

# Reflections on the oedipal triangle<sup>1</sup>

Iraci Galiás\*

## Abstract

The author reflects on the Oedipal experience at both the personal and archetypal levels. She explores how this issue unfolds in two phases: not only during childhood, but also in adulthood. In examining the developmental roles of the child, father, and mother, she outlines their expected progression in a normal course. Additionally, she analyzes deviations from this normal development, detailing a condition she terms the triangle rectification syndrome. The author further expands the scope of the Oedipal experience, arguing that it transcends the family unit and influences other social institutions and the concept of the psychological family. ■



**Keywords**  
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\* Psychiatrist, Jungian analyst, founding member of the Sociedade Brasileira de Psicologia Analítica (SBrPA), member of the International Association of Analytical Psychology (IAAP), founding member of the Comité Latinoamericano de Psicología Analítica (CLAPA), honorary member of the Sociedad Uruguaya de Psicología Analítica (SUPA), and honorary member of the Sociedad Chilena de Psicología Analítica (SCPA).

## Reflections on the oedipal triangle

*Quando o pai é pai e o  
filho é filho, quando o irmão  
mais velho desempenha o  
papel de irmão mais velho  
e o mais novo age de acordo  
com o papel de irmão  
mais novo, quando o marido  
é realmente marido  
e a esposa é realmente esposa,  
então existe ordem.*

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### I – Introduction

Much has already been explored in psychology regarding the myth of Oedipus (Brandão, 1987, p. 223), and my concern here is not with offering a broad and careful description of this topic. I aim to focus on a few reflections concerning the Oedipal experience —commonly referred to as the “Oedipus complex”—, which, in my view, has significant clinical relevance in psychotherapeutic practice.

### II – The oedipal triangle at the personal level

I have examined the Oedipal triangle here at what I call the personal level, that is, in what unfolds between a child, a father, and a mother. The natural course of a family group (diagram I) begins with a man and a woman who meet and only become a father and a mother with the arrival of a third person, the child. From conception to delivery, the child is biologically closer to the mother, being “one” with her. All contact between the father and the child during this period is made through the father-mother relationship. However, from a psychological perspective, the child experiences “oneness” —being one with the mother,

with the father, with the world—, as Erich Neumann so aptly points out when describing the primal relationship (Neumann, 1973, p. 7).

After birth, the child remains in this relationship for a long time, slowly moving into a kind of “hammock”, where one end is held by the mother and the other by the father. The child gradually perceives themselves as separate from the mother, discovering the father and entering the triangular relationship, as shown in the diagram.

Traditionally in psychology, the Oedipal triangle is understood as a developmental issue in childhood, with distinct resolutions for boys and girls, as demonstrated by Freud (1974, p. 259). As such, the boy must sacrifice his erotic bond with the mother and identify with the father in order to structure his masculine identity. The girl’s resolution is more complex, as she must separate from the mother and form a loving attachment to the father, later sacrificing her erotic bond with him and returning to the mother, with whom she must identify in order to structure her feminine identity.

Thus, we see that deep and intimate contact with both the mother and the father is crucial for both boys and girls. We know that, for the structuring of sexual identity, it is important for both boys and girls to have contact with the same-sex and opposite-sex parental figures. If one of these contacts, for any reason, does not happen or happens inadequately, precariously, or excessively, we are aware of the risks this poses to the development of the boy or girl. Both need to deeply relate to the same-sex parental figure, who will serve as their model. Likewise, both need to relate to the opposite-sex parental figure, from whom they must differentiate themselves. This process is undeniably important in the structuring of sexual identity, or first identity (Byington, 1986, p. 15).

However, I do not believe that the Oedipal experience, regarded as a normal developmental phase, is confined to early childhood. I believe that after the experiences classically described, both boys and girls must gradually adjust their contact with both the paternal and maternal figures. It is during adolescence that both will undergo a process of distancing themselves from the parental couple.

One practical way, in my view, to understand how this happens is to think that the “triangle” formed by father-mother-child will progressively become a “quadrangle”, as the child separates into two roles:  $C_F$  (child of the father) and  $C_M$  (child of the mother). In other words, at the level of the child’s identity, they will need to discern these two roles within themselves, understanding that they have dual parentage, being the child of a male father and the child of a female mother (diagram II).

In the process of adolescence, according to Carlos Byington, the child must break free from the circle surrounding the triangle formed with the parents (Byington, 1978). That is, the exogamous libido (the force that “pulls” outward away from the parental circle) must overcome the endogamous libido (the force that “pulls” inward toward the parental circle).

In my view, the conflict between these two currents of libido highlights the importance of the child’s  $C_F$  and  $C_M$  roles, as they support each other during this “second birth.” Thus, if one of the roles ( $C_F$  or  $C_M$ ) is in the service of the endogamous libido, the other will be in the service of the exogamous libido, and vice versa. This interplay of forces will ultimately lead to the young adult child’s exit from the parental circle, aided by the adequately performed  $C_M$  and  $C_F$  roles.

Everything described so far pertains to the first Oedipal phase.

Diagram I

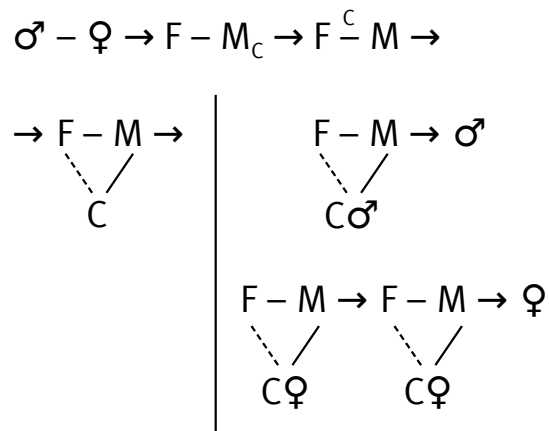
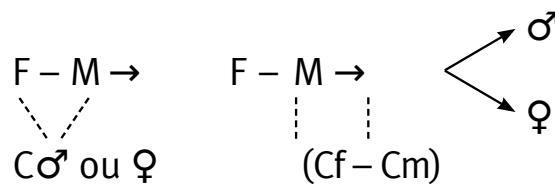


Diagram II



### II a – Oedipus is a biphasic experience

I believe that what has been described so far should be considered the first Oedipal phase, as already mentioned. However, in my view, we should consider the Oedipal situation as biphasic.

The second phase begins when a now adult man and woman meet. By this time, they should have already separated from their parental figures. In other words, the man and woman will become father and mother when a third person, the child, comes into being. In my view, this marks the beginning of the second Oedipal phase of development. The man will live, in the father role (second phase), through the same vicissitudes of the Oedipal situation that he experienced as a child (first phase). The woman will live through them as a mother. It is as if, as a child, this trajectory was the first cycle of a long journey, which is completed with the second cycle, experienced

in the adult role of father for the man and mother for the woman.

In the first phase (the first cycle of this journey), the child will be “receiving” care from the parents and “giving” them the opportunity to be parents. In the second phase (the second cycle of this journey), the parents will be “giving” the child, through their care, the possibility of being a child and receiving from them that of being parents. This is the natural order of things, through which we receive from our parents what we give (transformed) to our children, and they will receive from us what they will give (transformed) to their children. Therefore, we will be receiving from our children what we have given to our parents as possibilities while our children will be giving us what they will receive from their own children.

I believe that only after completing these two “cycles,” after living through both phases, will we have fully gone through the Oedipal experience for the first time.

It is important to clarify that, obviously, there is no concrete need for a man and a woman to be united and for both to have a child in order for this process to take place. What is necessary is that these roles are lived out in a relationship with an “other.” We can “mother” or “father,” for example, an adopted child, our nieces or nephews, our students, our clients, etc. The need to live out the roles of father and/or mother will lead us, so to speak, to perform them wherever it is existentially possible, as it is inherent to our development. In other words, being a child is a concrete experience—all of us are born from a father and a mother, even if we are not raised by them. Being a father and/or mother, on the other hand, is an experience to be lived whether with our biological child or with anyone in relation to whom we take on these roles.

## II b – Deviations

Given our need to experience both phases, the first roles ( $C_M$  and/or  $C_F$ ) that were not properly lived out will reappear in the second

phase. In other words, when we go through the same experiences during the second cycle of the same “journey”, but in the adult roles of M (mother) or F (father), the roles of  $C_M$  and/or  $C_F$  that were not adequately lived out will emerge alongside the roles of M and/or F. For example, if a man lived out his  $C_M$  role poorly, when he becomes a father, he will tend to live out this role along with his child. He will need his wife to also be a mother to him, not just to their child, with whom he will compete for the mother. He may feel intense jealousy, for example, and treat his child as if they were a younger sibling, because he needs that, so to speak, incomplete experience of being a mother’s son. If this man did not adequately live out the  $C_F$  role, when he becomes a father (F), he will have difficulty fulfilling that adult role, as what he seeks alongside his child is a father for himself, which confuses his performance. The same applies to women.

In a way, parents who did not adequately live out their roles as children will “hitch a ride” with their own children in search of a father and/or mother, which evidently disturbs their parental roles. Naturally, this also creates confusion in their husband/wife roles, as one may be experienced as the other’s father and/or mother, and vice versa. This deviation is frequently present in our culture: the man being a husband-father to the wife, and the woman being a wife-mother to the husband. Consequently, the children will become sibling-children of the father and/or mother, which disrupts the proper role structuring for all family members.

In deviations, there is always a fixation of the symbols associated with a role, which hinders the continuation of the symbolic development.

We call “deviations” those situations in which, for some reason, the Oedipal triangle cannot be properly experienced. Without the triangle, we cannot have the quadrangle, which results from the separation of the  $C_M$  and  $C_F$  roles. Consequently, there is no adequate exit from the triangle. This leads to the “displacement” of this

situation to the second Oedipal phase, as previously explained, and its repetition.

The disruptions of the second Oedipal phase do not necessarily always result from the disruptions of the first phase, although this is the most common scenario. Someone who has adequately lived through the first phase may still face disruptions in the second, such as in cases of traumatic loss of a spouse (widowhood), children, or experiences of overload in other areas of their development, etc.

There are, therefore, many circumstances that may hinder or even prevent Oedipal triangulation. Parental separations, single motherhood, etc., are some examples. Nevertheless, in my experience, these situations are more visible and easier to perceive in analytical work. Evidently, in the situations exemplified, there is not always an impossibility of triangulation, as a substitute male or female figure may be present.

### II c –Triangle rectification syndrome

This situation occurs when, instead of a triangle, a straight line is formed.

If we observe diagram I, we will see several natural transitions where one side of the triangle is weaker (dotted line). In these normal developmental situations, there may be a rupture of this side of the triangle, leading to its rectification.

Thus, there may be:

- a) F — M — C
- b) C — F — M
- c) F — C — M

These are the three possible types of rectification, always with damage to one relationship and, consequently, to all of them.

Thus, in rectification “a,” the contact of the child (C) with the father (F) does not occur directly but through the mother (M). This will prevent the child (C) from fully living out and developing the  $C_f$  role. In this case, there will be a strong  $C_m$  role to the detriment of a weak  $C_f$  role. If the

child is male, there will be significant challenges in identifying with the father-man, which will likely lead to issues in his relationship with his own masculinity. His relationship with the mother-woman will also be complicated, as there will be a lack of balance, causing difficulties in his relationships with women.

If the child (C) in rectification “a” is female, the inability to properly live out and structure the  $C_f$  role will lead to challenges not only in her relationship with the father-man, but also with men in general. The imbalance in her relationship with the mother (M) will also cause problems in her relationship with her own feminine identity.

Therefore, the lack of balance will cause problems for all three individuals involved. The father (F) in this situation will not be able to perform his role, and the mother (M) will be overloaded. The marital relationship will be broadly affected.

The child (C) will face problems in their first Oedipal phase, while the father (F) and mother (M) will face issues in their second Oedipal phase.

We could apply the same reasoning to rectification “b” but in reverse, which would also present similar issues.

In rectification “c,” the child (C) will experience strong tension between their  $C_f$  and  $C_m$  roles, leading to overload. The child will serve as a “messenger pigeon” between the father and the mother, often conveying difficult messages. At the level of the father (F) and mother (M), the marital relationship will be significantly impacted.

Rectification, as a deviation from the triangle, will always prevent it from becoming a quadrangle (through the differentiation of  $C_m$  and  $C_f$  roles). This will block the continuation of the Oedipal development and lead to fixation.

Another important issue to consider within the family group is the dynamics between siblings. In the same family, for example, there may be more than one type of rectification, with each child occupying a different position. Sometimes, siblings will live out the roles of father (F) and mother (M) with each other. Naturally, all this creates problems in both Oedipal phases.



Several factors may contribute to the triggering of rectifications. They may be related to the personality traits of each parental figure or to the relationship between them.

In terms of marital relationships and family interactions, in general, typology is very important, as Nairo de Souza Vargas shows us in his study on typology and couples therapy (Vargas, 1981, p. 3).

We often see that, due to the repetitive tendency of neurosis, a rectification experienced in the first Oedipal phase triggers a rectification in the second.

At the therapeutic level, I believe that we can benefit from recognizing existing rectifications. This allows us to work on both roles ( $C_M$  and  $C_P$ ), giving us access to these two agonistic forces. We will therefore be faced with a rectification that symbolically seeks “retriangulation.” This can happen concretely, depending on the client’s age, or abstractly. It is important to recognize the need to “retriangulate”, whether our client is in the first or second Oedipal phase. We will then have elements to work on this process, if our client is an adult, in both of their families: their relationship with their parents and their relationship with their spouse and children. Only after the “retriangulation” can we enable the “quadrangle” and thus resume the progress of the Oedipal process.

### III – The oedipal triangle at the archetypal level

Let us consider the archetypes, described in psychology by the genius of Jung (1975, p. 3, § 3), as gods that dwell on Olympus. They use symbols to communicate with humans. In other words, archetypes, through symbols, structure consciousness (Byington, 1988, p. 14).

Everything discussed in section II refers to humans. Now, we will talk about the gods and how they relate to humans in the Oedipal situation.

Each “god” has its own way of “dominating” the human stage with its own principles. Each “god” has its own laws, prohibitions, and pun-

ishments if their laws are not followed. All the gods will “inhabit” humans; each one will reign in its own time and in its own turn, in cycles. But never, during a human being’s entire life, will a god be fully deposed. Each ruling god maintains, in some form, its active reign throughout a human being’s individuation process. Since there are many gods, there will be many reigns or sanctuaries coexisting, not always peacefully. They all compete for the attention of humans, and humans need all of them. Woe to the human who decides to ignore one of the gods! As analysts, we know this.

I want to examine how all this unfolds, as well as the disputes for human consciousness among the gods in the Oedipal situation.

I would like to make the same journey again, following the same itinerary as in section II. Therefore, in the first cycle, we will consider the human child (C), and in the second, the human father (F) and mother (M).

#### III a – First cycle or first Oedipal phase

With conception, the Mother Goddess (archetype of the Great Mother) begins her reign. She is the great goddess of fertility. She oversees the pregnancy process. She is warmth, protection, coziness, in the service of life. She is care, affection. The child is born assisted by the goddess. She is the goddess of oneness, of cradling, of closeness. She watches over the baby’s body, attends to its hunger, thirst, poop, and pee. She is the goddess of nourishment. She takes care of the baby’s health. She desires unity, she is unity, she comes before separation, she comes in the “one,” she is the “one,” she cares for the one-mother, one-world, one-cosmos of the child. She cares for well-being and protests against ill-being. She cares for satiety and protests against frustration. She is complete, lunar, strong, powerful, wise, and competent, with her own discernment regarding her own laws. She is also fierce, furious, and punishes if her principles are disrespected. She “makes a fuss”, she

does everything to reign and take care of what is her responsibility: nourishment and fertility. Whoever dares to commit a cardinal sin against her and abandon her will encounter her hellish, terrible side.

The child forms therein islets of consciousness and slowly, from this world, Neumann's primal relationship, it becomes aware of itself and the other.

Gradually, another god prepares to enter the scene. It is the turn of the Father God. He is the god of the sword, the solar god. His laws are extremely serious, important, and fundamental. When he arrives, like all gods, he awakens fascination in the human child, fascination with the new, with the new code. This transition is not easy; in fact, it is very difficult, akin to changing religions. It is an act of heroism on the child's part, requiring sacrifice. The wisdom of Olympus provides for this as well, and fascination makes the transition irresistible.

While the goddess cared for a type of comfort, this god takes care of the separation of opposites, of education, of cans and cannots, of musts and must-nots, of rights and wrongs, of ahead and behind, of above and below, of night and day, of signs. It is all very fascinating. Who doesn't remember the fascination for learning to tell time, to read and write, to recognize that we speak through signs? It is the fascination with abstraction, with coherence, with numbers. The discovery of this kind of logic, the discovery of equations and inequalities. The discovery that  $2 + 2 = 4$ , no matter the object: 2 oranges + 2 oranges = 4 oranges; 2 bananas + 2 bananas = 4 bananas. It is surprising to discover later that this is only part of the story and that  $2 + (-2) = 0$  or  $-2 + (-2) = -4$ . To discover that signs say things in this continuous abstraction!

He is an absolute god, who implements, conquers, legislates, and establishes "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." He is the Father God in all his glory.

He has his tablets of the law and also his list of crimes or sins. Whoever wants to witness his

wrath need only disobey him. His terrible side is linked to injustice, disobedience, and disrespect for the asymmetry of things.

These two mighty gods will spend many years structuring the consciousness of the human child (C), with all the associated conflicts. Growing up is full of conflicts.

In adolescence, a great upheaval occurs. A Hero god enters the scene, compelling the youth to want and need to escape the dominion of the first two gods. It is as if the child needs to free themselves from the first two "religions." And it is the Hero who brings the child, the young human, the necessary dose of courage. The Hero has his own principles, and what is sacred to him is courage. His greatest sin or crime is cowardice, which should be avoided at all costs. This is why we often see this somewhat reckless side in a youth. They fight one battle at a time, pouring all their energy into it, sometimes to the point of exhaustion. The youth does not always heed the wisdom of the Mother Goddess (they do not take care of themselves) or the Father God (they disobey), as if it were no longer fundamental. It is so because the Hero now entrusts them with new tasks—often very challenging and not always understood by either them or their family. These are times of great insecurity, disharmony, highs and lows, folly, euphoria, and sadness, as occurs in battles.

The Hero brings disruption and disorganization to the previous order of things, so that a new one may be sought.

It is as if the child, the young human, is clearing the way for another god or goddess through the Hero, depending on whether they are male or female.

This is how the Animus God or the Anima Goddess enters the scene: the god in the case of the human daughter, and the goddess in the case of the human son. In truth, from an early age, the way each child experiences the structuring reigns of the first two gods is very individual, as it is already influenced by the presence of the Animus—Anima. This is not always understood

and respected by parents, as Carlos Byington (1987, p. 68) so well points out.

For the first time in the process of development, there are two gods: the Anima for the man and the Animus for the woman, as proposed by Jung (1978, p. 64, § 297). However, these are two gods who share the same “religion,” meaning the same principles, the same list of virtues and sins. This is Otherness, as proposed in psychology by Carlos Byington (1983). Among its virtues, the exchange, symmetry, and dialectic of opposites are very important. Its greatest sin is the betrayal of the soul, the self, and consequently the other. Values are not taught; they are sought, discovered, found. It is through it that we fully understand the importance the “other” holds for the “self.”

In normal development, it will be in this functioning of conjugality that man and woman meet.

These are the gods who, in a sense, lead the search for a partner.

At this point, the human child has completed the first cycle, or rather, lived through the first Oedipal phase. This is how a man and a woman come together.

### **III b – Second cycle or second Oedipal phase**

Between a man and a woman, there can be a relationship that is conjugal. This relationship, governed by otherness, must remain in this “religion.” With the arrival of a child, the man and the woman will develop another relationship: the parental one. It is through this relationship that the parental couple will embark on the second cycle.

This human couple only becomes father and mother upon the arrival of the child.

Here begins the second passage through the “churches” or “religions” already mentioned.

Let us now consider the human adult father (man) or mother (woman).

In the first church, the Church of the Mother Goddess, the adult human will embody a kind of high priest (man-father) or high priestess (woman-mother), who will take care of the child’s

“initiation.” The father and mother will be summoned by the goddess to exercise her principles, but now in the role of donors. Here, they will provide the child with nourishment, affection, protection, care, “maternal love”, dedication. Here, the parents will develop their capacity, as adults, to relate to the child through the body, using non-verbal language, lullabies, and physical contact. They will “humanize” the archetype of the Great Mother.

As adults, they will then proceed, along with the child, to the Sanctuary of the Father God, as high priest and high priestess. Here, they will initiate the child into this god’s principles. They will give of themselves to the child as providers, enforcers of the new law and new order, discipline, and the separation of opposites. They will, ultimately, be the “humanizers” of the Father archetype.

Both with the Mother Goddess and the Father God, the adults (parents) will experience fascination again during this second cycle. This time, they will be fascinated to see in their child the acquisitions of these two dynamisms. Nature, in its wisdom, so to speak, leads them, from fascination to fascination, to develop alongside the child.

It is in the “religions” of the Mother Goddess and the Father God that the human parents, by “giving” the child initiation, will “receive” the possibility of structuring the second half of these dynamisms (Byington, 1983), proving that “it is in giving that we receive.”

Following this, the parents will also experience the activation of the Hero within themselves during the child’s adolescence. Much parental heroism is necessary when the adolescent child separates from the parents. The same Hero who “pushes” the child to separate from the parents also “pushes” the parents to enable this separation, which is accompanied by much conflict and pain, as all births are painful.

It is here that, as an adult man and woman, parents can fully achieve otherness, which was initiated in the first cycle. It was not inter-



rupted but enriched by the reliving of the Great Mother and Father archetypes in the second cycle. This reliving allowed for the possibility of full otherness, which, in order to be experienced in its entirety, requires the adult parental dynamisms of the second phase or second cycle. It is here that the father-man and the mother-woman become equipped to fully exercise otherness, having already learned to give and receive, and now being able to exchange. Having been initiated as children into the previous two dynamisms or “religions” and being their child’s initiators into them, they can now fully experience their Animus or Anima. They are now capable of symmetrically relating with the other by seeking their own deep identity and fulfilling their mission.

### III c – The importance of sex

As we have described, both the father-man and the mother-woman will have their roles as initiators of their child, both with the Mother Goddess and the Father God.

It is common to find the personal mother solely as high priestess of the Great Mother and the personal father solely as high priest of the Father God. But in such cases, we encounter, if not a deviation, at least an incompleteness, a limitation of possibilities.

The father (man) and the mother (woman) will have their own distinct ways of initiating the child into both the religion of the Mother Goddess and that of the Father God. The man will do this as a man does it, which is different from the way a woman does it, regardless of their individual differences.

It is very important for the child to be initiated into each “religion” by both a man and a woman, by both their “equal” and their “opposite.” This expands the initiation, making it more comprehensive and solid. It will give the child parameters and models for how a man and a woman deal with the Mother Goddess and the Father God. As a result, the child will have a wider universe of learning and development.

### IV – Patricide, matricide, and filicide

Matricide and patricide are part of the normal confrontations in the development of the first Oedipal phase.

From the moment the child is born, they will increasingly commit “matricides,” gradually becoming more capable of doing for themselves what their mother used to do for them. As the child becomes independent of care, they are, in a way, “killing the mother,” that is, the need for someone else to maternally care for them. This is how the child gradually develops the capacity to, so to speak, “be their own mother.”

Next, the same will happen with regard to patricide. That is, the child, who was once entirely dependent on the father, will gradually become independent. Through successive patricides, the child will develop the capacity to, so to speak, “be their own father.”

These two processes, matricide and patricide, will reach their peak during adolescence, when the child separates from the parental couple.

Filicide is part of the second Oedipal phase. This movement begins with childbirth, when the mother “expels” the child. Successive “births” will be necessary for the separation between mother and child to occur—hence, successive filicides. The personal father will also be involved in the filicides “committed” by the mother, as he aids in these “births.” He, too, as the father, will have to commit them, pushing the child toward their development.

Filicide will also reach a higher degree during the child’s adolescence in order to enable the separation.

However, this entire process will be promoted by the gods themselves. The Mother Goddess, through her two sides, will promote both care and “weaning” at the level of the child as well as the parents, both matricide (of the personal mother and father) and filicide. This will occur in doses that are in harmony with the developmental process. The Father God acts similarly. Through his two sides, he provides and also “pushes” for development, at the level of both the child and the

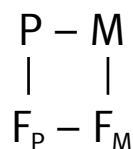
parents, thus promoting both parricide (of the personal father and mother) and filicide.

The Hero, however, will bring about the great activation of this process of separation for both the child and the parents. Therefore, the Hero will simultaneously serve as a great activator of matricide, patricide, and filicide within the family group.

Let us bring to mind the image of the churches where the child is being initiated by the high priest (father) and high priestess (mother) into the two “religions.” Matricide-filicide will occur in the first church, the Church of the Mother Goddess. Patricide-filicide will occur in the second church, the Church of the Father God. In both, the humans involved will be the child, the father, and the mother.

It is through this process that each human being will develop the four roles at play within themselves. It is by “killing” the parents in the other that the child will gradually develop within themselves the roles of M and F. The individual will continue this development in their second Oedipal phase. It is by “killing” the child in the other that the parents will gradually reclaim the C roles ( $C_f$  and  $C_m$ ), which they had lived out in their first phase.

Thus, at the end of the second passage through the churches of the Mother Goddess and the Father God, each “human” will have developed the four roles within themselves.



These four roles will be crucially necessary for the full practice of the other “religion,” otherness, governed by the Animus-Anima Gods. Then, in accordance with the principle of these gods, the human being will establish a dialectical relationship among these four roles or four possibilities. These are four polarities that will interact.

This is how the human being will know how to existentially receive ( $C_m$  and  $C_f$  roles), maternally give (M role), and paternally give (F role). And it is through giving and receiving that the human being will be able to exchange.

Thus, it will be at the personal level that the parents’ otherness within the family group will “support” the Oedipal development of their children.

### V – Incest and castration

With the understanding of how the gods operate in their interaction with humans, through symbols—the possible language between gods and humans (or between archetypes and ego)—let us revisit the “deviations.” It will become evident that in all the described deviations, particularly in the triangle rectification syndrome, there is a fixation of this “language” at certain points. In other words, there is a fixation, a stagnation in the normal symbolic chain. This will prevent the proper continuation of the Oedipal trajectory and, consequently, the full continuation of the individuation process.

The taboo of incest, upheld by humans, is part of normal development and is provided by the gods themselves. We could say that incest, in a broader sense, is stagnation itself—the halting of the symbolic chain at a particular point, preventing its continuation. As such, we will be confronted with incest whenever we are faced with a “deviation.”

Structuring the C roles ( $C_m$  and  $C_f$ ) and reclaiming them is fundamental to development. Without them, we cannot learn, receive, or be initiated. Thus, receiving and learning from the other will always place us in asymmetrical relationships in life, where the other will be our donor, our initiator (M and F roles). However, these possibilities are given to us by the gods themselves (or archetypes).

Therefore, we have a normal capacity to be contained ( $C_m$ ) and to contain (M) the other (the archetype of the Great Mother), which is very important in the act of surrendering. We also have a normal capacity to submit ourselves ( $C_f$  role) to

the legitimate authority of the other and to exercise legitimate authority (F role) over the other.

However, it is one thing to accept the containment by or legitimate authority of the other in order to receive and learn from them.

It is one thing to contain the other and exercise legitimate authority over them in order to give of ourselves and teach. It is something entirely different to submit to the possessiveness or authoritarianism of the other, or to be possessive or authoritarian with the other. In this case, we are faced with castration in the realm of the Great Mother or the Father archetype.

Thus, castration, as well as incest, are not, in my view, part of the normal Oedipal process but rather of its deviations, that is, of the fixation of its symbols.

## VI – The other cycles

Everything we have described refers to the two basic cycles (or two phases) of the normal Oedipal trajectory. However, life will provide us with many other cycles on this same journey, always giving us the opportunity to improve these roles.

In the family, for example, we will undergo another cycle as grandparents, when we will enable contact with another important “religion”—the cosmic one. In other words, we will enable contact with the cosmic dynamism (Byington, 1987, p. 81).

Similarly, in other institutions besides the family, other cycles will occur. We will be, for example, students and then teachers.

Everything we have received, we will be able to give in a transformed way, and this will be necessary for our development.

And this, I believe, is how Jung describes, as a task in our individuation process, the quest that results in the discovery of the “psychological family.”

## VII – Final observation

The initial quotation from the I Ching refers to hexagram 37, Chia Jen or “The Family” (Wilhelm and Baynes, 1980, p. 144).

I noticed the absence of the word “mother” in it. However, upon consulting the texts by Richard Wilhelm (translated to portuguese by Gustavo Corrêa Pinto) and James Legge, I observed that the word “father” used there seems to encompass both father and mother, due to the qualities it groups together.

In any case, I would like to add what it might imply:

“If the father is really a father [if the mother is really a mother,] and the son a son, if the elder brother fulfills his position, and the younger fulfills his, if the husband is really a husband and the wife a wife, then the family is in order.” ■

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## Resumo

### *Reflexões sobre o triângulo edípico*

*A autora reflete sobre a problemática edípica no plano pessoal e no plano arquetípico. Discute ser essa problemática bifásica, ou seja, não só a ser enfrentada na infância, mas também na vida adulta. Discorre sobre os papéis a serem desenvolvidos, no curso normal, pelo(a) filho(a), pai e*

*mãe. Discute os desvios nesse desenvolvimento descrevendo aí a síndrome de retificação do triângulo. Aborda a problemática edípica como sendo uma vivência não restrita somente a família, mas que se estende para outras instituições e a família psicológica. ■*

Palavras-chave: Édipo, retificação do triângulo, parricídio, matricídio, filicídio, incesto, castração, família

## Resumen

### *Reflexiones sobre el triángulo edípico*

*La autora reflexiona sobre el problema edípico a nivel personal y arquetípico. Discute cómo este problema es bifásico, es decir, no sólo debe afrontarse en la infancia, sino también en la edad adulta. Discute los roles a desarrollar en el curso normal por el(la) niño(a), el padre y la madre.*

*Analiza las desviaciones en este desarrollo, describiendo el síndrome de rectificación triangular. Aborda el problema edípico como una experiencia que no se restringe únicamente a la familia, sino que se extiende a otras instituciones y a la familia psicológica. ■*

Palabras clave: Édipo, rectificación del triángulo, parricidio, matricidio, filicidio, incesto, castración, familia

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