

PHILOSOPHY AS SYMPTOM

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It is an accepted commonplace that temperament is one of the most important sources of basic philosophical diversity. In spite of perfunctory and grudging acknowledgment of this phenomenon, it is bracketed completely in most philosophical verbal exchange. However, at least during question and answer periods at conventions, we witness emotional heat that belies that bracketing, whether it be in the form of tempers strained or cockles of the heart warmed.

I wish to explore this phenomenon briefly in the light of the notion of philosophy as symptom. I will then hazard the naming of one virulent and widespread type of preeminently curable philosophical neurosis, namely xenolexaphobia (fear of foreign tongues). I will go on to suggest a wholly unsystematic and very cursory mention of specific temperamental differences as plausible grounds of various ontologies and/or antipathy to ontology. I will then propose in barest outline a theory of philosophical therapy aimed at minimizing the effects of the fact that it is proper to characterize philosophy as symptom.

I would like to include in the notion of temperament not only emotional and volitional attitudes (both positive and negative) but also a preverbal sense of the rightness or wrongness of any issue which can be brought to verbal expression. Erich Fromm once suggested that love is a combination of insight, respect, care and responsiveness. I would point out that there are negative forms of each of these. Negative insight is nonverbal discovery which hides what is more worth knowing than what is discovered thereby; negative care is fear and care for the inconsequential; negative respect is either excessive regard or regard misplaced; negative responsiveness is misfiring reaction to whatever.

If we call Fromm's love and my negative correlates of his "love" by the generic term temperament, then we have a name for that cluster of factors of which philosophy is a symptom.

I am using symptom merely in the sense of an overt manifestation of something hidden. Most often it seems that symptom is used in the sense of an overt manifestation of a more or less hidden *illness*, as when we say that fever is a symptom of infection. By extension of that meaning, we could say that Marx's notion of philosophy as ideology is the claim that philosophy is a symptom of the underlying alienated dialectic of the pro-

duction and distribution of goods. Nietzsche's cry, "I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still believe in grammar," is diagnosis of rationality as a symptom of the residual sickness that is nihilism. In all these uses of the term, symptom is clearly negative, an overt x manifesting a disfunction.

But symptom can also be used in a neutral sense, as when we say in dualistic language that weeping is a symptom of pain or laughing a symptom of mirth. If philosophy is a symptom of temperament, it may be legitimately inferred that a healthy temperament is a precondition of healthy philosophy. It may be, however, that most, if not all, extant philosophies are symptoms of relatively unhealthy temperaments, that they are to varying degrees symptoms of temperamental disease.

Of course, philosophy cannot be mere symptom. Unqualified support of the Freudian thesis that science is a form of sublimated sexuality when applied to Freudian theory makes Freudian theory sublimated sexuality and renders itself stultifying. Similar difficulties lie in store for those who would accuse philosophy of being mere symptom of class conflict in society. We are all familiar with similar issues, arising in other contexts.

I do not think that the claim that philosophy is symptom is inherently self-stultifying. First, it is not *only* symptom. Moreover, it is possible to become aware of its symptomatic character and make attempts to diminish if not completely offset the fact that it is. The price of honest quest for the truth, however, is not merely eternal vigilance against our temperamental and volitional predilections, which motivate and shape our most intellectually rigorous attempts to formulate our rational convictions, but require that this temperament be the right kind. True enough, a philosophy which self-consciously attributes priority to the will in philosophy explicitly condemns itself. However, just as significantly—and that is the burden of my thesis here—a philosophy which self-consciously attributes priority to the intellect with the implication that it is free of the promptings of temperament is naive.

There is hardly anything more obvious than that philosophers disagree in most fundamental ways with each other. There is also hardly anything more scandalous in the intellectual community than such disagreement. There is also hardly anything more paradoxical, since it is a profession and an endeavor which of all intellectual professions and endeavors is the most searching, demanding, rigorous, and even important.

Formal systems and unqualifiedly unambiguous interpretations of formal systems are, I believe, wholly immune to temperament. However, with regard to natural languages and hence the construal of the life world, as well as with regard to all fundamental issues in philosophy, I am allied with Merleau-Ponty when he says that nothing can ever remove the fundamental obscurity of the expressed; and I would add, all of these matters are profoundly affected by temperament.

There is a vast grey area of verbal activity between formal systems (which might be called pure thought) and verbal automatism (which are nothing but overt emotion—for example, absurd blasphemies and obscenities). Although it may be that most of our philosophical activity takes place at the upper level of that vast area—closer to "pure thought"—I am claiming that the usual separation of pure philosophy from emotive expression is utterly spurious. Such a dichotomy leaves out the grey area, i.e., most verbal activity, including most philosophy. Not only is it the case that in that vast grey area all of us run out of reasons, not only is it the case that it is temperament which prompts and even decides what we will finally regard as intellectually binding (as if will intervened to forbid further search for presuppositions), but it is also the case that every step of the way is under the pervasive influence of temperament.

As we have said, this does not mean that the superstructure of rationality is mere subterfuge, nor that thought is epiphenomenal to temperament. Incidentally, I believe that temperament is under the pervasive influence of rationality, perhaps something like the parts of a gestalt, conditioning each other, like the scholastic *causae sunt invicem causae* (causes are reciprocally causal to each other)—but that is not my topic.

Philosophy is verbal activity. If that activity is in some measure a consequence of discordant temperament, then to that extent philosophy is diseased.

Quite a bit has been said recently about philosophy as linguistic therapy. Wittgenstein's influence is particularly notable here. But Ryle is not saying something very different when he claims that the aim of philosophy is to turn category habits into category disciplines. The difference is roughly between regarding the misbehaving child (the use of language) as untutored or as having a social disease. Ryle wishes to correct our delinquencies, Wittgenstein to cure our social illness. One is a school teacher, the other a doctor.

Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty (spearheaded by Husserl), recognizing that the West is in crisis, wish to provide a platform for renewal. Although their metaphor is different, it is possible to descry a similarity in goal that is relevant to the notion of philosophy as sickness.

Are these all merely metaphors, are they models taken from alien categorical systems and, therefore, systematically misleading? I would say, "No." It is clear that if we use the term dialectical to mean nothing more insidious or mysterious than a relatively coherent flow of meaning structures, then any series of events which is inherently meaning-bearing is a dialectical structure, and such structures can be disordered. Anything from what is prethematic in human perception or behavior, through the processes of the unconscious, all the way to what is most characteristically and explicitly "human" in social forms and life, including language, of

course, is dialectical. The major categorical leap is in moving terms from the biological sphere, where, presumably, they first took root, and extending them to the area of the specifically human, where dialectical processes are specific. The basic propriety for making this shift is that just as there can be disorders in biological systems there can be disorders in dialectical systems—error, ignorance, misunderstanding, as well as immorality and crime, are such disfunctions. Although the specific activities which most properly deserve those last terms may be open to debate and question, the meaning of the terms and the legitimacy of making the category shift has a very specific and clear rationale.

Texas law requires a mandatory life sentence for anyone convicted of three felonies. W. J. Rummel, at this writing, is serving a life sentence because over a period of ten years he was convicted of three thefts involving a total of \$229.11. The Supreme Court recently upheld his conviction on the grounds that if the doctrine of judicial restraint means anything it means that without the most compelling reasons judges ought not to substitute their own predelictions of what is gross and disproportionate for the judgment of legislatures; otherwise, a judicial oligarchy would result. But if this instance of gross miscarriage of justice and of disproportionate punishment is not a compelling reason, then what in heaven's name could be?

Contrary to the natural and spontaneous feeling I have about this matter, I am convinced that the five judges who voted not to intervene in Rummel's behalf are every bit as intellectually able and as competent in jurisprudence as the four who voted to intervene. Moreover, I would not impute direct and self-conscious malice to any one of them. We are, perhaps, too ready to believe that our intellectual adversary is at bottom either dishonest, malicious, or intellectually inferior. What is more likely the case is that one's temperament, i.e., one's affective orientation to life and one's diffuse sense of rightness and wrongness (insight with regard to practical matters) is a major factor in all of one's thinking, and the diversity is due to that and not to failure to understand or reason properly.

Supreme Court judges as a group are not likely to be more heavily under the sway of their temperaments than philosophers. In fact, I believe that it is more likely the other way around, not because philosophers are less passionate or more honest, but because Supreme Court judges operate within fairly well-defined rules of what constitutes legitimate jurisprudence, whereas philosophers by profession deal with attempting to find the rules for all rules and are, therefore, in relatively open territory as contrasted with Supreme Court Judges.

If the ground of our disagreement is temperament, then any purely intellectual effort to unify philosophy is misguided. Under the layer of intellectual rigor we find temperament, blik, perhaps childhood. If that be paradox, it is the human condition.

Someone may say that a sign expresses its sense and that philosophers are concerned with sense and not with signs. I understand; however, I detect something else. I detect that I am being asked to make a distinction which will engulf me in dualism if I fully agree. I know that the distinction will not stand up under a special form of scrutiny, i.e., when concern is going to be directed at the ontological status of meanings as opposed to signs.

Why do I so readily detect any attempt to pry meaning off of language in order to consider "meaning" alone? Probably because I am ontologically hypersensitive, and because I am an anti-dualist, an anti-idealist, and an anti-materialist. By the way, that puts me not in philosophical limbo but in the company of Aristotle, Aquinas, Spinoza, Merleau-Ponty, Peirce, and perhaps even Hegel.

But I believe that, ultimately, I detect that the apparently sound and inconsequential claim that a sign expresses its sense is a doomed philosophical gambit and that I have the ontological sensitivity that I do, and the preference for this particular ontological company, not merely for intellectual reasons, though they are mighty factors, but also, and perhaps even more importantly, because of subliminal motives and feelings. I temperamentally do not feel or want it to be the case that mind is a reality separate from the mindless process of nature. I do not think that it is so, but if I did not care whether it was so or not I might not have ever noticed that the sign-sense distinction is an implicit dualism. Further, if I wanted dualism to be the case I could be as resourceful in finding that it is as I believe that I can be resourceful in finding that it is not. If I did not care about ontology, I might be disposed to say that the distinction was alright provided it has some operational implication, that it was not okay if it did not. Naturally, if I did not care at all, I might say that if one wants to make the distinction it is fine, and if they do not want to it is equally fine.

As I observed earlier, this talk about temperament grounding philosophy tends to make of philosophers people who find bad reasons for what they already believe. And I think that that expresses some truth, but it also hides the deeper truth which is that philosophers are people who find excellent reasons for what they already believe and the even deeper truth that any human being who probes as relentlessly as do philosophers by profession will find that they must come to grips with the inevitable struggle of one's temperament to overcome one's understanding. They will find, too, that they must come to grips with the equally tenacious struggle of the understanding to suppress one's temperament, usually resulting in the success of the understanding in managing to believe that it has eliminated the temperament so completely that it need not even advert to it any longer.

In the middle ages, it was considered to be malicious and perverse if one did not accept Christianity—it was so universally accepted and so ably de-

fended by such prestigious thinkers. So much was this the case that bad faith began to mean what it does today, i.e., a kind of deceit, rather than what it meant then, i.e., a malicious and perverse adherence to "false" religious beliefs. During the enlightenment a reverse movement began. When one says that most of the problems of mankind are due to the stupendous capacity that it has for self-deception, he probably has it in mind to attack religion.

It is easy enough to see that attributing religious belief to fear of the numinous is an *argumentum ad hominem* which deserves the rebuttal, that religious disbelief is due to the fear of the wrath of God for the unbeliever. Now the fact of the matter is that religious belief does grow much more vigorously where those primeval senses are still alive and vigorous, and may be completely snuffed out where they are too attenuated. This gives some *prima facie* comfort to the anti-religionist. It is equally true that the anti-religionist's antipathy toward acknowledging in himself anything that smacks of the primitive is mightily effective subliminally in his finding reasons why religious belief is beneath the dignity of an enlightened individual. What everyone will concede is that *argumenta ad hominem* are spurious. But there is a fundamental kind of bad faith in not acknowledging that even our most intellectually sound arguments are tainted by the influence of temperament. It may be that *argumenta ad hominem* are inevitable, though they cancel each other out. That is far from the last word on this issue, however; for that would tend to imply that *Weltanschauungen* are simply different and that is all there is to it.

To take it for granted that clarity is a virtue may be perfectly healthy and sound, but to assume that nothing about the world or about human life is ultimately perplexing, not to say paradoxical, seems to me premature at best and the height of foolishness at worst. Our comfort with the presupposition that if our philosophy is clear, it is sound, betrays a form of preference, an unwarranted presumption in *favor of something* (*philia*) that ought to be glaringly obvious. Such a comfort betrays not a form of intellectual openness, but a will to bring the world under our intellectual grasp without residue. If we wanted to name this linguistic or philosophical disease we could do worse than call the excessive *desire* for control of the world *Cybernomania*, from *kybernos* (governor) and *mania* (madness).

It might seem that we can avoid all voluntaristic prejudice by purifying our motives and requiring that all philosophers deserving the name be truly lovers of wisdom and of truth. The will to truth is the *sine qua non* of being a philosopher, and the exercise of that will is philosophy, every other form of will or affective force is an illegitimate intrusion. But we can deceive ourselves by that kind of talk; for the will to truth, if that be the will to a perfect understanding of all that can be understood by a human being,

is not something we have, but a dazzling empty form or an unspecifiable ideal that can only beckon us.

Like any other man, the philosopher can only do his best, he can only be a lover of wisdom. Part of doing one's best is to take cognizance of and attempt to minimize where inappropriate the subterranean influences on one's philosophizing. At least one can subject one's conclusions to a searching reanalysis from the standpoint of philosophy as symptom. And lo and behold, another paradox leaps to mind. An excessively constant effort to take stock of those influences would result in intellectual paralysis.

Since "*aristos*" is Greek for "*best*" and "*telos*" is Greek for "*goal*," it might be said that we betray our trust to the extent that we are less than aristotelic, and that aristotelic quest entails becoming aware of and resisting the unwarranted intrusion of temperament. Some will be amused by the play on words; others will be put off. Am I right in assuming that those who are pleased have deep sympathies with the philosopher and that those who are not have antipathies for the same? Those who are amused though antipathetic to Aristotle can congratulate themselves, for at least they do not suffer from a severe case of *xenolexaphobia*.

Which brings me to the next point, namely, to hazard the examination of a specific type of philosophical neurosis which might be labeled *notational nausea* but can be given an air of greater erudition if called *xenolexaphobia*.

Notations are words regarded merely as physical objects or as mere sounds. It seems to me nothing short of astounding how much antagonism can be stirred up by the employment of certain notations. I have heard colleagues refer to Kant's phrase, "The transcendental unity of apperception," as typically meaningless jargon; yet, it is abundantly clear that it can be limited to mean nothing more than that a condition for the possibility of knowing requires that there be a joining of contents of consciousness, with the disclaimer that one is talking about an ontological reality (the ego) to assemble those contents. I do not wish to debate the issue in the slightest. I merely wish to point out that the apparently cumbersome jargon is a perfectly intelligible verbal sequence, and may in fact have the singular merit of economy of expression. Since the expression has meaning only in the verbal stream that is the Kantian *Critique*, and in the stream of western philosophical life, it certainly has wider implications and may turn out to be even incoherent. But it is anything but a paradigm of meaninglessness.

"*Ein Ausdruck hat nur im ströme des Lebens Bedeutung.*" What a neat way of saying something characteristically Hegelian! Of course, it is not Hegel but Wittgenstein. Our native pragmatists might not have been put off with a phrase of that kind, but it seems rather plain that a hard-nosed—I'm sorry—a tough-minded pre-Wittgensteinian analytic philosopher would have.

I regard it as a singular blessing that Wittgenstein's essentially continental temperament has insinuated itself into so much Anglo-American philosophy.

Someone might say, "What you are claiming in your paper can be shown by a sequence of rigorous questions and replies to be a self-stultifying claim. What you are offering as philosophy is merely a symptom of your temperament." There are philosophers who would agree or disagree with that, but all would find it intelligible. But if someone said, "Your thesis contains a necessary dialectic which negates itself," there are a fair number of competent philosophers who simply would not understand what was being said and would regard the statement as meaningless, despite the fact that *both sentences are paraphrases of each other*. What impels us to accept the first statement and to demur at the second, or even to prefer the first to the second, if we do? I suggest that it is because one of them has appeal to what we feel is our classical and pristinely pure English temperament, and the other tastes baroque and decadently continental.

Language analysts, such as Ryle, say that philosophers have no business trying to settle matters of fact; that is the province of the special sciences. But if the question, "What is there?" is the generic form of all metaphysical questions, then why should such philosophers object if it is pointed out that they are saying that metaphysics is the province of the special sciences? It is unlikely that they would not object. But if they did not, they would be put in the embarrassing position of having to rework every sentence in which they had made references to "*metaphysics*," which is an ugly foreign word designating an enterprise of muddled minds.

Surely it ought to be the case that philosophers could overcome their fastidiousness about modalities of expression, so that utterly spurious and inconsequential issues about sounds and notations would not be a stumbling block to discussion, to say nothing of convergence, let alone agreement.

Perhaps the examples I have given are insufficient to draw the conclusion which I wish to state now, in order to go on to more weighty matters. Xenolexaphobia is a lack of insight into, a lack of respect for, a lack of care for, and a lack of responsiveness to words and sounds that others find natural, normal, and even superior. It is an unconscionable disgrace for philosophers to have differences whose etiology is nothing but fear of foreign tongues. The differences they think they have at that level are no differences at all, and for them to be so regarded is a grossly inappropriate rationale for rejecting the other side. It thus fits a definition that has been given of a neurosis which is an inappropriate rationale by which one's encounter with the chaotic is given a measure of structure and meaning.

The philosopher suffering from xenolexaphobia places the object of his

phobia in the class of what is misguided, meaningless, or unintelligible; and insofar as that placement is a philosophical contention it betrays the fact that that portion of his philosophy is symptom.

It would be precipitous and erroneous for anyone to conclude from what I have said that I do not think there is a lot of hogwash passing for philosophy. It is one of the most embarrassing plights of our profession that we very frequently cannot tell one from the other!

I must risk further offending all or at least some of you in the following extremely sketchy suggestions about the temperamental etiology of ontologies and opposition to ontologies. At the very least, it is exciting heuristically to recognize that descriptions of certain well-known pathological disorders, especially some forms of psychosis, read like the crude descriptions of certain ontologies. Acosmic philosophies parallel autism; idealisms parallel paranoid fears of the dirtiness of the world; materialism parallels the psychic disorder dramatically portrayed in *David and Lisa*. David believes that he is a robot, a mere machine. It may be useful for the psychotherapist to acquaint himself with various ontologies in order to type and diagnose certain forms of mental illness.

The idealist is, as Berkeley called him, Philonous. He loves reality only if and to the extent that it is untainted by matter. It may be that the eminently resourceful intellectualization of one's loathing of matter produces Berkelean idealism. Consistent idealism of the Berkelean type would then be symptomatic of a philosophical neurosis that could be called hylophobia. It might be difficult to determine whether a phenomenology of Husserlean type should be more properly called hylophobia or decidophobia (a mongrel Roman and Greek etymological notation). Philosophical anarchists such as Feyerabend and Sartre are not true hylophobes but rather may be suffering from cybernetophobia, a paranoid fear of being controlled. If there were any truth, if there were a real world, then one's liberty would be contained within some limits. The delusional will to utter independence and unqualified freedom may be the driving complex prompting the ingenious arguments known as philosophical anarchism. Eminently resourceful intellectualization of one's loathing of spirit manifests itself in Democritus, Hobbes, and in only thinly veiled forms in most empiricisms. Psychophobia is extremely widespread in our culture, and hypocritically muted by the contention that ontology is pseudo-philosophy. Every philosopher has some view as to what is and what is not real. That is ontology. There is no escape from it.

Obviously, this sort of typing of one's opponent can get out of hand and is inherently calculated to make tempers flare. But we have acknowledged that temperament is a pervasive influence on philosophical positions. Oc-

casional reflection on this matter is a duty. A bit of auto-psychoanalysis is not only not an impertinence, but was actually hallowed by no less than Socrates in the dictum "know thyself."

It may be that there is an irreducible diversity in the unqualified desire to know, but it does not follow that much of the present diversity and antagonism and lack of cooperative endeavor can never be eliminated. Let us assume that the curtailing of such diversity does not lead to stagnation, but to achievement. In any case, it has been my contention that much disagreement among philosophers is purely semantic, purely a matter of temperamental differences about forms of expression in the most superficial sense of that phrase. These diseases could be cured relatively easily. Others are deeper and require more elaborate cures.

Our philosophy is rationalization rather than reasoning to the extent that the temperamental ground is defective and consequential. It follows that rightness, health, harmony, propriety of temperament is necessary to the purification of philosophy; for we have conceded that temperament cannot be eliminated. In Jungian psychology the shadow is the negative side of the personality—a more or less unconscious factor in our being. Normally, the shadow is considered to be made up of uncivilized tendencies—the darker side of ourselves. In Jungian psychoanalysis, health requires integration of the shadow. If Jung's proposal is defensible, sound philosophical life requires integration of the darker side of our temperamental penchants insofar as they affect philosophy. An alternative way of saying this is that if it is the case that the wish is father to the thought, and that our thought systems are infected with disorder due to those wishes, then a cure of the thought disfunctions requires a well-ordered will. There are parallels to this contention throughout most traditional philosophy. What else can be soundly meant by Plato's notion that the Good is the energizer and source of all the other forms?

The training and constant practice of the philosophical profession is, if anything, calculated to abet whatever proclivities every man has for being more resourceful in finding fine arguments to defend what one already is committed to on grounds swelling up from pre-decided goals, than in their ability to ferret out those hidden sources of desire.

A method of uncovering those hidden sources may be more important to the progress of philosophy than anything in the area of intellect or reason. The minimum that follows from what I have said is that the heightening of our positive insight, care, respect, and responsiveness to all that is and can be is propedeutic to sound philosophy.