

BETWEEN THOUGHT AND ACTION: SYMBOLISATION IN DEPRESSIVE AND ITS EXTREMAL EXPRESSIONS

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ABSTRACT

Aim. The paper revisits the nature of symbolisation in a depressive position with respect to its realisation in external reality. The basis for the analysis is Hanna Segal's paper *Delusions and artistic creativity: some reflections on reading "The Spire" by William Golding* (Segal, 1974/1988), enriched with findings she presented in her later paper *Acting on phantasy and acting on desire* (Segal, 1992/2007), whereas context for the analysis is provided by the Kleinian psychoanalytic framework.

Methods. Psychoanalysis core interest is thinking and thought formation. In the paper, I try to move this emphasis on examining pure thinking into exploration mixture that thought and action create. I, therefore, analyse on what tokens mind content can be put into action, and conversely how the action is incorporated into thought. I perform the study using Hanna Segal interpretation of *The Spire* by William Golding, which she issued on 1974. I also reach out to her other papers to broaden the interpretation, including the paper she wrote almost twenty years later on Festschrift for her colleague, philosopher Richard Wollheim (Segal, 1992/2007), which actually proposes the solid linkage between thinking and its expressions in the world. The study is performed with reference to the Kleinian psychoanalytic framework, and it is centred around object relation and anxieties the object arouses (paranoid-schizoid and depressive positions) with respect to their impact on thought formation (symbolisation, sublimation).

Results and conclusions. Analysis of the relationship between symbolisation and action enhances understanding of two main responses to the depressive position: sublimation and maniac defenses, for it explores the extent to which the ego benefits/refuses to benefit from internal and external reality. While the rereading of Segal's interpretation of *The Spire* allows us to spot how the creative act enables capturing the most difficult internal and external truths, it also reveals – when put in the context of Wollheim's concept of *acting on phantasy and acting on desire* – that maniac response is less a form of protection and more a direct attack on receptivity and penetrating exploration for their associations to the primary scene.

Cognitive value. Studying depressive symbolisation as a vehicle for acting on either phantasy or desire reveals that employment of behavioural component forces us to revisit maniac defenses in light of their actual aftermath in the external world.



Such a refined view onto depressive defenses further contributes to improved differentiation of symbolisation in the depressive position, for it puts under scrutiny the relation between ego and performed action. It allows us to recognise that in addition to the symbol proper (formed by anxiety for an object) and symbolic equation (defined by anxiety of object), there is also a partly malformed form of the symbol, shaped by maniac defences (and so by absence of anxiety for the object), which disfiguration is best examinable in changes to the external reality it makes.

Key words: Hanna Segal, Richard Wollheim, William Golding, *The Spire*, Depressive position, Symbolisation

INTRODUCTION

The aim of the paper is to explore the connections between symbolisation in the depressive position and actions of the individual. There are, therefore, two elements, along with dependencies between them, that will require attention. One of them is a matter of symbolisation itself: what forms it can take overall, and more narrowly, how it works in the depressive position. For that element, two forms of symbol usage will be relevant: sublimation (highly effective symbolisation) and maniac defences (failure to effectively symbolise). The second element is a topic of dependencies between symbolisation and taking an action. The depressive position is a moment, when the mind recognises separateness between ego and object, and therefore, the relation between actions taken and ego are particularly close. Further dependencies between this close connection (ego-action) and symbolisation capacity can be best observed in the sublimation process, when the artist – following internal recognition with action – secures and develops the ability to think.

Putting depressive symbolisation under scrutiny will require a proper introduction to the psychoanalytic background, which the concept springs from, therefore the first part of the paper will address a matter of Kleinian theory framework, giving an outlook on the concept of symbolisation and psychic positions with respect to the type of object relation that they describe. To ensure unambiguous understanding of depressive symbolisation and introduce base for the analysis, the next section will take a closer look at the depressive position as illustrated by Hanna Segal in her paper “Delusions and artistic creativity: some reflections on reading ‘The Spire’ by William Golding Institute of Cultural Studies, University of Wrocław (Segal, 1974/1988). Once good understanding of psychic positions is in place, and analysis of depressive features is illustrated I will transpose onto the notion of symbolisation in the depressive position, the Wollheim concept of acting on phantasy and action on desire as adopted by Segal (Segal, 1992/2007), who essentially takes Klein’s view a step forward and asks about the sources of action with respect to thought rather than sources of thought alone. The final section summarises performed analysis and transposition by presenting changes the findings imply to current understanding of anxieties that stir maniac defences. It further elaborates, how these anxieties, and maniac response they trigger, turn symbolisation into acting on phantasy, rather than acting on desire.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the study is driven by two factors: inquiry into the relation between thinking and acting, and by considering recognition of separateness to be crucial for thinking and acting linkage. While the first factor indicates psychoanalytical framework, the subsequent factor narrows it to Kleinian theory.

Kleinian theory has its origins in the main works of Melanie Klein: *Contributions to Psycho-Analysis 1921-1945* (Klein, 1948), *The Psycho-Analysis of Children* (Klein, 1961/1998), *Envy and Gratitude and Other Works 1946-1963* (Klein, 1975/1997), and *Narrative of Child Analysis* (Klein, 1961/1998). In addition, significant contributions to the Kleinian framework were added by Ernest Jones (who was Klein's guide and editor), as well as by her followers and analysts. Three of her students are perhaps most recognised, these are Hanna Segal, Wilfred R. Bion and Herbert Rosenfeld, among whom only Hanna Segal created a consolidated view to Melanie Klein theory: *Introduction to the Work of Melanie Klein* (Segal, 2002) and *The Work of Hanna Segal. A Kleinian Approach to Clinical Practice* (Segal, 1990). The fact that Hanna Segal aggregated and structured vital discoveries of Melanie Klein makes her works to be most suitable to analyse the subject of the study, and at the same time by default it imposes on this subject a well-defined double lens of symbolisation and depressive position.

According to Melanie Klein, in early infancy two psychic positions are established: paranoid-schizoid (first quarter of life) and depressive (second quarter of life). Later, individual's whole mental life development is based on repetitive fluctuations between these two positions. In that sense maturation of the psyche takes place in an ongoing move between delusion, and later desire to control the object (paranoid-schizoid position) and recognition (slow and gradual) of separateness and autonomy of the object (depressive position). These positions are reflected in symbol formation, and so also in ego capability to encounter reality, as Segal masterfully puts it:

Symbol formation is an activity of the ego attempting to deal with the anxieties stirred by its relation to the object and is generated primarily by the fear of bad objects and the fear of the loss or inaccessibility of good objects. Disturbances in the ego's relation to objects are reflected in disturbances of symbol formation. In particular, disturbances in differentiation between ego and object lead to disturbances in differentiation between the symbol and the object symbolised and therefore to the concrete thinking characteristic of psychoses. (Segal, 1990, p. 52)

Recognising the impact of the psychic positions to symbol formation, and so to ego capability, it is worth taking a closer look at characteristic features of these positions and their impact to symbolisation.

Paranoid-schizoid position

The paranoid-schizoid position starts in first quarter of life, when an infant is very vulnerable to sensations. At that time the mind has no apparatus to deal with new and overwhelming external stimuli, so different from prenatal

conditions. That early mind setting is experienced by the infant as chaos, therefore the core aim of the position is to group these stimuli into good ones and bad ones, so the chaos is put into some basic order that ensures survival. Such an aim implies that every element of reality must be tagged as either good or bad, never good and bad (which is the actual nature of a human being). Two defences are deployed in order to group experienced stimuli: splitting and projection. Splitting disfigures perception of the actual object, so it fits the tag either “good” or “bad.” After splitting is done all elements tagged as “bad” must instantly be removed (for protection’s sake), and here projection comes into play and ensures all “bad” is outside of ego and far from loved objects. Psychoanalysis calls removal of these “bad” elements from ego as *impoverishment of the ego* (for the ego loses an important part of its experiences and inborn resources), and removal of bad things from loved objects is called a *relation to partial object* (that is because love is only towards part of the object, i.e. towards mother that feeds, while mother that frustrates is hated and kept entirely detached from the gratifying mother). When splitting and projection operate, the reality perception is disfigured in two ways: splitting makes objects oversimplified (no complexity: either good or bad, which is not accurate and so a large part of the object is kept away) and due to projection boundaries in thinking are weakened and ultimately lost (projection is a powerful omnipotent phantasy, that part of ego/part of object can be controlled. With such operation three important boundaries are lost/weakened: boundary between ego and object, boundary between internal and external, and boundary between conscious and unconscious). In short, such disfigured reality perception means that the ego has access only to part of internal and external reality, and that such impoverished outlook is further flooded with unconscious phantasy, which makes it even more detached from reality and its demands.

Paranoid-schizoid symbolisation: Symbolic equation

The first quarter of life is also a phase, when process of symbolisation¹ is being launched. The projective identification – being the most initial expression of early symbolisation – is responsible for establishing connection between internal and external reality. With further working through the position, it develops into symbolic equation, the diminished, but functional form of symbolisation that the paranoid-schizoid mind is capable to form.² Inability

1 Symbolisation in Kleinian view is a mean for unconscious content expression in a thoughtful form, that can be effectively communicated and shared with others (Klein, 1930/1948). To be more specific it is a form of indirect or figurative representation of unconscious phantasy (which may be conflict, idea or wish) (Isaacs, 2002). Such substitution mode is well known in semiotic field, but Klein adds to it two important concepts: following Freud she proves that the semiotic process operates on unconscious level as well, and describes dynamics that govern substitute usage.

2 In further sections of the paper I suggest, following Freud and Segal symbol theory, that paranoid-schizoid symbolisation should perhaps be reviewed, as certain primitive, instinctual recognitions (i.e. of ontological nature) seem to be well possible to form when defences are withdrawn.

to obtain the symbol proper in this position is due to defences that are at play. When splitting and projection operate, symbolisation must serve the paranoid schizoid rule to divide into good or bad, and so cannot be fully developed into abstract thinking. The symbol is then very concrete (so does not send to the whole reservoir of the meaning on the conscious part of semiotic dimension) and is equated with unconscious content (concrete meaning is filled with unconscious phantasy on a token of association). Symbolic equation may serve – to some extent – as an attempt to work through the experienced chaos, nevertheless it does not facilitate wholesome thinking.

Depressive position

The depressive position starts with the onset of the second quarter of life. At this point modes of infant thinking change, because finally the whole object becomes available. Mother is now recognised as both: the object of gratification and frustration. With that recognition achievement of ambivalence occurs, that will further serve as a core space for development. Obtaining the whole object becomes possible due to multiple reasons: first and foremost, it is due to a more developed neurological system. An infant between 3rd and 6th month has better developed neurological systems, and so can remember many of his experiences. That ability to store good and bad experience contributes to his sense of security, because the infant is no longer forced to rely on immediate reality, but can recall good or bad experiences, if he needs them. As presented earlier, in paranoid-schizoid position it is the evacuation of mental content (projection) that predominates, and with the switch to the depressive position this *evacuation to outside* is replaced by *sourcing from external* (introjection), and it is precisely that move, which enables combining good and bad elements of the object into one, whole and so complex object. Furthermore, the fact that introjected reality becomes thinkable results in change of predominant anxieties: the infant no longer struggles with the murderous object, but attempts to accord to external reality to benefit from its goodness. (Obviously such a change also means a drop in severity of anxiety.)

With the object introjected (and so with withdrawal of splitting and projection), the infant can finally recognise the difference between self and object, external and internal, conscious and unconscious content, symbol and substitute. All these differentiations are an integral part of forming the thought. The ability to form the thought, however, does not secure undisturbed thinking process. Whenever the individual encounters circumstances that exceed his capabilities, depressive defences come into play. In Klein theory, these defences are grouped under so called maniac response and there are several qualities, which characterise it. The most important one is omnipotence, which is a remnant of paranoid-schizoid defences: splitting and projection. Omnipotence in the depressive position means that, even though contact with external reality is kept to a significant extent, this reality remains disfigured according to individual unconscious anxieties, wishes and beliefs. As a result, the individual maintains his relations with certain aspects of reality, while ignoring other,

and that selection (what is recognised, what is ignored) is based precisely on unconscious phantasy.

The aim of the position is to establish a good enough, whole object. Maniac defences are deployed whenever pursuing this goal becomes unbearable for individual. If they occur, complexity of the object is compromised, and overridden by a simplified view, that is driven by unconscious phantasy. Maniac defences can be overcome by working through the position, and that takes place by recognition of one's own aggressive impulses and guilt associated with them. In the depressive position recognition of aggressive impulses becomes more available, because, unlike in paranoid-schizoid position, separateness of the object is largely acknowledged, and this line between ego and object largely prevents storing parts of the ego in the object. Recognition of aggressive impulses introduces guilt, and so to fully overcome maniac response further reparation of harm must be performed. That reparation may take place directly (through apologising and fixing the damage) or indirectly (through sublimation of recognised aggressive impulses into works of art).

Depressive symbolisation: Symbol proper and sublimation

A particularly interesting aspect of the depressive position is the type of symbolisation it produces. Unlike in paranoid-schizoid position, this symbolisation enables combining unconscious content with the whole object (and so the object that stirs ambivalence). The fact that such symbolisation aims at including all features of the object opens thinking to the richness of, what Peirce calls, Interpretant (Peirce, 1998). The mind is no longer bound to cut out multiple aspects of a given sign, only to fit its meaning to unconscious phantasy and governing rule to create order, instead it can focus on exploring the actual object, as such. This drop in urge to resolve severe, internal difficulties that results in attention and appreciation of reality is what characterises formation of the symbol proper. Not surprisingly, deployment of maniac defences will mean precisely regression to focus on severe internal issues, with drop of appreciation and care for external reality. In that case, though the symbol does not have to be equated, it will be narrowed in a contained meaning and unable to become part of meaningful mental life (as will be illustrated with Jocelyn, main character of *The Spire*). However, when symbol proper is not impeded with maniac defences, it can be further developed through the process of sublimation. Just as the symbol proper, sublimation is closely bound with recognition of aggressive impulses and need for reparation. Whenever the ego is able to withstand depressive anxieties and keep the sense of reality, introjected good object combined with sense of loss (caused by its own aggression) opens the richness of Interpretant and animates creative desires. Mechanics of sublimation are twofold: they ensure reparation of the internal object (through guilt, love and gratitude), but they also introduce recognition of – unknown so far – aspects of reality, in an attempt to perform successful reparation in the external world as well. Hanna Segal sees subli-

mation and work of art even more comprehensively including the interaction between artist and recipient:

The act of creation at depth has to do with an unconscious memory of a harmonious internal world and the experience of its destruction; that is, the depressive position. The impulse is to recover and recreate this lost world. The means to achieve it has to do with the balance of 'ugly' elements with beautiful elements in such a way as to evoke an identification with this process in the recipient. Aesthetic experience in the recipient involves psychic work. This is what distinguishes it from pure entertainment or sensuous pleasure. And we know that people vary in their capacity to accomplish such work. Not only does the recipient identify with the creator, thereby reaching deeper feelings than he could do by himself; he also feels that it is left to him to look for completion. (Segal, 2005, p. 73)

For such broad understanding of sublimation dynamics and work that occurs with object relation, it is perhaps still worthwhile to add a bit more static contribution of the work of art: the new semiotic content that is built into the code on the conscious side of symbol comprehension (development of Interpretant).

THE SPIRE – HANNA SEGAL INTERPRETATION

Hanna Segal's interpretation of the novel *The Spire* (Golding, 1964), performed in her paper "Delusions and artistic creativity: some reflections on reading 'The Spire' by William Golding" (Segal, 1974/1988), is an excellent examination of thinking in the depressive position and its external expressions. The core conclusion of her paper is that William Golding, by actively working through the position, managed to represent in the book a deeply disturbed part of himself, a part that is unable to symbolise properly and is detained by megalomania and omnipotence. From the following – for the purpose of the undertaken topic – it can be derived, that for H. Segal William Golding was able not only to use symbol proper (regular communication), but could also use it creatively, for sublimation, and that it was precisely that sublimation which enabled him to capture thinking impeded by manic defenses (symbol malformed by the absence of anxiety for object). Keeping in mind this high level view for H. Segal's interpretation, it is worth examining her paper in detail.

In her interpretation, H. Segal proposes a structured analysis that outlines depressive setting from the start to its possible outcomes. According to Segal, the starting point for the artist and person suffering from delusion is the same: the destruction of the parental couple in phantasy (Segal, 1974/1988, p. 255).³ The form of response to this act of destruction decides whether the work of art or the delusion will be an outcome. In case of undertaking effort to work

3 This moment is a core issue of depressive position, for it is an attempt to work through Oedipus complex. Recognition of Oedipus complex role in working through depressive position was pointed by Melanie Klein in one of her most important papers: *A contribution to the psychogenesis of manic-depressive states* (Klein, 1935/1948).

through depressive position, attack on the creative couple becomes recognised and artist focuses on restoration of the objects and creativity they represent. This restoration takes place through creating a work of art, which symbolises restoration of the object (parental couple). Instead of focusing on self or dwelling in guilt, the artist reaches out to object, and that in turn organises his internal world: it allows him to alter the destructive trajectory, and with that regain abstract thinking (symbol proper). Such a setting of mind allows the artist to think about the destruction he has done, choose restoration as a response, and recognise that in the act of creation he restores the object symbolically, not concretely. All these elements ensure adequate distance that facilitates differentiation between work of art and the creative couple it unconsciously stands for. That differentiation further secures a critical attitude of the artist towards his work and – since the restoration in this act of creation actually takes place – drop of the guilt, depressive pain, and loss.

If the effort to work through the depressive position is not (or cannot) be undertaken and defenses come into play, then attack to the parental couple is mainly unrecognised. However, since some sense of damage done remains, the individual invests in restoration of an ideal picture of himself (represented in the novel by Jocelyn building a four-hundred-foot spire). According to H. Segal, Jocelyn's omnipotent delusion, that he can build an extremely high spire on a cathedral, that has almost no foundations, is deployed as replacement of the destroyed parental couple. This destruction of a creative couple in unconscious phantasy results in disturbed symbolisation (thinking), hence concreteness of Jocelyn's phantasy to reach heaven physically, with the spire. This concrete symbolisation has its aftermath: it impedes real reparation of the object, and so guilt resulting from the initial act of destruction cannot be lessened (and at best can be omnipotently dismissed). In the novel, this entrapment leads to repetition of destruction in multiple ways: through the inability of Goody and Pangall to become parents, through the death of Goody during labour, when she is giving birth to Roger's baby, through discovery that the cathedral has no foundations and was built on a grave filled with dead bodies, and through Jocelyn's lack of concern regarding external constraints when he insists on continuing building the spire despite severe risk of its collapse. The last issue, featuring the core theme of the novel, is closely bound with the fact that what is to be created does not represent the object but the self, and so the distance required for critical assessment is hard to achieve. That in turn, facilitates relying on infantile omnipotence and magic, instead of reality examination.

In addition to performing the analysis of Golding and Jocelyn's response to the depressive position, H. Segal examines closely material used for restorations they make (either object or self). In the case of William Golding, when thinking is deployed and connection with reality maintained, the main material used for creation (restoration) is a sense of reality. H. Segal stresses that it is important to recognise, that this sense of reality consists of both: external and psychic reality. This acknowledgment is paramount not only because it

echoes important Freudian observation⁴, but also because it helps to recognise the connection between internal and external that a work of art represents. On the other hand, when response to depressive position is based on defenses – as in the case of Jocelyn – differentiation between internal and external is malformed⁵: the only source for activity is omnipotent self⁶. In her interpretation, H. Segal points particularly at Jocelyn's need to control the parental couple. For her it is a nodal theme, as she believes it secures Jocelyn's sense of being special, being chosen by God, and further having vision and so mission. In his novel, W. Golding beautifully captured this severe captivity by two representations: Jocelyn being touched by God (through having a vision, but also through almost divine sunbeams that at the beginning of the story serve for a connection between Jocelyn and God) and Jocelyn attempting to touch God with his four-hundred-foot spire. This projective stream, undisturbed by a depressive triangle, brings foundation to double collapse: the attempt to build the spire destroys the cathedral instead of improving it, and delusion of being chosen by God and having mission among people, turns out to hide Jocelyn's hatred towards people and his disconnection from God.

All these remarks sum up the overall aim of response to unconscious attack to the creative, parental couple. For Jocelyn, who invested heavily in omnipotent delusion, the core task – after partial recognition of his aggressive impulses towards creative couple – was to remove any signs of his destructiveness and create an ideal self. As H. Segal skilfully summarised it, Jocelyn represents the great escape from external and internal conditions, which is a prelude to self-devastation (Segal, 1974/1988, p. 257). The aim of William Golding is different, unlike the main character of his book, he undertakes the effort of working through depressive position and so aggressive impulses towards parental couple are acknowledged. To remedy the damage done, the author focuses on exploration of external and internal truth, to further create external representation of his discoveries, for he recognises this to be the only way to restore parental couple in unconscious phantasy and so to regain connection to reality (internal and external).

In her paper, H. Segal provides an understanding of typical depressive dynamics: those aiming at creative couple restoration and those focused on ideal self-restoration. She also outlines the impact of these two responses to overall mental functioning. For the purpose of the undertaken topic, which is the examination of depressive symbolisation and its external expressions,

4 This observation takes various forms in S. Freud's writings, here most suitable is his differentiation between two fundamental opposites, which – as he argued in his letter to C. Jung – were not *symbolic-real*, but *fantastic-real*. (Forrester, 1980). Furthermore, this differentiation, by admitting reality of common, strongly encourages rethinking the nature of symbol in paranoid-schizoid position, and whether symbolic equation is the only possible outcome of it.

5 It is worth remembering that according to Kleinian views to symbolisation, internal vs. external differentiation is bound to further differentiations: symbol vs. symbolised, ego vs. object, conscious vs. unconscious.

6 Main element of omnipotence is a delusion of control over external reality (so where examination of reality should be deployed, phantasy occurs as its replacement).

H. Segal's paper is paramount to get a sense of unconscious phantasies that are at play in depressive attempt to form a symbol. It does not, however, provide detailed analysis of symbolisation in the depressive position, neither does it sufficiently stress the move from internal to external in a process of symbolisation, which is a core topic for external expressions of the symbol. It is, therefore, necessary to bring in her other paper "Acting on phantasy and acting on desire" (Segal, 1992/2007), which covers some of these missing parts.

FROM INTERNAL TO EXTERNAL. REACHING OUT TO WOLLHEIM'S CONCEPT OF ACTING ON PHANTASY AND ACTING ON DESIRE

Eighteen years after publishing her interpretation of *The Spire* (Segal, 1974/1988), H. Segal issued another paper that puts under scrutiny the depressive position: "Acting on phantasy and acting on desire" (Segal, 1992/2007). This latter paper examines the position in respect to actual behaviour it produces, as advised by the Wollheim concept. In other words, while her interpretation of *The Spire* observes maniac response through the fairly defensive lens of a book character, her paper on Wollheim concept embraces the cases of maniac responses in a real life. There is therefore significant transition from the purely analytical examination of interplay between conscious and unconscious to the more comprehensive interplay between internal and external, where internal contains the former opposition of conscious and unconscious (and I call it more comprehensible, not only for adding the external piece, but also due to the external part being more tangible and therefore more examinable). Clearly such shift extends the scope of the examination, it is therefore worth taking a look, at what impact this new perspective has on the study.

Merging unconscious and behaviour – impact of Wollheim's to Kleinian view

The difference between a primary focus on thinking and an attempt to capture both thinking and acting bears some resemblances to the distinction between reality principle and pleasure principle (Freud, 1961), for these feeds respectively acting on desire and acting on phantasy. The motivation for acting on desire is a drive to test reality, where there is a well-set direction from within to outside. To that basic, psychoanalytic view should be added Kleinian recognition of introjection importance in depressive position, because that dynamic ensures that both internal and external reality are engaged in the act of cognition. A properly established reality test involves acting, which employs a set of additional constraints and possibilities. Acting can only be performed through an individual's body, and acknowledgment of this fact enables both: individual talent engagement and his limitations respected. (Limitations here should be understood as both: less developed skills and natural determinants, which enable desire to occur (time, space, former experiences, mental and psychical capacity)). Incorporating the body

to discussion introduces – through a back door – one of the most important elements of the depressive position, namely the achievement of recognised separateness from the object. And this is precisely the point when a marked line can be drawn between acting on phantasy and acting on desire, for following the desire through action is due to acknowledged separateness of object and anxiety that it might be destroyed and lost. Acting on phantasy, on the other hand, remains undisturbed by a matter of separateness. Although in this mode separateness is recognised, this recognition is rejected on a token of omnipotent denial of dependency, which in turn establishes a solipsistic trajectory for acting that protects from reality testing and enables acting out unconscious phantasy irrespective of external reality constraints. This rejection of recognised separateness is in fact submission of ego and object to the death drive, and so serves as an indication to be sensitive to actual damage done, when exploring acting on phantasy.⁷

Perception

Introduction of the concept of acting on phantasy or desire also requires a couple of remarks on the nature of perception, when these two modes occur. When acting on desire, there is an accurate perception of internal reality and proper examination of external reality. In the case of acting on phantasy, perception is destroyed as a by-product of the attack on the differentiation between internal and external (rejection of recognised separateness).⁸ However, a more careful analysis indicates that acting on phantasy is bound with unbearable enviousness towards sexuality. Penetration and reception cannot occur due to the maintained attack on the creative couple, and by the same token defensively despised.⁹ Highlighting dependency between perception and attitude towards sexuality helps to set a direct linkage between the attack on the parental couple and oedipal complex in depressive position on one hand and a distorted sense of reality on the other. It also facilitates the recognition of linkages between internal and external differentiation with their sexual representations. If that is incorporated, Jocelyn's response to the attack on the parental couple can perhaps be interpreted less as a need to create an ideal picture of the self (Segal, 1974/1988) and more as a drive to continue this attack.

7 *The Spire* (Golding, 1964) offers good illustration of possible outcomes when acting on phantasy is deployed: Jocelyn pursues construction of an impossible spire, despite it takes lives of multiple workers and Goody. Moreover, the murderous nature of his activity does not prevent him from believing he fulfils God's will.

8 As W. Golding skilfully captured it, this refusal to admit the reality of one's own separateness, destroys ego and object through disowning ego (Jocelyn does nothing of his own will, he only fulfils God's will).

9 In the case of Jocelyn, there are multiple examples of that malformed perception: from his attitude towards his aunt (from whom he depends on and at the same time whom he disdains), through associations he produces to every object giving resemblances to genitals (as if rejected sexuality persecuted him), up until his looking for closeness with the sculptor and confusing him with Goody (which represents confusion between admiration and creativity).

Symbolisation

Reflections over perception introduce the topic of symbolisation. Even though H. Segal in her paper on Wollheim's concept (Segal, 1992/2007) does not examine this topic focusing mainly on depressive setting and defences, it is worth taking a closer look at this matter, for it is a core issue for the undertaken topic. When it comes to acting on desire, the symbolisation seems to follow the rule of symbol proper, as H. Segal puts it in her other paper:

Symbols

1. Symbols are formed when projective identification is withdrawn in the depressive position, and they are the precipitate of mourning.
2. The symbol is not felt to *be* the object, but *represents* the object. Its own characteristics are recognised and respected.
3. The symbol is used, not to deny, but to overcome the loss.
4. Symbolism is at the basis of sublimation and it governs communication both external and internal. (Segal, 2007, p. 112)

For the purpose of undertaken topic, it is necessary to note, that there is no description of symbolisation malformed with maniac defenses. Well described symbolic equation that sufficiently outlines symbolisation impeded by paranoid-schizoid defences does not seem to explain this phenomenon:

Symbolic equations

1. Arise in the paranoid-schizoid position through projective identification.
2. The symbol's own characteristics are not recognised. They are treated as though they were the original object.
3. The symbolic equation is used to deny the loss of the object.
4. It is the basis of acting out and symptoms. (Segal, 2007, p. 112)

According to the psychoanalytic understanding of how the mind operates when overtaken by omnipotent denial of dependency, it can be said that symbolisation malformed by maniac defenses is characterised by two features: it is very concrete and based on narcissistic object relation.¹⁰ The concreteness of symbolisation is a result of the absence of an object in the thinking, which impedes abstraction from occurring (element of potentiality is withdrawn from the perception). Narcissistic object relation denies dependency on the object: in place of reality testing idealised self occurs. What is learnt in such object relation is therefore the concept of the ideal self, a by-product of such mind setting is not only rejection of reality, but also eroticised destructiveness, for the death drive becomes primary to sexual drive. In other words, unlike symbol proper, symbol malformed by omnipotent delusion seeks to misrepresent reality and disconnect from the object, so that destructive fantasies can be realised in an external world. It will differ, however, from the paranoid-schizoid symbolic equation, for the nature and source of reality misrepresentation is not a defence from overcoming chaos (poor differentiation between ego and object), but a defense to recognised separateness (fairly good

10 Excellent description of Kleinian understanding of narcissistic object relation can be found in Riccardo Steiner paper "On Narcissism. The Kleinian Approach" (Steiner, 1989).

differentiation between ego and object, whole object available, but rejected due to oedipal complex issues).

Behavioural component

Last but not least, there is a behavioural component and its trigger. For H. Segal, acting on desire is a matter of choice, while acting on phantasy is a result of compulsion to act (in addition to overall withdrawal from taking action). It is worth differentiating between the compulsion to act on unconscious phantasy in depressive position and acting out unconscious content in the paranoid-schizoid position. The former is performed with partial recognition of reality, with driver (compulsion to act) being the expression of the unconscious, the latter is performed when internal and external reality are confused, for perception is malformed by projective identification. In other words, compulsion to act in depressive position is the aftermath of ego rejecting object, while acting out unconscious content in paranoid-schizoid position is due to the inability to fully differentiate ego from the object.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS TO UNDERSTANDING OF DEPRESSIVE SYMBOLISATION AND ITS EXTERNAL EXPRESSIONS

The analysis of depressive symbolisation, with respect to its external outcomes, leads to recognition that symbol proper and symbolic equation do not fully explain features of symbolisation in the depressive position. While symbol proper and sublimation accurately illustrate recognition of the depressive attack on the creative couple and the subsequent need to overcome the loss through the work of art (a need strongly bound with the reestablishment of central depressive anxiety *for* the object), the symbolisation that is malformed by maniac defences remains undescribed, for it cannot be explained by symbolic equation, which is founded on anxiety *of* object (deeply entangled into insecurities around one's own right to live). In symbolisation impeded by maniac defenses anxiety of object, even if part of the picture, is unimportant, for the main goal – driven by megalomania and narcissism – is to allow destruction to prevail, and so in terms of aroused anxieties, the core driver is *the absence* of anxiety *for* the object. To sum it up, analysis reveals that in case of depressive position two types of symbolisation must be considered: symbol proper that leads to sublimation (creative couple restoration) and provides work of art as an output, and symbol malformed by maniac defenses that pursues the destruction of the object (attack on creative couple maintained) and materialises internal attack to object in external reality as an output.

Such a view towards depressive symbolisation and its external expressions affects the reading of Segal's interpretation of *The Spire* (Segal, 1974/1988). It is no longer possible to maintain the view that maniac response (acting on phantasy) is merely an attempt to maintain an ideal picture of the self, for it becomes clear that depressive defences are to repeat attack on the creative

couple and dependency it represents.¹¹This further facilitates addressing a misperception of external and internal reality in depressive defenses, it is now less about disfiguration in favour of creating an ideal picture of the self, and more aftermath of a direct attack on receptivity and penetrating exploration for their associations to the creative couple. Last but not least, adding the component of action to the interpretation, confronts with uneasy fact that the overall aim of maniac response is to translate destruction in an internal world into external realities.

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11 That in turn furthers differentiation between paranoid schizoid and depressive position by recognising the difference in placing source of action. While paranoid schizoid position is a matter of confusion between internal and external, depressive position is individual's attack on this differentiation (separation), which bearing many resemblances, is obviously not the same thing. With that recognition, maniac defences prove to be very different from paranoid-schizoid: they don't prevent from struggle to identify with good object and keep away bad one, but in attempt to reject separateness they push into identification with bad (absent, frustrating and destructive) object instead.