

Chapter Twelve

CHILD DEVELOPMENT

A number of developmental theories have made a contribution to depth psychology. The ones most relevant to this work are grounded in normal development. I shall discuss a theory proposed by Stewart and Stewart (1979, 1981) that seeks to integrate aspects of the work of Piaget, Jung, Neumann, Erikson, and Sutton-Smith. I intend to concentrate on the critical first two years of the child's development with particular attention to the stages leading up to the discovery of 'pretend' and symbolic play.

Development occurs through the interaction of the child with the environment. The child's innate potential and environmental influences are usually of equal importance. An innate groundplan laid down in the DNA directs the infant's development in observable stages of increasing mobility, consciousness, and imaginative and intellectual understanding of the world and the self. The unfolding of this normal developmental plan can be encouraged or discouraged. Appropriate mirroring of the innate groundplan by the mother, father, culture and society is important.

Ordinarily, 'good enough' parenting means that there is a primary person (usually the mother) who is present and attentive to the child's basic needs for nurturing, comfort and loving playfulness. The essential qualities of Winnicott's 'good enough' mother have to do with her capacity for spontaneous play and natural curiosity. Stewart (1987a) expresses this simply and beautifully: 'Blessed indeed is the child who has a playful and curious mother!' (p. 38).

The process of individuation, that is to say, becoming a unique individual human being, is energized by the innate archetypal affects of Joy and Interest with their activated dynamisms of play and curiosity. Joy (play) and Interest (curiosity) engage in an on-going dialectical relationship. Each potentiates the other. In their

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fully differentiated form Joy/Play and Interest are understood as Eros, divine relatedness and playfulness (see p. 78-9).

Thus as we shall see, each new stage of development represents an integration of a new level of consciousness; a new developmental achievement; a new 'game'; and a new developmental 'interest.' In total each new stage represents the achievement of a new stage in the development of the child's consciousness. This is what Neumann refers to as the experiential core of each passage in development. Each stage is a startling, numinous moment of discovery.

I shall review five critical stages in development, beginning with the first integration following the development of conscious awareness of the ability to hold an object around 16 to 18 months of age. Consciousness leads to the development of symbolic play. The first five stages may be labelled: 1) Uroboric recognition of the other; 2) the development of object constancy; and 3) the awareness of the self.

UROBORIC: UNION WITH THE OTHER

The uroboros is a mythical image of a serpent eating its own tail. It is a characteristic symbol of wholeness, utter containment. Neumann (1987) calls it the 'Uroboric Round', in whose womb the ego-germ is contained. It is the experience of at once holding and being held, of rhythms of holding, touching, gazing, and being gazed at, of psychic nourishment of this earliest self. The infant is immersed in these together. The infant is the uroboros.

The first primal recognition of self and other is a comforting moment when thumb

We may see that the infant, while still in the womb, incarnates the image of the mythical uroboros. To Neumann, this represents the 'wholeness' or 'undifferentiated state of self-other consciousness' that characterizes this developmental state. We can also find the earliest evidence of that aspect of individuation that Neumann, following Jung, calls 'introversion'. In this light we may understand

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fully differentiated form Joy/Play and Interest/Curiosity may be understood as Eros, divine relatedness; and Logos, divine curiosity (see p. 78-9).

Thus as we shall see, each new stage of the infant's development represents an integration of a new level of mobility; a new level of consciousness; a new development in play/imagination, i.e. a new 'game'; and a new development in curiosity/exploration, i.e. a new 'interest.' In total each new stage may be described as the achievement of a new stage in the development of ego-Self identity. This is what Neumann refers to as the ego-Self axis. The experiential core of each passage in the development of identity is a startling, numinous moment of synthesis and reorientation.

I shall review five critical stages in normal development beginning with the first integration following birth and ending with the conscious awareness of the ability to 'pretend,' which occurs around 16 to 18 months of age. Conscious awareness of 'pretend' leads to the development of symbolic play and imagination. These stages may be labelled: 1) Uroboric wholeness; 2) the smile of recognition of the other; 3) the laughter of self-recognition; 4) object constancy; and 5) the awareness of pretend.

UROBORIC: UNION WITH THE SELF

The uroboros is a mythical image of a circular snake with its tail in its mouth. It is a characteristic symbol of the remote past, a state of wholeness, utter containment. Neumann relates it to 'the Great Round, in whose womb the ego-germ lies sheltered' (1973, p. 10). It is the experience of at once holding and being held. Shared rhythms of holding, touching, gazing, lulling and lullabies are the psychic nourishment of this earliest phase. Parent(s) and infant immerse in these together. The infant also does them when alone.

The first primal recognition of self may well be that powerful and comforting moment when thumb and mouth find each other.

We may see that the infant, while sucking its fingers or its toes, incarnates the image of the mythical Uroboros that, according to Neumann, represents the 'wholeness' of that undifferentiated state of self-other consciousness that is characteristic of this developmental state. We can also see in this early behavior the earliest evidence of that aspect of the autonomous process of individuation that Neumann, following Jung, has called *centroversion*. In this light we may understand the infant's behavior

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in the discovery of sucking its thumb as representing the first synthesis of the psyche following upon the rude disruption of life within the womb, which had more impressively represented a paradisiacal absorption in the purely unconscious process of life itself.

(Stewart 1986, p. 191)

The natural process of bringing thumb and mouth together is increasingly recognized as an important early developmental event. Greenspan and Greenspan refer to 'the challenge of finding your mouth – the reward of nature's pacifier' (1985, p. 31). The earliest meetings of mouth and thumb are usually transitory – before the mouth can really get hold of it, the thumb tends to wander away. But sooner or later, the hand reaches for the mouth and the thumb or fingers are surrounded and held. Not only the mouth, but the thumb too experiences the pleasurable, self-calming sensations of rhythmic sucking. In this way we first learn that we are able to hold and comfort ourselves.

FIRST SMILE: RECOGNITION OF THE OTHER

Any fully spontaneous smile at any time in life has at its core the infant's smile, when she or he first consciously recognizes the now familiar sounds and face of the mother. When Joy and Interest come together, we begin to fall in love. Stewart (1984) reflects on the infant's first smile:

What are the first signs of love in the infant and child? Our Western image of childbirth has been that the mother must suffer and the child come crying into the world. All this has more recently been questioned and there are those who talk about infants entering the world with smiles on their faces and wide awake mothers ready to smile back immediately upon birth. We are far from knowing then what may be the possible potential of the development of love in the child. However, what is observable today is that the mutual smile of recognition between mother and infant does not occur for several weeks after birth. Before that the child smiles under certain conditions of satiety, half awake, half asleep, but in a dazed, glassy-eyed manner. Then there comes a moment, as early as the end of the first month sometimes, when the infant, awake and clear eyed, smiles in what is unmistakably a pleased recognition of the fam-

iliar sounds and face of the mother. ...
the infant's first joyful laugh occurs.

FIRST LAUGH: RECOGNITION

As the smile is a recognition of the Other, the infant's first spontaneous smile alone expresses joy in the sheer existence of the Self. This kind of laughter usually comes in a burst, for example the kind of rhythmic laughter that liberates through the infant's whole body. The mother seems to join in. Or, the baby throws his head back and discovers that s/he is both the mover and the moved. Piaget describes such a laugh:

It will be remembered that Laurent [at 18 months], adopted the habit of throwing his head back [when he was 18 months old], and from this new position he seemed to repeat this movement with increasing interest and ever decreasing interest in the object. He brought his head back to the upright position and again time after time, laughing loudly.

Natural laughter has at its core 'the pure joy of being alive and ... is ...' (Stewart 1985, p. 93). From this point on, every new recognition of the self.

OBJECT CONSTANCY

Separation anxiety develops in the third year. At the same time that the infant begins to experience pain of separating from beloved persons, he begins to play with himself in games of peek-a-boo, and introduces the problems of disappearance and re-appearance.

At 0;8(14): Jacqueline is lying on my back and head and cry 'coucou'; I emerge and do

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iliar sounds and face of the mother. Soon, within days or weeks, the infant's first joyful laugh occurs.

(*ibid.*, p. 1)

FIRST LAUGH: RECOGNITION OF SELF

As the smile is a recognition of the Other, the laugh is a recognition of the Self. The infant's first spontaneous laughter when alone expresses joy in the sheer exuberance of bodily motion. This kind of laughter usually comes in the midst of self-movement, for example the kind of rhythmic leg kicking that reverberates through the infant's whole body until the entire world seems to join in. Or, the baby throws his or her head back and discovers that s/he is both the mover and the one who is moved. Piaget describes such a laugh:

It will be remembered that Laurent at 0;2(21) [2 months, 21 days], adopted the habit of throwing his head back to look at familiar things from this new position. At 0;2(23 or 24) he seemed to repeat this movement with ever increasing enjoyment and ever decreasing interest in the external result: he brought his head back to the upright position and then threw it back again time after time, laughing loudly.

(Piaget 1962, p. 91)

Natural laughter has at its core 'the spontaneous expression of the pure joy of being alive and ... is ... the prototype of play' (Stewart 1985, p. 93). From this point on, laughter will mark every new recognition of the self.

OBJECT CONSTANCY

Separation anxiety develops in the third quarter of the baby's first year. At the same time that the infant begins to struggle with the pain of separating from beloved persons, s/he immerses herself or himself in games of peek-a-boo, and intensely investigates problems of disappearance and re-appearance.

At 0;8(14): Jacqueline is lying on my bed beside me. I cover my head and cry 'coucou'; I emerge and do it again. She bursts into

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peals of laughter, then pulls the covers away to find me again. Attitude of expectation and lively interest.

(Piaget 1952, p. 50)

0;9(15): Jacqueline wails or cries when she sees the person seated next to her get up or move away a little (giving the impression of leaving).

(Piaget 1952, p. 249)

0;9(20): Jacqueline is lying down and holds her quilt with both hands. She raises it, brings it before her face, looks under it, then ends by raising and lowering it alternately while looking over the top of it: Thus she studies the transformation of the image of the room as a function of the screen formed by the quilt.

(Piaget 1954, p. 193)

As the first smile is the beginning of mother-child recognition, peek-a-boo and later games of hide-go-seek continue an ongoing process that leads to the development of object constancy.

AWARENESS OF PRETEND

Jung describes this major passage of consciousness as

the first morning of the world, the first sunrise after the primal darkness, when that inchoately conscious complex, the ego, the son of the darkness, knowingly sundered subject and object, and thus precipitated the world and itself into definite existence Genesis 1: 1-7 is a projection of this process.

(1963, par. 129)

A number of passages in the infant's first year create the base upon which a clear separation of day-world and dream-world can occur. Neumann (1954, 1973) refers to this differentiation of conscious and unconscious as 'separation of the world parents.' In the infant's life, this passage comes not through the word but rather through the discovery of nonverbal, symbolic play. The baby discovers that s/he can pretend.

Around sixteen to eighteen months of age, the child becomes aware of the semiotic function through the experience of

pretense; for example, a behavior pattern like the transition into sleep, the satiny edge of a blanket, the recognition of Self, and so on. Let us reflect for a moment on the central pattern of behavior in the child's development. It is not easily accomplished, and sleep disturbances, a night light, etc. And it brings together the child's fantasies, that of being those most dear, and of being peopled by who know. It is no accident that the recognition of the self, the miming of a behavior, warding off fear of the separation. Subsequent of the emotionally charged

After the child recognizes the doll as a person, teaches it to the doll, and pretend, the child begins to imitative enactments and becomes conscious and aware. This first discovery of the symbolic world.

Each of the stages with a similar quality of movement. In the final chapter on symbolic events that appear and interactions corresponding presented. They are: 1) the face of the woman, 2) the laughter of self, 3) the laughter of self, 4) the appearance; and 5) full imaginative use of mind.

pretense; for example in the miming of an already adaptive behavior pattern like the ritual behavior adopted to ease the transition into sleep (e.g., thumb sucking and fingering the satiny edge of a blanket). The child laughs with joy at this new recognition of Self; and this is pretend play (Piaget 1962). But let us reflect for a moment on the sleep ritual. This is not a neutral pattern of behavior. It represents one of the landmarks in the child's development. If the transition to sleep and waking is not easily accomplished, the child may be forever prone to sleep disturbances, to excessive fear of the dark, needing a night light, etc. And why is going to sleep difficult? Because it brings together the child's most feared and distressing fantasies, that of being deprived of the presence and comfort of those most dear, and of being left alone in the dark which is peopled by who knows what ghostly phantoms. Thus we consider it no accident that the child discovers pretense in the recognition of the sleep ritual; pretend play begins with the miming of a behavior pattern which has assisted the child in warding off fear of the unknown and soothing the anguish of separation. Subsequent pretend play will be seen to reenact all of the emotionally charged experiences of the child's life.

(Stewart and Stewart 1979, p. 47)

After the child recognizes his or her own sleep ritual, s/he teaches it to the dolls and stuffed animals. With the discovery of pretend, the child begins to play out an unending stream of imaginative enactments and intense little dramas. Imagination now becomes conscious and clearly visible through physical action. This first discovery of pretend coincides with the beginning of real curiosity about language. With this passage, the child enters the symbolic world.

Each of the stages we have discussed is associated with a particular quality of movement that is expressed alone and in relationship. In the final chapter on movement themes, I will describe five symbolic events that appear in dance movement. The symbolic actions and interactions correspond to the preverbal passages I have just presented. They are: 1) patterns of uroboric self-holding; 2) seeking the face of the witness and when found, a smile of recognition; 3) the laughter of self-recognition; 4) disappearance and reappearance; and 5) full engagement in the symbolic process via free, imaginative use of mime.