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### **Rapprochement Subphase of the Separation-Individuation Process**

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From our studies of infantile psychosis, as well as from observations in well-baby clinics, we have already learned that the human infant's physiological birth by no means coincides with his psychological birth. The former is a dramatic, readily observable, and well-defined event; the latter is a slowly unfolding intrapsychic process.

For the more or less normal adult, the experience of being both fully 'in' and at the same time basically separate from the world 'out there' is one of the givens of life that is taken for granted. Consciousness of self and absorption without awareness of self are the two poles between which we move with varying degrees of ease and with varying alternation or simultaneity. This, too, is the result of a slowly unfolding process. In particular, this development takes place in relation to (a) one's own body; and (b) the principal representative of the world as the infant experiences it (the primary love object). As is the case with any intrapsychic process, this one continues to reverberate throughout the life cycle. It is never finished; it can always be reactivated; new phases of the life cycle witness later derivatives of the earliest process still at work (**cf., Erikson, 1959**). However, as we see it, the principal psychological achievements in this process take place in the period from about the fourth or fifth to the thirtieth or thirty-sixth months of

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age, a period that we refer to, in accordance with Annemarie Weil's (1954) helpful suggestion, as the separation-individuation phase.

During the course of a rather unsystematic, naturalistic pilot study, we could not help taking note of certain clusters of variables, at certain crossroads of the individuation process, in so far as they repeated themselves at certain points of the maturational timetable. This strongly suggested to us that it would be to our advantage to subdivide the data that we were collecting on the intrapsychic separation and individuation process in accordance with the behavioral and other surface referents of that process that we had found to be repeatedly observable (cf., Mahler, 1963), (1965). Our subdivision was into four subphases: *differentiation*, *practicing*, *rapprochement*, and a fourth subphase, occurring during the third year, which, the longer we studied it, the more cautiously did we have to designate it as '*the child on the way to object constancy*'. And according to my definition, it should be regarded as the stage in which a unified representation of the object becomes intrapsychically available, as the love object had been available to the child in the outside world during his complete and later partial need-satisfying object relationship stage.

When inner pleasure prevails as the result of the child's being safely anchored within the symbiotic orbit (which is mainly proprioceptive and contact perceptual) and when pleasure in the maturationally widening outer sensory perception (as, for example, vision) stimulates outward directed attention cathexis, these two forms of attention cathexis can oscillate freely (cf., Spiegel, 1959); (Rose, 1964). The result is an optimal symbiotic state out of which expansion beyond the symbiotic orbit and smooth differentiation from the mother's body can take place. This process, to which I gave the name 'hatching out', may be looked upon as a gradual ontogenetic evolution of the sensorium—the perceptual conscious system—, a 'tuning in' process that leads to the infant's having a more permanently alert sensorium when he is awake (cf. also, Wolff, 1959).

It is during the first subphase of separation-individuation that all normal infants achieve, through maturation of apparatuses, their first tentative steps of breaking away, in a bodily sense, from their hitherto completely passive lap-babyhood—the stage of dual unity with the mother. They push themselves with arms, trunk, and legs against the holding mother, as if to have a better look at her, as well as the surroundings. One is able to see their individually different inclinations and patterns, as well as the general characteristics of the stage of differentiation itself. All five-to-six-month-old infants like to venture and stay just a bit of a distance away from the enveloping arms of the mother; as soon as their motor function permits, they like to slide down from mother's lap, but they tend to remain as near as possible to her and to play at her feet.

Once the infant has become sufficiently individuated to recognize the mother, visually and tactilely, as not just part of the symbiotic dyad but as his partner in it, the fact that he is ready to take this step is indicated by his preferential, specific smiling response to and for mother. At about the same time, or perhaps within an interval of a few weeks, he then turns, with greater or less wonderment and apprehension (commonly called 'stranger reaction'), to a prolonged visual and tactile exploration and study of the faces of others, from afar or at close range. He appears to be comparing and checking the features—appearance, feel, contour, and texture—of the stranger's face with his mother's face, as well as with whatever inner image he may have of her. He also seems to check back, apparently to compare all other interesting new experiences with the mother's gestalt, her face, in particular.

It should be emphasized that we view separation and individuation as intertwined developmental processes, rather than as a single process. And they may proceed divergently, as the result of a developmental lag of one or other. We have observed that children who achieve premature locomotor development, and are therefore able and prompted to separate physically from their mothers, may become prematurely aware of

their own separateness much before their individuation (reality testing, cognition, etc.) has given them the means with which to cope with this awareness. On the other hand, we have found that in infants with overprotective and infantilizing mothers, individuation may develop well ahead, and may result in a lag of boundary formation and a lag in readiness to function as a separate individual without undue anxiety.

The period of differentiation is followed or, we might better say, is overlapped by a practicing period. This takes place usually from about seven to ten months, and continues of fifteen or sixteen months of age. In the course of processing our data, we found it useful to think of the practicing period in two parts: (a) the early practicing subphase, which overlaps with differentiation and is ushered in by the infant's earliest ability to physically move away from mother through crawling, climbing, and righting himself, yet still holding on; and (b) the practicing period proper, phenomenologically characterized by free upright locomotion.

During the early practicing subphase, throughout which crawling, paddling, pivoting, climbing, and righting himself are practiced by the infant, usually with much glee, these functions widen the child's world. Not only can he take a more active role in determining closeness and distance to mother, but the perceptual modalities that had up till then been used to explore the relatively familiar environment are suddenly exposed to a wider world; the sensorimotor intelligence, in Piaget's sense, takes a big step forward.

The optimal psychological distance in this early practicing subphase, would seem to be one that allows the infant, whose movements are mostly quadrupedal, freedom and opportunity for exploration at some physical distance from mother. It should be noted, however, that during the entire practicing subphase mother continues to be needed as a stable point, a 'home base' to fulfil the need for refueling through physical contact. We have seen seven-to-ten-month-old infants crawling or rapidly paddling to the mother, righting themselves on her

leg, touching her in other ways, or just leaning against her. This phenomenon was termed by Furer (1959/1960) 'emotional refueling'. It is easy to observe how the wilting and fatigued infant 'perks up' in the shortest time, following such contact, after which he quickly goes on with his explorations, once again absorbed in pleasure in his own functioning.

## **THE PRACTICING SUBPHASE PROPER**

With the spurt in autonomous functions, such as cognition, but especially upright locomotion, the 'love affair with the world' (Greenacre, 1957) begins. The toddler takes the greatest step in human individuation. He walks freely with upright posture. Thus, the plane of his vision changes; from an entirely new vantage point he finds unexpected and changing perspectives, pleasures, and frustrations (*cf.*, Greenacre). At this new visual level there is more to see, more to hear, more to touch, and all this is experienced in the upright bipedal position. How this new world is experienced seems to be subtly related to the mother, who is the center of the child's universe from which he gradually moves out into ever-widening perimeters.

During this precious six-to-eight-month period, for the junior toddler (ten-twelve to sixteen-eighteen months) the world is his oyster. Libidinal cathexis shifts substantially into the service of the rapidly growing autonomous ego and its functions, and the child seems to be intoxicated with his own faculties and with the greatness of his world. It is after the child has taken his first upright independent steps (which, by the way, more often than not he takes in a direction away from mother, or even during her absence) that one is able to mark the onset of the practicing period par excellence and of reality testing. Now, there begins a steadily increasing libidinal investment in practicing motor skills and in exploring the expanding environment, both human and inanimate. The chief characteristic of this practicing period is the child's great narcissistic investment in his own functions, his own body, as well as in the objects and objectives of his expanding 'reality'. Along with this, we

see a relatively great imperviousness to knocks and falls and to other frustrations, such as a toy being grabbed away by another child. Substitute adults in the familiar setup of our nursery are easily accepted (in contrast to what occurs during the next subphase of separation-individuation).

As the child, through the maturation of his locomotor apparatus, begins to venture farther away from the mother's feet, he is often so absorbed in his own activities that for long periods of time he appears to be oblivious to the mother's presence. However, he returns periodically to the mother, seeming to need her physical proximity from time to time.

The smoothly separating and individuating toddler finds solace for the minimal threats of object loss that are probably entailed in each new stage of progressive development in his rapidly developing ego functions. The child concentrates on practicing the mastery of his own skills and autonomous capacities. He is exhilarated by his own capacities, continually delighted with the discoveries he is making in his expanding world, quasi-enamored with the world and with his own omnipotence. We might consider the possibility that the elation of this subphase has to do not only with the exercise of the ego apparatuses, but also with the infant's delighted escape from re-engulfment by the still-existing symbiotic pull from the mother.

Just as the infant's peekaboo games seem to turn at this juncture from passive to active, to the active losing and regaining of the need-gratifying love object, so too does the toddler's constant running off (until he is swooped up by his mother) turn from passive to active the fear of being re-engulfed by, or fused with, mother. It turns into an active distancing and reuniting game with her. This behavior reassures the toddler that mother will want to catch him and take him up in her arms. We need not assume that this behavior is intended to serve such functions when it first emerges, but quite clearly it produces these effects and can then be intentionally repeated.

Most children, during the practicing subphase proper, appear to have major periods of exhilaration, or at least of relative elation. They are impervious to knocks and falls. They are low-keyed only when they become aware that mother is absent from the room, at which times their gestural and performance motility slows down, interest in their surroundings diminishes, and they appear to be preoccupied with inwardly concentrated attention and with what Rubinfine (1961) calls 'imaging'. During this period, the toddler's sensorimotor intelligence imperceptibly develops into representational intelligence and into concomitant emotional growth that characterizes the third subphase of the separation-individuation process—the period of rapprochement.

### **THE PERIOD OF RAPPROCHEMENT**

The rapprochement subphase (from about fifteen to twenty-two months, and very often far beyond the second birthday) begins hypothetically with the mastery of upright locomotion and the consequent diminishing absorption in locomotion and other autonomous functioning.

By the middle of the second year of life, the infant has become a toddler. He now becomes more and more aware of and makes greater and greater use of his physical separateness. Side by side with the growth of his cognitive faculties and the increasing differentiation of his emotional life, there is also, however, a noticeable waning of his previous imperviousness to frustration, as well as of his relative obliviousness to the mother's presence. Increased separation anxiety can be observed—a fear of object loss that can be inferred from many behaviors; for example, from the fact that when the child hurts himself, he visibly discovers to his perplexity that his mother is not automatically at hand. The relative lack of concern about the mother's presence that was characteristic of the practicing subphase is now replaced by active approach behavior, and by a seeming constant concern with the mother's whereabouts. As the toddler's awareness

of separateness grows, stimulated by his maturationally acquired ability physically to move away from his mother and by his cognitive growth, he now seems to have an increased need and wish for his mother to share with him his every new acquisition of skill and experience. These are the reasons for which I called this subphase of separation-individuation, the period of rapprochement.

Now after mastery of free walking and beginning internalization, the toddler begins to experience, more or less gradually and more or less keenly, the obstacles that lie in the way of what was, at the height of his 'practicing', an omnipotent exhilaration, a quite evidently anticipated 'conquest of the world'. Side by side with the acquisition of primitive skills and perceptual cognitive faculties, there has been an increasingly clear differentiation, a separation, between the intrapsychic representation of the object and the self-representation. At the very height of mastery, toward the end of the practicing period, however, it has already begun to dawn on the junior toddler that the world is *not* his oyster; that he must cope with it more or less 'on his own', very often as a relatively helpless, small, and separate individual, unable to command relief or assistance merely by feeling the need for them or giving voice to that need.

The quality and measure of the *wooing* behavior of the toddler toward his mother during this subphase provide important clues to the assessment of the normality of the individuation process. We believe that it is during this rapprochement subphase that the foundation for subsequent relatively stable mental health or borderline pathology is laid.

Incompatibilities and misunderstandings between mother and child can be observed at this period even in the case of the normal mother and her normal toddler, these being in part specific to certain seeming contradictions of this subphase. Thus, in the subphase of renewed, active wooing, the toddler's demands for his mother's constant participation seems contradictory to the mother: while the toddler is now not as dependent and helpless as he was half a year before, and seems eager to become less and less so, he even more insistently expects the



mother to share every aspect of his life. During this subphase, some mothers are not able to accept the child's demanding behavior; others cannot tolerate gradual separation—they cannot face the fact that the child is becoming increasingly independent of and separate from them, and is no longer a part of them.

In this third subphase, while individuation proceeds very rapidly and the child exercises it to the limit, he is also becoming more and more aware of his separateness and is beginning to employ all kinds of partly internalized, partly still outwardly directed and acted out coping mechanisms in order to resist separation from the mother. No matter how insistently the toddler tries to coerce the mother, however, she and he no longer function effectively as a dual unit; that is to say, he can no longer get her to participate with him in his still maintained delusion of parental omnipotence. Likewise, at the other pole of the erstwhile dual unity, the mother must recognize a separate individual, her child, in his own autonomous right. Verbal communication has now become more and more necessary; gestural coercion on the part of the toddler, or mutual preverbal empathy between mother and child, will no longer suffice to attain the child's goal of satisfaction, of well-being (cf., Joffe and Sandler, 1965). Similarly, the mother can no longer make the child subservient to her own predilections and wishes.

The junior toddler gradually realizes that his love objects (his parents) are separate individuals with their own individual interests. He must gradually and painfully give up his delusion of his own grandeur, often through dramatic fights with mother, less so it seemed to us, with father. This is a crossroad that we have termed the 'rapprochement crisis'.

Depending upon her own adjustment, the mother may react either by continued emotional availability and playful participation in the toddler's world or by a gamut of less desirable attitudes. From the data we have accumulated so far, we would state strongly that the mother's continued emotional availability is essential if the child's autonomous ego is to attain optimal functional capacity. If the mother is 'quietly available' with a

ready supply of object libido, if she shares the toddling adventurer's exploits, playfully reciprocates and thus helps his attempts at imitation, at externalization and internalization, then the relationship between mother and toddler is able to progress to the point where verbal communication takes over, even though vivid gestural behavior, that is, affectomotility, still predominates. By the end of the second or the beginning of the third year, the predictable emotional participation of the mother seems to facilitate the rich unfolding that is taking place in the toddler's thought processes, reality testing, and coping behavior.

The toddler's so-called 'shadowing' of the mother at fifteen to twenty months of age (an often encountered phenomenon that is characteristic of this subphase) seems obligatory, except in the cases of those mothers who by their protracted doting and intrusiveness, which spring from their own symbiotic-parasitic needs, become themselves the 'shadowers' of the child. In normal cases, a slight shadowing by the toddler after the hatching process gives way to some degree of object constancy in the course of the third year. However, the less emotionally available the mother has become at the time of rapprochement, the more insistently and even desperately does the toddler attempt to woo her. In some cases, this process drains so much of the child's available developmental energy that, as a result, not enough may be left for the evolution of the many ascending functions of his ego. We shall illustrate the characteristics and certain typical conflicts of the rapprochement subphase with a few vignettes.

During the period of rapprochement Barney behaved with particular poignancy. He had gone through a typical, although precocious, 'love affair with the world' in which he would often fall and hurt himself and always react with great imperviousness. Gradually he became perplexed to find that his mother was not on hand to rescue him, and he then began to cry when he fell. As he became aware of his separateness from his mother, his previous calm acceptance of knocks and falls began to give way to increased separation anxiety.

Early maturation of Barney's locomotor function had confronted him with the fact of physical separateness from his mother, before he was fully ready for it at nine to ten months of age. For this reason, we believe, he displayed to an exaggerated degree during his period of rapprochement the opposite of 'shadowing'. He would challenge mother by darting away from her, confidently and correctly expecting her to run after him and sweep him into her arms; at least momentarily he had undone the physical separateness from her. The mother's own increasingly frantic response to the dangerous darting made Barney, in turn, intensify and prolong this behavior so that his mother for a while despaired of being able to cope with Barney's 'recklessness'. We see this behavior as the result of the precocious maturation of the child's locomotor functions coupled with the relative lag in maturation of his emotional and intellectual functions. Hence, he could not properly evaluate, or gauge, the potential dangers of his locomotor feats.

The imbalance between the developmental line of separation and that of individuation, causing a jumbled intermeshing of factors of the second, the practicing, and the third, the rapprochement subphases, appeared to have set an overdetermined pattern of accident proneness in this child (cf., Frankl, 1963). Barney's reckless behavior had introjective qualities as well. It was, as every symptomatic behavior is, overdetermined. It no doubt also derived from identification with, or better stated, from introjection of his father's sports-loving nature. (The children were permitted to watch and admire, and, at times, to participate in their father's highly risky athletic feats.)

Barney's mother, whom we observed as the ideal mother during Barney's early practicing subphase, now at his chronological age of the rapprochement subphase would alternately restrict Barney or, from sheer exhaustion, give up altogether her usual alertness to his needs and her previous high level of attunement to his cues. She would either rush to him in any situation, whether or not his need was real, or she would find herself keeping away from him at a time when she was really

needed; in other words, her immediate availability became unpredictable to her, no less than to him.

The disturbance of the relationship between Barney and his mother during this period was not a total one, however, nor did it, we believe, inflict permanent damage on Barney's personality development. Neither hostility, splitting, nor increased and more permanent ambivalence resulted. Barney continued to bring everything within reach to his mother to share, filling her lap. He would have periods in which he sat quietly and did jigsaw puzzles or looked at picture books with his mother, while remaining full of confidence and basic trust toward the world beyond the mother.

This mother-child relationship became mutually satisfactory again with the advent of the fourth subphase, as a result of which Barney in the third year became a patient, well-functioning, and, within normal limits, more sedentary child. I believe that Barney's very satisfactory symbiotic, differentiation, and early practicing subphases, as well as the fact that his father (with whom he roughoused and whom he hero worshipped), became an important part of his world during his second year of life, were all favorable factors in his development.

A different manifestation of the crisis of the third subphase was observable in Anna. Her mother's marked emotional unavailability made Anna's practicing and exploratory period brief and subdued. Never certain of her mother's availability, and therefore always preoccupied with it, Anna found it difficult to invest libido in her surroundings and in her own functioning. After a brief spurt of practicing, she would return to her mother and try to engage her with greater intensity by all possible means. From such relatively direct expressions of the need for her mother as bringing her a book to read to her, or hitting at the mother's ever-present book in which she was engrossed, Anna turned to more desperate measures, such as falling or spilling cookies on the floor and stamping on them, always with an eye to gaining her mother's attention, if not involvement with her.

Anna's mother was observed to be greatly absorbed in her own interests which were anything but child-centered. She emphasized with seeming satisfaction and with some mock self-depreciation that both her older children seemed to have preferred their father, who had apparently shared the mother's task in diapering and bottle-feeding the babies.

We observed in Anna, as early as the ninth and tenth month, an increased clamoring for closeness to mother, a refusal to accept any substitutes in the mother's presence, let alone in her absence, and a greatly reduced pleasure in and diminution of activity. She had far too little investment of libido in practicing the autonomous partial functions of her individuating ego; approaching, even beseeching, behavior toward mother far outweighed any involvement in activity away from mother. Hence there was a complete overlapping and intermingling of characteristics of both the practicing and rapprochement subphases.

Whereas all the landmarks of individuation—the development of partial motor skills, of communication, of imitation and identification, and of defenses—appeared at appropriate times, there was minimal progress toward object constancy (in Hartmann's sense).

Concomitant with Anna's inability to let mother out of sight, her activities and movements were low-keyed: they lacked the vivacity and luster that was characteristic of the behavior of her practicing contemporaries. Her happier moods and greater vivacity, which coincided with the achievement of free walking, were fleeting. On the other hand, her language development was even precocious.

Anna's chronic frustration in her attempt to win her mother's love had noticeably impaired the amalgamation of libido and aggression. Her ambivalence visibly affected her mood, which was characterized by ready smiles when her mother or a father substitute approached her, but which quite readily switched to the opposite—moroseness, unhappiness, and even despair. This reminded us of the mood swings and fluctuations of self-esteem that we observe so conspicuously in borderline phenomena in the psychoanalytic situation.

In our study we had a fairly good setup, we feel, for gauging the junior and later the senior toddler's capacity to function in the mother's presence, and to compare it with his functioning during the brief periods of her physical absence. The latter situation varies from the mother's just being in the adjacent nursery, or in the nearby interviewing room, to being out of the building. The toddler stays within a familiar setting, with familiar adults and contemporaries.

It may be of interest for me to relate a few details of Anna's personality development in the fateful 'second eighteen-month period of her life'. It had already been observed by us that Anna's play had a quality of early reaction-formation. The mother reported that Anna had shown disgust when she gave her a portion of her older brother's clay to play with, and this had been as early as eighteen or nineteen months. Anna's toilet training started at about twenty months, seemingly without pressure. Anna was already saying the word 'do-do' at that age and at first her mother was quite well attuned to cues from her concerning her toilet needs. She praised Anna whenever the latter produced either urine or feces. From her twentieth month on, Anna was repeatedly heard saying, 'Bye-Bye, wee wee', as she pulled the chain to flush the toilet. Soon, however, many observers noted that Anna was beginning to request bathroom trips whenever she wanted her mother's attention, or whenever she wanted to prevent mother from leaving the room for an interview—in any event, more frequently than she could actually have had a bowel or urinary urge.

Anna was bowel trained by twenty-two months, and at that age she went for days without wetting. At the beginning of toilet training (particularly bowel training), we saw that Anna was willing and able to oblige her mother so that both mother and daughter found in the toileting an emotionally and positively charged meeting ground. But within two months, toileting had been drawn into the conflictual sphere of this mother-child interaction. At around twenty-three

months of age, Anna used wetting all across the room as a weapon. Her mother was then pregnant and, as time went on, her pregnancy caused her to become narcissistically self-absorbed. She had fewer and fewer positive reactions to Anna's demands to accompany her to the upstairs bathroom at home. In fact, she told us that she asked her then four-year-old son to substitute for her in taking Anna to the toilet. The boy, we later learned, did not miss the opportunity to provocatively and aggressively display his manly prowess, his penis, to his little sister. Anna's penis envy thus gained momentum, as did her defiance of mother.

A battle around toilet training ensued between Anna and her mother. At around two years of age, twenty-four to twenty-seven months to be exact, Anna started to use her sphincter control to defy her mother. From twenty-two months on, severe constipation developed in the wake of Anna's deliberate withholding her feces.

We did not see Anna for about three months (from her twenty-fifth to her twenty-eighth month) during which time a sister was born.

Anna returned at twenty-nine months of age. Her mother carried the baby sister, Susie, with Anna following close behind. The mother looked harassed and tired as she entered the room, and, with a tight smile, exclaimed, 'I feel filthy dirty, and so mad, mad, mad!'. She complained that Anna 'is driving me crazy'. Anna had indeed been very difficult, whining, and demanding, but, in addition, for the past two or three days had been withholding her feces and had not had a bowel movement. The mother mimicked Anna as she held her thighs tightly together and stamped her feet. She also said that Anna was in pain most of the time and actually very uncomfortable. The pediatrician, she reported, had assured her that this was a normal occurrence after the birth of a new baby and that she should take it calmly and pay no attention to Anna's toileting at this time. Making a hopeless gesture, 'But I simply can't do it; I just get so mad'.

Anna was observed in the toddler's room playing with water. This, however, is not the kind of play that children her age usually enjoy, and it appeared to us to be of a more 'compulsive' nature. She began to scrub a bowl to which flour had stuck and was very determined to scrub it clean, becoming annoyed when she could not do so. She looked up at the observer and said, 'bowl not clean'. All this while Anna seemed most uncomfortable. She obviously needed to defecate and was under continual bowel pressure. Beads of perspiration appeared on her forehead and the color would come and go from her face. Twice she ran to the toilet. She sat on the toilet and urinated; then she got up and became preoccupied with flushing the toilet. She went back to the toddler room and listlessly played with dough, but again, and all during her play, Anna was in discomfort and kept jiggling and jumping, with the color repeatedly draining from her face. Finally, she jumped up and ran to the toilet, sat down on it, and said to the observer, 'Get me a book'. Sitting and straining, she looked up at the observer with a rather painful expression on her face, and said, 'Don't let Mommy in, keep Mommy out, keep Mommy out'. The observer encouraged her to talk about this some more, and she said, 'Mommy would hurt me'. She then looked at the book, at the pictures of the baby cats and baby horses, and as the observer was showing the pictures of the baby farm animals, Anna began to look as though she was particularly uncomfortable. She looked down at her panties, which had become stained, and said she wanted clean ones. Finally, in extreme discomfort, she seemed unable to hold back the feces any longer, and called out, 'Get me my Mommy, get me my Mommy'. Her mother came quickly, sat down beside her, and Anna requested that she read to her.

A participant observer watched from the booth, and noted that the mother was reading the same book about farm animals that the first observer had previously read to Anna. Pointing to the animals, the toddler was heard to say, 'My



Poppy has a piggy in his tummy'. Her mother looked perplexed and asked Anna, 'What?'. Anna repeated the sentence. The mother seemed distraught as her daughter was now talking gibberish. She felt Anna's forehead to see whether she was feverish, but the child smiled, pointed to the book again, and said, 'No, it's a baby horse'. At this point, with a blissful expression on her face, Anna defecated. After her bowel movement, Anna was more relaxed; she played peekaboo with the door, asking the observer to stand behind it.

In this episode, the sequence of behaviors and verbalizations enabled us to draw conclusions, to reconstruct, as it were, the development of Anna's early infantile neurosis in statu nascendi. With her deficient emotional supplies from maternal support, the development of autonomy had not been enough to gradually replace the obligatory early infantile symbiotic omnipotence. In spite of her excellent endowment, Anna was unable to ward off the onslaught of separation anxiety and the collapse of self-esteem. Her anger at mother for not having given her a penis was unmistakable in her verbal material. She coveted those gifts that mother received from father, among which was a porcelain thimble which she was allowed to keep. Anna turned in her disappointment to father, and, when mother became pregnant, in a perplexed way she obviously equated gift with baby, with feces, and with penis. She showed great confusion about the contents of the body: her own pregnancy fantasies were quite evident, but she was unclear as to who had what in his or her belly. She seemed to expect a baby in the belly of her father, as well as in her mother's. The equation of feces = baby = phallus was explicitly expressed in her behavior.

The mother-toddler relationship was such that Anna had to defend the good mother against her destructive rage. This she did by splitting the object world into good and bad. The good was always the absent part-object, never the present object. To clarify this, let me describe another sequence of events and verbalizations in Anna's third year. Whenever

her mother left, she had temper tantrums and would cling to her beloved and familiar play teacher, but not without verbally abusing her while still keeping her arms around her neck. When they read a book together, Anna found fault with every picture and every sentence that the playroom teacher offered; she scolded the teacher, everything was the opposite of what the teacher said, and she was 'Bad, Bad, Bad'.

I watched this behavior from the observation booth and ventured quietly into the playroom where I sat at the farthest corner from Anna and her loved-and-hated teacher. Anna immediately caught sight of me and angrily ordered me out. I softly interpreted to Anna that I understood: Anna really wanted nobody else but her Mommy to come back in through that door and that was why she was very angry. She was also very angry because not Mommy but the observer was reading to her. I said that she knew that Mommy would soon come back. With my quasi interpretation, some libidinal channels seemed to have been tapped; the child put her head on the observer's shoulder and began to cry softly. Soon, the mother came back. It was most instructive to see, however, that not a flicker of radiance or happiness was noticeable in Anna at that reunion. Her very first words were, 'What did you bring me?', and the whining and discontent started all over again. For quite a while Anna did not succeed in attaining a unified object representation or in reconciling the synthesized good and bad qualities of the love-object. At the same time, her own self-representation and self-esteem suffered.

By contrast, what we saw in Barney's case was merely a transitional developmental deviation in the form of a rapprochement crisis. In Anna we observed a truly neurotic symptom-formation, developing on the basis of a rather unsatisfactory mother-child relationship yet activated and, to a great extent, produced by accumulated traumata.

Till way beyond the fourth subphase, Anna's relationship to her mother remained full of ambivalence. Her school

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<sup>1</sup> The follow-up study is being conducted by John B. McDevitt, M.D. with Anni Bergman, Emmagene Kamaiko, and Laura Salchow, the author of this paper serving as consultant. It is sponsored by the Board of the Masters Children's Center.

performance was excellent, however. Constipation continued as a symptom for several years. Her social development was good. Our follow-up study will tell us more about the fate of her infantile neurosis.<sup>1</sup>

## **SUMMARY**

In our observation of two toddlers, we saw why the rapprochement crisis occurs and why in some instances it becomes and may remain an unresolved intrapsychic conflict. It may set an unfavorable fixation point interfering with later Oedipal development, or at best add to the difficulty of the resolution of the Oedipus complex.

The developmental task at the very height of the separation-individuation struggle in the rapprochement subphase is a tremendous one. Oral, anal, and early genital pressures and conflicts meet and accumulate at this important landmark in personality development. There is a need to renounce symbiotic omnipotence, and there is also heightened awareness of the body image and pressure in the body, especially at the points of zonal libidization.

Three great anxieties of childhood meet at this developmental stage. 1. While the fear of object loss and abandonment is partly relieved, it is also greatly complicated by the internalization of parental demands that indicate beginning superego development. In consequence, we observe an intensified vulnerability on the part of the rapprochement toddler. 2. Fear in terms of loss of the love of the object results in an extra-sensitive reaction to approval and disapproval by the parent. 3. There is greater awareness of bodily feelings and pressures, in Greenacre's sense. This is augmented by awareness of bowel and urinary sensations during the toilet training process, even in quite normal development. There

is often displayed, and in some instances quite dramatically, a reaction to the discovery of the anatomical sex difference with prematurely precipitated castration anxiety.

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