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Didier Anzieu, The Skin - Ego. trans.

11 The Sound Envelope

Chris
Turner
(New Haven:
Yale UP,
1989)

Parallel with the establishment of the boundaries and limits of the Self as a two-dimensional interface anaclitically dependent upon tactile sensations, there forms, through the introjection of the universe of sound (and also of taste and smell), a Self as a pre-individual psychical cavity possessing a rudimentary unity and identity. The auditory sensations produced when sounds are made are associated with the respiratory sensations which give the Self a sense of being a volume which empties and re-fills itself, and prepare that Self for its structuring in relation to the third dimension of space (orientation and distance) and to the temporal dimension.

In recent decades, English and American psychoanalytic literature has introduced three important concepts. W. R. Bion (1962) has shown that the transition from non-thinking to 'thinking', or from beta to alpha elements, is based on a capacity of which the infant must have experience if he is to develop psychically. This is the capacity of the mother's breast to 'contain' in a defined psychical space sensations (particularly cenesthetic and kinaesthetic), affects and memory traces (or mental images) which are then imprinted in the new-born psyche. The container-breast halts the aggressive-destructive retro-projection of expelled and scattered bits of the Self and offers them the possibility of representation, binding and introjection. H. Kohut (1971) has sought to differentiate between two antagonistic - alternative and complementary - movements: one in which the Self is constituted by 'mirroring' itself in objects with which it accomplishes a partial narcissistic fusion ('Self-objects'); and the other in which the Self accomplishes a 'grandiose' fusion with an ideal object. Lastly, referring back to the mirror phase as conceived by Lacan, in which the Ego constitutes itself as other on the model of a mirror image of the whole unified body, D. W. Winni-

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cott (1971) has described an earlier phase in which the mother's face and the reactions of those around her provide the first mirror for the child, who creates his Self according to what she reflects back to him. Like Lacan, however, Winnicott accentuates the visual signals. I should like to demonstrate the existence at an even earlier stage of a sound mirror or of an audio-phonetic skin, and the role this plays in the acquisition by the psychical apparatus of the capacity to produce meaning, and then to symbolize.¹

Case Study: MARSYAS

I am going to give an account here of two significant sessions from a psychoanalytic cure. I shall call the patient Marsyas, in memory of the silenus flayed by Apollo.

Marsyas has been in analysis for several years. At the time, I am holding face-to-face sessions with him of one hour's duration, because a negative therapeutic reaction to couch-based sessions had set in after a time. The new arrangement has enabled psychoanalytic work to be resumed, and this produces a certain number of improvements in the life of the patient, though he still finds it hard to bear the interruptions of analysis occasioned by holidays.

It is the first session back after the spring holidays. Marsyas describes himself as feeling, not exactly depressed, but empty. On resuming his professional activities, he has felt distant in his contacts with others. He also thinks I seem far away. He has lost me. Then he remarks that the two long periods of depression he has been through in the course of his treatment have both been in the long holidays, though one of these occurred after a career setback which hit him badly. At Easter, he had been able to go away himself for a long weekend. He went south and stayed in a comfortable hotel with a heated swimming pool, by a magnificent sea. Normally he enjoys swimming and walking. In fact things did not go well. He got on badly with the other members of the little group he had gone with, friends and colleagues of both sexes, whom he already knew from several weekends spent together. He felt neglected, abandoned, rejected. His wife had had to stay at home with their child who was recovering from illness. The walks tired him and the collective sessions by the pool in particular had gone from bad to worse: he became breathless, his bodily movements became jerky and the more he tried the more uncoordinated he became. He was afraid of diving. The sensation of being wet made it unpleasant for him to go in the water. In spite of the sunshine, he shivered. Twice, while walking near the

¹ Cf. Guy Rosolato, 'La Voix', in *Essais sur le symbolique* (1969), pp. 287-305.

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It occurs to feed him, as new arrange to restore to For the first source of ser from Marsya mind then to how she hel memory to mother likec much occupi had found hi of the daugh had entruste care require breast-feedii generously, livered back sister whose her life seen down greed maid, a ster working, bu receive plea a sado-masc it premature Marsyas was parent that was hard oi judgement, to him. The faction of h exercise sev

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edge of the swimming pool, he slipped on the damp tiles and banged his head quite painfully.

It occurs to me that Marsyas comes to his sessions not so much for me to feed him, as I had had the impression of doing since receiving him under our new arrangements, but for me to hold him, to warm him, to handle him and to restore to him through exercise the potential of his body and his thinking. For the first time, I speak to him of his body as a volume in space, as a source of sensations of movement (like the fear of falling), without obtaining from Marsyas anything more than a polite nod of approval. I make up my mind then to ask him a direct question: not how his mother fed him, but how she held him when he was very small. He immediately brings up a memory to which he has alluded two or three times and about which his mother liked to tell him. Shortly after his birth, Marsyas' mother, already much occupied by her first four children — an older son and three daughters — had found herself split between the needs of the newborn baby and those of the daughter born the previous year, who had just fallen seriously ill. She had entrusted Marsyas to a maid more expert at domestic tasks than at the care required by a newborn baby, but had always made a point of herself breast-feeding this boy whose birth had filled her with such joy. She fed him generously, but in great haste, and then, the feed over and the baby delivered back into the hands of the servant, rushed to the bedside of Marsyas' sister whose health remained so frail that there was even a moment when her life seemed in danger. Between these feeds which Marsyas swallowed down greedily, he was watched over and at the same time neglected by the maid, a stern, elderly single woman with strong principles. She was hard-working, but acted out of a sense of duty rather than a desire to give or receive pleasure, and her relationship with the mistress of the house was of a sado-masochistic type. Her interest in Marsyas' body was only in training it prematurely, or in caring for it mechanically. She did not play with him. Marsyas was left in a passive-apatetic state. After a few months, it was apparent that he was not reacting normally and the maid announced that he was hard of hearing, that he was retarded. His mother, horrified by this judgement, grabbed Marsyas, shook him about, stimulated him and talked to him. The baby looked at her, smiled, babbled and beamed, to the satisfaction of his mother, now reassured of his normality. She repeated this exercise several times and decided shortly afterwards to dismiss the maid.

This account allows me to draw several parallels, which I communicate in part to Marsyas over a period of time. Firstly, he has the same expectations of his sessions with me as he had from his mother's feeding-visits: he is afraid I might be late or might cancel a session, just as he feared his mother would not come again or that he himself would waste away like his sister for whose life they feared.

The second parallel had already occurred to me at the beginning of the

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session and is now confirmed: he has been sufficiently fed, but what he wants from me is what the maid did not give him, namely that I stimulate him, that I exercise his psyche (there were moments at which his inner life seemed so impoverished that he gave an impression of psychical death). Since I began to receive him face to face, we have more frequent dialogues, important exchanges of facial expressions and gestures, communications at the level of body language. Through these exchanges, though at a distance, it is as if I were lifting and carrying him, warming him, setting him in motion, and when necessary shaking him and forcing him to react, gesture, speak: this I impart to him.

Thirdly, I now understood Marsyas' body image better. For his mother, he was a digestive tube, hypercathected and erotized at both ends (at the slightest emotion, he is seized by a violent need to micturate and one of his fears is that he might urinate during sexual intercourse). His body as a fleshy whole, as volume and movement, was not cathected by the maid. Hence his panic fear of the void.

We have an active, lively, warm verbal exchange on these three themes. At the end of the session, he grasps my hand firmly, instead of giving me his usual weak handshake. My counter-transference feelings are dominated by a sense of satisfaction at work well done.

This only makes my disappointment the greater at our next meeting. Marsyas arrives in a depressed state and, to my great surprise, immediately complains about the negative character of the preceding session, which had seemed to me an enriching experience for him (and which had in fact enriched my understanding of him, i.e. had been enriching for me). I give in to a sense of disappointment parallel to his own, though obviously I do not communicate any of this to him. I think: after a step forward, he takes two steps back, he denies the progress he is making. I am tempted to throw in the towel. Then I get a grip on myself. It is clear to me that when he gains on one front, he is afraid of losing on another. I tell him this, and I also mention the law of 'all-or-nothing', about which I had spoken before as the principle governing his inner reactions. And I explain that with me he has found, in our last session, the 'bodily' contact which had been missing from the relationship with his nurse; this, however, has immediately aroused in him the feeling that he has lost that other mode of contact, more usual between us until now, and which he had enjoyed with his mother, of the brief, intense feeding. My words take immediate effect and he resumes psychoanalytic work. He associates this alternating loss with his long-standing fear – which he had never before stated so clearly – that psychoanalysis might deprive him of something. Nothing to do with castration, he immediately adds without prompting, but a fear that he might lose his mental capacities. Marsyas' problem in fact relates to a deficit in his narcissistic libido and the effects of the failure of his primitive environment to satisfy the needs of his Ego, as

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Winnicott distinguishes them from the needs of the body. But where are Ego needs to be situated in the sequence I have just outlined?

The renewed therapeutic alliance between Marsyas and myself allows us to progress with our analytic work and bring out another dimension of his susceptibility to frustration (that of his narcissistic wound): when someone else gives him what he has not had from his mother, it does not count, for it is his mother who should have given it to him. And he thus maintains in his head an item of perpetually unfinished business, desiring that his mother or the psychoanalyst should finally acknowledge the wrongs they have done him from the beginning! Marsyas is not psychotic, because his mental functioning was on the whole maintained during his childhood: there was always someone, his brother or his sisters, one of a succession of maids, later of priests, to fulfil this role, and Marsyas now for the first time mentions a neighbour whom he visited almost every day between first learning to speak and starting school. He chatted away to her endlessly and also very freely, which was impossible with his mother who not only was too busy, but who only let him express thoughts in keeping with her moral code and her ideal of the perfect little boy. Talking with me, Marsyas observes, is sometimes like talking with the neighbour, sometimes like talking with his mother.

We are back once again to his relationship with me. He feels that I give him a great deal, that his life is now more enjoyable and that he would not miss his sessions for the world. But a serious problem remains in our relationship: often, he does not understand what I say to him. The problem was acute in the last session: he remembered nothing and did not even hear what I said to him. Moreover, if he thinks about his problems between sessions and an interesting idea occurs to him, he cannot produce it for me. He is suddenly struck dumb, empty-headed.

At first, I do not know quite how to deal with this resistance. But then a parallel occurs to me and I ask him how his mother had spoken to him when he was a baby. He describes a state of affairs of which he has never before breathed a word, in spite of several years of psychoanalysis, and for which in the evening, writing the account of this session, I found the formulation 'negative word bath'.

On the one hand, his mother had spoken in hoarse, raucous tones, corresponding to her frequent, abrupt and unpredictable swings of mood: Marsyas' relationship as a baby to the maternal melody as source of meaning in general was therefore cut up or interrupted, as the intense and satisfying bodily exchange with his mother during his feedings had been by the mechanical attentions of the maid. Thus the two principal infrastructures of signification (the infra-linguistic signification found in care and bodily play, the pre-linguistic signification of general listening to phonemes) were both affected by the same disturbance.

On the other hand, Marsyas' mother was not good at expressing what

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she felt or desired. This was, indeed, a source of irritation or ironic comment for those around her. It seems probable that she was also incapable of intuiting what those closest to her were feeling or of helping them to put their feelings into words. She had not succeeded with her son in speaking a language in which he could recognize himself. Hence Marsyas' impression, where his mother or I were concerned, of coming up against an alien tongue.

These two sessions served to confirm my idea that in cases of the early environment failing to meet Ego needs, the subject lacks sufficient stimulation by others of certain of his psychical functions, a stimulation which, in a good-enough environment, would allow him to arrive, through introjective identification, at the auto-stimulation of these functions. The aim of the cure is in this case therefore (a): to provide this hetero-stimulation through appropriate modifications of the analytic setting, through the analyst's determination to symbolize on behalf of the patient each time the latter found his mind blank; (b) to bring out in the transference the old faults in the Self and the uncertainties regarding the coherence and limits of the Ego, in such a way that both parties could work on them analytically. (In fact, the deprived, but non-neurotic patient will in any case be deeply unsatisfied with the psychoanalyst and psychoanalysis, but the symbiotic alliance which will have been established between the authentic part of his Self and the psychoanalyst will enable him gradually to come to recognize, through these dissatisfactions, the presence of certain precise, specific, localizable and identifiable deficiencies, which are relatively surmountable in new environmental conditions.)

Hearing and phonation in infants

We must now review the body of data that has been established with regard to hearing and phonation in infants.¹ It suggests that the baby is bound to its parents by a system of truly audio-phononic communication; the bucco-pharyngeal cavity, in that it produces the formants indispensable to communication, is very soon brought under the control of embryonic mental life, and plays at the same time an essential role in the expression of emotion.

Apart from the specific sounds produced by coughing and by the alimentary and digestive activities (which turn the body into a

¹ An account of the relevant works, for the most part English and American (though also German and French), is given in H. Herren, 'La voix dans le développement psychosomatique de l'enfant' (1971). I have borrowed substantially from this article, and refer in this section to several works listed in Herren's bibliography. See also P. Oléron, 'L'acquisition du langage' (1976).

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resonant cavern whose noises are all the more disquieting for the baby since they cannot be localized), (crying is, from birth, the most characteristic sound emitted by the neonate. A physical analysis of acoustic parameters has enabled the English researcher P. Wolff (1963, 1966) to distinguish in infants of less than three weeks four structurally and functionally distinct sorts of crying: from hunger; from anger (as, for example, when its clothes are removed); from pain of visceral or of external origin (e.g. during the taking of a blood sample from the heel); and in response to frustration (for example, at the withdrawal of an actively sucked teat). Each of the four types of crying has its own temporal development, and its own spectrographic frequencies and characteristics. The cry of hunger (though it is not necessarily linked with that physiological state) seems to be fundamental: it always follows the other three, which in fact appear to be variants of it. All these forms of crying are pure physiological reflexes.

4 cries

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3rd weeks attention

1st communication

The forms of crying produce in the mother concerned (who moreover attempts at a very early stage to distinguish between them), specific reactions which vary in relation to her experience and character, but are all directed towards stopping the crying. But the most effective means of stopping it is the mother's voice. From the end of the second week, this halts the baby's crying much more effectively than any other sound or than the visual presence of the human face. From the third week onwards, at least in a normal family environment, the 'pseudo-cry of distress geared to getting attention' (Wolff) is heard. This consists of wails ending in cries; its physical structure is very different from those of the four basic forms of crying. It is in fact the first intentional sound emitted, in other words the first communication. At five weeks, the baby can distinguish its mother's voice from others, though it still cannot differentiate between its mother's face and those of others. Thus, before the end of the first month, the infant is beginning to be able to decode the expressive value of the adults' acoustic interventions. This is the first of the circular reactions observable in the baby; it is far in advance of those relating to sight and psychomotricity, the forerunner and perhaps the prototype of the various discriminations acquired later.

Between three and six months, the baby is constantly babbling. He plays with the sounds he makes, which are, first of all, 'cluckings, clickings and cawings' (Ombredane). He then sets about progressively differentiating and deliberately producing and consolidating, from the wide range of phonemes available, those constituting what will come to be his mother tongue. He thus acquires what the linguist Martinet has termed the second articulation of language (the

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articulation of the signifier with precise sounds or particular combinations of sounds). Some authors believe that the infant emits spontaneously almost all the possible sounds and then slowly narrows these down to what makes up the sound system around him. Other authors maintain, on the contrary, that the sounds made at this stage are the product of imitation and that the baby develops progressively widening the range of sounds imitated. One thing is certain: at around three months, as a result of the maturation of the fovea, the circular visio-motor reaction is established; the baby's hand reaches towards the feeding bottle, but also towards the mother's voice. And though the child is capable at this stage of reproducing only the gestures which he can see himself making (those made with the extremities of the limbs), audio-phonological imitation is much more diversified: in his babbling, the baby is imitating the sounds he hears others make as much as his own; at three months, for example, imitative cries appear.

Two experiments are worth relating here. It is difficult to know what the infant actually hears, for want of an observable reaction proving that it has heard. This methodological problem has been elegantly solved by McCaffrey (1967) and Moffit (1968). They took electrocardiograph readings of ten-week-old babies, whom they first habituated to certain phonetic signals which the babies themselves could produce. They then presented them with signals which were either contracted in form or found in the phonetic repertoire of adults. The results confirmed that the baby possesses a considerable perceptual talent, far superior to its capacity to produce sounds. This foreshadows the well-known fact, observable in infants a few months older, that semantic comprehension is anterior to speech production.

Another way of resolving this problem was discovered by Butterfield (1968): babies only a few days old suck more actively at feeding time on a musical teat than on an ordinary one. It seems indeed, judging by the enthusiasm with which they suck, that certain babies prefer a classical tune or a popular one, or a song. After some practice, these music-loving babies became capable, an hour before their feeding time when they were wide awake – i.e. independently of any alimentary gratification – of starting or stopping the recorded music connected to the empty bottle they were given. These experiments confirm Bowlby's theory that a primary attachment drive functions simultaneously with, and independently of, the oral sexual drive. But the findings also introduce an important additional or corrective factor: they suggest that mental capacities operate first on acoustic material (I am tempted to add: also undoubtedly on olfactory material). Thus the view of Henri Wallon, widely accepted in

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France, that the differentiations of gestures and mimicry – i.e. of tonic and postural factors – are at the root of social communication and mental representation, comes to seem improbable. It appears that feedback loops with the environment are formed much earlier in the baby. These are audio-phonological in nature; they relate to crying in the first instance and then to vocalizations (though there are patent functional and morphological analogies between the two) and are the first stages in the acquisition of semiotic behaviour. In other words, the acquisition of pre-linguistic signification (of crying and then of sounds during babbling) precedes the acquisition of infra-linguistic signification (of mimicry and gesture).

Admittedly, chronological succession does not necessarily imply a structural derivation. The voco-motor and visio-motor co-ordinations are relatively autonomous and specific processes: the first lay the ground for the acquisition of the second articulation (that of signifiers with sounds), the second for the acquisition of the first articulation (of signifiers with signifieds). It might even be said that in order to develop the language function and begin, during his second year, to appropriate the code of his mother's speech, the child must be able to tolerate the structural differences between vocal and gestural communication, and to surmount those differences by erecting a more complex and more abstract structure of symbolization. It remains the case, however, that the first problem the budding intelligence encounters is that of the differential organization of body sounds, cries and phonemes, and that through out the first year of life, phonetic behaviour constitutes a primary factor in mental development.

One last example will illustrate this. Between eight and eleven months, vocal activities, the imitation of sounds heard and the frequency of babbling tend to slow down. This is the age at which the child is frightened by strangers (their faces and their voices), and also the age at which, having mastered at about ten months the opposition between thumb and index finger, he can, if he has an external model, reproduce gestures without watching himself perform them, and can also mentally represent to himself objects or events outside his field of vision. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a consequence, he is more involved in analysing other people's phonetic behaviour than his own.

Freud's view of sound

The notion of a 'word bath' emanating from persons in the child's environment does not occur in Freud's work. He does, however, in his 'Project for a Scientific Psychology' of 1895, assign an important

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role to the baby's crying. Crying is, first of all, a pure motor discharge of internal excitation, according to the reflex schema which constitutes the first structure of the psychical apparatus. Subsequently, it is understood by the baby and those around him as a demand and as the first means of communication between them, bringing about the transition to the second structure of the psychical apparatus, in which the signal, the primary form of communication, operates in a circular reaction. 'In this way, this path of discharge acquires a secondary function of the highest importance, that of communication' (SE I. 318). The level of complexity of the psychical apparatus progresses, as is known, from a wish to a mnesic or memory image of the satisfying object. This image is mainly visual or motor (it is no longer related to the register of sound); it is the basis for the primary psychical process the aim of which is hallucinatory satisfaction of the wish (it is an experience of self-satisfaction, as opposed to the previous type of satisfaction which depended on the environment). Lastly, the association of mental images with instinctual activities constitutes the first form of symbolization (being beyond mere signalling). This third structure of the psychical apparatus in turn becomes more complex as the articulation of verbal traces (or word-presentations) with thing-presentations renders thought and the secondary psychical processes possible. It is interesting to note that Freud himself describes what I shall call the zero level of this articulation, the articulation of sounds with perceptions: 'In the first place, there are objects - perceptions - that make one *scream*, because they arouse pain. . . . When otherwise, owing to pain, one has received no good indication of the quality of the object, the *information of one's own scream* serves to characterize the object [as hostile].' (SE I. 366) It follows from this that the first conscious memories are painful ones.

I can now state my own position by explaining exactly where I agree with Freud¹ and where I think his position has to be supplemented by other considerations:

1. With the learning of the first articulation of language (the rules governing lexical usage, grammar and syntax), the archaic sadistic Super-Ego begins to transform itself into an agency for regulating thought and behaviour.
2. Prior to this, the Ego forms as a relatively autonomous agency, using the skin boundary anaclitically, as a basis for acquiring

¹ The problems of voice and hearing have not greatly interested Freud's commentators. The editors of the *Standard Edition* do not even include entries for 'voice', 'sound' or 'hearing' in their subject index, though they do index 'screaming' and 'similarity of sound' as in 'slips of the tongue' and 'puns'. There is still research to be done into Freud's views on sound.

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- the second articulation (fixing the flow of vocal emissions in phonemes which are the formants of the mother's speech) and, at the same time, a sense of the 'extra-territorial' status of objects.
3. Even earlier, the Self forms as a sound envelope through the experience of a bath of sounds (concomitant with the experience of nursing). This sound-bath prefigures the Skin Ego with its double face, one half turned towards the outer world, the other towards the inner, since the sound envelope is composed of sounds emitted either by the baby or by the environment. The combination of these sounds therefore produces (a) a common space-volume permitting bilateral exchange (whilst feeding and elimination involve a one-way flow); (b) a first (spatio-auditory) image of one's own body; and (c) a bond of actual fused reality with the mother (without which the imaginary fusion with her would not be possible later).

Semiophony

Contemporary technological gadgetry and the capacity for invention shown by classical mythology and science-fiction provide further evidence for these positions.

The idea of immersing children suffering from language disturbances in a bath of sound as a preliminary to all forms of rehabilitation has been put into practice in France under the name 'semiophony'.¹ The subject is put in a spacious soundproofed booth, equipped with a microphone and a headset, a veritable 'phantasy egg' in which he can narcissistically withdraw into himself and regress. In a first, purely passive phase, he plays freely (drawing, doing puzzles, etc.) while listening for half an hour to filtered music rich in high-pitched harmonics, then for another half-hour to a pre-recorded, filtered voice. He is thus subjected to a sound bath reduced to rhythm, melody and inflection. The second phase of the treatment concerns the second articulation; the subject, having heard the filtered music, has then actively to repeat signifiers which are also pre-recorded and passed through a light filter that leaves the voice perfectly audible and distinct, but pitched at the top of the harmonic scale; at the same moment as he repeats the word, the subject hears himself on the headphones. He discovers his own voice and experiences audio-

¹ See I. Beller, *Sémiophonie* (1973). The author started out from the experiments of Birch and Lee (1955), in which patients suffering from expressive aphasia, caused by permanent cortical inhibition, were given binaural auditory stimuli of 60 decibels; administered in 60-second doses, these produced an improvement in the subjects' verbal efficiency lasting between 5 and 10 minutes. Beller's idea also owes something to the 'electronic ear' of Tomatis.

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 phonatory feedback. In the following phase, which is more straightforward, the initial immersion in music is dispensed with, along with the filtered sounds, and the child has simply to repeat sentences organized in story form. If he repeats these wrongly, or if he deliberately introduces whimsical or rude variations into the story, nothing is said and he is in no way reproached for doing this. He can also continue to draw while he is listening and speaking. After all, in learning a code, one must first of all be free to play with it and also to transgress it. 'Thus, while believing he is conversing with another person, the child very quickly learns to converse with himself, with that other part of himself which he has failed to recognize and in fact projected on to others, thereby thwarting any possibility of real dialogue.' (Beller, 1973, p. 64.)

Unfortunately the author maintains a purely didactic position, denying any role not only to transference and interpretation, but also to the identification and understanding of the part environmental deprivation plays in the child's linguistic deficiencies. Though the method comes close to attempting to set up a 'healing machine', the intuition at the source of Beller's work is, none the less, a fruitful one.

'In the first, so to speak passive, phase of this therapy, during which external sounds are heavily filtered, to such an extent that they are rendered meaningless, the subject could be said to experience a pleasant feeling of strangeness. . . . This emotion induces a state of elation which is perceived as being within the person himself, i.e. in the representation the subject has of himself' (ibid., p. 75). The strangeness only becomes troubling or 'uncanny' when the environment cannot 'contain' (in Bion's sense) the psychical experience of the subject.

The sound mirror

Hearing the other, when the Self is enveloped in harmony (and what term but a musical one would do here?), and when in response the child stimulates itself by echoing these sounds, introduces the child to the world of illusion. Winnicott (1951) lists babbling among transitional phenomena but he puts it on the same plane as other behaviour of this type. However, the baby is only stimulated to emit sounds by hearing himself if the environment has already prepared him for this by the quality, elaborateness and volume of the sound bath in which he has been immersed. Before the look and smile of the mother who feeds and cares for him reflect back to the child an image of himself which is visually perceptible to him, and which he interiorizes to reinforce his Self and develop the rudiments of his

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Ego, the bath of melody (the mother's voice, her singing, the music she causes him to hear) have made a first sound mirror available to him. He makes use of it first in his crying (to which the mother's voice responds soothingly), then in his babbling and lastly in his early games of phonemic articulation.

The interconnectedness of visual and sound mirrors in the constitution of narcissism is recorded in Greek mythology. It is not by chance that the legend of the nymph Echo is connected with that of Narcissus. As a young man, Narcissus awakens passionate desire in a great number of nymphs and girls, but remains insensitive to them. The nymph Echo falls in love with him in her turn, though her love is not reciprocated. In despair, she withdraws into a lonely place where she loses her appetite and pines away; of her fading person, there soon remains only a moaning voice, repeating the last syllables of words spoken. During this time, the girls scorned by Narcissus obtain vengeance from Nemesis. After a hunt on a very hot day, Narcissus bends over at a spring to slake his thirst, sees his own image and finds it so beautiful that he falls in love with it. As with Echo and her sound image, Narcissus withdraws from the world, and does nothing but gaze at his own visual image, allowing himself to fade away. Even when he crosses the river Styx at his death, he will be trying to make out his own features in the water. . . . The legend well indicates the precedence the sound mirror has over the visual mirror, as well as the primarily feminine character of the voice and the connection between the emission of sound and the demand for love. But it also provides the elements for an understanding of pathology: if the mirror - whether of sound or vision - gives back to the subject only his own reflection, that is to say his demand, his distress (Echo), or his quest for an ideal (Narcissus), the result is a defusing of the drives, freeing the death drives and giving them economic predominance over the life drives.

The mother of a schizophrenic child can often, as we know, be recognized by the discomfort her voice produces in the practitioner she has come to consult: a monotonic (dysrhythmic), metallic (unmelodic), husky voice (with a predominance of low-pitched sounds, which tend to confuse the listener and make him feel invaded by them). Such a voice disturbs the constitution of the Ego: the sound bath no longer envelops, but has become unpleasant (in Skin Ego terms, we might call it 'rough'); it contains holes and causes them. This is the case irrespective of what occurs later when, as the child acquires the first articulation of language, the mother scrambles the child's logical thinking by double binds and by invalidating the statements he makes about himself (cf. D. Anzieu, 1975b). Only the conjunction of these two disturbances, the phonemic and the semantic,

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in severe form produces schizophrenia. If the two disturbances are slight, we would be dealing with a narcissistic personality. If the first occurs but not the second, there would be a predisposition to psychosomatic reactions. If the second occurs without the first, the subject would encounter a great many difficulties in adapting to social, intellectual and scholastic life.

Defects in the pathogenic sound mirror may be:

- Discordance: it occurs at an inopportune moment in terms of ~~what the baby feels~~, expects or expresses;
- Abruptness: it is by turns inadequate or excessive, and lurches ~~from one~~ extreme to the other in an arbitrary way that the baby cannot understand; it causes repeated micro-traumas upon the nascent protective shield (after a lecture I gave on 'The Sound Envelope of the Self', a member of the audience came and talked to me about problems he had relating to 'the sound invasion of his Self').
- Impersonality: the sound mirror provides the baby with no ~~information~~ either about what he feels himself, nor what his mother feels for him. The baby will be insecure about his Self if for his mother he is merely a programmable machine she has to maintain. Often also she talks to herself in his presence, either aloud or silently, in interior speech, but she is not talking about him. This bath of words, or of silence, makes him feel he means nothing to her. The sound mirror and later the visual mirror only contribute to the structuring of the Self and subsequently of the Ego if the mother expresses to the child both something of herself and something of himself, as well as something which concerns the earliest psychical qualities experienced by the baby's emerging Self.

3 distinctions

The sound space is the first psychical space. External noises, painful when they are sudden or loud, worrying internal gurglings which cannot be localized in any particular part of the body, cries that come automatically at birth, then in response to hunger, pain, anger and deprivation of the object, but which are accompanied by an active motor image - all contribute to forming that space. Together they make up something similar to the effect Xenakis was presumably trying to produce with the musical variations and light-show of laser beams in his 'polytope': an intermingling, organized neither spatially nor temporally, of signals of primary psychical qualities; or to what the philosopher Michel Serres has attempted to say in his writings on flux, dispersion, the cloud of primal disorder lit up and crossed by fog signals. Against this background of noise can arise a melody, whether from classical or popular music - music made up of sounds

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rich in harmonics, music properly so-called – the human voice speaking or singing, with its inflexions and constants so quickly taken as characteristic of a particular individual. This is the moment, the state, in which the baby experiences a first harmony (prefiguring his unity as a Self across the diversity of his sensations and emotions) and a first enchantment (the illusion of a space where no difference exists between the Self and the environment and where the Self can draw strength from the stimulation and calm of the environment to which it is joined). The psychical sound space – if we can, by resorting to metaphor, give it a visible appearance – is shaped like a cavern. It is a hollow space like the breast or the bucco-pharyngeal cavity, a sheltered, but not hermetically sealed, space. It is a volume within which there are rumblings, echoes and resonances. It is no accident that the concept of acoustical resonance has provided scientists with the model of physical resonance in general, and given group psychologists and psychoanalysts a model for unconscious communication between persons. The spaces successively inhabited by the child – the visual, the visio-tactile, the locomotor and finally the graphic – introduce him to differences between what is familiar and what is not, between the Self and the environment, to differences within the Self and differences within the environment. Sami-Ali has advanced our understanding of these spaces in his book, *L'Espace imaginaire* (1974). But original deficiencies in the sound envelope of the Self constitute a handicap to proper development through this sequence.

Case study: MARSYAS (conclusion)

Several months after the two sessions summarized above, it became possible to clarify exactly how such a handicap functioned in this particular patient. This was thanks to the solid points of reference those sessions had brought us, and on which I was able to draw explicitly on more than one occasion (proof that these handicaps can be considerably alleviated by psychoanalysis provided one has the will, the time, and an adequate spatio-temporal setting, and derives one's interpretations from a correct theory).

In spite of undeniable progress both in his inner and his external life, which he was forced to acknowledge, Marsyas went through a new crisis, not so much of depressive anxiety this time as of scepticism: that he would never manage to change as much as he needed to, he was too different from other people. He was disheartened, thought that I judged him incapable of completing his psychoanalysis and that it would be better to break it off by mutual agreement. Marsyas could not make a clear distinction between what was going on in himself and what in his environment. He was often invaded by

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the emotions of those closest to him and this disorganized him. He did try to distance himself from those emotions, but denied himself, by being unduly self-critical the practical means for doing so. He either kept his feelings to himself, and then complained that those around him were insensitive to those feelings, or else he expressed them with such force that they brought violent reactions down upon him. He kept coming back to the same conclusion: it is up to me, Marsyas, to change and I'm not capable of doing so. I was able to interpret to him within the transference that he was organizing his relationships in both his private and professional life as he did with me, on the model of an inevitable discord between the Self and the environment. I offered as a formula for this basic discord that the happiness of the one has its necessary counterpart in the unhappiness of the other

Another patient, whose history presented similarities with that of Marsyas as far as early childhood was concerned, and in its defects in the functioning of the Self and Ego, had adopted the diametrically opposite conclusion: he thought it was up to the environment and the psychoanalyst, and to them alone, to change, but that they were incapable of doing so. The heart of the problem here remains the same: the differentiation between the sensory and affective experience of the subject and that of those around him has not been carried through, or has been done inopportunistically, at a point when the subject had not been able to experience sufficiently an initial period in which the environment met his pleasure with pleasure, his pain with appeasement, his emptiness with fullness, and his fragmentation with harmony. The psychoanalyst has to talk to him about these things – though he does not need to put him in a semiophonic booth – in order to create an environment which resonates not just at the level of the voice, but at that of meaning.

Roland Gori, whose thinking runs parallel to mine and with whom I have often discussed these questions, has developed convergent concepts of a 'sound mirror-image' and 'sound walls', 'bodily anchoring of speech' and of an 'alienation of subjectivity to the code'. I must also thank him for drawing my attention to the science-fiction story by Gérard Klein, 'La Vallée des échos' (1966), in which the author imagines the existence of sound fossils:

On the planet Mars, explorers are searching the desert for traces of extinct life. One day they enter a valley, between jagged cliffs very different from the worn-down landscapes which run the length and breadth of the sand planet. . . and they encounter the echo: 'I heard a voice, or rather the murmur of a million voices. The uproar of a whole people speaking incredible, incomprehensible words. . . the sound hit us in successive swirling waves.' . . . In this Valley of Echoes are gathered the sounds of a vanished people; it is

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the only spot in the universe where the fossils are not minerals but masses of sound. One of the explorers, keen to savour the pleasure of his discovery, steps forward ill-advisedly and the voices fade away gently to a deathly silence, 'for his body was a screen. He was too heavy, too material for the airy voices to bear the contact.'

(R. Gori, 1975, 1976)

This is a fine metaphor for the sound matter, alien to the lived body, which maintains itself by its own vain compulsion to repeat. It is both a prehistoric memory and the mortal threat of a tattered audio-phonetic shroud, which will not serve as an envelope, and can retain neither psychical life nor meaning within the Self.

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