

## II- THE PSYCHE AND IMMUNITY<sup>1</sup>

This theme illustrates many of the issues treated by Professor Madeleine Bastide and the philosopher Agnès Lagache, who both died recently. Their work, mentioned here concerning many of its fundamental main lines, has undeniably opened up new possibilities for Research in homoeopathy and expresses the importance of the levels of information in the organism.

A form of surprising correspondence between the forming of the immunological Self and that of the Ego emerges from it. By showing the unity of these viewpoints which illustrate the different facets of living beings, it makes reflection follow its course.

### **The psyche and immunity are obviously linked.**

Day-to-day psychiatric clinical medicine is the obvious expression of it. The knowledge of homoeopathic types and that of the diatheses to which they belong contribute still more to the understanding of what happens here.

If the well-balanced psyche favours the body's defences against aggression, the deficiencies of the immunological capacity for defence engender difficulties and have an effect on the psyche.

The importance of heredity, the form of analogy which may be detected between the putting in place of the immune defence system and the structuration of the psyche, both guaranteeing the maintenance of life, give more meaning to this double movement.

The subject's capacity for reaction to stress, with a non-specific neuroendocrine and constitutional level, a specific immunological level and an individual level, is illustrated by the homoeopathic type corresponding to them. It is all the more fundamental as it **does not depend on the nature of the pathogen.**

The impact of the acute or chronic stress on the immune system, its link with psychosomatic illnesses, the manner in which certain predisposed personalities assimilate certain events of life play a role.

They show how much any disturbance affecting the psyche has an impact on the immune system, the reverse being also true.

The psyche and the immune system are therefore closely linked at many levels.

### **At the biological level, certain immunogenetic tendencies illustrate this link between stress and immunity.**

They bring to light the predisposition to certain pathologies without one being able to predict their onset or the time when they appear, even if the knowledge of the predominant phases of fragility of certain homoeopathic types or diatheses may provide information about it.

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<sup>1</sup> The text is taken from the book *Du stress au transgénérationnel*, Geneviève Ziegel, Editions internationales des Entretiens de Monaco, 2006, Référence des travaux essentiels de référence (end of the article).

It is nonetheless important to keep in mind that, when the subject has solid psychological defence and uses it in an appropriate manner, they reduce their sensitivity to illnesses and the homoeopathic treatment may contribute to it.

### **Autoimmune diseases show the obvious existence of biopsychological correlations.**

Certain molecules are fundamental in the functioning of the immune system.

*Two of them are at the top of this hierarchy of adaptation to diversity*

The molecules of recognition of the immune system and MHC molecules which act as self-markers: by presenting antigen peptides to the T-cell receptor, they make it possible for self or non-self peptides to go to the appropriate place before being recognised or not by T-cells.

*The triggering of the immune response is directly and essentially linked to the recognition of a difference.*

Several-level regulation permits to maintain balance between the defence against foreign elements and the preservation of the integrity of the Self.

*If this is not done in an appropriate manner, pathologies appear.*

Loss of balance, under the influence of genetic, environmental factors or immunological fracture as a result of stress, a virus or an immunosuppressant therapy, engenders various disorders.

If one refers, here too, to Professor Madeleine Bastide, they can 'be categorised into three groups:

- in the first, the immune system cannot reject the attacker as a result of a genetic defect;
- in the second, as it is hypersensitive, it develops a quick reaction or else an allergy;
- in the third – that of autoimmune pathologies –, certain cells of the organism act as self-antigens, whose maintenance engenders the persistence of lesions.' Certain viral or bacterial infections, genetic predisposition and not elucidated incidental causes have been blamed.

### **There would be two types of autoimmune diseases<sup>2</sup>:**

- The first are linked to 'circumstances': the immune system makes an error of recognition and, 'mistaken, functions with a mechanical error';
- The second are linked to 'personality': more serious and more profound, they are triggered off by intense stress or imbalance linked to an unknown cause affecting the immune system: MS, rheumatoid polyarthritis, lupus erythematosus, thyroiditis... There is a misinterpretation between 'self' and 'different from self' – a more appropriate term than 'non-self' insofar as the notion of difference is introduced. The latter becomes rejectable...

### **'The mechanism of central tolerance of the Self is disrupted...**

It is a question of loss of immunological and/or physiological and/or general personality rather than mechanical cause'.

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<sup>2</sup> As Professor Madeleine Bastide used to say.

The importance of its function in the identification of what the organism must reject leads one to look into the role of the immunological Self.

*Self and globality are closely linked.*

The Self, a 'global' entity, defines every living structure.

It becomes more complex as the evolutionary process develops until the human organism, in which various levels may be identified:

- the molecular level, with its cybernetics-type feedback control systems – it manifests what is of the nature of action-reaction,
- the biological level, with a carrier, about which there is the hypothesis that it might be electromagnetic,
- the psychic level as a whole.

*The organism constantly communicates with itself and the outside world:*

It exchanges information at all levels – psychic and molecular ones – and 'constructs its "representations of the body" in response to biological information'.

If it receives a piece of information at one level and is able to respond to it at the same level, it adapts itself.

On the other hand, if this piece of information is 'partial or moved to a "lower" level, it has to treat "at a lower level" an event which would necessitate "more general regulation" '. A piece of information that cannot be 'treated' by the psyche may thus appear somatically (urticaria, ulcer, etc.) to be managed in order to regain general balance. The symptom, showing inappropriate communication of the subject with themselves and with the outside world, should be deciphered in its true meaning.

*No appropriate means permits to conceptualise satisfactorily the manner in which antigens and T-cells function in the presence of each other.*

Even if there are new prospects at the present time, the mechanism for recognising antigens has not been elucidated yet.

*There is nevertheless an element which should be emphasised: after the exchange of information, there is **not loss but difference**:*

Endogenous molecules have a meaning for the organism: it knows its constituents.

On the other hand, exogenous molecules do not constitute for it a piece of information likely to be read beyond the scope needed to treat its meaning.

**From an immunological viewpoint, different levels of exchange may be accepted.**

The mode of communication at work in the organism undeniably throws light on them.

The immune system cannot 'be considered tantamount to a protective mechanism'. It is 'informational' and, to use again the words of Professor Madeleine Bastide, seems to constitute 'an interface between objects and entirety'.

**Immunological approach and psychic approach, a possible analogy?**

One may ask oneself the question.

It is important to stress here that Freud never denied the role of the soma on the psyche and of the biological mechanisms set in motion and playing a part in the psychic functioning.

**The immunological Self and Freud's Ego obviously have many things in common: they explain the link – and the analogies – between the psyche and immunity.**

If one goes over Professor Madeleine Bastide's points one by one to establish a parallel between them and what happens at the level of the psyche,

*- Both of them have a link with the past.*

Without forgetting to mention that the words used in the two epistemological fields are often the same – Self, Non-Self, Individuation, Energy... –, one may observe that:

'The immunological Self derives from an ancestral structure dating from about five hundred million years. It constitutes **the basic genetic and molecular unit and, through evolution, permits adaptation to diversity**. It distinguishes every subject – hence the rejection of all transplant if there is difference between the recipient and the donor'.

The Ego defined by Freud, constituted by the '**sedimentation of object relations**', **constitutes a 'unit' which 'ensures the stability and the identity of the individual'**.

It **establishes a sort of compromise** between the outside world, the Id, the reservoir of the impulses orienting the individual's activity – some of which tend to retain, establish larger units while others tend to break up, change relationships – and the Superego, which participates in putting in place taboos and the ideal image at which to aim.

The role of the Ego is the relationship with Reality.

If the Id is typically connected to 'heredity', the Ego represents the contribution of the past, namely what the subject has experienced, what was transmitted to them through educational attitudes, the Superego of the parents and, through them, the contribution of the previous generations.

Without putting them into the same category, given their development in different epistemological fields, these two concepts of 'immunological Self' and 'Freudian Ego' have a form of analogy in their relationship with the inheritance from the past and their management of the adaptation to what comes from the outside world and from within.

*- Heredity has an influence on the immune balance:*

If physical defence is feeble because of fundamental weakness of the organism, psychic defence will be affected.

The immune system may, 'because of the weakened state of its capacity to react, not be able to reject the foreign body': it echoes the weak or ill-structured Ego which, in some cases, no longer defends the subject against internal or external attacks, hence the symptoms and their disruptive effects.

*- The idiotypic network of the mother and its transmission to the child show a possible parallelism between the elaboration of the immunological Self and the construction of the Ego.*

It has sorts 'of internal images of antigens' and permits the protection of the infant during the first months of their life. By transmitting 'nongenetic inheritance of the immunological and biological experience', it contributes, in a way, to 'warn' the organism of the potential danger.

At the level of the psyche, in that stage in which the relationship is still intense, the mother 'protects' the infant. She keeps them safe from their impulses, which she helps them to channel, and from external stresses, of which she 'warns' them. She does so from her personal experience, what she transmits of it and what comes from those who preceded her and 'informed' her in every sense of the word.

What is passed on of the maternal defence, enriched with genetic inheritance, contributes to the forming and strengthening of the immunological Self and of the Ego of the child.

Later confronted with other pieces of information and other constraints, they have to put in place appropriate strategies at the psychic and physical levels.

With this aim in view, they use the means provided by genetic and educative inheritance.

But when an erroneous piece of information is transmitted by ancestors, the psyche and the soma are often confused... They respond in a solely 'impulsive' manner without the organism being able to provide the ways of fathoming the meaning of the pathology: the latter is part of the period of physical and psychological 'individuation' before the stage of language and before the Ego of the child is elaborated and they become more individual.

### **Other special features also show that link between the psyche and immunity.**

*- The immune system may 'be sensitive and see danger where there is none':*

This calls to mind what, in the psyche, reawakens a danger in an inappropriate space and time and resulting in the illogicality of a phobia or of irrational anxiety...

*- The immune system 'may turn against itself':*

In personality autoimmune diseases, the aggression is turned against the Self (against oneself) and results in the pathogenic information being treated at a lower level, at more archaic layers.

Stress, humiliation, fear, bereavement often make the fragility of the past appear again... Everything happens as if one regressed to a more 'archaic' stage of development of the psyche in which the psychic energy mobilises towards something less differentiated to serve not life instinct but that which brings the organism back to the inorganic, the inanimate and leads it to turn its dynamic charge against itself.

The melancholic subject who, in their liberating acting out, manifests their desire to be back in the womb's world of before birth, the wrong 'orientation' of information of the psychosomatic disorder are a form of expression of this.

*- The viruses 'which use the cell engineering of the host which they divert to themselves and make copies of the molecules of immune cells, the only ones able to destroy them', also deserve one's attention:*

They behave in a pernicious manner which calls to mind the psychic functioning of those who 'are like' so as to enslave and destroy their opponents in a more successful way.

### **The elements likely to play a role in the curative process show, too, an undeniable link between the psyche and immunity:**

Informing biological signifiers or psychoanalytic 'interpretation'...

Each approach informs the organism in its way and has an impact on both the body and the psyche:

Cytokines, after their stimulation through blood, would be 'able to produce physiological changes after process by the organism', according to a very precise mode of communication.

A sound 'interpretation' formulated by the psychoanalyst at the right time, the curative words of the therapist - one does not always know from where they draw their healing properties - have the same properties.

### **The bad assimilation of new food proteins also constitutes a space of possible meeting between the psyche and the soma...**

Carried by the nourishing milk, certain of them, which are new, are unknown to the digestive tract and assimilated with difficulty by the organism.

Identified as 'strange', they would constitute sorts of 'messages' impossible to integrate since they are 'unknown' to the mother too. From this point of view, they therefore cause disorders at the digestive and general levels.

When one is aware of the link between the psyche and allergies, one can only wonder about the repercussions inherent in their absorption at different levels:

Seen as carrying, in spite of herself, a piece of 'information' perturbing to the digestive tract, how could the 'mother'-food be 'assimilated' ?

Should not that unknown 'signifier' and the manner in which it will be received as 'mother-food' be examined in the points in which it is likely to pose a problem?

Do not mother and food, which have always been associated with each other, jointly participate in the good assimilation of what they carry at the somatic and symbolic levels?

How much food do those new proteins carry, together with 'messages'? Can the latter be otherwise than 'perturbing' to the child's future development?

How can they make that 'feeding person' their own and 'assimilate' her if she transmits a substance that cannot be recognised by the marks left through the generations?

How can they 'digest' an 'inassimilable' 'food-mother' carrying a piece of information whose structure or real code their organism does not know since it breaks the chain of what it received and integrated from those who preceded it and transmitted their inheritance to it?

Carrying inadequate protection against the stresses in the face of which she could only 'capitulate', does not that 'food-mother' convey in spite of herself a difficult message that leads her to be considered tantamount to discomfort?

How can she transmit what her psyche often consciously refuses to accept, as an intrusion into the order of nature, without perturbation being also carried?

Can the child make their own a piece of information sometimes given unwillingly by a mother who, rightly or wrongly, rejects what was imposed on her in spite of herself and which she carries?

To the message that is physically inassimilable is added the non-integrated element of the psychic conflict which, either conscious and perturbing or less conscious, was put in place out of submission to an external constraint and transmitted to the descendants.

Although it is seemingly tolerated, it nonetheless exists...

It manifests here everything that implies what is shown of *Luèse*:

The use of progress but also the vehicle of all delusions, deceptions and imitations.

Does not the *luétique*, the patent symbol of all distortions, the vehicle of psychic constraint, of the impossibility of refusal and instinctive submission to the law of profit in the name of what claims to be accepted by the majority of people, usually deny all natural laws?

Society and its visible or less visible diktats are at work here and infiltrate into what is transmitted to those who are part of it, old and young alike...

Sometimes made involuntarily unable to do otherwise, the mother can only transmit, at the same time as the food she gives to her child, a message loaded with her physical and psychic refusals.

What is unconscious and goes into the body and the psyche of the person she feeds physically and psychologically does not fool them at all: and the allergy emerges... It comes to 'signify' and bring to light a conflict.

The body of the child 'tells' the unconscious of the mother and, through her, of all those whose legacy she received...

It reacts, rejects and manifests.

It leads its parent and also its environment to ask themselves and then ask questions... It forces her to act... sometimes to renounce and lose... and reduce her ambitions.

If the mother protests and reacts through the body of the child and soon through those of a good many children, what manifests itself makes one wonder and tells...

In their secret alchemy, natural laws always restore the lost balance even if it is at the price of the sacrifice of one of its poles, in the interest of the whole... This is a well-known fact.

When, deep in her heart, the mother refuses... the child brings to light...

Through them, all those who, puzzled by the scale or frequency of a disorder, are gradually led to look for and work out the reasons for its onset, feel concerned...

Engendered by the forgetting or presumptuous negating of the fundamental laws organising living beings, does not the pathological symptom, after all, lead one to lose when one wanted to win too much?

Will not the increasing number of allergies engender understandable wariness of the ingested products since they may cause disorders?

Will not their partial and often instinctive boycott and the resulting healthcare costs have unpredictable economic consequences?

'Life' is at work and preserves the whole... but nothing here is gratuitous... The balance must be preserved... The reptilian brain is at work... sometimes to sacrifice a part for the whole...

**Isopathy, desensitisation and deconditioning therapies show, too, the link between the psyche and immunity.**

By somewhat 'simplistic' if not oversimplified extension, cannot isopathy be also likened to what is constituted by the confrontation, at least, with the situation triggering the pathology used as a therapeutic basis in behavioural therapy?

The question might be considered.

Cannot desensitisation be associated with what, first in the type of psychic disorder found in the behaviourist approach, constitutes the submission, in progressive doses, to the situations and stimuli seen as pathogenic?

**Many other analogies might be found.**

They lead to remind one that Freud saw the psychic apparatus as 'the organisation of various systems, each carrying out different functions'.

He described them as 'arranged one after the other' to 'form a whole comparable to the reflex arc or else to the different parts of a microscope'.

If the topographical issue which he also used emphasised the spatial or almost spatial arrangement of those agencies, the term 'psychic apparatus' laid stress on the notion of work done by the latter and the energy 'going through it'.

"J'appelle aussi un mode d'observation dans lequel chaque processus psychique est envisagé d'après les trois coordonnées : de la dynamique, de la topique et de l'économie, et j'y vois le but suprême qui soit accessible à la psychologie... De telles représentations appartiennent à la superstructure spéculative de la psychanalyse et chaque partie peut en être, sans dommages ni regrets, sacrifiée ou remplacée par une autre, aussitôt que son insuffisance est démontrée"<sup>3</sup>, he said about metapsychology.

It seemed that he was warning against the temptation to fossilise his research and the conclusions he had come to from the different modifications of his theories.

Like Hahnemann, he showed himself to be most open-minded, flexible and without any dogmatism.

According to him, what is of the nature of movement applied to psychic phenomena and leads to describe them as 'resulting from the composition of more or less antagonistic forces' introduces the notions of 'dynamics' and conflict, historically linked to the functioning of the unconscious...

Are not antigen/antibody conflict and the ability of the organism to repel its attacker mentioned in immunology?

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<sup>3</sup> I also refer to a mode of observation in which every psychic process is envisaged according to the three perspectives of dynamics, topography and economics, and I see in it the ultimate aim that is attainable by psychology... Such representations belong to the speculative superstructure of psychoanalysis and every part of it may be, without damage or regret, sacrificed or replaced by another as soon as its inadequacies are demonstrated. Bergeret J., Boulanger J.J. ..., *Psychologie pathologique théorique et clinique*, Masson, 7ème édition, 1999.



Is not the notion of antagonism in essence implied here?

Is not the latter commonly found and used in what the libido/interest of the Ego opposition or, in another terminology, the Eros/Thanatos one calls to mind?

Does not the health of the organism depend on this composition of forces:

On the one hand, the ability to respond to the power of the attacker in order to save the immune balance;

On the other hand, in the face of the outside world, the reciprocal action of the different psychic agencies between them with, coming from their dynamics, their consequence, that is, the formation of a compromise constituted by the symptom or the trait?

### **At the end of his 'experimental' career, Freud... between biology and philosophy?**

"Dans la démarche métapsychologique, il n'est pas douteux que, dans sa dernière théorie des pulsions [...], Freud s'est efforcé d'arracher sa conception psychologique à l'emprise métaphysique d'abord, à celle de la biologie, ensuite. Et voici qu'il semble retomber sous leur double influence. Il n'est pas interdit de penser qu'arrivé à ce qu'il pouvait juger être la dernière étape de sa carrière, il se soit senti attiré par ses 'amours de jeunesse', la biologie, qu'il a longtemps pratiquée, et la philosophie, pour laquelle il avait une particulière dilection (Lettre à Fliess du 2 avril 1896 dans *La naissance de la psychanalyse*)<sup>4</sup>".

It is worth remembering this...

### **Energy and cellular 'dynamics'; dynamics and psychic 'energy'.**

The notion of dynamics is introduced here, at the same time as that of 'energy'... The energy of a remedy... psychic energy.

The character of the opposing forces, their size, the potentiality or the inadequacy of the organism to defend itself, its ability to respond to the aggression at the physical level with, consequently – and vice versa –, that which it shows at the psychic level, are considered at the same time. Sometimes, the energy of drives even has the denomination of 'quantum of affect'...

Everything matches up and tallies, referring to the same words and awakening the same concepts...

The psyche and immunity...

### **Cardiac pulsation, emotional 'pulsation'...**

If one wanted to make a sort of analogical comparison, is not the energy of drives somewhat 'comparable' to the 'water'<sup>5</sup> that constitutes 90 per cent of the body' and which, 'dynamised in a constant way at about 90 pulsations a minute', plays the role of 'ligand of macromolecules'?

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<sup>4</sup> In the metapsychological approach, there is no doubt that, in his last drive theory [...], Freud endeavoured to snatch his conception of psychology from the hold of metaphysics first and then from that of biology. But he seems to have fallen under their influence again. One may even assume that, having reached what he reckoned was the last stage of his career, he felt attracted to his 'old flames', biology, which he practised for a long time, and philosophy, for which he had a fondness (Letter of 2 April, 1896, to Fliess in *The Birth of Psychoanalysis*). Bergeret J., Boulanger J.J. ..., *Psychologie pathologique théorique et clinique*, Masson, 7ème édition, 1999.

<sup>5</sup> M. Bastide, Supplément Revue *Aesculape*, n° 21, nov. déc. 1999.

The water might fulfil 'the function of mediation of molecular contact'. Regarding information, it might be put in place through an 'endogenous electromagnetic emission' likely to carry 'information belonging to the organism'.

Are not the two types of pulsation, that of the cardiac muscle... and that of emotion, which are linked together, worth the detour?

Since time immemorial, have not strength and energy had their seats in the heart, both that of the person and that of the body?

Is not stress, which always occurs to disrupt the function of defence and that of immunity, an emotional phenomenon above all else?

The psyche and immunity...

**Many other analogies might be found...**

They are illustrated by the autoimmune disease.

To be continued...<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Translated by Pascale Tempka