



## Of Human Bonds and Bondage

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One of the core problems faced by humans is the polar tension between the striving toward individuation and the yearning for symbiotic unity with some person, group, or power „outside“ of one's self. The universality of this human dilemma is derived, in part, from the biological helplessness of the infant who requires prolonged protection, nourishment, and stimulation for his very survival and development. The particular shape of the symbiotic unit and the qualities of the individuation process are, of course, very much a function of the particular culture and family in which the child develops. The child in India or in some Mediterranean countries experiences a much more prolonged dependency upon and unity with his mother in comparison with the middle-class American child of whom weaning, toilet training, and psychic individuation are expected at a much earlier age. Nevertheless, in all cultures—even those with extended families or clans—varying degrees of psychic individuation are experienced, deriving from maturational forces unfolding within the organism as well as through cultural molding. One way of looking at individual and family development would be as a struggle or conflict to achieve a certain equilibrium between the polar tendencies of individuation and symbiotic fusion.

In 1941, in *Escape from Freedom*,<sup>1</sup> Erich Fromm distinguished two kinds of human bonds: 1) „primary ties,“ which are „organic in the sense that they are part of normal development“ and „exist before the process of individuation“<sup>2</sup>; and 2) „secondary bonds,“ as a „substitute for the [085] primary bonds which have been lost.“<sup>3</sup> Fromm described the secondary bonds as mechanisms of escape from the terrible sense of separateness, aloneness, powerlessness, and inferiority stemming from faulty individuation and inadequate forms of subsequent relatedness. He introduced the concept of *symbiosis*, which „means the union of one individual self with another self (or any other power outside the own self) in such a way as to make each lose the integrity of its own self and to make them completely dependent on each other.“<sup>4</sup> A new depth of understanding of authoritarianism, sadomasochism, and symbiotic relatedness was brought into focus when these latter three concepts were viewed as being thoroughly interwoven one with the other. The sadistic person was seen to need his object as much as the masochistic one needed his. Both character types—sadistic and masochistic—were

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<sup>1</sup> Erich Fromm, *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Rinehart & Co., 1941).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.



seen as essentially authoritarian and failing to stand the „aloneness of one’s individual self that leads to the drive to enter into the symbiotic relationship with someone else ... there is a constant oscillation between the active and passive side of the symbiotic complex ...“<sup>5</sup> In *The Heart of Man* Fromm takes a more developmental view of symbiosis when he states that it would be misleading to use the concept of „dependency“ in speaking of symbiotic attachment since the „dependency“ presupposes „the clear distinction of two persons one of whom is dependent on the other.“<sup>6</sup>

It is of historic psychoanalytic interest that in 1941 when the Oedipus and castration complex held sway as principal motivational sources of behavior, Fromm had observed that man’s fear of separateness was an even more primary source of motivation in his interpersonal behavior. In the ensuing thirty years the research work connected with psychoanalysis and early child development was to go exactly in a similar direction. The work of Spitz,<sup>7</sup> Bowlby,<sup>8</sup> and Mahler,<sup>9</sup> for example, have all emphasized *by direct observation of infants* what Fromm had hypothesized in connection with his psychoanalytic and social-psychological work. In this paper our [086] goal is to point to some of the individual developmental precursors to Fromm’s concepts concerning man’s ultimate dilemma—the fear and the wish to be free—as well as some early observations connected with the „answers“ to this dilemma. Three classes of developmental responses or tendency systems—corresponding only roughly to the „mechanisms of escape“ and „productive orientation“ that Fromm has described as man’s means of coping

with his ultimate sense of separateness and finitude—could be grouped as follows:

- I Attachment, Symbiosis, Relatedness
- II Individuation, Detachment, Isolation
- III Integration, Reconciliation, Creation

Of these, only the first two groups will be dealt with in this paper. Each class of responses will be seen to have a healthy or pathologic potential, depending upon the developmental context in which they were born and upon the defensive function which they may have to serve in relation to anxiety and stress. Class III refers to the integrations and reconciliations that arise, in part, out of conflicts and tensions engendered by the child’s yearnings toward fusion, dependency, and his strivings for personal autonomy—representing his own developmental progression from the relatively global symbiotic stages to the more differentiated stages of individuation which will be considered in this paper. Some of these higher-level integrations include: the increasing working through of ambivalence (the reconciliation of good and bad dissociated personifications); the movement from exclusivity, possessiveness, and control to mutuality in relationships; the development and elaboration of imagination, play, creativity, and a set of ideals—which all function as the means by which new-level integrations can take place. For example, in the movement from simple use of transitional objects to structured dramatic play, the child increasingly can achieve the sense of creating his world, as he is producer, director, and actor in his drama all at the same time.

### I Attachment, Symbiosis, Relatedness

This group of behaviors and attitudes refers to tendencies in which one person finds or puts himself in proximity or in relationship to another person or persons. In his recent theoretical reformulation, Bowlby dispenses with his former theory of „instinctual drives“ and replaces this with a more sophisticated ethological model wherein certain behavioral systems [087] become activated *in interaction with the environment* in such a way that proximity to mother

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>6</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Heart of Man* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 104.

<sup>7</sup> Rene Spitz, *The First Year of Life: A Psychoanalytic Study of Normal and Deviant Development of Object Relations* (New York: International Universities Press, 1965).

<sup>8</sup> John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss: Vol. 1, Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1969).

<sup>9</sup> Margaret Mahler in collaboration with Manuel Furer, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation* (New York: International Universities Press, 1968).



becomes a „set-goal.“<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, Bowlby tends to remain behaviorally oriented—underplaying the psychoanalytic aspects of attachment behavior—namely, the *mental representations* or *personifications* of mother by infant and infant by mother, and how these mutually influence one another.

Mahler has most specifically focused on both the pathological and, in her later work, the normal developmental phases of symbiosis and separation-individuation. The mother is seen to function as the „executive ego“ for the relatively undifferentiated and helpless ego of the infant within a „dual unity.“<sup>11</sup> As the infant's ego and its functions develop in their capacity to differentiate self from other, to reach and later locomote toward a goal and attain the relative autonomy and mastery in a number of other ego functions, the infant is said to „hatch“ from the symbiotic membrane and achieve a beginning individuated selfhood.<sup>12</sup>

It is useful in conceptualizing the first human relationship (mother-child) to attempt to go beyond the descriptive behavioral attachment model of Bowlby and the symbiotic model of Mahler to a model of *reciprocal relatedness* that is more fully developmentally interactional. In such a model not only is the infant seen to be going through maturational and developmental changes but mother, and indeed the *whole family* and *cultural* matrix, is seen to have a transactional feedback effect upon the developing infant as well as vice versa.<sup>13</sup> From

our own observations of mother-child couples, the *mother* can also be seen as part of the symbiotic unit from which *she* gradually „individuates,“ partly in reciprocal relation to various developments on the infant's part. For instance, in the third to fourth [088] months of life, when the infant can grasp and mouth certain objects and thereby entertain himself, mother feels more ready to provide some life space and time between herself and her child. If the mother needs to cling to the symbiotic unit at any stage of early development and is threatened by the infant's newfound capacities to function more independently, she will find ways to obstruct—or at least not facilitate—individuation on the part of the infant. On the other hand, we have also become sensitized to developmental lags and deviations in the infant that necessitate a more prolonged or altered phase of symbiotic relatedness between mother and child. Whereas not too long ago the parent was simplistically seen as the sole culprit in the obstruction of healthy individuation—the primeval prototype being the „schizophrenogenic“ mother—we now look for the mutual influences of parental *and* child development on a given outcome of the individuation process. We are also aware of the tremendous burden carried by the parents of the average nuclear family alienated from a meaningful communal matrix. As extended families and their value systems disintegrate, young parents are attempting—with difficulty—to form new extended family surrogates through groups of friends with common ideals—including experimental communes—in which they take care of and teach each others' children. Parents unsupported by traditional frames of orientation connected with child rearing find it an awesome and anxiety-ridden task to bring up their children, and often do so in a spirit of quiet and alienated desperation. The adolescent and young adult uses a variety of „secondary ties“ to achieve new levels of symbioticlike forms of relatedness, partly in preparation for the task of

child couples using this frame of reference, which we can refer to as *family development*. See also the concept of „dialogue“ in Rene Spitz, „Life and the Dialogue,“ in *Counterpoint: Libidinal Object and Subject*, Herbert S. Gaskill (ed.) (New York: International Universities Press, 1963).

<sup>10</sup> Bowlby, *op. cit.*, pp. 179-180.

<sup>11</sup> As with Fromm's and Sullivan's shift from libidinal drive theory to interpersonal relatedness, Mahler's concept of symbiosis is cast largely in social terms, e.g., „The intrauterine parasite-host relationship ... must be replaced in the postnatal period by the infant's being enveloped, as it were, in the extra-uterine matrix of the mother's nursing care, a kind of *social symbiosis*“ (Margaret Mahler, „On Child Psychosis and Schizophrenia: Autistic and Symbiotic Infantile Psychoses,“ *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 7 [1952], 286-305).

<sup>12</sup> Mahler, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation*, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> I have elsewhere (David E. Schecter and H. Corman, „Some Developments in Early Parent-Child Interaction“ [unpublished paper, 1970]) reported in detail on the very early development of two mother-



parenting a new generation.

In a recent paper, „The Emergence of Human Relatedness,”<sup>14</sup> I have attempted to review the literature on the theories of the origins of human attachment and to indicate the many dimensions of experience that contribute to the formation of such attachment. In order to examine the subtle relationship between the concepts of human *bonds* and human *bondage* it will be necessary to summarize in some detail the experiential roots of the first human relationships. The sources of our data derive from the literature of infant research as well as from our own research.<sup>15</sup> In the above [089] mentioned paper we stated that the roots of the primary social bond could not be reduced to oral drive, to need for contact comfort, tension reduction, nor to the five primary „instinctual responses“ (sucking, clinging, following, crying, and smiling) postulated by Bowlby in 1958. Though all of these factors obviously play a significant role, we turned our attention to the experience associated with sensory and social stimulation and *reciprocal interaction*—often playful and not necessarily drive-connected or tension-reducing—as constituting a basis for the development of specific social attachment. The human face when presented in the form of a social approach—with nodding, smiling, and musical vocalizations—is a most potent evocator of the infant’s smiling response. Within the facial gestalt the eyes, as well as the mouth, are crucial elements in determining the affective response in the infant.<sup>16</sup> After a certain age a forbidding frown evokes an affect of displeasure in the infant in contrast to his pleasurable response to the adult’s smile. This kind of more or less predictable sequence lays the groundwork for certain basic forms of behavior patterns which, in inter-

action with the infant’s constitutionally given temperamental equipment, lead to relatively stable structures of character and personality. We have seen how, through reciprocal playful experience, the infant comes to anticipate and learn that *he can evoke* a social response even when he is not in an uncomfortable need state such as hunger or pain. Correspondingly, as the child develops a sense of *social potency*—that is, a confidence in making an impact on others—he learns that he can effectuate not only relief of tension but positively stimulating and even playful patterns of response in relation to a human partner as well as with objects of various kinds. These two classes of experience—1) effecting a social response that leads to reduction in physiological need tension as against 2) a response associated with reciprocal social stimulation, including play—are important to distinguish from one another, even though they may overlap in actual life experience. Later in life we see character structures and relationships that may correspond in large degree to each class of experience. Examples of the first type of relatedness (tension reduction) would include partnerships that achieve an equilibrium based on the mutual reduction of tensions associated with sex, hunger, psychosomatic suffering, and anxiety. A second class of relatedness would be predominantly associated with the evocation of social response and playfulness and the complex cultural elaborations thereof. We know that *any* class of pleasurable experience, including [090] the primarily social and reciprocal, *can come to be psychologically represented as a need tension*. This is illustrated clearly in the language of children: „I need you to play with me.“ Hence, the human attachment that is based primarily on social interaction can develop *a quality of habituation* just as the attachment which had been predominantly associated with tension reduction in the original physiological sense. This addictive-like need for a response and the lengths to which the individual will go to bring about a response represent one dimension of the quality of *bondage* in the human bond.<sup>17</sup>

<sup>14</sup> David E. Schecter, „The Emergence of Human Relatedness.“ A chapter in a collection of papers commemorating the twenty-fifth anniversary of the William Alanson White Institute (New York: Basic Books, in press).

<sup>15</sup> This project („Studies in Ego Development“) still in progress at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine (New York) was made possible by Grant #HD 01155-01 provided by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development.

<sup>16</sup> Spitz, *op. cit.*

<sup>17</sup> The dictionary’s (*Oxford Universal*, 1955) definitions of the words „bond“ and „bondage“ overlap to a surprising degree. We refer to a „bond“ in the sense of a social and emotional tie or attachment. In the



If we take seriously the idea of *habituation* to a social response, we can see how this form of social hunger can constitute the soil of *socialization* and the structuring of various forms of relatedness—including the authoritarian, sadomasochistic, conformist types described by Fromm.<sup>18</sup> Observations of human infants indicate that once a specific preferential attachment is formed to mother—usually between four to seven months—the mother in the ensuing months will become the increasingly preferred and sought-after figure despite the frustrations and punishments the infant may have to undergo in the interim.<sup>19</sup> Out of this selfsame developing achievement during the second year of life—which is psychoanalytically [091] referred to as object constancy—the child becomes capable of experiencing care and concern for another human being which will eventuate in what

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concept of bondage we wish to emphasize the quality of being „tied up,“ „tied down,“ or „subjected to some binding power, influence or obligation.“ Psychologically, bondage is recognized largely by the qualities of compulsion, obligation, subjugation, and ego passivity. When we speak of „a bond“ (without bondage), there is still a potential for relative freedom, ego activity, and developmental change within the association.

<sup>18</sup> Bowlby (*op. cit.*, pp. 212–213) reports how isolated puppies who, on social contact with a human experimenter, were physically punished soon ceased to run away from the human—after punishment was stopped—and actually spent more time with him than did control puppies whose approaches after isolation had been rewarded with „petting and kindness.“ Similar results indicated that lambs, like puppies, will develop attachments in spite of receiving punishing treatment from a companion. Analogously, we know that isolation of men in „reindoctrination centers“ produces strong craving for contact, and that men under such stress will become submissive and psychologically malleable in the phenomenon that has been described as „brain-washing.“

<sup>19</sup> It is of interest that according to the work of R. Schaffer and P. Emerson („The Development of Social Attachments in Infancy,“ *Monograph of Society for Research in Child Development* 29:3 [1964], 1–77) the variables associated with the figures to whom the children become attached were 1) the speed with which a person responded to the infant, and 2) the intensity of the interaction in which the infant was engaged—rather than the maternal caretaking function in the narrow sense of feeding, diapering, etc.

Fromm has described as mature love.<sup>20</sup> The point we would like to stress is that out of the development of the original forms of symbiotic relatedness can come the most distorted psychotic warps (e.g., symbiotic psychosis), the commonly found varieties and degrees of symbiotic relatedness,<sup>21</sup> or the most mature form of love. The fate of the symbiotic developmental phase depends in large part on the vicissitudes of the individuation process, which we will now consider.

## II Individuation, Detachment, Isolation

This class of processes is hardly homogeneous; yet there is in common—unlike the tendency to symbiotic fusion—increasing differentiation and structuralization in the direction of a more delineated sense of self. We include here processes that can lead to a healthy integration as well as those that lead to warps of individuation. There are signs of a dawning sense of self in the first year of life as the infant remembers and anticipates events, and comes to discriminate his mother, himself, and others. As maturation together with environmental facilitation make this possible, the child begins to do for himself what had been done for him: he feeds himself, manipulates objects and toys to produce a certain result, he transports himself—finally in the upright posture—he decides on a course of action, even if this means *negating* or *opposing* those who are closest to him. He even learns a gesture and a word—“No”—to semantically express his autonomous strivings. As Spitz<sup>22</sup> has pointed out, the „No“ is, in a basic sense, a first sign of affirmation of the ego as decision maker. And it is through *decision-making*, *goal-setting*, and *goal mastery* that the sense of self is experienced in its most heightened intensity.

With these exciting achievements (of the latter part of the first year and of the second

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<sup>20</sup> Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1956), pp. 108-129.

<sup>21</sup> These are described in some detail in Fromm's *Heart of Man*, *op. cit.*, in the chapter on incestuous ties, pp. 95-113.

<sup>22</sup> Rene Spitz, *No and Yes* (New York: International Universities Press, 1957), p. 129.



year of life) come some potentially grievous complications. The very achievement of the sense of self exposes the young child to an awareness of being *observed* and *evaluated*, giving rise to self-consciousness and the potential for *shame* and *doubt*.<sup>23</sup> Fromm's biblical reference to the Fall of Man illustrates some of the problems of this developmental [092] stage. As man eats from the Tree of Knowledge (self-awareness), he finds himself separated from Nature (including mother) and is *ashamed*. At this point the child—as well as God's first children—begins to *cover up* in self-awareness and manipulate his *social presentation*.<sup>24</sup> He gradually becomes all too conscious that a socially disapproved act will bring a disapproving frown—or more subtly, but not less potently—a withdrawal of maternal behaviors which reduce anxiety or induce security. A striking example of the myriad of ways in which a mother can reduce her child's anxiety is the way she will mediate his fear of a strange person, stimulus, or strange environment. Her „magic blessing“—for example, her vocalization or touch in relation to the strange object—will render it „detoxified“ for the child and he will feel free to relate to it and explore it.

Mother, or her surrogate, is also a *home base* from which sanctuary the child can make forays into the novel and strange and return when he needs reassurance or what Mahler and Furer<sup>25</sup> have referred to as „emotional refueling.“ This model of the toddler using mother as home base from which to explore on his own is analogous, and no doubt related, to intrapsychic processes that occur at the same time. There is a parallel oscillation from psychic states of symbiotic fusion to states of increased boundedness of self. Children show these variations from states of fatigue, illness, or fright to states in which they are autonomously goal-directed, for in-

stance, when involved in some challenging task. As adults we also experience a spectrum in the degree of self-boundedness: The „oceanic feeling,“ the orgiastic state, the mystical, communal, or drug experience for some individuals represent a relative blurring or loss of self-boundary while other states including intense concentration, loneliness, fears of separation or death may be associated with a sense of a relatively impermeable boundary of self.

We know how important it is for the nursery school child to periodically „rest“ from his most individuated level of functioning required of him at school. This „rest“ may include the use of a transitional object,<sup>26</sup> and play or fantasy during which he may experience a symbolic fusion or closeness with mother for short periods. *The relative freedom to oscillate [093] between symbiotic and individuated forms of relatedness cannot be over-stressed in importance at any stage of development.*<sup>27</sup> It is easier to enunciate this statement as a principle than it is to offer as a developmental prescription, since the issues involved are so complex. A sensitive parent and educator intuitively grasp the need for such flux in ego states. The freedom of oscillation—within realistic bounds—affords the possibility of a natural rather than a forced equilibrium to be reached by the ego in the polarity of its strivings toward fusion on the one hand and individuation and separateness on the other.

In all psychological theoretical developments a danger is to make out of the latest discovery an ultimate value or ideal. This, I believe, had happened some years ago with the concept of ego autonomy with which the height of individual human development came to be associated.<sup>28</sup> In recent years a counter-reaction set in,

<sup>23</sup> Eric Erikson, „Identity and the Life Cycle,“ *Psychological Issues* 1:1 (1959), 65-68.

<sup>24</sup> See later developments of these trends in E. Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1959), in Jung's concept of „persona,“ and Winnicott's „false self.“

<sup>25</sup> Mahler, *On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation*, *op. cit.*

<sup>26</sup> D. W. Winnicott, „Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena,“ *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 34 (1953), 1-9. Reprinted in *Collected Papers* by D. W. Winnicott (London: Tavistock Publications, 1958).

<sup>27</sup> This fluidity overlaps but is by no means identical with the mental processes described by Freud as „primary“ (wish) and „secondary“ (reality-bound, logical).

<sup>28</sup> Rapaport has developed the notion of ego autonomy (David Rapaport, „The Theory of Ego Autonomy: A Generalization,“ in *The Collected Papers of*



with increased interest in various social groups in the mystical and quasi-mystical, in boundary-melting drugs, and in beguiling writings of such authors as Norman O. Brown for whom the true corporeal body is seen as humanity, whereas the individual ego is devalued as a culturally induced persona.<sup>29</sup> The question for us in human development is always one of balance, of equilibrium rather than of achieving idealized end points. Only after a self has an *individuated center* can it voluntarily give up its boundaries (as in the orgiastic love or mystical experience) without loss of integrity.<sup>30</sup> Hence the danger of drugs in the [094] still developing adolescent whose sense of identity and its boundedness is already tenuous enough.

In the psychoanalytic experience with a particular individual, one of our tasks is to discover the imbalances or conflict-ridden forces of the

fusion-individuation polarity. We can learn about these personality conflicts by coming back to early development. When a child is secure in feeling that he has a „home-base mother“ to whom he may return, he will actively initiate ventures into strange territory without evidence of anxiety when he returns.<sup>31</sup> However, when he is *passively left* by mother, especially after seven months of age, he experiences anxiety, will protest actively and try to follow mother. This intense attachment only gradually abates in the third year through the rest of childhood and is loosened significantly during adolescence in many cultures, although the attachment to mother persists in some form throughout life.<sup>32</sup>

*The child's vigilance in avoiding or undoing potential separation* is another instance in which the originally „innocent“ tie to another human (the mother) will come to be internalized as a feeling of entrapment or of being „possessed.“

In this regard we wish to deal principally with one set of reactions, namely with the development of *defenses against these feelings of bondage* that are associated with the fear of abandonment. Bowlby<sup>33</sup> has described „normal“ children (ages one to three) who when left in the hospital, without mother, went through reactions which could be described in three stages:

1. Protest—loud crying, rejection of alternative figures, with apparent expectation that mother would return.
2. Despair—with behavior suggesting increasing hopelessness and deep mourning (for instance withdrawal, inactivity, lack of demands).
3. Detachment—a recovery of interest in surroundings, acceptance of surrogates' care and food, but when mother visits there is a „striking absence of the behavior characteristic of the strong attachment normal at this age.“ The child will in time *„commit himself less and less to succeeding [095] figures,“*<sup>34</sup> become increasingly self-centered, more

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*David Rapaport*, Merton M. Gill [ed.], [New York: Basic Books, 1967], pp. 722–745) and the concepts of ego activity vs. passivity (David Rapaport, „Some Metapsychological Considerations Concerning Activity and Passivity,“ in *The Collected Papers of David Rapaport*, Merton M. Gill [ed.], [New York: Basic Books, 1967], pp. 530–569) in a most clarifying way. It is of interest to the history of psychoanalytic theory that Rapaport—an outstanding scholar in metapsychology—enthusiastically acknowledged Fromm's contributions to the understanding of individuation and of ego activity and passivity as „growing points“ in psychoanalytic developments (Rapaport's lectures on „The Points of View of Metapsychology,“ given at the William Alanson White Institute of Psychiatry and Psychoanalysis, May 22–23, 1959). Nevertheless, except for passing superficial reference (e.g., *The Collected Papers of David Rapaport, op. cit.*, p. 921), nowhere in Rapaport's voluminous written works is Fromm's contribution to the above-mentioned issues properly acknowledged. For Fromm's specific written references to this subject see Addendum at the end of this paper.

<sup>29</sup> Norman O. Brown, *Love's Body* (New York: Random House, 1966).

<sup>30</sup> D. T. Suzuki has stressed that the Zen Satori experience—in which the individual experiences himself at one with Nature—comes after a gradual developmental achievement, including ego-boundedness. Moreover, he stressed that Satori was a peak experience which one could not expect to maintain, living as we must for the most part in the plateaus of life. (Personal communication, 1957.)

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<sup>31</sup> See Rheingold's interesting experiments in this regard. (Harriet L. Rheingold and Carol O. Eckerman, „The Infant Separates Himself from His Mother,“ *Science* 168:3927 [1970], 78-83.)

<sup>32</sup> Bowlby, *op. cit.*

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 26-28.

<sup>34</sup> Italics mine.



„preoccupied with material things such as sweets, toys, food.“

Aside from the different variables involved in these situations, it would seem that the separation from mother was the crucial one in the above sequence of reactions.

Tennes and Lampl<sup>35</sup> have recently reported significant findings—largely confirmatory of naturalistic observations—in „normal“ infants who were experimentally separated from their mothers for brief periods at bimonthly intervals between six and thirty-six months. The authors describe a number of classes of reactions which they consider to be defenses against separation anxiety—reactions *which may indeed represent prototypic precursors for major human defensive systems throughout life.*

1. After mother left the experimental room and the infants cried they would be held by the caretaker. The infants for the most part *visually avoided* the strange caretaker but on a number of occasions completely relaxed in a regressivelike posture which the authors interpreted as an *attempt at kinesthetic restitution* of the missing object.

Whatever interpretation we give this behavior, it is similar to that in which the infant is found in a highly relaxed or feeding state in the presence of his actual mother. When the baby looks at the strange researcher, discovering that she is „not-mother,“ he bursts into tears again.

2. A second category of response to the missing mother is one we commonly see—the *active attempt at mastery* through locomotor following in order to regain the missing mother. Thus, once the infant could walk he tried to find his mother, and if he was not thwarted from reunion with her the regressive reactions described above were not seen.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Katherine H. Tennes and E. Esther Lampl, „Defensive Reactions to Infantile Separation Anxiety,“ *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 17:4 (1969), 1142-1162.

<sup>36</sup> Much of the psychopathology we clinically see later represents the psychological detours that have been patterned by a self that has come to feel anxious, weak, or obstructed in the achievement of its goals.

3. When the infants' attempts to pursue mother were blocked by a closed door, some reacted with rage, stamping their feet, hitting, or screaming. After these outbursts some reactions were marked by *inhibition of activity*, including the bowed sad postures seen in Kaufman and Rosenblum's<sup>37</sup> infant monkeys who had been separated from their mothers. [096]

Both Tennes and Lampl's and Kaufman's interpretations of these inhibitory responses concern aggression: in the former case the inhibition was seen as a reaction to the infant's own aggressive impulses; in the latter instance as a means of reducing provocation of aggression from the remaining adults and as a way of eliciting comforting responses. Although these explanations at some point in development are no doubt quite relevant, the experience of *futility* (loss of hope) and helplessness postulated by Tennes and Lampl seems more fundamental to the infants' observable expressions of sadness and sobbing—as well as the *inhibition* of activity—all of which affects appear quite distinct phenomenologically from anxiety and distress or from anger and rage. Thus, with the thwarting of the infant's central goal and purpose we find infantile aggression and the precursors of a depressive type of reaction—a hypothesis Fromm and others have put forth in contrast to the theory of a primary aggressive drive as the major source of man's destructive or depressive behavior.<sup>38</sup>

Bowlby's, and Tennes and Lampl's work is reviewed in some detail because of the enormous implication their observations may have for *character development*. Both groups of ob-

<sup>37</sup> L. Rosenblum and I. Kaufman, „The Reaction to Separation in Infant Monkeys: Anaclitic Depression and Conservation-Withdrawal,“ *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 29 (1967), 648-675.

<sup>38</sup> *The development of futility as a chronic underlying life affect* has obvious importance in our times when depressive and violent modes of expression seem to be the principal challenge our society faces. For a penetrating analysis of hope and hopelessness see Fromm's *The Revolution of Hope* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968) and, from a different point of view, E. Stotland's *The Psychology of Hope* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1969).





servations derive essentially from *physical separation* of the normal child from his mother. In the latter part of the first year of life—and increasingly so as the child grows older—he begins to *anticipate* that mother can leave him, that he potentially can be abandoned, especially if he is *bad* or has a *bad-mother*, as he comes to represent, in part, himself and his mother. Now physical separations are no longer necessary to bring on the dread of abandonment; „symbolic separations“ will be sufficient. Such separations—as with physical separation—are part of life, but are heightened when the child has failed to properly internalize a *good relatedness* between himself and his significant figures. This memory bank of good experience can be drawn upon when he is actually alone or feels cut off for various reasons, as when mother is anxiously disapproving, forbidding, or *psychologically turning away* from him—acting „dead“—by becoming unresponsive or, in various ways, not the „familiar-mother-that-makes-me-feel-good.“ Under these conditions we see there are a variety of coping mechanisms that the child may turn to, including regression and *detachment with an implicit loss of hope of good* [097] *reunion*. It is through the mode of detachment that the child protects himself, so to speak, by sealing off his boundaries and preventing interpersonal affective exchange. He may give appearances of independence, of *actual precocious individuation* and self-reliance, but all this is at the price of his hope for the return to real commitment to human relatedness, as described by Bowlby in his stages of Despair and Detachment. There now develops a greater interest in what objects people may bring than in the persons themselves. The children become, so to speak, „consumer-minded“ and learn to market their charm for particular rewards. (In some families such behavior is not the result only of deprivation of reciprocal relatedness but is actually taught and fostered as a dominant mode of interpersonal relatedness.) The character outcome described here involves repression, isolation, and splitting off of warm joyful affects connected with reciprocal relatedness. In the extreme of pathology we see autisticlike defenses in persons who are diagnosed as autistic or schizoid isolates. More frequently, as Fromm has

described, the relatively „detached character“ is considered „normal“ and fits rather well with Fromm’s description of „automaton conformity,“ seen, for example, in what used to be referred to as the „organization man.“

There are also potentially *healthy* aspects to defenses involving detachment. With the traumata of necessary separations detachment may be a useful adaptive mechanism, if it does not become chronic and part of the core character structure. Moreover, with certain types of parents and teachers children need defenses against symbioticlike or intrusive emotional encroachments. A detached attitude would seem to be a necessary defense at various points in development to maintain one’s individual and creative integrity.<sup>39</sup> [098]

A brief comment on the resolution of separation anxiety: Most interestingly, in the Book of Genesis there is an injunction which states, „Thou shalt leave thy father and mother and

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<sup>39</sup> Maurice Sendak, in his delightful little book for children—*Pierre* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962) „who didn’t care“—graphically reveals how a child’s defensive detachment can develop into an attitude toward life in general—as a fear to invest care or interest in anyone or anything, in part as a protection against its potential loss. Many children and adults fully recognize Pierre’s poignant dilemma when he is caught in his own defiant disdain for care or attachment. *The child and adult can thus be as much bound down by their defenses against attachment as by the various forms of symbiotic attachment.*

It is interesting that H. S. Sullivan described the very young infant’s reaction of *somnolent detachment* and *apathy* when he is over-stimulated by excessive anxiety or tensions from other sources. There would thus seem to be a red-thread of continuity—albeit on different levels of complexity—between reactions of detachment from infancy through childhood to adulthood. During adolescence, keeping „cool“—or even isolated—can have a usefully temporary adaptive significance in the search for identity, or, on the other hand, represent a premature closure of development in the form of a detached identity. Among adults I believe it is this class of entrenched character defenses that accounts for Fromm’s observation that most of our citizens are „half-asleep“ (somnolent) and alienated from their potential feeling life. However, even adults need to protect their integrity at times by mechanisms of detachment and isolation.



cleave<sup>40</sup> unto thy wife." This commandment comes from God (the „parental“ creator of man) and signifies the permission, encouragement, and necessity of separating from the symbiotic matrix. At the same time, man is not cast into loneliness; he is given a direction of reaffiliation with someone outside his own family. Indeed this biblical reference parallels what we see in child and adolescent development.

As the child develops positive identifications with various loving, protective, and facilitating parental functions he becomes more equipped to stand on his own and able to take care of himself and others (interdependency). In fortunate developmental circumstances there occurs an ever-widening spread of trustworthy persons from mother, father, siblings to one's group of peers and hopefully to increasing varieties of human brothers and sisters, including those who are at first defined as „strangers.“<sup>41</sup> These developments become closely intertwined with the resolution of Oedipal triangular jealousies one of whose root problems is the failure in overcoming the exclusive symbiotic and postsymbiotic attachments through adequate individuation and capacity for sharing. There is more likelihood of achieving a capacity to share the less we are reared on the economic and psychologic principles of scarcity (K. Marx).

Whatever we find out about the needs and nutrients for healthy human growth and development—and for prevention of emotional and mental suffering and constriction—becomes potentially a force for social change. True, matters are much more complex than delivering psychic vitamin drops in the proper dosage at the proper time.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The word „cleave,“ interestingly enough, has a double lexical meaning, expressing the two polar tendencies with which we have been concerned: (1) „to stick fast, adhere“; (2) „to separate, split, or cut asunder.“

<sup>41</sup> Fromm's emphasis on the love of the stranger as a condition for the achievement of mature love is most relevant in this developmental sequence (Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, *op. cit.*, p. 129).

<sup>42</sup> On the other hand, on a more modest level, the work of pioneers such as Spitz and Bowlby on institutionalized and hospitalized children has already made a significant impact on the structure of the institutions

The writings and teachings of Erich Fromm have made a lasting [099] impact on and inspired at least two generations of thinking people of various professions, revealing, in a radical way, the underpinnings of our social and psychic functioning, and offering new directions and hope for their healthy development.

### Addendum

There is in Fromm's writings a red thread of concern with the concepts of *activity* and *passivity* in the sense that ego psychology has recently referred to as ego activity and passivity. Thus, Fromm points out in *Man for Himself* (p. 85), that activity or „productiveness“ is best defined *in relation to* „the underlying psychic conditions governing the activities.“ Fromm's polarity of activity-passivity is variously defined as:

1. Non-productive or submissive activity in the *interpersonal* sense of man's submission to an *external* authority, as in the hypnotic state.
2. Submission to *internal* authority, as with an overbearing sense of duty.
3. „Automaton activity“ in which the activity depends on the submission by *conformity* to an „anonymous authority“ related to the broader patterns of culture such as public opinion, convention, etc.

In these three examples we see, in effect, definitions of what corresponds structurally to *ego passivity*.

Fromm sees the passions as the most powerful source of activity (*Man for Himself*, p. 87), but in several instances he clearly relates „productive activity“ to:

1. Active independent *control* as against compulsive effort (*Escape from Freedom*, p. 92).
2. *Transcendence* (*Escape from Freedom*, p. 33), which implies an organization of activity into „higher“ levels of integrative functioning. Man „changes his role toward nature from that of purely passive adaptation to an active one: he produces.“

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involved with crucial phases of the child's development.



Both (1) and (2) would be examples in which ego functions would be exercised in an „active“ sense. Fromm is constantly alert to the temptation to equate submission with adaptation—a temptation which is not infrequently indulged in in the field of psychology.

In a recent book, *Revolution of Hope* (p.

12), Fromm makes clear by his adoption of the word „activeness“—as against overt activity—that he is referring to what we may call an ego „quality“ rather than to a mere display of active motion in the lexical sense of the term. [100]