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What Sets Up the Destiny of a Man?

(Translation by the joint efforts of Prof. Arthur C. Johnsson and Leo Berlips)

Text of the homage paid to Jean Mélon at the time of the handing over of SZONDI 2008 Prize

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To take the course towards Algiers, diploma of medicine in pocket, rather than to sign on to a career as a researcher at the F.N.R.S [Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique] is already in itself a first destiny orientation that our man achieves in August 1966.

To push for the third world, fleeing the odor of formol, our man is carried by his ideal (p+) and a necessity to repair (e+!!). Inspired by his political heroes, he settles as a doctor in the post of the Medico-Social Assistance to Bou Medfa, a small village without a real center at 100 km from Algiers. The uprooting is absolute. The only European in a radius of 40 km, among Arab inhabitants who trust only the medicine of the marabouts [Muslim hermits or saints], our man can hardly expand himself: he lives under the full whip of the “the shock of cultures”, the absence of communication and especially by not being able to appease his need for knowledge.

Oasis in this desert and the intensity of his relations: Monique, his wife, and Sarah, his daughter, initially, then Sophie was born in Blida in 1967.

Then, undoubtedly inspired by the proverb “What does not destroy, makes one stronger”, he feels here that a first effect of the destiny's scales tipping point: the scientific interests of our man divert from the somatic body and instead aspire to the funnel of the social sciences: sociology initially, then philosophy, cultural anthropology and, finally, the depths of the human psyche with psychoanalysis. Two Algerian years of assiduous, voracious readings with as hors d'œuvre the writings of Lacan, those of Freud as the main dish, and the delights of the Russian literature, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy and Chekhov, as dessert!

All the ingredients are there to germinate within the essence of our man the project to undertake a psychoanalysis as soon as possible after returning to his fatherland.

Christmas 1967 in Belgium, a new destiny turning: our man, undecided as to his future, is influenced by a televised vision of what he might become, and under the impulse of

Monique, organizes the meeting with his former professor of psychiatry, professor Maurice Dongier. Strong figure, psychoanalyst with intelligence tinted by humor, Maurice Dongier favored personal contact and the psychoanalytical dimension over pharmaceutical therapy. He is undoubtedly the first to recognize by his regard (Note 1) and his sharpened intelligence the values of our man. He engages him in his service of Medical Psychology and opens to him completely the doors of the legendary room 45.

In this court of miracles, where neurotics rub elbows with hysterics, borderline cases, severe obsessional and psychosomatics -- there is enough to deepen the field of psychopathology. But, our man has a real predilection for all that is in the margin of the margin -- when it rolls, it is never on only one tape but of two at the same time, and when he proceeds, it is often the drains and the edges of pavements that receive his steps. Thus, hardly had he put a foot in room 45 that the other foot pushed him already toward other faces.

New blow dealt by fate: September 1st, 1968, 8:30 in the morning, the photographs of the test of Szondi are there on the table of the meeting room. The shock of the encounter is immediate and powerful: our man literally is hypnotized by these photographs, monopolized by the glances of these lunatic beings, at such a point that the service nurse takes him for a patient and invites him to take the test!

This nurse with several of her colleagues is charged to give the Szondi test to all the patients, ten days continually, for the research task of a student in psychology in Leuven [a city in Belgium]: Johny Van Massenhove, who carried out at the time a report on the coronary personality and tried to compare 70 complete tests of affected subjects with a myocardial infarction and 90 other tests of neurotic subjects affected with various psychosomatic ills.

Dongier had accepted that Johny Van Massenhove collects the protocols in his service, in exchange, with the demand to interpret the tests and to slip a copy of the interpretations into the file of the patients.

A real windfall for our man who is, consequently, in a hurry to sound out this enigmatic material.

Thanks to some bits of information distilled by J. Van Massenhove and the invaluable and intuitive collaboration of Monique, thus begins for our man a real work of hieroglyphic decoding.

In Room 45, our man is transformed quickly into the "Incredible Doctor Szondi".

September 1969, the IFSP, which will become in 1991 the “International Szondi Society”, organizes its 5th conference at the Catholic University of Leuven. Our man goes and discovers there that Szondi EXISTS! He is a living being, deeply incarnated, not a simple name of a locality!

For our man, this conference is also the occasion to discover the Szondian literature and the French translation by Ruth Pruschy of the first edition of “Lehrbuch der experimentellen Triebdiagnostik”. He devours it in one afternoon!

At the end of one intensive year of practice of the test, our man became the Szondi specialist.

The year 69-70, a new stroke of luck that he knows how to use: 4 “typical” mental anorexics are hospitalized in room 45 at about the same time. Albert Demaret, supervisor of the specialists candidates in psychiatry, proposes the idea to compare the Szondi tests of these 4 patients for similar characteristics as well as for the level of the symptoms and the personality traits. The result is particularly telling: the tests are almost identical.

Albert Demaret suggests then to his brilliant Szondien assistant to write an article and to send it to “Annales Médico-psychologiques”. You are persuaded that your article that is entitled “L’anorexie mentale au test de Szondi” [“Mental Anorexia in the Szondi Test”] will be refused. An error of assessment, since the article is accepted and appears about the middle of year 71.

The same year 1971, destiny offers his nicest gift to you: you open your mailbox and discover a letter from Szondi, in person! In this letter, Szondi thanks you for having published, in the Psychiatric Collection of Liege [les Feuilletts Psychiatriques de Liège], a very beautiful article entitled: “L’intérêt du test de Szondi en recherche psychosomatique” [“The Significance of the Szondi Test in Psychosomatic Research”].

It is by the intermediary of Walter Jäger, who directed at that time the psychological collection of the Editions Hans Hüber in Bern, that Szondi had been able to discover the article in which you summarize the essential data of the report of Johnny Van Massenhove, as well as the results of a Szondian study of a certain Karl Kohle of Munich, devoted to subjects affected by arthritis of the lower extremities. The two authors obtained concordant results.

You hastened to reply to this letter and to join your article about “mental anorexia” to it, like another treating reactions of the Italian immigrants of the first and second generation to the Szondi test.

The answer of Szondi does not take long: more than just a letter, a REGARD [regard, that deeply transforms the one who receives it: see Note 1].

A RECOGNITION, that of Szondi, that will enable you to transfer to the world a Szondian fervor multiplied by ten.

You start to write more and more, to teach, to organize seminars, and to attend to Jacques Schotte and his disciples of the School of Leuven.

It is Dongier, at the time of a European congress of Psychosomatic Medicine in May 70, who is the catalyst to the Schotte-Mélon meeting.

Szondi occupied a central place in the theoretical evidence as a platform for the creation of a new thought movement based in Louvain.

In spite of the many reminders by Dongier to keep to your daily work, you hyper invest in Szondi and his conceptual model, asserting it with much verve as the theoretical-clinical model par excellence, higher than all the others.

Resolutely determined to put forward the ideas of Szondi, you decide to embrace a university career with, at the horizon, a very concrete doctorate thesis.

The year 1972 is productive in Szondian research and in profitable exchanges with Szondi and in publications: one on the old lunatic schizophrenics in collaboration with Andre Lebas and another on the correlations between the index of total disorganization, constructed by yourself and the neurological, physiological anomalies presented by the patients of professor Martine Berthier. These two researches will be the object of two communications, at the 6th Szondi conference in Zurich, the afternoon of August 28th, 1972 – a date that for you will be marked as a red letter day since between two communications, you discover Susan Deri, who exposes her favorite topic: symbolization. The pleasure of the meeting with this woman is immense, her being the preferred disciple of Szondi and as brilliant as modest and cordial.

1972 is also the year that devotes your entry into didactic analysis: 4 meetings per week, the 5:30 train in the morning for Brussels, long hours passed in the train and the subway... a long voyage... in all the meanings of the term! Does not Freud compare the analytical cure with a voyage by train (?!), the analytical space with the compartment, free association with the landscape that scrolls and transforms with its outlook through the window, the railroad which upsets the perception of space and time, the railroad

vehicle that conveys all the fantasies, all the anxieties, all the exiles, the way of transport towards the unconscious.

A long voyage by train, during which you maintain an enthusiastic bond with the German language and the works of Leopold Szondi.

1972 is also the year of departures, separations and mournings: Maurice Dongier leaves Liege to settle himself at Montreal, where he is named Professor at the University McGill; your career projects are put at risk; you are forced to take up again your profession as a general doctor in a personal emotional context that is not easy: your mother falls ill and will die in January 1973.

However, in all these turbulences, destiny's thread continues its weave. . .

François Duyckaerts, then professor of clinic psychology at the Faculty of Psychology in Liege, psychoanalyst, and member of the Belgian society of Psychoanalysis, proposes to you that you become his assistant with the project to direct the psycho-therapeutic polyclinic that he wants to develop in his service.

You accept without a shade of hesitation: the proposal has significance and coheres with your will to articulate the clinical, according to the conceptual Szondi model, psychoanalysis and the impassioned desire to teach and transmit the practice of Szondi.

As a relentless worker, always carried by a very accentuated ideal, your courses of introduction to Szondi are presented in 335 pages of a book entitled "Theory and Practice of Szondi". The work will be initially printed by the "University Editions of Paris" (Editions universitaires de Paris), then published by the university presses of Liege, where it was republished due to demand until 1995.

Then the authorization came from the University of Liege that will enable you to spend one month at the Szondi Institute in Zurich to work there on your thesis: "Ego Features in a Szondi - Rorschach Comparison". The meeting with the unique and exceptional man who is Léopold Szondi will deeply mark you. The sharp spirit, scouring humor, always at the same hour, 5 o'clock the afternoon, Szondi poses to his disciple the pitiless question: "What new thing did you discover today?" and the disciple was supposed to respond by an unpublished discovery! A powerful bond will link the two men.

This stay in Zurich will generate the production of an article in the Psychiatric Repository of Liege, of which the title was shaped only by him "Szondi and Rorschach - Elements for a Reciprocal Comprehension" and both reflects and symbolizes the quality of this harmonious meeting between Szondi and Mélon.

In September 1975, Jacques Schotte presents to the Szondi Conference of Paris his periodic theory of the drive circuits that comes to revolutionize the structural design and secret organization of Szondi's drive diagram. It becomes possible to call upon another reference than that is the basic theoretical argument of the hypothetical quartet of the pairs of drive genes. For your part, you present the significant results of your research on the correspondences between Szondi and Rorschach.

There too, once again, destiny achieves its task: the lines of thought meet and are encased magnificently; your work corroborates the theoretical workings out of Schotte. You bring the clinical elements and tests that get an experimental base with the theoretical construction of Schotte.

This conference of Paris dedicates an alliance between Schotte and Melon that will never be broken. Schotte will entrust you the course of "Thorough Questions on Szondi" (Questions approfondies du Szondi) of which he was titular at the Catholic University of Leuven. You will assume this course between 1976 to 1986. Then, it is Philippe Lekeuche who takes over.

End of the year 1975, the constraint of reality comes knocking on your door: if there remains for you a chance to remain at the university in the drastic context of limitation of the number of teachers and researchers of the epoch, you should defend your thesis before May 20th, 1976. The date of defense is focused at May 16th, 1976; the thesis will have to be deposited at the latest on May 2nd. There remains to you only 4 months to write it!

Then starts an unrestrained labor! Carried by an oversized p++, you cleave the ocean, build a monument on the 461 tests of patiently-compared Szondi and Rorschach tests! Your daughters support you passionately: "Go dad, you will win!" and dad wins by carrying out his work on 427 pages, entitled: "Ego Features of Szondi, Rorschach and Freud". (Figures du Moi, Szondi, Rorschach et Freud).

The thesis cannot however be recognized at its right value by the members of the jury, inhabitants of Liège: Albert Husquinet, Meyer Timsit, Daniel Luminet and François Duyckaerts do not know anything about Szondi. Only Jacques Schotte is able to speak in praise of this titanic work by describing it as "the most important contribution to the work of Szondi since the beginnings!".

Szondi himself will not be long in transmitting once again his confidence and recognition in you by naming you "Foreign Assistant" of the Szondi Institute in January 1977.

The contract provides that you accentuate your collaboration with Schotte, that you continue the teaching of Szondi and that you ensure the diffusion of the thought of

Szondi in the French speaking countries through the direction of reports, the French translation of the work of Szondi and his followers, and the organization of conferences.

For you, this is unexpected and unhoped-for. With an enthusiasm and an incredible energy, you will multiply the Szondian activities and will create, with Schotte, many splendid and memorable times of intellectual meetings.

The decade of C erisy-La Salle, in August 1977, is one of these extraordinary events. C erisy is a success, a total success both by the number of participants and by the quality of the speakers. All famous sympathizers of the Szondian cause -- Henry Maldiney, Roland Kuhn, Edmond Ortigues, Jean Oury, Antoine Vergote, Maurice de Gandillac -- are present and contribute to raise the tone of the passionate debates.

In the C erisy decade, you will translate many conferences and works of Szondi, organize seminars and conferences, mainly in Paris, Lyon, Montpellier, Besancon and Dijon, and will persuade Schotte of the necessity to give still more structure to the Szondi activities of the Department of Clinic Psychology of Leuven.

Schotte has a saintly horror of any kind of structured organization. On the other hand, he delegates willingly and sees each new initiative as positive.

Consequently, when you propose to set up the "Szondi Archives", he names you Director of the Archives with Philippe Lekeuche as second in command. The goals of the "Archives" are that both of you gather a maximum of tests with the appropriate clinical histories and that you two join two evenings per week to engage and to develop thorough theoretic-clinical reflections.

It is in this bath of thoughts and intense intellectual exchanges that you, like Archimedes, find in 1979 the brilliant association, the intimate correspondence between the four Szondi vectors and the four primal fantasies of Freud: Return to the womb, Seduction, Primal scene, and Castration.

At the end of 1981, you start the writing of what was going to become "Drive Dialectics" (Dialectique des Pulsions) in association with Philippe Lekeuche, who takes care of the chapters treating contact and paroxysmality. The ideas only waiting to leave your two overheated brains, the book was quickly finished and appeared in the beginning of the year 1982.

The tandem Melon - Lekeuche functions well and carries out very beautiful collaborations in particular with the Montellier-Szondi group that will publish the "Fortuna Review", where the theses of Leuven will be largely developed.

However, the Louvanists' ideas do not achieve unanimity on the Szondi planet; they meet sharp resistances in particular by certain teachers of the Szondi institute: the Swiss Szondians remained faithful to the theory of instinctual genes and remain allergic to the winds that come from Leuven.

The 9th conference IFSP at Zurich, in September 1981, suffers from a deleterious climate, in fact of incomprehensions that come very close to a break. It is in this context that you are contacted by Ernst Schurch, president of the IFSP at the time. He comes to request your ability as a conciliator. Thus in order to prevent that the Szondien movement is not destroyed by a schism, you rewrite the opening the 10th conference; it will be entitled "Fateanalysis, Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis" (Schicksalsanalyse, psychiatrie and psychanalyse) and will be translated into German by Ernst Schurch, himself, at the conference.

This 10th conference will proceed in a climate more alleviated and will be ended by the proposal of Ernst Schurch that you succeed him as the president of the International Association. You accept, even if the task is very difficult, after being elected unanimously.

January 1986, Szondi dies at the age of 93 years. It is for you a great loss, and to manage the International Association after the death of Szondi is not simple. Your position of Foreign Assistant is removed in the month that follows the death of Szondi.

In the course of this same year 86, the team of Leuven decides to found an asbl [French: Non-Profit Organization] that will bear the name of C.E.P. (Le Centre d'Etudes Pathoanalytiques = The Center for the Study of Pathoanalysis), in reference to the neologism of "pathoanalysis" created by Schotte.

It is a matter for you and your Louvain friends to maintain as alive as possible the Szondi movement in the spirit of the thought of Schotte. It was necessary consequently for you to start again from that moment the publications, which you did by magnificently creating a new collection at Boeck, which will carry the name of "Library of Pathoanalysis" (Bibliothèque de Pathoanalyse). The first volume of the library will gather the principal communications of the speakers of the 1st conference of the C.E.P. in Brussels, in November 1988, around the topic of "contact", the second volume will be devoted to the republication, review and corrected "Drive Dialectics" (Dialectique des pulsions), the third will join together the most important articles of Schotte devoted to Szondi and will carry the title "Szondi with Freud" (Szondi avec Freud). As for the 4th volume, it will make it possible to the French-speaking readers to discover the excellence of the work of Susan Deri, "Introduction to the Test of Szondi" (Introduction au test de Szondi) translated into French by your care in 1989.

... And then this ... the proof that destiny did not say its last word... Yours... Mine too!

Yours, because during a walk in Liege, you will meet François Duyckaerts. He announces his retirement and invites you to present your candidature for his succession. After a long reaction time and only two days before deadline, you stand as a candidate. Against any expectation, you obtain two courses: “Clinical psychology” (60 hours) and “Case Analyzes” ” with, one year later, the proposal to be appointed professor at the Faculty of Psychology of the University of Liege. You will agree to teach a part-time load in order to be able to preserve your activity as a psychoanalyst and teacher at Leuven.

For my part of destiny, I, would not be here, delighted and proud to pay homage to you, if I had not had the chance to meet you.

At the time, in 1985-1986, I was only 20 years old. I chose clinical psychology as 1st license [undergraduate degree] at the University of Liege. I am in the expectation to satisfy my desire to understand the undercurrents of human psychopathology. Up to that point, in my courses, no large topics that relate to the psycho-dynamic processes; instead mainly psychiatric classifications that then had dominance. Consequently, when I push the door of the auditorium open and discover the new professor of clinical psychology, I have the strange sensation of plunging in a new universe...: an extraterrestrial in a turtleneck sweater with long sleeves captures the attention of the 150 faces that came to listen to him. A strange language leaves his mouth with a particular tonality: deep, demanding, fluid and light all at the same time. I am impressed and bear down hard my pen to lose nothing of this new language. For the first time, I receive a real teaching: that which will enable me to understand the unconscious processes and which, especially, will give me conscious insight.

As a part-time professor, you were entitled to a half-time assistant. As a student I was well far from imagining that one day the university would propose me to work with this O.V.N.I. [Unidentified Flying Object] professor who challenged me so much.

This is what happened however in 1988: with three good copies for consideration before you, you will have to choose your assistant! You entrust the analysis of the writings to Monique, who designates me as the person most adapted to your personality!

The continuation of this history will confirm the relevance of the graphological analysis of Monique: 10 years of enthralling collaboration on board of this inter-analytic Szondi flying saucer!

The council of the Faculty of Psychology did not make difficulties for you to organize a free course on Szondi and let the students register it in their program.

This recognition made it possible that your Szondi lectures can be followed by a growing number of students who, moreover, started to use the test to carry out their reports at the end of their study (pour réaliser leur mémoire de fin d'étude).

Thus, since 1990, we could set up of the intensive collective seminars where the Szondi reports (memoirs) were the subject of keen debates and made it possible to associate our energies so that the 12th international symposium at the University of Liege could be organized around the topic: "Drive, Destiny, Subject" (Pulsion, destin, sujet) !

Meanwhile, the Berlin Wall had fallen! For the first time Europeans of the East attended the congress, several Hungarians, in particular professor Lukacs of the University of Budapest.

The year 1993 could not proceed without commemorating with dignity the hundredth birthday of Léopold Szondi. The idea was thus launched for an extraordinary congress in Budapest in April 1993. In preparation for this congress, you ask your students who submitted the best contributions to write a summary in the form of an article. It is on the basis of these different articles that will be born the first number from the "Cahiers of the CEP".

Immediately after the congress of Budapest that was a success, you plunge into hard work in order to produce the documents of the congress in the next edition of "Cahier du CEP".

In the space of three years, from 1993 to 1996, the Cahiers publish 7 numbers, all in close connection with the thought of Szondi.

During this period of the Nineties, your energy with work is amazing. You multiply your commitments while the number of students registered in clinical psychology continue to increase. We are submerged by the requests for training courses and reports, and this situation becomes each year more burdensome. I am myself committed in the finalization of my doctorate thesis that must be imperatively defended before July 8th, 1995, the end date of my mandate as an assistant.

During two years, 1993-1995, while continuing to teach and accept many conferences of which one was for television entitled "Oedipus, Becoming a Man", (Oedipe, devenir un homme) produced by Arte [a Franco-German TV network], you will give me wholeheartedly the assistance needed to finish my thesis, a pharaonic [colossus] of 1500 pages on the decision-making process in older adolescents.

It was obviously too much for only one man, even for the one who flew like Superman! Your physical limitations largely exceeded, your body sounds the alarm bell

through angina pectoris crises that you initially refuse to take into account. However, when finally you decide to let yourself be examined, the diagnosis is without appeal; your coronary arteries are in a deplorable state.

August 13th, 1996, the very same day when you would have to make your presentation to the 14th congress of the International Szondi Society, you are operated in an open heart surgery and undergo a triple coronary bypass.

When you come out of the postoperative coma, you do not think anything else than of one thing: to resign from the Liege University. Your p+ has turned in p- !

After only 6 weeks of convalescence you again take up your usual activities. If nothing seemingly changed, something in you however is broken! You continue to analyze, to teach, and to write.

In May 1998, you publish a booklet entitled “Clinical Mixtures” (Mélanges cliniques), where appear Szondi articles written by former students.

In July 99, you take part in the 15th International Szondi Congress in Louvain la Neuf with the intention to make a long presentation entitled “Metapsychological Foundations of the Drive Diagram of Szondi” (Fondaments méta-psychologiques du schéma pulsionnel de Szondi) but you are literally exhausted.

Thus, on April 3rd, 2000, after having written 100 times your resignation letter and having torn it up 100 times, you slip your ultimate letter into the box of the Vice-Chancellor of the University. The answer of this mail is laconic, cold, brutal: “Resignation Accepted. Please fix date of departure”.

Thus, on September 30th, 2000, you leave the university ship, at a time when what you had sown produced the best harvest, but you had too largely exceeded the limitation of your forces to reconsider your resignation.

This was followed then by Marianne Debry, then professor of Clinical Child Psychology, who resigned the following week. The clinical department of the Faculty of Psychology found itself decapitated to the great despair of us all.

That being so, hardly had you left the university than already you were relaunched again, animated by former students who wanted the Szondi flame to continue to burn in Liege. You agreed to run a seminar every 3 months and create, since 2001, the Szondi seminars CHR of the Citadel [Centre Hospitalaire Regional de la Citadelle]. Those will be a splendid success until July 2005, date on which the bad condition of your arteries obliges you to slow down and to sacrifice the seminars of the Citadel.

Your body caught up with you and this time you listened to it, at the same time signing your entry in the final destiny phase: the phase of wisdom.

Your executed course is exceptional, unique, impassioned, passionate, and splendid!

It found its source in a LOOK (un REGARD), that of Léopold Szondi who recognized you in his letter of 1971. After being yourself deployed in the originality of your meanders, you can now draw its final form thanks to another letter, that of January 5th, 2008 that emanates from the Szondi Institute. You think that you did not pay your 2007 contribution and that it is about a cancellation !

Instead it is in fact the dreamed recognition signed with the hand of Alois Altenweger and Esther Genton-Meyer:

“You are the winner of the Szondi 2008 Prize” !

" Vous êtes le Laurát du Prix Szondi 2008" !

FIN

Note 1:

REGARD is a special expression used in Pathoanalysis probably originated by Lacan and with complex meanings but generally meaning an intense focusing on one or another carrying a deep psychological meaning. Particularly in Szondi's regard – his look and thus his recognition -- has a profound positive influence on Jean Mélon.