

**THE INTRAPSYCHIC SPLITTING OF THE I AS A PATTERN OF SPLITTING,  
CONFLICT AND INTERPSYCHIC WAR WITH OTHERS**

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**Abstract**

In this article, I tried to argue the fact that the internal splitting, respectively the intrapsychic conflict of our I represents the psychological pattern of the external splitting, respectively the interpsychic or social conflict, being therefore about the splitting/conflict of the I first with oneself, and then with others. I have thus shown, bringing arguments from the sphere of Christian theology and Lacanian psychoanalysis, that this very intra- and interpsychic splitting of the I is at the basis of the internal/psychological and external/social conflict, the I being considered for this reason the prototype par excellence of the division, the scission and the conflict at the psychological and social level. And this because the quintessence of the I seems to be, both from a theological-Christian perspective and from a psychoanalytical one, the narcissism. Thus, if from the point of view of Christian theology, I interpreted the narcissistic I as being both the cause and the effect of the "fall" or "original sin", from the psychoanalytic point of view, as Jaques Lacan highlighted in his famous the "mirror stage", the narcissistic I is constituted by doubling in the imaginary or illusory mirror of reality. I have also shown that the main ignorance of the narcissistic I consists in identifying the mind with an external image, that is, in attaching or falling in love with one's own mental images which confuses them with reality. It is more precisely about the primary/intrapsychic identification of the I with its own image (from the mirror) - the pattern on which the secondary or interpsychic identifications with different mental images will later be grafted. It is these identifications with different images, ideas, beliefs, ideals and mental symbols, by virtue of being considered as belonging to the sphere of the "I", that will generate scission, rivalry, competition, conflict and war between people. Therefore, only the full awareness of this narcissistic-aggressive-conflict pattern of the I could free us from its tyranny, basically responsible for all conflicts and wars between people.

**Keywords:** the I, intra-interpsychic splitting, conflict, identification, mental image, mirror stage, narcissism, original sin

### **1. The intrapsychic splitting as a pathological state of the I or "fallen" human being's condition**

The human history is often written in the red ink of the bloody conflicts and wars that have crossed it. The most recent war, that of Russia against Ukraine, circumscribes the same pathological mechanism of conflict and war, as old as the world, that is, the same disease from which humanity has suffered and is still suffering. But what disease is it? Dostoevsky, a name already included in the cultural heritage, both Russian and universal, shows in *Notes from Underground* that the main characteristic of this disease is the state of conflict or war, "perpetual – from the days of the Flood. [...] Put it to the test and cast your eyes upon the history of mankind. What will you see? [...] People fight and fight; they are fighting now, they fought first and they fought last. [...] In short, one may say anything about the history of the world - anything that might enter the most disordered imagination" (Dostoevsky, 2003, pp. 27-28).

Let us remember from here the expression "disordered imagination", common to the condition of the "fallen" human being, which accounts for the pathology of the human's I, whose "attack", according to Christian tradition, on divine creation or harmony, led to its expulsion and "fall" from paradise. The story of human's "fall", equivalent to *original sin*, through which the human being succumbed to the temptation of the devil to be like God, thus attests, from the very beginning, the presence, in germ, of an "I" that was "activated" as soon as the devil instilled in him the desire to be like God (See Ardelean, 2019, p. 29). Thus, Jean-Claude Larchet points out, the original sin consisted for human being, as for the devil, in self-deification, in claiming for oneself an absolute autonomy and in the will to dispense oneself from God; in seeking a glory for oneself alone, *making one's own "I" an absolute centre* (See Larchet, 2001, p. 211).

It is interesting to observe that the I seems to play a similar role in this story of the "fall" as Lucifer. As we know, Lucifer, the heavenly angel created by God perfect in wisdom and beauty, was the first angel to "attack" divine unity, coming in pride, glory and self-love, synonymous with narcissism, to rebel against God in an attempt to become his own god. This led to the *first split and "fall"* of the angels in heaven, resulting in the transformation of Lucifer into Satan who, then tempting the human being, by instilling the desire to be god, ignited in it the spark of the illusory omnipotence of the I, resulting in the *second split and "fall" - the "fall" of the human being*. For this reason, *the I* can even be considered the *demonic prototype of the splitting, division or separation* from the divine unity. (See Ardelean, 2019, p. 30).

According to the Christian tradition, the human creature thus becomes a "fallen" being, his "fall" being the result of the devil's temptation, which actually introduces the first split in the human being - the *internal* or intrapsychic split. It is useful to recall in this regard that the very

etymology of the word devil, coming from the Greek word *diabolos* (διάβολος), which means to divide, to split, to break ties with the whole, with unity, with God, shows *the devil's favourite tool*, that of *division or splitting*, whose maxim, "*Divide et impera*", reveals the very specifics of his mode of operation. The one that corrupted the human being, making it "fall" prey to the first division and, implicitly, to the *first conflict, intrapsychic or psychological division/conflict, as a model of interpsychic or social division/conflict*, based on competition, rivalry, aggression and war with others. This internal division/conflict will become, as I will show, the premise of the external division/conflict, the external division/conflict being only the "*mirror*" of the internal division/conflict. In the sense of this split, we can also better understand the meaning of the proverbial saying "the devil's got his tail" - with which he invented the ancestral method, that of the division or splitting - the eternal "apple of discord" and conflict between people, both on a *psychological, intrasubjective* level, as well as at the *social, intersubjective* level.

Indeed, the oldest and most striking psychological/intrapsychological split, as perceived by the Holy Fathers, and the most striking conflict is that between the *mind* (intellect, reason) and the *heart* (feeling). If in the state of original unity the mind was united with the heart, the mind being for this reason contemplative, circular, describing a movement within the heart and designating the "inner human being" or "the ontological centre of human being and the source of all his powers" (See Larchet, 2001, p. 211), subsequently, by splitting the mind from the heart, the mind goes outside, describing a rectilinear trajectory that "cuts" or splits reality. Dionysius The Areopagite speaks of the three movements of the soul: *circular* movement, *spiral* movement and *straight line* movement. The circular movement of the soul, corresponding to the movement of the divine mind, is the unitary, intuitive or contemplative movement, the movement of turning inwards from the multiplicity of what is outside, or the movement of unification "to the beginningless and endless illuminations of the Beautiful and Good" (Dionysius The Areopagite, 1972, p. 98). The spiral movement of the soul is when the soul is "enlightened with truths of Divine Knowledge, not in the special unity of its being but by the process of its discursive reason" (Dionysius The Areopagite, 1972, p. 99). Finally, the straight-line movement occurs when the soul no longer turns inward or retreats inward, allowing itself to be totally absorbed by the multiple and changing outside (See Dionysius The Areopagite, 1972, p. 99). Thus, only the contemplative movement seems to be the natural movement of the soul, the other two movements being nothing but deviations contrary to the nature of the soul, acting outside. Only when the soul's movement is contemplative in nature, according to its nature, does the mind have a circular movement; it remains within the heart

and does not spread outside. Leaving the contemplative work and not having a circular movement, but one in a straight line, the mind goes out of the heart, therefore out of the spiritual centre of the human being, and spreads outwards, in a discursive activity in which it dissipates and divides, taking the human being outside of itself and outside of God (See Larchet, 2001, pp 46-47).

The splitting of the mind from the heart will institute the great spiritual *schizophrenia*, in the etymological sense of the word, for schizophrenia comes from the Greek words *skhizo*, *ein* - to split, to divide - and *phren* - spirit, thus dividing the human being at the level of the whole spirit, made up of mind and heart. This split between mind and heart will then transfer and split all the faculties of the human being. Thus, following the mind, divided by the multitude of thoughts and sensations which it receives, all the other faculties of the human being, harassed and confused by the multitude of passions, are driven, in a contradictory manner, in all directions, making the human being one divided at all its levels (See Larchet, 2001, p. 47).

This split at the intrapsychic level is the very psychological "I" of the human being, that is, its conflicting, split, divided or "fallen" consciousness. Given that the I (split consciousness) is divided at all its psychological levels, it is not surprising then that all these parts, pieces or fragments, precisely by virtue of being split, will come into conflict, in opposition to each other, generating and maintaining the internal/psychological conflict of the I. This *internal* conflict of the I, first of all with itself, i.e. a *psychological* or *intrapsychic* conflict, will then move outwards, generating the *social* or *interpsychic/intersubjective* conflict, i.e. the conflict with the others, as a so-called "evolutionary" pattern of human society. The quintessence of this internal and external, intra- and interpsychic conflict is our *I/Ego*, the *prototype par excellence of division, scission and conflict* at the *psychological* and *social* level (See Ardelean, 2019, p. 40).

## **2. The intrapsychic splitting of the I from the "mirror stage"**

We can better understand the mechanism of our I's intrapsychic split and conflict using a psychoanalytic interpretation key, which highlights the ambivalent-conflictual or narcissistic-aggressive structure of the I, duplicated in the imaginary mirror of reality. Particularly relevant in this context of imaginary doubling or splitting by means of an image is "the mirror stage", the most important psychoanalytic contribution of the French Jacques Lacan regarding the stage of the constitution of the I.

Considered the reference point of the entire Lacanian work, the mirror stage<sup>1</sup> (*stade du miroir*) represents a solid and scientific argument regarding the deconstruction of the I's claims to knowledge, through which Lacan reveals its imaginary or illusory structure, that structure of human subjectivity, called by him "the paradigm of the imaginary order", in which "the subject is permanently caught and captivated by its own image" (Evans, 2006, p. 118).

Who does not recognize himself in the myth of Narcissus, the one who falls in love with his own image? It is enough, it seems, to see yourself once to be blinded and hypnotized by one's own mirror image which, by imprisoning oneself in the shell of an alien identity, is the cause of the imaginary alienation/splitting in the mirror. The mirror stage therefore refers to the drama of Narcissus, more precisely, to Narcissus' dual, conflictual relationship with his own image. But what duality, conflict or split is this really about?

Lacan refers here to the conflict between the child's *motor* and *visual* system. Given that the child's visual system is more advanced than the motor one, this allows the child to see his image in the mirror as a whole, as *gestalt*, before reaching control of body movements. From here follows a contrast between the incoordination of the body, experienced as a fragmentary body, and his own image, seen as a whole. This contrast then creates a *duality, a cleavage, a split and dialectic tension between subject and image*, tension which is solved by identifying the subject with the image (See Lacan, 2002, p. 76). This split between the specular image, which reflects the body as unity, wholeness, coordination, and the bodily reality, in which there is no such unity, wholeness and coordination of bodily movements, will be dramatically and aggressively felt, underlying the first form of *split* between *image* and *reality*. In other words, the *cleavage* between the imaginary, as a unitary image of the body, and reality, as fragmentation, uncoordination of bodily movements, will generate for the first time the conflict between the imaginary, between *what should be* (the ideal I), and *reality, what is, the I being the result of this cleavage and conflict, solved by the identification with the reflected image* (See Ardelean, 2019, p. 120). The constitution of the I takes place, therefore, through the process of identification with one's own reflected image (*image spéculaire*), moment described by Lacan as being one of gleefulness, in the sense that the child's joy is owed to his imaginary triumph in anticipating a degree of muscular coordination which he has not yet reached in reality (See Lacan, 1988, p. 79).

Thus, the temptation of doubling in the imaginary and external mirror has for Lacan a negative character because of the hypnotizing and captivating effect of the reflected image. This primary

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<sup>1</sup> See Jacques Lacan, „The Mirror Stage as Formative of the I function as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience”, in *Écrits: The First Complete Edition in English*, 2002, pp.75-82.

identification with the reflected image will become the narcissistic image of the ideal I or the ideal image of the I (See Lacan, 2002, p. 79) in which the I and the reflected image form the *prototypal dual relationship*, which is fundamentally narcissistic, i.e. based on the rivalry structure of the subject with himself. In the mirror stage, therefore, the narcissistic image is formed through the primary identification of the I with its own reflected image, situated outside itself, this outside image being the ideal image of the I. This ideal image, never being attainable, precisely by virtue of being on the outside, will generate aggression, cleavage and continuous rivalry of the subject with itself, in an attempt to maintain narcissistic identification from the mirror stage (See Ardelean, 2019, p. 123)

Narcissism, defined as “the erotic attraction to the specular image“ (Evans, 2006, p. 123) is an *ambivalent* formation, which has double character, *erotic* and *aggressive*, as it appears in the myth of Narcissus. The erotic characteristic is given by the attraction or the falling in love of the subject with the image or the *gestalt*. The aggressive characteristic is given by the cleavage, tension and conflict between the wholeness of the reflected image and the lack of motor unity of the subject's real body. Aggressiveness is thus constitutive of narcissism, in the sense of that continuous rivalry with one's self. It is the subject's attempt to maintain the identification formed in the mirror stage, when “the child sees his reflected image in the mirror as *gestalt* or unity, in contrast with the lack of coordination of the real body, contrast felt as an aggressive tension between the unitary reflected image and the fragmentary real body“ (Evans, 2006, p. 6). Hence, this narcissistic identification with the reflected image implies the ambivalence of the erotic and aggressive elements, “erotic aggressiveness” being considered by Lacan the fundamental ambivalence of narcissism, which all the other forms of identification will later fix onto. Given this ambivalence, narcissism can easily glide from the extreme pole of self-love to the opposite pole of self-destruction (See Evans, 2006, p. 6), as it is found in the myth of Narcissus.

The mirror stage shows, therefore, that the I is the result of a misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*), the result of not knowing, not recognizing or ignoring, whereby the subject is alienated in an image, placing itself outside, in the radical exteriority of the imaginary, the apparent and the illusory, reason for which the I cannot receive, according to Lacan, a real ontological status, but only an imaginary one, of illusion, appearance, delusion and illusion, the main illusions of the imaginary being "wholeness, synthesis, autonomy, duality and, above all, similarity [... ] so the order of surface appearances" (Evans, 2006, p. 84).

The mirror stage, which reveals the imaginary structure of the I, represents the most important psychoanalytic contribution to the deconstruction of the I. And the constituent elements of this

structure: the primary/intrapsychic identification with one's own image from the outside, as the origin of the secondary/interpsychic identifications with other images from the outside, through which the I splits and becomes the Other, instituting narcissism, as aggression, cleavage and rivalry with self<sup>2</sup>, highlights from a psychoanalytic point of view the internal splitting of the I at the primary, intrapsychic or psychological level.

### **3. The intrapsychic/psychological splitting of the I as a pattern of the interpsychic/social splitting**

I will further show that this *internal splitting of the I*, at the primary/intrapsychic or psychological level, will become the *pattern of the external splitting of the I*, at the secondary/interpsychic or social level, in the form of aggression, rivalry, competition, struggle and conflict with others . Thus, the intrapsychic conflict, based on the primary identification with one's own external image, will be the pattern on which the interpsychic conflict, based on the secondary identifications with the series of external images, will be grafted, the *intrapsychic conflict* being therefore the *basis* of the social, *interpsychic conflict*. Given that the primary or narcissistic identification with one's own image (in the mirror), through which the I becomes the Other, constitutes, as we have seen, the prototype of the dual or conflictual relationship of rivalry and aggression with the self, it is then obvious that this dialectical prototype of rivalry and intrapsychic aggression (with *oneself*) will become the pattern of rivalry and interpsychic aggression (with *others*), respectively the pattern of rivalry, aggression, competition, struggle, conflict and war with other people.

This internal splitting of the I, in which the pattern of (*intrasubjective*) rivalry with oneself becomes the premise of (*intersubjective*) rivalry with others, thus circumscribes the whole picture of "life as a prey", in which each "I" fights with another "I", perpetuating the same ancient *dichotomous pattern of rivalry, aggression, splitting and conflict*, characterized by the fierce struggle of individuals for competition, power or supremacy, in which the strong defeats the weak, i.e. this whole dialectic of hatred, "enmity and conflict between master and slave, executioner and victim, oppressor and oppressed, dominator and dominated, both at the level of individuals, classes or social groups, and at the level of nations, thus justifying what has been called evolution, horror or the history's terror" (Ardelean, 2016, p. 61).

We can see, therefore, how this pattern of rivalry and aggression with oneself is projected outwards in the form of rivalry and aggression with our fellow human beings, producing

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<sup>2</sup> The I's rivalry with itself becomes, therefore, possible only if the I doubles, splits, and actually becomes the Other.

endless struggles, conflicts and crises - psychological, social, political, economic, technological, ecological, cultural, spiritual, i.e. endless crimes and wars in which our actions divide, split and become contradictory actions or actions against ourselves, generating what Hobbes described so well in *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, i.e. "the war of all against all" - "*bellum omnium contra omnes*".

Therefore, the *external social* structures are only the "mirror" of the *internal psychological* structures in the sense that "society is what you and I, in our relationship, have created; it is the outward projection of all our own inward psychological states" ( Krishnamurti, 2001, p. 16). Thus, society is not something abstract, but is the external projection of our internal states, rivalry, aggression, conflict and war at the social or interpersonal level, being only the "mirror" or "replica" of rivalry, aggression, conflict and war at the psychological or intrapersonal level. In other words, what we are, what we feel, think and do every day, projects itself outward and forms the world, which means that "we are each of us responsible for every war because of the aggressiveness of our own lives, because of our nationalism, our selfishness, our gods, our prejudices, our ideals, all of which divide us" (Krishnamurti, 1999, p. 9).

Given that every human being thinks according to his prejudices, experiences, ideals, beliefs and convictions, to which are added the conditionings of race, nation, family, society, education, religion, tradition, culture and environment, it is obvious, as Krishnamurti<sup>3</sup> pointed out, that the identification of the I with those images, ideas, beliefs and symbols will generate division, rivalry, competition, conflict and war between people, instituting the following divisions: "my country", "my religion", "my god", "my faith", "I am American", "I am Russian", "I am Christian", "I am Hindu", "I am democrat", "I am nationalist" etc. each "I am" violently confronting the other "I am" (See Krishnamurti, 1982, pp. 12-13).

Thus, the essence of the I is the process of identification of the mind with an external image (one's own person, race, nation, family, ideology, profession, religion etc.) which moves inside and forms the I, this I being, as Lacan pointed out, the result of identification with an image/object, i.e. with an Other. We are talking here about the *series of secondary/interpsychic identifications* of the I with different mental images (ideas, beliefs, ideals and symbols), grafted onto the pattern of intrapsychic identification with one's own image. In other words, the I of

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<sup>3</sup> Jiddhu Krishnamurti is considered one of the most authentic spiritual messengers of the contemporary world. He enjoyed enormous appreciation from the scientific, artistic and cultural elites of his time. The Dalai Lama did not hesitate to call him "one of the greatest thinkers of the 20th century", and Time Magazine, "one of the five saints of the 20th century". Krishnamurti also visited Romania, in December 1930, and held a famous conference, applauded for a long time, in the great hall of the Romanian Athenaeum, crowded by an audience made up of the elite of Bucharest intellectuals, led by the great diplomat Nicolae Titulescu, who after the conference declared that he was happy to have been able to listen to Krishnamurti.



the subject identifies with a series of images, ideas and symbols, which are confused with reality and considered more important than it. As the quintessence of the identification process is the very confusion between mental image and reality, this makes the space of our mind conditioned by identification with different personal or collective experiences, related to family, race, nationality, religion, ideology etc. all these identifications leading to mind splitting. Identification, as I have shown, is the process by which the mind identifies itself with an image from outside, which moves inside, producing the I, and then "once we established a notion of something inward, it becomes necessary to protect that" (Krishnamurti & D.Bohm, 1985, p. 27) and thus struggle, conflict, splitting, separation arise.

Nothing therefore generates more violence, aggression, segregation and conflict in the intersubjective space than this process of identification with different mental images. All people are ready to accept or tolerate each other's various shortcomings or weaknesses, but as soon as their mental images, that is, their political, economic, philosophical or religious ideas or identifications are divergent, intransigence and intolerance immediately make their presence felt, showing their "fangs" and instigating people to enter into competition and fight against each other, thus making their actions waste away in opposite and contradictory actions (See Ardelean, 2016, p. 25). Each individual imagines that his/her point of view is more justified, more "true" than another, thus expressing absolute value judgments. For this reason, human history is full, as we know, of such individuals who, believing that they hold the whole truth, were ready to wage wars, kill, torture or massacre in its name (See Ardelean, 2016, p. 25 ). *The I of the individual* thus becomes the *great ideologist, tyrant, inquisitor, dictator or executioner*, always eager to impose, dominate and subjugate, all the great ideologies and social, political, economic systems standing under the *sign of the narcissistic aggressiveness of the I*, whose main vice or disease lies precisely in this identification with a mental image, which becomes more important than reality, substituting it.

#### **4. Instead of a conclusion**

We can state therefore that this identification process of the I generates the confusion, contradiction, conflict and split between image (subject) and reality (object). As long as this identification of the I "is not understood and put an end to, we are bound to have conflict, within and without, in thought, in emotion, in action. No solution of any kind, however clever, however well thought out, can ever put an end to the conflict between man and man, between

you and me" (Krishnamurti, 2001, p. 96). It is precisely because of this fact, Huxley<sup>4</sup> points out, that ideas, images and symbols should never be raised to the status of dogma, and no system should be regarded as anything more than a provisional solution. Otherwise, belief in formulas, dogmas and action in accordance with them not only does not solve the problem, but, on the contrary, deepens, aggravates, amplifies or increases it in complexity and destructiveness (See Huxley, 2001, p. 5) becoming the destructive potential of conflict and war of any kind and from everywhere.

In conclusion, as long as the I, through its narcissistic-aggressive structure, identifies with its own mental images, ideas and symbols, allowing itself to be blinded and hypnotized by them, ignoring that they are the product of the individual or collective mind, it will inevitably perpetuate and find itself in the same "*fallen*" condition - of division, splitting and conflict within and without, intra- and intersubjective, i.e. of conflict with both itself and other human beings. This is why only a deep understanding or awareness of this *narcissistic-aggressive-conflict pattern of the I* could lead to the solution and, implicitly, to the (e)liberation from the tyranny of this unconscious and ancestral pattern, which is basically responsible for all the suffering, friction, discord, enmity, rivalry, conflict, aggression, crime and war existing in the world.

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<sup>4</sup> Aldous Huxley, „Foreword”, in J. Krishnamurti, *The First and Last Freedom.*, 2001, Krisnamurti Foundation India, pp. 1-9.

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