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# The phenomenological status of the Lacanian signifier

One of the crucial issues in Freud's famous case of 1915 on the analysis of the person who has become no less famous under the name of the 'Wolf Man' is, as we know, the status of the 'primal scene'. We shall leave this difficult question to one side, and concentrate our attention on the episode with Grusha, described at the beginning of section VIII. There are two reasons for this. First, this episode is a remarkably condensed account of the sort of material that can emerge in the treatment, and of the type of psychoanalytic interpretation that is based upon it. Second, in a 'working note' published in the appendix of his last work, *The Visible and the Invisible*, Merleau-Ponty offers a commentary both rich and dense in which a relationship, which we would like to pursue further, may be drawn between psychoanalysis and phenomenology. To be sure, psychoanalysis is no longer the same as it was for Freud; there has been, for one thing, the work of Lacan. But the same goes for phenomenology, which is not quite the same as in Husserl's time; there has been the work of Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, and we shall try to show, here, that only a transformed phenomenology is capable of being fruitfully brought into relation with a transformed psychoanalysis.

First of all, though, let us quickly go over Freud's case history. He begins with a screen-memory that emerged in the analysis very early, in which the patient 'was chasing a beautiful big butterfly with yellow stripes and large wings which ended in pointed projections. . . . Suddenly, when the butterfly had settled in a flower, he was seized with a dreadful fear of the creature, and ran away screaming.'<sup>1</sup> In the 'mythology' or primitive symbolic code of the child Wolf Man, butterflies appear as women and young girls; beetles and caterpillars as young boys, and 'Many months later, in quite another connection, the patient remarked that the opening and shutting of the butterfly's wings while it was settled on the flower had given him an uncanny feeling . . . It had looked, so he said, like a woman opening her legs, and the legs then made the shape of a roman V.'<sup>2</sup> After a long interval in the treatment, the Wolf Man had, first of all, the indistinct memory of a

young girl who he had been very much in love with, who he confused with his mother, and who was attached to him as nursery-maid. Her name, initially identified with the name of his mother, came back to him in the memory of a 'particular sort of pear with a most delicious taste--a big pear with yellow stripes on its skin',<sup>3</sup> and the name of which, in Russian, is Grusha, which was also the name of the young maid. Freud concluded that the screen-memory of the butterfly hid the memory of the maid, the problem being that of the origin of the anxiety 'that had arisen when the memory of her had been activated'.<sup>4</sup> It was in this context that the incomplete memory of a scene appeared, very shortly after: Grusha was kneeling on the floor and had beside her a pail and a short broom made of a bundle of twigs. He was also there and she was teasing him or scolding him.<sup>5</sup> The analytic work (on broom, bundle of firewood, fire, John Huss, enuresis) brought out the gap in the memory of the scene with Grusha: in fact, 'when he saw the girl scrubbing the floor, he had micturated in the room and she had rejoined, no doubt jokingly, with a threat of castration'.<sup>6</sup>

How does Freud, at this point, interpret this sequence of events? He states first that his reason for recounting this in such rich detail is that, according to him, 'it provides an important link between the primal scene and the later compulsive love' of the patient—a link that shows 'a condition upon which his falling in love depended'.<sup>7</sup> The position of the young woman—on the floor, engaged in scrubbing it, on her knees, with her buttocks projecting and her back horizontal—sexually aroused him and caused him to urinate, this act being an attempt at seduction that Grusha, moreover, seems to have understood perfectly well. According to Freud, this was a repetition of the primal scene in which the young woman occupied the position of the mother and the Wolf Man the position of the father, in such a way that, on the one hand, 'the compulsion which proceeded from the primal scene' was *transferred onto* this scene with Grusha, and was carried forward by it, and that, on the other hand, 'the condition upon which his falling in love depended' was itself transferred similarly, 'from the woman's posture to the occupation on which she was engaged while in that posture', as the patient's 'object choice'.<sup>8</sup> As

<sup>3</sup> P. 90.

<sup>4</sup> P. 90.

<sup>5</sup> P. 91.

<sup>6</sup> P. 91.

<sup>7</sup> P. 92.

<sup>8</sup> P. 93.

<sup>1</sup> From the History of an Infantile Neurosis', SE 17, p. 89.

<sup>2</sup> P. 90.

Freud writes, 'all his later love objects were *surrogates* for this one person, who *through the accident of her attitudes* had herself become his first mother-surrogate.'<sup>9</sup> He invoked, in support of his claim, one of the patient's dreams, which I shall quote:

'I had a dream', he said, 'of a man tearing off the wings of an *Espe*.' '*Espe*?' I asked; 'What do you mean by that?' 'You know; that insect with yellow stripes on its body, that stings.' I could now put him right: 'So what you mean is a *Wespe* [wasp].'<sup>10</sup> 'Is it called a *Wespe*? I really thought it was called an *Espe* . . . But *Espe*, why, that's myself: S. P.' (which were his initials). The *Espe* was of course a mutilated *Wespe*. The dream said clearly that he was avenging himself on Grusha for her threats of castration.<sup>10</sup>

Here, then, is the material that we shall now discuss. What Merleau-Ponty suggests, in the working notes of March 1960 and December 1960, is a bracketing or a radical *epoché* of the concepts of classical psychology with which Freud was more or less working. It is a question, as Merleau-Ponty says, of understanding that 'everything takes place in non-conventional thought'. And this requires nothing less than a complete reworking of what we understand by the word *thought*.<sup>11</sup> But in what sense? This is what we would like now to bring out in a critical evaluation, in the spirit of Merleau-Ponty's notes, of Freud's case study.

### *The problem of thought*

My first remark is that the screen-memory of the butterfly emerges very early in the treatment and appears both enigmatic as to its meaning and as lacking an origin—outside any signifying linkage. The butterfly phobia appears in a raw state, without the patient being capable of explaining why. It is located outside meaning as it were, or, since this is the same thing, it is located in a situation so saturated with its own meaning that this meaning therefore appears opaque, contingent, or even arbitrary—unique, in any case, in that uniqueness to which Freud the analyst is alert. Obviously, the butterfly resting on a flower and beating its wings is a *signifier*, but a signifier without signified, which signifies nothing capable of being thought, that is, put into language or deployed in a temporal chain of speech that inserts it into a meaningful context. It constitutes that sort of 'foreign internal body' as

<sup>9</sup> P. 84. My emphasis.

<sup>10</sup> P. 94.

<sup>11</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible* (Evanston: Northwestern Univ. Press, 1968), p. 241.

Freud so well puts it, in which the subject find himself strangely caught in an ek-stasis, terrified—which is precisely why the yellow-striped butterfly that beats its wings is a signifier.

It is only much later that there appears, initially indistinctly, the memory of the young maid in which she is confused with the mother. It takes free association, the recall of the pears that themselves have yellow stripes, and that are called *Grusha*, for the Wolf Man to remember her name. It takes Freud's extraordinary free-floating attention, which is specifically analytic, to understand that the memory of the butterfly is a screen-memory that hides the memory of the young woman. If one is placed outside of the analytic *praxis*, one inevitably gains the impression of a sort of 'fantastic construction', one that is totally arbitrary. In point of fact the mediation between the butterfly and the maid is, apart from the beating of the wings which evokes the opening of a woman's legs, the veritable *quale* (which is not a perceptible quality of an object) incarnate in the 'yellow stripe'.<sup>8</sup> This hardly seems sufficient, and yet there is no doubt that in the context of the analysis, this *Einfall*, this idea, is indeed the correct one. It is by means of the 'yellow stripe' that Grusha is literally metamorphosed, as if by magic, into a butterfly, retaining only the feminine attributes that the Wolf Man conferred on all butterflies. If we take seriously the suggestion that the Wolf Man in fact made this association, then this signifies that something from his childhood delight [*délice*] was transferred onto the pears with yellow stripes, and that this transference was reinforced by the name, not as an abstract linguistic sign capable of indifferently designating a young woman and a certain sort of pear. Rather, this transference was reinforced by the name, by virtue of what Merleau-Ponty appropriately calls 'the force of incarnation of the language', as a certain no less magical sedimentation of experience in the carnal emblem of *Grusha* which resonates as one of the keys of his desire and of his blissful satisfaction.<sup>12</sup> In one sense, still according to the same magic, the young woman and the pears constitute the same being. But it is a composite being, since it is both woman and fruit, and, moreover, striped yellow. In the same way the butterfly is a composite being also: woman and animal, it too striped yellow. There is therefore already a sexual movement in his pursuit of this type of butterfly, and it is this alone that enables us to understand, or at least to begin to understand, the fright that paralyzes the little boy before the butterfly, resting on a flower and beating its wings.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> P. 240.

<sup>13</sup> P. 240.

For we have yet to grasp the 'reason' for the phobia. The 'proof' that Freud was correct in his grasp of the screen-memory is provided by the work around the scene with Grusha—a scene of seduction in which the child urinated in front of the maid on her knees, her buttocks projecting and her back horizontal and which at the very least is equivocal since, instead of the classic reprimand, the threat of castration is made, at a level once removed, as a joke. Grusha had understood perfectly well, behind the rather incongruous appearances, what was going on. Without going so far as to speak, with Freud, of the repetition of the primal scene, one may at least speak of repetition in the sense of (re)enactment [*mise en scène*], probably transfixing [*foudroyant*], of the fantasy of coitus, in which Grusha occupies the *general* position of woman and the little boy the *general* position of the man. The love relation transforms itself, outside time, in the flash of desire, into an erotic relation. In this sense, we would not say today, as Freud seems to have thought, that the scene with Grusha is the *cause* of the patient's fixation on his erotic object (who, as a Russian aristocrat educated as an aristocrat, was regularly aroused by a desire for servants exercising the same activity in the same position). We would be more inclined to say, in so far as the situation was fortuitous in character, that the scene, as a scene of fixation, outside time, of fantasy, reinforced or increased the fantasy by fixing woman *in general* as the object of erotic desire in this *general* position: in a certain sense, for the Wolf Man a woman is not truly a woman (a desirable 'object') unless she is in a position of inferiority and unless he takes her *a tergo*. Once again, we are in the presence of a composite being, or as Merleau-Ponty says, an 'ominal' being, as emblem of desire, as an ek-static locus, the key to which the subject does not possess, in which desire is ready to be aroused, signified as it is for the subject without its signifier having the slightest sense that consciousness is able to do anything with.

However that may be—let us leave the dream of the *Espe* to one side for the moment—the phobia has not yet been understood: the scene with Grusha takes place before the dream of the wolves, and could not have left, at the time at which it occurred, the frightening impression of anxiety left by the dream, as well as by the butterfly. It was therefore forgotten and was displaced onto the screen-memory of the butterfly with yellow stripes which emerged, as we have said, very early in the analysis. How are we to understand this displacement of something that itself did not have this effect? Let us look closely at the highly mysterious alchemy at work here, in which the dream of the wolves is the real axis of the history of the patient's neurosis: with the dream, as we know, the castration anxiety that emerges is

literally terrifying. The scene of the dream, itself fantastic and outside time (so fantastic that Freud believes that it contains a transformed enactment of the primal scene, of what symbolically institutes the subject as subject of desire) is, without the little child (nor the adult man, when one thinks of his destiny) knowing or understanding why, what decides his life. Nothing is ever the same again. Henceforth there takes place (though, enigmatically, in an unconscious manner) what Freud rather curiously calls 'the subsequent understanding of the possibility of castration', that is, the symbolic death of the subject as sexual being. We shall have to discuss further this 'understanding', that is, this unconscious 'thought'. For the moment we shall simply note the fact that this thought spreads *over* (chronological) *time*, since it developed the anxiety, according to Freud, *après coup*, after the event, and *starting from* the scene with Grusha. It is as if, in a retrojection, or in one of these unconscious 'reworkings' with which psychoanalysis is familiar, the threat of castration proffered by Grusha had *suddenly, out of a past that has however never been present*, to be taken seriously, in a radical, but also blind, manner. But at the same time, to be faithful to the analytic material, it is also as if this 'taking seriously', which did not take place in this past which in fact never took place, had taken place and was taking place in the past present of the screen-memory in which the anxiety appeared without apparent cause. Just as the 'primal scene', that is, the 'originary fantasy', was displaced onto the dream of the wolves, so it was also displaced onto the phobia of the butterfly which, behind the screen that it forms for the scene with Grusha, makes this scene in turn a screen for the originary fantasy.

For it is this originary fantasy, again, that is put into play in the dream of the *Espe*. In a manner very characteristic of fantasy, the subject is both the producer and the actor in the scene, both subject and object. The wasp, once again, is a composite being, magical, since it is both Grusha (yellow-striped body) and the mutilated wasp *Wespe*, lacking its wings and its first letter *W*, that is, *Espe*, S. P., the subject himself. It could almost be said that the originary fantasm is here in its most archaic state, since the supposedly real mutilation, in the dream, of the wasp (which is capable of stinging, which is therefore phallic), is also castration that is supposedly carried out in the real (of the scene) on Grusha, on the (phallic) woman, and at the same time castration in the flesh of the name itself, which increases and reinforces the former castration in order to let the subject fall into his symbolic identity as *Espe*, as S. P. (The castrated wasp is the Wolf Man.) According to this version, 'a man pulls the wings from a wasp' means: the subject achieves his symbolic identity as man only if he castrates woman. An infantile belief that

is very common, as Freud showed so well, where, in this type of error at the origin of the very first sexual theories, coitus is interpreted by children as the castration of the woman. But in the Wolf Man, the symbolic kernel of his neurosis is such that this castration implies his self-castration: his masculine identity vacillates, appears in its own disappearance, and disappears in the moment in which it is going to appear, subjecting him to the in-finite games of his intrigue, of a sort of 'Ariadne's thread' in which the impossibility of this identity, that is, a veritable *symbolic misencounter* is brought into play in the repetition and the anxiety.

What appears here can, I believe, be clarified by seeing it as a *double network*, both *symbolic*, about which Merleau-Ponty says very little, in fact, and *phenomenological*, about which the working notes taken from *The Visible and the Invisible* provide us with a number of highly valuable suggestions.

Let us first of all consider the first network, the signifying network (Lacan), on which psychoanalysis concentrates almost exclusively. Let us take the 'primal scene' or the originary fantasy. Obviously, it is that which symbolically institutes the subject as symbolic (and unconscious) identity that is at work here, in this fantasy. This is the subject of desire, in Lacanian terms, the unconscious subject of the unconscious. For if that which institutes symbolically is at work here, it is immediately re-codified in terms which, as we have just seen, make the subject's symbolic identity impossible; or rather, his identity, unstable, merely circulates as a signifier in a constellation of signifiers in which he discovers himself only to lose himself, encountering, so to speak, an insoluble problem. The originary fantasy is articulated in such a way that, in the same movement, he is in his place (the supposed place of the father, the place of the little boy urinating) and is not in his place, threatened as he is in his masculine identity by the threat of symbolic death, which is the castration anxiety. The child Wolf Man assumes a consistency as subject of his own desire only in a locus in which his desire threatens him with death. And the signifier of his desire, in the conscious adolescent and adult, that is, the woman of an inferior position that he takes from behind, *circulates* in the child in an unmasterable (unconscious) manner, moving from the position of woman in the originary fantasy to Grusha and to the butterfly: this *nomadic* signifier, always caught in the same 'structure' (which re-codifies the emerging symbolic institution), signifies for the subject the awakening of his desire, pins him down as subject of desire in his particularity, whose aberrant character, which lies outside the world, outside time and space, consciousness is able to recognize.

The dream of the *Espe*, dreamed in the context of analysis, throws back into play this signifying circulation in a veritable *embodied* enigma, which does not proceed from any form of reasoning, and in which, in trying to win through, and finally in trying to find his place within it, the subject risks losing everything. He will escape from it only as an empirical, indifferent, that is to say, asexual, S. P.—a being suffering from his desire, adrift, a shadow of what he lacks and has always lacked in being [*manque à être*] already—the shadow of an identity that has already always been aborted, of which he will remain enigmatically the prisoner, because the problem is such that the subject is incapable of dealing with it—incapable, that is, of getting it to enter the concrete trial of an elaboration that requires time in creating time and occupies space in creating space, outside the stereotypical and rigid scene of the fantasy. The castration anxiety is indeed the anxiety of the (symbolic) death of an archaic self which maintains this anxiety only through wanting to preserve himself, come what may: but at the same this self cannot be discovered in consciousness, because it can not be found there as the pole, which both reflects and is reflected, of a meaning constituting itself in the experience of time and the world, because it is an abortion of the symbolic unconscious, an articulated signifier, grafted or hooked onto the signifier of desire. If the signifier, in the Lacanian sense, has no 'signified' or 'signification', and if, in its characteristic nomadic quality by which it is capable of becoming embodied just as much in Grusha as woman as in the butterfly whose emblematic character is drawn from its yellow lines, this is because it is, in a concrete fashion, not a *horizon* of symbolic meaning within which meaning could be made and thought in speech, *praxis* or action (on the contrary, it closes off all access of meaning or of doing to themselves), but rather a sort of symbolic cyst, moreover one that is nomadic, and as such prevents the subject from being completely in the world, as L. Binswanger has correctly pointed out. Moreover, the signifying structure, which we have interpreted as that which symbolically institutes and which is immediately recodified in the originary fantasy, is triggered off unbeknown to the subject (that is, to the space-time of consciousness) in the intemporality of what Lacan translated as *automatisme de répétition* ('repetition compulsion'). The enactment of the subject's access to his symbolic identity, and of the symbolic death that awaits him is indifferent to the historical time of experience: it draws its material from there where it seems that it wants to: both in the buried past of the scene with Grusha, which was not to have that significance at the beginning, and in the conscious past of the screen-memory, as well as in the present actuality of



the dream of the *Espe* and its recounting, where, it is true, the subject's symbolic intrigue finds its resolution by preterition, the subject having in fact gone through the experience of castration, and found himself, crushed, in his empirical identity, where he is dead to desire without being dead in general.

The symbolic network, where the problem or enigma of the subject's symbolic institution is embodied, without any prior, unconscious contriving, without a Thinker (of which Lacan sometimes gives the illusion) presupposes, therefore, something other than itself, in which it comes, blindly, and as it were indifferently, to be embodied. The signifiers as symbolic and wandering cysts *invest* and thus are embodied in *worldly beings* (*Wesen*) which thereby become *emblems*. While there is a certain contingent component in the signifying investment (or cathexis), which we prefer to call 'symbolic marking' so as to bracket the idea of an all-powerful 'Thinker' who 'invests', it also has a certain necessary component that is not entirely reducible to the signifying structure. This necessary component comes from what Merleau-Ponty gives us to understand is an entirely new type of 'eidetic', where the worldly beings or qualia (*Wesen*) come into play as 'rays' of time and world.<sup>14</sup> For him there are three *Wesen* belonging to the same ray of being, and not, as it were, three 'representations', in the first working note, in that which creates the movement from the phobia to the butterfly in the scene with Grusha. For, what causes the passage from butterfly to pear (two beings, notice, that are already codified by language) is the *Wesen* 'yellow striped', a certain modulation of the colour field that essentially belongs *neither* to the butterfly *nor* to the pear, but draws them together as if they were on the same ray. Note that this *Wesen*, although it may be named, exceeds, in its concreteness, any power of naming: it is more than an 'idea' or a 'quality' which, abstractly, might motivate the association. It is a being, both a unique, complex, perceptible quality, and the virtually autonomous power to radiate, whose being in the active or verbal sense (*Wesen*) owes nothing to the symbolic power of naming, since it imposes itself on the subject even before he recognises that he is entangled in the networks of language. It is therefore not that through this *Wesen* the butterfly and the pear have anything in common, as if they were two objects falling under the extension of the concept 'yellow-striped'; but that through this *Wesen*, which radiates out of both with the same concrete intensity, the butterfly and the pear stand there like two variations on the same being, like two 'laceworks'

<sup>14</sup> P. 240.

made from the same flesh. This *Wesen* 'yellow-striped' is not a concept, but is beyond concepts; it is incarnate, therefore, in the visible prior to any linguistic practice, and thereby merits the generic name of wild *Wesen*. This wild *Wesen* is prior to the symbolic institution of language in linguistic signs (beings), and even prior to any component of the subject's symbolic institution, that comes into play, not labelled as such, as the signifier of his desire. Freud's mistake of seeing this as evoking a yellow-striped woman's dress, a mistake that he immediately recognized, is in this respect characteristic. The *Wesen* 'yellow-striped' is in effect interwoven with this other wild *Wesen*, which itself is not marked by the subject's signifying structure, but without which it would have doubtless become entangled in his pathology. This other wild *Wesen* is his experience of 'delight' [*déllice*], of an 'origin' prior to the affair, and which is his experience with Grusha. Grusha, delicious being of his delight, of a childhood prior to origins, who is incarnate while radiating out of the carnal, bodily (*leiblich*) motion of pronouncing the name, 'Grusha'. Behind the literal appearances here of a signifier ('Grusha') without a signified (since this would have to be a contradiction, both pear and maid) there is the profile of something else, and which is the name, the *Wesen*, of 'Grusha' *returned to the wild state*, where, having become a being in the active sense, it radiates both from the pear and from the young maid, holds them together on the same world ray, the same incarnate existentielle where *Dasein* is ex-static in relation to the pre-symbolic innocence of pleasure. Reciprocally, this ray has always already propagated itself to the butterfly, intersected with the *Wesen*, 'yellow-striped'. The butterfly, the pear and the maid are all so many codified beings of language, at play as so many variations of this unique *Wesen*, in which the subject is *in the world*, and which we can designate, through the lack of anything better, only as 'yellow-striped - delight - feminine'. There is no doubt that this is what the Wolf Man is trying to rediscover, but in the hunt in which the enigma of his symbolic identity is already dawning, in chasing butterflies--and we know what his imminent success in capturing them confronts him with. It confronts him with the figuration of his own death where the sweetness of nostalgia is suddenly transformed into terror and the innocent hunter into a petrified, dumbfounded boy, where the symbolic markings are again at play, the 'yellow-striped - delight - feminine' suddenly turning into the 'woman-butterfly' (signifier), to which access is decidedly impossible.

This carnal depth of 'association' is, all things considered, what enables the association to occur 'freely' (but not arbitrarily) in the shadow of a

symbolic marking that would otherwise block it, just as it blocks the subject in the impossible locus of his enigma. This carnal depth is, as we have indicated, precisely the locus of in-nocence, of what arises, as Lacan says, in 'good fortune', in the fortunate 'chance' of the *tuché*. It is not, as such, the object of psychoanalysis, even though psychoanalysis *makes use of it* constantly. It is the object of what we call the *phenomenological dimension* ('network' is incorrect) of experience, of what is sedimented as beings or wild *Wesen* on a level with the world, that is to say, with world-phenomena. The reason for the 'overdetermination' of the association is that *it is for us*, after the fact (*après-coup*), who analyse it, since there is in fact a wild *Wesen* (yellow-striped-delight-feminine), of which the *Wesen* cut off from (codified) language, butterfly, pear, maid, are so many musical variations that cut across one another while referring to one another on several levels at the one time, which is what makes them these beings we call composite and that we have located: the butterfly is at one and the same time a butterfly, yellow-striped, and a woman (twice, through its being codified in the 'mythology' of the Wolf Man and through the beating of its wings); the pear is at one and the same time pear, yellow-striped, and a woman (twice: through its name and through the delight it incarnates); and the young maid is at one and the same time woman, pear (twice: through its name and through the delight it incarnates) and butterfly. The 'association' is therefore more like a *musical composition* whose rhythm is held together, as wild and innocent proto-sense in ex-stasy in relation to the world (or the world-phenomena), by the wild *Wesen* 'yellow-striped-delight-feminine'), where the three terms, distinguished for the needs of designation, are in fact confused with one another. And it is on to this complex musical score, in fact recodified *après coup* for the linguistic needs of analysis, that the symbolic encoding of the insoluble symbolic problem addressed to the subject concerning his (masculine) identity asserts itself, through its signifying marking which is already an initial recoding.

All this obviously implies a profound recasting of phenomenology since we are now required to speak, alongside the *symbolic unconscious* of psychoanalysis, of a *phenomenological unconscious*, from which there proceeds, regardless of any unequivocally fixed chronology, what we have called the 'sedimentation' of beings or wild *Wesen*. For this sedimentation does not take place in consciousness, nor in the time or space of consciousness, not even as 'thought' or as 'sensation' or hyletic datum (Husserl). Rather than being, enigmatically, a strange 'being' that is both trans-temporal and trans-spatial, the wild *Wesen* 'yellow-striped-delight-

feminine' is a being which, through its power of being, is the trace of a temporalisation of experience. Or rather, if, following Heidegger, notably in 'The way to language',<sup>15</sup> we reserve the temporalisation/spatialisation of experience, by which experience is lived in the present with *its* horizons of the past (retentions) and of the future (protentions), for the *phenomena*, properly so-called, of language, that is, for the *reflexive* spatio-temporal linkages of speech, gestures and actions, the wild *Wesen* in question is the trace of a *proto*-temporalisation/*proto*-spatialisation which is performed, precisely, outside of any reflexive power of consciousness, unbeknown to its activity of making sense through creating time (the time of presence) and space (in this presence). If this wild *Wesen* appears to permeate chronological time, this is because chronological time is not phenomenological time, but time that is 'filtered' or 'codified' by the symbolic institution--as it happens, the symbolic institution of the calendar. But it is also because the wild *Wesen* itself is not an identity recognizable in its concept, a Platonic, Aristotelian or Husserlian *eidos* that would be outside the world because outside space and time: if we are only able to designate it with this curious group of words, this is because in itself it escapes the concept, that is, the supposed univocity of naming. The wild *Wesen* is a 'being' or an 'essence' *without a concept*, which is neither a stasis qua the self-consistent locus of an ex-stasy, and even less is it a 'self-adequation', but, as Merleau-Ponty shows, a horizon or a *ray of the world*, that is to say, an *embodied existentielle*.<sup>16</sup> That which, already, is stretched into the scene with Grusha, is stretched again into the 'Being-in-the-pears' and into the 'Being-in-the-butterflies', and around which, as if on the one same branch, there are distributed three phases of the Being-in-the-world of the subject, that is, three world-phenomena in which the subject is himself inscribed as worldly *Wesen*: first his initially innocent Being-in-the-world with Grusha, and in particular, beyond what the originary fantasy cut off in this Being-in-the-world through *codifying* it according to the signifying structure in the scene with Grusha; second, his Being-in-the-world, in itself in-nocent in his relation with the pears; and third his Being-in-the-world, it too, in-nocent, with the butterflies, which is also, as we saw, symbolically cut off or marked in a signifying way by the structure of the originary fantasy. The flesh of the wild *Wesen* only holds these three world-phenomena together on the same branch because it is the transcendental memory, but also the transcendental

<sup>15</sup> *On the Way to Language* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), pp. 111-36.

<sup>16</sup> *The Visible and the Invisible*, p. 241.

anticipation (if one thinks that what is produced there is forever incomplete and always liable to be enriched) of the proto-temporalisation/proto-spatialisation of the world-phenomena as world phases or phases of Being-in-the-world. Similarly, in effect, none of the world-phenomena is a stasis or an adequation of self to self: the meaning of the feminine is not reflected in language meaning that is temporalised/spatialised in one or more series of acts and speech in which, as it were, femininity would be a horizon reflecting meaning, and similarly for the delight and the striped-yellow that is confused in it. The feminine is itself, away from its symbolic encoding, and away from its signifying marking by the originary fantasy, in a wild *Wesen* without concept, a *Wesen* inhabited by a radical indetermination, in which a specific relation is put into play, in which an existentielle is incarnated and in which the 'terms' of the relation (subject-woman) inhabit one another reciprocally, in undividedness, which is also that of 'thinking' and of 'feeling'. This relation is precisely that of the delight--anticipated in the proto-temporalisation, even before it exists--in the pears, and beyond, through the 'yellow-striped', in the butterflies: what is at issue can never be understood as long as this anticipation is inscribed in chronological time, through presupposing a pro-ject that anti-cipates that which nevertheless does not yet exist, not present in the pro-ject even as an 'idea'. For if there is no 'Thinker' who pro-jects and who subsequently realises the association for himself, this is because the world-phenomenon where the femininity *Wesen* is experienced as *Stimmung*, as 'atmospheric character' (Binswanger), turns this *Wesen* into both the transcendental reminiscence of other world-phenomena outside the reflexive memory of experiences that could have been lived as present in the past, and the transcendental premonition, similarly, of other world-phenomena outside the reflexive project of a meaning the reactivation of which it is a question of finding. That is to say, that the world-phenomena in which the delight for pears and the yellow stripe of the butterflies are respectively experienced, articulate with the world-phenomenon where the femininity *Wesen* is experienced as *Stimmung*, in the proto-temporalisation/proto-spatialisation, in an entirely unexpected way. Just as it is entirely unexpected that the return in the reverse direction of the 'yellow-striped' to the pears and the young maid should occur in the freedom of association. In the confusion of the wild *Wesen* the three world-phenomena are run together as one, precisely as the one that stands, as it were, 'behind' the wild *Wesen* 'yellow-striped-delight-feminine', as the world-phenomenon in which the subject does not yet exist *as such* because he is here ek-stasied, always already lost in the delights of an origin. And it is because, in a way,

the subject, symbolically instituted as the subject of the symbolic unconscious, 'knows' that he is there only through not being there, that his symbolic institution institutes at the same time the origin as *barred* or lost, that, contracting himself into his self-preservation, into the quest for his identity which however escapes him, he finds himself literally prohibited, inter-dicted, at its edge or its border, as the derisory S. P. fallen from the sadistic destruction of the origin and of the revenge against it. It is in this sense that the neurosis places the patient *outside the world* and dooms him to the machinations of his destiny. And we see that if Freud had been less blinded by the theory, by the 'reconstitution', of the primal scene, the way would have been opened for a more satisfactory result of the treatment--the fixation on the primal scene pinned the subject for ever to his symbolic mishap that left him with the hopeless and infinite quest for his identity: he became the Wolf Man, the living incarnation of the theory.

As to the problem of thought, we have made an important step forward, since, at last, we are getting to an understanding of what Merleau-Ponty means by this 'nonconventional thought', namely, that it issues from the *phenomenological unconscious*, from that fantastic and whimsical forge where unbeknown to consciousness the world-phenomena are proto-temporalised/proto-spatialised, where they are individualised and dis-individualised according to a radical contingency and become loaded with concreteness, with wild *Wesen*, with incarnated existentialia, except by passing, without lack of continuity, into one another, by becoming fused at a distance, according to what Merleau-Ponty nicely calls 'one sole and massive [*scil.* in-nocent, un-conscious] adhesion to Being which is the flesh';<sup>17</sup> in this adhesion the wild *Wesen* is both facticity (nothing can predetermine it as *Wesen*) and dimensionality (that which makes it into a *Wesen*). Free association reveals itself, at bottom, as we have said, to be like a musical composition having its own necessity, whose rhythm, held together by the wild *Wesen*, 'says' something only in so far as it is the rhythm of a proto-temporalisation/proto-spatialisation in a world-phenomenon which is a world phase, i.e., of world-phenomena which themselves are world-phases. The incessant logology of world-phenomena, which is incarnated in wild, always contingent, *Wesen*, and in which there is, if you wish, always incessantly at work something like a 'thought'. But it is an in-nocent 'thought' or one without consciousness, a 'thought' without concept and without reflection. It is therefore also a 'thought' that is not a thought, and which, given what is

<sup>17</sup> P. 270.

generally called thought, which assumes activity, is at play in the *passive synthesis*, to take the meaning of a term of Husserl's much farther. The phenomenological unconscious is, as it were, its locus, in so far as it is the locus of the *wild, an-archic* (without principle) and *a-teleological* (with no project) proto-temporalisation/proto-spatialisation of world-phenomena which, in this logo-logy in which they never manage to become stabilised into beings that meet up with themselves again, as self-adequations (by virtue of what we call their originary distortion), these world-phenomena take on a floating concreteness, itself identifiable only by convention and only because it is necessary, there too, to speak. This concreteness does not belong to them as essences of which they would be the substrata or as the attributes of which they would be the subjects, but, in its floating, it migrates from one phenomenon to another as their incarnated existentialia, that is, as what causes all world-phenomena to be originally *ex-static to other world-phenomena*, from which the subject as *self* symbolically *instituted is absent*. All world-phenomena embody this paradox of being a *structure of Dasein* (in Heidegger's sense) *without* thereby having however an *identifiable self*, which means, ultimately, that it is impossible to speak of them, unless as an 'x' whose concrete contents are indefinitely variable. It is also to this same extent that the world of world-phenomena carries within itself the imminence of *death*, the horizon of a radical *absence* which gives it all its transcendence, and which, in a way, renders it inaccessible to a meaning that it did not expect, that it does not and never will expect. We come into this world by being born. We are, we exist through living and we shall leave it in dying, since this absence of this world of ours is also our absence from the world.

Translated by Russell Grigg