

The Therapeutic Approach To Complexes Created By The Primary Drive Of Intense Desire (Prospatheia): An Introduction To Neptic Psychology

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Abstract:

This paper examines the concept of "prospatheia" and its relationship to the creation and management of psychological complexes, drawing on elements from both Neptic Theology and psychology. Prospatheia, as a powerful longing for connection, is considered a primary drive leading to emotional attachment and contributing to the formation of complexes. In psychology, complexes are interpreted as unconscious patterns that guide behavior, reinforcing dependence on external sources to fulfill fundamental emotional needs.

The approach of Neptic Theology proposes a therapeutic process that differs from the psychological acceptance or integration of complexes. Specifically, Neptic Psychology emphasizes the prevention of complex formation from childhood through training the individual to develop a more measured relationship with the material world, avoiding excessive pleasure. In adulthood, Neptic Psychology supports controlling prospatheia through the conscious avoidance of pleasure, which sustains dependence. Thus, the treatment of complexes involves three phases: prevention, pleasure control, and gradual weakening of the complexes.

Focusing on the abandonment complex, the paper illustrates how excessive reliance on security can transform into a fear of abandonment, leading to emotional insecurity and alienation from one's spiritual nature. Neptic Theology advocates for self-control and the avoidance of pleasure that reinforces complexes, thereby fostering an inner balance. This methodology differs from modern psychological methods, as it aims at the weakening rather than the acceptance of complexes, offering a unique framework for understanding the human soul and its relationship to the material world.

Key Word: *Neptic Psychology; drive; complex; prospatheia; therapy.*

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I. Introduction To Neptic Psychology

The modern person, especially when also a member of the Church, is characterized by specific attributes. They seek meaning and purpose in life, combining their trust in science with their faith in God. They strive to deepen their relationship with God, humanity, and the environment, seeking the ideal stance regarding their religious beliefs and scientific knowledge. They confront the ongoing changes and challenges of modern society, attempting to preserve their faith intact²⁸. This person is drawn to social justice and helping others, inspired by Christian values of love and charity^{17,8}.

In their daily effort to balance life in Christ with everyday demands, they often experience conflicting situations. They feel torn between their religious beliefs and the scientific discoveries that shape their life. This conflict may cause them doubts and insecurities^{37,32}, leading to both internal and external pressure. They intensely feel the pressure to align with their moral and spiritual values in a society that often promotes different standards and values²⁹. Balancing spiritual life with professional obligations and family demands can lead to stress and anxiety⁴².

To relieve the burden of daily challenges and the pressure to adapt to an ever-changing society and expanding scientific knowledge that increasingly governs more aspects of their life, the believer turns to parishes, monasteries, and various religious communities seeking spiritual guidance, solutions to their spiritual and psychological problems, and support. In these communities, they seek a framework of mutual support, faith reinforcement, and mental relief^{38,28}. They seek the help of spiritual fathers and priests for advice and guidance on matters of faith and daily life³⁴. They turn to studying theological texts and prayer to find inner peace and deepen their relationship with God and humanity^{3,36}. Many also seek help from professional psychologists who understand their religious dimension and attempt to provide support on psychological issues without disregarding their faith^{35,29}.

The daily struggles faced by Christians in their quest for a genuine spiritual and Christ-centered life, as well as a realistic life that considers scientific achievements and new social structures, the limitations exhibited by clergy in guiding the faithful, and psychologists who focus primarily on the worldly aspect of humanity, and the lack of self-awareness in modern individuals underscore the need for a systematic examination and understanding of the psychological experiences, functions, and mechanisms of people who wish to walk the path of salvation through the lenses of both Theology and Science. Consequently, utilizing the ascetic-Neptic experience for understanding the psychosomatic function of individuals who strive to follow Christ's commandments and live a fulfilled life in Christ in the modern world is now more essential than ever.

This study aims to bridge these two fields by creating a new scientific discipline: Neptic Psychology. Neptic Psychology aspires to become a new psychological approach that draws its fundamental perspectives on humanity from Neptic Theology, the branch of Orthodox Christian Theology that perceives humanity as a material-spiritual being and focuses on the healing of the soul through purification and enlightenment. More specifically, while traditional psychology scientifically examines human behavior, cognitive functions, and emotional states, viewing humanity as an expression shaped solely by worldly factors such as biological, social, and cultural influences, Neptic Psychology also aims at a scientific examination of human behavior, cognitive functions, and emotional states. However, it acknowledges that the psychosomatic human being is not merely a biological, psychological, and social entity defined solely by their material, social, and cultural dimensions. At the same time, it recognizes that humanity's spiritual nature and relationship with the spiritual and material world play a primary role in shaping a healthy psychological development and well-being. At the core of Neptic Psychology's scientific focus and practice is the understanding of humanity as a psychosomatic unity, comprising material (body, biological processes) and immaterial elements (mind, reason, consciousness), whose correct relationship ensures mental balance and individual and social well-being.

The aim of Neptic Psychology, therefore, is primarily the well-being of humanity through the prevention or restoration of harmony between its material and immaterial elements, thus restoring humanity to a state of "very good," and secondly, the achievement of healthy spiritual growth, aiming for deification by grace. Although the latter mainly concerns the faithful who, under the spiritual guidance of the Church's spiritual fathers, experience the truth and participate in the Church's sacraments with the goal of sanctification and participation in eternal life, Neptic Psychology can still provide valuable services by translating into contemporary psychological language the introspective observations of ascetics and sanctified fathers of the Church regarding the psychological functions and interactions between body and soul in their ascetic struggle. Just as the Fathers of the Church approached the terms they inherited from the philosophy of their time by stripping them of philosophical-metaphysical content and charging them with theological meaning, Neptic Psychology aspires to reverse this approach. It seeks to understand the psychological content of theological terms used by Neptic Theology, such as *nepsis* (*νήψη*), silence, self-control, heart, *prospatheia*, to compare it with the psychological content of equivalent terms in modern psychology, thus bringing the profound psychological knowledge of the Church Fathers into the modern era and creating a new psychological approach to contemporary humanity based on the truths of Orthodox Christian tradition. The significant contribution of Neptic Psychology, therefore, lies in its scientific approach to investigate, understand, and manage the psychosomatic balance and well-being of the modern material-spiritual human being.

Neptic Theology as a source of core principles for Neptic Psychology

Neptic Theology is a branch of Orthodox Christian theology that focuses on deep spiritual experience and the inner purity of the individual. The term "neptic" derives from the verb "*νήφω* (*nipho*)" which means "to be sober, to be attentive to oneself." Hesychasm, or spiritual vigilance, is essential for achieving inner purity and union with God. The practice of hesychasm is not only a spiritual exercise but also a daily necessity for the believer seeking union with God. By combining spiritual vigilance with unceasing prayer, hesychasm provides a framework for attaining inner peace, self-awareness, and spiritual purity. Therefore, the concept of hesychasm, along with constant vigilance and purity of mind and heart, forms the foundation of Neptic Theology and spiritual life in general.

Neptic Theology primarily refers to the practice of silence and unceasing prayer as expressed in the monastic tradition of the Orthodox Church¹⁷. It centers on the experiential knowledge of God through heart-centered prayer and silence, allowing the person to transcend the passions and enter divine grace through introspection and observation of their psychic functions. The fundamental principles of Neptic Theology identify three main states in which the psychosomatic human being may exist: the state at creation, where the soul and body were in harmonious relation; the "fall," where there is a disruption in the functions of the soul and a reversal in its relations with the body, leading to the emergence of passions and decay; and the "path to salvation," where, through ascetic struggle, support from the Church, and the Holy Spirit, one proceeds toward cleansing the heart of passions, restoring the balance between soul and body, illuminating the mind, and filling it with spiritual gifts (virtues), leading to deification. These three phases constitute the fundamental spiritual journey for every believer

striving for spiritual development, culminating in union with God. Cleansing is achieved through vigilance, repentance, and fasting; illumination through prayer and study of the Scriptures; and deification through divine grace and unceasing prayer⁴¹. Consequently, Neptic Theology, based on the experiences of the Church Fathers and the ascetic tradition of hesychasm, explores and seeks to shape the proper relationship between humanity and God, as well as guide the spiritual development of the psychosomatic person with an emphasis on the spiritual restoration of the soul and the role of the body.

The historical development of Neptic Theology begins with the Desert Fathers, such as St. Anthony the Great and St. Pachomius, who laid the foundations of ascetic life in Christianity in the 3rd and 4th centuries. The ascetic tradition was further developed by the Cappadocian Fathers, including St. Basil the Great, Gregory of Nyssa, and Gregory Nazianzus³⁰. Significant advancement in Neptic Theology occurred in the 14th century with the teachings of St. Gregory Palamas, who defended the theological foundation of hesychasm and divine illumination³³.

St. Symeon the New Theologian (949–1022) was one of the most prominent representatives of Neptic Theology. Born in Galatia, Asia Minor, he entered monastic life at an early age. As the abbot of St. Mamas Monastery in Constantinople, he developed rich spiritual and theological work that deeply influenced the later theological thought of Orthodoxy⁴³. St. Symeon's teachings center on the personal experience of divine presence and the direct relationship of the believer with God. One of his most important works is the "Catechetical Discourses," where he analyzes the principles of spiritual life and theology. The seventh Catechetical Discourse is particularly significant for our study as it describes the importance of *prospatheia* and spiritual exercise in shaping human character⁷. St. Symeon's teachings offer valuable insights into understanding the psychic mechanisms that influence humanity, as well as in forming a spiritual framework that incorporates the psychological and theological dimensions of human existence.

In this context, Neptic Psychology, as a branch of Psychology, aims to understand human psychology, thoughts, emotions, and behavior by combining scientific methodology with the empirical observations of Neptic fathers, with a view toward therapeutic intervention. It acknowledges that humanity, being created in the image of God, possesses not only biological and psychological needs but also spiritual ones. Thus, soul healing in Neptic Psychology is both a psychological and spiritual process that involves the inner reformation of a person as they progress from the state of disharmony between their psychosomatic elements to the restoration of their relationship with God and others through cleansing, illumination, and union with God by grace³¹.

Specifically, based on Neptic Theology and the thought of the Church Fathers, Neptic Psychology offers a new perspective on the primary drives of humanity, which are the focus of our study. *Prospatheia* (intense desire), as understood by the Fathers, plays a central role in this psychological approach, placing humanity at the intersection between the material and immaterial worlds.

- 1 The new perspective introduced by Neptic Psychology rests on the following premises:
- 2 Humanity is a psychosomatic being, composed of an immaterial soul and a material body that interact with each other.
- 3 The soul comprises spirit, mind, and reason (*logos*).
- 4 The soul, through the mind, guides humanity on both a psychological and physical level.
- 5 Humanity's primary drives or drives originate from the mind's orientation toward the spiritual and material worlds. Thus, there are two fundamental inclinations:
 - a. *Spiritual Inclination*: The tendency of the mind to direct the psychosomatic being toward the spiritual realm, providing a sense of complete freedom (*dispassion*), communion with God, and eternal life.
 - b. *Material Inclination – Prospatheia*: The tendency of the mind to seek emotional connection with the material world, leading to material pleasures and delights, which in turn lead to bondage to sensory experiences and desires in the material world and the formation of passions.
- 6 *Prospatheia*, as a primary drive or drive, directs individuals toward strong emotional attachments with persons, things, or situations in the material world by generating secondary drives or drives and forming complexes.
- 7 Understanding and therapeutically addressing *prospatheia* can help individuals avoid emotional attachment to the material world, people, objects, and various situations, thereby maintaining a balanced relationship between soul and body and freeing them from passions, allowing them to pursue full spiritual growth and freedom from the psychosomatic components of their being.
- 8 Achieving a proper relationship between soul and body, where the soul (mind and reason) guides thoughts, cognitive processes, and behaviors manifested physically through the practice of free will and necessary and rational desires (e.g., for food, clothing, safety, etc.), provides psychological well-being and growth. Conversely, the disruption of this balance between soul and body creates negative emotions, psychological disorders, etc.

The necessity and potential of Neptic Psychology

Neptic Psychology, deeply rooted in the spiritual and ascetic tradition of the Orthodox Church, offers a unique and necessary perspective today for understanding and addressing the mental state of the modern individual, who often experiences confusion and psychological distress. The necessity and potential of Neptic Psychology in contemporary times can be summarized as follows:

Response to spiritual and psychological deprivation: Despite having access to technological advances and scientific knowledge, today's person faces an unprecedented spiritual and psychological crisis. The lack of meaning, alienation, and inability to cope with internal conflicts are often predominant. Neptic Psychology, with its emphasis on the cleansing of the soul and spiritual empowerment, provides a comprehensive and holistic model that combines spiritual cultivation with psychological balance. It equips the modern individual with tools for developing inner peace and deeper self-awareness through practices such as introspection, discernment, and vigilance.

Deeper self-knowledge and cultivation of conscience: Neptic Psychology focuses on the deep observation and understanding of psychic processes, aiming to understand the motivations, desires, and emotions that drive people. Through the process of discernment, individuals can distinguish between the soul's negative, perishable states and virtues, thus fostering a healthy psychological and moral framework. This deeper cultivation of conscience and self-knowledge is essential for developing an authentic relationship with oneself and others, something often missing in Western psychological approaches, which prioritize behavior and external adaptation.

An empirical spiritual therapeutic method: Neptic Psychology is not merely theoretical but offers practical methods, such as prayer, vigilance, and silence, which have been repeatedly tested and proven effective over centuries. These practices enable individuals to work at the level of their inner potential and confront their "passions," or negative habits and dependencies that hold them back. At the same time, applying these practices fosters resilience and spiritual autonomy, making Neptic Psychology a useful tool for those seeking self-improvement and psychological health.

An approach to the holistic health of the psychosomatic human being: In contrast to current psychological theories, which often separate soul and body, Neptic Psychology views the individual as an integrated psychosomatic entity. Spiritual health is directly connected to mental and physical well-being. By harmonizing the relationship between soul and body, Neptic Psychology provides a framework for restoring inner balance and overall human health. At a time when mental and physical health are threatened by stress and overstimulation, this approach offers a reliable and empirically verifiable alternative.

Revealing meaning and spiritual fulfillment: Neptic Psychology provides a spiritual dimension to psychology, redefining human purpose not merely as self-actualization but as union with God and attainment of deification. This perspective gives life meaning, enabling individuals to transcend worldly concerns and temporary hardships in pursuit of a higher, divine fulfillment. In a society where the quest for meaning is often a source of anxiety and frustration, Neptic Psychology offers a higher purpose and direction.

Neptic Psychology can be considered essential for today's individual, as it provides a framework for understanding and healing internal conflicts and a path toward spiritual fulfillment. It also offers possibilities for strengthening conscience and cultivating the soul in depth, providing a powerful tool for personal growth and psychological resilience. In an era of spiritual and psychological uncertainty, Neptic Psychology re-emerges as a valuable ally and guide for the modern individual, offering them the means to understand and live out their true nature.

As a synthesis of Psychology and Neptic Theology, Neptic Psychology can provide a more comprehensive understanding and approach to human problems. This approach acknowledges the value of both scientific and spiritual methods in promoting mental and spiritual well-being. To integrate Neptic Psychology into the scientific domain of psychology, the following methods could be used, maintaining its distinct character while adhering to the scientific standards required in academia:

- 1 Systematic Recording and Description (Phenomenology): Systematic recording of the experiences of ascetics, especially concerning their introspective life, can be conducted in collaboration with specialists who understand the language and content of Neptic Theology. The phenomenological method, already used in other branches of psychology, can document the characteristics of the experiences of vigilance and discernment as described by individuals who experience them.
- 2 Developmental Case Studies: In-depth case studies of monks or others systematically practicing the introspective practices of Neptic Theology could provide valuable insights into their psychological

development. These studies might use interviews, self-reports, and records of introspective experiences to document changes in the participants' cognitive, emotional, and spiritual state.

- 3 Qualitative Methodologies: Qualitative methods such as semi-structured interviews and thematic analysis could be applied to gather and analyze data on the experiences of vigilance, discernment, cognitive processes, and psycho-emotional states. Through these techniques, researchers can understand the content and significance of ascetics' experiences, identifying common characteristics and patterns in their psychological state.
- 4 Psychometric Tools Adapted to Neptic Theology: Developing questionnaires or scales based on the characteristics of spiritual growth in Neptic Theology, such as cleansing from passions and the illumination of the mind, could provide quantitative data. Such tools might measure feelings of mental tranquility, self-awareness, a sense of fulfillment, and spiritual vigilance.
- 5 Comparison of Introspective Practice Results with Other Psychological Therapies: Neptic Psychology could use comparative studies to examine how the introspective practices of vigilance and discernment affect individuals' psyche compared to other recognized psychological therapies. Statistical analysis of this data could determine whether these practices have positive outcomes and to what extent compared to other methods.
- 6 Biometric Measurements and Neuroscience: Neuroscientific research in collaboration with Neptic Psychology could provide insights into brain activity during introspective practices like prayer and vigilance. Through electroencephalograms (EEG) or tomography (fMRI), changes in specific brain areas and their relationship to inner mental states could be studied.
- 7 Longitudinal Studies: Long-term studies that track the psychological and spiritual development of individuals who systematically practice Neptic Theology's methods could reveal the long-term effects of this psychological journey, providing valuable information on changes in a person's mental and emotional state.

The combined use of these methods will enable Neptic Psychology to offer scientifically recognized data within the field of psychology.

An initial step in establishing Neptic Psychology is to highlight the possibility of correlating the spiritual and psychological states experienced by humans. St. Symeon, with his profound spiritual experience and teachings, provides valuable insights into understanding the psychic functions that influence humanity. For example, examining the formation of the complex (syndrome) by *prospatheia*, as presented in the seventh Catechetical Discourse of St. Symeon the New Theologian, could shed light on how spiritual characteristics and mental functions impact various psychic mechanisms systematically described by modern psychology.

Therefore, this study focuses on analyzing how *prospatheia*, as a fundamental drive, can act as a generative cause of complexes according to St. Symeon's teachings. The significance of this study lies in its potential to offer a new framework for understanding and healing the human soul, integrating the spiritual traditions of the Orthodox Church with scientific methods of psychology. In this way, Neptic Psychology can offer new perspectives and tools to support the modern individual in their pursuit of mental well-being and/or adherence to the Christian way of life. Following this approach, this study aims to lay the foundation for the development of Neptic Psychology, paving the way for further research and application of this new scientific field.

II. *Prospatheia* As A Primary Impulse

Prospatheia according to Neptic Theology

In everyday language, *prospatheia* refers to the energy or result of effort—exerting physical, mental, or spiritual strength to achieve a goal. Specifically, in a more refined usage, *prospatheia* draws its conceptual content from the verb “*prospascho*,” which means “*to suffer additionally, to have an added emotional condition (intense desire, yearning) for something*”⁴¹. When an emotional feeling, a passive mental state, or a psychological change accompanied by pleasure or pain is intensified, additional desire is added⁴¹. As a result, the initial emotion intensifies, gaining strength and turning into a strong psychic passion. Thus, *prospatheia* signifies passionate attachment, an intense commitment, or a deep-seated desire for association, with the simultaneous engagement of all psychosomatic forces of a person directed towards something or someone⁴⁶.

In the writings of the Church Fathers, the term *prospatheia* is used to express a specific mental disposition. According to A Patristic Greek Lexicon², *prospatheia* can mean inclination, tendency, attraction, passionate inclination, or craving for something or someone. It is evident that, for the Neptic Fathers, *prospatheia* represents a mental disposition in which one turns strongly toward the material world out of intense affection or fondness for it. In other words, *prospatheia* is perceived as a state that manifests when a person relates to something or someone with an intense desire.

St. Elias the Presbyter, also known as the Advocate (circa 1100 A.D.), in his work *Anthologion Gnomikon Philosophon Spoudeon*, defines *prospatheia* as the disposition (state) of the mind to oppose its immaterial, intellectual essence and to mix with the material world: “*The evil materiality of the body is passion; of the soul, it is sensuality; and of the mind, it is prospatheia. The organ of the first is touch; of the second, the*

other senses; of the last, the disposition of opposition.”⁴⁷. Since the mind is immaterial and intellectual, any association with the material world contradicts its essence. Therefore, prosothataia manifests as a voluntary disposition of the mind to oppose its intellectual essence and attach itself to the material world, influencing the soul.

Elias the Presbyter further classifies human mental states, listing passion, sensuality, and prosothataia, with apathataia as the final state. In the first part of the classification, according to one’s relationship with passion, he presents three levels of mental states: passion, sensuality, and prosothataia. In the second part of the classification, he presents apathataia, the only state where all passions have ceased. Apathataia is distant from the previous states and stands “far from both.” Thus, in the ascetic struggle, a person strives to transform their psychosomatic condition from passionate to passionless. At the bodily level, they must free themselves from passions by controlling touch; at the mental level, they must rid themselves of desire for worldly things that bring pleasure to the soul by controlling the senses; and at the intellectual level, they must dispel the disposition of opposing their intellectual essence (prosothataia), which turns them toward the material world and away from God.

Tracing the classification backward, initially, the mind contemplates God and the immaterial, intellectual world, and the psychosomatic person is without passion (apathataia). However, when the mind ceases to contemplate God, it becomes dominated by a disposition opposing its essence and turns its focus toward the material world (prosothataia). The mind’s perception is divided among the five senses of the psychosomatic person, through which the soul forms desires and seeks pleasure from the material world (hedonism). Finally, the psychosomatic person is overwhelmed by passions, which manifest bodily through touch (pathos).

Depending on the psychosomatic state of an individual, according to Elias the Presbyter, a person may be described as passionate (empathes), hedonistic (hedypathes), or inclined (prosothates). According to Maximus the Confessor, the prosothates individual exists between freedom and bondage, standing at the threshold between the immaterial and material world but with a greater inclination toward the material ⁴⁸. The mind of the prosothates individual has lost its focus on the immaterial world and inclines toward the material world.

According to St. Symeon the New Theologian (976–1025 A.D.), prosothataia, as an association of the mind with something or someone in the material world, is understood as a turning, inclination, or tendency of the mind away from the immaterial world and towards the material world, as the mind’s friendship with the world ⁵¹. The voluntary turning of the mind from the vision of the immaterial world to the vision of the material world creates a friendship for the world within the soul, bringing forth chain reactions in the psychosomatic person. According to Symeon, prosothataia includes “*the natural love of every person and kin.*” ⁴⁹. It denotes a stronger affection for something or someone in the material world. Essentially, prosothataia represents a discernment and choice of focus by the mind, resulting in love for something or someone being greater than for others, as is the case with natural love. In his funeral oration for his brother Anthony, Symeon explains the object of prosothataia, describing it as the desire for a relationship with visible things, whether relatives, friends, or perishable items ⁵¹. Although prosothataia is not considered a passion, it is a bond with the material world, which prevents one from freely progressing toward God ⁵³.

Only through aprosothataia (the absence of prosothataia) can love be equal toward all: “*from the lack of attachment to the neighbor and the love towards all equally*” ⁵¹. Aprosothataia is as essential as other divine commandments because it helps form a person as a worthy vessel capable of receiving God’s grace.

What is the cause of prosothataia?

Symeon does not consider Satan the cause of prosothataia, but rather one who exploits prosothataia to bind humanity to sin and passions. The devil does not create prosothataia but uses it as a rope to bind people to sin. In other words, prosothataia is, according to Symeon, one of the many tools used by “*the cunning devil and enemy of our souls*”⁵¹ to drag humanity into the abyss of sin. The devil finds this tool within each person’s soul and uses it to lead them to sin. What the devil does is to bind the entire psyche of a person with prosothataia, applying it like a rope around their neck.

If the devil is not the creator of prosothataia, then who is responsible for its emergence as a new disposition or state of the mind? According to the Neptic Fathers of the Church, the root cause of prosothataia is the turning of the mind away from the vision of God’s glory due to inactivity and laziness. Since the mind is “a constantly moving entity ... that cannot remain idle,” its complacent behavior in Paradise led it to direct its attention, perception, and loving inclination toward something other than God. The abundant pleasure, incorruptible, and effortless lifestyle of the Adamic person in Paradise led to the voluntary forgetfulness of God and the neglect of the commandment given, resulting in the mind’s loving turn toward something else.

The impact of prosothataia on human psyche

In one of his many references to the mental state of a person turning away from Christ, Symeon describes prosothataia as the cause leading to the complete binding of the soul’s impulse toward something other than Christ. This bond begins with the expression of love, friendship, towards someone or something other than Christ,

resulting in the soul creating intense desire and feeling pleasure in it ⁴⁹. That which the soul turns to is the entire world, and *prospatheia*—the friendship with the world—creates a loving relationship between the soul and worldly things. This includes the material world and everything in it, all visible things, all human affairs, and generally anything to which the soul may turn and form desires within. To the question, "*What is the world?*" he answers, "*It is sin, and the attachment to things, brothers, and passions*" ⁵¹.

The wicked world, through *prospatheia*, lives, exists, and is activated within our souls, and we live within it. Our relationship with the world, created by the state of the mind inclined toward the material world, affects all of our mental functions. Our love for the world influences our intellect, causing our thoughts to be irrational. It affects the soul's desiring part, making us experience pains and pleasures that keep us bound and trapped in earthly matters ⁵¹. Since our life is shaped by the relationships our soul maintains with the world—by which we are held—and these bonds pull us to earthly matters, Symeon says that we carry the world within us.

In the state of *prospatheia*, the mind activates soul functions to stimulate the soul's desiring part by rationalizing the thoughts of the intellect, so that this association strengthens and becomes a permanent mental state—a passion. The *prospatheia* of the mind influences the intellect, creating voluntary thoughts about present things, binding the mind to the material world. Through a cyclic interaction, the intellect, with rational arguments, creates in the soul an additional feeling of love, friendship for the world, increasing the intensity of *prospatheia*.

The functions of the soul of the *prospatheia* person—reason, desire, and spiritedness—hold the mind bound to present matters and prevent it from achieving perfect knowledge, which is God. The communion of the mind with God cannot be achieved unless one is freed from "those by which and in which one is bound by attachment" and reorients themselves toward God, willingly refraining from letting their thoughts be diverted by anything else.

As a mental state through which one leans toward worldly matters, *prospatheia* hinders those who seek virtue: "*Attachment to worldly things is a great obstacle to those who strive for virtue*" ⁵⁴. This mental state, through which the soul relates to worldly things and builds its own internal world, often unconsciously, is the cause of human deviation from "*the first commandment of all.*"

Symeon refers to the first commandment as given by Jesus Christ to a scribe, relating it to *prospatheia*: "*You shall love the Lord your God with all your mind and all your strength and all your soul, so that anyone who desires or relates to something other than God is outside this commandment*" ⁵⁵. Those who have any desire or relationship with anything other than God cannot follow the first commandment. Desire or relationship toward another constitutes an obstacle: "*For attachment to the world is hostility toward God, as the divine apostle says; 'Do not love the world or the things in the world,' because no one can serve God and live according to human ways, for all worldly things are obstacles to love and devotion to God*" ⁵¹.

Prospatheia as a primary drive in Neptic Psychology

The concept of *prospatheia*, as presented in Neptic Theology, describes an intense desire for connection and a passionate attachment to the material world. St. Symeon mentions that *prospatheia* causes a distraction of the mind, leading one to a continuous, friendly preoccupation with perishable objects and relationships with other people. This attraction to material goods and the visible world strengthens the soul's desires, leading to emotional entanglement with the world, which impedes spiritual development and distances one from God.

This conceptual content differs from the traditional psychological notion of effort as an inner drive toward achieving a goal. In contrast, translating the concept of *prospatheia* from Neptic Theology into the psychological field offers a new way to understand primary drives and the human relationship with the material world. *Prospatheia*, seen as a primary drive of the mind, diverges from the typical psychological view of other instincts within the psychosomatic individual. It represents a state of psychological tension that stems from the fundamental need of the mind to relate to the material world. Thus, an drive such as hunger or thirst, which motivates the body to act in ways that reduce the tension caused by lack of nourishment, has its deeper cause in the desire to connect with the material world, with nourishment serving as a secondary necessity. The act of seeking and consuming food as a strategy to reduce tension, while it decreases the psychological tension caused by hunger, is insufficient to satisfy the deeper urge for connection with the material world. On the contrary, the pleasure associated with food intake (which reduces physical tension) can amplify the desire for connection through consumption, leading to psychological disorders like bulimia.

In this way, *prospatheia* is now perceived as the origin of primary drives as understood in Psychology. The physical and mental drives of the psychosomatic human being, which relate to material, perishable things in the world and respond to immediate needs for survival, pleasure, and reproduction, acquire the nature of secondary needs. Thus, *prospatheia* plays a decisive role in shaping human psychology, while other drives, as described by psychology thus far, are considered secondary primary drives that specify *prospatheia* within the psychosomatic human being.

In Neptic Psychology, *prospatheia* may be viewed as the mind's primary drive since primary drives are considered driving forces guiding behavior and mental processes. The distinction between the psychosomatic and

spiritual levels is significant, as traditional psychological theories, like those of Freud, Maslow, and others, primarily regard primary drives as biological or psychic forces related to survival instinct, self-preservation, and reproduction. These drives are closely linked to bodily needs, cognitive processes, and emotional states of the person. However, if the primary drive concept is transferred to the level of the mind as understood in Neptic Theology, then *prospatheia* takes on a more foundational character.

Prospatheia, as an drive of the mind, can be interpreted as the primary attraction toward material things and a friendly association with them. In this perspective, *prospatheia* functions as a foundational force that shapes the psychosomatic person at biological, cognitive, emotional, social, and cultural levels, ultimately guiding the entire psyche and behavior toward the material world and passionate attachment to it.

This position adds a new dimension to primary drives as they are understood in psychology. It is intriguing to examine the relationship between the mind's primary drive, as conceptualized in Neptic Psychology, and the primary or basic drives in psychology.

In the Neptic tradition, the mind is considered the most immaterial and spiritual element of human existence. It is the part of the soul that is distinct from reason, although it includes it, and encompasses the capacity to sense and guide both the soul and the psychosomatic person. The mind's central function is to perceive the spiritual world and, through the body and the division of its unified sense into the five senses, to perceive the material world. When the mind functions according to its natural order, which renders it fully autonomous, it can unify its perception at will to contemplate God or distribute it through the body to perceive the material world. Conversely, when the mind, due to its dysfunction—opposition to its essence (because of the tarnishing of the image of God)—leans passionately toward the material world, it develops the primary drive of *prospatheia*, which binds it to the material realm.

Thus, the primary drive of the mind and the basic drives in psychology operate at different levels of human existence, yet they interact with one another. In Neptic Theology, the mind's essential attribute is to contemplate God. However, being free, it can oppose this fundamental attribute and seek friendly association with the material world. This inclination toward emotional association with the material world, represented by *prospatheia*, originates in the mind, which presides over all the soul's functions, generating basic drives such as the drive for pleasure, survival, or competence.

Therefore, the primary drive of *prospatheia* is responsible for developing secondary drives, such as the fundamental drive for pleasure, a mental disposition reflecting the individual's intense, often pathological attachment to material objects and situations from which pleasure is derived, as well as the physical passion where pleasure is sought through touch. This relationship between primary and basic drives can be viewed in light of dependencies and addictions, where a person develops an irresistible need to connect with specific objects or situations that provide immediate satisfaction. Freud¹⁴ recognizes that these drives, when unchecked, can lead to pathological conditions like obsessions and addictions, where the individual loses the ability to function without these objects or situations.

In this context, *prospatheia* may be considered a powerful inner mechanism that enhances the desire for material goods or experiences, affecting an individual's psychosomatic balance. When this drive becomes dominant, it may limit a person's capacity to focus on higher goals or develop healthy relationships, leading to psychological disorders.

The basic drives in psychology, therefore, direct one toward a passionate, rather than passionless, fulfillment of physical, psychological, social, and cultural needs due to the existence and function of the mind's primary drive for passionate attachment to the material world. Consequently, the modern psychosomatic person experiences an internal struggle to balance fulfilling needs as a psychosomatic and social being and achieving total freedom from enslavement to these needs, driven by passionate attachment to the material world.

Humans constantly exist in a dual reality. On one hand, the basic drives of body and soul, rooted in the primary drive for passionate association with the material world, push toward survival, security, pleasure, etc., with passion (*empathia*); on the other hand, the quest for freedom of the mind calls for transcendence from attachment to the material, entering a state of *apatheia* to turn toward the divine. *Apatheia* entails achieving inner freedom, where a person is no longer enslaved by desires and drives derived from the material world. This state allows one to live in harmony with their spiritual nature, undistracted by external worldly factors that provoke emotional reactions. *Prospatheia* (as the mind's primary drive that drives the psychosomatic person to hedonism and passion) disrupts this balance, as the mind moves away from God and friendly focuses on the material, reinforcing enslavement to psychosomatic drives.

Conversely, the state of *aprospatheia* refers to freeing the mind from passionate inclinations toward the material world, leading to a state of *apatheia*, or liberation from passions. When the mind detaches from passionate attachment to the material world, it regains the ability to express freely and without constraints its natural drive to contemplate the spiritual and material world. According to the Neptic tradition, *apatheia* does not imply indifference toward the world but rather achieving spiritual serenity, where the soul is not bound by fleeting and

pathological desires. Thus, the struggle to attain aprospatheia can be likened to the concept of "self-regulation" in psychology, where one learns to control emotional reactions and focus on higher spiritual goals⁵⁶.

Self-regulation, as described by Albert Bandura in his social learning theory, includes the ability to control thoughts, emotions, and behaviors to achieve one's goals (Bandura, 1991). Within the framework of aprospatheia, a person learns self-regulation by detaching from external attachments and directing attention toward achieving spiritual fulfillment.

This self-regulation process involves conscious efforts to free oneself from psychological and emotional attachments to the world, such as the desire for material goods or attachment to human relationships. In modern psychology, this process also relates to an individual's ability to develop psychological resilience and inner strength, avoiding pathological emotional reactions arising from excessive dependence on external stimuli.

Therefore, aprospatheia, as the struggle or absence of a tendency for passionate association with anything material or worldly, allowing the mind to turn toward the immaterial spiritual world and the vision of God, cannot be regarded as a primary or basic drive but rather as a conscious and ascetic restraint of the primary drive of prospatheia.

Based on what we have discussed thus far, we can suggest that the psychosomatic person, as a being with both intellectual and material perception, possesses two drives or drives: the drive toward the immaterial world and the drive toward the material world. Both drives serve to connect and harmonize with the respective realities, and their proper and balanced function can be understood as psychosomatic well-being. However, an imbalance between these two primary drives, with a predominance of the drive toward the material world as an opposition of the mind to its essence (expressed as prospatheia), leads a person into a passionate perception of the material world and enslavement to secondary or basic drives and the passions they create, such as the drive for pleasure (hedonism), the drive for survival, etc.

The defining characteristic of primary and basic drives is that both contribute positively to the well-being of the psychosomatic person. The problem arises when a drive, for example, the drive for the material world, is combined with an irrational and passionate tendency for friendly association with the material world; that is, when the drive for the material world transforms into prospatheia. In this case, the balance of primary drives is disturbed, and the psychosomatic person gradually becomes enslaved to various drives that arise either internally or externally and to the passions they create. On the other hand, if the balance is disrupted with a passionate and irrational inclination toward association with the intellectual world while avoiding the material world, a person risks self-destructive consequences to their psychosomatic existence. Examples include insanity, suicide, schizophrenia, and other mental disorders.

III. Prospatheia And The Formation Of Complexes

The exploration of prospatheia as a primary drive requires examining how this drive affects the various mental functions of an individual. In psychology, the concept of drive, as we have already explored, is closely associated with basic mental functions such as reason, desire, and emotions, which correspond to logic, desires, and feelings, respectively. When a person is under the influence of prospatheia, these functions can be diverted toward satisfying immediate desires at the expense of logic and moral judgment, leading to the creation of a complex.

The complex, a core concept in psychology, offers significant insight into how unconscious emotional and mental processes driven by primary drives can influence a person's behavior and life. Although complexes can be a source of distress and lead to psychological conflicts, recognizing and processing them through psychotherapy can serve as a significant step toward personal growth and enhanced mental health. With the help of psychotherapy, an individual can understand their complexes, integrate them into their personality, and use them as a catalyst for positive changes in their life.

Conversely, according to Neptic Psychology, the ultimate goal for mental health is to support the individual's complete release from complexes through Neptic exercises that remove their root cause, which is prospatheia.

What is a complex?

The term complex (Fr. *complexe*, Eng. *complex*, Ger. *Komplex*, Gr. *σύμπλεγμα*) originates from the Latin word *complexus*, meaning "connection" or "intertwinement." In psychology, particularly within Carl Gustav Jung's analytical psychology, the complex holds a central place. Carl Jung (1875-1961), a disciple of Sigmund Freud, introduced and developed the concept of the "*complex*" in psychology¹⁸. According to Jung¹⁸, complexes are a set of partially or fully unconscious feelings and representations endowed with an emotional force that organizes each person's personality, marks their emotions, and guides their actions.

Freud used the term to describe the Oedipus complex, a concept referring to a child's unconscious desire for the opposite-sex parent and rivalry toward the same-sex parent¹⁶. While Jung agreed that complexes are significant, he regarded them as broader patterns not limited to sexual and aggressive instincts. Thus, complexes

are generally understood as psychological patterns of feelings, thoughts, and behaviors that are unconscious and exert a strong influence on a person's behavior. They arise from traumatic experiences or recurrent emotionally charged events and can deeply affect an individual's personality and relationships.

A complex can therefore be described as the image of a specific mental state that has intense emotional expression and is incompatible with the usual conscious attitude¹⁹. According to Jung, complexes act like autonomous psychic entities within the unconscious, possessing their own energy and influencing an individual in ways they may not fully understand (Jung, 1934). Due to their autonomy, complexes behave like independent beings, taking control of a person's mental life²⁰.

There are various types of complexes, each influencing an individual's life in different ways. The most well-known complexes include the inferiority complex, superiority complex, maternal complex, heroic complex, and erotic complex.

Types of complexes:

1. **Inferiority Complex:** According to Alfred Adler¹, who further developed the concept of the inferiority complex, it manifests when an individual feels inferior to others due to real or perceived shortcomings. This feeling of inferiority may lead to overcompensation, such as pursuing a successful career or displaying power, but can also result in resignation and avoidance of challenges.
2. **Superiority Complex:** In contrast to the inferiority complex, the superiority complex refers to an exaggerated sense of self-worth and value. Individuals with this complex may exhibit arrogant behavior and feel the need to dominate others. According to Adler¹ this behavior may serve as a counterbalance to deeper feelings of insecurity.
3. **Maternal Complex:** Jung²¹ described the maternal complex as an unconscious emotional attachment to the mother or maternal figures. This complex can affect an individual's relationships with others, leading to dependence or, conversely, excessive rejection of care and closeness.
4. **Heroic Complex:** This complex reflects a person's need to become a hero or achieve great feats. It can lead to excessive ambition or self-sacrifice²⁴.
5. **Erotic Complex:** This involves emotional states related to love and romantic relationships, which can impact one's ability to form healthy and balanced relationships (Jung, 1960).

The psychological dynamics of complexes

The negative impact of complexes manifests as a distortion of emotional or cognitive function, leading the individual to react based on the complex rather than the actual situation²¹. This can occur in various areas of life, such as interpersonal relationships, work, and decision-making. Thus, complexes can have significant psychological effects, influencing self-esteem, relationships, and overall mental health. An unresolved complex can lead to chronic psychological difficulties, including anxiety, depression, and personality disorders. Some of these effects include:

- 1 **Emotional instability:** Complexes can trigger intense and uncontrollable emotional reactions, such as anxiety, anger, or depression²³.
- 2 **Repetitive behavioral patterns:** Complexes may lead to repetitive and self-destructive behaviors, with individuals responding in the same way to similar stimuli⁹.
- 3 **Personality disorders:** In some cases, complexes may contribute to the development of personality disorders, such as narcissistic or borderline personality disorder²⁷.

More specifically, complexes cause memory disturbances, block associative thought flow, and can temporarily influence consciousness or guide behavior unconsciously. For example, instead of using proper judgment and showing an appropriate emotional response, a person may react according to the dictates of a complex. A complex may have at its core a traumatic experience or significant event around which similar experiences and emotions accumulate. For instance, someone who experienced rejection in childhood may develop an inferiority complex, leading to feelings of insecurity and worthlessness. Activation of a complex can alter one's perception, leading to irrational or exaggerated reactions. As long as complexes remain unconscious, the person is driven by them without recognizing their influence²⁰. Jung famously remarked, "*Everyone knows nowadays that people 'have complexes.' What is not so well known, though far more important theoretically, is that complexes can have us*"²⁰. Jung argued that complexes are essential for personality development and can act as a driving force for personal growth, although they are often a source of distress and psychological conflict.

In analytical psychology, complexes are emotionally charged sets of ideas, feelings, and memories in the unconscious, influencing our behavior and perception without our conscious awareness. Some of the most significant and common complexes are associated with archetypes, which are fundamental patterns or models of behavior and experience present in the collective unconscious of all people. According to Jung, archetypes such as the Anima (for men) and the Animus (for women), as well as the Shadow, are among the most foundational. The Anima represents the unconscious feminine side of a man, while the Animus represents the unconscious

masculine side of a woman. The Shadow includes all those parts of ourselves that we do not wish to recognize or confront, such as fears, desires, and undesirable traits.

When an individual identifies with a complex, it means that they unconsciously allow this complex to guide their thoughts, feelings, and behavior. For example, a man identified with his Anima may exhibit excessive emotionality or uncertainty, while a woman identified with her Animus may display excessive logic or competitive behavior. Identification with the Shadow can be even more dangerous, as this archetype encompasses the darkest and least developed aspects of ourselves. When the Shadow takes control, the individual may engage in destructive behavior, self-sabotaging tendencies, or act in ways that contradict their conscious values and beliefs.

However, complexes are not inherently neurotic. According to Jung, neurosis often arises from a conflict between an individual's conscious values and beliefs and the unconscious influences exerted by complexes. When someone identifies with a complex, their reactions become unconscious and uncontrollable, leading to internal conflicts, anxiety, and psychological distress. Therefore, neurosis can be seen as the result of this conflict and the individual's inability to recognize and integrate these unconscious forces into their life in a healthy way.

The fact that a complex can cause pain does not indicate a pathological disorder. Pain is often the opposite pole of happiness and is a part of the human experience. A complex becomes pathological only when a person denies its existence and fails to acknowledge its influence on their life²¹. The emotional intensity accompanying complexes can lead to creative processes and foster personality development, provided that the individual is aware of their existence and their effects on behavior.

Psychological treatment of complexes

According to psychology, complexes do not disappear but transform and integrate into personality through awareness and understanding. Psychological treatment of complexes does not aim to eliminate them, as this is deemed impossible, but to reduce their negative impact by understanding their role in behavioral patterns and emotional reactions²¹. A complex can only be overcome if it is fully experienced, meaning that an individual must confront and process the emotions and memories associated with the complex instead of distancing themselves from them²². Only through this process can personal growth and mental integration occur²². For example, if someone recognizes that their Shadow includes intense feelings of anger or jealousy, they can work through these emotions instead of repressing them. By acknowledging and processing these feelings, they can learn to express them in healthy ways and reduce their destructive impact on their life.

Psychotherapy is the main tool in psychology for recognizing and processing complexes. Jungian analysis, known as analytical psychology, focuses on understanding unconscious patterns and complexes through dream analysis, symbols, and personal narratives. Through this process, individuals can become aware of their complexes and develop strategies to manage them, aiming to integrate these unconscious elements into the conscious personality rather than allowing them to dominate unconsciously.

Jung proposed various methods to address complexes:

- 1 Dream analysis: This can reveal unconscious complexes and help understand their nature²³.
- 2 Free association: This method allows individuals to express their thoughts freely, helping them recognize the emotions and thoughts associated with complexes¹³.
- 3 Symbolic interpretation: Interpreting symbols appearing in dreams and fantasies can provide insight into unconscious complexes²³.
- 4 Conscious confrontation: Becoming aware of the complex and exploring the accompanying emotions and thoughts is essential for addressing it. This includes acknowledging and accepting the emotional wounds that created the complex¹⁰.
- 5 In modern psychology, the concept of the complex has been integrated and expanded by various researchers and therapists. Contemporary approaches include:
- 6 Gestalt Therapy: Developed by Fritz Perls, this therapy focuses on present awareness and integrating all aspects of one's experience. Gestalt therapists work with complexes by helping clients recognize and address their unconscious conflicts³⁹.
- 7 Schema Therapy: Jeffrey Young's Schema Therapy combines elements of cognitive-behavioral therapy, psychoanalysis, and attachment theory to address chronic psychological issues often associated with complexes. This therapy helps clients recognize and change dysfunctional thought patterns and behaviors²³.
- 8 Mindfulness and meditation: Mindfulness and meditation have been found effective in managing complexes, helping individuals develop greater awareness of their emotions and thoughts and gain more control over them²⁶.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) can also assist individuals in addressing complexes by recognizing and restructuring distorted thoughts and beliefs associated with them. CBT techniques, such as cognitive restructuring and exposure, allow individuals to confront the root causes of their complexes and reduce their influence on behavior⁵.

Understanding complexes and developing strategies to manage them is important for mental health and personal growth. Working with a qualified therapist can help individuals address their complexes, achieving greater internal balance and peace.

Relationship between Prospatheia and Complexes

In its psychological dimension, prospatheia, as previously discussed, is seen as a strong longing for something or someone, along with the concurrent intensity of an individual's psychosomatic forces directed towards that object or person. This intensity is characteristic of complexes, as emotionally charged events that create complexes often provoke a similar intensity and desire for connection with objects or people representing the original trauma or experience¹⁸. From a psychological perspective, therefore, prospatheia as a primary drive could be recognized as the emotional force that establishes a complex, activates it, and keeps it influential within the individual's mental life. This role of prospatheia is evident in cases where a person focuses exclusively on satisfying sensory and material needs, ignoring the consequences of such behavior (empathy). This reflects a psychological state where the balance between different mental functions is lost, with prospatheia leading the individual into a state of continuous pursuit of satisfaction (hedonism) through the material world. Thus, prospatheia, as a primary drive, can profoundly impact an individual's mental health by embedding various complexes into their psyche.

For instance, when the desire for material goods and relationships with the material world becomes excessive, a complex can emerge, and the individual may experience heightened levels of anxiety and worry. This happens because prospatheia is tied to a sense of loss or failure when these desires are unfulfilled, creating a vicious cycle where the need for satisfaction grows increasingly intense and pressing.

It may also impact an individual's self-esteem. In cases where a person cannot achieve their goals, especially when those goals are linked to the material world, they may develop feelings of worthlessness or failure. This can lead to psychological conditions such as depression or anxiety, often accompanied by feelings of abandonment and despair.

As a state of intense attachment where mental forces are directed towards objects or people in the material world, prospatheia resembles the concept of "craving" or "passionate desire" as described in modern psychology—a compulsive tendency that dominates the mind and directs it toward specific objects, distancing it from other spiritual or intellectual activities⁵⁷. Consequently, prospatheia, through the creation of various complexes, drives an individual into a state of total emotional dependence on the world. This psychological pattern resembles the "dependence on desires," a common theme in psychology, associated with an individual's inability to escape drives, resulting in psychological fixation on objects or situations that do not promote inner balance⁵. The concept of passion in theology refers to forms of psychological dependency, which could be analyzed through theories of dependencies and pathological drives.

Attachment theory, as developed by John Bowlby⁶, provides an interesting framework for understanding how prospatheia leads to the formation of complexes. According to this theory, humans seek to create emotional bonds with objects and people in their environment, pursuing security and comfort. However, prospatheia, as described in Neptic Theology, represents the inability of an individual to maintain a balanced relationship between the material and spiritual world. This disturbed relationship can lead to emotional dysfunctions, as one becomes trapped in an overly dependent relationship with the material world.

Bowlby noted that a lack of secure emotional bonds can lead to anxiety, depression, and other emotional disorders. Analogously, a person's attachment to the material world, as described by Symeon the New Theologian, can be seen as a pathogenic reaction that causes psychological anxiety and inner conflict. Prospatheia drives a person away from the vision of God, creating psychological distress and alienation from their spiritual nature.

IV. The Therapeutic Approach To Prospatheia According To Neptic Psychology

Understanding and managing prospatheia is crucial for achieving mental balance and well-being. Prospatheia, as a primary drive that shapes the basic drives of the psychosomatic person, requires a careful psychological approach for its treatment. Within this context, several questions arise: (a) Can psychological therapies focusing on the recognition and management of internal drives help individuals develop a healthier relationship with the material world? For instance, could Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) enhance an individual's ability to recognize and modify thoughts and behaviors that intensify prospatheia?

Additionally, can mindfulness techniques help individuals cultivate a more balanced relationship with their desires, allowing them to observe their thoughts and emotions without becoming excessively entangled in them? This approach could reduce the intensity of prospatheia and enhance the individual's ability to focus on more meaningful and sustainable goals.

A characteristic example of a complex, widely analyzed by many authors, is the abandonment complex. In classical and modern psychotherapeutic literature, the abandonment complex is described as a persistent, unconscious set of emotions of fear, insecurity, and worry arising from real or perceived experiences of

abandonment. These experiences may relate to childhood losses or rejections and continue to affect the emotional life and relationships of the person in adulthood. In therapy, a key method for addressing the abandonment complex is psychoanalytic exploration and restructuring of early experiences. Here, the individual is encouraged to recall childhood memories and process feelings of pain or loss associated with their current fear responses related to abandonment. Meanwhile, the therapist provides a safe environment, helping the individual to develop a sense of trust, which gradually reduces the fear of abandonment and allows the individual to experience a different kind of relationship from what they are accustomed to.

Another approach, associated with CBT, involves recognizing and reassessing thoughts and beliefs related to the abandonment complex. The therapist helps the individual identify automatic thoughts that arise in situations of fear or rejection and replace them with more realistic and less self-destructive beliefs. Through this process, the individual learns to recognize and manage the fear of abandonment in healthier ways, preventing the onset of symptoms or behaviors related to the complex. These approaches show that addressing complexes requires deconstructing old, destructive associations and building new relationships that reinforce security and acceptance.

In cases of complexes like abandonment, the behaviors exhibited may offer a sense of temporary relief or pleasure, but they are usually short-lived and often followed by feelings of anxiety, guilt, or disappointment. For example, individuals with an abandonment complex may develop clinging behaviors or a strong need for validation from others. Although these behaviors provide momentary pleasure or a sense of security, the relief is usually transient, and the individual often returns to a state of insecurity or disappointment. The pleasure derived from such behaviors resembles more a fleeting "pleasure of relief" that reinforces attachment to the behavior but, in the long run, maintains the vicious cycle of insecurity.

The drive to associate with a person who offers a sense of security is a natural human tendency. However, intense attachment to a person (prospatheia) and the experience of security that this intense (excessive) attachment creates satisfy both the drive for association (prospatheia) and simultaneously create a security complex (due to the pleasure of an excessive attachment). Here, we recognize that the sense of security, when based on excessive association with the person offering it, creates a complex that produces positive thoughts, feelings of pleasure, and behaviors. However, if the sense of security is disrupted for some reason (loss, abandonment) and the original security complex cannot function satisfactorily due to real experiences, it mutates into an abandonment complex. We thus observe that each complex may be a mutation of a previous complex due to excessive (intense) desire for association.

This perspective is particularly interesting, as it introduces the idea of complex mutation, showing how excessive prospatheia can evolve from a positive feeling (security) to a negative one (abandonment) when the initial relationship that created the security is disrupted. The excessive association and pleasure derived from it are strongly connected to the original security complex, making it appealing and reinforcing positive behaviors around it. However, when this is disrupted, the positive feeling loses its foundation, and the unmet need for association may lead to a stronger form of attachment or fear—in other words, an abandonment complex.

The idea that the new abandonment complex is not a separate entity but rather a "mutated" security complex provides depth in understanding psychological fluctuations. This view can aid therapeutic approaches by offering a "historical" way of identifying and deconstructing the original complex, highlighting the needs for association as roots that require attention and acceptance. Therefore, we can assert that every complex is the expression of a strong (excessive) desire for association that provides not only the fulfillment of a need but also the pleasure that accompanies it.

Each complex, then, can be seen as the result of an excessive desire for association, which, apart from fulfilling a need, also provides an element of pleasure. This pleasure, arising from the deep satisfaction of the desire, reinforces and sustains the complex. Thus, the excessive desire for association leads to the maintenance of behaviors and emotions that bring pleasure, even if, ultimately, the complex may lead to dysfunction.

This approach could redefine therapy, aiming at recognizing the deeper desire for association and developing more balanced ways of fulfilling it without leading to excess and complex-related behavior. Consequently, we could argue that meeting the needs of modern humans should be done to the extent necessary while avoiding the surplus pleasure they offer to prevent the formation of complexes. For example, ascetics, during the intake of necessary food for body sustenance, stop eating before feeling full, and during the process, they listen to readings from the Church Fathers or pray to avoid the surplus sense of pleasure that eating might bring.

This reasoning highlights the ascetics' practice as an attempt to limit natural needs to the essentials, avoiding the pleasure that accompanies their fulfillment. In this view, avoiding pleasure aims to prevent the creation of complexes that could arise from an excessive sense of satisfaction or attachment to a basic need.

It is interesting how ascetic practice becomes a "training" of the soul to maintain control over these desires, cultivating an attitude that does not focus on surplus pleasure but on the necessary relief from using goods. This practice contrasts sharply with the tendency of modern humans to frequently seek enjoyment and fulfillment, which, as we have observed, may contribute to the formation and maintenance of complexes.

Returning to Neptic Psychology, we could say that for preventive purposes, a person should be trained in childhood to relate to the material world in such a way that they do not experience pleasure, thus avoiding the creation of complexes. In adulthood, where complexes have already been established, an initial therapeutic reaction would be training the person to deal with the causes (actions, thoughts, emotions) that reinforce and sustain the complexes without seeking the pleasure they provide. In a second phase, through analyzing thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, the person should identify how these create surplus pleasure beyond necessity and attempt to avoid them, thus avoiding reinforcing the complex that creates them. This approach gradually leads to the dissolution of the complex, rather than its acceptance and integration, as proposed by Psychology.

This approach from Neptic Psychology is indeed interesting, as it introduces an alternative to contemporary psychological therapy. Rather than integrating or accepting complexes, Neptic Psychology proposes the gradual dissolution of complexes by avoiding the pleasure that reinforces them. The idea of training from childhood, so that the person relates to the material world moderately, lays the groundwork for a more conscious and controlled interaction with the world, something that can prevent excessive attachment. This attitude, although demanding, can offer a deeper self-control and an opportunity for disengagement from complexes, something not directly pursued in psychological practice. Separating pleasure from basic actions, thoughts, and emotions encourages an approach of self-discipline leading to inner liberation.

If we consider our entire discussion, how would we present a therapeutic approach to complexes according to Neptic Psychology?

A therapeutic approach to complexes according to Neptic Psychology can be defined as a process based on three main phases: prevention, understanding, and dissolution of complexes. This approach differs from psychological theories focused on acceptance or integration of the complex, as it aims at its elimination by avoiding surplus pleasure and training the individual in a conscious and balanced association with the material world.

Phase 1: Prevention from childhood

Neptic Psychology suggests that to prevent the development of complexes, a person should be trained from a young age to engage with the material world without experiencing excessive pleasure from such engagement. For example, in his teachings on sobriety and self-discipline, Evagrius Ponticus emphasizes the importance of self-control and ascetic practice so that one learns to limit sensory experiences and avoid excessive gratification (Philokalia, 1983). A practical example is the approach to food intake. According to the Neptic tradition, monks are trained to stop eating before reaching fullness and to pray or read spiritual texts during meals, thus avoiding the pleasure associated with eating. This practice prevents the association of food with excessive enjoyment and the potential formation of a complex.

Phase 2: Addressing complexes in adulthood

In adulthood, where complexes have already formed, Neptic Psychology proposes an initial therapeutic response focusing on training the individual to engage with the causes of complexes (e.g., actions, thoughts, emotions) without seeking the pleasure they provide. Understanding complexes through the regulation of pleasure is considered a fundamental step in weakening negative associations. For example, if a person suffers from a security complex created by excessive attachment, the Neptic approach would encourage them to develop a relationship that offers security without dependence. The absence of pleasure in this experience helps the individual weaken the complex without forming new attachments.

Phase 3: Analysis and dissolution of complexes

The third phase involves a deeper analysis and observation of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors linked to the complex. The goal is for the individual to identify how these provide pleasure and avoid them to weaken the complex. In his Seventh Catechetical Discourse, Symeon the New Theologian describes *prospatheia* as a bond of the mind with material things that, once recognized, can gradually be severed through watchfulness and discernment⁵¹. For example, a person with an abandonment complex may tend to seek validation from others through behaviors that offer temporary pleasure but, in the long run, maintain insecurity. Analyzing and recognizing these behaviors, combined with consciously avoiding them, gradually leads to the dissolution of the complex and a reduction in insecurity.

V. Conclusion

The therapeutic approach to complexes through Neptic Psychology relies on a combination of prevention, control of attachments, and conscious avoidance of pleasure. This methodology differs from psychological approaches, as it does not seek acceptance of the complex but rather its weakening. Through the practices of self-restraint and watchfulness, the Neptic tradition offers a model that emphasizes self-discipline and

the gradual elimination of complexes, guiding individuals toward a more meaningful and freer relationship with the material world.

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