

Eros, Mirror, and the Hidden Third

Houria Abdelouahed and Basarab Nicolescu

Introduction

According to Rūmī, “Whoever is not in love sees his own image in the water.”¹ Rūmī’s verse runs counter to the unhappy consciousness found in Ovid’s fable of Narcissus who falls fatally in love with his own reflection. Let us remember that in Ovid’s *The Metamorphoses*, not only is Narcissus bewitchingly beautiful but he also holds all of his admirers in contempt. As a consequence for having rebuffed young men and women, he is condemned to an unquenchable thirst: “So may he love—and never win his love!”² a prayer which is answered by Nemesis, the goddess of Rhamnous. In another version, it is Eros who takes revenge on Narcissus who, looking down into a pool of water, falls in love with his own image, thus becoming “the very fuel of the fire he is lighting.”³

For Narcissus, Love is not horizontal as it is in the myth of Aristophanes, which concerns the nostalgia associated with reunions, where either the symmetrical half is mutilated or where there is a desire to recapture a lost unity. Neither does Love operate according to a vertical

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¹ Jalāl ad-Dīn Muḥammad Rūmī (1207-1273), quoted by Eva Meyerovitch, *Anthologie du soufisme* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1978), p. 288.

² Ovid, *The Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), p. 63.

³ Ovid, *Les métamorphoses* (Paris: Flammarion, 1966). This is a direct translation of the French text. The English translation reads a bit differently: “love he kindles while with love he burns,” *The Metamorphoses*, p. 63.

axis that would tend toward immortality, an idea taught by Diotima.⁴ In Ovid's fable, love is not an opening onto the world, but rather a closing on oneself. This is the reason that Narcissus dies "at the edge of his image."⁵

Pierre Hadote writes that his punishment "responds both to the ancient law of Talion and to the logic of the offense itself. The guilty one is taken at his word. It is the law of Talion that is invoked against Narcissus by the lover who has for so long been despised."⁶ The punishment will be, as Ovid says, an "unheard-of form of madness"—madness because Narcissus wears himself out trying to eliminate the distance and the boundary between self and image.

The Other as Mirror

Let us recall this exchange between Socrates and Alcibiades:

Socrates: I'm sure you've noticed that when a man looks into an eye his face appears in it, like in a mirror. We call this the 'pupil', for it's a sort of miniature of the man who's looking.

Alcibiades: You're right.

Socrates: Then an eye will see itself if it observes an eye and looks at the best part of it, the part with which it can see.⁷

The other is defined in this dialogue as a mirror because he is the one who provides me with the projection of my own wholeness. Indeed, the eye that sees and which makes things visible, cannot see itself. Additionally, in order apprehend himself, man has to direct his gaze to the exterior and must encounter other eyes. Each partner serves the other as a mirror where in the eye of the person opposite him, he perceives a doubled reflection of himself. Let us add that he sees and pursues from his desire. To quench this desire, the individual must go through the other. This is why a text like the *Phaedrus* is important.⁸

Narcissus, in fact, ignores this fundamental rule: man can only catch up with himself by making a detour through the other. Eros is precisely

⁴ Plato, *The Symposium, Complete Works*, ed. J. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2001).

⁵ Julia Kristeva, *Tales of Love*, trans. L. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), p. 105.

⁶ Pierre Hadote, 'Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin', *Nouvelle Revue de Psychanalyse* (Paris: Gallimard, coll. Folio, 1976), p. 138.

⁷ Plato, *The Symposium, Complete Works*, p. 592.

⁸ Plato, *The Symposium, Complete Works*, p. 592.

what ensures this detour. The gaze is permeated by Eros, which is an opening onto the world. Eros implies a narcissistic deficiency, the recognition of lack and the desire to fill it by going through the other. To love is to open oneself onto the other.

The *Phaedrus* completes the *Alcibiades* by introducing an essential dimension: “He does not realize,” says Socrates, who is correcting Lysias’s views, “that he is seeing himself in the lover as in a mirror.”⁹ Ghazali writes: “man loves himself and does not hide the fact that he loves himself.”¹⁰ Indeed, one could think that man stops loving himself when he loves his semblable. Yet, this being “will never stop loving himself save the day when he loses his life and not when he loves his fellow humans, because he must, on the contrary, continue investing his own ego even if he does so quietly, in order to love these beings who are different from him.”¹¹ This love constitutes the very heart of our ego. Libido and ego are on the same side. This is the bridge between the *Alcibiades* and the *Phaedrus*: loving oneself through the other. Rūmī’s verse stands in contrast to Ovid’s fable. He tells us that the mirror is not a place of loss for anyone who is not shut up in a narcissistic closure.

Reinstating the Mirror

Plotinus rebukes Narcissus for falling in love with his own image:

For when he does see beauty in bodies, he should not run after them, but realize that they are images and traces and shadows, and flee towards that of the which they are images. For if someone runs towards the image, wanting to grasp it as something true, like someone wanting to grasp a beautiful reflection in water—as a certain story has it, hinting at something else, in an enigmatic way, I think, who then falls into the water and disappears.¹²

Plotinus reinstates the mirror and makes a break with the longstanding Pythagorean tradition that advises against gazing at one’s reflection in the water of a river.¹³ The latter is no longer a place of loss and instead acquires

⁹ Plato, *The Symposium, Complete Works*, p. 532. Here, a more direct translation of the French version of the *Phaedrus* reads “it is himself that he loves,” in Platon, *Phèdre, Oeuvres complètes*, t. IV (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1978), 255d.

¹⁰ Ghazali (d. 1111), *Le livre de l’amour*, trad. M. L. Siaux (Paris: Vrin, 1986), p. 24.

¹¹ M. Dayan, *La relation au réel dans la psychose* (Paris: PUF, 1985), p. 131.

¹² Plotinus, *Enneads*, ed. L. Gerson, trans. G. Boys-Stones et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), I.6.8, p. 101.

¹³ Hadot, ‘Le mythe de Narcisse et son interprétation par Plotin’, p. 91.

a metaphysical dimension because the original reflection that created the universe is a fundamental process. It is the reflection of this reflection in the ephemeral substances that distances us from the ideal and which deserves to be condemned.

Taking inspiration from the Plotinian tradition, Farīd ud-Dīn Attar writes: “You, you are not you, you are the reflection of Him. You are also beautiful and you are good ... Do not contemplate this soul and this body. Contemplate his beauty and not yours.”¹⁴ Rūmī goes further when he speaks of this movement that makes it possible to see the moon and not the reflection in water because “All objects that exist here below are only samples of the other world.”¹⁵ This theme concerning the notion of reflection, which is only the expression of the ultimate Reality, takes on a considerable role in Rūmī’s work: “All objects that exist here below are only samples of the other world.”¹⁶ Thus, for Rūmī, there is nothing narcissistic about Narcissus: “You yourself, these newlyweds, the flowers, you are spellbound by my hidden King.”¹⁷

Rūmī’s verse gives an admirable response to the Pythagorean: “Do not gaze at your reflection in the water” as well as to the unhappy consciousness of Narcissus. In fact, the mirror is a place of loss for whoever is caught in the throes of narcissistic capture: “When you see a reflection in the mirror, is this really seeing your image?”¹⁸ or even “Do you know anyone who has seen his own image?”¹⁹ One can quench his thirst without risking the loss of self. “They say: we invite you to drink some water. Drink as much of it as you want!”²⁰

Loss is for whoever refuses the gap between the pool and the image and wears himself out trying to eliminate the distance. Narcissus dies from not having understood that “I is an other,” as Rimbaud used to say. This is what Pierre Legendre names “the principle of division in the speaking species,”²¹ in other words, the gap that undergirds speech and informs us of

¹⁴ Farīd ud-Dīn Attār (d. 1190), *Rubâ'iyât*, trad. Assaf Hâlat Tchelebi (Paris: Maisonneuve, 1950), p. 174.

¹⁵ Rūmī, *Le livre du dedans*, trad. Eva Meyerovitch (Paris: Sindbad, 1982), p. 262.

¹⁶ Rūmī, *Le livre du dedans*, p. 262.

¹⁷ Rūmī, *Rubâ'iyât*, p. 174.

¹⁸ Farīd ud-Dīn Attār, *Le livre divin* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1961), p. 406.

¹⁹ Attār, *Le livre divin*, p. 407.

²⁰ Rūmī, *Rubâ'iyât*, p. 53.

²¹ Pierre Legendre, *Dieu au miroir* (Paris: Fayard, 1994), p. 44.

the negativity inherent in the order of language—that is, the fact that the word and the thing do not adhere to each other. This is the void that is fundamental to the relationship between the signifier and the signified.

We can say with Pierre Legendre that Narcissus does not have access to the mirror as an “operation of division.”²² The mirror implies the division that exposes, according to Hegel’s proposition, the origin as the outcome. If the pool is “so bitter and full of poison”²³ for Narcissus, it is because his gaze is not guided by alterity and by an opening onto the world. As Jacques Derrida philosophises: “It is like an absolute glance which being always opened wide and thrown toward the visible, cannot perceive itself, never emerging from its night.”²⁴ Because Narcissus does not have access to the mirror as an operation of division, the pool remains a “pure origin”²⁵ for him. Also, “the imaginary is broken up rather than formed here.”²⁶ However, in order to leave the opacity of the night, in order to emerge from it, it is absolutely necessary to accept, internalize, appropriate the interval, void, or gap of alterity. Alterity is the basis for a representation of this interval and the division with oneself. This gap between the I and what is revealed as image is what informs us of loss. It goes hand in hand with representation and the category of thought. To think is precisely to render ‘alterity present in the self’.

The Breath that Draws the Image

The strength of the mystical text, being both subversive and against religious dogma, is that it was able to pave the way towards a very modern reading of the question of the image.²⁷ Drawing from both Hellenistic and Neoplatonist thought, the Sufic text has the merit of deepening thought concerning the gap, the reflection, and the image. It is not only a question of the reflection itself here, but also of the theorization of the reflection.

²² Legendre, *Dieu au miroir*, p. 44.

²³ G. de Loris et J. de Meun, *Le roman de la rose* (Paris: Gallimard, 1949).

²⁴ Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), p. 284.

²⁵ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 283.

²⁶ Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, p. 285.

²⁷ Islamic mysticism dates back to the seventh century CE. This movement was identified with a woman, Râbi'a. See H. Abdelouahed, ‘Un parfum de femme’, in *Passion amoureuse*, eds H. Allouch, D. Guyomard, S. Sésé-Leger, L. Gherchang (Paris: Campagne première, 2013), pp. 121-132.

Similarly, it is not just a question of the image, but of a thought about the image. In any case, we cannot discuss the entire body of mystical writings here. Instead, we will limit ourselves to mentioning the great Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), who was a contemporary of Averroes and Maimonides. He had the merit of extracting the image from the water thematic (Narcissus's pool) and of granting a large place to the breath that draws the image.

He invites us to reflect on the gap and the division of the subject via the breath of speech. Air has always been designated as the medium of speech, but Ibn Arabi introduces a new dimension here. He integrates the movement of air into the definition of the mirror. Of course, he does not do away with the classic ideas that defined the other as a mirror,²⁸ but he does go farther in the construction of the mirror. He writes: "When God wanted to see the essences of his most beautiful names, and you can also say that God wanted to see his essence in a globalizing object ... he created a mirror."²⁹ He saw himself and virtualities that had not yet bloomed come into the world. But the multiplicity is not as it is in a Plotinian procession. It happened one time and all at once. What is particular to this gaze? It is the equivalent of his speech—"Be!"—which the essences had received. Without this speech, we would have been in a pure void, as Ibn Arabi tells us: "He was the first speaker. And I was the first listener."³⁰ Thus, the quality that gave birth to the world is speech.³¹

In fact, Ibn Arabi's text points out not only the symbolic dimension of speech that proceeds from the Other but also the physicality of the word as an opening onto the body of language. Thus speech ("Be!") turns out to be the founding violence that brings the blossoming of virtualities, which are under the sway of Eros, into the picture. Understanding (*entendre*) the voice signifies the reception of signifiers, one that forges the passage from the desire to hear (*ouïr*) to the pleasure of understanding (*entendre*) the voice of the Other. Take for example the psychic development of a child. The child who is in contact with the one who bears the voice (*porte-parole*) experiences the transformation of a pleasure due to pure excitation by "the voice-object into a pleasure bound up with a sign proffered by the voice of

²⁸ "Without the intermediary of the other, man would not see his image," Ibn Arabi (1165-1240), *Al-Futûhât al-makiya*, III (Beyrouth: Sâdir, n.d.), p. 251.

²⁹ Ibn Arabi, *Fusûs al-hikam* (Beyrouth: Dâr al-kitâb al'arabi, 1980); T. Burckardt, trans., *La sagesse des prophètes* (Paris: Albin Michel, 1974), p. 21.

³⁰ Ibn Arabi, *Futûhât*, III, p. 567.

³¹ Ibn Arabi, *Futûhât*, II (Beyrouth: Sâdir, n.d.), p. 352.

the Other.”³² Clinicians observe that if the child’s desire to hear becomes a desire and pleasure of understanding it is because the voice involves pulsations that tear the psyche from its enclosure. The coming into the world and the birth of an I is the work of a crossing. It is a history and a journey. That said, when the mother speaks to the child, she presents herself in a kind of gap.³³

What the above passage from Ibn Arabi also indicates is that speech acts as a reflecting mirror. The mirror, he says, is “the presence of possibles.” The Other looks at itself here. As for the image, it is none other than the name. “Star, man, or horse,” writes the Emir Abdel-Kader.³⁴ The image is carried by the breath of speech, and breath corresponds to the air element.³⁵ Air thus becomes the invisible support of the image—this image that heard (*entendit*) the imperative “Be!” an imperative as an original crossing of speech, as an opening onto the body of language and as a metaphor of origins. This image that listens to the voice and agrees to come, inscribes, in its agreeing to come, the desire of the Other. It is thus the phonic air that draws the image. The gaze is equivalent to speech. This gaze (which engenders the names) can be designated as the model of every scene of origins—a matrix scene where the optical construction of presence in the world is carried by the verticality of the breath that carries speech.

The Transdisciplinary Mirror and the Hidden Third

The physical mirror gives a fake image. When we look in a mirror we think that we see ourselves. But the left is inverted with the right when I look in a mirror: my left hand becomes a right hand and my right hand becomes a left hand. Human beings have always dreamed of pondering their own face in the mirror of Nature. The *mirror of magical Nature* is, of course, a magic mirror: everything can be seen, perceived, experienced, at least potentially,

³² Piera Aulagnier, *The Violence of Interpretation: from Pictogram to Statement*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Routledge, 2001), p. 58.

³³ It is precisely the mother’s psychic activity that creates this gap. Her fantasy space creates a distance with the child’s experience—an experience which she nevertheless looks to translate in her own words. The inscription of different signifiers in the child’s psyche involve this first gap which is necessary for the I to come into being and so that the mouth emptied of the breast can be filled with signifying words.

³⁴ Abdel-Kader, *Kitâb al-mawâqif (Le livre des haltes)* (Damascus: Dâr al-yaqaza al-'arabiya, 1967), p. 1345.

³⁵ Ibn Arabi, *Futûhât*, II, p. 123.

in this mirror. Unity is actualized and diversity is potentialized.

In contrast, the *mirror of mechanistic Nature* is like a broken mirror, or a scalpel. It is enough to take piece of the tissue (that is, Nature) in this mirror/scalpel in order to make a pronouncement about the entire Nature machine. This piece of Nature is conceived as if it were a miniature copy, conforming to the entire whole. The privileged instrument for interpreting the image produced by this mirror/scalpel is theory, more and more formalized on the mathematical plane. Etymologically, ‘theory’ means the action of observing, the fruit of intellectual contemplation, the action of seeing a spectacle, or of participating in a feast. For mechanistic thought, the feast is transformed into a conquest and the spectacle is transformed into the reading of a book written in advance, the book of Nature. It is of little importance for whom or why this book has been written: from the moment it becomes entirely accessible, doors of unlimited power open before us.

The *transdisciplinary Nature mirror* is situated simultaneously between and beyond all areas of knowledge. The classical world is the world of figuration, while the transdisciplinary world is that of transfiguration. The old portrait of Nature is replaced by the icon of Nature. The word ‘mirror’ comes from the Latin *mirare* meaning ‘to look at with astonishment’. The act of ‘looking at’ presupposes two terms: the one who looks and the one who is being looked at. Where else could this astonishment come from if not from the included third?

In his famous story about *The Conference of the Birds*,³⁶ Attâr, describes the long journey of birds on the look-out for their true king, the Simorgh. The birds cross seven valleys, filled with dangers and marvels. The seventh valley is the valley of wonder. There is day and night at the same time, while we can see and not see alike, we exist and we do not exist, things are both empty and full. If he holds tightly and at any price to his habits, to what he knows, the traveler falls prey to discouragement and despair—and the world seems absurd, incoherent, insane. But if he accepts to open to the unknown world, then the new view appears to him in all its harmony and coherence.

What is the transdisciplinary mirror? The methodology of

³⁶ Farīd ud-Dīn Attâr, *The Conference of the Birds*, trans. C. S. Nott (Boulder: Shambhala, 1971).

transdisciplinarity³⁷ is founded on three postulates:

1. The ontological postulate: *There are, in Nature and in our knowledge of Nature, different levels of Reality of the Object and different levels of Reality of the Subject.*
2. The logical postulate: *The passage from one level of Reality to another is insured by the logic of the included middle.*
3. The epistemological postulate: *The structure of the totality of levels of Reality is a complex structure: every level is what it is because all the levels exist at the same time.*

The first two postulates received, in the twentieth century, experimental evidence from quantum physics, while the last one has its source not only in quantum physics but also in a variety of other exact and human sciences. The key concept of transdisciplinarity is the concept of *levels of Reality*.

‘Reality’ first of all designate that which *resists* our experiences, representations, descriptions, images, or even mathematical formulations. In so far as reality participates in the being of the world, one has to assign also an ontological dimension to this concept. Reality is not merely a social construction, the consensus of a collectivity, or some inter-subjective agreement. It also has a trans-subjective dimension: for example, experimental data can ruin the most beautiful scientific theory.

The meaning we give to the word ‘Reality’ is therefore pragmatic and ontological at the same time. We have to distinguish, in order to avoid further ambiguities, the words ‘Real’ and ‘Reality’. *Real* designates that which *is*, while *Reality* is connected to resistance in our human experience. The ‘Real’ is, by definition, veiled forever (it does not tolerate any further qualifications) while ‘Reality’ is accessible to our knowledge. Real involves non-resistance while Reality involves resistance. This is the error of Narcissus: he confuses Real and Reality.

By ‘level of Reality’, we designate a set of systems which are invariant under certain general laws (in the case of natural systems) or general rules and norms (in the case of social systems): for example, quantum entities are subordinate to quantum laws, which depart radically from the laws of the macrophysical world. That is to say that two levels of Reality are different if, while passing from one to the other, there is a break

³⁷ Basarab Nicolescu, *Manifesto of Transdisciplinarity*, trans. Karen-Claire Voss (New York: State University of New York Press, 2002).

in the applicable laws and a break in fundamental concepts (like, for example, causality). Therefore there is a *discontinuity* in the structure of levels of Reality.

Every level is characterized by its *incompleteness*: the laws governing this level are just a part of the totality of laws governing all levels. And even the totality of laws does not exhaust the entirety of Reality: we have also to consider the Subject and its interaction with the Object. *Knowledge is forever open*. The zone between two different levels and beyond all levels is a zone of *non-resistance* to our experiences, representations, descriptions, images, and mathematical formulations. Quite simply, the transparency of this zone is due to the limitations of our bodies, of our sense organs and of our brain, limitations which apply regardless of what measuring tools are used to extend these sense organs. The unity of levels of Reality of the Object and its complementary zone of non-resistance constitutes what I call *the transdisciplinary Object*.

The different levels of Reality of the Object are accessible to our knowledge thanks to the different levels of perception which are potentially present in our being. These levels of perception permit an increasingly general, unifying, encompassing vision of Reality, without ever entirely exhausting it. In a rigorous way, these levels of perception are, in fact, *levels of Reality of the Subject*. As in the case of levels of Reality of the Object, the coherence of levels of Reality of the Subject presupposes a zone of non-resistance to perception. The unity of levels of Reality of the Subject and its complementary zone of non-resistance constitutes what I call the *transdisciplinary Subject*. The two zones of non-resistance of transdisciplinary Object and Subject must be identical for the transdisciplinary Subject to communicate with the transdisciplinary Object. Knowledge is neither exterior nor interior: it is simultaneously exterior *and* interior. The studies of the universe and of the human being sustain one another.

The zone of non-resistance plays the role of a *third* between the Subject and the Object, an Interaction term which allows the unification of the transdisciplinary Subject and the transdisciplinary Object while preserving their difference. In the following we will call this Interaction term the *Hidden Third*. The transdisciplinary Object and its levels, the transdisciplinary Subject and its levels and the Hidden Third define the transdisciplinary Reality (see Fig. 1). It is important to note that the Hidden Third restores the continuity of Reality.

The incompleteness of the general laws governing a given level of Reality signifies that, at a given moment of time, one necessarily discovers contradictions in the theory describing the respective level: one has to assert A and non-A at the same time. It is the included middle logic³⁸ which allows us to jump from one level of Reality to another level of Reality. Our understanding of the axiom of the included middle—there exists a third term T which is at the same time A and non-A—is completely clarified once the notion of ‘levels of Reality’ is introduced.

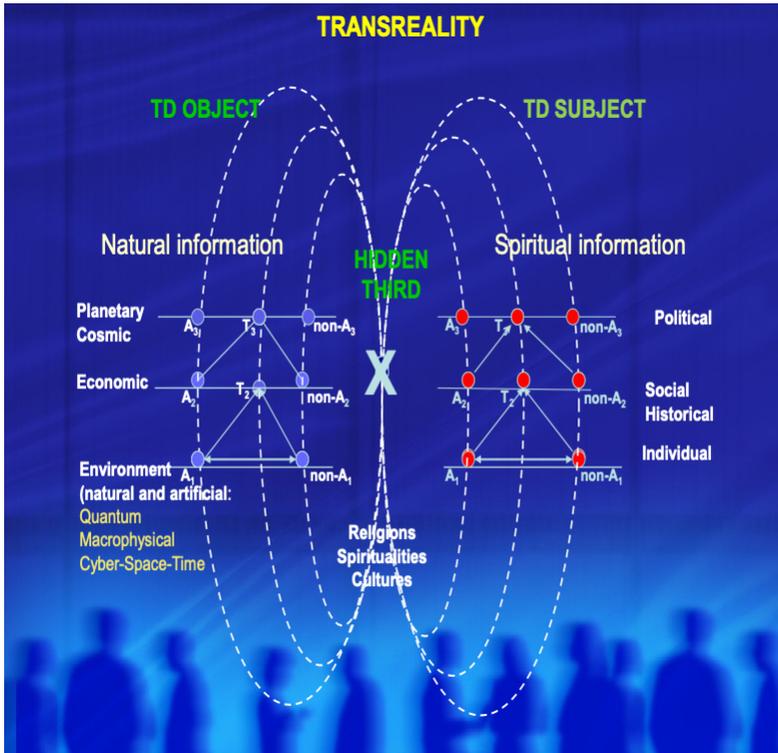


Fig. 1. Transdisciplinary Reality.

In order to obtain a clear image of the meaning of the included middle, let us represent the three terms of the new logic—A, non-A, and

³⁸ S. Lupasco, *Le principe d'antagonisme et la logique de l'énergie - Prolegomènes à une science de la contradiction* (Paris: Hermann & Cie, 1951).

T—and the dynamics associated with them by a triangle in which one of the vertices is situated at one level of Reality and the two other vertices at another level of Reality. The included middle is in fact an *included third*. If one remains at a single level of Reality, all manifestation appears as a struggle between two contradictory elements. The third dynamic, that of the T-state, is exercised at another level of Reality, where that which appears to be disunited is in fact united, and that which appears contradictory is perceived as non-contradictory. In other words, the action of the logic of the included middle on the different levels of Reality is able to explore the open structure of the unity of levels of Reality.

Life is undoubtedly inhabited by contradiction: life-death, youth-old age, good-bad, true-false. We unconsciously pass happily from A to non-A and we do not see when the misfortune arrives. By what accident did the handsome A (say love) become the ugly non-A (hatred)? It is the absence of the third (inclusive) T that explains this strange metamorphosis. Contradictories are always linked to the laws of one and the same level of Reality. The included third T is on another level of Reality: it is subject to other laws. But what level: higher and lower than mine? I thus discover the existence of two included thirds, located at two other levels of Reality: one higher and one lower. *My own level thus appears to me like a mirror*, certainly asymmetrical, because the information being ‘lower’ is more reduced than the information being ‘higher’. If I contemplate myself in this mirror, I discover other worlds (the other levels of Reality) which, in their turn, are mirrors for other worlds which seem very distant to us, but which are all buried in our being, closer than our own lips.

All levels of Reality are interconnected through complexity. From a transdisciplinary point of view, complexity is a modern form of the very ancient principle of universal interdependence. The principle of universal interdependence entails the maximum possible simplicity that the human mind could imagine, the simplicity of the interaction of all levels of Reality. This simplicity cannot be captured by mathematical language, but only by symbolic language. It is important to note that a flow of *spiritual information*³⁹ that coherently cuts across different levels of reality of the Subject must correspond to the flow of *natural information* coherently cutting across different levels of reality of the Object. The two flows are

³⁹ Basarab Nicolescu, ‘The Hidden Third as the Unifier of Natural and Spiritual Information’, *Cybernetics and Human Knowing*, vol. 22, no. 4 (2015), pp. 91-99.

interrelated because they share the same zone of non-resistance.

The human person appears as an interface between the Hidden Third and the world. The erasing of the Hidden Third in knowledge signifies a one-dimensional human being, reduced to its cells, neurons, quarks, elementary particles and electronic chips. The Hidden Third between Subject and Object is rational but it denies any rationalization. The Hidden Third is not the opposite of reason: to the extent that it ensures the harmony between Subject and Object, the Hidden Third is part of the new, complex transdisciplinary rationality.

How then to say: ‘mirror’ or ‘mirrors’? In fact, *there is a mirror of all mirrors*. The totality of the Subject and Object Reality levels is this mirror of mirrors, which reflects endlessly, under countless images, the Hidden Third, where the wedding of Reality and Real is celebrated. Is it that mirror whose intuition Ibn Arabi had when he wrote: “When God wanted to see the essences of his most beautiful names, and you can also say that God wanted to see his essence in a globalizing object [...] he created a mirror”?

This wedding of Reality and Real corresponds to a special language. A living word crosses all levels of Reality and the Hidden Third. The word of God, about whom Ibn Arabi writes “He was the first speaker,” contains everything: images, forms, life. This opens an extraordinary avenue of understanding arts and literature, their meaning and their finality. A great painter, a great writer, a great musician, captures potentialities of the Word of God, through being in communion with the Hidden Third. For example, there is a mystery of writing novels or poems or theater plays in such a way. Far from the world of mental association, this writing reveals itself in the process of creation. It reveals the unknown and the invisible. “Writing to shake the Universe” (*Écrire pour faire trembler l’Univers*),⁴⁰ says Peter Handke.

The role of the Hidden Third is to establish the link between the Reality and the Real. Catalyst of movement, it possesses an infinite number of faces. The Hidden Third is the guardian of our irreducible mystery and the only foundation of human dignity. The Hidden Third corresponds to the “hidden King” of Rūmī.

⁴⁰ Peter Handke in an interview given to A. Veinstein for France Culture (20 June 2014) at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dp8mFN_expo. Accessed 10 February 2020.

Conclusion

Mystical thought is misunderstood and is confused with Jungian mysticism and the occult. It is also confused with pathological phenomena like drug abuse, erotomania, megalomania, and hysteria. It is considered to be a field deriving from the irrational and the triumph of the death drive.⁴¹ However, Lacan, using the example of Saint Teresa of Avila, spoke of another jouissance, one that was different from phallic jouissance.

More than this, mystic thought is subversive and has made a break with religious dogma in favor of thought regarding the gap. The other becomes the opening that organizes his narcissism. This is a way of saying the subject's finiteness in the face of something infinite. Moreover, we can define mysticism as a thought about the image. The latter cannot be thought without the gap, and sight is unthinkable without the structure of language. Reconsidering the linguistic nature of the mirror amounts to speaking of the optical apparatus at the heart of language. This is the modernity we find in this medieval thought.

⁴¹ Guy Rosolato, 'Présente mystique', *Nouvelle revue de psychanalyse*, no. 22 (1980), p. 12.