Theodore Lidz

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From *The Person* by Theodore Lidz

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THE BASIC DEVELOPMENTAL TASKS

Sometime around the age of three, the child ceases to be a baby and becomes a preschool child. During the next two or three years the child passes through one of the most decisive phases of life's journey that has been termed the oedipal transition. The baby has required a close relationship with a mothering person, but now, in order to release attention and energies for investment beyond the family in school and with playmates, the child must relinquish the erogenous aspects of the relationship, albeit reluctantly and often painfully. The child must now complete the task of differentiating from the mother and become sufficiently secure as an autonomous boy or girl member of the family to begin to venture beyond its shelter.

How this transition transpires depends upon the process of separation and individuation that we have been examining, including the mother's ability gradually to frustrate her child's attachment to her, but it is fostered by other changes which accompany maturation. The child's movement toward increasing independence involves gaining the experience and cognitive capacities required for reality testing and self-guidance. It also involves the ability to cope with the frustrations and anxieties that inevitably arise as increasing autonomy brings insecurity and, in turn, fosters desires to regress to the shelter of mother's presence.

By the end of the period, children will have learned the lessons of primary socialization: to feed and dress themselves, and to control not only their bowels and urine but also their temper outbursts—at least most of the time. They will have attained considerable organization of their personalities, and the major lines of their future development will have been established. The start of coming to terms with reality as specific individuals in a social system takes place within the family, which forms a microcosm in which a patterning of ways of relating to others and of reacting emotionally is laid down. Here children must gain an appreciation and acceptance of themselves as boys or girls and achieve a firm gender identity. They find their places as members of the childhood generation with its limitations as well as

prerogatives; they adjust to the competition of siblings for attention and affection; and they gain some realization of their families' position in society. A great deal must happen in these years to make possible the shift in their emotional relatedness to their parents, the oedipal transition, and to prepare them for school and participation in peer groups.

Freud first drew attention to the critical importance of the child's transition through the "oedipal" or "phallic" period. He believed that the investment of libido—sexualized energy—shifted to the penis in the boy and the clitoris in the girl, which led to an upsurge of erotic love for the parent of the opposite sex and desires to possess that parent sexually.[1] The guilt aroused by these oedipal strivings with ensuing anxieties of punishment by castration, death, or abandonment leads the child to give up or repress the love for the parent of the opposite sex and gain strength by identifying with the parent of the same sex, and in the process gain the capacity for self-control to replace the need for parental control. Freud considered that the way in which a child resolves these "oedipal conflicts" forms a major directive to personality development as well as a potential source of various types of developmental disturbances. The nature of this oedipal transition will be examined more explicitly later in the chapter. Even though contemporary understanding of child development requires profound alterations of the classic psychoanalytic theory of the oedipal transition, the reorientation of children's relationships to their parents at this developmental period—the essence of the oedipal transition—clearly forms a critical determinant of the course of further personality development.

Erikson considers the basic issues of the period to involve the balance between initiative and guilt: the initiative being concerned with the seeking of a parental love object and the efforts to become a person like a parent through identification with the father or mother; the guilt derives largely from rivalry with the father and siblings for the mother. From the ensuing anxiety over retribution, a conscience or superego develops that serves to regulate initiative, and by making children dependent upon themselves makes them dependable. These developments are fostered by the expansion of children's imagination permitted by their increased locomotor and linguistic capacities (Erikson, 1959).[2]

By the time they are three, children are beginning to emerge from the protected but confining shelter of their mothers' care, but they will require time and experience before they have the mental tools and emotional stability properly to comprehend their still small worlds and become able to guide

themselves beyond their homes. Piaget has made us aware of the striking limitations of preschool children's language, reasoning, comprehension, and moral judgments. It seems essential to understand something of preschool children's cognitive abilities and limitations to be able to grasp properly the tasks confronting them and their means of coping with their problems. There are many aspects of this complex and crucial developmental period that require attention, each clamoring, so to speak, for priority. To bring order to the presentation, we shall adhere to the following sequence: a general description of oedipal children's capacities and behavior; cognitive development; development of gender identity, including the impact of fantasies about childbirth; sibling rivalries; the oedipal problem and its resolution. Last, we shall consider the influence of the nature of the oedipal transition upon personality functioning and malfunctioning.

CAPABILITIES AND BEHAVIOR

When their development has progressed reasonably well, three-year-olds are fascinating to watch as they-tenaciously explore how things fit together and come apart, and question what things are and what they are for. No longer toddlers, they tend to waddle as they move earnestly about, but they soon attain an angelic grace as the simple motor schemata that they acquired so laboriously become increasingly automatized and coordinated, and become subordinated to more integrated and purposeful uses which permit satisfaction from more sustained activities. Even the early stages of language mastery lead to a major inner reorientation. The parent and child can increasingly give directions to one another, and children are learning to direct themselves, in part, by talking to themselves. They gain a modicum of self-control, some orientation toward a proximate future rather than simply toward gratification of present needs and wishes, and can use fantasy as a means of gratification and amusement. Increasing periods of delay can be interposed between the stimulus and the response, and simple alternatives can be taken into account. Alertness to reward and punishment, even if they are only a matter of parental approval or disapproval, tempers behavior. The child becomes much more of a participant in social interaction. However, tolerance remains limited and frustrations can produce sudden outbursts of temper and aggression, which can pass as quickly as a cloud on a windy day unless the parent prolongs the storm.

By now children have gained control over their bowels, and accidents are rare; but although

urination is controlled by day, they may still wet at night, or need to be picked up to urinate without actually waking. when preoccupied with play, they may occasionally wet themselves, much to their shame; and the parent or nursery teacher is alert to the little boy holding his penis or the girl wriggling though perhaps unaware of her discomfort. The boy is likely to enjoy urinating and now stands up and imagines that he is shooting a machine gun—"ack-ack-ack"—or hosing out a fire, gaining a feeling of masculine power. If the girl has watched boys she may now also wish to stand up to urinate and expresses feelings of deprivation, even though she is generally content with being a girl like mommy.

It is difficult to provide a brief and coherent description of what the child of three and four is like, not only because rates of maturation and development vary, and children are by now so distinctively different in their ways of relating, but also because boys and girls can no longer be encompassed by the same description. Although currently the differences between boys and girls have probably decreased and may diminish markedly in families in which parents make conscious efforts to relate similarly to a boy or girl, usually their ways are becoming increasingly different. The separation of the sexes may be more apparent in neighborhood play than in nursery school. when playing "family," the four-year-old boy becomes reluctant to fill a maternal role, even though the mother may be the more important and powerful parent. It is the boy who tends to exclude the girls as part of his way of overcoming his dependency on females, a trend that becomes more marked during the next developmental phase. The girl spends more time in the house and in her mother's company, and when she is with her friends, more time talking than doing. The types of activities in which the two sexes engage are already diverging.

Children by the age of three and, even more, when four become more in the way of companions to parents, but their efforts to participate in parents' activities can sometimes create greater difficulties for parents than the earlier needs to contain and control them. The homemaker, who has usually been the mother, has someone to converse with during the day, though perhaps primarily as a listener to the increasingly lengthy monologues in which the child talks of imagined activities and tells what he or she is going to do for mother when he or she grows up. At three and four years of age both the boy and the girl will participate with the mother as she works around the house. There is considerable movement toward behaving grown up in real activities as well as in play, both through imitation of the behavior of elders. However, as children do not yet have the knowledge or skills, they will engage in "symbolic play," in which they assimilate the activity to their own ideas about it and their capacities to engage in it. Still

"symbolic play," which greatly helps children cope with their ineptitudes and feelings of inadequacy, develops slowly. Children of three may simply build blocks into something they can demolish, but at four they will laboriously make constructions that need not resemble very closely what they intend them to be. As they work at their play, children carry on monologues, even when no one is present. They are, in essence, thinking aloud and telling themselves what to do: "a block—one there—one there—a boat—boat—make a boat—Mommy will go in boat—another block," and so on. This *synpractic* speech will gradually be internalized, but will still be vocalized occasionally even after the child starts school (Vygotsky, 1962). At three, the child's imagination can transform almost anything into the object needed for play. A block becomes a boat in the bathtub, a train on the carpet, a hammer when the child is imaginatively constructing something. Having achieved sufficient motor control, the child is usually not as occupied with body mastery and exploration as with carrying out play that provides the satisfaction of achievement. A child will enjoy finger painting for the outlet it affords for smearing, but also for the pleasure of creation, though perhaps still free from the need to make a picture of something. A four-year-old girl responded to her parent's question of what she was painting: "How should I know? I haven't finished it yet!" but the younger child need not have anything other than the colored lines when finished. However, even the most abstract creations usually represent something to the child who will gladly explain just what it is. Children are likely to admire their productions, praising themselves and seeking the praise of an adult. Modesty is not yet part of their vocabulary or behavior, and self-aggrandizement seems to come naturally.

Play with Peers

Children's worlds are expanding even when they do not go to nursery school. They can care for themselves sufficiently to play with others in their yard, or in the park under supervision. A few props help the four-year-olds with their imaginative play; a purse turns a child into a mommy at the supermarket, a six-shooter into a cowboy; a space helmet into an astronaut. They have entered that wonderful period when fantasy need not yield too much to reality, and dilemmas can be solved simply by altering the way they imagine the world. They enjoy swings and jungle gyms, where they demonstrate their prowess with pride. Children begin to play with others; at first it is parallel play, in which they are pleased by the presence of others, but they do not play at the same thing; but it gradually

shifts into imaginative role taking. Naturally, playing "house" and "family" predominate, for these are roles and activities the child knows best; such play often innocently reveals family characteristics that parents prefer not to recognize. Television has, of course, increased the range of activities that even very young children can initiate and elaborate upon. At this age, the child may suddenly shift from being a space pilot to become a snake wiggling along the floor; or, when fatigue mounts, may even turn into a baby sucking an imaginary bottle.

If we listen to children conversing when they are sitting together idly, or when they are engaged in some sedentary activity, we find that although the talk has the form of conversation it is very likely to be a dual or *collective monologue.* One child says something to the other and waits for a reply, then what the other child says has no connection with what the first child said, and so they continue, both voicing their own preoccupations or fantasies in turn. Many children at four virtually crave the company of other children, at least of another child. The little boy may awaken in the morning filled with energy and with plans of what he will do with his friend, impatient to be finished with breakfast and off on his adventures. Girls and boys usually enjoy the nursery school world of age mates in which adults remain in the background when possible. Some must be satisfied with imaginary companions, or prefer them as they are more amenable to direction and are less aggressive and competitive. An imaginary comrade may be quite fleeting, imaginary even to the imagining child, or may have the force of reality that must be taken into account in planning the days activities. A mother may sometimes feel desperate when she must not only set the table for two but even serve food for two rather than one. One such child enjoyed playing catch with older boys but, unable to catch as yet, became very fond of Joe, invisible to others, with whom he could play flawlessly with an equally invisible ball. Transitional objects, dolls, or fuzzy toy animals are favored companions and may virtually be endowed with life, even as Christopher Robin shared his adventures with Pooh Bear (Milne, 1961); and the child cannot go to bed and face the dark and lonely night without them.

Even those fathers who have shown little interest in babies are now likely to find enjoyment in the child. He is an object of admiration; the son perhaps more than the daughter now wants to do things with him, and boasts of his father to other children. The girl, even before three, learns alluring ways of endearing herself to her father, who finds it easier to be tender and affectionate with a daughter than with a son. Whereas children commonly invoke authority with "My mommy says—" they seek status and

prestige with "My daddy can—" in both cases summoning up instrumental attributes. The father will, reciprocally, usually enjoy spending time with the child who provides such gratifications. The patterns of father-child interaction vary greatly from culture to culture, but in ours there has been an increasing tendency for the father to become an important figure to the child at an early age; and, as we shall examine, play a significant role in guiding the gender typing of the child by what behaviors of the boy or girl he cherishes or disapproves.[3]

Children are by now clearly members of families rather than simply the mother's child, and they often have difficulty finding their places in it. They are envious of older siblings and jealous of younger ones, and may resent the father's prerogatives with the mother or vice versa, as we shall examine later in the chapter. Nevertheless, in relationship to outsiders children have a sense of belonging to their families. Each child has two names: a first name identifies the child within the family and a last name that identifies the child with the family. A four-year-old refused to return to nursery school on the day after his three-year-old brother first attended: it turned out that it was not a matter of rivalry or jealousy, but of his intense shame because *his* brother had made a puddle on the nursery school floor.

Anxieties

The period is not without blight. Indeed, it is a time when fears may mount to phobic proportions; when efforts to contain anxieties over desertion by parents can paralyze thought and activity; when fears of evil lurking in the bedroom corner propel the child into the parents' bed. Greater independence brings insecurity in its wake. Increased knowledge leads to awareness of more numerous dangers. Expanding fantasy conjures up menacing as well as benevolent persons and events. Concerns over death may begin; these are extensions of separation anxiety: the child's death and the mother's are almost equally anxiety provoking to the child, who does not and cannot understand what death really means. The television introduces murder and mayhem into the quiet of the playroom as well as incomprehensible scenes of passion that frighten as well as stir puzzling feelings in the child.

Jealousy of a new baby and wishes to be rid of the intruder may lead to fears of kidnappers who could, after all, kidnap the child as well as the baby. Concerns over retribution from the father, who the boy may ambivalently wish were dead, bring wolves or lions into the bedroom at night as the child

projects similar wishes onto the father. The various intrafamilial "oedipal" and sibling rivalries bring masked fears of retribution that appear in dreams. Dreams and reality are not readily separable. A three-and-a-half-year-old girl who was afraid to sleep because of nightmares was assured that the tigers were not real but just pictures in her head. A few days later she started to cry when a fire engine with siren screaming stopped outside of the house, but she immediately reassured herself, saying, "Sissy [her younger sister] is having a bad dream about a fire engine." Many children now seek the comfort of the parents' bed in the middle of the night in order to feel safe; they feel secure from all harm as long as the omnipotent parents are tangibly close. Such concerns usually heighten as the child approaches five and the oedipal feelings become more intense, and we shall later note how the development of means of handling the anxiety will be a major force in directing personality development.

COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT

We followed children's early acquisition of language until the age of two and a half or three, by which time they had acquired sizable vocabularies and had mastered the essentials of syntax. It is important to the understanding of preschool children to recognize the limitations of their intellectual capacities and their comprehension of their surroundings. As we followed children's emergence from the period of sensori-motor intelligence to the age of about three, their limitations were apparent; but after they become able to speak fairly fluently and begin to lead active lives, with a fair degree of self-direction and control, their capacities are readily overestimated. Indeed, as we read Piaget's many studies and experiments we are apt to be surprised again and again at the limitations on children's ways of thinking and conceptualizing reality well into the school years.

Reality and Fantasy

When children acquire language, they gradually become freed from the tangible sensori-motor schemata and the concrete present. They can internalize visual signs, recall them, rearrange them, and recombine them imaginatively with the aid of verbal symbols or words.[4] They become able to fragment the past in order to select appropriate memories and project a future toward which they can direct themselves. Ultimately such attributes will permit intelligent reflective behavior. However, the internalization of the environment symbolically also permits the development of imagination and

fantasy, which need not be referred back to reality. For a time, at least, this capacity to manipulate symbols imaginatively will interfere with problem-solving behavior. It is patently simpler to solve problems in fantasy than in reality. Children whose oral and anal drives have been frustrated, and who cannot gain the solace and personal attention they would wish, and who find that they cannot compete with elders, or control others, can gain or regain in fancy what they cannot in reality. Indeed, as we learn from patients in analysis, the three-and four-year-old is very likely to regress in fantasy to recapture oral and anal gratifications, particularly when going to sleep or in conjunction with masturbatory play. Such fantasies are usually deeply repressed and can be recovered only with difficulty. However, fantasy also serves other ongoing and more reality-oriented needs.

After all, it is difficult for young children to know what is reality and what is imagination. A little girl's experience is very limited and she hears about things that she can grasp but vaguely. She can go exploring for the North Pole at the end of her street—that is a very distant place where she has seen a pole, a telephone pole, in the snow. Let us consider the tales of a four-year-old whose father has been overseas in World war II for over three rears. His mother has a great investment in this unknown figure whom he knows only by hearsay, and she constantly attracts attention by telling friends and relatives—and even the boy—about his father's experiences in the war. After a time, the child also has his "boys," his sons, overseas who are in and out of battles, in and out of hospitals, and who lose legs and regain them from day to day. These "boys" (all soldiers were "boys") were just as real to him as a father he had never known and who existed only in his mother's talk. Another four-year-old heard a great deal from his grandmother about how things were done in her native land. Soon he has his own Cocaigne, his Utopia, where he goes almost any night and which has the appropriate name of "Milkins." There, things are done properly, his way: the family has one very large bed in which they sleep together; he has his own automobile which he can drive, and when his mom is nice to him she can come to Milkins with him, sleep in the big bed, and he will give her a new car. Is "Milkins" any less real to him than Europe, or even New York, which he has never seen?

Children are not at all certain that they cannot change the world to suit their needs, or even to change themselves. Little boys can fully expect to become mommies when they grow up; and many little girls hare believed they would turn into a boy, like the three-and-a-half-year-old Piaget reported who said, "I think the mountain [the mons] hanging here grows and turns into a little long thing with a hole

in the end for water to come out, like boys have" (Piaget, 1962, p. 173), or like another girl who decided that she would go back inside of her father and when she came out she would be a boy. Naturally, mothers give birth to girls and fathers to boys. After all, her mother can grow a large tummy and even a new baby. It will take years before the facts are sorted out, and before the child learns that although fantasy can give pleasure and dampen the pain of frustrations, it does not change reality, or at the most can be but a prelude to acting upon reality.

Limitations of the Child's Comprehension

Words are the carriers of categories and contain a predictive value (as has been discussed in Chapter 1), but when the child first learns names for things they are almost only empty shells into which the members of the category or class will be fitted as the child gains experience. They are like labels on empty filing folders. The categorizing function of words is not a matter that can be pushed and rushed very much: mere instruction in word meanings and in the relationships between words divorced from experience or from a need to solve problems serves little. Meanings keep developing throughout life, and it is not until children are at least six or seven that they have learned enough to abstract from the tangible image and to form the superordinate and subordinate categorizations that are necessary for logical thinking—and even then it is still at a rather concrete and limited level. The little girl of four or five may well know that dogs, cats, and cows are animals, but is her stuffed bear an animal? Do animals think and talk? After all, in the stories that are read to the child, animals understand. Mickey and Minnie Mouse talk on television. Christopher Robin goes walking with Pool., who does not say very much but is very understanding. In some respects, just as the mother modified sentences for the younger child's comprehension, parents and people who write stories for children fit the stories to the child's conception of the world. The successful writer for children properly grasps how the child thinks and views the world. The process tends to be circular. Children do relatively little thinking for themselves about the nature of the world. They rely upon the authority of their elders. If parents talk about what animals think, why then animals must think. However, as we shall see, there are other reasons why the child endows animals with language and thought and the inanimate world with feelings. Adults who read or tell imaginative tales that depart from reality are not perverting the child's notions of truth and falsehood, or of reality and fantasy. Usually, they are stimulating fantasy that can serve the child well.

Children's manipulations of a fantasy world and its people in play and daydreams in accord with their own needs constitute a prelude to coping with the reality that cannot be so readily manipulated. It is an important stage in the process of mastery through the manipulation of symbols. A reality orientation will come to the child in time through the sorting out of his or her own tangible experiences of what works and what leads to further frustration, and in terms of how useful communications are in establishing a workable interaction with others.

Another difficulty arises because preschool children lack organized frames of reference into which they can fit what they learn. They have only their own limited experiences and the authority of their elders as to what constitutes reality and truth. They do not yet have the various systems developed by the culture, its measures of time and space, its ways of categorizing, its ethical code, and its value systems into which to fit and organize their experiences, and which provide them with bases for comparison and standards of evaluation. They do not know what their society considers worthy of attention and what can, or should, be ignored.[5] Persons cannot pay attention to all of the stimuli that encroach upon them, and each culture varies in what it finds significant but children are first learning such differentiations.[6]

Egocentricity

The preschool child's orientation, as Piaget repeatedly points out, is markedly *egocentric.* Piaget's use of the term has often been misunderstood, sometimes being confused with narcissism, another notable trait of early childhood.[7] Children can see things only from their own limited points of view and narrow perspectives. They do not realize or appreciate properly that other persons see things differently. For a time, they cannot even grasp that a person seated in another part of the room does not have the same view of things as they have. If asked what the other person sees, they are very likely to describe what they see themselves. Even seven-or eight-year-olds have notable difficulties in explaining something to another child, or in repeating a story so that another can understand it. They cannot grasp properly what needs to be explained, and may omit things they visualize in thinking of the story. Thinking is also egocentric in that a child believes that other persons, and also animals and inanimate objects, are motivated or activated in the same way as the self and one's own parents are. For example, the clouds move because they want to hide the sun; the water in a stream flows because oars push it; didn't the train (that was missed) know we weren't in it? (Piaget, 1962, pp. 245-291). Egocentrism, as

we have noted, also concerns the overestimation of cognitive, subjective solutions over the objective.

Preoperational Intelligence

Children from about two and a half to six or seven are in Piaget's *preoperational* period of intellectual development. It constitutes a prolonged transition from the sensori-motor period to the period of concrete operational intelligence in which conceptual thinking begins, and retains marked residues of sensori-motor behavior, with language and thought remaining tied to concrete and specific visual images. The linguistic symbols refer to specific examples of the categories they designate rather than the abstract categories. Piaget has carefully analyzed the nature of preoperational intelligence.[8] The transition to the stage of *concrete operations* with the ability to deal with categories develops gradually and school-aged children are often thinking preoperationally—to some extent even up to the start of adolescence.[9]

Let us consider some of the preschool child's ways of thinking. We have already noticed the *animism.* Piaget's daughter J., when three years old, remarked that the clouds moved to hide the sun; and when she was five and a half that "the moon was hiding in the clouds, it's cold" (Piaget, 1962, p. 251). She not only bestows upon the moon the power to hide but also a motive. The child may be reluctant to pick a flower and hurt it. Aspects of nature are explained by *artificialism.* "Mountains are little stones that have grown bigger" (p. 248), or at three, "I think the sky is a man who goes up in a balloon and makes the clouds and everything" (p. 248). Names are an inherent part of an object and not something bestowed by people. At four Piaget's daughter L. was certain that the name of a mountain was "Soleve" and not "Saleve," insisting she could tell by looking at it (p. 256); and when over five and a half his daughter J. asked, "How did they find out the name of [the mountain] the Dent Blanche?" (pp. 255-256). Dreams are puzzling. The child believes that they have a tangible existence in the room, outside of the self; and may be uncertain whether or not someone else in the room might be able to see the dream, and is puzzled how it can be seen with eyes closed. Causality is also considered in animistic terms. An eight-year-old girl studied by Piaget still believed that she could make the clouds move by walking, that everybody could; and when asked if the clouds also moved at night, said that the animals walking about at night made them move. At an earlier age, the child may become involved in circular reasoning such as that the wind makes the trees move, and the moving trees make the wind that moves the clouds. As we

might anticipate, rules of games are, like their names, something inherent in the game, or perhaps rules that God or the parents once made. Children of four or five may be able to understand and try to adhere to the rules, but are very likely to change them to suit their needs. Thus a four-year-old boy invented his own game and insisted that his brother and father play it with him, but they could not follow his rules until they grasped the one fundamental rule: that the four-year-old must always win.

It is apparent that preschool reasoning is very loose. Before the age of seven children's use of "because" is rare, and when it occurs in response to "why" it usually precedes an animistic or artificialistic explanation. Children are likely to join ideas together by using " 'n then" as a conjunction, relying upon sequence as a cause. Actually, it is difficult to analyze children's reasoning at this age because of its global, syncretic nature which is related to the absence of adequate categories or classes. When pushed a child can usually find some reason to connect things together.

In describing the preschool child's abilities we have noted the various characteristics of preoperational thought. It is egocentric as a result of the child's limited experience, absence of reference systems, and difficulties in differentiating the subjective from the objective. Fantasy and reality are intermingled, and reality gives way to fantasy in face of the child's needs. As word meanings are limited they do not supply the categories required for logical thinking. Thought is still tied to internalized visual signs, and the child is apt to *center* on a single aspect of the object and neglect other attributes and so distort reasoning, and also to center on a typical example of a category rather than a true abstraction. Thinking tends to be static because children cannot take into account the transformations from one state to another. It suffers from being irreversible because they cannot maintain an original premise while reasoning; and, similarly, there is difficulty in remembering the image with which they started and need for comparison with the end result.[10] Piaget stresses in many different ways the imbalance between assimilation and accommodation during this period of life.[11]

Piaget's analyses of children's intellectual processes and ways of experiencing during the preoperational stage are highly intriguing.[12] However, for our present purposes it may suffice to understand something of children's capacities and limitations and how they understand the world about them. Many of their limitations would seem to be understandable in terms of inexperience, which means that they will be egocentric; in terms of the fact that even though they have words it will take time and

experience before words really designate categories; and that they have not yet gained the culture's ways of reasoning and systematizing. How much depends upon the immaturity of the nervous system, and how much upon the slow process of organizing the "mind," are not yet known.

There is some danger that emphasis on the limitations of young children's mental processes and egocentric views of the world can lead to gross underevaluations of children's potentialities. Children's abilities vary with intelligence level and the social and intellectual milieu in which they are raised. After all, John Stuart Mill, as well as other child prodigies, could manage the syntax of Greek and Latin by the age of four to five. Far less remarkable children can manifest a strange admixture of primitive and complex thinking. The four-year-old who seemed to believe in the reality of his fantasy country "Milkins" could at the same time readily distinguish various makes of cars, including the models from different years under the proper brand names, and also categorize them according to the body style, irrespective of brand names. This constitutes a rather high level of category formation, and was related to a dominant interest as well as to the presence of an adult companion who went to considerable effort to help him learn the differentiations.

With experience and education children move beyond preoperational thought. With increasing socialization and under the subtle pressure to conform in order to gain acceptance, as well as to find relief from anxieties, children begin to repress unacceptable wishes and the fantasies and thoughts that accompany them. Much of the material will become unconscious and interfere less directly with reality-directed and reflective thinking. The nature of the unconscious processes and how they continue to influence behavior will be considered in the next chapter.[13]

The Development of Trust in Verbal Communication

Children of three or four are starting to assemble their major resources for conducting their lives through their abilities to use language. Their reality testing will depend upon the slow sorting out of experiences and the learning of what works and what does not that started during infancy; but this will, in turn, also depend upon the consistency and reliability of the behavior of their tutors, primarily the members of their families. Verbal communication assumes increasing importance as children emerge from their families. Family members had, through long experience, been able to understand and even

anticipate many of their needs without the children's verbalizing them. Still, the child's trust in language —and what can be conveyed verbally and what responses words will elicit—develops in the home setting. Here the child learns how effective words will be: whether they concur with the unspoken communications; whether they are apt to match the feelings that accompany them; whether they subserve problem solving or are just as often a means of masking the existence of problems. The child's trust in verbal communication depends upon whether the words of the persons who are essential to the child help solve problems or confuse, whether they provide more consistent signals than nonverbal cues, and whether the child's use of words can evoke desired responses. Difficulty can arise when parents' words contradict their nonverbal signals, as, for example, when the mother's words of affection are accompanied by irritable and hostile handling of the child; or when the mother's instructions for the child to obey grandmother are accompanied by her obvious delight when the child disobeys and becomes a nuisance to the grandmother. The value of words is also diluted or negated when erroneous solutions are habitually imposed, as when a child who cries from fear is fed because all crying is interpreted as a sign of hunger. Predictive values of communication are undermined when promises rarely materialize. A disturbed young woman told how very early in life she had ceased to trust what her mother said, and virtually stopped listening to her incessant talk, for she had learned that her mother's tales of the wonderful things they would do together never materialized. It took her many years to learn that her mother was simply sharing the fantasies that sustained her.[14]

Interference with children's efforts to explore their surroundings and solve problems by themselves can also impede the development of language. Children who have been treated as passive objects for whom almost everything must be done have little need to speak. Discouragement of verbal play also hinders. Children need to try out words and expressions in a multitude of contexts and learn from the responses elicited. They often repeat what a parent says and does, imaginatively exchanging roles with the parent. "You tired, Mommy; sit here, Johnny reads you book." Through filling the reciprocal role in play, children expand their comprehension and use of words as well as developing through such identifications. Parents who cannot participate in such play, and who insist upon firm adherence to reality, discourage such exploratory problem solving. Sometimes, parents consider the child's "make-believe" to be lying, reprimand the child severely, and cut off all expressions of fantasy. The parents of an adolescent delinquent related that they were not surprised that he was in serious

trouble, for he had been a difficult child from the start, already given to lying at the age of three—he had told them about playing with another boy when no one had been about, and of how he had helped mow the lawn when he could not yet push the lawnmower. They felt that they had been forced to make strenuous efforts to change his ways, but their punishments could not alter his inherent nature.

As Basil Bernstein (1974) has found, children in many lower-class families gain little linguistic experience in their homes, where there are few conversations and children are simply given abrupt orders, and much interaction is at the nonverbal, concrete level needed to carry out the fundamentals of life.

Here, discouragement and disparagement of a child's questions limit the verbal explorations essential for learning. Children's incessant questions can become a test of parental patience and provoke: "Why can't you shut up for a while?" "What difference does it make what it is called?" "It doesn't mean anything at all!" Sometimes punishment for what is simply the conveying of needs can lead to a vicious cycle of creating greater needs, more pressing attempts to communicate, and eventually to despair. A little girl of four who imparted her wish to be rid of her baby brother was told that she was wicked and severely admonished never to hurt the baby. Fearful of rejection, she called for her mother at night, only to be threatened that she would be sent off to a school for bad girls if she didn't let her mother sleep. The child stopped calling her mother at night because of her fears, but instead developed a severe pain in her head. The severe headaches then led to her hospitalization, which caused the girl to suffer acute separation anxiety. Parents can impede and distort the development of linguistic abilities in a great variety of ways. The examples presented should suffice to indicate how the child can fail to develop trust in the usefulness of language for communicating and as an instrument for solving problems.[15]

GENDER IDENTITY

Whether a child is a boy or girl has always been one of the most important determinants of personality characteristics. How much of the child's tendency to assume gender-linked personality traits is innate and how much is environmental are difficult to determine,[16] but in all societies children are consciously, and perhaps even more unconsciously, prepared for the functions they will carry out as adults. As most women in our contemporary society spend far fewer years rearing children than

formerly, with a larger proportion of them engaged in careers outside the home, and as men come to share more of the child rearing and household tasks, boys and girls need to be prepared for less differentiated roles and functions than in the past. However, at least because of their different procreative functions, if not also because of different developmental problems as well as deeply rooted needs and traditions, some definite differences between males and females are unlikely to disappear. Freud could write with complete assurance some forty years ago, "Male and female is the first differentiation that you make when you meet another human being, and you are used to making that distinction with absolute certainty" (Freud, 1933). Now we can only say it is a distinction that you used to make with certainty. Nevertheless, the difference remains of the essence in human relationships, and the children's gender will, at least for some time to come, continue to determine much of the future pattern of their lives.

The influence of the child's gender on personality development has been so pervasive that until recently it has simply been taken for granted, and little attention has been paid to the complex and subtle matter of the dynamics of the personality differentiation of the two sexes. Theories have often been rooted in culturally accepted beliefs rather than upon scientific evidence. Although many questions remain, the topic requires consideration before we turn to the oedipal transition proper, for the nature of the oedipal strivings and the way in which they are resolved depend upon the child's gender and the firmness of his or her gender identity. Further, the proper resolution of the child's oedipal problems solidifies the child's gender identity, and when the oedipal transition becomes confused, it can augment conflicts or even create new problems concerning gender identity.

Biological Factors

The child's sex is genetically determined, but, as we shall examine, biological factors only influence but do not determine the gender identity.

Let us now review very briefly some of the salient aspects of gender determination and what it may have to do with gender identity in humans. Whether the child is male or female depends upon the presence of an X or a Y chromosome in the fertilizing sperm that joins with the X chromosome in the ovum. The presence of the Y chromosome usually assures that at a critical phase in fetal development the

testes secrete androgen which influences the anlage of the genito-urinary tract to develop male internal organs and later to develop male external genitalia. It must be understood that neither gonads nor sex hormones are necessary for the development of infantile female external genitalia. It has now become fairly certain that in mammals, including monkeys, the male hormone also acts upon the undifferentiated brain to organize certain circuits in male rather than female patterns (Diamond, 1965; Young *et al.,* 1964). The androgen acts upon the fetal brain to direct young males after birth to show more active and aggressive play and a tendency to sexual mounting behavior; and the absence of such an androgen leads to female trends of interest in babies and greater interest in grooming behavior. The duration of such influences in primates is unknown, but they last for at least two years and start the baby in the proper gender role. Indeed, in Jane Goodall's (1963, 1965) studies of chimpanzees in their natural habitat, a young immature female was observed to try repeatedly to take a baby away from her mother to care for it herself: such behavior was not observed and would not be anticipated in young males.

Recent studies have shown that when androgens are given to pregnant monkeys, the female offspring of such pregnancies tend to show the male rather than the female behavior patterns in childhood. Such experiments cannot, of course, be conducted in humans. However, occasionally female fetuses are exposed to high levels of male hormone because of a defect in the production of adrenal hormones, resulting in oversecretion of genitally masculinizing hormones. Fifteen preadolescent girls suffering from this adrenogenital syndrome showed more interest in boys' toys and less in doll play and less satisfaction in being girls than did a control group, even though the excess secretion of male hormone was stopped medically in infancy (Ehrhardt, Epstein, and Money, 1968).[17] Another group of girls who had been exposed to progestins prior to birth, given to prevent their mothers from aborting, were between three and fourteen years old when studied. Progestins, even though female hormones, have a masculinizing effect. Nine were designated as "tomboys" by their parents or themselves, and showed a marked interest in boys' toys and team sports (Ehrhardt and Money, 1967). Such studies suggest that prenatal exposure to androgen has a masculinizing influence in humans as well as in other mammals. It may be possible that some pregnant women who are subjected to severe stress secrete sufficient androgen from the adrenal cortex to produce a masculinizing influence upon a female fetus. It seems unlikely that androgen secretion in the mother would induce *patterned* male behavior in human infants, but it might well influence the readiness of males and females to learn behaviors appropriate to their

genders,[18] There are also indications that chromosomal abnormalities may influence gender-linked behavior in a very general way. Thus, men with Klinefelter's syndrome, an anomaly due to the presence of two X chromosomes and one Y chromosome, are not only sterile and weakly motivated sexually, but may tend toward confusions in gender identity. In contrast, men with two X and two Y chromosomes tend toward outbursts of aggressive behavior as well as being very tall, eunuchoid, and mentally retarded (Garcia *et al.,* 1967).

Gender Allocation

The studies by Hampson, Hampson, and Money of seventy-six pseudo-hermaphrodites and hermaphrodites of almost every known type require thoughtful assessment in any theory of gender role determination.[19] In these individuals various combinations of discrepancies existed between the assumed gender in which the person had been raised and the external genitalia, the internal organs, the chromosomes, and the hormonal secretions after puberty. In only four of the seventy-six subjects was there any notable inconsistency between the sex in which the person had been raised and the gender role established despite the obvious developmental difficulties created for many of them by the uncertainties about their actual gender and by various physical abnormalities. Thus, chromosomal males with gonadal agenesis had almost always been thought to be girls, at least till puberty, and they were clearly feminine in behavioral characteristics. In some diagnostic categories some children had been raised as boys and others as girls. It is also significant that in twenty-five of the series there was a marked contradiction between the appearance of the external genitalia and the assigned sex, and yet all but a few had come to terms with the anomalous situation and established a gender role consistent with the assigned sex and rearing. The topic is extremely complex but the results of the study seem sufficiently definitive to warrant the conclusion that the gender assigned and in which the child is reared can outweigh chromosomal and hormonal influences and the appearance of the genitals in determining gender identity. However, the investigators have now modified their earlier conclusions that the human is born psychosexually neutral: that is, with gender-linked sexual behavior developing only in accord with the way in which the child is reared. The evidence now indicates that because of prenatal genetic and hormonal influences, humans are predisposed at birth to a male or a female gender orientation, but that such influences only predispose to a pattern that can be modified greatly by subsequent life

experiences.[20]

While such investigations are important in helping sort out the factors determining sexual identity as well as sex-linked behavioral traits, confusions concerning a child's gender are rare, and with occasional exception the physical appearance, chromosomes, hormonal secretions, and the assigned gender are in harmony. By the age of two or two and a half the identity of the child as a boy or girl is already well ingrained in the child's awareness and behavior. Indeed, the Hampsons and Money, on the basis of their experience with children whose gender assignment had been changed, believe that such changes after the age of two and a half are very likely to create serious problems for the child (Money *et al.*, 1957).

Although the child knows its gender by the age of two, the matter is not as clear-cut as one might imagine. If we remember the way in which the child thinks and fantasies between the ages of three and five, it becomes apparent that many inconsistencies can exist in the children's concepts of themselves. They know what they are but not what they might become. Many boys of three or four will openly express their belief or wish that they will grow up to be a mommy. A little girl may fully believe that when she grows older she will develop a penis. Both boys and girls may fantasy as well as fear that they may change sex when they grow up. It is necessary to appreciate the boys initial identification with his mother to understand the foundations for many sexual aberrations and related psychopathological conditions.

Parental attitudes are very likely to differ according to the child's sex from the time of birth and influence the child's emerging behavior in many subtle ways. It is difficult to tell whether the boy usually becomes more active in response to a pattern evoked *in utero* by androgen secretion or in response to the manner in which he is treated.[21] Many mothers relate more actively with a son than with a daughter (Cohen, 1966). The father may often play a more crucial role than the mother in fostering gender-linked attributes. Whereas the mother may fill her nurturant role with the young child in very much the same way whether it is a boy or girl, the father may have more active physical interaction with a little son and feel freer to display affection and softness with a daughter. J. Kleeman (1971) noted that by one year the girl's coyness, flirting, and kiss-seeking behavior with her father and not with her mother may be striking. Fathers in turn note that their two-to three-year-old daughters are flirtatious, coy, and cuddling and like

it, whereas they may frankly state that they cannot stand feminine traits in a son (Goodenough, 1957).[22] Fathers want sons to be boyish and girls to be feminine more decisively than do many mothers.

The establishment of a firm gender identity in the child is clearly a complex matter, for it depends upon a multiplicity of factors. The sexual organs are, of course, a major influence in contributing to the child's basic orientation as a male or female. Erikson considers that in addition to providing a general directive to both child and parents a boy, in response to the presence of his penis and the feelings it engenders, tends to become intrusively active, whereas a girl, responding to her external and internal sexual organs, feels receptive and even ensnaring. He considers that the girl develops feelings and ideas of an inner space, a creative space that profoundly influences her way of relating and her feelings about herself (Erikson, 1959). The sexual hormones may have influenced the fetus *in utero* and will also affect behavior in the adolescent but do not impinge upon the young child. Despite the importance of various biological factors, the gender assigned the child by the parents and the ensuing interactional patterns within the family can, as we have seen, outweigh all other considerations. The child's identification with the parent of the same sex is clearly important in guiding the child's development as a male or female, but the child does not initially take on behavioral ways of an adult man or woman. Parental preferences, encouragements, and prohibitions of certain types of gender-linked behavior are also significant. However, once the children clearly identify themselves as boys or girls some time before the age of two and a half, a more general factor may come into operation. Kohlberg (1966) considers that once gender identity is established children deduce what male and female behavior is supposed to be, and more or less seek to adhere to the stereotypes they have formed. At first such ideas are simple, based on a limited set of features that a child can grasp, and thus are both stereotyped and oversimplified. However, the concepts are not static but change as children grow older and their cognitive abilities permit them to appreciate more complex aspects of maleness and femaleness. In this way identification with peers of the same sex becomes very important as the child passes the age of four or five, as we shall examine in Chapter 9.

Children's Reactions to Sex Differences

What makes children boys or girls may not be obvious to the child. Some do not have an opportunity to ascertain the physical differences till later in childhood, but ignorance of the difference is more often

due to an inability to see or to remember what has been seen and is upsetting. Children may pay more attention to the clothing than to the genitalia. A five-year-old, when asked while he was looking at a nude baby if it were a boy or girl, replied, "I don't know—it's hard to tell with the clothes off." However, the discovery that boys have penises whereas girls do not may have a critical effect upon the lives of some children. The little boy who believes that all children are born with penises but those of girls had been removed fears the loss of his; and some girls may blame their mothers for not providing them with a penis, as we shall discuss when considering the oedipal transition. The girl's feeling that she has been deprived, or that she was born with a penis which has been removed, has been considered a trauma common to all women by some psychoanalysts, but others attribute the so-called penis envy to resentment over the second-class role in society to which being a woman—and, therefore, deprived of a penis—assigns her. Freud rather strangely believed that the psychoanalysis of women could not progress beyond recognition and acceptance of such feelings of deprivation. However, Bettelheim (1954) has observed and emphasized that children of both sexes are likely to envy both the physique and the prerogatives of the other sex. His observation led him to study the practice of subincision among Australian Aborigines, which he considers is a means of partly assuaging men's envy of women's natural creativity.[23] Sometimes a little girl can become very much concerned or preoccupied with the absence of the handy little tool that she observed on a boy. Some will rebel and try to change the situation either in reality or imaginatively. The girl may insist on standing up to urinate; or the parents may merely note references to her fantasies. Thus, a four-and-a-half-year-old had been a happy child until the birth of her brother. She was not only jealous of the attention the infant received but properly attributed the parents' delight with the baby to his sex. She began to stand up to urinate and insisted on wearing blue jeans, refusing to wear dresses. Her mother sought to ease the situation by explaining the advantage the girl had in being able to have a baby. 'The explanation included some information about how babies are made and grow in the mother. The girl then developed a severe phobia of contamination and refused to eat many foods, fearing she might ingest a "seed" and have a baby grow in her "stomach."

Such crises are unlikely to occur—or, if they do, are readily surmounted—when the girl can appreciate that the mother has self-esteem as a woman, and also that the father has esteem and affection for his wife as a woman. Being a girl who will grow into a woman can have many advantages over being a boy, as well as vice versa. In some societies little, if any, unhappiness over being female arises, because

girls are raised to accept completely the female way of life. New Guinean women who are kept in a very inferior position have been known to say, "Let the men have their rituals and sacred objects if it makes them happy; after all we have the important things in life: the babies, pigs, and gardens." In our contemporary society, girls are likely to be rebellious about the lot in life that awaits them. It is hoped that, as they become freer to choose their war of life—to pursue a career, to become a housewife and mother, or to combine the two—the advantages of being female will increase and dissatisfaction with women's fate become less common. The choice can, of course, make the lives of young women more difficult, as we shall consider in Chapters 10-13.[24] Obviously not all little girls accept being female. A period of boyish behavior that lasts until shortly before puberty is common, and may be accompanied by unexpressed daydreams of being a boy. The eventual solution of the problem may hang in balance until some time in adolescence; but a proper resolution of the oedipal situation usually consolidates the acceptance of a feminine identity. The identification with the mother, fortified by the father's pleasure in having a daughter, usually wins out, directing the girl into feminine ways and satisfactions.

The little boy, in contrast to the girl, must shift from his initial symbiosis with his mother to identify with his father and brothers, and model himself after other boys. Little boys, as we have already noted, often have strong desires to become "mommies." The mother is apt to be for the little child the secure, protecting, and bestowing adult. The wish to become a man may not be as natural as Freud assumed; and perhaps society-must make the goal of masculinity seem tempting to the little boy. The shift is fostered by his mother's admiration of his father as well as the societal evaluation of the male role. It may be enhanced by the pride the boy takes in his penis, and perhaps by his mother's conscious or unconscious pleasure in his having a penis. Boys usually start gaining pleasure by playing with their penises at a very early age, and solace by grasping the penis when in pain or emotionally upset. The boy can become very upset when he discovers that there are persons who have no penis. He may conclude that girls have had their penises cut off, and fear for his own intactness and male identity. Concern that the penis can disappear may be augmented by the fluctuations in its size. The concern may be so anxiety-provoking that the boy seeks to deny the potentiality, refusing to perceive or remember having seen anyone without a penis. He may imagine that his mother has simply hidden hers, or that his baby sister has not yet grown one. Such ideas and concerns were brought home to a mother very vividly when her five-year-old son asked where she kept her penis. She reminded him that she had told him that boys and men have

penises but girls and women do not, that they have other organs instead. The boy then said, "Yes, I remember now, that's where someone axed you one!"

Freud considered castration anxiety to be a universal and a critical aspect of all male development that plays a major role in the oedipal transition. However, in homes where matters concerning sex and genitals are taken more casually than in Victorian times, anxiety over castration may not occur at all, and when it does be less of a central issue. However, the existence of castration concerns is very apt to be minimized because of the tendency to repress the childhood fear after the problem has been resolved. Castration anxiety occurs or is augmented, according to psychoanalytic theory, because the penile erotic masturbatory sensations stimulate erotic fantasies which in the little child are rather naturally connected to the mother and the bodily care she provides. Masturbation tends to continue unless the child is severely admonished or threatened with The consequences unless he stops. Threats that the penis would fall off, or that the father would cut it off, unless the masturbating stopped were once common, and still occur in some families. Even without such threats, the connection between masturbation and fantasies about the mother may eventually lead to severe conflicts and guilt feelings, with fears of retribution from the father, which force the hoy to suppress his autoerotic play. However, it has also become evident from the analysis of patients in whom castration anxiety has become a severe and enduring problem that such concerns are likely to reflect the individual's wish to be rid of his penis. Although such wishes may seem unlikely, a boy may fantasy retaining his identification with his mother, or he may become envious of the prerogatives of sisters and feel burdened by the demands placed upon him for achievement because he has a penis. Severe anxiety here, as elsewhere, is very often related to fear that an ambivalent wish might materialize.[25] Psychoanalysis had, until recently, failed to consider seriously not only that some women envy men but that many men wish they could be women. Transsexual operations are sought far more frequently by men than by women.

By the age of four, boys and girls are beginning to move into separate groups. Although boys may act contemptuously toward girls—which has been taken to indicate their assimilation of the cultural devaluation of females, or of scorn for the "castrated" sex—evidence indicates that it is part of boys' efforts to gain distance from and become independent of feminine influence because they must overcome their initial identification with a woman as well as their wishes to be taken care of by a woman.

Security of Gender Identity

A child's comfort and security as a member of his or her own sex depend very greatly upon parental attitudes. As parents neither treat a child completely in accord with his or her sex, nor themselves provide fully consistent models as males or females, nor consistently reward masculinity in a boy or femininity in a girl, no child grows up to be purely masculine or feminine, which designations are, after all, only relative. As every psychiatrist knows, some of the most aggressive masculine behavior often covers intense feminine strivings or homosexual tendencies; and among the most ensnaringly seductive women are some who are incapable of attaining any sexual gratification. The Greeks in their mythology of the heroic and unconquerable Heracles included an episode in which he exchanged roles with Queen Omphale and lived with her as a woman. Parents who have had their hearts set upon having a child of a given sex may be unable to absorb their disappointment when the newborn turns out contrary to their hopes. Girls are more likely to feel unwanted, and according to tradition less often be of the sex that the parents wanted. In an effort to make up to her father for having disappointed him (as if it were her doing and not his) the girl may strive to become a boyish companion for her father.[26] Some mothers are unable to relate properly to a daughter, and may more or less consciously encourage the development of masculine traits. A husband may treat his wife so contemptuously that their daughter sees little advantage in a feminine role. Boys can also disappoint their parents and feel that they should have been girls. The male role may be dangerous in a home where an aggressive and dominant wife constantly belittles and cuts off her husband. An occasional mother may have her heart so set on having a daughter to provide companionship, or to whom she can give all the things that she lacked in childhood, that she feminizes the boy. A marine who suffered a combat neurosis after displaying exceptional heroism confided that he had joined the service to bolster his inadequate feelings of masculinity: he had been dressed as a girl until he was five, and had never been able to believe that he was really a male.[27]

When the development goes well, the emerging gender-linked roles fuse with the biological directives. The society, just like the evolutionary process, has a vital interest in seeing that children of both sexes assimilate whatever gender-linked roles are appropriate to the society and needed by it. As only girls can give birth to children and are likely to be the primary nurturant figure for the small child, it seems vital to foster at least some differences between the sexes. In the past at least, and to a great extent still today, the girl who is to become a mother, and who will have a vital interest in preserving the

integrity of her family, is already becoming more interested in people and how they relate to one another. She is not as physically active as the boy. She is spending more time playing house and caring for her dolls. She is quieter and more passive, waiting upon the action of others, but she is also very likely to know how to make herself attractive to her father. The boy, who is to become a husband upon whom a wife and children can be dependent, is beginning to deny his dependency upon his mother and manifest feelings of superiority to girls. He is already moving out into the neighborhood and into a male competitive world. The trends start early; they need to be deeply rooted.

Since the gender identity and its accompanying roles are so dependent upon the ways in which parents relate to the child, interact with one another, and regard themselves, it becomes apparent that all sorts of variations in gender identity and in the security and stability of the gender identity can develop. Because the pattern of a person's relationships will be carried out in accord with his or her sex, the gender identity will have far-reaching repercussions, but here we must be concerned primarily with how it influences and is influenced by the oedipal transition.

KNOWLEDGE AND FANTASIES OF CONCEPTION AND CHILDBIRTH

Sooner or later, often in conjunction with the birth of a younger sibling, the child puzzles about the origin of babies. Stories about storks are likely to stretch the credulity of even a young child, particularly in a country where there are no storks. Simple explanations that the child grows within the mother and comes out through a special opening may satisfy for a time. Detailed explanations are beyond the child's comprehension and do not decrease misapprehensions. Children usually develop or expand theories on their own. The mystery of the origin of babies is one of the primal mysteries of childhood.

The young child is likely to believe that the seed is placed in the mother's mouth, or that it comes from eating a seeded food. The baby before birth may be envisioned as sitting in the mother's stomach with open mouth, ingesting the food she eats. How the baby gets out of the mother is an even greater puzzle. Obviously, the child is likely to believe that it emerges from the anus; but the navel, which appears to serve no other good purpose, is often selected. As mothers go to hospitals, the doctor may remove the baby by an operation. There are many potential sources of anxiety to the child, particularly to the little girl who cannot conceive of how she could produce a baby without incurring disastrous

consequences to her body. However, in this regard as in many others, the child's attitude reflects the parents'; and if not given reasons to feel discomfort or concern, children usually accept their parents' explanation and ask when they wish to know more. The child's reasoning may be difficult to follow, as in the case of the four-year-old boy who, after puzzling over an explanation of how the baby grows in the mother, asked, "Now, before the baby is born, is the baby in the mother or the mother in the baby?"

SIBLING RELATIONSHIPS

Although it is simpler to consider the development of a single child growing up in relation to parents, it is unrealistic as the interactions between siblings are among the major formative influences. If a child does not already have siblings, a brother or sister is likely to appear before the child completes the oedipal phase. Sibling relationships are not only almost as important as the oedipal triangle of parents and child in directing and crystallizing a child's early development, but the oedipal transition is usually greatly influenced by the presence of other children. Even though a discussion of siblings will complicate an already complicated subject, it will permit a more rounded and realistic presentation.

Sibling rivalry has probably received far more attention than the advantages of sibling relationships. The hostility of brothers receives attention in the opening pages of the Old Testament in which Cain's fratricide—a crime relating homicidal impulses to fraternal jealousy—is considered second immediately after the original sin of Adam and Eve. The rivalry between brothers for a father's blessing led Jacob to drive a hard bargain with the starving Esau and cheat him, albeit with their mother's help. Jacob, in turn, was deprived of his favorite son when his ten oldest sons united to rid themselves of the precocious Joseph.

The arrival of a new baby can naturally provoke intense jealousy; a child's entire life is changed by it. The infant usually has priority for the mother's attention. Still, the child is often expected to take delight in the new arrival and share the parents' enthusiasm. A child who had been awaiting a baby brother with happy anticipation may now feel deceived: the little brother can't join in play, doesn't talk, and is little more than a nuisance. Children are not joking when they ask whether the parents can't give the baby back, or comment that a new puppy would have been preferable. A three-and-a-half-year-old girl with a one-year-old brother, when told that still another baby was expected, was disappointed to

learn that her parents would not simply be, as with the family car, trading in her brother for a new and more preferable model. Despite parents' attempts to prepare their children and make them feel that the baby is theirs as well as the parents', this is a time of tribulation during which most children can be expected to show regressive behavior. A child may insist on returning to the bottle, or start soiling again. Being a baby and unable to care for oneself clearly has advantages. Tics or a stammer may appear, symptoms that reflect efforts to control aggression toward the baby.

Parents often sigh with relief after the baby is several months old and the older child has accepted the situation without obvious difficulties. However, problems are even more likely to occur when the infant emerges from the crib or playpen and gets into the older child's possessions. The mother must now divide her attention between two active children. The older child's aggressivity toward the baby or toddler may provoke the first real conflict with the parents, who must protect the younger child and cannot practice their customary tolerance. Children learn to conform in order to maintain the parents' approval but may do so by *reaction formation.* They repress hostility and become overgood or overdemonstrative toward the baby. The defense does not always work, and, a child may develop a disturbing slyness, appearing affectionate toward the baby when the parents are about but pinching, hitting, poking, or otherwise provoking the baby when no one is about.

Envy of Older Siblings

Whereas older children are given to jealousy of younger children, younger children are usually envious of children older who have many prerogatives and gain attention through their accomplishments. Their envy may spur children to activities beyond their capacities and lead to various frustrations. When the young child can somehow identify with the older and take pride in the older's abilities, things can go well; but if the child feels defeated and constantly left out, he or she may stop trying to emulate the older sibling and simply feel resentful. Here again, the older children are very likely to follow the parental example of being helpful to younger siblings if they do not feel deprived or constantly reprimanded because of the younger.

The rivalrous conflicts that are almost bound to occur, particularly among closely spaced siblings, create turmoil; and the noise of the friction, like a squeaking wheel, gains attention from the parents who

seek means of lubrication to restore quiet and calm. The regressions of the older child, the turn from carefree happiness to sullen discontent, the hyperactive strivings to regain the center of the stage, cannot but disturb the parents. Their efforts to mediate and provide justice are not always compatible with a child's emotional needs. Punishment for attention-seeking tactics can readily leave the child feeling misunderstood and lead to new infractions.

Affection and Identification Between Siblings

The positive feelings between siblings and the great need and affection they often develop for one another can be overlooked because their fights attract more attention. Ambivalence is characteristic of good as well as poor relationships between young siblings. Most quarrels, even those that look as if they would end in fratricide, are quickly forgotten by the children, who make up wordlessly and resume their companionship while the parents are still pondering how they will manage the situation.

While difficulties in finding conflict-free space within the family and desires for affection provoke rivalries, the similarities in how they are raised and in their backgrounds can make siblings very much alike and quite understanding of one another, and they are apt to be closer to one another than to any other person. The siblings' similar ways of regarding situations, and similar superego developments, may enable them to understand what the other thinks and feels without any verbal exchange. Indeed, a sibling's values may be as important as the parents' in the formation of a child's superego directives. The need for a sibling's esteem and affection can take precedence over strivings for parental love. A child may cede priority with a parent rather than see a beloved sibling unhappy or endanger their relationship. One child may conceal or fail to develop some ability rather than move into an area in which the other has gained recognition. Siblings may divide roles between them as they find ways of sharing the living space to avoid conflict. The division of a single place within the family becomes most noticeable with identical twins who encounter the special developmental problem of differentiating from one another as well as from the mother (Kent, 1949; Koch, 1966; Lidz, Cornelison *et al.,* 1958). Here, the sharing of ways of doing things and the reliance upon one another for support often create serious difficulties for the twins in learning to lead separate lives.

Ordinal Position and Development

The significance of the ordinal position of the child to various abilities, traits, and mental health has been studied in a variety of ways. Statistical studies have limited value to the understanding of the individual because of the variations in circumstances and parental attitudes from family to family. Apparently first-born children enjoy some advantages as far as achievement of intellectual superiority and eminence is concerned (Altrus, 1966). Oldest children clearly gain a different perspective from that of younger children, particularly in large families where they assume some responsibility for the siblings. The advantages may derive from the greater opportunity for contact with adults that they have while still small, and from their being the sole recipient of the parents' attention for a time. Whereas the first-born will often maintain a certain priority in the mother's affections, a youngest child may also have a special position in remaining her "baby" no matter how grown. Younger children benefit from the parents' experience with the older and from having an older sibling to provide an example. The middle child, particularly when all children are of one sex, is apt to be caught between the jealousies of the older and the envy of the younger who may form a coalition against the middle child.

When the parents are particularly eager to have a son, the appearance of a second daughter can create poorly concealed disappointments. A second daughter may respond by tending to become boyish in order to compensate the parents; though the third daughter docs not usually follow suit. Still, the long-awaited arrival of a son after several daughters (as one father commented, "After three zeros, finally a digit!") does not always place the boy in an enviable position. The older sisters become jealous of the parents' delight in the presence of a son and heir, and may be particularly envious of his prized penis. Two sisters managed to make their four-year-old brother very self-conscious and ashamed of his penis. The boy may grow up under the aegis of three or four mothering figures, not all of whom are completely benevolent, and in a family that is more attuned to feminine than masculine patterns of behavior. He may be pampered but at the same time be expected to have the manliness to become his father's successor and the carrier of the family name. Some such boys become very envious of the girl's role, with its freedom from great expectations and acceptability of continuing dependency, and develop strong castration wishes. The position in the family does not of itself establish definite patterns. One may also see a youth with three or four older sisters whose masculinity and independence has been properly fostered and with a suitable father figure to emulate who feels very comfortable in his favored position.

Sibling Relationships and the Oedipal Transition

The sibling relationships, or more usually the parental attitudes toward the siblings, can decisively influence children's oedipal relationships as well as the firmness of their gender identities. A girl born into a family in which the parents had become emotionally estranged prior to her birth was confronted by a difficult situation. Her mother deeply resented her birth, which she felt held her in a marriage that she had decided to dissolve just before she found herself pregnant. The mother, feeling neglected by her husband, had become very much caught up in her relationship with her three-year-old son, and could find no room for a daughter. The mother's own lack of self-esteem as a woman contributed to her disinterest in a daughter. The father moved into the gap, seeking to provide the mothering the girl needed. The family soon divided into two hostile camps. The mother, not caring for the father or the daughter, did not furnish a model with whom the girl could identify nor did she impose any obstacles to the father and daughter developing an intense relationship. The father, also feeling deprived, used the girl as a replacement for the mother and formed a close and seductive relationship with her. The way was prepared for the continuation of an incestuously toned relationship into the girl's adolescence.

A girl who feels displaced by a series of younger siblings may become fixated upon a need to regain the mother's love and never properly develop oedipal strivings toward her father. She may prematurely decide that if her mother has no room for her because of the needs of the younger children, she will become her mother's helper, share the mother's tasks and woes, and thereby gain her mother's approval and affection. She then tends to become a little mother who never has a proper childhood. Some such children continue to spend their lives seeking eventually to be appreciated and loved by the mother, even remaining at home unmarried, waiting until all the others have left.

The few illustrations that have been presented are intended only as random examples of the diverse influences that sibling relationships can exert on the oedipal situation. Common patterns may exist, but not many have been clearly defined. Indeed, the whole question of the influence of sibling relationships upon a child's development beyond the relatively simple problems of sibling rivalry and twin relationships has received insufficient attention.

Siblings present so many difficulties that a child may well wish he or she were an only child,

believing that life could unfold far more smoothly without the competition. Yet, only children are often lonely and feel deprived of brothers and sisters. They do not have the opportunity to learn to cope with jealousy and envy of rivals within the home; or to compromise with siblings and share adult attention; or to erect and strengthen defenses against feeling displaced. These may sound like very doubtful benefits, on the order of hitting oneself over the head so as to feel good when the pain stops, but they are important in the long run. The opportunity to share intimately in childhood, to know how someone close feels in various situations, to become familiar with the ways of the opposite sex, to assume responsibility for a brother or sister, to have a sibling show pride and happiness over what one accomplishes, are among the many benefits of having siblings. Basic experiences are properly gained within the shelter of the family.

THE OEDIPAL TRANSITION

We have been following the little child's gradual differentiation from the early symbiotic union with the mother; the assumption of a gender identity; the decrease in egocentricity with the expansion of cognitive capacities and experience; and the process of individuation as the child gains inner structure and increasing capacities for self-control and self-direction. The nebulous boundaries between child and mother have become more definite. The father has become, sooner or later according to the family style, an increasingly important nurturant figure. The initial symbiosis with the mother has broken up into two components; an identification in which the child seeks to be like the mother and take on her attributes, and an object relationship in which the child seeks to maintain a tender or erotized relationship with the mother. All of these developments have to do with the oedipal transition, a process that is not as clear-cut and circumscribed as originally conceptualized by Freud.

Many vagaries exist in the concept of the oedipal complex that may perplex the thoughtful student, who should be aware that main aspects of the oedipal process await clarification.

The term *oedipal attachment* usually refers to the child's erotized attachment to the parent of the opposite sex; and to the resolution of the oedipal complex—to the repression or resolution of the erotic components prior to the age of five or six—because of fear of retribution from the parent of the same sex as the child. As we shall see, such concepts are only tenable in part, and only under certain

circumstances. In a more general sense, the oedipal transition has to do with the child's rescinding the erotized attachment to the mother and the feelings of being the mother's primary source of affection and interest, and finding and accepting a place as a boy or girl member of a family unit.

As we have seen, the little child's attachment to the mother contains strong erotic components. The little child had required erotically toned nurturant care from the mother, which stimulated sensuous oral, anal, and tactile feelings that generalized to color the child's feelings toward the mother. Genital sensations, perhaps more in the boy than the girl, became connected to fantasies about the mother, stimulating feelings of possessiveness and love. Young children consider themselves the center of their mothers' interest and affection, just as their mothers are central to their lives. We have noted the egocentricity of children's thinking, and nowhere are little children more clearly egocentric than in their view of their relationships with their mothers. The child seeks to avoid coming to grips with the changes in the relationship to the mother that the various developments in the child's life have fostered, but inevitably reality closes in and forces the child to terms. The child's renunciation of a priority with the mother and repression of the erotic components of the attachment to her—the resolution of the child's oedipal attachment—seem to be the pivot about which many changes in behavior, thought, and personality organization consolidate.

Just how the oedipal conflicts are resolved will exert a major influence upon the pattern of all future interpersonal relationships and the structuring of the personality. How it is resolved depends upon prior experiences, the particular makeup of the individual, the family members, and the configuration of the family. For better or for worse, decisive changes will take place by the time the child enters school and the next developmental phase.

The Classic Psychoanalytic Concept

Because Freud's discovery and exposition of the oedipal conflict and its resolution form a landmark in the history of man's struggle to gain an understanding of himself, and because the oedipal conflict is incorporated in psychoanalytic as well as many other theories of development, the classic psychoanalytic conceptualization will be presented, even though some aspects of the theory clearly require reformulation (Freud, 1916-1917). We shall then consider a broader approach to understanding the

oedipal transition.

On the basis of his own self-analysis, the psychoanalysis of patients, and from his contemplation of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex* and Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Freud became convinced that the little child develops an intense sexualized love for the parent of the opposite sex; that the love arouses jealousy, guilt, and anxiety which lead the child to repress the feelings into the unconscious; and that in so doing the child comes to identify with the parent of the same sex, and gains a superego in the process. Freud understood the conflict and its resolution primarily in terms of the vicissitudes of the child's libido in accord with his concept that sexual or "libidinal" conflicts were at the root of all neuroses. After the anal phase of development passes, the child's libido becomes invested in the genitals—in the penis in the boy and the clitoris in the girl. The shift of libido to the genitals causes or accompanies an upsurge of sexual feelings in the child, often with a marked increase in masturbation. The sexual feelings of the boy attach themselves to the mother, and those of the girl to the father. Freud offered various explanations of the shift of the girl's attachment from the mother to the father.[28] The child seeks erotic gratification from the parent who is the love object, and fantasies possessing this parent in marriage. The other parent is resented as an intruder, someone unnecessary and superfluous in the child's scheme of things. Those children who have witnessed parental intercourse, or who have developed fantasies based on noises they have heard, wish to replace a parent in the act. The child now wants to be rid of the rival parent, wishes that parent would die, and may fantasy killing the parent. The child's hostile and aggressive impulses are then *projected* onto the parent; that is, the child believes the parent rather than the self is hostile. If the boy can wish to be rid of his father, the father can want to be rid of him. The child becomes anxious, and at night, when defenses are low and darkness and quiet foster fantasy, dreams and nightmares bring terror. The little boy who experiences the connection between his erotic fantasies and the sensations in his genitals may fear that his father will settle the matter by cutting off his penis. This "castration anxiety," Freud believed at times, was at the bottom of almost all anxiety, including anxiety over death. Unable to stand the anxiety he is experiencing, the little boy renounces his erotized wishes to possess his mother. Instead, he decides to grow up to become a person like his father who can gain the love of his mother. He now identifies with his father, seeks to take on his traits, and is impelled into a firmer masculine identity. The father's restrictions and prohibitions, whether real or imagined, are internalized and serve to bolster the ego's capacities to repress and to maintain the repression of the

incestuous strivings. Freud considered that the superego is formed at the time of the resolution of the oedipal conflict by utilization of the "libidinal energy" that had been invested in the mother. With the libidinal energy utilized largely in the service of repressing erotic impulses, the child enters the latency period—a time relatively free from sexual strivings, preoccupations, and activities.

Freud was never quite satisfied with his understanding of the girl's oedipal situation and its resolution. He believed that the girl turns from seeking the mother as a love object because of inherent instinctual reasons; or because she becomes hostile to the mother, who she feels deprived her of a penis; or because she feels that the mother, who is also without a penis, is not a worthy object of her love. He finally emphasized that the girl's recognition of the anatomical differences between the sexes led her to desire a baby to compensate for the lack of a penis, and "with this purpose in view she takes her father as a love object. Her mother becomes the object to her jealousy" (Freud, 1925).[29] As the girl already feels castrated, she cannot suffer castration anxiety that forces her to renounce her desire to possess the father. However, she comes to fear the mother's jealousy, or her projections of her own jealousy onto the mother, and fears the mother will kill or abandon her. She then accepts her identification with her mother and strives to become a woman who can gain a man like her father. However, Freud recognized that the girl does not usually repress her desires for the father as completely as the boy represses his erotic feelings for his mother (Freud, 1933).

The question of the universality of the oedipus complex and, particularly, whether the boy's erotic attachment to his mother and the girl's to her father are inherent components of the human endowment became sources of considerable controversy. Understood in the terms just presented, it would be difficult to defend the omnipresence of the oedipal situation. We must recall that Freud was not only living in a strongly patriarchal society in which it was inconceivable that any boy might want to be a girl unless something were inherently wrong in his makeup, in which the father was or seemed to be the controlling, directing parent, in which virtually all upper-middle class children were cared for by nursemaids or governesses rather than their mothers, and in which there was little, if any, notion that both parents could share the nurturance of the child. Further, without evidence to the contrary, Freud could readily believe that there was an upsurge of sexual drive around the age of four or five because of the children's conscious and unconscious desires to possess their mothers.

There is, however, no evidence that the oedipal child experiences an upsurge of libido in the sense of an increased sexual drive such as occurs at puberty. The confusion of sensuous feelings with a sexual drive has created unnecessary theoretical complications. The child, particularly the boy, has shown genital masturbatory activity even earlier and, as we have previously noted, there are reasons why the child now tends to erotize if not sexualize his feelings toward his mother. Biochemical assays of the hormones as well as observation discount the hypothesis of an increased sexual drive (Tanner, 1961).[30] Oedipal children may be preoccupied with erotic and sensuous ideas and feelings but they are not being subjected to the same type of biological sexual impulsion that occurs in adolescence. However, despite the various reservations we have noted, and still others, the oedipal resolution can be understood as a way the child makes the transition from the initial and essential attachment to the mothering person to finding a place as a boy or girl member of the family.

A Reconceptualization of the Oedipal Transition

Children must overcome the intense bonds to their mothers that were essential to their satisfactory preoedipal development. There are several reasons why children rescind their erotized attachments to their mothers, which may or may not include the fear of the father. First, the mother gradually frustrates the child's attachment to her as part of the diminishing care she provides as the child becomes increasingly able to do things for the self (Parsons, 1964). She knowingly or unknowingly places greater distance between herself and the child. The process is often aided by the birth of a younger child who preempts much of her attention. Second, children suffer a serious narcissistic blow as their egocentric views of the world diminish. They learn that the parents do not consider a child's relationships to the mother in the same way they do. The mother's affectional attachments are divided between the child and her husband, and usually she gives love to other children as well. Children have difficulty realizing that love is not a quantity that is diminished by such division; the child wishes to feel central to the mother's life. The boy has wished to marry his mother, and may have confided his wish and hope to her. "When I grow up, I'm going to marry you," he tells his mother and it has seemed to please her. Now, he realizes that she has not taken his wish seriously. She loves his father and the father has prerogatives that the child does not have. Although the child may be permitted in her bed, it is clearly a temporary matter whereas Father can stay. Mother will not wait for him to grow up to marry her. Indeed, she cannot, and

will be as old as Grandma when he is old enough to marry. Children also begin to learn what marriage involves, and that parents have responsibilities as well as privileges, and children become concerned over their capacities to handle responsibilities in reality. Now, when children have become aware of their separateness from their parents and their own very real limitations, they experience their vulnerability. Nightmares may reflect anxieties over the vulnerability that accompanies the new-found independence as well as fears of a parent. These concerns are part of the sorting out of reality and fantasy that occurs during this period, and perhaps are a pivotal aspect of coming to terms with reality.

The blow to the child's self-esteem and sense of security may be severe. Wertham (1941) believes that the child's resentment toward the mother because of her rejection can reach matricidal proportions.[31] However, when children recognize that their mothers have other interests, most children develop defenses against the ensuing blow to their narcissism. The initial attempts take place while the child's understanding of the situation is very limited. As we have noted, the boy decides that he will marry his mother to retain her to take care of him and love him. The girl may turn to her father as a basic "love object" who will look after her. Whether these wishes are expressions of a child's "infantile sexuality," as Freud believed, or rather natural security operations remains debatable. Such fantasies properly fade as children recognize their parents' priority with one another, the generational differences and other such reality factors, which may be augmented by the dynamic that Freud emphasized: the child's fears of the jealousy of the father. At this juncture, the child develops a defensive pattern[32] to alleviate and prevent a recurrence of the insecurity and loss of self-esteem that would again evoke untenable feelings of anxiety, the empty and lonely feelings of loss, or the hostile resentment of depression.

One common defensive pattern in boys is that described by Freud. The boy fears his father's vengeance because he projects his own hostile feelings onto his father, and, fearing death or castration at the father's hands, gives up his desires for the mother, and so forth. However, the fear of the father is not simply projection. Often enough a father—and perhaps to some degree all fathers—feels displaced by the baby in his relationship with his wife. The intensity and duration of the boys feelings will depend not so much upon the child's needs as upon the father's needs to be the center of his wife's attention, the mother's abilities to divide her interests and affection, the parents' capacities to feel secure in their relationship, and other such matters. When the father is jealous of his child, a son—or even a daughter—

may have reason to fear the father, and a jealous father who seeks to keep his wife from the child and interferes with the mother-child relationship can, in turn, augment the child's wishes to be rid of his father and thus increase his guilt. However, when the father desires the child, gains pleasure from having a child, appreciates what his wife does for the child, and through participating in the child's care is a source of pleasure and security to the child, patricidal impulses are likely to be short-lived, if they arise at all. Instead, the boy learns that his mother loves him differently from the way he loves her, and perhaps that his father does not seriously consider the child to be a rival. Indeed, he appreciates that having a father has advantages.

If, then, the relationship between his parents is good, and his father's relationship to him is affectionate, the boy goes through a more felicitous oedipal transition than the classic version. He realizes that he must grow up before he can marry and he will wait for fulfillment in a relationship with a woman. He identifies with his father, seeking to become a man who can gain a love object like his mother, as could his father. He gains not only strength from the identification but also a model to follow into manhood. He regains or maintains his self-esteem by his identification with a person his mother admires. In contrast, when the boy represses his desires for his mother from fear of castration by his father and then identifies with his father, the boy identifies with a punitive and frightening figure and internalizes aggressive and sadistic characteristics. However, when a son identifies with a father who he feels is benevolent, he can feel that his achievements are extensions of those of his father rather than rivalrous efforts to supplant him, and he is not as likely to be inhibited in his strivings lest he surpass his father.

Although rivalrous, hostile feelings of a son for his father are more likely to predominate in settings in which the father is authoritarian and a distant, feared figure to the young child, as in Freud's Vienna, than they are in middle-class families in the United States, in which authority is shared by the parents and fathers are likely to be close to their children; fathers who are resentful of sons are common enough in the United States and probably in all societies.

With either pattern, the identification with the father may be said to strengthen the child's "ego" and also, through internalization of parental directives, the "superego." "Id" impulses are being confined and repressed, and no longer are permitted as much direct expression. With better self-control, improved reality testing, and less need for gratification from his mother, the boy is ready to move into peer groups

where he must begin to make his way on his own.

Obviously, there are still other ways in which a boy can seek to defend against the anxieties and depressive feelings of losing his primacy with his mother. When the mother rejects the son, the boys resentment, as we have noted, can be directed primarily toward the mother, and lead to lasting misogynistic tendencies. If the mother is contemptuous of the father or despises him, a son is not likely to seek to gain the love of a person like his mother by identifying with his father. If the boy feels engulfed and overwhelmed by a possessive mother, and has a weak father who does not intervene, he may never establish boundaries between himself and his mother or feel adequately masculine.[33] The ways in which the child resolves or fails to resolve the oedipal situation are many, and are not fixed in a single pattern. The differences do not depend primarily upon innate characteristics of the child, as Freud believed, or simply upon how the mother or the father relates to the child, but also upon how the parents relate to one another.

The Girl's Oedipal Transition

Although many of the considerations concerning how the parents' ways of relating to their child and to each other apply to the girl as well as the boy, the girl's oedipal transition, as Freud realized rather late in his life, cannot be conceptualized as a mirror image of the boys. She, too, must overcome her primary attachment to her mother in order to become a discrete individual. However, in contrast to the boy, she has the advantage of not needing to give up her identification with her mother, and often has in the mother a model with whom she is far more familiar than the boy is with his father. The continuation of the identification with the mother may account for the girl's greater stability and calm during the early school years. Freud, however, emphasized the girl's greater developmental difficulties because she must shift her choice of a basic love object from the mother to the father, which has led to difficulties in understanding feminine development. whereas anger with her mother for not having created her a boy, or disappointment in the mother because she, too, is without a penis, may, at times, be significant in turning the girl's love from the mother to the father, but there are other important directives. As the girl emerges from her symbiotic existence with her mother and differentiates from her, she finds another love object within the family in the father, and is directed to him by his tendency to be close and affectionate with a daughter. She can be free of the primary bond with her mother and still have a love object within

the family. As Freud eventually recognized, a girl first forms her "oedipal" attachment to her father at the time the boy is resolving his erotized attachment to his mother (Freud, 1916-1917) and she usually does not repress or rescind the attachment to her father until she approaches puberty. Although a girl may fear reprisal from her mother, either because of projected hostility or because the mother resents her daughter's closeness to her husband, experience shows that a girl is likely to retain fantasies of becoming her father's sexual choice over her mother at a rather conscious level. Fathers commonly gain considerable gratification from their daughters' adulation of them, and are likely to show overt affection for their daughters, which encourages the girls' fantasies. Unlike the child's initial attachment to the mother, the father-daughter bond is not primary and need not be frustrated so early in order to foster the girl's separation-individuation process. At about the time of puberty, however, she becomes frightened by the pressure of her desires and represses the erotic aspects of her attachment; or, as frequently happens, the father must place distance between himself and his nubile daughter. Many women feel and believe that they became unattractive to their fathers when they reached puberty because it was then that their fathers moved away from them. Indeed, it seems as if divorce occurs particularly often when a daughter is reaching puberty, and the daughter's sexual attractiveness to her father may be a factor in leading him to have an extramarital affair.

Thus, the girl's oedipal transition is very likely to occur in two stages: the first occurs during the oedipal period proper, when she differentiates from the mother and shifts to make her father her "object choice"; and then, the prepubertal or early pubertal period, when anxiety forces her to repress her feelings for her father.[34]

The girl's ability to retain the father as a love object keeps her major emotional investment within the home longer than the boys, and appears to serve to prepare her for her greater emotional involvement in the home in adult life. It may also help account for the tendency for girls often to select husbands who clearly resemble their fathers.

Family Integration and the Resolution of the Oedipal Conflict

The fate of the oedipal situation, then, depends upon a variety of factors, including some that are consequences of the child's maturation, some that depend upon the nature of the interaction between the

child and one or both parents, and some upon the relationship between the parents. The dynamic structure of the family plays a major part in organizing the child's personality by guiding the way in which the oedipal conflicts are resolved. A properly structured family with a firm coalition between parents who maintain boundaries between the two generations and adhere to their respective gender-linked roles, however they are defined, enables the child to grow into a relatively conflict-free place within the family. The reader is referred back to Chapter 2 for a discussion of the importance of the family's structure to the personality development of its offspring. Here we are concerned only with the oedipal transition.

The desexualization of the parent-child relationship before puberty is one of the cardinal tasks of the family. It does not depend upon a subsidence of sexual drive as hypothesized in classic psychoanalytic theory, nor does it depend only upon the child's fear of retaliation from a parent, but primarily upon the child's coming to terms with the reality of the prerogatives of the parents and of the basic bond between them. A firm coalition between the parents does not permit the child's fantasies of separating the parents and gaining one for himself or herself to continue on a realistic basis. A parent who turns to a child for gratification of emotional or sexual needs instead of to the spouse or even extramaritally, moves the child across the generation boundaries. When there is a schism between the parents, the child can move into the breach and seek to replace one parent in satisfying the needs of the other. In either case, as commonly happens, it becomes difficult to repress the oedipal erotic fantasies. When the parents are united as spouses and parents, and complement each other's roles and functioning, the child does not have an opportunity to fill an empty place in the wrong generation, but grows into the proper position as a childhood member of his or her sex. The child properly enters the "latency period" after establishing a position as a boy or girl in relation to the parents. When children can identify with the family as a unit and feel secure in their dependency upon it, they can venture into the broader world with energies free to form new relationships and to invest in learning.

A harmonious relationship between the parents, in which the father loves and respects his wife and supports her in her child-rearing functions and her career if she has one, enables the girl to develop a harmonious self-structure. The person with whom she identifies is desirable to the person who is her primary love object; and by following her maternal models she gains self-esteem in feeling that she can be loved and wanted as a woman. The same considerations apply to the boy. Unfortunately, such patterns

are far more often an ideal rather than a reality. Not only are the majority of marriages far from fully satisfactory, but children in their oedipal jealousies can find flaws in parents and the parental relationships and readily magnify conflicts between parents.

Oedipal Fixations

There is an essential relationship between the oedipal situation and the incest taboo. While it has sometimes been assumed that the taboo which is virtually universal determines the resolution of the oedipal attachment, a need to evoke the taboo consciously is an indication that something is amiss in the family structure. The progression of the erotically toned child-parent attachment to an incestuous bond threatens the existence of the nuclear family, prevents the child from investing energies in extrafamilial socialization, and blocks his or her emergence as an adult.[35] If conscious avoidance of incest becomes necessary, the family transactions and the personalities of the family members become further disturbed because spontaneous interactions become impossible, role conflict almost inevitable, and crippling defenses are often necessary. However, some transitory defenses against incestuous feelings' gaining consciousness are present in virtually all families; difficulties arise when defenses are necessary to stop overt activity.

Fixations of development at the oedipal stage come in many configurations and intensities. Disturbances in the resolution of the oedipal conflicts enter into a large proportion of all psychopathology. Fixations or serious difficulties in preoedipal development will also be reflected in oedipal difficulties. In a broad sense, the term "oedipal problems" refers to failures to overcome dependency upon the mother, to repress the sexual components in the love of the parent of the opposite sex, and to identify with the parent of the same sex. The common usage connoting a man's continuing dependency upon his mother often really refers to preoedipal oral dependency problems. The interference of sexualized feelings for a parent in later love relationships is a more central issue. Oedipal conflict is, as I trust has become clear, a normal aspect of development; it is the failure to find a suitable resolution of the conflict that creates ensuing developmental and personality disorders.

An Illustration of Unresolved Oedipal Problems

An excellent illustration of the disturbances that can ensue when oedipal problems persevere into adult life can be found in the melancholic Dane with whom we all have at least a passing familiarity. Hamlet had remained unmarried at the age of thirty; he was an only child whose mother lived "almost by his looks" (*Hamlet*, Act IV, Scene vii). He had identified strongly with his father, whose priority with his mother he had reluctantly accepted. When his mother remarried after his father's death instead of centering her attentions upon him, he was unable to accept the situation and became intensely depressed. When he then learns from his father's ghost what he has already unconsciously believed ("Oh, my prophetic soul, my uncle"—Act I, Scene v)—that his mother had been seduced by his uncle, who had then killed his father—he can no longer tolerate the situation. He feels life is empty and worthless. The narcissistic wound suffered in childhood when he could not displace his father is reopened; and the defensive pattern he developed to avoid further rebuff through identifying with his father, who could gain the love of a person like his mother, is shattered when he learns that his mother prefers his uncle to the father he had idealized. Although he has sworn to avenge his father by slaying his uncle, he cannot act. Freud believed that he could not kill his uncle because his uncle had only done what he himself had wished to do as a child—kill his father and marry his mother.[36] However, Shakespeare makes it apparent that Hamlet is enraged at his mother's betrayal of his father and of himself; and he is preoccupied with his mother's sexual activities with his uncle. He becomes intensely misogynistic, ranting at Ophelia and distrusting her for his mother's faults. If his mother is wanton, what woman can be trusted? It is only after he vents his rage upon his mother ("I shall speak daggers to her but use none"—Act III, Scene ii) and insists that she leave his uncle's bed, that he becomes free and can move toward action. Instead of informing his mother that his father had been murdered, he admonishes her, "Go not to mine uncle's bed —not—let the bloat king tempt you again to bed; pinch wanton on your cheek; call you his mouse . . ." (Act III, Scene iv). What sorts of thoughts Hamlet had been having about his mother and stepfather seem fairly clear from the "closet" scene. His jealousy of a father figure is also noted in his discourtesies to Polonius, the father of his beloved, and whom he kills by accident as he may have in fantasy. Ophelia, an only daughter of a widower father, then loses her sanity and commits suicide, for she, like Hamlet, who loved his mother, is caught in a insoluble conflict—now being forced to hate the person she had loved most because he killed her beloved parent.[37]

A realistic version of the plot of *Hamlet* was found in a young man with homosexual proclivities and a great fear of women. His mother had seductively showered affection upon him as she felt neglected by her husband, who was preoccupied by his affairs of state—the direction of a large industry. When his father died following surgery, the young man fantasied that his mother had plotted with the surgeon to kill his father so that they could marry. His illusion was only partially resolved when the surgeon paid no attention to his mother. Indeed, when he was in psychiatric treatment several years later he managed to distort the events surrounding his father's death, insisting that his father had died on the operating table when in fact his father had survived the operation for six months. He feared living alone with his widowed mother, at times (like Hamlet) fearing his incestuous impulses and at times his matricidal impulses. When his mother finally remarried, he made a serious suicidal attempt during the wedding reception, feeling both abandoned by her and disillusioned with her for capitulating to her sexual desires.

The resolution of the oedipal conflict terminates early childhood. The need to rescind the wish to preempt a parent brings with it a reorganization of the child's world and a reevaluation of the child's place in it. Life will never again be viewed so egocentrically, and fantasy now yields priority to harsh reality. Children have now taken a giant step toward becoming independent and self-sufficient persons, even though they have done so by recognizing the long road ahead before they can expect adult prerogatives. They have found peace with both parents by repressing the erotic aspect of their attachments to one. Nevertheless the erotic attachment survives in the unconscious and will become a determinant of later relationships. The precise manner in which the oedipal situation—sometimes called "the family romance"—has been worked through is likely to set a pattern that will later be relived in different settings.

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Notes

1 Freud later modified his conceptualization of the girl's oedipal transition, as discussed later in the chapter.

2 The reversal in this book of the periods in which the issues of initiative and autonomy are crucial does not indicate a basic difference concerning the essential tasks of these periods, but rather a difference in the use of terms as well as a somewhat different orientation concerning the nature of the transition the child is making. Here, as elsewhere, the use of an eponym to signify the crucial issues of a developmental phase has serious limitations.

3 Such comments differ from commonly expressed ideas that many contemporary problems of child rearing derive from the father spending little time at home. Whereas it seems clear that some occupations and some men's ambitious strivings keep fathers out of the home a great deal, fathers in general seem to share responsibilities for their children and participate in play with them more than earlier in the century. The import of the weakening of paternal authority to the problems of contemporary society as expressed by H. Mitscherlich in Society Without the Father is a different issue.

4 Piaget considers that the child can learn to use language only after becoming capable of forming discrete stable motoric and visual symbols that can be recalled and "imitated.' Words or verbal signs can then be attached to these symbols. These aspects of his theory are far from satisfactory, for nouns are necessary for the process of dividing experience into units, as noted in Chapter 1. However, I wish only to call attention to such problems; they need not be discussed or argued here. Piaget discriminates between symbols, which always remain bound to the tangible experience and are therefore personal, and verbal signs, which are socially learned and capable of communication, and eventually (but not in early childhood) become freed from the more concrete and specific symbols. However, in keeping with more common usage, in this text "symbols" will also be used to mean words, except when we are specifically discussing Piaget's concepts.

5 An interesting approach to the subject of how a culture establishes taboos in order to differentiate between things categorized as separate entities, and the functions of language in the process, is found in E. Leach, "Anthropological Aspects of Language: Animal Categories and Verbal Abuse."

6 Stating the matter more in Piaget's terms, the child has not built up schemata to which many of his experiences, particularly those imparted to him verbally, can be properly assimilated, and the processes of accommodation and assimilation are temporarily out of balance.

7 Because of such confusion, Piaget has, of late, used the expression "centering on the self" instead of "egocentric" (Piaget and Inhelder, 1969, p. 61, note), but "egocentrism" is too firmly established in Piaget's writings to eliminate now.

8 The period is sometimes subdivided into two stages at about the age of four to five; the first stage is that of preconceptual thought, and the second that of intuitive thought.

The preconcept is characterized by incomplete assimilation since it is centered on a typical sample of a set rather than including all the elements of a set (which requires a further abstraction from concrete reality and visual symbols) and also by incomplete accommodation which is limited to evocation of the image of the individual example. The child cannot yet grasp transformations but only a series of static states, and these are irreversible—that is, the child cannot hold the original state in memory so as to refer back to it and follow the transformation (J. Piaget, *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*, p. 284). Reasoning is transductive, neither inductive nor deductive but proceeding only from the particular to the particular (A = B; B = C; therefore A = C) and not generalizing from classes or developing class generalizations—that is, categories (ibid., p. 234). Intuitive thought shows evidence of less "centration" on the image, a diminution of egocentric confusion between what is subjective and what objective, and movement toward concrete operations. The reader is referred to Chapter 10 of Piaget's *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood.*

9 Studies of the concept formation of adults by means of the Object Sorting Test show that the concept formation of many persons with less than a high school education remains very limited (Wild et al., 1965).

10 See Chapter 9 for farther discussion of these concepts.

11 Piaget notes that in contrast to the sensori motor period the child not only assimilates current experiences but must also try to handle internalized imagistic symbols and assimilate to these schemata as well as current ones. I believe this does not differ greatly from saying that the child must deal with material recalled from memory as well as with ongoing experiences. It is also essential to bear in mind that children do not yet have the schemata to which they can properly assimilate what they simply hear about. Piaget considers the imbalance between assimilation and accommodation to account for the child's pervasive use of imitation, in which there is a primacy of accommodation over assimilation; and of symbolic play, in which there is primacy of assimilation over accommodation. The reader must again be referred to Chapter 10 of *Play, Dreams, and Imitation in Childhood*, pp. 273-291.

12 Studies of preoperational intelligence may serve to clarify many aspects of the thinking of schizophrenic patients. See Lidz, 1975, Chapter 2.

13 The movement beyond preoperational thinking does not depend upon maturation alone. In various primitive societies persons depend upon animistic and artificialistic explanations of causality throughout life and tend to depend upon various types of magical thinking in dealing with matters beyond their own control such as fertility, weather, and the strength of enemies, in order to attain some control over the contingencies of life. One need not venture among primitive peoples to find adults who manifest similar phenomena. Palmists, astrologers, and faith healers abound in localities where the law does not forbid them. Magic potions, amulets, and love charms are readily available in most large cities. Physicians who take care of persons from the lower socioeconomic sectors and from various minority ethnic groups are likely to become aware that some of their patients are not placing all of their eggs in one basket and are relying upon various types of white magic as well as upon the physician.

14 Persistent denial of the correctness of children's perceptions and understanding of what transpires about them can have a particularly malignant influence in promoting distrust of language and fostering distortions of meanings. The child is repeatedly placed in a "bind" because the obvious is negated, and the child is threatened with loss of approval or love if things are not seen the way in which a parent needs to have them seen. A mother keeps telling a little boy that he must love his father as she does, that father is very good to them; but father comes home drunk every other night, beats his wife, and usually gives his son a whack or two. Perhaps, less malignantly but more commonly, children are punished if they do not tell the truth, but cannot avoid hearing their mothers falsify why they cannot attend a church meeting or their fathers boast of how they concealed the truth in selling the old family car. Children may also learn that what people say is more important than what they do; and that what one does is less important than not being caught—common situations in families with delinquent children.

15 Disturbances in the child's language development are increasingly being related to impoverished self-control in childhood and to the development of serious psychopathology such as schizophrenia and delinquency in later life (Bateson et al., 1956; Lidz, Cornelison, et al., 1965; Singer and Wynne, 1965a, 1965b; Wynne and Singer, 1963a, 1963b).

16 The various observations and experiments concerned with the psychological differences between the sexes have been assembled and reviewed in *The Psychology of Sex Differences*, by Eleanor Maccoby and Carol Jacklin. Judith Bardwick has examined the theories and evidence concerning how and why women's personalities differ from men's, perhaps with some bias toward the importance of biological factors, in *The Psychology of Women*. As we can here consider only the more salient and clear-cut influences, the reader must be referred to these sources for a more thorough evaluation and discussion.

17 The critical nature of the study was, however, diluted, as seven of the fifteen girls had been thought to be boys at birth; and even though the erroneous gender allocation was corrected before seven months in age, the parents' knowledge of the genital masculinization may have influenced "their expectations and reactions" regarding their children's behavioral development.

18 Sec D. Hamburg and D. Lunde, "Sex Hormones in the Development of Sex Differences in Human Behavior," for an excellent review of the literature on this topic. See also R. Green, Sexual Identity Conflict in Children and Adults.

19 The cases studied include females with virilizing adrenal cortical hyperplasia, simulant females with testes, chromosomal males with gonadal agenesis and female physical morphology, cryptorchid males reared as females, and others. There were contradictions between chromosomes and the gender in which the child was reared in nineteen cases; between the gonads and the gender in which the child was reared in twenty; between hormonal sex and the gender in which the child was reared in twenty-seven postpubertal cases; between appearance of external genitalia and the gender in which the child was reared in twenty-three; and between internal accessory organs and gender rearing in eighteen (Hampson and Hampson, 1961; Money, 1965; Money et al., 1957).

20 "Our findings indicate that neither a purely hereditary nor a purely environmental doctrine of the origins of gender role and orientation is adequate. Gender role and orientation is not determined in some automatic, innate, or instinctive fashion by chromosomes, gonadal structures, or hormones. However, sex of assignment and rearing does not automatically and mechanically determine gender role as there is a small group of patients whose sexual outlook diverged somewhat from that of the sex to which they had been assigned. It appears that a person's gender role and orientation become established as that person becomes acquainted with and deciphers a continuous multiplicity of signs that point in the direction of his being boy or girl. Those signs range all the way from nouns and pronouns differentiating gender to modes of dress, haircut, and modes of behavior. The most emphatic sign is the appearance of genital organs" (Money, et al., 1957).

21 Although many differences in the behavior of male and female neonates and young children have been reported, most studies have not been replicated. Moss (1967) found that neonatal girls seem to sleep more, and as boy neonates and young infants are more fussy and active they obtain more handling and fondling than girl neonates. However, a replication study failed to find significant differences in the sleep-wake cycle in boys and girls (Moss and Robson, 1970). Little boys are found to be more aggressive—or at least more active-—than girls. Girls seem to show greater verbal ability and boys better visual-spatial ability and perhaps mathematical ability (Maccoby and Jacklin, 1974), etc., but the activity or "aggressivity" seems the most clear-cut and consistent finding.

22 Ten out of twenty fathers described their two-to three-year-old daughters in terms such as "a bit of a flirt"; "arch and playful with people"; "a pretended coyness"; "I notice her coyness and flirting, 'come up and see me sometimes approach'" (Goodenough, 1957).

23 R. and T. Lidz (1976) studied the practice of male menstruation in New Guinea and similarly related it to male envy of women's natural creativity and closeness to nature as well as of women's capacities for self-purification through menstruation that eliminates the dangers of contamination by contact, particularly sexual contact, with men. Ritual male menstruation also plays a major role in eliminating the female influence of the mothers who raise them for the first eight to twelve years with little influence from the fathers.

24 We must, however, differentiate between dissatisfaction with the opportunities open to women in a society and unhappiness at being a woman, even though the two sometimes become confused in women's liberation literature.

25 A young man with severe castration anxiety, who could have his hair cut only by a woman barber and his teeth repaired by a female dentist because of unconscious derivatives of such fears, also had mild transvestite tendencies. He was markedly envious of his older sister, not because she enjoyed a favored place with their mother, but rather because his mother had such inordinate expectations that he live out the life she would have wished for had she been a male, and also that he recoup for her the position in select society that her father had lost for her family by being an alcoholic and a wastrel.

26 A classic example of an extreme outcome can be found in Radclyffe Hall's novel *The Well of Loneliness*.

27 There is now strong evidence that most male transsexuals were kept in very close physical proximity to their mothers, sleeping cuddled together, and their identification with the mother fostered by her without opposition from the father (Stoller, 1968).

28 See S. Freud, "Some Psychological Consequences of the Anatomical Distinction Between the Sexes" and "Female Sexuality."

29 Freud thus regarded the oedipus complex as a secondary phenomenon in the female, and gave the impression that it played a less important role in female development (Freud. 1925; 1932).

30 Gonadotrophic hormones are not detectable in children of this age, and only appear in detectable quantities a few years before the onset of puberty. Between the ages of three and five, seventeen ketosteroids which are considered to reflect secretions of androgen cannot be found in the blood. Estrogen secretion as measured by bio-assay is also negligible (Hamburg and Lunde, 1966).

31 Wertham has designated the boy's enduring hostility toward his mother because of her withdrawal from him the "Orestes complex" after Agamemnon's son who killed his mother, Clytemnestra, to avenge his father's murder by his mother and her paramour, Aegisthus.

32 For further consideration of defensive life patterns in contrast to mechanisms of defense see Chapters 19 and 20.

33 The "oedipal transition" in some societies may be so different from the patterns described here that it seems erroneous to call it such. Thus, in Papua/New Guinean villages in which boys are raised primarily by their mothers, the movement away from the mother is accomplished through elaborate rituals in which the boys—as previously noted—are subjected to ritual bleeding or menstruation to rid them of their mother's blood, and in some places are symbolically reborn as males from male ancestor spirits, and identify with the collectivity of males more than with the father; and separation from their mothers is reinforced by stringent warnings that continued contact with women will interfere with maturation and may even kill them, etc. (Lidz and Lidz, 1976).

34 In his later writings on the subject Freud considered the girl's attachment to her mother to be preoedipal and part of the girl's early masculine character associated with phallic (clitoral) sexuality. As the concept no longer seems satisfactory, the reader is referred to his writings (Freud, 1925, 1931) for further discussion.

35 Overt incest between mother and son is very uncommon, and rarely occurs unless the mother is psychotic and with very rare exceptions the son becomes schizophrenic. Father-daughter incest, which is not subject to as intense a taboo, is far more common. The father usually has been deprived of his mother early in life, and often the wife seems to have handed the daughter over to the father as a substitute in order to permit the wife to evade her wifely responsibilities. Severe hysterical symptoms are common in women who have had incestuous experiences with their fathers.

36 A theme elaborated by Ernest Jones in his famous essay Hamlet and Oedipus.

37 The thesis is elaborated in the author's *Hamlet's Enemy: Myth and Madness in Hamlet*.