It should be noted that by the death drive I refer to acts of destruction as those that sever causation of external objects within the Other, not the absolute cessation of causation in general, as is the case of death of the subject. By mimicking death, the subject can “kill” the foreign cause and replace it with herself. In this manner, the subject has essentially “become” death or, more specifically, made herself the structural equivalence to death. .

destruction is the means through which the subject channels causation into the *negation* of portions of the elusive Other. The subject, through her destructive act, essentially forces her way into an otherwise impregnable relation and, in doing so, guarantees herself as the cause through the literal transformation of the Other into something else entirely, thereby allowing the subject to disrupt the original causal relation and create a new one with herself as the cause. Therefore, the original state between subject and the Other:

$$S (x \rightarrow O)$$

is transformed into:

$$S \rightarrow \neg O$$

in which destruction allows for the subject to replace an external cause through the imposition of herself as the cause of the Other's negation: if the subject cannot be the cause of the Other, she can very well be the cause of its destruction.¹⁹

Of course, destruction is the less ideal course when considering how to collapse the contradiction given that the Other consists of other subjects who too are imbued with the death drive.²⁰ This is due to the fact that, by its very nature, the death drive supplants the original cause of the Other with the subject through the abolition of particular relations that run counter to the subject's causal narrative. This would, ostensibly, mean that the subject can only ever be the cause of this abolition, meaning that the death drive leaves the subject as the cause of *nothing*, or the destruction of the thing in question (if the cause of something still exists, then the subject

¹⁹ This is similar to the theory introduced by Spielrein in which she asserts that the death drive is based upon reproductive instincts rather than the morbid Freud hypothesized as the drive towards death and destruction.

²⁰ This is examined more closely in my paper "The Altar: Love and the Limits of Social Relations", but the essential point is that social relations become crucial to overcoming the Father as social forces compound the power of each subject and therefore allows for the subject to "punch through" her subjectivity and its limits. Slavery and relationships characterized by intense jealousy or resentment would be the only social relation in which the subject can utilize the death drive in the context of social relations. As a further aside, jealousy is driven by the subject's fear that someone else is the cause of a particular object and therefore wishes to destroy such a relationship that exists absent the subject.

could not have truly destroyed it). Hardly a consolation, the death drive is a forgery or imitation of genuine subjective causation.

Eros, or the life drive, is preferred, if only because it represents a positive relational movement in which the subject is the cause of things and not their respective negations. Creation in this sense implies the ability of the subject to transcend the limits imposed by the Image while simultaneously abiding by the logic it entails. In other words, Eros permits the subject to transcend the limits of her subjectivity *as* a fully coherent subject, thereby collapsing the inherent contradiction of the Wandering.

Creation—and creativity—imprints itself in the Wandering in a variety of ways, from literature to technology. The most important and fundamental manifestation of Eros lies in the act of procreation, for it is procreation that is seen as *the* means of overcoming death. Through her child, the subject can continue the struggle against the Father through the vicarious synthesis of the two—what results is what I refer to as *subjective singularity*, in which the subject-as-parent and her child merge into an entity that is capable of ontologically and psychologically overcoming death beyond the expiration of either though the combined subjectivity of both.²¹ As such, the synthesis of the subject and her offspring produces a rather interesting conundrum at odds with the logic of the current reality within which she exists and operates: procreation simultaneously accepts *and* rejects the Image in that the child is indeed an individuated object, yet one in which the child and (m)Other has incorporated the subjectivity of the other.

²¹ It should be noted, however, that procreation does not have to result in a child or children: objects or indications of state such as fame and infamy are sufficient in bringing about subjective singularity. This is the reason why being famous or desiring children are such popular dreams, for such are proposed means of overcoming and supplanting the limitations imposed by Death and the Father. Indeed, some people seem to be obsessed with leaving some form of legacy, or the continued influence and acknowledgement of oneself after death.

Lastly, another important manifestation of creation in the formation of *habits*, or the routinization of behaviors so as to ensure causal predictability, should be mentioned. Habits as a means of coping with this new and often hostile reality is certainly not a novel concept. For example, Anthony Giddens incorporates habits and routines within the context of trust as fundamental to the overall well-being of one's mental state:

Trust, in Giddens's view, is a basic psychic mechanism for handling the demands and dangers of everyday social life; or for establishing what he terms 'ontological security'. It is because an individual learns a sense of trust in other people that feelings of inner trustworthiness come to predominate over anxiety. Trust established between self and others is fundamental to creative, ongoing human relations; and it is what enables individuals to achieve a practical engagement with the open nature of modern social life... What matters most in this forging of self, according to Giddens, is 'what goes without saying'—that is, the establishment of routines and habits. Unconscious anxiety leads the infant into a transitional realm of self and others; and it is through an early involvement with parental routines and habits that such anxiety is then contained. A sense of self, trust, and object relationships is therefore forged through a transitional realm of *routinization* (Elliot, 1994, p. 71).

For Giddens, trust is essential to help quell the dangers of an unpredictable era of modernity.

However, while in agreement with Giddens over the significance of habits in a constantly changing world, I disagree with him as it relates to the theoretical framework within which habits ought to be viewed. The routinization of everyday life, as stated before, is the mechanism by which the subject attempts to merge her subjectivity with an objective reality. In other words, the subject creates and maintains routines as an unconscious attempt to reestablish the causal

certainty found in Eden. Driven by this desire to return, routinization of an otherwise frightening and spontaneous reality allows for the subject to recuse herself to a causal enclave predicated on *predictability*, the same predictability of outcomes which causal relations demand. Routines therefore carve up reality into predictable causal matrices which can then serve as the foundation from which more interactions with reality can be made predictable—and therefore incorporated into subjectivity—in relation to the subject.

Furthermore, the main function of routinization of everyday life is not, as Giddens argues, to contribute to a general sense of trust which can then be directed against the general state of anxiety common in modernity. Rather, such formations of habits into complex routines serves as a defense mechanism against death by effectively *regulating* causal relations of everyday life so as to maintain the ascendancy of the subject-as-cause. This regulation can be seen as safeguarding the fruits of creation; it allows for sustained causal relations which, taken together, produces a *predictability* that gives the subject comfort and assurance in her subjectivity against the inherent threat of death, for she can rest knowing that she will continue to cause tomorrow and the day after.

Omnipotence and Desire

It is in the Womb that the drive for omnipotence has reached its full maturation. In the Womb equality exists purely through one entity. In Eden equality is mimicked as S and O causing each other (but as two distinct entities). With the Father, the subject is forced into relations; however by being the cause of all external to her the subject can reestablish equality. In causing all, the subject is no longer trapped in the Image but has transcended it by making the subjective boundaries of the Image impossible.

As omnipotence is the state in which there is no subjective lack, it is the only possible state other than equality that the Father can be transcended. In other words, since lack necessarily demands individuation, the absence of any lack would mean that there exists no boundaries with which the Image can be imposed. Subjectivity itself becomes the first casualty of omnipotence—only a subjectless subject can return to Eden. This hypothetical state of the subject is the I.

Desire is the expression of the Father. It emerges, not from the subject's will, but from the lack which arises from the limitations inherent to the Image. In other words, desire comes into being, not through or by the subject, *but through her subjectivity*. The subject desires that which is external to her, the elusive Other that was once her.

That being said, desire, although caused by the Father, can be satiated only by the subject. Desire thus maintains a peculiar structure in that its manifestations can never themselves be prevented, only satisfied.. As such, desire is profoundly foreign; a constant, unrelenting reminder in some form or another that the subject is still imprisoned in the Image by the Father. It is the overt proclamation of subjective inferiority caused by the Father, a causal relation which remains thoroughly repressed. It is precisely what desire represents—an overt flaunting of the Paternal precedence which would otherwise be repressed so entirely as to be inconceivable—that provokes considerable anxiety and despair. By desiring, the subject threatens to conjure the repressed Father, which is why she seeks to fulfill this desire by acquiring that which induced the desire in the first place.

Fulfilling a particular manifestation of desire has two purposes. The first is, as mentioned previously, to maintain the repression of the Father. The second is related to the achievement of omnipotence: by quelling a desire associated with a particular element of the Other through its

acquisition, the subject has, if only ever so slightly, come closer to the omnipotent state. Fulfillment of these various desires is synonymous with the securing of causal relations between the subject and Other in which that which was once external to—and therefore independent of—the subject is now securely “within” her; a particular lack of the subject is no more. What she once lacked is now an established part of herself; it has become ontologically and psychologically inseparable—a feature characteristic of Eden, albeit small.²²

It is only omnipotence, through the allure of lacking nothing, that can “cure” desire once and for all. Omnipotence promises the subject an escape from the Image, for the Image can only be maintained as long as the subject lacks.

If libido is the drive through which the subject overthrows the Father, then omnipotence is the teleological end of this drive, or the state of the subject necessary to overthrow the Father and return to Eden. As an omnipotent entity, the subject not only transcends the limitations of the Image, but also satisfies the preconditions of existence in Eden; omnipotence itself is a means towards another, greater goal, as often portrayed in popular culture.²³

The Topological Model of the Self

Finally, given the psychoanalytic framework presented, we can now discuss the overarching tripartite, or topological, structure of selfhood. In reality, the “self” and its apparent cohesion is actually the product of two contradictory but nevertheless connected psycho-ontological systems in the most fundamental sense. These two models, which I refer to as the *Me* and the *I*, are crucial “systems of being” whose simultaneous existence places the general

²² Lack is to the Image what desire is to the Father. If desire is the expression of the Father, then lack is the expression of the Image.

²³ In fact, omnipotence in literature can be categorized in several forms and functions, in which it may be necessary to continue the plot. See *The Omnipotent*. TV Tropes.
<https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/TheOmnipotent>.

self in a constant state of tension, with the possibility that this tension will rip the subject apart looming forever over her.

The Me is the self constructed in a manner necessary to engage with reality. It is the subject that abides by the logic of reality, one which is maintained through distinctions (objects) within it. (After all, a subject lacking distinction could not possibly engage with individuated objects or, for that matter, exist at all in reality.) The Me thus represents the subject in her current condition—beholden to the Image that imprisons her in subjectivity. This Me is synonymous with the state of the subject in the Wandering; an ontological system that is defined more by its limitations—what it is not—than its assertions—what it is.

The I represents the constructed subject that can overcome the Father. It is the subject as she wishes to be—without distinction. The I denotes the teleology of the Me; a theoretical endpoint in which the subject is the cause of all and the distinction between the subject and Other collapses. In its basic form, the I serves as the teleological goal of the Me and, in acting as such, allows for a coordinated approach through which the subject can express her general hatred and resentment of the Father into an organized means of overcoming Him. In other words, the I serves as the depository for a subjective form of the omnipotent subject for which the subject can actively aspire. Were it not for the I, the Me would be reduced to sublimating her drive into random and unpredictable creative and destructive incursions in her attempt to overcome the Father.

It is important to note that the I does not imply the subject in the previous state of Eden. It may seem like the I is nothing more than a crude facsimile of the subject in Eden. In fact, the I would seem to house the very Father that it seeks to overcome! While this may appear to be so, the I serves a crucial function in that it allows the subject to aspire to a state of omnipotence that

is simultaneously comprehensible and therefore attainable. For without the I, the question of how the subject can even return to Eden becomes impossible to answer. How could the subject, who cannot imagine the state of Eden, return to it? The I provides the conclusive answer: the maintained distinction of the I provides the focal point to which all causal relations can be directed and, in doing so, it provides the comforting hope that she can overcome the Father. The I becomes, for a lack of a better word, a *surrogate* for Eden which sustains the drive for omnipotence by making it subjectively comprehensible. Furthermore, the concept of omnipotence changes in relation to this subjectivity. In Eden, the subject already *is* omnipotent, for the lack of distinction means that the very notion of lack and the subsequent desire is impossible. In the I, however, the subject is distinct from the Other, meaning that omnipotence *becomes* a feature to which the subject aspires; omnipotence is the desired state of being.

The two states of the Me and I, would be compatible were it not for the subject's general awareness of the existence of the I.²⁴ This awareness is brought about by the imagination, the realm in which the subject as Me can construct a new subject that is not bound by the Image. In order to do so, however, the Me would have to *precede* the I as the cause, for to assume the inverse would invariably lead to the nonsensical conclusion that the subject already has overcome the Father and subsequently transitioned to a subject that can no longer do so (and the Father emerges once again). The problem becomes even more pressing when considering the consequence of this awareness, namely that the states of the Me and I are mutually exclusive. In this situation, the subject as Me must somehow reconcile her distinction with a subject who inherently lacks it. Needless to say, this incompatibility of the Me and I produces considerable tension, and were it not for a mediating teleological force the two would have separated and dichotomized the general self far before such a self could emerge. This force, which I refer to as

²⁴ A vague sense of awareness, but an awareness nonetheless.

the Myself, acts as the tether that binds the Me and the I together in a manner which simultaneously reduces and maintains the contradiction inherent to the Me and I.

In its most basic sense, the Myself is the general term used to describe the compulsion to remedy the inherent contradiction of the Me and I brought about by the awareness of two distinct systems of being. It acts as the negotiating force between the Me and I as the subject seeks to shed her subjectivity and become capable of overthrowing the Father; it would perhaps be more helpful to consider the Myself as a general space²⁵ within which contradictions can be held and maintained rather than a bridge or connection. Coherence in this space is largely sustained through libidinal forces that can produce respite, albeit temporarily, and allow for the overall cohesion of the general self, for although structured accordingly with reality (and therefore the Me) in that the libido is directed at particular objects as opposed to one which ignores distinction, it also contains elements of the I (the object of the libido is highly varied and constantly changing, yet the actual libido itself, never being completely satisfied, points to a general frustration in the subject in which the libido is forever only temporarily relieved. It is through the I that the libido can be definitively satiated). The I emerges through the orgasm, for although the libido arises from the structure of the subject by abiding by the laws of a differentiated reality, the orgasm refuses to be synthesized into this general differentiation. It seems that the orgasm is some sort of phantom, one that is *caused* by the Me and object but never *contained* within it. Instead, it seems that the libido is directed towards an absolute satisfaction through objects used to reach an orgasm but is always forever beyond the object and therefore never able to satisfy the libido indefinitely; the libido can only find temporary reprieve

²⁵ The Myself is, in part, inspired by the concept of thirdspace by the geographer Edward Soja, in which “everything comes together...subjectivity and objectivity, the abstract and the concrete, the real and the imagined, the knowable and the unimaginable, the repetitive and the differential, structure and agency, mind and body, consciousness and the unconscious, the disciplined and the transdisciplinary, everyday life and unending history” (Soja 1996).

in the orgasm before it starts itself anew. As a result, the libido forever lacks closure because the notion of a “permanent orgasm” that would otherwise provide it is fully incapable of being synthesized into reality. It would seem then that the permanent relief of the libido resides in the I, thus the libido, seeking its own total satisfaction, agitates the Me and thus provides the foundation for overcoming the Father. Thus, while the Myself is housed within the Me, it is always producing a tension that is relieved through the gradual transformation of the Me into the I.

It would be helpful, I believe, to differentiate my tripartite conception of the self with that of George Herbert Mead, who posited the self as a dichotomy composed of the Me and I. According to Mead, the Me is the internalization of social attitudes about oneself, whereas the I is formed in a direct response to the Me. Mead writes, “The ‘I’ is the response of the organism to the attitudes of the others; the ‘me’ is the organized set of attitudes of others which one himself assumes. The attitudes of the others constitute the organized ‘me,’ and then one reacts toward that as an ‘I’” (Mead, 1972, p. 175). Thus, the Me is a crucial element to the individual’s sense of self, as we derive a sense of who we are through the observation of others in relation to ourselves. As Erving Goffman notes, “What the individual is for himself is not something that he invented. It is what his significant others have come to...treat him as being” (Goffman, 1971, p. 279).

Given this, it is obvious the differences between the self of Mead and my conception of the self. Firstly, Mead’s self is purely in the realm of the sociological. It is true that he embraces psychological elements of the self to a much greater degree than his contemporaries. Yet, Mead nevertheless places supremacy of the self in the social; a self that is “noticeably entwined within a sociological existence” (LibreTexts, 2022). For Mead, existence in a society precedes the

emergence of self-consciousness. Needless to say, I find this argument hardly persuasive, not the least of which due to the emphasis on social relations in the development and nature of selfhood. It is certainly true that people are influenced by social relations, but the fundamental precedence of society over the individual presupposes a self whose own ontology is beholden to and transformed by social relations. Furthermore, this conception of the self is itself the product of its time—Mead could hardly have envisioned the immense psychological developments which occurred after his death in 1931. We know now that selfhood is far more complex than a model that emphasizes the internalization of the perceptions and attitudes other people may have regarding the individual.²⁶

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is the general introduction to the omnipotent structure of the psyche. From the Womb, the subject transitions through a series of stages and events that, with each new stage, attempts in vain to cling to the original state of equality in which she was complete. Driven thoroughly by her antagonism towards the Father, the subject seeks to become omnipotent—the condition necessary for a return to Eden. Topographically, the current state of the subject, the Me, strives to become the I, or the omnipotent subject, through the Myself, or the fundamental drive to this hypothetical state. Through this theoretical framework, perennial questions such as colonialism and the relationship between humans and technology can be seen for what they are: manifestations of the inherent subjective drive for power and mastery of reality itself.

²⁶ A better conception of selfhood is that conceived by Heinz Kohut, although there remains fundamental theoretical differences. See Kohut, H. (1974). *The Analysis of the Self*. International University Press.

These pressing concerns are but two themes of many that can be answered or, at the very least, seen in a new light. Yet, perhaps even more fundamental in purpose, I hope that this framework commits to a grander goal—to commit to a psychology that harshly rejects the fundamentally optimistic view that the subject and her psyche are, even theoretically, knowable. I am confident that certain features of the psyche will never be uncovered; we must be satisfied with this conclusion. For it is these very limitations that ultimately define personhood and what it means to be human. Omnipotence, through technology ever more sophisticated and ambitious, may indeed be achievable and the subject may someday be able to return to Eden. However, these same limitations force us to not only realize our own frailties, but to seek out others who, with their respective limitations, can help us make peace with our Images. Is the price of omnipotence worth sacrificing subjectivity, that which makes us human? With this paper, I answer simply but emphatically—it is not.

CHAPTER II: ON THE ALTAR

Introduction

In defining sociology, Max Weber (1978) stated that it "...is a science concerning itself with the interpretive understanding of social action and thereby with a causal explanation of its course and consequences." When specifically defining what a "social action" is, Weber argued that, "Action is 'social' insofar as its subjective meaning takes account of the behavior of *others* [emphasis added] and is thereby oriented in its course" (Weber, 1978, p. 4). However, his elaboration gives rise to a pressing question: what constitutes this "other"? Social relations in general are said to occur when "people" interact in some manner. However, in doing so, these relations presuppose and obscure what constitutes what these "people" are. In accepting this assertion, however, social theorists have made a fundamental mistake; they have accepted the existence of people in social relations as fundamentally the same. In doing so, any *qualitative* focus is specifically on the nature of these relations themselves and their development, as can be seen in models like the framework developed by the United Nations (2007) on the six "stages of social relations."

This paper is, in large part, an attempt to analyze and discuss this problem in greater detail as well as to provide a theoretical framework within which the psycho-ontological status of these "people" can be determined and possibly reconstituted. I argue that social relations in general are not between equal members but rather between a dominant Subject and corresponding parts, or self-operating machines. These machines, in turn, are crucial in constructing a Body which can overcome the Father and return to the State of Eden—concepts which are derived from my psychoanalytic theoretical framework which essentially posits an innate drive for omnipotence as the fundamental force propelling the psyche. Social relations are

significant in and for the achievement of this omnipotence, and thus the use of others as what I refer to as Limbs as a means to this end.

Furthermore, I introduce the Altar, or the foundation upon which the paradigm of social relations and those who compose them is established. It is through the Altar that the Subject chooses between Paternal relations, or relations of domination, and relations of Love. From relations of Love come the recognition of others as humans, fully engaged with their own humanity and creative complexity. Paternal relations, as I will argue, continues the subjugation and denial of people in social relations as humans in their own right and thus allows for their continued conversion into Limbs which can be used to construct the desired Body without Image.

Relations of Self-Operating Machines

Any investigation into the limitations of social relations—and sociology—must necessarily begin with the nature of social relations themselves. According to one source, social relations “...refer to the connections that exist between people who have recurring interactions that are perceived by the participants to have personal meaning” (August and Rook, 2013). Regardless of the myriad definitions adopted for the term “social relation”, some assumptions are shared, namely that such relations presupposes the existence of individual “persons” who engage in such relations.

Yet it is this very presupposition of the subject, as well as the multiplicity of such subjects, which implies the inherent limits of social relations as they are currently characterized. For one, these relations assume a presupposition that is neither proven nor questioned, namely that social relations exist between two or more *equal* subjects. For a relation to be deemed a

social one, I, a person, must engage and interact with another person in some manner. However, what is to say that the other person or persons are indeed people; those who are imbued with the same status and are therefore placed in the same category as myself?

To answer this question, we must first examine the distinction between the Subject and her Other. The Other, being that which is not the Subject, contains the sum total of all that cannot be said to be within the Subjective domain—the boundary within which function and existence of the Subject can be maintained and regulated. Fundamental to relations is the presupposed *precedence* of the Subject, namely in regard to the aforementioned Other: if the Subject is, then the ontology of this Subject must be as a result of its distinction from a corresponding Other. In this manner, the ability of the Other to assert ontological existence in and of itself is denied. Rather, the Other exists only insofar as it is *not* the Subject. In other words, whereas the Subject exists in and of herself, and can therefore claim to “be”—a positive ontological assertion—the Other cannot claim any existence apart from the Subject, and whose ontology therefore is rendered to that which the Subject is not. It is much like light and its shadow: whereas light can be said to be something, a shadow is not something in itself but rather the absence of its counterpart.

One can see the foundations of this distinction of the subject in two philosophers in particular: Rene Descartes and Gottfried Leibniz. In his *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1993) Descartes’ ontology is the well-known distinction between *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, two substances which are more popularly referred to as the corporeal or corporal matter and the soul, respectively.²⁷ However, more than this lies the concept of distinction in his ontology, which is crucial in understanding the constructed subject. He writes, “The real properly subsists between two or more substances; and it is sufficient to assure us that two substances are really mutually

²⁷ We shall not concern ourselves with the problems associated with Cartesian dualism here.

distinct, if only we are able clearly and distinctly to conceive the one of them without the other” (Descartes, 2002, p. 22). Likewise, we can compare the subject to the notion of the “monad” in Leibniz’s unique idealism, with a particular emphasis on the elevation of pure “mind-like simple substances” (Look, 2013) as real beings. Because of the ontological primacy of these monads, Leibniz’s concept of monads (Leibniz, 1965) plays an important role in my own theory of the supremacy of the subject, both phenomenologically and ontological, before that of the Other.

As a necessary result, when I state that the Other lacks an inherent ontology, what I am referring to is the Other *in relation to* the Subject, not the ontological status of the Other apart from the Subject in itself. In an attempt to refer to the Other as always in relation to the Subject, the Other will hereafter be appropriately referred to as the *Shadow*:

Subject | Shadow

Lastly, the Relation between the Subject and Shadow emerges as a prerequisite of distinction: the very existence of either denotes the necessary social connection between them:

Subject ↔ Shadow

Similarly, Subject and Shadow are connected in a manner in which the absence of one precipitates the absence of the other. In this manner, it can be said that both, although differentiated, exist in a complex ontological synthesis as well. This synthesis lends itself to the notion of a *constructed* Subject, one that is as much defined by what she can wrest away from the Shadow and incorporate within herself. Relations in this context can thus be broadly defined as any form of interaction, usually a vicious struggle, that can be said to involve the Subject and Shadow in some manner.

Before moving on, it is important to distinguish my conception of Shadow from that of Carl Jung, who also integrated the concept of shadow into his analytical psychology. The

differences are stark and obvious, for while I use the shadow in a phenomenological and ontological sense, Jung uses the shadow to describe the unconscious aspect of the self which does not align with the ideal self. He famously writes:

Unfortunately there can be no doubt that man is, on the whole, less good than he imagines himself or wants to be. Everyone carries a shadow, and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is. If an inferiority is conscious, one always has a chance to correct it. Furthermore, it is constantly in contact with other interests, so that it is continually subjected to modifications. But if it is repressed and isolated from consciousness, it never gets corrected (Jung, 1966, p. 93).

That is not to say that there are no similarities at all. For one, the Jungian assertion of the shadow as unconscious is not antithetical to the perception of those in the Shadow by the subject; she does not view them as unequal *consciously*, for such an idea would produce profound anxiety and a need to change this belief. However, my conception of the Shadow extends far past the psyche and the unconscious; while it may include unconscious beliefs, the domain of the Shadow comprises reality and being itself.

Because of the inherent disparity between the Subject and Shadow, social relations cannot be said to exist among equals; the very nature of the Subject precludes the possibility of genuine social relations. Thus we come to a particular truth about the Subject and Shadow which fundamentally rejects the prevailing paradigm of social relations—*social relations qua social relations cannot exist*. At the very least, they preclude existence in their current form for, as mentioned earlier, such relations beget interactions between two subjects of equal ontological standing which can never be the case insofar as the Subject exists. Instead, what emerges is a Subject who always precedes and comes to dominate her inferior Shadow. What is meant by

social relations are relations between a Subject and one-dimensional “things” which, by virtue of being things, cannot participate as dynamic social agents with a corresponding autonomy.

The inferiority of the socio-ontological status of these things can best be encapsulated by the concept of the *self-operating machine*.²⁸ By self-operating machine I mean those in the Shadow in relation to the Subject whose appearance and behavior, which strongly indicate a dynamic and creative person, is actually controlled and regulated as a by-product of the Subject. These “people” adopt the logic of the Shadow in that they exist where the Subject—the positive ontological assertion—does not. This regulation, in turn, simultaneously preserves the illusion that the Shadow is equal to the Subject while extending its control over all aspects of life: others are turned into speaking-machines, eating-machines, thinking-machines, running-machines; anything to produce the illusion that the Shadow exists in its own right. What results are dehumanized caricatures stripped of autonomy whose participation in relations with the Subject becomes largely determined by the innocuous and predictable *functions* with which they are tasked and can provide; insofar as they can act in this capacity, self-operating machines are granted an autonomy which manifests as a genuine and spontaneous *desire* to function in accordance with the Will of the Subject. In doing so, the impression that the self-operating machines are separate and not dependent upon the Subject allows her to engage with these machines as “equals”, thereby masking the underlying structure of objectification that permits the dehumanization of the Shadow and their incorporation into the Subject as pure extensions of herself.

²⁸ The interest in self-operating machines or automata, especially those resembling humans, has been noted throughout history with increasing levels of sophistication as technology advances. Needless to say, true automata have yet to be invented, although certain embellished accounts in the past would say otherwise. For one example, see Needham (1991).

The notion of the self-operating machine leads one to conclude the categorization of two types of social relations which stand in irreconcilable opposition to each other. One type, domination, builds upon the structure and inherent assumptions of this relation and pursues the total conversion of the Shadow and those in it into self-operating machines, the end result being the actualization of others into Limbs, which will be discussed in the next section. The other type of social relations, Love, requires as a prerequisite the reversing of the process whereby the Shadow is converted into self-operating machines and the simultaneous embrace of others as genuinely dynamic and separated entities.

Domination as Paternal Relations

Within this concept of relations, the Shadow consumes and simultaneously maintains the existence and separateness of other subjects in relation to the Subject. Yet, the question of whether this model is a *social* one has yet to be determined. It is certainly true that definitions of social relations discuss interactions between “persons”, but this sense of neutrality fundamentally obfuscates the inherent necessity in such relations for a Subjective domination or prioritization, one in which social relations are always constructed in a manner in which the subjectivity or ontology of the Subject is taken to be the indomitable Truth whereby the other subjects are confined to the realm of the Shadow. Simply put, there *are* no such things as equals in social relations because the presupposition that would make such equality possible—a neutrality favoring neither that necessarily must exist *external* to the Subject—is itself rendered impossible by the very subjectivity that places preference of the subjective over the objective (and thus renders the objective impossible). As a result, equality is forever precluded from social relations, instead to be replaced with a causal hierarchy, one in which the Subject always precedes, and is

therefore inherently superior, to the consequent, or the objects that lie at the other end of social relations.

This means that social relations must always be relegated as an *extension* of the Subject to the extent that they themselves are ontologically and phenomenologically dependent upon her. Based upon this understanding, social relations—and the very concept of the social—becomes reduced to an understanding in which that which is not a part of the Subject, the Shadow, becomes nevertheless tethered to her in a manner that is both institutionalized and therefore thoroughly regulated. It is this regulation that I refer to as “social” in nature. Social relations can be reconfigured into Subjective relations, in which sociality and society become regulated mechanisms of maintaining Subjective power and control over others.

Furthermore, it is in this light that the notion of *Paternal causation* must be discussed in the context of social relations. Social relations as extensions of the Subject can only be so if the essence of the Subject *precedes* that of the Shadow. In other words, the Subject can only maintain its ascendancy within social relations if it can be said to exist prior to the Shadow; indeed, the very nature of the Subject demands her own existence as the very precondition to the Shadow. Through this organization of precedence in social relations the Subject can assert its dominance as ontologically superior through the claim that she “caused” the Shadow to exist, as it is only through the existence of the Subject that the Shadow can subsequently exist as well.

Causation and the subsequent Subject-Shadow dichotomy follow the overall structure of the *Father*, or the personified limitations inherent to subjectivity and distinction. As I write in the preceding chapter:

The Father...represents the event in which the (m)Other can no longer sustain the relation of the subject with herself: this is when lack in the subject becomes too great for the

(m)Other to bear. The Father can be said to be the effect of this incapability. In other words, the Father emerges once the illusion of omnipotence—and the structure that maintains it—can no longer hold (Park, Chapter 1, p. 11).

From this realization, the Father becomes the personified antagonist whose emergence precipitates shatters the state of Eden, one in which the subject is maintained in relation to an Other that is indistinguishable from herself. From the Father, the subject is expelled through the Fall, or her expulsion from Eden:

The Father also means that, for the first time, the subject must direct attention towards something that is not herself. The subject, having only had to direct her energy to an Other that is herself, had no need—or recourse—to conduct affairs with anything outside of herself; she is the totality of her existence insofar as she is not aware of anything apart from her. The Father represents a rude intrusion, for His presence means that the subject now has an object external to her; she must now direct her focus onto something other than herself (Park, Chapter 1, p. 12).

It is from this limiting Father that subjectivity becomes possible, and the subject emerges from this rude confrontation with Him.

Lastly, the Father and His presence imposes a fundamental restriction on the subject, in what I refer to as the Image, essentially imprisoning her within its confines and allowing for a foundation upon which the subject can emerge as a coherent entity:

The resulting awareness of this distinction—that she is not the Father—necessarily leads to the conclusion that the subject too is distinct: she is not the totality of existence but merely a part of it. It is this awareness by the subject of her own distinction that leads to the imprisonment of the subject within the *Image of the Father*²⁹. The Image maintains

²⁹ Hereafter referred to as “Image”.

and regulates the boundaries of distinction formed which limit the realm of the subjective and thus allow for subjectivity to emerge from an otherwise indistinguishable Other; the Image symbolizes the inherent constraints of casual capabilities of the subject that defines her relation to the Father and later, reality. It is within this Image and its confines that consciousness emerges through the distinction of the subject and the Other (Park, Chapter 1, p. 12).

From the Father and the resulting Image comes the purpose of social relations and its structure in the context of the subject.

Social relations are, in large part, molded in and through this initial Father-subject antithesis, or what I refer to as the *Paternal relation*. The subject exists in a somewhat unified state, for she simultaneously directs her resentment of her subjective existence (away from Eden) and desire for it (from subjectivity emerges a Will to dominate)³⁰ towards the Father. As a result of this hatred of the Father comes a subsequent need to incorporate the Other—an Other which emerged in the aftermath of the expulsion from Eden—as a pure extension of the self. In other words, social relations in this regard are collectively the attempt of the subject to overcome the Father and her own subjective limitations through the incorporation of other subjects into the self. Not only ontologically, but psychologically, the notion of other subjects can be reconfigured as what I call *Limbs-of-the-subject*³¹: pure apparatuses of the self whose purpose is to contribute to or, at the very least, not interfere with, the aforementioned Will. Through these relations, the subject can, at least through fantastical means, overcome the inherent limits of her own subjectivity imposed by the Father and become ever-closer to overcoming Him.

³⁰ This has some similarities to a driving force inherent in the human condition, notable examples being the concept of the will to live by Arthur Schopenhauer, the will to power found in the works of Friedrich Nietzsche, the logotherapy of Viktor Frankl, and the individual psychology of Alfred Adler. However, my conceptualization of a Will is derived from the desire or inherent purpose in life to overcome the Father and thus return to a state of omnipotence in Eden.

³¹ Hereafter referred to as “Limbs”.

Fantasy plays a key role in the incorporation of the Shadow through social relations that ontology alone cannot affect. Through the fantastical incorporation of the Shadow, the Subject can, at least subjectively, interpret a reality in which all social actors (those involved in social relations) are reinterpreted as pure Limbs from which the Subject can then construct a new being which can overcome the Father. This entity, the *Body without Image*³², becomes the culmination or synthesis of the inherent Will to overcome the Father, for with the Body without Image the subject can shed herself of the subjective limitations of the Image, thereby reversing the process by which the Father emerged in the first place and granting Her re-entrance into Eden.

The Body without Image is an ontological parody which simultaneously is and is not, thereby placing it purely within a distinguishing reality which by definition rejects all that which lacks distinction. However, it cannot be said that the Body without Image is entirely distinguished either, for it remains maddeningly elusive and forever without a specified or specific ontology; its ontology, although distinct, is also fluid and dynamic, contorting and fluctuating as it incorporates further Limbs for its anticipated purpose. Actively flaunting the commandment of distinction, the Body without Image instead mimics and ridicules this reality and, in doing so, threatens the fabric of reality itself through its entrenched existence in the realm of fantasy. It is, paradoxically, a Body without a body, operating purely as the teleological end for the incorporation of Limbs and therefore can be equated to the omnipotence the Subject once experienced in Eden; the Body without Image is the unconscious ends to which the Will is directed. It is this feature of the Body without Image that can punch through the Image and confront the Father. It is the Body with seemingly limitless Limbs: the symbolic Centimanes

³² This concept has little in common with the “body without organs” first introduced by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, although the concept of limitations of possibilities by structured organs imposing a certain homeostasis certainly has merit and deserves further study. See Deleuze & Guattari (1983).

perfected.³³ As all manifestations of desire and drive must fulfill some purpose, the Body without Image acts as the coherent and unified singularity whose achievement is the purpose of Will that can ultimately return the Subject to the state of Eden.

This means or purpose of incorporation is far from benevolent, for it is from this incorporation that domination plays a fundamental role in social relations. Far from being neutral (as is the expected position of a “scientific” sociology), social relations are always expressions intended to contribute to a Body without Image. Yet, without some form of guarantee from the other subjects, all of whom possess Wills of their own, these relations can never serve as formative pieces to the construction of the Body without Image. Thus, other subjects can never be viewed as those on equal footing with the Subject herself, either ontologically or fantastically, for to do so would necessarily mean the abandonment of a true Body without Image. Instead, others must be the Limbs, or pieces, which together can form the desired Body without Image. Thus, the subjects, in the fantastical transformation from humans with Will to Limbs, are necessarily stripped of their humanity and are instead reconstituted as cogs in the Body without Image. Subjectivity of the Shadow too is held to be inauthentic—and thus the status of other subjects are degraded to fit this inauthenticity—and thus a facsimile of the Subject’s own mode of existence. This logic comes to dominate the nature of social relations, in which these very relations are transformed into the Body in the fight against the Father. Consequently, as others are seen as Limbs for the Body without Image, genuine social relations—that is, relations between and among equals—are impossible. It would be akin to saying that one can have a social relation with an inanimate object.³⁴ What the Subject instead engages in false social

³³ The Centimanes or Hecatoncheires (literally translated as “Hundred-Handed Ones”) were Cottus, Briareus (or Obriareus) and Gyges, three brothers who each had fifty heads and one hundred arms. See Hesiod (2006).

³⁴ Fetishism is the most overt assertion of this fact, for by expressing libidinal drive through objects one eradicates the distinction between people and inanimate entities and therefore simultaneously humanizes objects and objectifies humans.

relations of possession in which the dehumanization of others into Limbs is obfuscated behind the fantastical impressions of them as equals.³⁵

It is important to note how oppression, which is often defined as a social phenomenon, differs essentially in my theoretical framework of relations. Oppression “...names a harm through which groups of persons are systematically and unfairly or unjustly constrained, burdened, or reduced by any of several social forces” (Cudd, 2013). However, oppression through the lens of social relations relegates it to supra-individual forces whose genesis can be traced to masses but never the individual, fundamentally obfuscating the role the Subject actively and inherently plays in oppression. Thus, oppression can be better expressed *as the collective efforts by Subjects to reconstruct subjects into Limbs through social relations in the pursuit of the Body without Image*. In this sense, all forms of social relations, and society itself (insofar as it is the sum product of these social relations), are at the mercy of the Subject whose sole Will is to overcome the Father. It is important to reiterate that these relations cannot be anything other than oppressive, for the structure of social relations themselves are modeled after the Paternal relation in which the forced relation between the Subject and Other lead to the need of the Subject to reincorporate the Other as a lost part of herself.

Oppression as social relations is not an obvious or noticeable characteristic, mainly because oppression as social relations demands the total engagement—and therefore acquiescence—of the Subject as fundamentally integrated within this system of oppression, thereby making the ability to distinguish between “oppressive social relations” and “non-oppressive social relations” impossible because the ability to do so would then rest upon the capability of the Subject to distinguish a form of relations in which other subjects would not

³⁵ Fantasy is crucial in creating and sustaining others as “dynamic equals” which mirrors genuine social relations without having to abdicate their contributions to the Body without Image as dehumanized and reliable Limbs.

be converted into Limbs.³⁶ This conceptualization is in stark contrast to the traditional notion that oppression is a disease that can be “excised” and separated from society like a tumor.³⁷ As long as the Subject maintains itself as distinctly superior (in that its distinction allows for such superiority), the Shadow can never express any authentic means of subjectivity itself, as any channel of subjectivity would be regulated and expressed by the Subject alone; subjectivity itself is forever denied to others in the Shadow. Social relations is therefore not a means of reclaiming their humanity, as some have argued, but rather a means of forever denying it. The Subject-as-causer in relations operates as the Father, one whose existence precipitates the cause of other subjects as Limbs necessary to surpass the subjective limits of the Image. Through domination, the Subject can reliably form social relations *as* causal certainties: cogs in the machine whose dehumanization makes causal relations possible through which the Limb can predictably and dependably serve its purported function.

This conception begs a rather obvious question, namely how can there exist more than one Subject when there exists significantly more subjective beings (all of whom are themselves Subjects exerting the same influence through social relations). Recall that the Subject constitutes the position of ontological supremacy, and it is from this position that the Subject can claim superiority to her Shadow. Yet, given this condition, the only prerequisite necessary for the existence of a dominant Subject is the existence of a subject whose ontology takes precedence. Thus, each subject, who is a part of the Shadow of another Subject, is in turn the Subject from which others are part of Her Shadow. It is precisely this multiplicity of Subjects that results in the often antagonistic and contradictory relations between Subjects and subjects: there is a fluidity of

³⁶ This ability itself demands the capability of the subject to transcend the subjective position and occupy an objective one outside Herself, which as previously stated is impossible.

³⁷ This also allows for the possibility of multiple systems of oppression, based upon characteristics long since ingrained through sociohistorical norms as opposed to a single system of oppression with potentially different facets.

being between the two that forever eludes permanency. One is both the Subject of her own existence and simultaneously a subject in the Shadow of another.

Love as Transcendence of Relations

Given the structure of oppression and its transformative power in relations, we must contrast it with *Love*, a fundamental concept that stands as its absolute antithesis or, more specifically, one that always exists external to the current social relational system of oppression.

Love as the antithesis of oppression and domination is certainly not a novel concept. Many prominent theorists have already posited the two in an antagonistic relationship in which one precludes the acceptance of the other:

A culture of domination is anti-love. It requires violence to sustain itself. To choose love is to go against the prevailing values of the culture. Many people feel unable to love either themselves or others because they do not know what love is. Contemporary songs like Tina Turner's "What's Love Got To Do With It" advocate a system of exchange around desire, mirroring the economics of capitalism: the idea that love is important is mocked (hooks, 2016, p. 3).

Others have furthered the notion that love in its purest sense is fundamentally self-altering and that current capitalist societies have degraded this love in one form or other:

This concept of love assumes that the machinery of buying and selling of needs and fulfillment is what makes everything run. It regards life as a market and love as a variation on free enterprise. You buy and you sell, and to get somewhere in love is to make a good deal with whatever you happen to have available. In business, buyer and seller get together in the market with their needs and their products. And they swap. The

swapping is simplified by the use of a happy-making convenience called money. So too in love. The love relationship is a deal that is arrived at for the satisfaction of mutual needs. If it is successful it pays off, not necessarily in money, but in gratification, peace of mind, fulfillment (Merton, 1979, p. 25).

And while these thinkers have, in many ways, understood love as something intensely profound, my conception of Love is opposed to oppression and domination precisely because its essential—and only—premise is inimical to the structure of oppression itself: *that Love cannot be expressed as a Paternal relation and is therefore always hostile to oppression.*

This premise is composed of a tautological assertion that precludes oppression as a means of expression: *Love causes and is the effect of itself.* For one, Love represents both an expression and the state of pure equality—it can only ever relate to itself. Thus:

$$L = L$$

However, from this simple expression comes a powerful consequence, namely that the Love cannot ever be tainted by taking the form of Paternal relations because its structure transcends such relations. Indeed, there is simply no means by which any relations between disparate elements that seek to preserve such disparity can express itself in relations of Love. There is only one absolute condition without exceptions or dependency: for a relation to be based upon Love it must be a relation of and between equals.

In this sense, Love is the merging of the Subject with the Shadow through the *empathic position*. By empathic position I mean the temporary fantastical flight to a point beyond the confines of the Image, thereby placing the Subject outside of herself and, in the process, integrating herself within an Other that is otherwise impossible to access. It is the expulsion of the Subject from her own body, with its subjective biases and limitations, and the embrace of an

empathic connection—embrace of a common humanity—from which the Subject can understand and ultimately *be* the Shadow. From this expulsion the Subject comes to the empathic position, a singularity of the Subject and Shadow as the expression of Love from which any distinction becomes impossible to sustain. It is from the empathic position that relations of Love become possible in the first place.

It should be noted that this particular synthesis of Subject and Shadow into one entity of equality means that relations of Love are able to transcend the traditional limitations of the logic of Paternal relations. For one, the Subject, equalized with her Shadow by the empathic position, can perceive reality from two separate and distinct, yet equal, positions. As the philosopher Alain Badiou writes:

My own philosophical view is attempting to say that love...is a quest for truth. What kind of truth? you will ask. I mean truth in relation to something quite precise: what kind of world does one see when one experiences it from the point of view of two and not one? What is the world like when it is experienced, developed and lived from the point of view of difference and not identity? That is what I believe love to be (Badiou and Truong, 2009, p. 22).

We shouldn't underestimate the power love possesses to slice diagonally through the most powerful oppositions and radical separations. The encounter between two differences is an event, is contingent and disconcerting, "love's surprises", theatre yet again. On the basis of this event, love can start and flourish. It is the first, absolutely essential point. This surprise unleashes a process that is basically an experience of getting to know the world. Love isn't simply about two people meeting and their inward-looking

relationship: it is a construction, a life that is being made, no longer from the perspective of One but from the perspective of Two (Badiou and Truong, 2009, p. 29).

This “twoness” of being and perceiving, however, is not enough to maintain a relation of Love, for the Subject could very well imagine and deceptively construe an empathic position in relation to self-operating machines. Instead, it must be augmented by an additional “oneness”: the position from the synthesized Subject and Shadow. Such is why equality is a necessary prerequisite of Love, for it demands not only the structure of equality but also the actual equality of being. That is, Love demands that those involved *are themselves equal* before engaging in relations. Thus, Love precludes mere appearances of equality (as is what is commonly asserted in democracies) or relations in which equality is merely a means asserted in the name of a greater goal (as is the case in cooperative relations).

Thus, Love requires the elevation of the Shadow to a position as equal to that of the Subject. However by granting the Shadow autonomy as an equal the Subject accepts the inherent expression of this autonomy as spontaneity and unpredictability. This spontaneity includes the potential for the Subject to be hurt by her Shadow. Love means accepting this possibility and even embracing, for the ability to be hurt by the Shadow is itself an expression of the autonomy of the Shadow. As the psychiatrist Colin Murray Parkes (2010) writes, “The pain of grief is just as much part of life as the joy of love: it is perhaps the price we pay for love, the cost of commitment. To ignore this fact, or to pretend that it is not so, is to put on emotional blinkers which leave us unprepared for the losses that will inevitably occur in our own lives and unprepared to help others cope with losses in theirs” (Parkes & Prigerson, 2010, p. 6). Granting the Shadow autonomy necessarily means allowing for the possibility that it will hurt the Subject, a position that, although not favorable, preserves the status of the Shadow as an equal to the

Subject. Conversion of those in the Shadow to self-operating machines and eventually Limbs mitigates this possibility, but this must be averted if relations of Love are to be sustained.

By rejecting the notion asserted by Paternal relations of ontological and phenomenological precedence of the Subject, relations of Love fundamentally reject the prevailing paradigm of social relations of self-operating machines by always being beyond that which dictates the logic of these relations. Love demands that the Subject and Shadow both lay claim to ontological equality and therefore certainty. Both the Subject and Shadow simply *are*, and in doing so collapses the distinction necessary for Paternal relations to exist. What results is nothing less than a radical transformation of relations and those involved in them—Love forces the otherwise impossible synthesis of the Subject and its Shadow. In doing so, Love represents an alterity that is always external to social relations—those between the Subject and self-operating machines—and therefore the collapse of social relations into an entity that itself transcends subjectivity and its inherent limits. What results is an “objective” perspective in which relations are seen from a neutral vantage point that favors neither the Subject nor Shadow but rather maintains the two in a relation of equality. As Luce Irigaray writes:

Love is either the mode of becoming which appropriates the other to itself by consuming it, introjecting it into the self until it the self disappears. Or love is the movement of becoming that allows the one and the other to grow. For such love to exist, each one must keep its body autonomous. One must not be the source of the other, nor the other of the one. Two lives must embrace and fecundate each other with no preconceived goal or end for either (Irigaray, 1982, p. 170).

Lastly, although Love stands in absolute antithesis to oppression and social relations, its position as something outside of the current social reality of oppression makes it the object of

profound desire and envy for those who exist within this reality.³⁸ Needing only itself, Love is an enclosed system whose self-referential and self-reliant nature refuses to adhere to the template of the Paternal relation. Precisely because Love can never be subjugated by the Father (and therefore subject to fantastical incorporation of other beings), there exists an intense need to obfuscate and hide the radical capabilities of Love. As a result, an imitation of Love emerges, one which replaces, in large part, the aspects of Love that are especially incompatible and therefore in accord with the causal structure of the Paternal relation. This imitation, which I refer to as *Lust*, is the reconstitution of Love which makes it conducive to the current system of oppression. While Love is fundamentally antithetical and hostile to the presence of oppression, Lust is an element of that very oppression that serves to obfuscate Love and maintain oppression as a desired state of being. Lust in this sense reduces Love to a known and fixed constant whose main means of expression of libido becomes the *possession* of other subjects, thereby maintaining the distinction necessary for relations by implying the preceding existence of a possessor who then possesses.

But why would an alienating Lust be preferable to a liberating Love? The answer lies in the implied consequence of Love that demands the abolition of distinction in favor of an unknown Other. By accepting this proposition, the Subject acknowledges her own limitations and willingly embraces both the possibility of her own subjective extinction as well as the status of others as equal to herself. Through Love, the Subject rejects the Paternal relation—and therefore all social relations which stem from it—in favor of a synthesis of the Subject and Other into a singularity that forever precludes oppression.

³⁸ This includes, but is certainly not limited to, love songs, poems, gifts, holidays (Valentine's Day), movies, art, and locations.

Unsurprisingly, these consequences are met with and perceived by a fearful Subject whose acceptance of them would entail a commitment into a thoroughly unknown realm, one in which subjectivity, and therefore the ability to compromise and integrate Love into a constructed reality dominated by the Subject, cannot penetrate. Lust presents a far better outlook, one in which the Subject need not change at all and the pursuit of the Body without Image can continue unabated. What Lust offers is *comfort* that can only be brought about through predictable (knowable) structures based on the Paternal relation—a comfort whose allure ensures for the most part a willing desire to dominate others and being dominated in turn.

The Altar

Given the opposing forces of Love and oppression the question over how a relation or lack thereof is to be defined becomes a key component in the larger paradigm of social relations.

Initially, all social relations are those between the Subject and self-operating machines. Through the innate capacity to empathize with those trapped within her Shadow, the Subject cannot avoid knowledge that these self-operating machines, despite every attempt to portray them as subjectively and ontologically inferior in status, are also capable of the qualities that make the Subject supposedly distinct. That is, empathy forces the Subject to consider the profound possibility that the self-operating machines and their reduction to specific sets of functions is altogether wrong; that these “machines” are *of* the Subject rather than *like* her. Through the emotional and fantastical bridge that is formed between the Subject and the Shadow through which the Subject can place herself in the position of these self-operating machines, the Subject cannot forever remain ignorant of this possibility, and it is in this determination that she is confronted by the *Altar*.

The Altar represents the culmination of this possibility in which the Subject must choose what to do with the epiphany presented through the empathic state. Which does she sacrifice upon this Altar? One offering to the Altar comes in the form of the Other. Through this offering, the Subject sacrifices the others and prevents the actualization of their true humanity; of their condition as equals to the Subject herself. In doing so, she has maintained and even furthered the distinction between herself as authentic in being and the Shadow, filled with those whose purpose is to serve her and her desires. What is ultimately preserved is the realization of the Body without Image, for by sacrificing the others the Subject has condemned them as self-operating machines whose conversion to Limbs can continue unabated.

The empathic state is thus reduced to the *sympathetic state*, in which emotional connections that assume the common humanity and equality of being between the Subject and the Shadow become reduced to superficial signals that overtly show signs of emotional connections while maintaining the structure of Paternal relations. Unlike in the empathic state, the Subject need not form any connections with the Shadow; the Subject need not escape the comforts of her subjectivity at all. Instead, the sympathetic state is one in which the Subject, from within herself, attempts to understand those in the Shadow. In other words, the Subject serves as the template within which the Shadow can be subjectively and emotionally known. It is from the perspective of herself that an emotional bridge is formed between the Subject and self-operating machines, and, as these machines must be rendered incapable of feeling (at least to the extent of the Subject), such a bridge can only be forged between the Subject and herself; she has become a surrogate of the Shadow authorized to “accept” the emotions expressed by herself to herself. Thus, whereas in the empathic state the Subject *experiences* the pain of others and subsequently acknowledges a common humanity, the Subject in the sympathetic state simply

imagines experiencing the suffering of others *as* herself. This can be seen through pity, or the dominant expression of this sympathetic state in which the pain and suffering of others is cordoned off and contained as not the problem of the Subject proper rather than shared and experienced together. The Subject, by virtue of being distinct from the Shadow, forgoes any knowledge of this suffering outside the context of herself—machines in general cannot feel and therefore cannot suffer—and thus pities others as foreign entities which forever preclude empathy or compassion. She does not make an emotional connection with other people but with *things*. In this manner, pity and the sympathetic state reinforce the divide between the Subject and Shadow; between a true being and things.

As terrifying as this prospect may sound, the other offering represents the more radical of the two options: offering the Subject herself.³⁹ In this offering, the Subject willingly sacrifices herself as precedence, and in doing so renounces her claim as the cause of the Shadow and those within it. The Subject has come to terms and accepted the radical insights of the empathic state. Those caught in the Shadow are no longer defined by what the Subject is not, but rather is granted, as full-fledged subjects in their own right, an autonomy and complexity that signifies the restoration of their authentic humanity. Whereas in the previous offering the Body without Image is maintained as a teleological goal, by sacrificing herself the Subject necessarily relinquishes this ambition and instead converts the Body without Image to a new entity—the Body of Many Parts.⁴⁰ Rather than an entity that uses others to achieve a purely subjective and selfish goal, the Body of Many Parts instead becomes a *collective* task that is achieved through the embrace of others, not as a means to an end, but rather as ends themselves. In this manner, the Body of Many

³⁹ Self-sacrifice is a theme which emerges throughout the Bible, the most overt evidence of this being John 15:13. However, in this case, I am much more inspired by the concept of the “living sacrifice”, found in Romans 12:1.

⁴⁰ This term is inspired by 1 Corinthians: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many” (New International Version Bible, 2011, 1 Corinthians 12: 12-14).

Parts becomes a truly social endeavor, one in which the former self-operating machines can now engage as truly autonomous agents capable of meaningful acts. This Body, like its predecessor, overcomes the Father, but does so through the absence of distinction brought about by the rejection of the underlying presuppositions of the Paternal relations.

Sacrificing herself at the Altar presents further repercussions for the Subject, one of which is the abdication of the cherished principle that the Subject's own phenomenology presupposes those of other people. What she experiences, and those with whom she shares these experiences, is itself conditional, being subject to *conflict* with the experiences of others. This means that, if she is to accept others as equals, the Subject must be willing to abandon the claim that something exists or is so purely because she believes and understands it to be so. Sacrificing herself at the Altar means that the Subject must accept and acknowledge the experiences of others—their beliefs, their concerns, their lives—as equal to her own. Dictatorial subjective structures such as tendencies to ignore or diminish these experiences as caricatures in favor of her own must yield to one which sees the Shadow as an independent and therefore autonomous realm.

Lastly, it should be noted that deciding on relations of Love must be brought about through a Will that emerges from the Subject and the Subject alone. Unlike Paternal relations, Love demands an authentic agency as a necessary prerequisite, for its emergence from anything external to the Subject would make Love foreign to her as well, which by its very nature is impossible. This feature—that Love is the manifestation of autonomy—is in stark contrast to Paternal relations, for these relations can never be sourced from any subjective agency because their very existence presupposes the presence of another Will—that of the Father! This Paternal Will operates in and through the Subject, whose pursuit of Limbs ironically relegates her to a

monomaniacal machine whose own desires merely serve to function within the framework of this Will. Thus, agency is a crucial factor at the Altar—either the Subject or the Father decides what to sacrifice. And which they each decide to sacrifice in turn decides the structure upon which relations develop: the result of sacrificing the Shadow at the Altar is Paternal relations, and the last as a relation of Love is the product of the sacrificing of the Subject.

Haunting of the Sacrificed and Return to the Altar

We have already discussed the terms of the Altar and the implications of the sacrifice of either the Shadow or the Subject. But what happens to that which is sacrificed?

This question arises as a consequence of the impermanence of the empathic state. So long as empathy and the empathic state is sustained the Subject can engage with the Shadow in and through relations of Love. However, this is not to say that these relations, once determined at the Altar, are in any manner eternal in nature, for the nature of social relations means that Love is an aberration, not the norm. As a result, there exists an intense pull of relations of Love back towards the “natural” state of Paternal relations; the established equilibrium is heavily in favor of the subjective precedence and is therefore against Love and its relational manifestations. As such, relations built upon it are seen as profoundly alien when contextually placed in a reality which mirrors the stark divisions of the Subject and self-operating machines. In a world in which all are Subjects and all are self-operating machines, the mere presence of relations in which one is neither proves to be more than just a difference in relations: it represents the very model which can ultimately upend social relations as Paternal relations. The temptation therefore to revert from the dynamism of an autonomy separated from the Subject back to the state of functional self-operating machines is constant and relentless. The result is that that which is sacrificed at

the Altar, be it the Subject or Shadow, becomes, in a sense, a phantom—one which haunts the subject, remaining elusive yet always strangely familiar. The Subject, once confronted by the Altar, is forever aware of the possibility—and allure—of the other which was sacrificed.

If the Shadow is sacrificed then the phantom haunts the Subject in the form of *Guilt*, an ambivalent state in which the Subject is unable to completely sever the ties between the Shadow and its humanity. The inherent nature of the sacrificed Shadow, as those whose humanity and equality to the Subject was denied at the Altar, consequently comes to haunt the Subject in the form of these denied humans in the realm of fantasy; because of the capacity to empathize even through its overt denial, the Subject can, even if pursuing these others as Limbs, nevertheless perceive and understand these others as herself and, furthermore, comprehend her own role in ensuring the denial and separation of these others from their humanity—what results is a profound guilt over her decision at the Altar. This alone would make the pursuit of the Body without Image almost impossible and thus there exists a need to counteract this guilt. The only means of ensuring the continued denial and therefore the unabated conversion of self-operating machines into Limbs is through the *repression* of the empathic position into the realm of the unconscious. Through repression, the Subject, although unable to sever herself completely from the empathic position, is able to simultaneously maintain Paternal relations and the structure which makes them possible.

This is not to say that this repression is complete, for as stated before the empathic connection and position are incapable of being cut entirely. From this inability is the guilt that punctures the repressive mechanism and emerges as paranoia in its phantom form. The Subject, in sacrificing the Shadow at the Altar, is now free to transform others into Limbs. However, a problem arises when considering how necessary it is for others to be stripped of their spontaneity

and creative capabilities in order to be Limbs—as long as they function accordingly and act predictably there is a harmony between what the others are and what they purport to be. Yet, this illusory state, as a heavily invested mechanism, proves to be quite susceptible to contradictions as any creative act performed by others while being Limbs ruptures it and, in doing so, immediately brings into question their very status as Limbs. And while these ruptures can be mended quickly, the presence of these spontaneous acts, indicative of the beings sacrificed at the Altar, gives rise to a guilt over what the Subject has done. In other words, these subversive acts by Limbs induces in her guilt and a fear that those who she sacrificed will return with a desire for retribution; as she turned others into Limbs, the Subject fears that the resurrected Shadow will turn her into a Limb to be used against the Father. There thus exists in Paternal relations to some degree persecutory fears that those dominated will come to dominate, creating a vicious and tempestuous cycle in which one seeks to dominate in order to control this fear of the dominated which then furthers the fear of the oppressed because she dominates.

If instead the Subject is sacrificed then the phantom materializes through an unfulfilled Paternal Will which constantly clashes with the new Subject and entices her to return to the Altar and sacrifice the Shadow instead. The phantom, this time in the form of *Temptation*, beckons to the Subject in a constant attempt to have her ultimately submit to the desires for domination. Such enticement is the product of a tenuous coexistence of relations of both Love and the Father, for the presence of relations of Love do not mean the banishment of Paternal relations or its form entirely. Love does not mean the absence of desires to dominate and oppress the Shadow but rather that, given the presence of both, the Subject willingly chooses love over domination. The desire to dominate will always remain, and in doing so presents the Subject with a never-ending temptation to regress from Love towards the state of Paternal relations.

If the Subject listens to the phantom of temptation, then the empathic position which until then had sustained the relation reverts to the sympathetic position, and what was once a dynamic and autonomous Shadow becomes self-operating machines once again. This highlights the *fluidity* of the Altar and the relations tethered to it—no relation can be maintained in one state without effort on the part of the Subject. Any relation of Love, if not sustained by the Subject, is quick to degrade into a Paternal relation. The motivation pulling the Subject from one state to the other, be it guilt or temptation, is ultimately a deciding factor, *but it is not the decider*. That is a role for the Subject and the Subject alone. Thus it must be stated: however tantalizing desire and lust can be in the overarching system of domination and oppression, it is the Subject who decides what relation to pursue, be they relations of Love which holds the key to a multiplicity of authentic beings, but an committed embrace of Love does not do away with the constant beckoning of the Father to return to relations built upon domination.

Conclusion

This paper serves as an introduction to the concept of the Altar, which I argue is the fundamental foundation of social relations. It is only through the particular choice of love at the Altar that relations between and among people can be truly social in that those who engage in these relations are equal. From these relations of Love come the trust and respect which can only arise when those who engage with others necessarily recognize and, in turn, are recognized in their humanity and creative complexity. This is a far cry from Paternal relations, in which social relations implies the use of others as mere instruments for the Subject in the fight against the Father. These others, as self-operating machines, have no autonomy or creativity, but rather are reduced to a function, much like inanimate objects. Lacking any of the features that would make

them human, they are free to be converted into Limbs, in which the Subject can use to construct the Body without Image and return to the State of Eden. Conversely, relations of Love between autonomous beings converge to form the Body of Many Parts, which, unlike the Body without Image, lacks any Limbs or a single Subject whose Will these Limbs seek to express. What results is social relations which are themselves imbued with the characteristics of their members, namely the capacity to create and build through the combined efforts of their members. It is as Helen Keller once said, “We live by each other and for each other. Alone we can do so little. Together we can do so much. Only love can break down the walls that stand between us and our happiness” (Lash, 1980, p. 489).

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