SEPARATION AND MERGER: AN EXISTENTIAL DILEMMA

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INTRODUCTION

"In the child, that ever-active will is more apparent in the capacity to resist, to refuse, than in its power to choose positively, to create. Perhaps for all of us, even as adults it is easier to know what we do not want or will not have than to move toward the self-chosen goal positively. This is what is meant by the originally negative character of the will, which gets organized primarily in opposition just as consciousness grows on the necessity to meet problems.

Only at points of growth crisis where the pressure for further development becomes strong enough to overcome the fear of change and disruption, is the ordinary individual brought to the necessity of enlarging his hard-won integration...Genius seems to belong to another order - where the overwhelming necessity to create goes beyond all refusal or purely negative ego control." (Jessie Taft 1950, p. 4)

It is my understanding that the way in which a pearl comes into existence is by the constant irritation of an object caught within an oyster's shell.(1)

The source of my irritation is, not unlike Jessie Taft's description, of being in a state of either wanting to or not wanting to or sometimes both at the same time. Since childhood I was aware of wanting to become a social worker. For some reason, however, it has taken me some forty odd years to actualize this thought. The reason for this length of time, I believe, is that I have been busy "being here for others." (Hora 1983, p. 17) By this I mean that I was convinced that if I were to survive in this world I had to please the "dominant other." (Arieti 1974c, p. 468)

In childhood the "dominant other" was my mother. I had to figure out a way not to be abandoned and thus annihilated by her. I learned to be a "good girl" and to adhere to her "parental fantasy." (Hora 1985, p. 23) Her fantasy was for me to realize her dream---graduate from high school, go to work as a secretary, meet a man, get married and have children. By my doing all this, I would make up for all her perceived shortcomings. Seeing how she abandoned my father, I was not about to let her do the same to me. I conformed to her dream and denied my own desires. I could

not separate from this woman. To separate would mean I would no longer exist in her eyes.

It is possible that this early idea to become a social worker was the way my self was trying to heal itself. I must have realized that I needed to be my own caretaker. Though I thought I wanted to take care of others, it was in fact I who needed to be taken care of.

I became a secretary though I was always aware that I did "not want to." (Menaker 1982, p. 43) I had always loved the creative arts. As a child I drew and danced, however these talents only seemed to be appreciated by my grade school teachers. Mother seemed oblivious to these early aspirations and without her encouragement my interest in them withered away.

After high school I was determined to become an actress and told myself I would "only" be a secretary to put myself through acting school. Though I performed my secretarial duties adequately I always felt resentful and unfulfilled. It was clear I did "not want" to be doing this activity, but it was as if I had no other choice. I lived my life as if in default. I did not realize the meaning of my entrapment. I did not know that I turned myself into a slave in order to survive. I submitted myself to this all powerful figure so that I would not be rejected. Consequently, I have been stuck in a state of ambivalence which manifests itself continually as both "wanting to and not wanting to." Wanting to realize my self but not wanting to lose the "other." (Menaker 1982, pp. 43, 48)

Dwelling in this ambivalent mode of being in the world keeps one static and safe. To be a vehicle for the other to manifest through means that I do not have to struggle to find my own identity. For to find that

identity means to risk oneself in the world. Risking could mean either annihilation or freedom. If I separate from mother and do not manifest her fantasy, then who am I? Wouldn't there be a void? Isn't that void the dread of existence to which the existentialists refer? (Hora 1978, p. 27)

> Medard Boss states that "the terrible guilt feelings of the depressed person are existential, that is, they represent the failure to live one's own life. To fulfill one's own potential because of the twisting and turning to be "good" in the eyes of the other. The other calls the tune to one's eligibility for immortality, and so the other takes up one's unlived life. Relationship is thus always slavery of a kind, which leaves to a residue of guilt...The depressed person uses guilt to hold onto his objects and to keep his situation unchanged. Otherwise he would have to analyze it or be able to move out of it and transcend it. Better guilt than the terrible burden of freedom and responsibility, especially when the choice comes too late in life for one to be able to start over again. Better guilt and self-punishment when you cannot punish the other---when you cannot even dare to accuse him, as he represents the immortality ideology with which you have identified. If your god is discredited, you yourself die; the evil must be in yourself and not in your god, so that you may live." (Becker 1973, p. 213)

Three years ago, still dwelling in a state of ambivalence, but being at a point of "growth crises where the pressure for further development becomes strong enough to overcome the fear of change and disruption" (Taft 1950, p. 4) I applied and was accepted into Wurzweiler School of Social Work and the Fifth Avenue Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy as my placement. This seemed to be exactly what I wanted to do.

Nevertheless, up until the day of registration it was still not clear to me whether this was the right thing for me to be doing. I became ill and could not register. I was still torn, still ambivalent. I could not commit myself. It was only when I learned that I could register late that I became relieved. I began social work school "ass backwards." I literally had to back into it in order to begin. To commit, I was to learn in a Human Relations in the Social Environment course, at Wurzweiler, was to risk oneself.

Within a few months I am to receive my Master's in Clinical Social Work. There have been many moments during this past year, especially when I am sitting with the patients at my placement, when I realize, that what I am doing with them, is right and good. The idea occurred to me that not unlike a musician expressing musical understanding through the instrument, the therapist expresses existential understanding and clarification through herself. To be a vehicle of what Thomas Hora calls "divine love intelligence" (Hora 1979, p. 21) is my purpose as well as that of my chosen profession. To be myself, i.e. to be genuine and to call upon my internal resources as a source for healing and clarification for others is ultimately satisfying and enriching. I cannot think of anything else I would rather be participating in than the clinical therapeutic profession.

Nevertheless, as I begin to write this Essay, I am painfully aware that I still suffer from ambivalence. For instance I am aware that I do not want to write this paper.

There is an idea in consciousness which seems to believe that I cannot write the Integrative Essay. I feel blocked. I sit here with a plethora of books and articles surrounding me, which I have gathered from various sources, and when I try to read one, I cannot comprehend. I close the book feeling great frustration and wonder "what is the use?"

This is not a new experience for me. It is an old familiar friend. It is a long held belief that I simply cannot do or accomplish certain things. This idea is especially prevalent in the domain of education. There is an idea that it is better to simply give up and go away. There is an implicit belief that I am limited and stupid and unable to complete the task. It is a belief that I do not have sufficient resources within me to manage what is required of me. And so it is that I believe that I

must remain dependent on the "dominant other," (Arieti 1974, p. 468) that this "other" (transferentially mother) is a greater power than me and that only she can make "everything all better." I am powerless to do it for myself.

Bibring believed that the predisposition to depression is often the result of "the infant's or little child's shock-like experience of and fixation to the feeling of helplessness." This affective state is an expression of a state of helplessness and powerlessness of the ego. (Arieti 1974, p. 453)

Although I have dreamed of becoming a social worker since childhood, I can see by the difficulty I am having in writing this Essay that the real issue is "the fear of separating and the fear of becoming autonomous." For to write it, I realize "in its symbolic meaning is an end, a statement of self. It represents a leaving of dependency and of childhood." (Menaker 1982, p. 110-111).

The reality of becoming a social worker, obtaining the MSW, represents my finally "individuating." (Mahler 1975, p. 4) Individuating for me first means letting go (separating)---letting go of the past, letting go of my mother's "parental fantasy" (Hora 1985) and letting go of what Otto Rank calls "counter-will" the struggle to "want to" and "not want to." (Menaker 1982, pp. 42, 44)

"Counter-will" manifests in me as a dualistic bind, i.e., submission vs rejection. (Arieti 1974, p. 465) Either I submit to the "parental fantasy"; (Hora 1985) my mother's transferential ideas as to who I am, or be rejected; thrown out of the Garden of Eden (though it was not such an Eden, but what did I know?).

Since the ambivalence towards "individuating" (Mahler, 1975) seems to be my Achilles Heel, I have decided to explore the meaning of this existential dilemma. Having been exposed to object relations theory at my placement, I will look at some of the seminal ideas which relate to early childhood developmental issues. I will then describe a current dream which illustrates my struggle to finally individuate from my mother's parental fantasy. (Hora 1985).

I will also discuss my exposure to Metapsychiatry and how I see object relations fitting in with this theistic existential developmental theory which has played a major role in my life. I will then look at some of the similar problems a young female patient, whom I see at my field placement, experiences. I will conclude by addressing the question of whether I have evolved into a professional social worker.

Regarding the use of self-analysis as a learning mechanism, I would like to quote Harry Guntrip from one of the last articles he wrote before he died:

> "There is a natural order peculiar to each individual and determined by his history, in which problems can become conscious and interpretations can be relevant and mutative. We cannot decide that but only watch the course of the individual's development.
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> Finally, on the difficult question of the sources of theory, it seems that our theory must be rooted in our psychopathology. That was implied in Freud's courageous self-analysis at a time when all was obscure. The idea that we could think out a theory of the structure and functioning of the personality without its having any relation to the structure and functioning of our own personality, should be a self-evident impossibility. If our theory is too rigid, it is likely to conceptualize our ego defenses. If it is flexible and progressive it is possible for it to conceptualize our ongoing growth processes, and throw light on others'problems and on therapeutic possibilities."
> (Guntrip 1975, p. 156)

Ultimately, Guntrip tells us, we must intuitively sense our own basic reality before we are able to comprehend, and shed light on, the

inner reality of others.

In the following section I will locate when I believe this developmental wound occurred in childhood and make an effort to understand it from an object relations perspective.

SEPARATION-INDIVIDUATION

The "Good Enough" mother: (2)

> "The loving mother teaches her child to walk alone. She is far enough from him so that she cannot actually support him, but she holds out her arms to him. She imitates his movements, and if he totters, she swiftly bends as if to seize him, so that the child might believe that he is not walking alone...And yet, she does more. Her face beckons like a reward, an encouragement. Thus, the child walks alone with his eyes fixed on the mother's face, not on the difficulties in his way. He supports himself by the arms that do not hold him and constantly strives towards the refuge in his mother's embrace, little suspecting that in the very same moment that he is emphasizing his need of her, he is proving that he can do without her, because he is walking alone." (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 85)

The Not So Good Enough mother:

> "There is no beckoning encouragement, no blessing at the end of the walk. There is the same wish to teach the child to walk alone, but not as a loving mother does it. For now there is fear that envelops the child. It weighs him down so that he cannot move forward. There is the same wish to lead him to the goal, but the goal becomes suddenly terrifying." (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 85).(3)

At my field placement I have been exposed to the modern psychoanalytic trend known as "object relations theory." The term object relations refers to an individual's subjective interpretations of the important interpersonal relationships in his life. (Gourgey, 1986, p. 15) The theoretical writings of some of the major players in this movement have contributed to my understanding of how early objects (the primary object being the mother) play a crucial role in the unfoldment of the individual's self perception and hence manifest in difficulties or lack thereof with significant others in his or her life.

Donald Winnicott, an influential object relations theorist, talked about the difference between an infant being and reacting. Anxiety, he states, centers around early stages in the parent-infant relationship which relate to the threat of annihilation. The infant is born with an "inherited potential" to become a "continuity in being." This can only unfold in a loving and supportive "holding environment," i.e. the mother-infant "dyad." If the infant's needs are not responded to in a loving and timely manner, than the infant becomes a reactor. "The alternative to being is reacting, and reacting interrupts being and annihilates. Being and annihilation are the two alternatives. The holding environment therefore has as its main function the reduction to a minimum of impingements to which the infant must react with resultant annihilation of personal being. (Winnicott 1965, ch. 3, pp. 47, 54)

I have found Winnicott's description of the difference between an infant "going-on-being" or needing to be a reactor meaningful. It has helped me to understand my own tendencies to react to life situations rather than respond. I have found, interestingly enough, that meditation seems to provide the possibility of trying to help an individual relearn, with a teacher taking the place of the mother, to get back in touch with the "inherited potential" to become a "continuity in being." (Winnicott 1965, ch. 12, pp. 140-152)

Winnecott's ideas about the "false self" and the "true self" are also important notions. He says that the "false self" develops in order to isolate the "true self" so it can remain intact. This idea has helped meto understand why individuals develop defense mechanisms. With this understanding one can respect the defense system of a patient and even admire how the individual figured out a way to survive in a pathological environment. When working with a patient one can use the analogy of dirt on a window. The dirt is not the window and once the dirt is dissolved,

the window is clear. Similarly, the patient no longer needs to hold on to the "false self", and his true identity, i.e., the "true self" can emerge. (Winnicott, 1965, ch. 12, pp. 140-152).

Mahler and her colleagues devoted several years to observing and working with both normal and psychotic children. From their observations they developed a detailed paradigm for the development of object relations. This paradigm supplements the Freudian outline of psychosexual development, and provides a detailed map of the journey to reality from an object relations perspective. (Gourgey, 1986, p.103).

There are three stages of development within Mahler's paradigm (Mahler, Pine, Bergman 1975): Normal autism, normal symbiosis and separation-individuation. There are four subphases within separation-individuation: Differentiation, the practicing period, rapprochement and emotional object constancy. Failure in any phase is associated with a specific form of pathology.

Mahler's description of the difficulties encountered during the rapprochement subphase seem to most accurately reflect my early childhood memories of separation anxiety.

Just prior to the period of rapprochement is the practicing subphase where the toddler may be experiencing a "love affair with the world." He is walking and is able to feel himself as if omnipotent. However, during this subphase two types of rapprochement crises can take place. One type would be with a mother who does "not want" to separate and the other type would be with the mother who very much "wants" to.

The child may appear to the mother who does "not want" to separate that he no longer needs her. It is however during rapprochement that he

both "wants" and "does not want" (according to Rank's will and counter-will) his mother. It is during this time that an overly protective mother may send a signal to her child that to individuate would mean a threat to the mother's sense of security. The child may interpret this signal as an indication that it is dangerous to leave mother's side for he may lose her love.

On the other hand, the mother who takes the cue, during the practicing period, that her child is on his way to self-sufficiency and no longer needs her becomes unavailable to him too early during rapprochement. This encourages premature individuation thereby inducing fears of abandonment. Such fears can lead to exaggerated anxieties regarding separation anxiety.

The rapprochement crisis takes place somewhere between the eighteenth to forty-eighth months. Mahler states:

> "The Rapprochement crisis is a period during the rapprochement subphase occurring in all children, but with great intensity in some, during which the realization of separateness is acute. The toddler's belief in his omnipotence is severely threatened and the environment is coerced as he tries to restore the status quo, which is impossible. Ambitendency, which develops into ambivalence, is often intense; the toddler wants to be united with, and at the same time separate from, mother. Temper tantrums, whining, sad moods, and intense separation reactions are at their height." (Mahler, 1975, p. 292).
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> ..."the realization of the senior toddler of his smallness and helplessness renders him more vulnerable to events in the outside world, for example, to the absence of his parents, to illness, to the birth of a sibling, and so forth. Severe separation reactions can be the consequence of even minor traumata, and more than the expectable degree of ambivalence may ensue. In less favorable cases, regression to the stage in which the symbiotic matrix was first differentiated into either all "good" or all "bad" may occur. This splitting of the object world may become a proclivity that may interfere with expectable normal repression (Kernberg, 1974). Whether and how far this split of object representations will spill over to affect the self representation as well will depend on the degree to which self-object differentiation has progressed. (Mahler, 1975, p. 209)

Successful negotiation of the rapprochement crisis leads to a fully developed sense of self and relatedness to objects. The maternal function

is assimilated into the self, which becomes able to nourish itself in the mother's absence. ([Klein, 1975] Gourgey, 1985, p. 107)

On the other hand, Mahler states:

> "Fixation at the level of rapprochement may be seen every so often in the widening range of child and adult patients who nowadays seek our help. Their most pervasive anxiety is separation anxiety; their affects may be dominated by narcissistic rage with temper tantrums, which may subside and give way to altruistic surrender [A. Freud1936]. Their basic conflict is to be sought and found, we believe, in the primitive narcissistic struggle that was acted out in the rapprochement crisis, but that may have become a central internal conflict pertaining mainly to their uncertain sense of identity." [Erickson, 1959] (Mahler, 1975, p. 230).

The statement that the basic conflict surrounding fixation at the rapprochement level was a conflict with being sought and found rang true for me. The conflict seems to be one of desperately wanting "the dominant other's" love and recognition but not openly asking for it for fear that one will be humiliated and rejected. So one does not ask directly for what one wants or even needs, but instead learns to operate and manipulate in what appears to be a less than forthcoming world.

A CHILDHOOD WOUND

> "Behind manifest grandiosity, there constantly lurks depression, and behind a depressive mood there often hide unconscious (or conscious but split off) fantasies of grandiosity. In fact, grandiosity is the defense against depression, and depression is the defense against the real pain over the loss of the self...One is free from depression when self-esteem is based on the authenticity of one's feelings and not on the possession of certain qualities."
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> "It is thus impossible for the grandiose person to cut the tragic link between admiration and love. In his compulsion to repeat he seeks insatiably for admiration, of which he never gets enough because admiration is not the same thing as love. It is only a substitute gratification of the primary needs for respect, understanding, and being taken seriously--needs that have remained unconscious." (Alice Miller 1976, pp. 35-40)

Separation anxiety and ambivalence i.e., "wanting to and not wanting to," (Hora 1986, ch. 16) (Menaker 1982, p. 42) have played key roles throughout my life. From early childhood through adolescence and into adulthood i.e., marrying, raising children, and now leaving school, I have been plagued by this ever present undercurrent of fear. Reading

about the object oriented pre-oedipal developmental stages an infant and toddler pass through which Margaret Mahler (1975) so beautifully describes in her book on symbiosis and individuation has helped me to understand the meaning of my anxiety. Following are some childhood recollections which are testimony to the rapprochement crisis.

One of my earliest memories centered around being sent away from home to a Children's Aid Society camp when I was about four years old. I can recall sitting on a bus looking outside and seeing my mother waving me off. I think I was mystified as to what was actually going on. My next recollection was at the camp where I was in a metal crib urinating and feeling frightened and humiliated. I look down a long dark room and see a light at the end. I wonder what will happen next. I feel powerless.

In his discussion of early childhood problems experienced by depressed patients, Arietti (1974) speaks about a "duty bound" mother who takes very good care of her infant in the first year. This child subliminally learns, from its dutiful mother, "what is to be obtained is to be deserved." Arietti hypothesizes that something happens to the child in his second year of life. Due to the mother feeling overwhelmed by a life circumstance such as another child being born, or to economic problems, or some such problem. "A brusque change occurs. Such a child had to be abandoned by the mother. The child was then left in the custody of an aunt, grandmother, cousin, stranger or orphan asylum, and was subjected to a violent and unmitigated experience of loss." (Arieti 1974, pp. 464-465)

Due to my mother needing to go off to work after separating from and then divorcing my father, sometime before the age of four, I was "handed over" to the next door neighbor. Thank God, they were a wonderful, though childless couple. My memories of them are loving ones as they took very good care of me and I felt a great deal of love from them. My early

memory of them is quite different from my memory of my mother waving goodbye to me on the camp bus. I can recall sitting in a bubble bath, in their home, and listening to a song on the radio called "By the Light of the Silvery Moon." I remember feeling very special and loved lying in that bathtub. Unfortunately, when my mother remarried, when I was five, we moved away from the Lower East Side, leaving behind this deeply caring couple. I never saw them again. I learned a few years later that Yetta died of cancer.

Yetta and her husband gave me a very important "transitional object" (Winnecott, 1953) which I took with me after I left them. They gave me God. They taught me the childhood prayer "Now I lay me down to sleep, I pray the Lord my soul to keep. If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Many a night, before I went to sleep I would turn to this prayer for comfort.

Anna Marie Rizzuto states:

> "God is a special transitional object because unlike teddy bears, dolls, or blankets made out of plushy fabrics, he is created from representational materials whose sources are the representations of primary objects." Throughout life, Dr. Rizzuto states, "God remains a transitional object at the service of gaining leverage with oneself, with others, and with life itself. This is so, not because God is God, but because, like the teddy bear, he has obtained a good half of his stuffing from the primary objects the child has `found' in his life." (Rizzuto, 1979, pp. 178-179)

I thank God that I "found" Yetta and her husband for they were loving objects that I sorely needed. I never realized until now that it was they who introduced me to the concept of God. I was not only able to hold on to them through the prayer which they taught me, but they helped me to realize that there was something outside of myself that I could turn to for help. Subsequently I was to turn to a deeper study of spiritual ideas.

Many years later when I was twenty, I entered psychoanalysis for

depression. My analyst turned out to be a theistic existentialist. He introduced me to the idea of God being a principle of love and intelligence in the universe. It is these ideas which have sustained me.

An illustration of this God concept can be seen in the following dream which I first had upon entering analysis: I was in the ocean. A bridge overhead was burning and I was drowning; a voice, as if from above, spoke and told me that I would be all right. And, thank God, I was.

In spite of my mother not being around, at least in my memory, I nevertheless became a very loyal and dutiful daughter, I would not leave this woman's side. How does this child try to adjust to the new threatening situation, Arieti inquires?:

> "The child does not reject the parents emotionally or avoid them, but consciously accepts them. He must live up to their expectations no matter how heavy the burden. It is only by complying, obeying and working hard, that he will recapture the love or state of bliss which he used to have as a baby... love is still available, but not as a steady flow. The flow is intermittent, conditioned, and therefore does not confer security. The child feels that if he does not do what he is supposed to, he will be punished--mother may withdraw her love totally."
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> "The child," he continues, "thus feels he has choice, the freedom of retaining the parental love or not. No matter what he chooses, however, he has a hard price to pay: submission or rejection. He also feels that mother is not bad, in spite of her appearance, but, on the contrary, that she is good. She is good even in punishing him, because by punishing him she wants to redeem him, make him again worthy of her love...This patient would rather be punished than lose mother's love. If he is not punished, he often works harder in order to punish himself." (Arieti, 1974, p.465)

THE STRUGGLE TO FIND THE "TRUE SELF"

> "The cycle of female oppression will be reinforced as the mother turns away from her daughter when she does not embody the attributes the mother wished to have but never acquired. Should the daughter strive to acquire such envied attributes, her mother will subtly undermine her ambitions..." (Kaplan 1978, p. 231)

The following dream, which I recently had, illustrates both Ms. Kaplan's quote and my own internal struggle to separate from my mother's fantasy, i.e. the "false self," and to realize the "true self." (Winnicott 1965, ch. 12)

I was sitting on a stool at a high round table. I seemed to be at the beach. A few of the women from my fieldwork placement were sitting around the table including our male group supervisor. The supervisor turned to me and gently and lovingly asked, "do you believe in yourself now?" I said, "no, you see, I need you to believe in me." Then I tried to explain to him the difference between an ectoderm and an endoderm. "An ectoderm, needed an outside force, such as the sun to warm it up. It has to rely on something from the outside to give it recognition. An endoderm, could warm itself up from the inside, it is self-regulated." "It does not need recognition from the outside."

"No" screamed one of the women at the table, "you have it all wrong, you are confused." And she left the table and went off to a nearby drug store. When she returned she had a lipstick in her hand. She handed it to me and said, in a demanding tone of voice, "you owe me $100." I looked at her and said incredulously, "a lipstick costs $100?"

Harry Guntrip (1975) in his article My Experience of Analysis with Fairbairn and Winnicott, extensively used dreams, during his analysis with these two men, to try and understand an early childhood trauma which centered around his domineering mother and dead baby brother. Guntrip could never fully understand the meaning of his occasionally feeling "a static, unchanging, lifeless state somewhere deep in me, feeling I can't move." At the age of 70, while in the midst of retiring, he has a series of dreams which take him back to an earlier time before his brother died, to where he was able to see the "faceless, depersonalized, black depressed mother, who totally failed to relate to both he and his

brother." Guntrip, through the help of Winnecott was finally able to remember that even long before his brother was born, he felt abandoned by this woman who never really wanted babies of her own, since she had been saddled with taking care of ten others while she was just a child herself.

Harry Guntrip states:

> "So far as psychopathological material is concerned, dreaming expresses our endopsychic structure. It is a way of experiencing on, the fringes of consciousness, our internalized conflicts, our memories of struggles originally in our outer world and then as memories and fantasies of conflicts that have become our inner reality, to keep `object relations' alive even if only `bad-object relations,' because we need them to retain possession of our ego." (Guntrip 1975, p.155)

My dream seems to illustrate an initial awakening and questioning as to who I am. Am I my mother's fantasy? Am I my familial past? Am I still a stupid and confused little girl? And finally, can a man really be loving and supportive and genuinely concerned about me without my having to seduce, coerce or manipulate him?

For the very first time that I can remember, there is a loving and supportive male figure in my dream. This is of major significance to me as my only experience of men has been one of abandonment, anger and criticalness, or of being objects of seduction and rejection. In case supervision the male supervisor, who runs the class, seems to be approving and appreciative of my contributions and I find myself moved and grateful for his support and acknowledgement. In fact he once spoke about the therapist becoming a "transitional object" (Winnicott, 1951) for the patient. Having had two dreams where he always plays a supportive role, I realized that I have internalized him as a "good object." (Klein 1935, pp. 145-174) I have had earlier experiences with this supervisor where I saw him as withholding and distant, but by my getting to know him

better over the past two years I have been able to tolerate and introject both the "not so good as well as the good enough" parts of him.

The female student who screams at me in the dream, that "I do not understand what I am saying and that I am confused," symbolically represents my mother. Her dark eyes and hair and her narcissistic mannerisms remind me very much of the women in my family of origin. She, my symbolic mother in the dream, insists that I am stupid and I can never really understand anything. She goes and buys a lipstick and then tells me I owe her $100 for it. My interpretation of this high price is that I don't dare use my intellect, that all I am allowed to use is my feminine wiles; i.e., the lipstick. All that is important is that I look beautiful so that I can attract a man to take care of me. "Do not forget", she infers, "that you are stupid," and you need an outside force, i.e. "the lipstick." And you have to pay a high price for this power to win men. You have to give up your intelligence and most importantly you have to give up your father!

The woman in the dream, i.e., my mother demands that I be loyal to her idea of what a woman is: stupid, confused, cunning and manipulative. I must pay allegiance to the family code of what a woman is, or I could be annihilated. Interestingly enough, I begin to question this allegiance. $100 for a lipstick, I ask?

Being at the beach is indicative of my maternal family roots. McGoldrick and Gerson (1985, pp. 5-6) tell us that families repeat themselves. "What happens in one generation will often repeat itself in the next, i.e., the same issues tend to be played out from generation to generation, that the actual behavior may take a variety of forms." Bowen (1978) calls this the multigenerational transmission of family patterns. The hypothesis is that relationship patterns in previous generations could provide implicit models for family functioning in the next

generation."

The beach, I realize, symbolizes my Polish born Jewish grandmother, who while raising her children and grandchildren on the Lower East Side of New York, (Howe 1976, p. 558) would spend her summers in a bungalow at Coney Island. My grandparents played an important role during my childhood. My grandfather nurtured me while my mother was off working, after she divorced my father when I was about four or five. I would spend many summers with my "bubba" at the beach, walking on the boardwalk, swimming in the surf and eating her delicious lunches. She would rub me down with her special mixture of iodine and oil, so that I would be returned back to mother looking black and enriched from my stay with her.

Education in my family was something to which only boys were entitled. Women were supposed to marry and raise a family. At the age of ten, my grandmother was left in Poland to take care of her younger sister and fend for themselves. Her mother went to America with her youngest child, a boy. At age thirteen she was able to bring my grandmother and aunt to the United States. When my grandmother came to New York City she went to work while her brothers went to school. All her brothers went on in life to become financially successful.

This was not the case for my grandmother. She married a poor pushcart peddler and raised four daughters and one son on the Lower East Side of New York City. Education was not prized in my family, not even for the oldest son. Only one daughter went to college, and that was only because one of my grandmother's brothers came to her aid. It is in fact this aunt who recognized my depression when I got out of high school and advised my mother to send me to therapy. That is where I met Thomas Hora and began to learn about Metapsychiatry.

MY EXPERIENCE WITH METAPSYCHIATRY

When I was 19 years old, I was introduced to Dr. Thomas Hora, who was in the process of developing an approach to understanding reality and truth which he dubbed Metapsychiatry. This radical method of thinking about man and God, and many other facets of human experience changed my life, but continues to frustrate my attempts to fully understand it.

Metapsychiatry responds to life's issues by asking what it calls the two intelligent questions: (Hora 1986, p. 7)

1. What is the meaning of my experience?
2. What is what really is?

Metapsychiatry states that all problems are psychological and their solutions are spiritual. (4)

At the time I first saw him, I was suffering from depression. Using the method of asking the "meaning" or mental equivalent of my symptom or experience, he was able to show me that I was suffering from invalid values and from what I wanted. I was subsequently able to alter my outlook to become interested in something which was more "existentially valid." (Hora 1977, p. 9) This orientation, toward examining the meaning of both physical and mental problems, has been a reliable source of clarification and healing for me ever since.

I have continued to see Dr. Hora for the past 3 decades (I met my husband because of our mutual interest in Dr. Hora's teachings), but have

had difficulty in integrating some of the ideas and principles in my life, primarily because I have been so strongly rooted in attachment to those early traumatic experiences and desires mentioned earlier.

Metapsychiatry sees man as "a transparency for God," manifesting all of the spiritual qualities of God. Spiritual, which means non-dimensional, qualities and values are truth, harmony, beauty, vitality, intelligence, love, integrity, gratitude, joy, orderliness, and peace. Man is capable of becoming aware of these values, which constitute his true identity. (Hora 1977, pp. 84-88)

Obviously, it is not easy to see man or myself or anyone else consistently in this light. Given the damaged self-esteem from which I suffer, it is highly inspiring to be reassured by someone like Dr. Hora that my real purpose in life is to be a "beneficial presence" (synonym for Bodhisattva) rather than to think of myself as weak, lacking and limited. (Hora 1983, p. 17)8)

Although Dr. Hora points out that "we must remember our past in order to forget it," (5) I have not been able to forget it. I believe, therefore, that there is something more to be understood in order to be finally healed of my childhood wounds. Through my studies of object relations theory, at my field work placement, I have gained greater clarity and understanding of childhood developmental issues and how they impact on the "evolving sense of self" (Stern 1985, p. 12)

I believe, however, that Metapsychiatry adds a final step to the theory of man's development. Man's human development is an evolution of his sense of self which evolves from his experiences with how the "dominant others" (Arieti 1974) in his life respond to him. This is how it seems to be; it is not necessarily the way it really is. Transcendence

of this illusory sense of selfhood is required.

Our problems in life seem to emanate from the idea that we are attached to one another, things and places. It is the attachment to the thought of how it "should be and shouldn't be" (Hora 1986, ch. 5) "what we want" and "what we don't want" (Hora 1986, ch. 16) that keeps us locked into demanding from ourselves and the "other" (Menaker 1982, p. 48) that they recognize and love us. This is not an easy concept to understand for we seem to be habituated to seeing life from this perspective. Nevertheless, we can use our problems as "lessons designed for our edification" until "the understanding of what really is, abolishes all that seems to be." (Hora 1986, p. 230).

Contemplation of the Zen koan, "there is neither self nor other, there is only that which really is" is a form of meditation which can help man begin to consider the possibility that what he thought was his human nature is instead, in reality, spiritual. Man ultimately needs to realize his Godhood, in order so that he may coexist harmoniously and prosperously in the world.

While seeing patients at my field placement I have been able to integrate object relations and interpersonal theories with Metapsychiatric existential principles. The understanding of the patient's developmental fixation and how it impacts on the current situation helps to clarify what Thomas Hora calls "the meaning of what seems to be." Recognition of the patient's inherent spiritual nature allows me to help them consider, once the psychological problem is illuminated, what the true nature of reality is by asking the second intelligent question, "what is what really is?" I have found that all of the patients whom I see and who have continued their therapy with me appreciate this radical perspective on their past, present and evolving

sense of who, what and where (Hora 1986, p. 57) they really are.

LINDA

The following discussion centers around a patient whom I see at my field placement, The Fifth Avenue Center for Counseling and Psychotherapy. Out of a patient caseload of ten, I have chosen to discuss this young woman because I believe her situation illustrates some of the same struggles I have experienced with the wish to stay "merged" and the need to "volitionally affirm the obligatory," (Menaker 1982, pp. 37, 102) which means that we are obligated to acknowledge the reality of our creative autonomous self. By autonomous, I mean, in the sense of realizing our "I-ness" and therefore our uniqueness. (Singer, Sokol 1976, pp. 227-272)

Linda, a twenty-five year old white Jewish woman whom I have been seeing for almost two years, came into her weekly private session a few weeks ago and began to talk while rocking back and forth in her chair, something she has done on other occasions. From her conversation and the rocking behavior I sensed that an issue was being avoided. When Linda rocks in the chair she reminds me of a little girl who has done something bad, but smiles and acts nonchalantly as if to imply that nothing is wrong. Not yet knowing how to explore the meaning of this phenomenon, without making her feel alienated or attacked, I noted the behavior to myself but did not call it to her attention.

One of the six basic principles of the structural model to direct practice in social work states:

Principle 4: The worker should proceed from an assumption of least contest.

> This principle directs the worker to exert the least pressure necessary to accomplish the client task. In the first place, force tends to generate counterforce. The amount of pressure that the worker brings to bear on a target system is directly related to the amount of counter-pressure that the target system is likely to exert. And since low-pressure interventions tend to evoke minimum resistance on the part of the target system, low-pressure interventions are more likely to result in successful task accomplishment. Moreover, when low-pressure interventions are not successful, greater pressure can then be exerted. (Wood & Middleman, pp. 35 & 62)

I have been gradually gaining more confidence in my analytic and social work skills, thanks to my group, individual and casework supervision both at the Fifth Avenue Center and at Wurzweiler. And so this particular night I decided that I needed to risk asking her what the meaning of the rocking behavior was.

Linda revealed that her chatter and rocking were ways to avoid talking about her mother, who has been dead for three years. Linda wanted to keep the image of her mother sacrosanct and felt disloyal to her if she revealed or analyzed the hidden and submerged anger toward her. It was OK to talk about her hostile feelings toward her living father. It was obvious to her that "she has never been, nor will ever be very important to him." "After all," Linda stated, "when I went away to Europe wasn't it my mother who wrote to me everyday while my father did not write one word." The possibility that her father may have had more confidence in her ability to make it on her own never occurred to Linda.

Linda's inability to bring her mother into the analytic room meant that she felt compelled to conform with her self-imposed image of being mother's "good and obedient little girl." Linda would prefer to continue sacrificing her "self" so that she could remain in a fantasy of merger with her mother. But as Medard Boss states, "if your god is discredited,

you yourself die; the evil must be in yourself and not in your god, so that you may live." (Becker 1973, p. 213)

That night Linda revealed two secrets. The first secret revolved around her feelings of hatred, when she was five, at the arrival of her new "baby" sister. The night Ana was brought home, Linda hid in a corner of the room; she was not happy about this new arrival into her house. She knew she was being displaced. Linda then revealed that when she was a child she tended to retreat into herself. She preferred staying in her room and playing with her dolls to going out. She started to cry when she recalled how her mother tried to force her to be more outgoing. Her mother even arranged a playmate for her. Linda could not understand why she was not being accepted for who she was and why her rights to play quietly by herself were not respected.

The second secret, one only the immediate family knew about, was that she would defecate in her panties up until the age of nine. It took two years before Linda could reveal this "personal and family secret." Through our exploration it seemed that Linda worried that she would be displaced and forgotten about because of Ana. Her reluctance to go out of the house was a way that she could ensure this would not happen. When her mother began to urge her to be more outgoing, Linda would literally become a baby once again. She would "shit" in her pants. Ana was not going to be the only baby in this household!

When Linda was ten years old her mother decided to return to full-time work. Linda became Ana's caretaker. Linda insists that she "loves" Ana. I have suggested that this "love" may be a reaction formation and that, in fact, she may actually still hate her "baby" sister.

Linda's presenting problem was threefold. She was still in mourning for her mother. She said she did not hate her mother for dying and leaving her but she was furious at her father's lack of concern for her. He was now dating a cousin of her mother's whom he was thinking of marrying.

Linda's relationships with men have been disastrous. She would always find herself being abused and rejected. Linda revealed, in the initial interview, that she had recently been forced to perform fellatio on a strange man who was driving her to the hospital to see her newborn nephew. Linda chose to sit in the front seat with this man which may have sent a mixed signal to him. He never drove her to the hospital but instead took her to a desolated spot in Brooklyn and threatened her with abandonment if she did not do what he wanted.

Linda revealed that prior to this occurrence she usually "enjoyed" performing this sexual act on men. At another point in time, during therapy, Linda realized that this was her way of getting men to pay attention and to not reject her. Linda also came to realize that she was seeking out excitement as a form of "self-confirmation" (20) and was subsequently putting herself into dangerous situations.

Linda's third presenting problem was that she was not happy with her work. She did not feel she was fully utilizing her potential and felt undervalued and underpaid at her present position at a non-profit organization. Linda found herself not being fully appreciated and being taken advantage of by her female boss. Linda recently almost lost her life by sublimating an intelligent idea to prove her loyalty to this supervisor. A winter storm fell on New York, and people were being urged not to come into Manhattan. Knowing that Linda opens up the office, various colleagues called her to see if the office would remain closed.

Linda called her supervisor who lives in New Jersey, and who was taking that day off, to ask whether it would be all right to not open the office. Since the supervisor was not aware of the weather conditions in the City, the response came that the office should be open. Being a dutiful and "good" employee, Linda did not argue the point, called her colleagues back and told them the office would be open.

That morning Linda found herself on the now infamous subway which was caught in a fiery tunnel. A few people died that winter morning on that train. Linda was more fortunate, for although her subway car filled up with noxious fumes, she was able to escape relatively unharmed. We used this incident, in therapy, to see how dangerous it can be to sacrifice oneself in order to be loved and approved of by the "dominant other." Linda knew the intelligent idea was not to open the office that morning. Nevertheless, she swallowed herself for the sake of the "other." Linda happens to be obese. We have explored how this physical phenomenon is a manifestation of her motivation to "swallow herself" and keep her "true self" stuffed and hidden away.

The session after Linda revealed her secrets she told me about two meaningful occurrences. Linda had attended a birthday party in her honor, which her family gave her. Returning home that evening, after a typically unpleasant evening with them, Linda found herself "unable to breathe." Linda asked herself what the meaning of this physical symptom could be. I have been working with Linda, as well as all my other patients' to help them see that physical symptoms always have a mental equivalent. This is a basic tenet of Metapsychiatry. Linda had been resisting this idea for a very long time and some time ago actually became angry with me. She was not ready to look to her own thoughts as a key to her problems but preferred to blame outside forces for her difficulties.

A few weeks ago, during a session where she was unable to breathe,

we explored the meaning and discovered that Linda was feeling trapped and cut off. Linda had gone to her mother's grave, on the anniversary of her death, and visualized her mother under the ground, unable to breathe. I suggested, at that session, she might be identifying with her mother and, as a loyal daughter, she too now could no longer breathe. As I said this Linda exclaimed, "yes, that right," and within a few minutes, Linda was breathing freely.

The night after the party she began to explore the meaning of her inability to breathe again. She thought "I must be feeling trapped." When her difficulties continued she realized that this thought was the meaning of the problem she had a few weeks earlier and that she couldn't put "new wine in old bottles." Mathew 9:17 Linda needed fresh manna. Exodus 16:17-21

Linda realized that she could not figure out a meaning and that the truth needed to obtain in consciousness. After a while the thought occurred to her that "her family was smothering her." "No," she said, I cannot blame them and she corrected the thought and said, "I feel smothered by them." Upon observing this thought Linda began to breathe. This cognitive process (Hora 1983, pp. 220, 265) indicated that Linda was now finally willing to look to herself in order to gain understanding about her existential dilemma. By gaining the ability to take responsibility for her thoughts, she finally began the healing process.

That weekend, after realizing the meaning of her breathing difficulty, Linda had a dream which, when understood, seemed to be a gift from the unconscious. The dream helped her to understand historical issues which had affected her as well as her family. She understood her difficulties with men by remembering how her father's mother was so abusive to him.

Through the dream she was also able to remember an early childhood memory where she felt cut off and blocked out from others in the family while laying in a crib which she occupied for the first three and one-half years of her life. Linda revealed that she occupied her parents' bedroom those three years. She also recalled how her mother's grandmother lived with them and how close Linda was to her. The great-grandmother moved out when Ana was born. This made it especially difficult for Linda, for she perceived the grandmother's departure and Ana's birth as a double rejection.

Linda also revealed that both her mother's parents were mentally ill and that her mother's mother died in an institution at the age of forty-five. Linda's mother went to live with her maternal grandmother when she was six months old, after being rescued from a foster home.

The final gift the dream offered was a sequence whereby it seemed as if Linda was able to make peace with the idea of her mother's death and that she was willing to "let her go and that it was OK to do so." She told another little girl in the dream to take two phone numbers. One of the numbers was mine. She told the little girl, "if you need help, call Diana, she will help you."

Needless to say I was very moved by this account and realized that Linda had finally developed a therapeutic alliance with me. She was willing to let go of her loyalty to her mother and begin the journey to realize her "true self." (Winnicott 1965, ch. 12)

A supervisor at my placement once said that he believed that the patients who come to us for help "were sent." I believe this mystical statement and I especially think it applies to Linda and myself. My

experience with the existential dilemma of wanting to remain in a child-like trance, dependent and merged with the all powerful other has helped me to be compassionate and helpful to Linda. This mode of being in the world, though seemingly providing a "safe haven" is ultimately a trap. It is the trap of being a slave. The price one pays for this "safety" is one's freedom. And although to be set free can initially be quite frightening, like the little child first learning to walk, finally uprightness and clarity of vision is our true nature.

Through the passage of two years I have gently and lovingly guided Linda's transition to begin to question her basic premise that she has a right to remain a dependent and demanding child. Together we were able to look at the meaning of this stance and wonder about its validity. Linda is now beginning to question the meaning of her sense of entrapment and difficulty with breathing. She has begun to look within herself for the answers to these questions rather than continuing to blame "the other." (Menaker 1982, p. 48)

If Linda was, indeed, "sent to me" then I am very grateful that I was selected to be her guide.

THE EVOLUTION OF A PROFESSIONAL SOCIAL WORKER

> "Yes, as the teacher rightly said, it was hopeless to expect anything of me. I was an aesthetic leper, so to speak. To clinch it, I positively loathed the crabby bitch who reigned over us---a dried-up spinster who talked of nothing but planes, shadows, perspective and such nonsense.
>
> I say that this experience, with its accompanying sense of failure, or inadequacy, probably served me in good stead. Sometimes the wrong thing turns out to be the right thing; sometimes a setback is as good, or better, than a push. We seldom realize how much the negative serves to induce the positive, the bad the good." Henry Miller, To Paint Is To Love Again. (1968, p. 3)

Norman Tokayer, my teacher and mentor for the Integrative Essay, asked me, "what would you say was the most significant thing you have learned over the past two years in social work school?" I knew the answer immediately! "I no longer blame my mother." In fact I said, "a short while ago I actually pondered, for the first time that I could remember, what could it have been like for my mother as a child?" I never, heretofore, considered that my mother was once a child.

After reading Harry Guntrip's account of his own difficulties with an "unavailable mother," (Guntrip, 1975) and his realization that his mother could not tolerate any more babies after being the "parentified" mother to nine siblings, it occurred to me that it was possible that as the oldest daughter my mother also may have been saddled with such a responsibility for her three younger sisters. Whatever her reasons were for being "cold and tough," while I was growing up, I realize that this was not her "true self." Whatever her reasons were, she had to take care of herself in the best way possible that she could "figure out." No one can be blamed for that.

In a Jewish Social Philosophy class we looked at the two accounts of Genesis through an article written by Joseph Soloveitchik called Lonely Man of Faith (Singer, Sokel 1982). In this article Soloveitchik uses the two accounts of the creation of man to illustrate the struggle between wanting to stay merged in a symbiotic relationship (Adam with Eve) and preferring to recognize himself as an independent individual. Cause and effect thinking seems to make man believe that he is dependent on an "other" and without this other he shall perish. Adam the First does not know that he is separate from Eve..." he feels safer and more comfortable in her company...he will never admit to seeing himself without her." By contrast, Soloveitchik tells us, Adam the Second, knows that he is a "singular being." He knows he was created separately from Eve. (Singer,

Sokel 1982)

It was only after reading about the eternal struggle between wanting to stay merged and the need to "volitionally affirm the obligatory" (Menaker 1982, pp. 37, 102) i.e. to individuate that I realized that this was the key issue I needed to address in the Integrative Essay. Unless I realized Rank's requirement I would not be able to evolve into a professional social worker.

The primary question then became, am I ready to individuate? Am I ready to leave the "dominant other" (Arieti 1974) (my Eve) and cleave unto my Maker i.e., "to prepare a way for the Lord," Mathew 3:3, so that I may realize His Creative Will and my talent?

Soloveitchik tells us that there is an essential step one must take before one is set free of this bondage. Adam the Second, he reminds us, "has never forgotten that he is just a handful of dust." Initially man must "surrender and retreat" at the recognition that "on mine own self I can do nothing..." (Singer, Sokel 1982) Man is constantly being reminded of his essential no-thing-ness when he cannot come up with a solution to a problem, when he cannot prevent himself or the other from suffering, and finally when he realizes he cannot stop death.

When my mother was dying I would wake up in the middle of the night feeling as if I were up against a wall. As desperately as I wanted to penetrate it, I couldn't. Each night when I would wake up I felt frantic. I was rendered powerless; not unlike that little girl urinating in her metal crib. As much as I wanted to control it, I couldn't.

It is only when man realizes his powerlessness over the ultimate force in the universe that he can submit (give up his false illusions)

and "surrender and retreat." For most of us, unfortunately, it is only through "crisis and failure" that we can experience Soloveitchik's "cathartic redemption." (Singer, Sokel 1982) By this I think he means that it is only by experiencing pain and suffering that we finally awake to a Job-like experience which says, "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear; but now mine eye seeth thee..." (Job 42:5).

I would like to believe that my seemingly negative experiences in life have had a purpose, not unlike Henry Miller's. An artist once told me that there is a form of Japanese pottery that before it can be displayed and sold, it goes through a process of firing which nearly reduces it to ashes. Just prior to its demise, it is quickly rescued from the kiln. This process of firing is an essential step in the creation of some of the world's most beautiful Japanese pottery.

My "firing" served dual purposes. Initially it created a sense of loss. I lost the knowledge of who I really am. However, without that sense of loss and pain, I would not have been motivated to reach out to try to redeem it. Rediscovering one's true identity, one's "true self" is like discovering a pearl of great wisdom and beauty. Once the first pearl is lifted, what follows is a string of others such as peace, assurance, gratitude and love. (Hora 1986, ch. 9, p. 69)

I believe having been through my own experiences of crises and failure (would that they be over) and having individuated, realizing my own "redemptive catharsis" (Singer, Sokel 1982) I can now become a guide for others. I can begin to point the way to those individuals who seek me out for help. I can as Otto Rank states, "provide a therapy which is geared to the cultivation of the Creative Will." (Menaker 1982, ch. 4)

This is how I see myself functioning in this world. Through a clearer understanding of who and what I am, to that degree can I be a

channel of loving and creatively intelligent ideas. Thomas Hora (1983, p. 3-4) states that the highest form of love is compassion and compassion is knowing that love is non-personal, non-conditional, benevolence. This mode-of-being in the world would be the greatest contribution which I could make to those individuals who seek me out for guidance. This mode-of-being can only contribute to my own well-being, my family's and ultimately to the world. (Hora 1977, Session 1)

Although my hidden motivation to enter graduate school was to heal a "childhood wound" (Miller 1976) I have come to realize through my social work education that I am not that wound. I am, however, enabled by virtue of having experienced these wounds and knowing what it is to be in "real pain over the loss of the self.." (Miller 1976) to finally have evolved into a compassionate professional clinical social worker.

Finally, I would like to end the Integrative Essay with the following quote:

> "Without suffering, happiness cannot be understood. The ideal passes through suffering like gold through fire."
>
> Fyodor Dostoevsky (6)

FOOTNOTES

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3. Mahler, M. S., Pine, F., Bergman, A., 1975 The Psychological Birth of an Infant, New York: Basic Books, Inc.

4. Hora, Thomas, quoted in a group session.

5. Hora, Thomas, quoted in an individual session.

6. Leonard, Linda Schierse, 1990, Witness To The Fire: Creativity and the Veil of Addiction, Boston & London: Shambala.

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