

SYMBOLS IN PSYCHOTHERAPY

# Symbolic Moralism

The Role of Symbols in the Transmission  
of Ethics Across Generations



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## **The Role Of Symbols In The Transmission Of Ethics Across Generations**

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From

## Table of Contents

[SYMBOLIC MORALISM: THE ROLE OF SYMBOLS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF ETHICS ACROSS GENERATIONS](#)

[INTRODUCTION](#)

[THE ONTOGENESIS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM](#)

# SYMBOLIC MORALISM: THE ROLE OF SYMBOLS IN THE TRANSMISSION OF ETHICS ACROSS GENERATIONS

## INTRODUCTION

Symbols serve communication between men. As denizens at the fringes of memory, symbols serve communication between the remembered past and the present. When placed in the context of myths and legend, whether written, spoken, or transposed into pictures or stained glass, symbols become tools of communication between generations and as a source of identities and ethics for men in societies.

### **Symbolic Moralism and Symbolic Interactionism**

*Symbolic Moralism* is a term used to convey the concept that moral values and related judgmental evaluation of behavior are carried to new generations of society by symbols set in myths and traditions. *Symbolic Interactionism* is a related phenomenon. It refers to the communicative role, of the symbols of myth, drama, literature and art, which informs conscience and ethics. In the latter role, symbols interact with young minds to shape moralities in statu nascendi. Such interactions leave a residue in the culturally defined and shared ethics and beliefs that make up superego demands.

### **History of Symbolic Moralism**

The origins of *symbolic moralism* as a sociological theory can be found in the works of eighteenth century Scottish moralists such as Adam Smith and David Hume. (See Shott (1976) and Meissenhelder (1977).) Smith and Hume propounded the idea that the behavior that defines a culture is a carry over from antecedents in preexisting patterns of society. During the 1930s through the 1960s, George Mead (1931) and Hugh Duncan (1968, 1969), while exploring the role of *symbolic interactionism* in the process of symbolic moralism, placed the symbols contained in myth, drama, art, and religious teaching at the center of the communicative conduits, which carry moralities from the past to the vast attentive audience of young people, who are on the brink of independent responsible behavior. Duncan (1968)

noted that “Art creates symbolic roles which we use as a dramatic rehearsal in the imagination of community roles we must play to sustain social order.” (P 222) Moral symbols delivered through dramatic action create and sustain social order. Symbolic action is communicative in nature. It contributes to the shared patterns of behavior, which give shape to culture. We see the latter process in the work of latency, (See Sarnoff (1976.) which uses fairy tales and legends in shaping the child’s awareness, so that it fits the beliefs of the dominant culture (cultural capture). It is also to be seen in the role of religion in the establishment of the mythological curriculum from which is derived education about the evaluation of reality in cosmological theories. (i.e. Evolution vs Intelligent Direction as the explanation of the origins of earth and life.)

Symbolic interactionism may be summarized by Duncan’s phrases “ . . . symbolic—dramatic action functions to create and sustain social order.” (P 269) “ . . . social order is created through an agency of symbolic principles of order that function for society as imagery does for the individual. Through mythic principles, order emerges in the present.” (P 270) In this regard Meissenhelder (1977) noted that, “Art gives form to society. It supplies us with the symbols through which we communicate and thereby create an integrated social order.” Symbols shape psychic reality (P 271). Sources of ego ideal are found in art and narrative (P 334). The use of these resources through passive symbolization contributes to the acquisition of cultural identity. (P 7)

Shott (1976) introduced the concept of the storage of symbols of experience in panels of memory for use in interpreting psychic reality and moral appropriateness. Meissenhelder (1977) devoted his efforts to explaining “How . . . symbols create and sustain order in social relationships?” (P 267) He noted that “An image . . . purely and formally symbolic . . . of the future of an action orders that action in the present.” (P 267) He described “Symbolic Interactionism” (P 267) as a source of the infused truth that defines a culture and its mores. He stated that “ . . . symbols create and sustain order in social relationships.” (P 257) and that “ . . . social forms are symbolic forms.” (P 268)<sup>1</sup> “Symbolic interactionism” describes the role of the symbols of drama, literature and art, as they interact with minds and moralities to create a culturally defining code of ethics and beliefs for transmission across generations. For instance the myth in which Prometheus is chained to a mountain because he defied the gods by giving fire to men teaches one not to challenge entrenched power.

Literary and dramatic catharsis as experienced in latency fantasy and adult theatre going, is evocative in nature. It preserves society by providing pathways for the personal venting of potentially disruptive affects. Latency fantasy uses communicative mode symbols when it is transmuted into socially conforming future planning during early adolescence. Its symbols are then derived from reality elements, though its contexts continue to be shaped under the guidance of superego demands derived from the fantasy based symbols of earlier experienced dramatic action. Dramatic catharsis continues through life.

### **Symbolic Interactionism and Social Change**

The adaptability of liberal societies is contained in their ability to use the cryptic symbols of art to launch subtle changes that serve adaptation to new influences. Conservative societies are characterized by the persistence of loyalties, shaped into familiar symbols, in organizing adaptations to new pressures. Art can activate symbols that can alter the speed of change. An example of this can be seen in satirical plays that challenge the slowness of old orders during adaptation to new influences and technology. The difference between the adaptation of conservative and liberal approaches to new influences, whether they be war, conquest, ideas, or inventions, lies in flexibility in the symbolic content of their responses. As examples, one need look no further than the anthems to which men march on their way to war. Old orders march to old songs. New orders march to new rhythms.

“Symbolic Interactionism” describes an actualization of the potential of the human personality to participate in immediate and delayed transmission and transmutation of culture. As secret messengers of cultural potentials and aspirations held in reserve, cryptic symbols provide a bridge across the generations. They store culture elements that can be activated to produce a self-identity that adds new dimensions to a society’s capacity for adaptation to stresses that demand change. “Symbolic Interactionism” also offers a point of entry for the current programs and ideas of charismatic leaders to find their way into the identities of their subjects. There is a pernicious aspect to this human attribute. Throughout history and as a part of it, charismatic leaders have used mankind’s capacity for passive symbolization as a Trojan horse to influence, populate, and bend the verbal concept memory of their people to the shape of their programs. They use passive symbolization as a vessel to carry their own symbols, wills and ways through the boundaries of their subject people’s selves, creating identities

compliant to the leader. Part of this process through which, “The old order changeth, yielding place to new . . .” is the use of symbols as tools by charismatic leaders in manipulative interactions to bring under their control the masses, which they need to support their bids for power.

Some examples follow:

In writing the constitution of Indonesia, Sukarno, its first leader, recognizing the power of the number five in the belief systems of his people, increased the basic principles of the constitution from four to five, creating Panjksilla to enhance its appeal. This necessitated a search for a fifth principal, which resulted in the inclusion of the phrase “one god” in the constitution. As a result the polytheists of the land had to name a god (Balihindu) to lead their other gods. Today at the border of the smallest villages one sees a five part sign, which carries the five-part message of Indonesian identity proclaimed by the constitution.

Napoleon selected the bee as his emblem. The bee as a single symbol carried two meanings. It is small and industrious as was the emperor. In addition it was the well-remembered symbol of the first French king. This symbol empowered Napoleon’s escutcheon with an implied royal lineage that was not a part of his natural endowment and created for the Corsican a French identity. Such a manipulation of symbols was not foreign to the French tradition. In support of the myth that French royalty could be traced in mythic reality to the kings of Troy, they called the heir to the throne the Dauphin (dolphin) a symbol of Troy, and changed the name of the city of light (Lutece) to Paris, the name of a Trojan prince, thus tightening their link to Troy.

Hitler set his summer retreat, the “eagle’s nest” on the top of the mountain in which the Holy Roman Emperor Rotbart (Frederic Barbarossa) is known in mythic reality to be sleeping surrounded by his knights. They wait for a call to arms that will signal that Germany is in peril. Should danger threaten, Rotbart and his cohorts will, it is believed, sally forth in defense of the fatherland. Through such manipulative identification with known symbols, Hitler projected himself into the mythologically prepared self-image of the German people. Note here the demonstrated reawakening of old myths and their manipulation by current leaders in forging a new identity for a people.

Charismatic speakers use metaphors and mythological references in their speeches. They enhance



their appeal by tapping into mythic foreknowledge in their listeners. The sense of familiarity induced by the situation helps the purposes of the speaker as he conveys them to his listeners. As Schele (1990) has noted, rulers of nations can manage governments and rule large populations through the shared myths and symbolisms of their culture. (P 401) Meissenhelder (1977) in referring to the control of a populace through the manipulation of symbols by charismatic leaders, states, "The creation and sustenance of social order is accomplished through symbols, and social power is the ability to control symbols and their arrangement in social dramas. This power sustains order." (P 270)

### **Symbols Shape History**

Not only do symbols order societies, they can also influence the events of history when they are manipulated to serve as agents of supernatural causality. The latter enhances belief in the power of prophecy. Predictions brought into the arena of mythic consciousness from a selection in the mythic memory of a people have often empowered the pen or the sword in altering the fates of nations.

Penders (1974) has described Japanese propaganda during World War II as giving Indonesians the impression that Japan would accommodate to their political aspirations. As such Japanese troops were welcomed by the Indonesian people with neither panic nor obvious fear. Why? The Indonesians took the "... invasion calmly because they firmly believed that the Japanese victory was the realization of the first part of the prophecies of the legendary king Djojobojo, who had predicted that the Dutch usurpers would finally be forced to surrender to the 'forces coming from the islands of Tembini, the members of which are yellow-skinned, short legged, and they will occupy Java but only for the life-time of the maize plant.'" (P 58) The Japanese military had carefully studied the political situation in Indonesia and having learned of these beliefs released thousands of airborne leaflets stating that the Japanese army would make "... the prophecies of Djojobojo come true." (P 59)

Schele and Freidel (1990) note that there was recorded in the sacred books of the ancient Mayan Indians of Mexico, the following prophesy: "The ladder is set up over the rulers of the land. The hoof shall burn; the sand by the seashore shall burn." (P 400) "No one shall arrest the word of our Lord God, God the Son, the Lord of Heaven and his power, come to pass all over the world." (P 400) "No one shall prevent it; this then is the drought. Sufficient is the word for the Maya priests, the word of God." (P 400)

These prophecies decreed a belief that made success possible for Avendallo, a Spanish captain, in defeating a Mayan leader. The fatalism at the heart of the Mayan's thinking came from prophecies. "This fatalism was part of the legacy of [Mayan] Classic-period attitude toward history and its relationship to cyclic time and supernatural causality." (P 400) ". . . events unfolded within the symmetries of sacred time and space. They looked for symmetries and parallelisms as part of their political strategies, and when they could not find them, they very probably manufactured them." (P 400) This type of thinking predicted history, locking the future into place through awakening old symbols in support of new ambitions and hopes, and introducing fatalism into the resolves of the Mayan leaders.

## THE ONTOGENESIS OF SYMBOLIC INTERACTIONISM

### Introduction

The acquisition of superego memory content provides infrastructure for the development of symbolic moralism. This process is spread throughout child development. As a result, contents enter identity at times and in a form that fit the age specific receptive capabilities of the growing personality. In infancy words shape ethical expectations of oneself from the moment that in learning to speak we develop a lens of remembered language for interpreting the shape of parental intentions. Internal moral demands acquired in infancy are derived for the most part from introjections of parental admonitions during reactions to separations.

The infant, who early on had been capable of symbolic distortions as a result of projection of aggression, acquires memory consisting of remnants of past projections. These in turn inform future interpretations. Projection of aggressions and introjection of early parental admonitions, which have been symbolically distorted as they are encoded in memory lead to distortions of later acquired reality information.

Early conscience consists of direct conformance to parental demands and of symbolic deformations that shape internalized parental admonitions. The child's reaction to a parting parent and his adult transferences are informed by these distortions. For instance tearful episodes, when parents leave the child in nursery school or when they deposit the child with a baby sitter, reflect a child's distorting sense

that he is being deserted. In essence the parent's comment, "I'm leaving you so that you can learn to be without me.", when loaded with the child's projected aggression becomes "I'm leaving you because of something you did. You are not worth anything." This can lead to a child's belief that he has done something that must be corrected, and that the parents are leaving never to return. This sensed misbehavior, the nature of which the child cannot conceive, contributes to a potential low self-image shaped by symbolic distortions. These can be activated to intrude a dark image on a person's image of his true self in times of later separations, criticisms and stresses.

### **Conceptual Memory Transmits the Content Elements of Symbolic Moralism**

Symbolic moralism requires entryways for introducing memory content to the child. During the last half of the first year of life, the acquisition of words enhances the process. At first words serve to please parents and to name things; but words as simple concrete symbols are soon harnessed as potential signifiers of sensory memory contents with an enhanced potential capacity to transmit large volumes of memory content efficiently. Much of this memory content informs ethical behavior. By 18 months, early abstract symbolic forms are introduced. They increase the volume of ethical expectations recalled at the expense of accuracy. At 26 months, repression and psychoanalytic symbols come into play. The activation of psychoanalytic symbols introduces an enhanced group specific potential for the formation of conceptual distortions in memory that create the touchstones in conscience that define the shared beliefs of new groups and societies.

Conceptual memory is defined as the ability to evoke recall of learned patterns. Conceptual memory may be divided into the earlier appearing verbal conceptual memory (begins at 18 months to 3 years) and the relatively late-appearing abstract conceptual memory (begins at 8 years). Verbal conceptual memory exists when recall is organized around verbal signifiers, such as words and related symbols, which were shaped by socially dictated verbal schemata for naming and understanding perceptions. The use of words both in the form of simple symbols and psychoanalytic symbols as a potentially more efficient medium for the recall of experiences is the intrinsic characteristic of the verbal conceptual memory organization. Group identities can be defined by the presence of the shared symbolized content of verbal conceptual memory, which shapes interpretation of sensory inputs. They are derived in common by all members of a group from shared roots and cultural experiences including myths, which

are remembered in terms of socially dictated symbolizations based on symbolic linkages based on external characteristics. The content of such memory remnants reflect membership in a culture. They are hard to argue with and rarely change. An easily observed phenomenon of group membership based on shared ways of symbolizing new inputs is the use of language, metaphors, and myths, characteristic of the culture. In organizing and categorizing information to be taught preconceptions shape the categories.

### **Verbal Conceptual Memory Organization after the Third Year of Life.**

The verbal conceptual memory organization becomes an organ of memory available to augment preexisting affectomotor memory, by the third year of life at the latest. It does not become the primary means used for memory until about 6 years of age, when latency defenses are activated. In highly verbal literate cultures, in which words are handled as though they are the things they represent, the use of verbal conceptual memory may become so intense that verbal constructs are employed as the only means for retention of events in memory. For instance, in courts of law, testimony in words is given precedence over testimony guided by feelings.

Verbally encoded ideas influence the interpretation of perceptions involved in the process of recall and perception. During the introduction of a cultural set of realities, words are used to convey and verify perceived realities in discussions with others. In describing worldviews and cosmological and eschatological verities, words from valued infused sources introduce and verify taught truths. Individuals who use verbalized concepts alone to verify taught truths lose flexibility and become truly locked into the automatic symbolizations of their culture, for they have no means to challenge the slogans of their faith.

The development and primacy of the verbal conceptual memory organization is influenced by environment. The extent to which it is used is strongly determined by environmental and social factors. Verbal conceptual memory is not wholly dependent on cognitive maturation. The level of verbal conceptual memory that one reaches is a social phenomenon. A culture that is preliterate limits the symbols of the verbal concept memory while encouraging sensory-affectomotor memory. Primitive tribes block abstract conceptual memory.

For the latency-age child, (6 to 12 years) memory elements have a highly personalized appeal; they reflect experiences, feelings, and repressed affectomotor memory elements, which cannot be shared with others. Even mythic elements and symbols, which bind memory elements into repression at the same time that they sweep the verbal skills of the child into channels of expression that reflect cultural capture, are selected with little emphasis on communicative value. Companions and observers cannot crack this symbolic cryptic code of the unconscious. This serves well the purpose of fantasy in the latency years, since latency age fantasy's purpose is to prevent the sharing of mood and memory. Witness the child in therapy who plays out fantasies with toys that are blocked from the view of the therapist. Limited sharing can also be achieved through the use of the evocative mode in selecting symbols. The observing object in the mind's eye has little demand to make on the child's world of creativity during the latency years. Curiosity and concept hunger support the educability of those in the latency years. There is a need for culturally oriented stories, legends, myths, and other verbal schemata to be adapted for use as patterned outlets for the drives, whose expression previously had been through fantasy evocation of sensations and experiences related to prior gratifications. As these patterned outlets are acquired, associated ethical concepts augment the shape of the ego ideal. The influence of society through cautionary tales presented in the media of the culture (Dhondy 1985) skews these contents to match needs of the culture and to ensure conformity and proper fit for the individual in the society of the masses. With the shift to communicative mode symbols during late-latency through early adolescence, symbols and the moralities that they represent enter the part of conceptual memory that informs the superego through cultural gates provided by drama, myth and ritual. Ethical decisions encountered in the lives of others and in the activities of characters in the histories, myths, folk tales, and current events, with which the child comes into contact, have far-reaching effects. They shape the ethical characteristics that influence the ego ideal acquired during latency. A verbal catalog of ethical solutions begins to accumulate. Awareness of diversity of views and the awareness of motivation in selecting a course of action introduce the potential for ethical considerations in evaluation of one's own decisions and those of others. Much more subtle and complex problems can be solved through the use of the virtual library of potential responses acquired during the latency period.

During early adolescence, for youngsters sitting on the hinge between childhood and the adult world, religious rites of passage dictate the behavior that is to be expected in their adult years. The early

adolescent child begins passively to be guided in his identity, behavior, and morality by the myths and symbols of his culture. He begins to recognize ethical crises akin to those he is himself experiencing in the adventures of the protagonists of cultural myths and historical legends. The hero serves as a symbol for the child himself. Any movie or story that tells a tale of a person in a moment of life transition can influence a child's ethical sense in early adolescence. Luke Skywalker in "Star Wars" is followed as he makes the transition to independent manhood. Ulysses in the Odyssey is in transition from war to peace. Tales that tell of the preambles to marriage predominate in movie plots. For each problem that a tale presents, there is a solution, which the watching child adds to the armamentarium of memories that will be called upon when he must choose to do the right thing in a new situation. Tales told by teachers and situations presented in fiction and the cautionary tales of parents and friends serve for many children this prime function often served by myths. For many, if not most, the religious tale still serves this purpose. Values such as morality, ethics, the sanctity of marriage and home, channel the life pattern and foster acceptable decisions. These culture elements "supply the symbols" (Campbell 1968) of the symbolic moralism that carries the spirit and essence of a society forward and shape character for the next stage of life for children on the "thresholds of transformation" between prior stages of life and adulthood.

### **Abstract Conceptual Memory**

Abstract conceptual memory is organized around culturally dictated symbolizations that enable recording of experiences through shared abstract concepts. These are based on symbolic linkages derived from similarities in the intrinsic substance of things and events. The abstract conceptual memory organization approximates reality in its recalls as a result of the less arbitrary nature of the connections upon which it is based. This enhances the development of individual identities, conceptualizations, and moralities as well as myths that produce explanations, which are closer to scientific observations. They are pragmatic and since they are based on intrinsic characteristics of things and events perceived, are more malleable than fixedly intuitive. Abstract conceptualizations open the way to progress, changes, and true tomorrows.

### **Symbolic Transactionism in Adolescence**

When the child expresses his drives through fantasies, identifies with characters through internalization, and introjects certain components related to that character, he becomes himself like the character. This is the essence of symbolic transactionism in adolescence. Myths, tales, and concrete symbols are provided by society for use in acquiring a tolerable armamentarium of mechanisms and skills for the expression of drives. Those story elements, which are familiar and comfortable for him, provide the child with responses that he can use in his own problem solving. Mechanisms similar to those involved in actively producing discharge fantasies and symbols, in which the hero can be covertly identified with the teenager's own self, can be utilized by social authorities to encourage passive identification of the child with the myths, legends and ethics of a child's culture. Ego organizations constructed from these mechanisms perpetuate into adolescent and adult life the civilizing function of the ego structure of latency. As a result of these structured rites of passage, the individual acquires, and can continue to acquire, the fantasy images that myth and cautionary tales provide that set the rules for cultural patterns of behavior, ritual, and belief that will guide him, his mores, his opinions, and his social reactions for as long as a lifetime.

The fantasies around which cultures are organized, having proven themselves to be an effective way to shape the individual to the world as seen through the verbal conceptual cognitive organization, are taken over as the tools of priests and kings. Symbols, magical gestures, and rituals are emphasized and intuitive and ritualized approaches are reinforced in the organization of the masses. Abstract conceptual memory that could have opened the door to insight and have supported perceptive challenge to authority is given short shrift. The door is closed to new insights and to knowledge derived from an understanding of the intrinsic nature of the phenomenon under study by the freezing of concepts into invariable mythic entities.

### **The Observing Object in the Mind's Eye Intensifies in Adolescence**

The internalized observing object becomes part of conscience. It shapes behavior and choice. It represents the public when it is absent. Even when alone, a child experiences the influence of parents and society. This shapes the boundaries of his thinking. This remnant of parents and society is sustained

in the memory as an observing object. Such an object becomes more important and influences the symbolizing function in the selection of symbols on a prospective aesthetic (i.e., communicative) basis when the audience it represents becomes more important to the child. This occurs when the communicative symbol comes of age in adolescence. Then a strengthening of the communicative mode in the use of symbols in fantasy occurs because the needs and understandings of others are responded to by the adolescent, when emphasis is on communication. The expression of drives connected with being in love is guided by the loved one's contribution of priorities to the observing object in the mind's eye of the lover.

The communicative symbol dominates art and therapy from the beginning of adolescence. Its domination by society increases then. This form of symbol takes into account the real world and the needs of the audience in the selection of the signifier. Communicative symbols are shaped by choices based upon consensual recognition of meaning. Communicative symbols play a significant part in communicative work, art, and writing.

The shift in symbol from those that function in the evocative mode to those that function in the communicative mode is strongly influenced by the internalized representation of the audience for which a work of art is conceived. This is an important conduit for the transfer of values that occurs in symbolic interactionism. The ethics and ideals of the child are shaped by the expectations of those around him.

The latency-age child conceives of a word as a means of expressing himself and his drives, whereas the adolescent conceives of a word as a communication to a significant other. This change in emphasis reflects the characteristics acquired during adolescence by the observing object in the mind's eye, which is after all at this time an internalized cultural conscience. Shott (1976) introduced a sociological concept of ". . . an internal, social agent that promotes self-control . . ." (P 42) extending the work of Smith and Mead. This concept is comparable to the observing object in the mind's eye. Such an internalized social image, for use in setting up identifications, colors and intensifies the tuning of oneself to the needs of others and society.

The first love affair with society that is engendered by this developmental step produces a lasting mark on the tastes and choices of the child in a manner that transcends the moment and tints the future.



The internalized audience is retained in memory to shape the creativity and hopes of the adult years. If an act of creation occurs when the social initiate is alone, and representatives of society are absent in reality, as occurs when a child reads, the internalization of socializing myths can occur without external personal influences.

As a result of these developmental steps, interpretations of new situations come to be guided by stereotype-dominated patterns of memory, which represent the imagoes derived from the culture in which one lives. They are patterned after myths approved by the culture. Henceforth the values of the individual are dominated by the value judgments so learned. As Schachtel (1949) noted, "Voluntary memory recalls largely *schemata of experience* [italics mine] rather than experience [itself]. These schemata are mostly built along the lines of words and concepts of the culture" (P 19) Culturally infused guided memory shapes a man's world and its customs.

Primitive societies encourage the use of rote memory for verbal concepts averting abstract challenge for the morality that the concepts sustain. This is the core cognitive support for any society controlled through magic and mythic symbols. Literate societies tend to encourage the development of abstract memory skills, leading to a gathering of insights about the intrinsic nature of real phenomena. Abstract memory skills provide the potential to topple simplistic myths.

### **Projection Using Communicative Symbols**

During the adolescent transition from emphasis on evocative to emphasis on communicative symbols, displacement and symbolization of affects as well as interpretation of other's motives become less involved in the discharge of drives and more with communicative modes. There is a shift in early adolescence from defensive to sublimative projection. Through the projection of the ego ideal to others, the superego is opened to influences from the peer group and the environment. Group pressures and examples are internalized after the introjection that follows early adolescent projection. (For Example, before going to a party a girl said, "I'm afraid to go to the party cause they'll think I'm icky." "I must be really uncool." After going to the party the girl said. "They liked me. I must be OK.") Thus changes are introduced to the self image, which enhance the potential to fulfill the ego ideal and the conscience when there is introjection following the controlling mastery of new situations that is achieved by

projecting an image that is off putting but acceptable. An internal remembered audience is developed from these introjections, whose requirements augment the internal motivating demands of the childhood superego. This early adolescent process within symbolic transactionism provides sources, stored within the self, of the words and customs that make it possible to enter the strange land beyond the self and beyond the experiences of one's parents with a sense of familiarity and ease. In this way society creates a sensed social reality that can be experienced concurrently with or in place of natural or other realities as defined by reality testing.

The successful shift to communicative symbols is necessary if the needs of society are to become operative in the formulations of a person as he explores future planning. Communicative symbols are the piers of a bridge to the object world that permits the observing object in the mind's eye to influence behavior. When communicative symbols serve an observing object in the mind's eye, that represents a loved society the symbolizer will spontaneously produce fantasies and planning that takes into account the preconscious demands of society on the level of tertiary elaboration.

Tertiary elaboration (see Hoffer 1978) refers to modifications of latent fantasy that take into account social demands and audience expectations in the area of symbol formation and storytelling. It may be present early on to some degree, but it achieves an effective level first during the transitional developmental phase associated with late latency-early adolescence. When a loved society joins the observing object in a mind's eye, that mind comes to belong as member to a flock of minds. As such one need never again feel quite alone for now and ever more in the mind's eye, the leader of the flock becomes its shepherd.

## **Summary**

Humans begin to acquire social definitions of sensed reality from the moment they begin to understand word meanings during personal interactions. There is a "Symbolic Moralism" by which word symbols shape ethical social expectations of oneself from the end of the first year of life. In latency this process is enhanced when fairy tales and moral stories dictate expectations characteristic of a given society. Such verbally encoded symbolisms in abstract verbal societies replace the rituals of passage, which for primitive people dictate to youngsters, on the brink of the adult world, behavior to be expected

in their adult years.

Important sources of superego content and the ego ideal are introjection of the characteristics of parents during repeated separations, and passive participation in symbol bearing myths of culture, which are taught. Symbolized distortions of parental admonitions also become part of the parent's influence on the child. As the child grows, he relates to an absent parent through obeying remnants of these admonitions. He obeys the distorted and remembered parental authority. Right or wrong does not govern what's to be done. Good behavior is defined as acquiescence to the distortion enhanced will of authority. Peer substitutes in early adolescence participate in this process when they become for the moment the primary objects of the child during late latency-early adolescence. In early adolescence projection of ego ideal influence to peers, such as happens when the child seeks to join the social group and take on its coloration, results in a reorganization of the content of the ego ideal. Internalization of the influence of this experience results in an alteration of superego guides to behavior. The latter can be persistent through life, or pass with the reassertion of parental imagoes that occurs in the late twenties.

On a less personal interactive level such as reading or viewing movies or plays, passive participation in the myths of culture becomes possible. An experiencing of ethical crises in the adventures of symbolic, mythic, and religious protagonists occurs. When the events of the myth are identified as being akin to those that he himself is experiencing, the responses of the protagonists influence the potential of the child's ego ideal. This becomes a source of identity during adolescence. The child finds elements within stories that he can use in his own problem solving tasks. As the child expresses his drives through identification with mythic characters involved in fantasies, internalization and introjection of ethical components related to a mythic character, result in the child becoming himself like that character, whether he is a hero, saint, or leader. As a result the reality of a mythic character, as the child senses it, interprets it, and symbolizes it, becomes the landscape of the child's own morality.

#### *Notes*

<sup>1</sup> See Duncan 1968).

