In the understanding of this system of assumptions, propositions and axioms regarding the formation, composition, and dissolution of emotional-psychological symptoms, there are essentially four phases that encompass the subject matter of symptom structure comprising the morphology and anatomy of symptoms. The first phase to be presented is actually a distillation of the exposition of the previous chapter.

Phase 1: Before the Symptom Forms

1. The pleasure principle of life starts it—we want what we want.
2. The chief example of how the pleasure principle works in everyday life concerns the drive that people have to realize their wishes. The drives are considered the Freudian classical drives of libido and aggression, and the wish becomes the chief representative of the pleasure principle. It is the pleasure principle that contains the drives. When the pleasure principle is gratified we feel empowered.
3. When a wish is thwarted, however, frustration is experienced.
4. The result of a thwarted wish and its subsequent frustration, is a feeling of helplessness or disempowerment.
5. The natural response to disempowerment is the emotional reaction of anger which in itself is a pleasurable alleviation of the frustration and disempowerment. This anger reflex is natural because when someone is disempowered, anger frequently becomes the only way to feel reempowered.
6. The need to repress the anger is based on social and psychological injunctions against aggression.

Phase 2: Formation of the Symptom

When anger is repressed, as in the event of a thwarted wish, and the inability, incapacity, or inaccessibility of expressing the anger directly exists, one must then, in order to further appreciate this process, remember anger’s basic personality.
That is, all anger wants to do, is attack. That is its basic nature. Therefore, when the anger is repressed, it can do nothing else but attack the self, the subject. It can do nothing else. The anger when repressed therefore, takes the self, attaches to the self, attacks the self.

This process of the target object morphing into the target-subject invokes another principle of emotion. Now to the proposition that each basic emotion has a unidimensional personality (anger, attacks; fear, flees), this must be added: In order to be fully realized as an emotion, to be fully crystallized as an emotion, the emotion must be targeted toward or attach itself to a person-the object. When the emotion cannot be directed to, or cannot “take” the object, then the emotion will just hang there, in a virtual state as it were, a condition that cannot be sustained because the emotion will not be fully realized without it attaching itself to a person-the subject becomes the object of the emotion. And here is the important moment. When the self, the subject, is attacked by the repressed anger, then this moment constitutes the instant of conception leading to the birth of the subsequent symptom.

Thus, the first step in understanding the genesis of symptom formation – and the organization of the symptom equation formulated in this volume – concerns the awareness that, on the face of it, the thwarted wish essentially deprives the pleasure principle of its reward. The second step emerges from the sense of disempowerment regarding this thwarted wish. The third step focuses on the reflex of anger as a response to the state of disempowerment in order to gain reempowerment. The fourth step is concerned with repression. When the anger, for whatever reason, cannot be directed toward its intended object, a person, a “who,” repression is therefore invoked and acts on the anger before the anger reaches consciousness. Now the anger is repressed and unconscious. The fifth step occurs when the anger is repressed, because accompanying the repression of the anger is the original wish that was thwarted or denied. In this respect it should be remembered that one of Freud’s seminal observations concerned his discovery that no wish will be denied. Therefore, the wish must, through repression, accompany the anger into the unconscious. There is no other way for the wish to be translated into the symptom if it is not, along with the anger, subject to repression. When the criterion of repression regarding both the anger and the wish, as material of the unconscious, is satisfied, only then is Freud’s axiom that no wish will be denied revealed as a truth. Only then, is step 6 achieved; that is, that the wish is realized albeit neurotically or perversely as the symptom, or simply that the symptom appears as a symbol of the wish.

The originally denied wish therefore accompanies the anger, pressed as it were, into the unconscious—repressed together. Another of Freud’s brilliant observations resonates here. Freud indicated that we love our symptoms, and this observation now makes sense. We love our symptoms, obviously, because symptoms are the wishes, fully gratified, though in symbolic form.

Review of the Six Steps of Symptom Formation in Phases 1 and 2

1. A wish is thwarted.
2. The subject is disempowered.
3. The subject becomes reflexively angry as a way of becoming reempowered.