

ON THE TRIOLECTICAL METHOD IN ITS APPLICATIONS IN GENERAL SITULOGY

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In his book *Die dreiköpfige Gottheit*, Willibald Kirfel proposed that the origin of the image of the god with three heads goes back to the pre-Celtic megalithic (or Neolithic) era and that it has its place in the cultural world of the Mediterranean. It is still found in places all over the world. To the African Yorubas, it is Shango, the god of thunder, and is associated with secret organizations.

Frobenius affirms that the feeling and the concept of Time is expressed through the number three – past, present, future – and that the number four is a projection in space of directions across the surface plane. Frobenius's proposition appears to be corroborated by the existence of Spanish representations of the month of January imagined as a triple head which, by its evident symbolism, send us back to secularity. The opposition of the Catholic Church to the representation of the Trinity as an image with three faces has its explanation here. The Christian concept of duality probably arises from the notion of opposites like black and white and the double face of Janus (January).

The Bibliothèque nationale de France holds a Botticelli drawing illustrating one of the scenes from *The Divine Comedy* of Dante. Botticelli has represented Dante beside a devil with three heads. Dante wrote, 'O, what a marvel it appeared to me/When I beheld three faces on his head!/The one in front, and that vermilion was [...] And the right-hand one seemed 'twixt white and yellow;/The left was such to look upon as those/Who come from where the Nile falls valley-ward [that is to say, between blue and black]'

We are reminded that the book for which Abelard was condemned concerned the Trinity and the oratory which he had built at Nogent-sur-Seine was also consecrated to the Trinity.

It is interesting to compare Botticelli's diabolic triple head and Titian's allegory of Prudence with an old man (himself), his son and his nephew, being again the Past of age, the Present of maturity and the Future of youth – a context which suggests that the Present is simultaneously able to benefit from past experiences and not to compromise future actions. Erwin Panofsky sees in this image a prayer to Titian's son to permit his nephew every chance of development. Panofsky mentions Bruno Giordano's penetrating analysis of the three faces of Time. All the analyses of this image by Titian – so simple in appearance – produce apparent conflicts of interpretation, passionate conflicts from which, paradoxically, Prudence is banished. In the syntax of all Western languages there appears a Time divided into Past, Present and Future – forms to which all minds must become accustomed and which, in practice, have become current for all. On the formal plane, the message is broken up into Time in three different aspects, into three images of different moments. To the mind, this message is a mould, the considerable importance of which has escaped us until now. For a long time it has been impossible for us, as prisoners of language, to abstract from Time what this syntax tells us – that it is broken up into an apparently harmonious triplicity of pure Duration, and this means that it demands of us an important mental process, consisting of intuitively seizing upon only one of the aspects – that one of the forms of Time is always opposable to the two others present.

The concept of triplicity, which plays the same role as three elements, conceals and masks the principle of antagonism from us – one of the elements being always opposed to the two others as a pair. Stéphane Lupasco has studied the structure of a characteristic antagonism – the static and the dynamic: – 'In order for any given event to take place, to have a moment and some place in the Universe, it is necessary for an energy, a powerful dynamism, to go through a certain state of potentialization towards a certain state of actualization, without which, rigorously actual or actualized, it is not even possible to talk of energy, of dynamism. All would be static, inert for ever and never.'

The triple polarization of Time, such as it appears in language, is really the image of Lupasco's eternal statics, and he continues, 'Thus all energy – all energetic movement – which ever form it takes – implies an antagonistic event such that the actualization of one brings about the potentialization (the virtualization) of the other.' This is the union of any two of the aspects which Time appears to us to have the power to actualize and yet on the other hand to virtualize or potentialize its third aspect. The main outcome of this is that it entails the idea of Time concealing three different kinds of antagonisms distinguished by the nature of whichever aspect of Time is chosen to oppose to the other two. We could set the conjunction of past-present to its virtualized opposite, the future, then the past-future would oppose the present and finally the present-future would oppose the past.

Lupasco states that, 'An antagonistic pair of events and of energetic anti-events constitutes – and only in itself is able to constitute – a system, that is to say, that ensemble of events bounded and ordered by the forces or intrinsic dynamic relations inherent in the events themselves. This what I have formulated in a Logic of systems or a Systemology. The possible combinations of these systems of systems are certainly multitudinous, their chains numerous in an arborescent or systemogenetic expansion. However they always form threes.'

Even before I became acquainted with Lupasco's theories (which do not otherwise tackle the problem of Time and its triple aspect), it seemed to me, on examining the system of Latin structures, that this system made up an actualization of past-future and a virtualization of the present, whereas the Byzantine and Russian structures were made up of a present-future opposable to the past, and, finally that the Nordic structures were essentially an actualization of past-present and a virtualization of the future.

Upon the theological plane, the symbolism of the Trinity offers us a good opportunity to outline precisely the opposition between the Arianism of the Germanic peoples and the Roman civilization of the Latins, between Father and Son, a distinction of essences that the latter opposes in an absolute manner. This is an opposition which, liberated from all theological terminology, reappears today in Europe upon the scientific, philosophical:

and artistic planes. In his *Physics and Philosophy*, the celebrated scholar and theoretician Werner Heisenberg highlights the fact that, 'In classical theory we assume that future and past are separated by an infinitely short time interval which we may call the present moment. In the theory of relativity we have learned that the situation is different: future and past are separated by a finite time interval, the length of which depends on the distance from the observer.' One could not highlight better the fact that in classical theory the present is without dimension, that is to say, without surface, so that time is presented as reduced to just two dimensions, a head of Janus. The relativity that gives a dimension to the present makes up in itself an elective environment of a possible encounter between the two poles that represent to us the past and the future. A dialogue of time is thus instituted, that of the necessary delay between question and answer. Locke, who defined knowledge as being 'the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas,' leaves us in the embarrassing position of deciding which antagonism effectuates knowledge's grasp of the notion of the relativist present. Will this be the idea of the past or that of the future? Certainly, neither of these two ideas are able to play a solo role, so that their conjunction in a unique concept of past-future has the force of opposition – of antagonism – in relation to the present: '... the properties of symmetry always constitute the most essential features of a theory.' The relationships which have long remained mysterious between the real – the ultimate form of the present – and the possible – the union of the past and the future – are thus clarified.

However, this fusion in a unique concept of past and future, and thus the notion of antagonism, was vigorously criticized by the young Russian scientist N.A. Kozyrev, who stated that, 'There is no symmetry between action and reaction: time can only move in one direction, from the past to the future and the future is completely different from the past.'

I did not think that Kozyrev's theories of oriented time made my approach to this problem any easier than those of Lupasco on antagonisms did. All these theories have not become sufficiently familiar to me and consequently the best approach for me will be the theory of colours. On the other hand, I have also been tempted to find a new solution. In this area,

the first obstacle will be the evidence of a conflict between Niels Bohr's theory of complementarities and the Hegelian and Marxist dialectic.

The idea of 'complementarity' was perfectly defined long before Bohr commenced his studies. The word 'complementary' designated the contrasting colours at the opposite extremes of a particular diametrical line of a spectral circle, colours which if mixed together neutralize each other and always give a similar grey regardless of the chosen diameter.

This polarization of colours, which we feel should preferably be called contrasts, seemed to obey marvellously the principles of Hegelian dialectics – thesis, antithesis, synthesis. Using Lupasco's terminology, we call blue, yellow and red, which are three irreducible segments of the spectral circle, potential or virtual colours. These colours oppose each other like the angles of a triangle, not in an antagonism of two poles. Red has as its contrast a mixture of yellow and blue – to become green; blue, a mixture of red yellow – to become orange; yellow a mixture of red and blue – to become violet. These observations have permitted me to establish that all mixtures are characterized as actualized poles. At any rate, variability and play are the elements which make up the mixture.

Lupasco did not – or did not wish to – take account of this definition, this placing of all mixtures in play, in his system. He is taken captive by an antagonism bounded by the opposition of the homogenous and the heterogeneous. Antiquity already knew of the triangular model of three invariable contrasts. It appeared in the three superimposed triangles that form a star on the seal of Solomon, which is called 'the seal of Good and Evil'. To trace the diagonals running between them, is, on the plane of communication, to implement a reconciliation between Kant and Hegel.

The simultaneity of my perceptions with those of Lupasco and Kozyrev appears to me to be historically significant, if one takes account of the fact that they came about in an absolutely independent manner. Lupasco only had a certain need for clarification in the logico-philosophical area, Kozyrev the desire to respond to certain lacks in astronomy, and finally I myself, a purely artistic interest in the problem of colours – following Goethe and the painter Runge in their desire to understand it better.

Lupasco stresses that light and 'death' are synonyms. Yet from a Newtonian perspective the different colours make up light. It follows therefore that the world of colours extends beyond the limit that death constitutes. On this particular point, Goethe challenges the Newtonian theory by asserting that the division of light into colours is an inverse process – of materialization – a tendency towards 'life'. It appears to me that the ignorance and disregard in which scholars have held Goethe's very impressive affirmations necessitates and makes possible the elaboration of a third theory of light, which would be complementary to the other two.

The antagonism between culture and civilization is not one of the least important sources of conflict in the real world. This is why it appears to me to be necessary to elucidate the hidden mysteries in these ideas to the greatest extent.

One could consider culture as the actualization of a past-present (of what is still called 'tradition' or '*vane*' in Danish) and civilization as the actualization of a past-future (which is called 'historicity' or 'chronology'). These two systems are based upon their own particular antagonisms, which have the potential to be a present, to be a future, and by their opposition alone seem to manifest to us the very divergence of the European North and South.

The outline which I want to propose here – the Triolectic – is conceived from this critical examination of the Copenhagen Interpretation and is entitled 'the Silkeborg Interpretation'. Sitology, of which this outline is only a part, recaptures the concept of Poincaré's *analysis situs*, but avoids giving too much importance to the idea of positional limits in the way that this is formulated in topology. We consider, with Gaston Bachelard, that the event and its moment ought to be implicated in the concept of the situation.

The concepts shaped by leaving the three elements in a static order are in danger both of remaining enigmatic and of not being sufficiently clear. They necessitate a much more profound study of the very conditions of their formulation.

For this formulation two of the three given elements – those putting the antagonistic concepts in opposition – correspond. To be well

constructed and well executed, this mental operation absolutely demands that care is taken that the matching of the concepts is effected with a suitable vital dynamism.

This is why an outline (however rudimentary) of the most elementary particulars of this formulation of concepts appears to us to be necessary. We have undertaken this work here. We will however make an effort to formulate our most express reservations about these conclusions. Therefore we are gathering together in groups of three, words which seem to us to be the basic elements of this formulation of triple concepts. The list we are appending here does not pretend to be exhaustive. In defence of this systemic classification, however, it should be possible under our guidance for everyone to become aware of the antagonisms that we are indicating in an elective and symbolic manner. Obviously, we are quite accustomed to hearing and understanding these words in a number of senses other than the vital dynamism listed here and it will certainly be disconcerting for people to find them here in their ideal static purity. We have preferentially classified them into three groups which correspond to Latin, to Byzantine and to Germanic ways of structuration.

In optics, a Swedish scholar has demonstrated that the phenomenon of the transformation of triply contrasted colours lies in the gila-tissue where they are juxtaposed. The study of this phenomenon is hampered by the fact there is a lack of psycho-physiological data. Greater knowledge would permit a better approach to mental illness. Lupasco's theory has the very great merit of having enhanced the identity that exists between the physical concept of potentiality and the ethical concept of virtuality.

The sacred and the taboo are concept words in which the ambivalence of ethics and theology on the one hand and the all-empowering Mana on the other is particularly strong.

We have established the existence of a certain antagonism between the sacred (virtualized) and the divine (actualized), an antagonism which restores the original content of the word: play – variation.

After all, the whole history of Christendom is not just that of its division into complementary antagonisms, of the successive schisms of the Church. In the end, three distinct regions have emerged, the Greco-Byzantine

church, play of present and future, the Roman Catholic church, past and future, and the Nordic Protestantism, past and present.

Here we have three complementary concepts of the sacred; firstly, the concept of the past – which I will call 'of production', as industrial society puts production and reproduction on the same footing – secondly, the concept of the present, which is 'administration', and then, thirdly 'consumption', which corresponds to the sacred future of the Protestants. Whatever it costs us and whatever discomfort is incurred, we must bear in mind these so intractably contradictory conceptual types, since they originate from radically different mental processes. We must not relinquish the dangerous facility of believing it possible – with Raymond Aron – to harmonize a hierarchical system of values (in itself) with Max Weber's world of free play. To reject this would be a fallacious illusion. And we do not conceal that there is an obligation to choose in order to avoid one day the shattering of a cohesion built upon the misunderstandings and false agreements.

To understand fully the drama that is actually being performed in consciousness, one need only to hear Stéphane Lupasco affirming without hesitation that, 'All psychiatry must be revised.' To this declaration, we immediately enlist our, to us, eminently flexible triolectical system – with optimism – in order to convey some clarification of the functioning of the deep psyche and to offer a rational account of the nature of hitherto incurable major mental illnesses.

In contrast to Lupasco, who seems to cultivate schizophrenia, we are not of the opinion that the process ought to be from the concrete to the abstract. The plastic arts are currently almost exclusively directed towards popular art and are manifesting a health towards this particular momentum that it would be vain to deny.

Amongst the antagonisms which preoccupy Lupasco there is one that particularly seems to us to capture his thought, that of space and time. He assures us that, 'The simultaneity of certain cerebral events generates the notion of space.' Now, we have long known – let us say, since Heisenberg – that notions of space and time are not alien to each other, but, on the contrary, are identical ideas, the present itself being also

simultaneity. Between question and answer there is a delay, the duration of which is the present itself, the actual as space. In its idea of the sacred, European culture somewhat vaguely includes time and space. Anything that lengthens the delay between question and response, will create the present exponentially – at the cost of the past and the future. Ultimately, we will find an absolute, integral, eternal present: ‘Waiting for Godot.’

The false and illusory possibility of introducing some equilibrium into the antagonism between time and space has been denounced with subtle efficacy by Kozyrev, who has shown us what the essential differences between the constituents (the past, the future) of time are.

Lupasco states, ‘As such – as dynamics – the antithetical elements possess the constituent property of the idea of dynamism itself. [...] The logic of contradiction is a tri-dialectic. This engenders three intersecting dialectics.’ Disjunction is the very hub of the dialectic. No dialectic without disjunction and no disjunction with dialectic.

Our triolectical thesis can be applied axiomatically in the following manner:

We have demonstrated previously how and why these three dialectics are inevitable. With regard to tri-dialectical dynamism, we have revealed the subtle mechanisms which govern the correspondence of its complementary and tri-dialectical statics. Each disjunction is followed by a conjunction and, in the same way, each conjunction is followed by a disjunction.

Fusion creates fission (actualization is the name given by Lupasco to this conjunction or fusion).

Each compromise isolates and virtualizes the opposite standpoint.

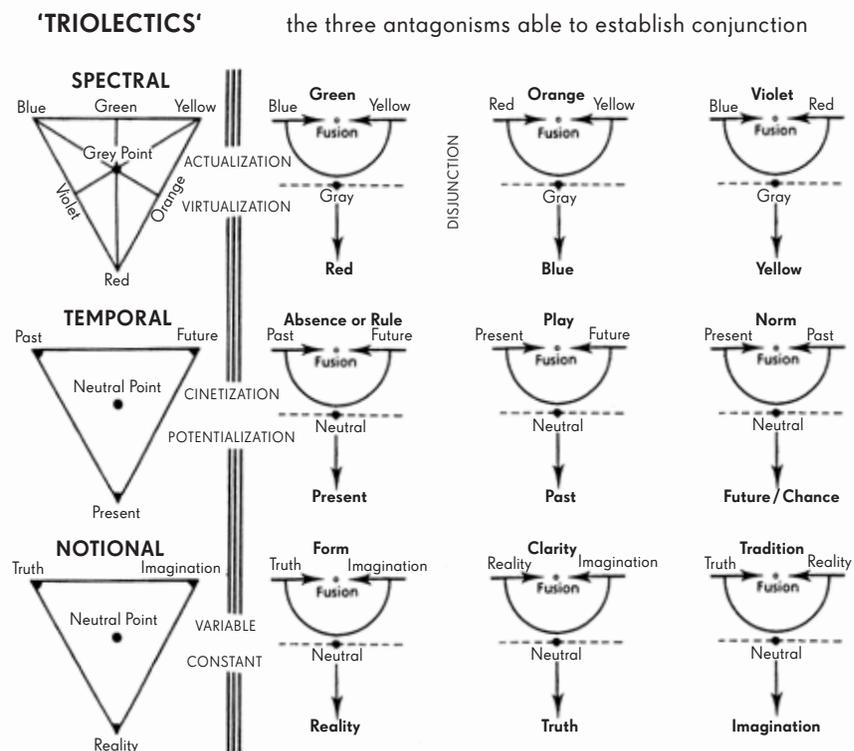
We have chosen to call the formation of an antagonism or a contradiction ‘the creation of a situation.’

The basic necessary elements for the birth of any situation can be organized by the formation of two situations equally different and complementary to the first.

Triolectical schemas

SOME EXAMPLES OF TRIOLECTICAL COMPLEMENTARITY

We present here some models of triolectical equilibriums applied to different conceptual domains. We emphasize that these are simple working bases, totally undogmatic, which could be modified or extended. It is in their nature to be open, to start, for example, with more than three relations, this method not being based upon any numerological mystique.



Its purpose is to liberate the dialectical movements constrained either in sub-Marxist determinism or in the arbitrary antagonisms where Lupasco founders.

De la méthode triolectique dans ses applications en sitologie générale

(Aarhus: Institut scandinave de vandalisme comparé, 1964).

Translated by Peter Shield.

