

# De Verdringingstheorie, Beoordeeld Van Thomistisch Standpunt

**Rev Fr Willem Duynstee CSsR LLD**

**(1935)**

## The Displacement Theory Judged from a Thomistic Perspective

Translated from the original Dutch by

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**Translator's Note:** This translation is from the original 1935 Dutch lecture published in a collection of Fr Willem Duynstee's articles in an edition celebrating his 50th anniversary of priestly ordination. That volume was entitled *Verspreide Opstellen* (i.e., *Scattered Writings*), collected by his Redemptorist Confreres and was published by Romen & Zonen, Uitgevers, Roermond Maaseik, 1963, 8-23.

At first, readers unfamiliar with Thomas Aquinas' philosophical terms may find an initial reading of the text problematic. Other readers may comment that it is too wooden or verbatim. The translator's task is to present the author's ideas authentically for readers of a different language group. Care has been taken to communicate as accurately as possible the original concepts and terms of Fr Duynstee.

As with all spoken languages, the Dutch language undergoes nuances of vocabulary, frequent modern usage, and adaption to a world of change. Fr Duynstee presented his lecture over eighty years ago. This translation has endeavoured to remain faithful to his original presentation. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that minor changes and modified meanings need to be incorporated to address archaic nomenclature.

Secondly, there was the necessity of remaining as close as possible to the exact meaning of the philosophical terms and descriptions as Duynstee presented them in his lecture. This translation was scientific, and significant effort was spent pairing appropriate terms.

A third problem presented itself regarding the title of the lecture. Freud used words and gave them unique meanings that were novel. Displacement was one such word that marks a different understanding between Freud's terminology and that of Duynstee's knowledge of the same matter. However, he respects Freud's unique meaning in itself.

**Editor's Note:** Before Sigmund Freud, the word "displacement" in common usage meant that something was removed from its usual or proper place; or moved from its prior position or supplanted. It also could mean that something was expelled or forced to flee from home or homeland, as in the case of displaced persons. Displacement also had its specific meaning from philosophy and physics. Freud coined an additional psychological definition.

Since that time, his term has been used by Freudian psychoanalysis and modern behavioural psychology. In psychology, displacement can mean the redirection of emotion or impulse from its original object (e.g., an idea or person) to another (e.g., the displacement of one's feelings). It could also describe substituting another form of behaviour for what is usual or expected. This behaviour is especially if the response is nonadaptive or socially inappropriate (see Merriam-Webster).

"Displacement" for Fr Duynstee, as a philosopher, lawyer and moralist, was a philosophical alternative to the Freudian explanation of psychological repression. Instead, Duynstee emphasized an elucidation of repression based on Aristotle and Aquinas. Whereby reason, and therefore the will, is overcome by emotion, against its knowledge?

Aquinas stated that this can happen: firstly by way of distraction; secondly, by way of opposition; and thirdly due to a bodily transmutation (i.e., the body reacts and changes materially in conformity with and in proportion to the movement of the sensitive appetite, just as in everything matter is proportionate to form, See *Summa Theologiae*, [I-II, q.37, a.4](#)). In this way, the reason is somehow fettered or displaced from exercising its governing action freely. An emotion has drawn reason to judge in particular, against the knowledge it has in general or universally. Thus the governing ability of the intellect and the will is hindered in its free guidance of the sensitive appetite (see *ST*, [I-II, q.76, aa.3-4](#)). Subsequently, not only does

one emotion displace another unnaturally, but all future potential reasonable governance of emotion(s) concerning suchlike particular objects is similarly displaced, ‘impeded,’ or buried alive (*ST I-II, q.77, aa.1-2*).

Duynstee understood: 1. The displacing action of the repressing emotion(s) (e.g., fear or daring or both) is due to mistaken usefulness or harmfulness judgments made by the cogitative power (i.e., particular reason); 2. Whereby a healthy but unacceptable emotion (e.g., *desire, anger, etc.*) is displaced or repressed (i.e., *buried alive*) by the repressing emotion (i.e., *fear or daring, assertive emotions*); and 3. The sensitive appetite by repressing aroused emotion(s) (e.g., *pleasurable emotions*) thwarts or displaces their potential for appropriate reasonable governance by the intellect and will (i.e., *universal reason*). The displacement of naturally healthy emotions from obtaining proper direction by the higher faculties because of emotional repression fundamentally interested Fr Duynstee. His displacement theory scientifically explains repression from philosophy and differently from psychoanalytic theory. Hence Duynstee’s title and the content of his essay: “Displacement Theory Judged from a Thomistic Viewpoint”.

The Dutch word “*verdringing*” means crowding out or displacing (*verdringen* v.t., crowding out. Fernand G. Reinier, Dutch-English and English-Dutch Dictionary, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd. Broadway House, Carter Lane, London, 1972, 291). But remove the “*ing*”, and you get *verdring* which means repressing. The verb, *verdringen*: crowding out, press out, or thrust out of a small space, e.g., “The weeds crowd out the flowers”, or force out, displace - cause to move, usually with force or pressure, e.g., “the war-displaced the refugees”. The term displacement is sound concerning Aquinas’ explanation of how reason and will are crowded out or impeded from their rightful place of the natural governance of the repressed concupiscible emotions.

The human person’s “sensitive appetite surpasses that of other animals by reason of a certain excellence consisting in its natural aptitude to obey the reason” (i.e., *ST I-II, q.74, a.3, r.1*). If Fr Duynstee wanted to mirror Freud, he could have just written *verdring* (repress). Still, he wrote *verdringing* (i.e., crowding out or displacement). In Freudian psychology, displacement (i.e., German: *verschiebung*, means to shift or move) is an unconscious defense mechanism. The mind substitutes either a new aim or a new object for goals felt in their original form to be dangerous or unacceptable. According to Freudian psychoanalytic theory, displacement is when persons shift their impulses from an unacceptable object to a more acceptable or less threatening target.

The audience to whom Fr Duynstee addressed his lecture were mature philosophers, trained academics, or experienced pastors. Duynstee presumed a philosophical grounding concerning those gathered to hear him. Hence, for readers less familiar with Fr Duynstee’s explanation and terms, some elucidations and editorial annotations are provided within the original text in [square brackets and *italics*]. Most of these additions are proper terms as found in philosophical psychology. Other notes are given by way of example and clarification. For a helpful understanding of a [Philosophical and Psychological Schema](#) of the Human Person, click [here](#).

# The Displacement Theory Judged from a Thomistic Perspective

## Introduction<sup>†</sup>

We may presume what is known about Freud's understanding of repression. Certain tendencies [*i.e.*, [Id](#)] arise in a person, which are at odds with their moral understanding (censure) [*i.e.*, [Superego](#)]; through the conflict which exists as a result of it, they are displaced; displaced, in fact, in the unconscious intellectual sphere [*i.e.*, [Ego](#)]. Here they continue to exist, and in certain situations show themselves in emotionally disordered expressions [*i.e.*, *obsessive thoughts and compulsive acts*], through which they seek compensation for not yielding to that which in reality they craved [*i.e.*, *Id*]. The cure is: making conscious the displaced feeling and sublimating it [*i.e.*, [Psychoanalysis](#)]; *i.e.* redirecting it to a higher, permitted purpose [*i.e.*, *Freudian 'displacement'*].

It is not our intention to criticize the details of Freud's doctrine, but rather [to glean] what truth may be found in his thought processes, when we place ourselves in a Thomistic perspective. As a result, it will appear, that the insights of Freud on this point, provided they are differently formulated, and more clearly expressed, contain a great deal, which in our psychological understanding can be fully explained and easily accepted.

## I

In the human soul, as is known, we need to distinguish two significant areas: the intellectual [*faculties*] and the sensual [*powers*]; leaving the third area – the vegetative, outside of consideration.

The intellectual area is that part of the human psychic life, by which the human person is characterized as human. Here is found the knowing capacity, the intellect [*i.e.*, *faculty of cognition*], and the striving capacity responding to the intellect: the will [*i.e.*, *faculty for free choice*], with freedom as its essential characteristic.

In this higher part of the human soul, the person finds the spiritual motives: essentially, there is the foundation of religion, of moral attitudes, etc.

Belonging to this spiritual, intellectual part of the person is found the area of mindful living, of knowledge and feeling or inclination. This area [*i.e.*, *the judgments formed by the cogitative sense power's ability to acquire and collate data from the external and internal senses*] is also found amongst the animals, although with the human person this area, through interconnection with the spiritual soul, is strongly influenced by the intellectual, hence it cannot be positioned as being in one continuum with animal life.

In this sensual area are found, just as in the spiritual, knowledge and striving capacities. Concrete-sensible objects are observed by the knowledge capacity [*i.e.*, *the cogitative power, or particular reason*]; the sense-life towards these objects is directed by the striving capacity [*i.e.*, *sensitive appetite; concupiscible and assertive emotions*]. Usually, there is a distinction between these two meaningful striving capacities; the capacity for pleasure [*i.e.*, *concupiscible emotions*] which has the object of the sensible good and evil as such, and the irascible striving capacity [*i.e.*, *assertive emotions*] which has as its object the sensible good or bad in so far as it is difficult to achieve. To the pleasure-seeking capacity belong the affections [1],<sup>1</sup> of pleasure, desire, and enjoyment (*amor, desiderium et delectatio*) in relation to the sensual good, and that of hate, flight or aversion and sadness (*odium, fuga et tristitia*) in relation to sensual evil; to the irascible striving capacity belong the qualities of trust/hope and hopelessness or despair (*spes et desperatio*) in relation to the good object, that of courage and fear (*audacia et timor*) in relation to the bad object.

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<sup>†</sup> The Introductory comments were addressed to the Netherlands Association of Thomistic Philosophy, in 1935.

<sup>1</sup> We make no distinctions between the word: affect, passion, inclination, striving, etc.; we intend all these words to mean the same: an inclination of the sensual life.

Connected to the striving capacity is a third capacity related to the sensual area [*i.e.*, *anger (ira)*]: the activating capacity, which readies the person to reach or to flee [*i.e.*, *fight or flight*] from the objects of the striving capacity; and is, therefore, an unmissable ingredient for the perfection of the sensual experience.

What then is the natural, normal relationship of the sensual to the mental area? It is this: the sensual area certainly has its own knowledge [*i.e.*, *the internal senses*] and its own striving capacity [*i.e.*, *sensitive appetite*], but these are actually subject to the guidance, and to the rule of the mental area of understanding and will. The human person is after all human because of his intellect and the will that is subject to it; hence every human action must necessarily be an action determined by the understanding and the will.

That means that it cannot be otherwise, since the sensual in a person, who is a psychic whole and not an accidental combination of independent capacities, must naturally be ruled by the understanding and the will. Applied to the striving capacity, this means that the inclinations of the sensual emotional life, by its nature, by force of its nature, can be controlled by the person through understanding and will. St Thomas expresses this in the following way (*ST I-II, q.74, a.3, r.1*): ‘*Appetitus sensitivus in nobis ... natus est obedire rationi*’, ‘the sensual striving within us ... is by nature ordered to obey reason’. This control, however, is not of the order that the feelings entirely obey reason, as Thomas together with Aristotle, state (*ST I-II, q.17, a.7(c)*) [2].<sup>2</sup> This would not be possible because the feelings by nature, spontaneously follow the sensual experiences even before the intellect can begin to exercise its controlling influence, so that of necessity as soon as the sensible object is present, the feeling arises in response. But reason can direct the feeling in its development and can, if considered appropriate, allow it to work itself out, or, in case it does not judge the development of the feeling as reasonable, reason can prevent its satisfaction.

What consequences are there from the result of this guidance of reason? That naturally – and this conclusion is of the highest importance – a rational adjustment of the sensual feelings can never lead to disharmony [*i.e.*, *an emotional repressive disorder*]. Without a doubt: the nature of the human passion [*i.e.*, *emotion*] seeks an adjustment/ruling from reason; when she receives it, she then possesses her complete natural solution and satisfaction; as a result, there can be no ‘talk’ of psychic disharmony nor of an ongoing conflict. On the contrary, as was hinted before, the sensual emotional life, because of the refusal by reason to give sensual gratification, will not always obey immediately, and for a short or long time will keep striving, but following its nature, it must eventually comply with reason and come to rest. The more immediate the affections follow awareness, the longer this affection will remain.

Pleasure and displeasure are actually longer-lasting than desire and aversion; in other words, a person can find it easier to place a desire or aversion subject to obey reason, than a sympathy or an antipathy, and the motivating force that urges towards fulfilment, than the desire or aversion. In general, it could even be said that the motivating force as a rule, is rather entirely subject to the directing of reason. What we can add – but it does not belong to our subject to fully explore – that it is certain that after a shorter or longer time, through rational control restfulness returns, so that rational governing can never be the source of psychic disharmony, nor of residual psychic conflict.

So, when psychoanalysis points to the existence of a conflict as a result of religion or morality [*i.e.*, *superego*], which acts as censure, by which the feeling is displaced, then this is completely incorrect; religious and moral interpretations are actually perceived as intellectual motives at work (which they in fact are). When a person possesses religious and moral norms, in this case, these norms empower his nature with rational control over passion; then human nature recovers its natural peacefulness.

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<sup>2</sup> Aquinas says, ‘The reason governs the irascible and concupiscible not by a despotic supremacy, which is that of a master over its slave; but by a politic and royal supremacy, whereby the free are governed, who are not wholly subject to command’ (*ST I-II, q.17, a.7(c)*). Duynstee notes, ‘We do not consider here to what extent natural controllability has changed as a result of original sin.’

## II

Must we conclude that Freud's teachings in their essential details be cast aside? We do not believe so because even if a conflict cannot exist under a purely rational control of feelings, that conflict does indeed exist when the feeling is opposed not by reason but by another feeling. [*I.e., Here the word feeling denotes emotions in conflict. For every emotion has a corresponding feeling, but nor every feeling is an emotion.*]

It can happen for example, and it happens quite often, that when a sensual tendency arises, immediately a contrary tendency arises about the same sensual feeling. For example, take the common case, where in a scrupulous person a sexual urge arises [*i.e., desire*], which causes the release of intense anxiety [*i.e., fear*]. What would the relationship be now between these two feelings [*i.e., emotions*]?

Understandably one passion cannot be ruled by the other, as happens with the reason; since the passions stand parallel to each other, as also their concrete objects stand parallel to each other; one can make room for the other, but naturally it is not possible for one to control or lead the other. [*I.e., It is a disorder for the emotion of fear to try to rule/govern sexual desire. The assertive emotion of fear by nature is subservient the concupiscible emotion of desire*].

But if the leading or control referred to in this example, cannot occur [*i.e., under reason*], still, one passion, independent of rational control, can hide the other from consciousness. It can then wholly deflect awareness from the object of that passion (through anxiety or a severe feeling of stress), which then has the effect that the first inclination is no longer consciously retained and seemingly disappears. [*I.e., sexual desire is psychologically and unconsciously buried while fear increasingly dominates the disposition of the person with anxiety; namely, emotional fear-based repressive disorder*].

In reality that passion [*i.e., desire*] does not disappear, at least not in the sense that it comes to restfulness, and no longer would exercise its effect. That passion has not, in this case, found its natural release, neither in achieving its concrete sensual object nor in receiving rational governing. The passion remains in a position of tension, of the tendency to its object in the hidden emotional life, however, without the subject being reflectively aware of its tendency.

It is through this process that the residual psychic conflict is created in the emotional life [*i.e., emotional repressive disorder*]: consciously, one strives only towards that which the dominant passion [*i.e., fear*] has as its object [*i.e., a fear of sexual sin*]; unconsciously, there is a tendency towards the displaced object [*i.e., of sexual desire and pleasurable satisfaction*].

And this tendency [*i.e., the procreative natural inclination*] continues to urge. We shall see later how this occurs. What matters for the moment is to establish that, when in the emotional life one passion is eliminated by another apart from reason, there always arises an abnormal situation, in which the displaced passion [*i.e., desire*] disappears from consciousness, but in fact remains hidden in a tense state and continues to influence [*e.g., repressed individuals can manifest an abiding demeanor of stress, become flirtatious, sexually preoccupied, even immaturely fixated*].

We now have to respond to a number of questions. First of all: how can such an irrational control occur? Next: what are the consequences of this activity in the spiritual [*i.e., intellectual*] realm? Finally: which passions come to notice in relation to displacement (passive and active)?

## III

First of all: how can such an irrational control occur? We should distinguish between two examples: 1. The case where the passion, in general, is not rationally controllable; and 2. The case in which the passion is itself intelligently manageable, but because of the intrusion of another passion, it is not under the control of

reason. In this last example, there is, after all, no rational guidance present, in so far as the passion is not actively subject to reason.

To begin with the first example, we must for a moment first return to what was hinted at before: the question: how far is the passion rationally controllable?

Speaking generally, we saw that the emotional life is subject to reason and will and should fully obey, but this subjugation does not go far enough, so that the arising feelings, the deep underlying expressions, and affections of the motivating force, immediately bend towards a deviant act of the will.

Only gradually will restfulness settle. Should one still want to achieve an *immediate* subjugation, then one sets a goal that reason cannot accomplish; if one tries to achieve this with his feelings [*i.e.*, an *assertive emotion*], then the result is a conflict as previously described. The most common example in this matter is the case of the young man or young woman, who because of a wrong understanding, consider having a sexual feeling as such already as sinful and try with all their power to go against it and to displace it. In the case of those who desire to live an ascetic life, one sometimes finds himself in the same situation in relation to feelings of self-love and self-pleasure [*e.g.*, *over zealously prohibiting sub-sensory drives of nutrition and procreation*]. All those affections cannot be avoided, cannot be immediately held back and disappear; but if one tries to achieve it forcefully, then the only result is an illusory victory and an unconscious activity.

But there are people, whose control over their emotions is generally weaker, and they have greater need to express their emotions and not permitting these expressions leads to psychic imbalance; as a result with these people, the displacement process will be more readily activated.

We can nominate children and neurotic [*i.e.*, *emotionally disordered*] people. The intellectual life of children grows slower than their emotional life. Only as years pass, people gain control over their lower emotional life. In the beginning, a child is wholly bound to his emotional life; advancing in stages this bondage increasingly diminishes and the possibility of control by reason and will increases. Only, once the person is psychically mature, is this process completed. From this process flows that in the years of childhood/youth the emotions, in a noticeably lesser measure than of adults, would be ruled by reason; not only the primary feelings, but also the more remote ones, and even the implementation of the motivations would persist in more or less degree, without the will being able to intervene between the two. Hence it is more likely with children and young people, for there to be the possibility of an irrational control, of the displacement by another feeling. It is, therefore, entirely understandable, that psychoanalysts have so often found a conflict from childhood as a reason for the cause of neurosis.

The same defective control is found with psychically unstable people, under which understanding we gather together here all deviations in the emotional life, whether you want to call them clinical neurosis or psychopathy or psychasthenia or neurasthenia or whatever. After all, they all agree on this: that particular inclinations of the emotional life in these people are more irascible than normal. Now, a lesser control responds to this unusual sensitivity, and therefore also a greater possibility of conflict and displacement.

To this can also be attributed, that these difficulties occur very often especially with these people and are particularly strong in their expressions and effects. If there are *children* with an oversensitive nature, then the pre-disposition is naturally the greatest.

These comments refer to the first example, where, as we saw before, displacement can occur; when for instance, the passion cannot naturally be controlled but the person wants to achieve this control. There is also the situation, that the passion itself is under control, but breaks out from under this control, because, loose from the *imperium rationis* (*the control of reason*), another passion is connected and begins to exercise a displacing task. This can occur especially in the case of people whose displacing passions (*e.g.*, fear and courage) are too irascible. Because even in these cases apply the words: *quod passiones praeveniunt mentem* – these also must be controlled by reason. For example, take a person who has a strong leaning towards fear

(or anxiety) which is expressed in the moral order. In such a person, when a feeling arises that stimulates the fear; sometimes this feeling has done its work before reason can take over; or when the stimulation is not so severe, when the will tries to rule the feeling, the fear will strive to reach its goal, and prevent the pure rational control. Again, the result is displacement, and all that follows.

#### IV

How does such a psychic situation develop? What consequences follow displacement? To answer this question, we have to distinguish between the consequences on the part of the displaced passion [*i.e.*, *passive desire*] and those on the part of the displacing passion [*i.e.*, *active fear or daring*].

To begin, what shall be the activity of the displaced passion? As we explained before, the first consequence of displacement is that there arises in the psyche a tension, directed at achieving the natural goal of the displaced passion [*i.e.*, *the natural need for reasonable direction toward or away from the desired object*]. An unconscious, indistinct tendency arises in the emotions towards the object of the displaced feeling.

Let us take a simple and frequently occurring case. A sexual tendency is displaced. From this arises an indistinct, unconscious, and uncontrollable persistent force precisely towards the sexual arena. It goes without saying that this is not observable in just one act of displacement, but that displacement, in fact, continues to exert itself; hence the unconscious tendency becomes stronger over time and expresses itself in the end in a very emotional way. The young man, for example, who in his puberty has displaced natural expressions of curiosity in the sexual area, later gets an unexplained strong urge to view nude objects or images of naked objects; and if he accidentally happens to get his hands on a magazine, in which he suspects to find nude photos, it is practically impossible for him to stay away from it, despite all his resolutions and decisions [*i.e.*, *displaced/repressed sexual curiosity becomes an unconscious preoccupation, an increasing conscious obsession, which develops into compulsive acting out*].

Another example. A girl, as a child, had a strong need for affection from her mother. The mother did not give affection to the children; she was understanding but cold. The child considered this need for affection as a weakness and became ‘strong’ and displaced that need. Later, that girl has a greater than normal outgoing tendency, to be loved and to be fondled, which she finds extremely annoying; it is after all not ‘mature’ and terribly childish. As a result, there is further self-condemnation with all that goes with it. [*I.e.*, *while not essentially a repressive disorder, Duynstee identified what would later be called the emotional deprivation disorder*].

Because this is the peculiarity of the case, despite the fact that it is psychologically explainable, the matter becomes more complicated the longer it lasts. The displacing passion continues all the time to ‘displace’, and therefore fights against all the expressions of the displaced passion, as soon as they come to the surface. But gradually those expressions slowly become so forceful that they will not allow themselves to be displaced; a new conflict begins.

The religious person who has forcefully displaced all arising sexual tendencies over twenty or thirty years, and has used all available energy, to the point of binding his hands, reaches the point, despite himself, of masturbation [*i.e.*, *highlighted here are elements of the emotional energy-based repressive disorder*]. He sees it as an act for which he is to be blamed, a serious feeling of guilt [*i.e.*, *psychological, not moral, guilt*] and with it a great sense of inferiority arises – which then further spreads like an oil slick and can lead to all sorts of consequences: shyness, despondency, self-loathing, sometimes the urge to self-harm or suicide.

Alternatively: people put all the blame on God. They have done all that could be done, despite hopeless attempts, and still everything has gone wrong; why then has God ordained it this way? Result: aversion, sometimes even hate, towards God which are not only limited to thoughts and feelings but can also express themselves in action, e.g., in relation to the Eucharist. We could multiply these examples tenfold. In each



case, the development is different of course because no person is psychically completely the same as another.

There is, however, one particular developmental stage which we want to mention especially because it has led to Freud's doctrine about symbolism in neurosis [*i.e., the process of mentally representing objects and experiences through the use of symbols*]. We discovered that ultimately the displaced passion [*i.e., sexual desire*] continues to strive towards its own objective [*i.e., venereal pleasure*], and this striving continues to be restrained by the displacing passion [*i.e., fear*]. But it can happen, that this inclination is seeking a way out (entirely unconsciously of course) in an object which is not the one that is forbidden, but does have a certain bond, a certain likeness – philosophically one might perhaps express it as sharing something of the ratio formalis of the object [*i.e., the essential attributes of matter as they appear in the mind*]. Once we had a case like that where someone had a strong emotional inclination to see and touch the shoes of young men, this preference, in the end, being a surrogate of a similar inclination towards male genitals, which the person in question had in his childhood years but had displaced very forcefully.

This can express itself powerfully in dreams. In dreams are manifested to a high degree the happenings in the emotional aspects of a person similar to what happens outside the control of the intellect and will. That is why the images of our dreams and fantasies can teach us frequently about what is happening within us, but which we would rather not wish to know consciously. It is possible for someone to express in dreams the displacing passion as explained earlier. If the passion is strong enough in the dream it will also prevent the appearance of its own object but allow a similar object to be admitted. This is what Freud calls the symbolism of dreams, a phenomenon, in our opinion, like symbolism in general, not only is it factually certain, but is also psychologically fully explainable. It is naturally too extreme for us to approve all psychoanalytical *Traumdeutung* (*Dream interpretation*); there is some danger that the analyst will give his own *Deutung* (*Interpretation*), especially with sexual symbols. If one presumes that all conflicts have a sexual basis, one arrives at a completely wrong, altogether a priori explanation, and one sees sexual symbols where there are none. But that is no reason for the kernel of the doctrine to be less true or acceptable.

The manner of the development of the displaced passion is different in each person as mentioned before. Some consequences, however, nearly always present themselves. The first is a certain psychic restlessness, which is quite explainable because there is an unconscious situation of tension. It can express itself in a range of ways, perhaps in very innocent and unimportant matters; in serious situations it will lead to a general nervousness.

More typical is the oversensitivity on the points related to the displaced passion. The displacement has on that specific point of the emotions imposed an abnormal tension. If that displaced emotion were to be touched by another circumstance, then there is an immediate release of that abnormal tension, therefore an emotional reaction which usually does not relate to the stimulus. This explains what Freud has named – the term is at present common property – emotional complexes [*i.e., A complex is a core pattern of emotions, memories, perceptions, and wishes in the personal unconscious organized around a common theme, such as power or status*]. For example, someone happens to commit a small sin, not even deliberately, one of the sins which the Bible mentions where the just person sins seven times a day. Objectively there is no reason to worry about it any further, but the person is totally overwhelmed by it, considers himself a big sinner, wants to give up on everything, and considers himself damned, etc. Source of the problem: excessive guilt feeling as a result of unresolved conflicts from childhood.

Another person is unbelievably irritable on the point of honor; every moment he feels offended, passed by, put in his place, while no one thinks of doing anything like it; a third person, for example, is excessively emotional in sexual matters and has strong feelings when talking to a girl in ordinary circumstances. When you begin to analyze such cases, you would almost certainly find a deformed development on that point, an accumulation of earlier, unresolved difficulties.

You can say in general – as long as you are not dealing with psychopaths in whom the emotional life is often much too active – that always when the reaction is not commensurate with the stimulus, there are deeper grounds present; then you would then have to consider the consequences of earlier displacement.

The manner in which the unresolved conflicts develop depends moreover entirely on the character of the person and external circumstances. The more important is one's character (or bent). The more sensitive and the more nervous a person is, the more prominent the effects appear. You cannot, therefore, conclude from the existence of similar deviations, the presence of a psychic inferiority; on the contrary, frequently these difficulties arise in people who combine a very good emotional life with a sharp intellect and a firm direction towards the moral good, but for that reason needed very careful guidance, which unfortunately, all too often, was lacking.

Particularly acute is the expressing of conflicts, when they occur in psychopathically inclined people, with whom, as we have just explained, by nature their emotional life is already quite vehement and less controllable under the higher part [*i.e.*, *right reason*].

In particular people, you can also get intense bodily symptoms. In view of the connection between the soul and the body, this cannot cause wonder when this is assessed from a 'hylomorphic' point of view [*i.e.*, *Aristotle's philosophical theory, which conceives every being as a compound of primary matter and one actual substantial form*]. Specific displaced desires will try to express themselves unconsciously in physical actions and be symbolized in physical conditions. Psychogenic paralysis, for example, can be counted among them [*i.e.*, *conversion reactions often indicate a hysterical emotional repressive disorder*].

Psychic conflicts in youth are of the greatest importance. They can happen very easily, because there is little or no consideration of his own rational guidance in a child, and the guidance of the parents is also often lacking in reasoning; whilst on the other hand, the struggle with an inclination considered by a child to be wrong or not permitted, will occur with not much effect. Moreover, the development in youth is often profound and comprehensive, because the inclinations in a child are still relatively undifferentiated so that these displacements will later exercise influence on a much greater area of the intellectual life than if they had occurred at an older age.

As we already mentioned, according to Freud, all neuroses have their origin in childhood years, and as he said, in the very first years of childhood. How far this is correct is not for us to judge; that is a purely psychiatric question of fact; it seems possible to us from a psychological perspective that a conflict in the earliest stage of life can achieve its goal, when for example, one of the primary inclinations of the child is stymied. If there has to occur a properly named 'displacement', or simply not being satisfied is sufficient, to explain an influence on the later intellectual life, we leave for the time being.[3]<sup>3</sup>

A significant and typical result of displacement in youth is the beginning of 'infantilism'. Passion/anger is developing in a child; if this were un-naturally impeded, then the natural growth remains retarded, and the person remains at that stage of his emotional life, where he was at the beginning of the displacement [*i.e.*,

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<sup>3</sup> According to the orthodox psychoanalysts, the Oedipus complex lies at the root of all neuroses (*i.e.*, emotional disorders), which is frequently experienced, in their opinion, in every human being. See "The Oedipus complex forms the nucleus of all neuroses" (*i.e.* "Der Oedipuscomplex bildet den Kern aller Neurosen" (Nunberg, *Allgemeine Neurosenlehre auf psychoanalytischer Grundlage*, p. 48). In the sense, in which it is usually taken, the Oedipus complex, based on the sexual tendency, it seems to us, is generally not acceptable, because at that age naturally, the sexual urge is not yet developed. It is of course already present potentially, but whether this aptitude would already be able to have an effect as Freud says seems highly unlikely, except perhaps in the case of the psychopathically inclined individuals. Perhaps rather, the solution must be sought in another direction. We think, here is the basic fault of Freud, who does not distinguish between sensual love in general, and sexual love in particular. It is obvious, that the process of the first affection and aversion of the child will be in relation to the parents, as the natural bond, because it is with parents that the child has the most contact, hence the child reacts most to the parent's feelings. That this bonding can lead to unconscious conflicts is plausible. In this connection, we point out what Nunberg (*ibid.*, p. 48) also remarks, that there exists both a positive and a negative form of the Oedipus complex, and that the purely positive is rare. See also his comment that often significant others act in the place of parents; *viz.* Geschwister and Pflegepersonen (p. 49).

*emotional repressive disorders where anger is judged as an unacceptable social expression often result in an emotional depressive disorder*]. Many sexual abnormalities, for example, can be explained because of this. It can even happen that a great part or nearly one's whole emotional life remains infantile [i.e., *where psychosexual immaturity and fixations abound, e.g., same-sex attraction disorder*].

Here then, in broad outlines, is explained the working that a displaced passion can have on the spiritual life. In addition, you get the growth of the displacing passion, if you wish to have a complete overview of the development of the displacement process. The displacing passion has been able to proceed, without being hindered by reason, even frequently supported, and encouraged [*by it*]. As a result, that the displacing passion will become stronger, and likely receives the disposition for a new urging. However, this is a disposition, again functioning outside of reason 'praeter ordinem rationis' [i.e., *beyond the order of reason*].

The urge to displace, to express it this way, becomes stronger the longer it lasts, and shall make itself count more and more. Slowly she spreads her influence, first over the area in which the original displacing occurred, then into bordering areas, until in the end the whole spiritual life can be ruled. To take a simple example, displacement through anxiety is one effect, e.g., a sexual feeling can cause in the end an all-embracing scrupulosity. It is self-evident that in addition there will appear symptoms of the displaced passion [i.e., *the activity of the repressing emotion tends to grow and spread by means of intensity strengthening the process, and via expansion towards other objects*].

## V

Finally, we can ask the question, what are the emotions that can be displaced, and on the other side, which passion can put into place the displacing activity?

In relation to the first question, we wish to give a very general answer: every feeling in the emotional life and appetites. [*Secondly*] After all, in respect to every striving, a contrary passion can arise which irrationally prevents its natural development.

Displacement can, therefore, take place both in respect to the passions *circa bonum* (about the good [i.e., *love desire, joy*]) as well as in respect of the passions *circa malum* (about the bad [i.e., *hate, aversion, sadness*]). The first takes place most frequently, which is to be expected because the primary object of all striving is the *bonum* (the good). In this way, you can have displacement in respect to the *passio amoris* (pleasure, affection), in respect to the *passio desiderii* (desire/lust), and in respect to *passio delectationis* or *gaudii* (delight or joy).

Affection is displaced, for example, by a young woman who from fear feels duty-bound to enter the convent, while at the same time she loves a young man very much; or on the part of a young man who displaces his sexual emotions of desire with force; or [*has displaced*] joy on the part of a child who from pure fear towards a strict father, does not dare to release any expression of enjoyment.

It is apparent – in view of the close links between the *passiones amoris* and *desiderii* – that the displacement of both these feelings often goes together.

However, displacement is also possible with the *passiones circa malum* [i.e., *emotions about evil*]. Against a natural aversion for evil, another feeling can arise which displaces that natural inclination in an unreasonable way. The religious child who has a feeling of aversion to her father, who is strict, or to a mother who prefers another child, will condemn this attitude in herself (to such antipathies), and as such an antipathy should not exist, it must be put aside; the child does love the father and mother, it must love them – the aversion has disappeared, but it is displaced and works itself out via a side path.

The novice who with full zeal devotes himself to the spiritual life and hears that he must love suffering and that for him things that are bitter, must be sweet, he begins to approve of every humiliation, and long for it; he succeeds in eliminating all his natural feelings, they no longer play a role for him, in appearance, he is just like the saints, about whom he reads in ascetical books; but later he becomes totally over-wrought and is someone who cannot bear even one harsh word, nor one disappointment. The Novice Master shakes his head over him; he had been such an exemplary novice, after all, he had never seen a young man with such willpower [e.g., an emotional energy-based repressive disorder]!

In the end, for all of that, there are enough examples of the displacement of sadness; everyone knows, how badly it turns out when one tries to replace a buried sorrow with forced happiness. Do not all sober psychologies say: it is much better to have a good cry to bring relief?

Usually, the feelings of the concupiscible striving capacity are displaced, but it is not exceptional for it to occur with the irascible striving capacity; we know of a case, where on appearance, a feeling of fear was forcefully displaced and continued to work itself out in unnatural ways.

So far it has been about the *type* of passions which are subject to displacement. If one were to ask what the objects of the displaced feelings could be, then we must again reply in a general sense that this can be any random sensual object. Usually, however, they will be objects, which are tied together with two great natural strivings in a person, the inclination to self-preservation, and to procreation, *de conservatio individui et speciei*.

You have to view these two natural inclinations to their full extent and meaning. The drive for self-preservation not only includes what the word itself points to, the continuity of the human being, but also the development and full maturing of the person into an independent, fully mature, personality. Hence, everything that inhibits that development and maturing of the person can become a source of conflict and result in psychic deformity and psychic retardation. In this area lie, for example, all those conflicts which grow out of the clash of a child with a too strict and dominant father; of the weak or fearful young man confronting his naïve, severe environment.

The procreative urge also needs to be taken in a broader context, with all its inclinations and strivings, which in some way or other are related to or are linked with it, including therefore the need for love, for enjoyment, for psychic association with others, etc. It goes without saying that you have to take account of the development of the procreative urge, which in the beginning is undifferentiated, but slowly gets its normal-full expression [*i.e., the natural inclination for heterosexual procreation and the rearing of children*]. Only a complete overview of what is connected to this procreative urge can provide one with the insight into the extent of cases in which these matters of displacement can occur.

From the discussion so far, it follows that according to our opinion, both psychoanalysis, as well as individual-psychologies, suffer from a bias, when they want to reduce all conflicts either to the sexual sphere, or to the development of one's personality and 'Wille zur Macht' (Will to Power, Friedrich Nietzsche.). There is no reason, however, to limit conflicts to one of either of the main passions of the human emotional life.

## Conclusion

Now, when we summarize and review the results of our reflections, we conclude that in the teaching on displacement, if well understood and well explained, there is much to tie in with Thomistic teaching.

It seems to us that this insight is of the highest importance both for spiritual direction and for education and formation, both therapeutic – and perhaps more importantly – preventative.

In spiritual direction, it will enable the understanding of quite a few situations, and it will at least lead to the position that you no longer go blindly past all sorts of difficulties.

It will (stimulate) ‘apprendre a douter’ (i.e., learn to doubt) – to use a phrase here of my old teacher, prof. G. A. van Hamel, to question, to reflect more deeply into matters, and to carefully assess, what is hidden in the spiritual life. Much can then be resolved and be brought to peace.

For education and formation, it will teach the necessity for an understanding of rational guidance. It can be seen what tragic results can be produced in children and youth from the cold, harsh, unreasonable strictness of parents, and from too much intensity and exertion, for example, in being determined and strong-willed, which in such cases is nothing more than irrational-sensual emotions, deriving from too anxious a sexual upbringing due to the lack of timely and correct instruction. And it is from this insight that change, and improvement will the more readily originate.

However, this study will have to be continued and extended. In this introduction, we have only provided a general survey, but there is still so much to be studied and explained in these matters. For example, we think of different complexes, of transference, of theories of sexuality, of sublimation, of the development of the passions, and at the philosophical level, of the distinction and connecting relationships of passions and motivations, of the activity and meaning of ‘aestimativa’ and ‘cogitativa’ [*i.e., estimative sense and the cogitative power, or practical reason; collates sense data though in a less perfect manner than intellectual cognition; ST I, q.78, a.4*], and of the link between the areas of feeling and will. We are only pointing out: the very fruitful terrain for collaboration between the psychiatrist and the speculative philosopher.

Through this collaboration, Thomistic philosophy, we believe, would be rendered a great service. Because, if it desires to obtain full recognition in our time, then it must not limit itself to repeating the thoughts of former times, and dispute what has been disputed for ages, but do again what Aristotle and Thomas did for their time: to connect with the facts which are offered by modern empirical sciences in such rich measure and then to put to the test the principles of these facts, and to further develop them on the basis of these facts.

Then, but only then, will Thomistic philosophy become acceptable again for the modern mind/spirit, and on its part could shed enormous light on modern science, so that it would be recognized again as what it truly is among the pure natural sciences: the queen and teacher of knowledge (*regina scientiarum et magistra*). ☩