LANGUAGE AND FANTASY IN A BORDERLINE CHILD

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by

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INSTITUTE FOR CLINICAL SOCIAL WORK

We hereby approve the Project Demonstrating Excellence

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ABSTRACT OF PDE

LANGUAGE AND FANTASY IN A BORDERLINE CHILD

Rebecca D. Jacobson, June, 1979

This study is a partial analysis of the language and fantasy of a borderline child. It is an exploration of this child's inner world, a confusing and disordered place containing rich but chaotic fantasies. These he communicated in expressive but idiosyncratic and often incomprehensible speech, which nonetheless conveyed both the confusion and the richness of that inner world.

The subject of the study is an intelligent and appealing 7 year old boy, whose thoughts and fantasies comprised a private view of the world and of his own body, a view which came to be at least partially understandable in the course of the therapy, but which was poorly adapted to reality. His behavior was bizarre and his language, although age appropriate in terms of vocabulary and sentence formation, was dominated by primary process thinking. It was a language that reflected his great confusion about reality, but its variety and vivid imagery suggested both his wish and his unusual capacity to convey his concerns and to have help in sorting out his confusion. His capacity for imagery and verbal production, in the face of profound reality confusion afforded an unusual opportunity for access to highly elaborated, but very primitive

psychological concerns and mechanisms. It is for this reason that this particular child was chosen, and his material gives rise to many questions about primary process, fantasy formation and speech production in both normal and disturbed children.

In particular, what is explored in this study is the relationship between language and ego functioning. Several aspects of ego functioning are discussed: body ego, object relatedness and reality testing; each area of ego functioning is discussed in terms of the fantasies associated with it and the verbal manner in which his fantasies and concerns were communicated in the therapy. Many excerpts from the clinical material are presented to illustrate the level and content of his thoughts and feelings, and the manner in which he expressed them. It developed that his view of the world, primitive and confused as it was, reflected his confusion about his own body; indeed, he seemed to project onto external reality, his distorted and contradictory understanding of events within. Thus, like primitive man, and very young children, he saw the world in his own image; because that image was so distorted, the world around him took on a confusing and menacing quality, which further impeded his functioning, and precluded further development of ego functioning and mastery.

The focus of the study is limited and does not attempt to cover all aspects of the case, or to discuss the treatment techniques or the progress of the therapy. Rather, it is a

clinical contribution to the existing literature on the nature of ego disturbances in very disturbed children.

LANGUAGE AND FANTASY IN A BORDERLINE CHILD

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This study is a beginning exploration of the inner world of a borderline child, with a particular focus on his use of language as it reflected, in content and form, the deficits and capabilities in his ego functioning.

The child in the study is a seven year old boy, whose fantasies comprised a private and idiosyncratic view of the world and of his own body, a view that was poorly adapted to reality. That view will be looked at primarily as it was revealed in his speech, since in the early therapy he made extensive use of language compared to nonverbal play and other activities. His language, although age adequate in terms of vocabulary and sentence formation, was dominated by primary process thought, which rendered it, for the most part, not understandable to those with whom he spoke. It was a language that reflected his great confusion about reality, but its variety and vivid imagery suggested his wish and his capacity to convey his concerns and to have help in sorting out his profound confusion.

Significance

Language is used by young children to contact the object world and to control and comprehend reality. Borderline children are limited in their ability to use language in either of these ways. Because of their fear of merger with the object, a fear arising from their poor differentiation of self from other, they often use language not to contact, but to confuse and to ward off the object. Moreover, in an attempt to reduce their sense of helplessness and vulnerability, they often use language in the support of omnipotent fantasies. Both of these mechanisms interfere with their ability to use language in the normal manner, i.e., for learning about reality and for help in the gradual replacement of primary process thinking with secondary process thinking. The dilemma of these children is a circular one; they seek to avoid the object, and reality, and they are dominated by primary process thinking which prevents them from being understood. In consequence, they do not fully interact with others and are thus deprived of the normal opportunities to use verbal interaction to clarify, define and order phenomena to construct a comprehension of reality. They are thus to a degree locked into their own confused and confusing sense of themselves and the world around them. The issue of verbal communication with the borderline child is therefore of central importance in therapeutic work.

One is limited by the use of a single case, in that generalizations to other cases cannot be made. However, what is of interest in this particular case is that the child studied happened to possess a unique verbal facility and capacity for imagery combined with a highly disordered view of himself and the world. Thus his material provided a kind of window, through which the disorder within could be viewed, a means of access to primary process thinking, and its ramifications, that is often lacking in highly disturbed children. The theoretical understanding of the material, and the choices of interventions were not unique to this therapeutic endeavor. What was unusual was the understanding of this child, afforded by his superior capacity for verbalization, in spite of the confusion contained within it.

What is analyzed in this study, then, is a partial picture of his inner psychic world, and the means by which he conveyed it in the therapy. It is well known, for example, that children with this degree of disturbance, have a profound fear of bodily disintegration. In this analysis, the attempt is made to illustrate what this meant to him, how he experienced it and how he used language to convey it to the therapist. A similar attempt is made with regard to his confusion about the functioning of his body, about the external world and about the people in it. In this

manner, the study makes a contribution both to the understanding of the form and content of very primitive fantasies in children, and to the understanding of the use to which language is put in conveying these fantasies. Moreover, since all children are under the influence of primary process thinking to a greater extent than are adults, and use language in a complex way to communicate their inner state, the study adds to the general understanding of the problems of verbal communication in child therapy.

A study such as this, when combined with similar studies of other borderline and neurotic children, contributes to the body of knowledge from which our understanding is enlarged, and from which generalizations can be made. And since the language of children and the uses that it serve share much in common with that of adults, such studies contribute more generally to the knowledge of communication in psychotherapy.

Interest in language and psychotherapy, and language and its relationship to thought, is not new. Particularly in the writing of the treatment of psychotics, language is a focus, both because of the difficulty of understanding so-called schizophrenic speech, and also because of its connection to disordered thinking. Writers about work with very disturbed children frequently refer to the need of further exploration of the use of language in such children and its

implications for treatment. It does seem clear that a special sensitivity to and appreciation of the complexities of the use of language is an indispensible tool to anyone who attempts access to the confusing world of the very disturbed. And finally, there seems to be an increasing interest in the phenomena of language in psychotherapy generally, as reflected in recent psychoanalytic writings.

Description

Following a discussion of the theoretical concepts which form the foundation of the analysis of the clinical material, a short anamnasis will be given. The clinical material itself, using excerpts from the sessions of the first ten months of therapy (three times weekly), will then be presented and discussed in terms of ego functioning and object relatedness, with an emphasis on the role of language. An attempt is made to describe the nature and the level of the child's concerns, confusions, conflicts and fears, and his attempts at mastery of them. In a final section, the analysis will be summarized and implications for further work suggested by the study will be discussed.

Delimitations

This study is on an exploratory level and attempts a beginning ordering of certain aspects of the material of one case. Since the analysis is based on the material of

a single case, generalizations to other cases cannot be made; rather it is a small addition to the larger body of clinical data which taken together, form the foundation on which theoretical understanding is built.

Furthermore, the study is not a complete case study; only certain aspects of the case have been selected for analysis. This is not intended to suggest that other aspects are not equally worthy of attention and investigation. For example, the complex countertransference issues that such a case entails, or the intriguing matter of evaluation of the movement of the case or of the choice of interventions on the part of the therapist are not discussed, except as these are implied in the material. The material that is selected for analysis is not considered in terms of all aspects of psychic functioning; for example, the level of superego formation in the child is not discussed, nor is any attempt made at genetic reconstruction of past events as they have bearing on the clinical picture. The choice of focus does not reflect the relative importance assigned to the various aspects of the case, but does reflect the particular interests of the writer which work with this child gave rise to.

CHAPTER II

SUMMARY OF CASE HISTORY

Identifying Information and Presenting Problem

James is a seven year old boy who lives with his middle-aged parents in a working class, residential neighborhood. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. D., are English, having immigrated to this country before James' birth, but after the birth of his two sisters, both now in their twenties, married, with children of their own.

In appearance, James is slight, fair and angelic looking; his manner conveys a mixture of excitement, fear and restraint. He had been brought by his parents for treatment because of intense and bizarre fears: of noise, fire, earthquakes, mud slides, monsters and other potential disaster (houses flying away, cars crashing); fears of separation and change; bizarre behavior characterized by rigidity and controlingness; repetitive and echolalic-like speech; and limited peer interaction, characterized by fear and submission. James spent much of his time seemingly lost in his fantasy world, dominated by his interest in play in his "warehouse," a collection of discarded objects in the family's back yard. James began public school at age four

years, eleven months, at which time he was observed to be fearful and confused. He was then transferred to a diagnostic school, which he enjoyed, and then to a special class, where he made no progress, and finally to a private school for emotionally disturbed children.

Previous Treatment

James' pediatrician referred the family to a university hospital for a diagnostic evaluation when James was three and was manifesting intense separation panic when his visiting sisters left his home, and great fear to the opening of the hood or door of the family car. His parents were not able to make use of this contact, although they were concerned about his behavior. A second attempt to obtain help, when James was six, brought his mother in contact with a social worker who helped her sufficiently with her own anxiety to enable her to seek long term treatment for James.

Family Background

James' mother, a housewife, is a polite and cordial woman, greatly concerned about her son. She is both emotionally distant and over involved with him, but aware of and guilty about this overinvolvement. She is a highly anxious woman, who attempts to deal with feelings and problems by avoidance and denial. She was born and grew up in England,

a late and youngest child in her family of origin. She was very close to, and had difficulty separating from, her own mother. James' father, a carpenter, is a retiring man, who expresses both warmth towards his son and irritation over his demands and inability to communicate effectively. Both parents were committed and caring, but felt helpless to understand or to be of help to James.

Mrs. D. was 19, her husband 26, at the time of their marriage. Nine years later, along with their two daughters, they left their birthplace to immigrate to this country for a better standard of living. At the time, Mrs. D. was unaware of any feelings of loss or sadness.

Developmental History

The parents did not wish to have more children at the time Mrs. D. became pregnant with James. She was employed as an office worker at the time. When she missed her period, she feared cancer and as a consequence, postponed going to a doctor, so that when she did, she was both relieved and surprised and distressed that she was pregnant. Moreover, during this period, her mother died in England, and her daughters were preparing to marry and move from home. The year after James' birth, Mrs. D.'s father also died. She did not experience grief reactions to these losses, but was aware of feeling irritable and

depressed with her concerns focused on James. She recalled nothing of his birth, and though she feared something wrong from the beginning, was unable to inquire of her doctor. She felt unable to care properly for a baby at this time, especially a boy, worried about crib death and clung to him, seldom leaving him in someone else's care. It appeared that the pregnancy with James was an unconscious compensation for the losses in her family and that her own anxiety about death and loss were experienced in relation to James.

Pregnancy was full term and uncomplicated and birth was normal. James was a quiet baby, who slept a great deal. He is described as having been responsive to his mother, but "stiff" and fidgety with his father. Developmental milestones were within normal limits. He was interested in cars from an early age, and "car" was his first word, spoken at age one year. He used words to repeat what was said to him, but spoke little at this time. He walked at age fifteen months. By the time he was three, the parents were aware of marked separation anxiety and intense and unusual fears.

Diagnostic Evaluation

The diagnosis at the time of the initial evaluation of James was symbiotic psychosis, characterized by anxiety and confusion of a psychotic quality. James' fears were of

a primitive nature: of separation, of abandonment, of being thrown away, or annihilated by destructive forces. Although his confusions were profound (confusion about the parts and functions of the body, about his own body boundaries, and the difference between the animate and the inanimate), there was also indication of the wish to separate, and the capacity to use a therapeutic relationship for help with his confusion. The recommendation was for intensive therapy, begun when James was seven years three months old. The period of treatment discussed in this study is the first ten months of three times weekly therapy.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The material in this section is a summary of some of the more important theoretical contributions on which the analysis in this study is based. There is a vast quantity of literature which addresses issues relating to the subject of this study, and many, of necessity, have been left out. Selection was made on the basis of those ideas and conceptualizations which have most influenced the author's thinking.

In the course of her analytic work with psychotic children in the 1930's, Mahler was struck by the similarities between the inward directed appearance of the psychotic child and that of the very young infant.[1] Although different in many ways, both appeared tuned in and unaware of the world of reality. What young babies had not yet achieved, psychotics appeared to have failed to achieve, that is, psychological birth, becoming a separate individual and having a beginning identity. Her investigations led her to conclude that the similarity was to be explained by the fact that psychotic children were arrested at, or regressed to, a stage of development which is normal for

all children, a state of symbiotic fusion with the mother. The psychotic child, according to Mahler, never fully left this stage and did not achieve a clear sense of separateness from the object, or establish internalized representations of the self and of the object. She considered that this failure resulted from some gross distortion during the symbiotic phase, due to some unknown, inherent defect in the child, combined with some defect in the mothering functions.

Along with this study of the developmental failures in psychotic children, Mahler and her co-workers organized observational studies of randomly selected infants, toddlers and their mothers. These studies resulted in that group's well known formulations of the normal course by which the child achieves psychological separateness from the mother and the beginnings of object constancy.[2]

Mahler considered that the normal toddler's achievement of psychological separation via the process she called separation-individuation was indeed a psychological birth, a gradual hatching process, occurring between the ages of four or so months and three years. She described this process in much detail, based on her group's observational data.

Her conception of the earliest phases of development, the autistic and the symbiotic, was also based on her

observations but also on the observations and speculations of others--Freud, Spitz, Hoffer, Winnicott, Provence, to name a few. These investigators considered the neonate's development in the context of the mother-child diad, describing the functions of the mother in tension reduction and maintenance of psychic homeostasis by providing "good enough mothering,"[3] based on the mother's empathic intuneness with her developing infant's changing needs. They also placed primary emphasis on the significance of bodily phenomena, indistinguishable in early life from psychic phenomena, and the importance of the development of a body ego as fundamental to any further self-differentiation.

The idea of body ego originated with Freud.[4] When he was developing the concept of ego, he assumed that the nucleus of the ego is a sense of one's bodily self arrived at through the senses. He emphasized the unique importance of the body to the developing infant because of its role in libidinal gratification, in the pleasurable sensations of tension reduction, but also because painful stimuli, for example hunger, cannot be removed or avoided in the way that external stimuli can, by means of the infant's physical withdrawal. Freud said the body also assumed special importance because, unlike anything else in the infant's environment, the body, when touched by the

infant, gives rise to two sensations: the sensation in the hands, of touching, and the sensation in the part of the body touched. Freud therefore considered the ego to be "first and foremost a bodily ego."[5] He, and others, assumed the newborn has no psyche--no thoughts or images, only bodily sensations, feelings of tension and relief and of diffuse stimuli. In earliest infancy, psyche and soma are one and only gradually become separate.

In the earliest part of infancy, in the first few days or weeks after birth, the infant is in what Freud called the autoerotic phase of libidinal development. He stated that he would leave it to the neurologists of the future to describe in detail what occurs internally at this time. However, he compared the newborn with the fetal bird in the egg, protected from stimuli by the stimulus barrier until enough growth has taken place to permit functioning outside the shell. He said that the infant gratifies himself "autistically."[6] Later, Mahler called this period "normal autism."[7] Spitz in commenting on this phase observed that the newborn doesn't manifest pleasure as such, only unpleasure (that is, tension) and its opposite, quiescence or absence of tension.[8] Piaget described the newborn as having only sensations of hunger and of satisfaction.[9] However the internal state of the neonate is described, it

is clear that the stimulus barrier at this time of life enhances survival in that it allows the infant time for the transition from the protected environment of intrauterine life, to the stimulating environment of extrauterine life, from relative passivity to activity, and from minimum stimulation to much greater stimulation.

This doesn't mean, of course, that the autistic infant is unresponsive to stimuli. Although sleeplike states far outweigh states of arousal, in periods of freedom from tension, for example after a good feed, the infant is often in a state that Wolff called "alert inactivity," a very important state for allowing the infant to begin to take in and to learn about his environment.[10] However, the infant's main orientation is to sensations from within; the infant appears to be relatively self-sufficient in its hallucinatory wish fulfillment."[11]

Gradually, from the fourth or fifth week of life, this state of affairs changes, bringing an end to the autistic state and the beginnings of the symbiotic phase. Two factors appear to account for the move forward. One is the activity and stimulation of the mother and the other is a shift in the libidinal cathexis from the inside of the infant's body to the periphery.[12,13] This is a major step in development,

and Mahler points out that in the psychotic, the well known peripheral pain insensitivity and the heightened gut sensitivity, the latter so often equated with the bad introjects of the psychotic, bear witness to the failure of this important cathectic shift. Evidence of this crucial maturational change in the three or four week old infant is found in the observable increase in sensitivity to external stimuli at this time, so much so that in the absence of maternal intervention in tension reduction, the infant easily becomes overwhelmed by the quantity of stimuli. This heightened sensitivity is also born out by electroencephalagraphic studies.[14] Mahler refers to this maturational event as the "cracking of the autistic shell." The result is that the mother then becomes what Spitz called the outer half of the self.[15] She provides by her ministrations, the functions formerly served by the stimulus barrier, i.e., maintenance of homeostasis, and the result is a specific bond between mother and infant, marked most dramatically by the infant's smiling response to the mother's face.[16] Experience begins to be organized around definite tension states and definite pleasure states, the latter described by Anna Freud as "blissful experiences of satisfaction and relief." Memory traces begin to be

established, but with no differentiation between inner and outer, or self and other.

During the symbiotic phase, the infant behaves and functions as if he and the mother were an omnipotent system, with a common boundary. It is to this state that the symbiotic psychotic regresses, as well as the normal adult, in certain states characterized by a sense of boundlessness which Freud referred to as oceanic feelings.[18] It is also in this phase that the infant begins to single out sensations originating in his own body as opposed to those from without and to begin to build the body ego.

This acquaintance with the body undoubtedly begins with the mouth, the first part of the body to respond to stimuli, and with the act of sucking, the first coordinated muscular activity. The mouth, and the tongue, are also the first surfaces used in tactile perception and exploration. The mouth retains permanent importance among body organs, and its mode--taking in--retains prime importance in later perceptual and psychological development.[8] Experience is taken in by the senses and people are taken in by introjection and identification.

Next, the hands and face assume importance. The infant uses his hands in sucking and to grasp the breast

or bottle in nursing. Hoffer pointed out that the infant's ability to bring the hands to the mouth for sucking constitutes the earliest ego achievement in the sense that the infant uses his beginning mastery of his body in the service of satisfying his needs. Because of their association with the pleasure of sucking and nursing, the hands are libidinized, and they in turn libidinize the rest of the body in the course of body exploration.[19] The face also assumes early significance, along with the mouth and hands, since the face is the site of the primary sense organs and is the point of contact with the world.[20] Thus infants learn about their body parts in clusters. Remnants of this are to be seen in the fact that in experiments, small children and brain-damaged adults fail to distinguish between touches which are simultaneously applied to the face and the hands. This phenomenon is also reflected in the typical figure drawings of young children, in which the arms extend from the sides of the head.[21] This early mouth-hand-skin experience of the symbiotic infant is merged with the visual image of the mother's face, and the experience of movement and of contact with her body. Mahler describes the variety of maternal holding styles and how these are often taken over by the infant as the symbiotic phase comes

to an end.[22] The symbiotic phase is a period of exquisite intimacy between mother and infant, in which the mother's "primary maternal preoccupation"[23] provides the matrix in which ego organization begins, including the infant's learning about his body and making connections between memory traces of pleasure and unpleasure and the experience of the mother's face, body and functions. Thus the ground is laid for the eventual internalization of self and object representations. Inside and outside are still vague and the mother, although highly cathected, is still a part object.

This phase comes to an end with the peak of the child's interest in the mother, in manual, tactile and close-up visual exploration of her face and the feel of her body. The infant seems at this point to have begun distinguishing self from non-self, and human from non-human (for example, in his interest in inanimate objects worn by the mother). He begins also to strain away from the mother in contrast to the molding of the symbiotic stage, to look at her from a greater distance, and to look more outside the mother-infant context. This behavior heralds the infant's first steps in breaking away and ushers in what Mahler calls the first stage of separation-individuation, the differentiation subphase.

During differentiation, the near total dependency

of the infant on the mother decreases. The reservoir of basic trust[24] or normal narcissism has formed a solid base from which the infant may reach out to the other-than-mother world. This is the period of the emergence of transitional phenomena,[25] of increased investment of motor activity, including now crawling and standing, biting and the beginnings of one word language. The infant takes great pleasure in these emerging ego functions, and the outside world is explored, in close proximity to the mother. It is during this period that a primitive but distinct body ego emerges, and is later consolidated by the mastery of upright locomotion and the subsequent development of representational intelligence.

When symbiosis is delayed or distorted, the differentiation phase is also delayed, distorted or premature, and patterns are thus set up which are maintained throughout the separation-individuation process. For example, when the mothering has been lacking in empathy and warmth, the infant, instead of progressing to the differentiation phase, may turn back to his own body, in narcissistic autoerotic behavior, like rocking. Winnicott and James spoke about the consequences of this kind of self care and turning from the object world when it resulted in the development of a compensatory "false

self."[26] When ego development is premature, for whatever reason, the ego is, in consequence, vulnerable.

Mahler[2] describes in fine detail the subsequent subphases of practicing and rapproachment. In the practicing subphase, between eight and sixteen months, the infant has a "love affair with the world"[27] and the libidinal cathexis shifts into the service of the autonomous ego functions. The child is intoxicated with his own facilities and narcissism is at a peak; body exploration continues, while the great investment in the world coincides with a relative imperviousness to falls and frustrations. At this time, the mother is still not experienced as a separate object, with her own needs and wishes, but as a partial, need fulfilling object.

The third subphase, rapproachment, from ages sixteen to twenty-four months includes the rapproachment crisis, brought about by the infant's dawning recognition that the world is <u>not</u> his oyster and that he is in it on his own. This typically brings about increased anxiety, less frustration tolerance and anxiety about object love (as opposed to object loss). The child shadows the mother and also rejects her for fear of re-engulfment. He uses "No" to protect his budding autonomy, and seems both to need her more (than in the practicing phase) and to <u>want</u> to need her less. There is a shift from preoccupation with

exploration to preoccupation with social interaction. The phase closes with the child finding the optimal distance from the object and showing very individual ways of coping, as compared to the relative similarity of coping mechanisms associated with earlier phases. It is also out of this rapproachment process, colored as it is by events of the preceding phases of separation-individuation, that the sense of identiy, and the self-representations as distinct from the object representations begin to be consolidated. This consolidation constitutes the task of the last subphase (ages twenty-four to thirty-six months), resulting in the gradual achievement of individuality and the beginnings of object constancy. The course of these developments have a great range of variability from one child to the next.

In summary, the autistic and the symbiotic phases serve to protect the infant from overwhelming stimuli during the beginning stage of ego development. During the normal symbiotic union, the infant perceives the narcissistically cathected object as predominantly good, because it is fused harmoniously with the self. During the first phases of separation, the object begins to be experienced as frustrating as well, and the earlier undifferentiated self-object representations become differentiated into the all good self-object representations and the all bad self-object

representations. This division of good and bad is a consequence of the early ego's inability to integrate the two. In the final phases of separation-individuation, self-representations and object representations are differentiated, and good self and object representations are integrated with bad.

These two processes fail to a great extent in psychosis and to some extent in borderline conditions. In the psychoses, there is poor differentiation of self and object, even of self and non-self; in the borderline illnesses, differentiation of self and object are not prominent, but there is an inability to synthesize aggressively determined from libidinally determined self and object images. As a consequence, the psychotic struggles with maintainance of ego boundaries and reality testing; the borderline has reasonably intact ego boundaries, but must rely on primitive defenses of splitting, projection, idealization and omnipotence to preserve the good internalized self and object.[28]

In the diagnosis and treatment of psychotic and borderline children, this kind of distinction tends to be difficult to make, because of the fluidity of the defensive structures. In those children who seem clearly to have regressed to the symbiotic phase of development, there is extreme confusion and dysfunction, and the predominant

defensive mechanisms are aimed at avoidance of disintegration and refusion with the object. Ekstein,[29] in discussing the treatment of the symbiotic psychotic child, describes the importance of distancing devices employed by these children in an attempt to avoid the regressive pull of the transference back to the symbiotic state. Children generally described as borderline do not appear to struggle so predominantly with the possibility of merger with the object, but do show marked ego deficits, including disturbances in reality testing, poor anxiety tolerance, and great dependency on the object for maintenance of ego functioning. Their object relatedness is on grossly shifting levels, and they easily regress to primary identification with the object (in contrast to cathexis of the object).[30] Pine considers the concept of borderline to apply to all children who fall diagnostically between the neuroses and the psychoses (by which he means autism, symbiotic psychosis and childhood schizophrenia, the latter being a phenomena primarily of regression rather than arrest). He sees the borderline category as a continuum of degrees of dysfunction, with no clear cut demarcation between the more disturbed borderline children and psychotic children.[30]

In addition to the deficits in ego functioning and object relatedness of borderline children, A. Freud[31] speaks

of the disturbance of drive mastery. These children fail to achieve phase dominance. There are overlapping oral, anal and phallic traits and the ego gives insufficient direction or coloring to the drives. The bulk of the libido is tied to the oral and anal phases and aggression is of a primitive quality. She also points out that the reliance on the primitive mechanism of omnipotence is not very serviceable in handling aggression, and further blurs the distinction between fantasy and reality. There is a failure of fusion between the drives, which are in a primitive and untamed state. Concerning object relatedness, she describes borderline children as having a weakness in the capacity for object cathexis which leads to the danger of blending of self and object; the symptoms can thus be seen as a defense against this fear of the loss of self-boundaries. Moreover, the object tends to be seen as a part object, characterized by attributes and functions; such a view of the object defends against object loss, since if the object is seen as a function, the loss is less because a function can be replaced.[31] (This is an important mechanism in treatment, because this defense is frequently seen in the borderline child in reaction to the developing attachment to the therapist.)

Frijling-Schreuder suggests that the borderline child has better ego functioning than the psychotic

perhaps because there is a greater capacity for contact with objects, but points out the problem of distinguishing cause and effect, where the interaction between drive and ego development is so intense and continuous.[32] She would attempt to make a clearer distinction than Pine, between psychotic and borderline children, and believes that although both suffer disintegration and separation anxiety, in the psychotic, such anxiety is overwhelming to the ego, causing gross impairment in reality testing and even dissolving ego structure so that the child must rely mainly on projection and introjection, the defenses of delusion. In the borderline, the anxiety is less severe and catastrophic, the ego remains partially intact and is capable of a greater range of defenses, and better reality testing. The borderline child therefore has some awareness of his anxiety in her view, and a desire for help with it, while the psychotic wards off the anxiety with delusions and strongly resists change of any kind.

The distinction between the two categories of psychotic and borderline, to the extent that it can be made, seems to be in the level and intensity of the anxiety and the capacity for minimal ego development and object relatedness. Both groups of children, however, hover between a fused state and a separated state, and thus have two basic fears: the fear of engulfment, of loss of ego

boundaries and of a sense of wholeness and the fear of the loss of the dimly perceived object by separation.

Frijling-Schreuder places much emphasis on the significance of language development in the borderline's superior functioning, a functioning that is often characterized by isolated but very significant achievements in specialized areas of knowledge. The significance of language is its role in the development of secondary thought processes. She believes that the use of speech to convey secondary process functioning and the consequent ability to tolerate feelings constitutes the main difference between psychosis and borderline states. The psychotic child is constantly flooded with anxiety but lacks the ability to verbalize his feelings and thus cannot bind them in a secondary process mode. The borderline typically uses speech more actively, even though it is stereotyped and limited in its clarity of meaning.

Language begins in relation to the object, first in imitation, then as a magical means of contacting the object in bringing about need satisfaction. The child's initial efforts are helped along by the responsiveness of the parents, and thus speech is additionally libidinized. At this early stage, the infant uses language to identify things and needs, and to make fuller contact with people, but continues to express <u>feelings</u> in the nonverbal ways--

facial expression, movement, crying, etc.--and only comes to verbalize feelings much later. When that occurs, language greatly aids in distancing from the immediacy of situations and thereby acquires a significant role in the control of the drives, and the modulation of affects.[33] In general, language enhances ego mastery by enriching fantasy formation, allowing for trial action in thought, and fostering causal thinking, categorization and abstraction. In short, all ego functions are enhanced by the development of language as it occurs along with the capacity for representational thought in the second year of life and after.[34] The thing becomes hypercathected by the addition of the word.[35] As the child develops language, he develops the capacity to sort out, to define, to discriminate, facilitating the differentiation of body parts and functions, and finally self-differentiation, as indicated in the use of "No" to safeguard autonomy, and then "I" to refer to the self. In the normal child and adult, language is both the vehicle of thought and a primary mode of contact with the object, and the disturbance of language as, for example, in the schizophrenic, represents a breakdown in both realms.[36]

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CHAPTER IV

LANGUAGE USE AND EGO FUNCTIONING

Part 1. Introduction

This section is an introduction to illustrate from the early material the style and feeling of James' speech. The following is from our first session.

> When I met James this first time, I was struck by his rather soft, even angelic face, a countenance which resulted in part, as it now seems to me, from the absence of the complex and higher level emotions that a more integrated child would be experiencing on such an occasion, feelings which would lend an expression of tension, discomfort, or at least seriousness. James' face was an untroubled blank. His eyes seemed gentle, though he barely looked at me. When he spoke, several new and very crooked teeth were visible. After being introduced to me, and with barely a glance in my direction, he headed down the hall in a jolting, clumsy fashion, in seeming confusion and with no idea, of course, where he was going. He moved stiffly and without grace. As I showed him the door of my office, he mumbled,

referring to his mother, something like, "Where is she going?" (She was on her way to her therapist's office, further along the hall.) He bolted into my office, went straight to the window, and looking out over the freeway said, "Can we touch those poles?" And then, in a flat but somewhat high-pitched voice, asked in rapid succession, with many repetitions, questions like: "What is that fence made of?", "Can we walk on the fence?", "Can we touch the wires?", "Where is the off ramp?"; and comments like, "That wire will burn you (the wire of the fence)"; "Electricity burns you."; and "There's electricity in that pole." Without looking at me, and with tense movements to and away from the window, he went on in this way, at one point saying, "I saw a car go into the fence and the fence bent and it burned up." After I had made some comments about his obvious fear of the dangers of this new place, he became interested in the toy shelf and upon seeing a can of clay that was partly hidden behind something else, said "Oh!" and then "Ho," and "Ho, Ho, Ho--Santa Claus . . . ." The stream of questions continued as he played with clay; he asked what it was made of, what was inside it, and finally announced that we would make pancakes. The

pancakes had patches on them which he fashioned from small bits of clay of another color, and he explained that the patches made them very hot, and very good but also melted them--"syrup melts them" and "syrup makes them sour" and "it makes them run off the plate." To the making of pancakes, he associated a rambling, disjointed account of burning his mouth, going to bed after eating, and jumping on the bed, which became a trampoline. He said, "Maybe I'll go through the roof . . . into the attic." In response to my question about the attic, he spoke of ghosts who steal you from your bed, and set fires and cut your hands off. He mumbled something about "bad hands." He spoke of the attic as full of wood, of woods, of junk. Interspersed among these themes, he asked unconnected questions: did I have a boy at home, a pool at home, and what was a mess on the freeway. At the end of the session, the very room reflected his disorder--there were tiny bits of crumbled clay on the table and the floor.

It is difficult to convey, in reproducing this hour, the extent of the disorder. In reproducing it, in fact, in remembering it after the session, a degree of order was imposed that did not exist in the actual experience. The

content of the hour conveyed a great deal; it is noteworthy, however, that during the session, the content seemed close to meaningless. The style of the interaction seemed to contain the essential communication, more than the content of the verbalizations. For one thing, the obvious disorder of the ego function of motility, which gave to James the quality of careening through space, with little comprehension either of the space, or of his body in it, conveyed his excited fear and helplessness more eloquently than anything he said. Secondly, the form of his speech had as much impact as what he actually said. I'm not referring to the tone of voice, which was even to the point of flatness, but rather the structure of his speech. He repeatedly asked questions, and in this initial session, my reaction was a wish to provide an answer, not possible, however, because he did not wait for a response. It became apparent, in the early phase of treatment, that the questions were not questions as such. He did not expect an answer, nor did he seem to be aware at this point that he was questioning. I came to regard his questions as statements, often simply for the purpose of naming things or calling attention to phenomena, in a non object-related attempt to gain mastery over stimuli. Moreover, the use of the question form of speech conveyed the pervasive lack of comprehension of these phenomena, his utter confusion about reality, in

contrast to his obvious facility with language. Although James' speech was immature, his vocabulary was impressive, he used past as well as present tense and understood the basic rules of grammar, although he often discarded them. He also used the pronouns, "I" and "you," unlike autistic children, indicating that he had progressed to the point of making a beginning distinction of self and others.

On the basis of the initial session with James, I was left with two main impressions about his speech. One was that his language minimally served the purpose of exchange of information, of communication of ideas and feelings in a comprehensible way. I was reminded of the referring psychologist's letter, in which he said, "James does not use language for communication. He has poor eye contact, yet he can comprehend the spoken word. Certainly he is an odd child, who will be most difficult to treat." My other impression was that James' language was the language of primary process, and that it was suited, by form as much as content, to convey his essential dilemma, his pervasive confusion and basic struggle to ward off disintegration.

Ensuing sessions, in this early phase, continued to be of this kind, in fact, many of the early sessions contained less in the way of decipherable content, and had the very pronounced effect of engendering intense anxiety

and confusion in me. There were clang associations, neologisms, confusion of past and present, no awareness of cause and effect; there were also, however, some very definite devices used by James in what seemed to be an attempt to order and contain his anxiety. When, for example, he could use a comment of mine to help reduce his anxiety, like my remarks in the session reported about his uncertainty and fear about his safety in my office, he could then proceed with an activity (like the making of clay pancakes in this session), by means of an announcement, a proclamation of intent: "Now we will make pancakes." In doing this, he would assume an adult tone, much like that which one can imagine used by a kindergarten teacher in capturing the interest of her small and easily distracted students for focusing on an activity, which calls forth the use of skills and leads to the mastery of some goal-oriented physical task. This continued to be a reliable self-imposed device of James', by means of which he could borrow, in simple imitation, the organizing function of the benign object. We came, in fact, to spend considerable time in such schoolish activities, as a welcome--to him and to me--escape from the chaos of his more random and idiosyncratic associations.

The foregoing is intended to convey the style of James' communications and to suggest some of the uses to

which he put speech. It is apparent from the content, form and manner of his speech, that there existed severe deficits in ego functioning. James appeared to be between a state of symbiotic fusion with the object and an early state of separateness, moving back and forth, now nearer one, now the other. In the following sections (Parts 2 and 3), his verbalizations will be discussed in terms of one aspect of ego functioning, achievement of a reliable body ego.

James' failure in this regard manifested itself in the following ways:

1. He had an intense fear of bodily disintegration. He appeared not to have achieved a sense of bodily separateness or of firm body boundaries which would permit him to have mastery of his body and of space; he seemed vulnerable to recurring, intense feelings of lack of wholeness, of impending dissolution and disintegration. This appeared to result from both a fear and wish to fuse with the object, to recapture the symbiotic state.

2. He was also profoundly confused about the products and parts of his body and their functions, or of their interconnectedness as a functioning whole. He was confused accordingly about the distinction between inner and outer stimuli and phenomena, as well as the distinction between self and other.

In subsequent sections (Parts 4 and 5), James' dysfunction in the spheres of object relationships and reality testing will be discussed.

Part 2. Fear of Bodily Disintegration

James expressed a recurring fear of bodily disintegration associated with intense anxiety of a psychotic quality. The anxiety referred to was not signal anxiety, serving the purpose of calling forth defensive action, nor did it seem to be neurotic anxiety resulting from intrapsychic conflict. Its quality and the context in which it appeared indicated that it was associated with the threat of disintegration, of dissolution of the self. James' concern about being burned was an early manifestation of this, and continued to be a recurring theme. The following is an example of this kind of anxiety and the context in which it arose, from the fourth session.

> James and I were making clay table and chairs. He seemed to have eating in mind and talked about a peppermint cheesecake. He then said, "Can I take my tea on the roof?" And then, "What's on the roof?" He answered himself, saying, "There are pipes from the heater, there are chimneys, antenna, rocks . . . " He suddenly inquired, "Do you live in an apartment or a house?" He repeated the question insistently,

until I asked him which he thought was better. His reply was, "Apartments . . . they have cribs in them." He then mumbled something about not going to bed, and added, "I lived in an apartment, and I slept in my mother's bed . . . the heater blew up and a boy burned the house down." He said this with emphasis and a quality of subdued excitement and fear.

There was no angry affect with this account and he seemed not to be fantasizing a destructive attack, as the content alone suggests. Rather, this was a fantasy of separation, of being unprotected on the roof, which then seemed to be followed by the impulse to return to the crib and to have bodily closeness with his mother. This in turn gave rise to the annihilation fear expressed in the house burning down.

In subsequent sessions he frequently expressed his fear of burning "to ashes," of burning "to pieces." This fear was expressed in other ways as well, for example with regard to toileting, which also aroused feelings of separation and loss. James would ask, "Will I go down the drain?," or when speaking of junk and garbage, as he often did, "Will I be thrown away?" The fear of disintegration was also expressed in terms of falling apart, of crumbling

or of losing a part of him. The following example is from the second session.

> James was making a clay heater-air conditioner. As he handled the clay, he asked repeatedly, "What is it made of?" and "What's inside of it?" The clay heater then became a "shit--no, shooter." He dug into it with his fingers, crumbling it to bits, laughing with fear and excitement as he told me that someone had come in the night and made a hole in the back of him. The crumbling of the clay had an exploratory quality as if he expected to find the answer to his confusion within. He finally gathered the clay bits together and made a crude airplane. He said excitedly, "There are shooting people inside." As he crumbled the airplane to bits as well, he said, "The bottom is falling out . . . the people are killed." To my comment during this about his fear of losing <u>his</u> bottom and falling to pieces, he answered calmly, "Yes . . . I will."

It is perhaps clarifying to point out that the primitive quality of this kind of anxiety had an extremely anxiety provoking effect on the therapist, as it had on the other people with whom James had contact. His parents

had attempted to cope with their helplessness in the face of James' confused and anxious speech by avoidance, seemingly with the effect of heightening the desperateness of his need for some assurances that he could remain whole and intact. The reaction of the therapist was sometimes the same as the parents, manifested in a feeling of numbness and sleepiness, at other times in a feeling of desperation to find the means of ordering the chaos.

James regularly chopped up the clay objects we made, and spoke in casual tones of wanting to chop me up as well. He often made wobbly tables with two legs, asking, "What are tables made of?", seeming to fail to distinguish between the clay representation and tables themselves. He would ask, "Do tables have legs?", and by way of answering his own question, say, "Tables don't run." He clearly could not differentiate between animate and inanimate, nor could he comprehend the similarity of the concept "leg," as part of the body, and "leg" as part of a piece of furniture.

Again, in the fourth session, James referred to his fear of dissolution, this time not by burning, or falling to pieces, but by melting from tears.

> James was talking about ghosts. He explained that ghosts had legs and could run after you. Snowmen, he said,

> while making one out of clay, had no legs. But snowmen did have tears. He went on to say that this snowman's tears melted him and he "fell to pieces." When I commented that it seemed when the snowman felt bad, he thought he would go to pieces, James took the snowman's head in his hand, nodding it up and down, and said softly so that I could barely hear, "Now you're getting it."

This material brings to mind the commonly used expressions "breaking down" in reference to crying, and "pulling oneself together," in reference to gaining composure.

The concern about dissolution was also expressed in terms of the physical surroundings. A brief description of the building and the office in which James was seen will be helpful in understanding material relating to it. The building was an office building with two long corridors and 20 or so offices. The waiting room was on the first floor, and the office, on the second floor, could be reached by stair or elevator. There was also a third floor, an attic, the entrance of which could be reached by stair. The building was situated next to a busy freeway, which could be seen from the office window. Across from the freeway was a railroad track, and beyond, a fire station. Also visible from the window was an adjoining roof, on

which there were air conditioner pipes of various sizes. Thus the building itself, and the view from the window afforded an array of inanimate objects on which James could project his confused picture of internal events. Indeed, there were many examples of this kind of projection, in James' obsessive ruminations and repetitive questions about wires, fences, freeways, heaters, lights, vents, elevator cables, basements, attics, fire escapes, by means of which he sought to divine some order within.

Just as the body could melt and dissolve and fall apart, so could the room and the building. In the first session, when James spoke of going through the roof, a literal rendering of the metaphor for being angry, this was not only a reference to his concretization of feelings. The reference to going through the roof at this point was similar to his initial rush to the window, when he asked if he could touch the fences and the poles outside: it conveyed his lack of understanding of the limitations and boundaries of his own body; he was, it seemed, at one with the world. Bodily boundaries were not clear and boundaries in space were not clear.

For example, James was distracted by the slightest noise in and outside the room, and assumed that noises, regardless of their source or direction, meant that the roof was falling in, the walls collapsing or the floor

giving way. He had little capacity to discriminate stimuli or to selectively tune out. His view seemed to be that we could at any moment fly into the attic or drop away to the basement, and thus the essential communication appeared to be his experience of physical instability; the room was as unreliable as a delimited space, with boundaries, in which he could be assured of remaining as was his own body. In this connection, it is significant that James often spoke of headboards: to keep one's head on and to keep one from falling out of bed, and to keep the bed from falling apart.

It further appeared that such dissolution fears often emerged in connection with some consideration of a move toward separateness. As mentioned in the material just discussed, the fantasy of the crib and the mother's bed followed the fantasy of tea on the roof. (Later, James made it unmistakably clear that the roof was his metaphor for birth and the separated state.) The melting snowman followed James' observation of the sunlight through the window and the comment, "It's better than dark," and then, "Can you play the game of open-the-door?" When I inquired about this game, he said, "When the door is open, ghosts and bats can come in." He thus expressed, seemingly, his fear about separation (an open door) as well as his view of his body as dangerously permeable. Somewhat later, James would occasionally speak of the play of other children; it both attracted him and frightened him and when

he expressed interest in joining in such play, it was usually followed by a fantasy of being broken or discarded.

It is of interest also that over time, there was evidence of progress in terms of development of a firmer sense of bodily integrity. Over a year later, James repeated the theme of the crying snowman melted by his own tears. In the later version, it was not a snowman, but an unhappy boy, who went into an angry outburst of destructiveness, breaking up the furniture in his school, over the prospect of separation from his favorite teacher. After all the furniture had been smashed, the boy cried pitiably in the corner of the devastated schoolroom, because, James said, he didn't know why he smashed the furniture and now he was very sad.

Thus it seemed that although from the beginning James had facility with speech, little direct communication took place. The very act of communication, of acknowledging the need to convey an idea to another, implies some degree of separation from the other person. Without at least some degree of separateness, words have only a magical significance. It seemed that, with the help of the therapist's interaction in attempting to untangle the confused threads of his speech, James could begin to grasp the concept of the communicative function of language, and then employ it for the purpose of beginning to sort out

self from nonself, and later, for the purpose of identifying feeling states. Such progress was uneven and characterized by many regressions. It did indeed seem that one of the failures in the parenting function, at least on the part of James' mother, was her limited ability to acquaint him with reality on a verbal level. There were instances of this in my minimal contact with them, before and after the sessions. Once when there had been a loud noise in the corridor, just before the end of the session, James worried about an earthquake. When he met his mother in the hall at the conclusion of the session, he anxiously asked her, "Is there going to be an earthquake?" Her reply was, "Well, you can never tell." Irony and at times sarcasm were characteristic of both parents' speech, and seemed to serve the purpose of helping them to cope with fears of their own.

At the same time, it is important to state that James' confusion about his body and about the world was not the result of misinformation provided him by adults in his environment. He was very perceptive, and took in a great deal, but he had ordered the world in terms of his concerns about himself, resulting in a highly inaccurate and confused perception of external phenomena.

Part 3. Confusion of Body Parts, Products and Functions

All children have an intense interest in the body and its functioning; the body is a source of pleasure, the first means of communication, of gratification, of mastery; it is an object of curiosity and is the first means of achieving separateness from the mother. As children gradually develop the capacity for autonomy, representational thinking, object constancy and acceptance of the reality principle, their comprehension of the workings of their bodies is gradually established. These achievements are, in fact, inseparable and interdependent. A full grasp of the parts and functioning of the body is, however, a somewhat late achievement in the normal child. Children of five still answer when asked what is inside their abdomen, "hamburger, salad," etc., whatever was their last or most frequent meal. There is, moreover, a question whether anyone ever views the contents and functions of the body entirely without the coloring of magical thought. Given James' partial failure in achieving the most fundamental comprehension of his body, i.e., body ego, it is not surprising that he was profoundly confused about how his body worked. So confused, in fact, that a great many of his early verbalizations were variations and elaborations of fantasies resulting from this inaccurate understanding,

and of his continuing and persistent search for clarity about his body.

It was clear very early that body products were of fundamental importance to James. One of his first recorded comments, from the evaluation session, was "What do bats have in their bums?" It seemed that in James' mind, food, feces and babies were overlapping concepts, not clearly distinguishable one from the other.

Thus, one of James' great concerns in the early period was with what could be eaten, what could not, and how the distinction could be made. The following is an early example of this, from the eighth session.

> James made several play pancakes, and then using the play doh machine, extruded long pieces of clay. He spoke of cigarettes (as he had one time previously). "Puppies eat cigarettes . . . Mum eats Benson and Hedges . . . she smokes them and eats them . . . they make you cough and hurt you and burn you . . . ." He told me he wanted to smoke, and made a small clay cigarette which he smelled and licked and puffed on.

And in the twelfth session, he continued this theme.

James made a clay pizza, explaining that pancakes were fattening. He then made pancakes as well, which he said were for the bat. But it ended up that milk was spilt, a mess resulted, and James finally said, "The bat's pancakes have cigarettes in them."

Cigarettes were a source of particular confusion, because both his parents smoked and undoubtedly discouraged his natural interest in them; thus cigarettes, like food, were taken into the mouth, but were hot and smoking, ended up as butts and ashes and were forbidden to him.

The following is another example of the food-nonfood confusion from a later session, the sixteenth.

James went to my desk, and picking up an eraser, said, "What's this for? . . . . I erase if I make a mistake . . . if I make a steak . . . ." He wrapped up the eraser in paper for a present, saying, "It's a hotdog, but you can't eat it." Removing it from the paper, he broke it in two. "Now it's chocolate . . . you can eat it."

The confusion of food and feces had many determinants; on the simplest level, it represented an equation between what goes into the body, and what comes out. The

pancakes, discussed earlier, with their feces patches, which were baked and transformed in "the oven" contained the condensation of the three concepts--food, feces and babies.

In the initial nine sessions, James' references to feces were indirect, in the form of a "mess" in and under his bed, on the freeway, in the therapy room, and in connection with a messy puppy who went "potty" on the floor, as well as in his seeming equation of feces and spilled or hot food. The following is an excerpt from the tenth session and illustrates the more explicit way in which James came to speak of these concerns from this time on.

> As James walked into the room he said, "I'm learning to make a mess." Looking out onto the freeway, he spoke of the "litter" there. He took out clay and smelled it as he made cookies, then pancakes. Sniffing out the open window, he said, "What smells?" . . . "there's electricity in those fences . . . there's electricity and gas . . . ." He made a hissing noise for the gas of the oven in which the cakes were to be baked. "You're Cinderella . . . your mouth will be burned and cut . . . ." He made a rhyme: "Cinderella, cigarella, cigarette," as he continued making the

cakes, and "maker-baker-caker." He smelled the cakes, and smelled his hands, and spoke of eating something "milky and gooey and hot." (I said sometimes boys want to taste what they make.) He was quiet for a time, then mumbled something about eating "poopoo." He said the pancakes would go in a different oven today . . . and "do you have any hotdogs?" He burned himself on the oven, said his finger was bleeding, smelled the imaginary blood and then, "It's healed."

In this example, blood is also a feces equivalent, something which comes from the body, and once outside, is regarded as waste, to be disposed of.

This confusion of food, feces, and babies arose from a variety of sources. James tended to equate all bodily products--tears, saliva, blood, etc.--with feces. Since they were created by him, and seen as part of him, they were of great value; but since they were also associated with parental prohibition which he did not understand, they were frightening. It was difficult for him to relinquish them, and he had by no means altered his view of them by virtue of being toilet trained; he gave indication that he continued in the forbidden act of touching and tasting his feces and when his nose ran, he licked the

mucous with his tongue, reclaiming the loss. It was in fact difficult for him to throw anything away, and his favorite play activity at home was in his "warehouse," a collection in his backyard of junk and discarded objects, with which he contented himself for hours. In the sessions, he had difficulty throwing away a bit of dry clay, or a scrap of old paper--the very word "old" filled with apprehension, since anything labeled "old" was in danger of being discarded. (He had, understandably, no wish himself to become "old.") Moreover, as indicated, the loss of body products constituted a threat to his body integrity.

Milk was especially confusing because it was a body product that could, without prohibition, be taken back in. James had a great affection for the TV program, Sesame Street. He had seen a recurring episode on the program about the manufacture of cheese, beginning with the milking of a cow. He would speak of "udder-scudders" and once, when demonstrating a small boy doll urinating, said, "He's milking no cow." The following is from the 23rd session.

> James was making pancakes again . . . "they have butter" . . . "where does butter come from . . . milk, from milk . . . and milk comes from cows, from their bodies . . . out their bums . . . ."

Some time later, he said, "If a cow milks itself, there'll be trouble."

The equation of milk with feces, or urine, extended to other foods as well. He often asked what foods were made of, and his own answer was a list of ingredients, usually including milk. Milk seemed to stand for all food, and food could easily become garbage, which was waste. Thus the equation seemed to be food = garbage = feces. Sometimes he eliminated the "garbage" link, for example, in his speech, "cookies" was sometimes interchangeable with "poopoo." James' view seemed to be that since the body transforms food into feces they are the same. And food, if uneaten, spoils, i.e., it is transformed into garbage, and is, like feces, regarded with disgust and thrown away. James had a great interest in garbage, and in eating it, and one of his early accomplishments in treatment, by way of ordering his internal chaos, was to build a "back alley" to hold the clay "garbage" he regularly created. He did, then, see his body as a processor of food into feces. Food is both pleasure giving and life sustaining, and he often enacted its role in his life; in the material discussed, his love of pancakes and cakes was clear, but they were almost always tinged with anal references; he recognized the role of food as nourishment, for example, when he said, "You should eat your cake so

you can run, yes, you should." Food therefore is generally good, but is converted into something generally bad and forbidden; for James, all taking in was connected to some degree with the notion that taking in is the beginning of a destructive transformation. It was, of course, equated with other transformations, like the creation and birth of babies, and thus babies were also confused with feces.

The other source of the food-feces confusion seemed to rest on James' confusion about the parental injunction, "Don't touch." Two categories of things which parents discourage their curious children from touching are things which are hot, and things which are filthy. By means of his characteristic illogic, James seemed to have concluded that filthy things are therefore hot and capable of burning. Moreover, since the bowel is a place from which gas comes, and since where there's smoke, there's fire, James was very determined in his conviction that "poopoo has fire in it."

The following is from the eleventh session and is an expression of James' view of this matter.

> James complained of the noise through the open window and said that cars are made of plastic. He rhymed as he used the clay, "Bat to hat to bed,"

and added, "I worry about bats" . . . "bats make poopoo on their pancakes." He went on with this, giggling anxiously, "Bats touch their poopoo and get burned. The bat's poopoo makes fire and burns him to ashes." As he made pancakes, he asked what the clay was made of, and putting the pancakes in the oven, said the bat burned himself. When I commented on the bats being confused about the different reasons for not touching things, James insisted that "the bat's poopoo has fire in it." He repeatedly asked where poopoo comes from, what it's made of, how it smells, and finally called forth the "sanitation truck" (from Sesame Street). During this, he asked to go to the bathroom and holding his penis, he anxiously checked on me as I waited outside the bathroom door.

Finally, body products were dangerous by virtue of their connection with sickness and injury. An example from the sixth session follows:

James was looking out the window at the cars on the freeway. "See the mess on the freeway . . . there are boxes and junk . . . my Daddy drives on the freeway . . . I drive . . . and bats chase me . . . the bats chase me and break the windshield

. . . the bats get my blood and I die . . . ."

James' understanding of the Red Cross was that when one got cross, the Red Cross "comes and throws blood on your mouth."

It gradually emerged in these early sessions that James regarded his body as full of activity of mysterious and potentially destructive transformations, and of small animals--bats, mice and baby monsters. My body was viewed in the same manner, and this vision seemed to be projected onto external reality as well, so that all movement in space--the flow of air or water in pipes, of cars on the freeway, crashes, explosions, mudslides and earthquakes--were seen by James as the external replica of the body and its processes. Earthquakes, in fact, he called "birth-quakes," and the very earth was seen by him to be a source of fire (as in the metaphor "bowels of the earth"). He longed, at times, to be safely entombed within the body, but this then gave rise to the fear that this would lead to death, that he would remain inside "forever."

The bodily parts that were of most interest to him were the mouth and the anus. The mouth assumed especial importance following dental work for an abscessed tooth. He referred to the connection between candy and bad teeth, but the candy he had in mind was a "Milky Way," with its

obvious reference to milk. His actual explanation was that bad teeth came from "too much biting." He often spoke of a dog in the back alley who could "bite the heck out of you," and from the material already discussed, it is clear that sucking and licking and biting were of great interest to him. He saw the dentist as retaliating for biting, and to some degree, for saying bad words. The anus was both the source of valuable and dangerous products, and the "seat" of explosive activity. He was also interested in legs, feet and toes, and regarded them as not quite a part of the body. Legs were for running, feet for kicking, and toes represented the penis, which was for "watering" or urinating. Breasts and penises were equated, as suggested, and he used the word "picture" to mean breasts, by association with the word "pitchers" which hold milk. (He was especially pleased about our deciphering this substitution, but in a whimsical mood one day, he asked me what pitchers were; I said they were for milk; he said, "No, they are for throwing baseballs.") Of course, to some extent, all these bodily parts were merged, for example, when he spoke of legs as "shooters."

His earliest symbolic explorations of his body represented his curiosity and confusion about the source and nature of feces. Later, such explorations began to include his confusion about conception and birth, and the

role of the father in this. The following material is an example of these concerns, from the fourteenth session. Here, he seems to refer to the impregnation function of the father, or his role in birth, and the idea of the fetus buried within the bowel.

> James placed a toy buffalo in a plastic box, a "box car," a "mud machine," in which the buffalo was covered with mud for being bad. (There had been, in fact, some mudslides which had been reported on the news.) Using a man doll, he said the father would break down the wall of the dollhouse-office . . . but "the buffalo will never get out." Pointing to the lower back of the man doll, James said, "He's furry." James made a rhyme about the mud . . . "Milky-silky-sicky-licky" and said something about ice cream.

Somewhat later, in the 29th session, James introduced the idea of mice living under the freeway. He had been much interested in his fantasy of a network of pipes and drains, some of them carrying milk, under the freeway. In that session, he suggested that pipes can break and make fire, and that fire is "made under the ground." In these fantasies, James projected his view of internal events onto inaminate objects around him, which he interpreted

accordingly. In the 30th session, he took up the same theme, now speaking of a "bum bag" and a chimney to represent the explosive place within the body which contained feces-babies.

> James spoke of breaking a flower pot, for which his father "hit me in my bum." He began anxiously rhyming about the "boom-bomb-bum bag" . . . "the boom bag in the war" . . . and repeated this many times. He said "the boom bag is for hiding in." . . . "It has soot in it, like the chimney." He fashioned a formless lump of clay to represent the bum bag, then broke it to pieces.

The bum bag image was recurring in this period, and was always associated with excitement and anxious movements and laughter. The mouse, representative of the baby-penis, the creature buried within, was also recurring. In the 32nd session, for example:

> After a fantasy of a buffalo, in a "long white car on the freeway," trying to get out, at the beginning of the session, James returned to this theme near the end. He used a toy car traveling on an imaginary road. The car, after many wrong turns, went into the ocean, but was rescued, and

> finally got "home." Once there, the car "broke into the house." James then explained that there was a hole in the house now, and out of it crawled a mouse.

He seemed here to be struggling with a confused jumble of misunderstanding about sexual intercourse, impregnation and birth, all of which he understood in anal terms. The creature who is buried within the body and unable, in spite of the efforts of the father, to break out is endangered by those efforts as well. His notion seemed to be that one is lost and in much danger outside the symbiotic fusion with the object, and that birth and separateness consist of the possibility of crawling out, through an opening created in a dangerously destructive manner. The means of getting to safety is to return to the "house," but this entails the risk of being permanently entrapped. James spoke of this entrapment in terms of being "buried in the mud," of being "melted," or being "drowned." His images also revealed his theory that one gets inside by being eaten, and thus he frequently expressed the fear that he would be eaten by me and by "monsters" in the room. Indeed, any form of emotional connectedness carried the possibility of destruction. The session following the one just quoted contained a complex interweaving of these confused images,

and of the dangers involved.

> James was late for the session, wandered past my door, finally came in, looking disheveled, with his shoes untied and on the wrong feet. He said somebody knocked down the freeway signs. He feared monsters in the room, which would eat him up. He obsessed about the insides of things, made a gingerman who melted . . . "in the frig too long . . . " " . . . in the oven." This gingerman was finally carted off in pieces by a toy truck. He spoke of pools and drowning, made a pool "vacuum cleaner," which became a "muffler-buffler," and in answer to his own question of what was inside it, said, "an agical . . . magical." Then he asked me, "What is ordinary?"

James often rhymed, as when he said "muffler-buffler" in a thinly disguised attempt to lessen the emotional intensity of a word, like "muffler" which had an anal meaning. His use of the words "magical" and "ordinary" is an instance of his surprising fluency, and his capacity for eloquence and simplicity--certainly the mystery he was attempting to unravel seemed magical, and little, at this time, seemed ordinary.

During this period, James' mother reported to her therapist that James was reluctant to leave the house,

unusual for him, and that he agonized with himself over his usual practice of having ice cream at bedtime. Subsequently, in the sessions, he had canabalistic fantasies, spoke of eating the building, of eating me and about the need for a fire exit. He spoke of a mouse going into a mouse hole and eating cheese there; he asked if he could go into a mouse hole, and in response to my comment about wishing to crawl inside me, he assured himself that he could crawl out, and I could crawl out of him . . . "right here," pointing to his teeth. He then said, after asking me what I had for breakfast, that there was a monster in me that would break my "eardrum," and spoke of people "breaking through the roof" of a building, and of an egg that breaks open and has cookies inside it. On one occasion, somewhat later, in the 48th session, he elaborated these concerns beginning with his interest in the basement.

> "Are there cables in the basement? . . . Pipes? . . . Cookies?" He then built an elevator "bottom" in the dollhouse basement, with rumblings and things moving about. (I said it seemed to be like his inside, where there were sounds and feelings of things moving.) He looked down, "Yes, what's inside there . . . is there a mouse in there?" He then became preoccupied with closing off the elevator of the dollhouse; there was to be no opening, no "vent" or "the cookies

could blow out" . . . he said "Can you throw cookies in the oven?" . . . and indicated if there were an opening, something would fall out; if not, "it would be plugged." He resolved this dilemma in the dollhouse play, by having the buffalo "blow a hole" in the elevator in order to get out.

James actually had several hypotheses for the birth process; fathers kicked holes to let babies through, the babies broke or blew their own way out, or they ate their way out.

These themes continued to concern James, and his expressions of them became more direct, and somewhat closer to the normal three or four year old child's theories of such matters. The following example is from the 60th session.

James asked if I had children. He spoke of milk and of "Mummies" . . . "Mummies eat children." (I said he must think this is how Mummies get babies inside.) "Do you have babies inside you? Will you get fat? What did you eat for breakfast?". . . I had bacon and eggs . . . "Do you listen to the news? . . . The Coast Highway was flooded." He spoke of cows having "scudders" and asked, "How do babies get out? . . . they break out . . . " As he built a road by the dollhouse, he said, "One way only . . . only-

lonely . . . how many beds do you have? . . . "
He asked did I sleep with my mother; he'd like to sleep with his, but he might wet the bed.

In this session, in addition to the exploration of his theories of impregnation, James indicated his concern, relatively new, with more clear cut separation issues, when he spoke of "one way only," and associated to "lonely." It seemed that he could now begin to contemplate more fully the separated state and to speak of it in terms of feelings other than his early ones of total confusion and of dread of the possibility of destruction. Furthermore, James now spoke openly of wishing to replace his father with his mother.

In the 70th session, at a time when James was very vigorously experimenting with separation issues, in particular with the consequences of opposing me, and telling me "No" in a loud voice, he returned to the buffalo, entombed in the kitchen of the dollhouse, and said,

"If you break in, you'll get your hand bit off, yeah, your toe will get bit off . . . and you won't be able to walk or to pee." He threatened to do various naughty things, then scolded in an imitation scolding--mother's voice, "Get that in your head" . . . and "Get that in your bed" . . . and then mumbled . . . "he stuck it in . . . in the

toilet," . . . and said there was junk and trash in there. (I said he might want to go inside and pull the buffalo out, but he was afraid for his toe.) He again spoke of the trash "in there" . . . if you went in, "you'd get stuck . . . like quicksand, it's like snow . . . it's warm and smelly and you'd die."

On still another metaphoric plane (from the 81st session), and in the context of fantasies of eating me up ("I eat you, keep you; eat you, keep you . . . ") and of being eaten by me, James spoke of the consequences of being eaten: "You end up in the basement, in the foundation . . . there's a spider there, and he bites you . . . " He then gave a slightly new version of a familiar fantasy based on his somewhat befuddled conception of God, heaven and hell. It was as follows: The bat rushed into the cat's bedroom, ate the cat's birthday cake, and generally tore things up, then flew out the window, up to God's castle. God lost no time throwing the uncontrolled bat down "into the burning fire." In this recurring fantasy, James is easily recognizable in the ill-behaved bat; the cat seemed to represent his mother, from whom he made impossible and greedy demands, which led to excitement sufficient to lift him out the window, to a confrontation with his father, which did not end well. But the final destination is back in the fiery depths,

the place whose meaning to James still represented the dim prospect of a safe hiding place, but one which is too hot, and dangerously suffocating.

Subsequently, James risked entering the barricaded chamber, eventually represented by a garage to which he brought broken down cars and busses for maintenance and repair. He was careful to barricade it enough to make it safe, but fashioned a door that could be opened to let the repaired cars and busses out again. "Children" were not permitted in this garage, despite their great interest; "They'll knock things over," he explained.

Many months later, when James had made some further progress in exploring the dangers and possibilities of autonomy, he repeated the bat and cat story, only this time, the ubiquitous bat, the biter, mess maker and perpetrator of violence, had managed to acquire speech. When confronted by God, in the latter's castle, he said, "You better be quiet, God;" God, however, was not yet ready to listen.

Part 4. Object Relatedness

The material discussed thus far was selected to point up James' intense confusion about the boundaries, contents and functioning of his body and the urgency of his need to achieve some order in this sphere. James was, however, to varying degrees, aware of and responsive to the

object as separate from himself or as a part object in terms of the function the object performed.

James' progress in this regard over the course of treatment is beyond the scope of this paper, but for the purposes intended in this section, a sketchy overview is given.

In the early phase of treatment, James was primarily occupied with the self/nonself issue, and his interest in and confusion about his body parts and products. He continued to explore his various theories about these matters, throughout the period of therapy discussed; gradually, as indicated, he came to experiment with opposing me as a manifestation of the beginnings of a greater degree of differentiation and autonomy. He then struggled with separation issues and the problem of object loss as a consequence of his actual and fantasied wrongdoings. There were frequent regressions to the earlier, more basic anxiety about fusion with the object.

In the very earliest period, the first weeks of therapy, James manifested no separation anxiety worthy of the name. He catapulted himself away from his mother into my office, and then out again, at the end of the session, with seemingly no awareness of his taking leave of the other person. Often, when I walked with him to the waiting room, and said goodbye, he would simply continue whatever

he was saying, not so much to his mother as to no one in particular, as if objects either did not exist as separate, or were at least indistinguishable one from the other. Also during this time there were clues to the source of this inability to see the object as separate. His mother, for reasons of her own, did not lend herself to the perception of a cohesive object. She seemed to have fused with James in his early life, and subsequently, preferred a stance with regard to James, as well as others, of emotional isolation. Moreover, she was herself beset with fears and anxieties, for example, she did not drive on the freeways at all, and was very frightened of any kind of driving.

As early as the initial session, James indicated his wish for a connection with another person. In the context of his pancake making, he said, as he offered me one to eat, "It has a heart on it . . . it says 'love' . . ." The pancakes, of course, were hot and capable of burning, like bad words, and seemed to represent the frustrating aspect of the feeding mother. He was concerned about the destruction both of the object who fed, and of the feeding mouth. The following is from the ninth session.

> James took some interest in the dollhouse, but did not actually use it. With exuberance, he made a clay pizza, flipping the clay in the air, in imitation

of an Italian cook. As he did this, he spoke of the dangers of the "mean freeway." Then, in reference to the doll house, he said something about tearing the pictures from the wall. He asked me to make a leg, "for a boy," and he used the clay leg, the "boot," to kick the mother for spilling milk in the kitchen of the house. In enacting this, he used a shrill, scolding voice, a caricature of an angry mother to her child. He then spoke of the bat, whom he said turned into a flying vacuum cleaner, which James made of clay and then crumbled to pieces.

To James, as it later emerged, pictures represented the breast, and in this material, the flying vacuum cleaner was the sucking mouth, and both were damaged in the course of the feed. The notion of eating began with the pizza, and was associated with pleasure; but this image gave way to a dangerously destructive one. It appeared in this, and similar material, that James' inability to perceive the object as predominantly good interfered with his further progress in differentiating the self and the object, even by the primitive means of splitting off the "bad" object from the "good," and thus preserving the "good" object. There were slow and uneven changes in this. By the 24th session, James had begun to respond to me in a somewhat more complex way: he had started to be more directly

aggressive, to look at me and to smile. He had also begun to speak of monsters, and in one instance of looking closely at me, he put his face very near to mine, stared into my eyes, no doubt seeing his own reflection, and said:

"There's a monster in there; yeah, a bat's in there and that bat, he's going to poke your eyes out."

The monster was literally as well as metaphorically James' own image within me. But this capacity to project the bad into monsters and into me was intermittent, and infrequent in the early period relative to the occurrance of his regression to an even more primitive level. In regressing to that level, he perceived himself as one with a diffuse and chaotic, about to fall to pieces universe, with no clear objects, not even monsters, only potentially destructive forces.

In the early sessions, James made fleeting references to the members of his family, or to domestic scenes which represented them. The situation he presented on these relatively rare occasions was a baby or boy who wanted access to the parental bed, a scolding and abusive mother, a silent but abusive father, and a very rapid breakdown of the quiet family scene, usually eating, to frenzies of violence and destructiveness, of both the people and of the contents of the room. In preference to this volatile situation, he typically depicted the relative calm of a

schoolroom with teachers, or an office building, a hotel, a theater, dance hall, beauty shop or dentist office.

On the occasion of the first interruption in therapy, (for four sessions, between the 25th and the 26th), James responded with surprise, when I told him ahead of time of my coming absence, that I was ever away from the place in which we met. On the last session prior to the interruption, he asked for the first time that something we made of clay be left to dry. The object was a traffic sign, saying, "No parking." On my return, in the 26th session:

> James obsessed about the traffic slowing on the freeway. "The freeway breaks . . . an earthquake makes it break." He then looked out the window for a sign on the freeway, spoke of ones he could see from his school, and then looked at the now dry clay sign he'd made last time, asking repeatedly, "Why doesn't it stick?" He made a new sign, and explained that it said, "Ventura Freeway, South-west." He asked for my help, and made an elaborate freeway system with signs, bridges, cars, lampposts, fences and signs, while ruminating about what holds them up and where the off ramps are.

In this manner, James seemed to speak of his experience of a lack of connection with me, but this was by no means clear. At this time, the flow of traffic seemed, as

suggested earlier, to represent the flow of sensations within James' body and it was often difficult to know the level of meaning to ascribe to James' metaphors. James had a much more intense reaction to me during this same period, when he saw me in front of the building before our session. The sight of me, outside our accustomed meeting place, and separate from it, seemed to shock and confuse him. The following is from the 31st session.

> It was a warm spring day, James had come early, and was sitting in front of the building with his mother as I walked towards the entrance. James seemed amazed and disturbed at the sight of me-- he ran a short way off, not speaking or looking at me again. When I spoke to him, he gargled saliva in his throat. As he came with me, he said he didn't want to see me that he wanted to go to the basement. He gently stomped on the elevator floor and banged on the wall, asking, "What's in the basement?" (I said he didn't like seeing me outside.) He demanded to know "Where were you?" and went on with repetitive questioning about what was inside many objects in the room, and "What does 'Exit' mean?" He grimaced to let me know he needed to go to the bathroom, and on his return, said there were "little people" in the other rooms. He had a cold and was sniffling, and

spoke of germs; "They get into your face and you die." He told me I was dirty and needed a shower; he looked out the window and into the waste basket, saying something smelled bad; "It stinks." When I commented on his obvious upset state, he repeated he hadn't wanted to see me, that I ate his cake and he wouldn't come "tomorrow."

James' seeing me out of the usual setting seemed a profound threat. It appeared that at this time, he perceived me as an extension of himself, so that seeing me outside meant that the unity of him and me had disintegrated, and it constituted a fragmentation of his world; it was as if he had seen a part of his body, separate from the rest of him. This incident subsequently gave rise to intense preoccupations with his own body and with being "inside." James' mother, at this time, reported to her therapist that James began to protest going anywhere, and in the sessions, I was aware that he was more anxious and unhappy looking. His behavior was similar to the state of "low keyedness" which Mahler describes observing in small toddlers, when they begin to recognize that they are physically separate from their mothers.

There was another four session break shortly after this one, occasioned by James' illness with an abscessed tooth. Following this interruption, James openly expressed

the wish to eat me, and was very confused about who was away from whom. The following is from the 35th session, the first one after his illness.

James seemed very tense; smiling blankly, he rushed into the room. "Let's eat the freeway, let's eat the freeway and get very big." "You're a cheese, and I'm going to eat you." He giggled nervously. "What's a cheese?" "A mouse eats cheese, and it makes him sick." James tried to make a house of cards; it kept falling down. He used the Parchesi board as a freeway; he said, "When you're sick, you have to rest." (I said that I knew he'd been sick.) "Yes, and I couldn't see you . . . where was the freeway? . . . Did it run away?" He followed this with a garbled traffic report: "Tie-up on the north-bound exit and divider." He smelt the Parchesi game and said it was "like dirt" or "mud." He looked at another game, Candyland, and looking at the Gingerbread-man on the cover, said, "remember how the gingerman melted?" (in reference to the last session). He spoke more of the freeway, of blocked lanes and guard rails to "keep you from falling off." If you fell off, you'd "crash, get hurt, get killed." His association was to leaving your seat at school, for which the teacher sends you outside. Near the end of the session, in response to the noise of a siren outside, he spoke of ambulances and being hurt. He asked, "What does it mean, to feel very bad?" . . . "You'll go to the hospital, because you

got burned . . . yeah, you'll go to the fire station to be burned." "And the doctor puts matches in your mouth and you can't get them out . . . no, you can't . . . and that doctor, he'll get very mad at you if you take those matches out . . . "

James' speech in this excerpt was most condensed, and conveyed very effectively and dramatically the nature of his concerns. It reminds one of the condensed illogic of Lear's fool--senseless, but filled with meaning. James seemed to say that he could only keep the freeway--his access to me--and me, by means of devouring. I was a cheese, and he the mouse that would eat me, except that I had disappointed him, and so the cheese made him sick. The falling house of cards, the melting gingerman, and the crashing off the freeway, all seemed to refer to his fear of dissolution under the stress of the interruption, his sickness and the trauma of the dental work. Finally, his account of the dental work itself conveyed a vivid picture of the helpless feeling of a mouth full of brittle objects and the sensations of needles and novacaine.

Several weeks later, James went through a period of strenuously protesting leaving at the end of the session. At this time, he could voice his feelings about taking leave of me in an unmistakably clear manner. It seemed to signify his beginning capacity to separate, to experiment with a degree of autonomy, by defying me. The defiance came in the wake of birth fantasies, which seemed to be a metaphor for his own psychological birth. The next excerpt is from the 58th session.

> At the end of the hour, James was reluctant to leave. In response to my telling him it was time to go, he began a repetetive song, not very melodic; "I won't go, forget it, I won't go home, oh, no, I won't: I'll stay here forever, and ever, and ever." I repeated what he had said about wanting to remain here. Hearing it from me made him anxious, and he quickly said, as he prepared to leave, "You'll be left alone." He left the session calmly, without further protest.

In this ending of the session, James used the same language he had used before in reference to the entombed buffalo: he would be inside, in my office, "forever and ever and ever." But he now seemed to be experimenting with the idea that he could exercise some choice in the matter. He could express his wish to remain close to me but could also leave if he chose. To help him with the separation, he made me the one who was left alone, not him.

It was about this same period that James developed the wishful notion that I lived next door to him, and on one occasion, when he again looked closely into my eyes, (as he had the time he saw a monster there), he warned of a fiery dragon, who breathes fire and will burn you, a metaphor suggestive of another meaning of burning, as the consequence of emotional closeness. But he could apparently risk being

"burned" and he mumbled, "I like you." James's idea about my living next door to him was spoken sometimes as a statement, sometimes as a question, and seemed to indicate his wish that if I were indeed separate, that I at least be readily available; he also wanted to know the color of my house, my car, my bed, as if he could then picture me in his mind, in order to maintain an image of my continuing existence.

Around this time and for the next two or three months, the play became very intense, and ritualized, so that if James came late to the session, there was a frantic quality (on both our parts) lest he not have time to complete all the aspects of the play: the setting up of the dollhouse, making clay furniture for it, arranging people and animals within it, and the absolutely essential back alley, where now all "junk" was carefully segregated.

At the time of the end of the ninth month of treatment, James was continuing to experiment with opposing me, and seemingly to test out what he could take in from me that was good and nondestructive. He spoke simply and directly about eating me, having me for lunch, and so on, and now the buffalo seemed to represent, as had the bat earlier, the bad and destructive introject. When scolding me, in seeming imitation of his mother, James would say, "Now get <u>that</u> in your head, Buster- you're <u>doing</u> it!" or, "you're <u>going</u> to school!" James, when asked what the "that"

was, would reply, "the bat." This concern, about taking in something bad from the object, was often concretized by James in the form of fantasies of an oral attack on me, or an oral attack by me on him. In either case, the result was the same: if I ate him, he'd end up "in the foundation, where a spider bites." If he ate me, God would punish him by throwing him down into the "burning fire." At the time of the 82nd session, he had come to use the dollhouse as an elaborate representation of the body, and of his mind, in the sense that it was a stage on which he seemed to be representing his attempts to create an internal world of self and object representations. The buffalo, as indicated, now seemed a composite of his dangerous, bad introjects. The following is from the 82nd session. By this time James had introduced a "body and fender shop," which was part of the dollhouse-school and combined with the back alley. Thus James still did not distinguish between that part of the anatomy where feces are made, and that in which "bodies" are made.

> James was annoyed with me because he had seen me in the hall when he came to the clinic, and he didn't want me "going to another room." He built a school, with concentration and intensity. Together we made clay furniture for it. A baby was at the school, but he was "not alone," there were two men with him. There

> was also a toy Indian, about to "bongo-a-beat a hole" in the bathroom wall, to see something in there. There was in general an emphasis on looking. James made the back alley, which had in it a body and fender shop for the repair of crashed cars; there was also a garage, and James excitedly enacted a dump truck, then a car, driven by a man, crashing through the garage door, now separate and distinct from the back alley door. Inside the garage was the buffalo, who had earlier been breaking into the school refrigerator for milk and was now breaking things up in the garage.

Here the buffalo seemed to represent the bad self-object representation: the greedy, oral baby, destructive in his attempts to get milk, to get inside for good supplies, merged with the image of the sexual man, presumably embarked on a similarly destructive search, which threatens the hungry buffalo-baby within. At the same time, the buffalo is not hopelessly entombed inside, as he had been earlier; in fact, his activity could be construed to imply the active movements of something about to be born. In any event, the introduction of the garage and the body and fender shop represented the search for repair, and the separate doors (for the garage and the back alley), seemed to suggest the beginning differentiation among body parts and functions.

In subsequent sessions in this period, there were recurring reparative attempts; his earlier version of the cat and bat at play sometimes ended well, without destruction; they could, in fact, "play nicely" for awhile. He also asked for more toy people, as his interest in them increased relative to his interest in inanimate forces and animals. He could also speak straightforwardly of his feelings towards me: "I get mad when I have to go," and "I get mad at you when I miss you;" interposed, of course, with his more primitive comments, like, "I eat you, keep you."

Part 5. Reality Testing

Little more need be said about James's difficulty in testing reality. Given his limited capacity to differentiate inner and outer, animate and inanimate, and self and non-self, he was, understandably hampered in making sense of the world about him. A basic problem in this regard was his inability to distinguish the symbol from the thing. He often asked, for example, if he could eat the clay. He was never quite sure if the clay food he made was not really the food he had in mind. It was not that he lacked the capacity for symbolism; he made use of a rich and varied array of symbols and metaphors; it was that he did not always know that the symbol was different from that which was symbolized. When, for example, he used the dollhouse and placed toy people or animals on its roof, he might suddenly

run to the office window, open it, move as if to climb out, saying, "I can run on the roof." He could not understand the T.V. or the movies as pictures of things, and became very distressed if Sesame Street was not on whenever he thought to watch it. He once asked me, "What's inside the television?" His answer was, "The news." In the early sessions, the dollhouse often represented his body, but he was so confused about its status as a representation, that he would on occassion actually climb into it himself. On one occassion, he proposed that I hold him up to the ceiling so that he could climb into the air conditioner vent, and find his way into the "attic."

He also confused the phenomenon with its function. For example, in the session in which he spoke of someone making a hole in the back of him, this obviously had reference to the act of defacation, and to his "hole" or anus; thus if one has an anus, it must be made there by the act of defacation.

James had great difficulty accounting for what could not be seen. Where was the sun when it wasn't "out?" He finally developed the explanation that it went behind the clouds and into the earth. He often asked in the early sessions where were the pipes that led from the toilet, or where did the cars go after they drove past our window. He once happened to see his mother walk by, underneath the

window. He anxiously asked what happened to her, as she walked out of sight.

His logic was faulty in that he overgeneralized. Since he understood that electricity was carried in wires, then all wires had electricity in them. Since the water was carried from the toilet in pipes, all pipes carried toilet water. Since objects that were old were thrown away, then everything old was thrown away. His logic was also defective in that he had little grasp of cause and effect. He asked, "Does a roof talk?" His answer was, "No, it has no mouth." And, "Does a table need legs?" "No, it doesn't run." He would frequently ask a question like "Why does poopoo burn? . . . Because it does." Later, when he spoke about being angry, he would say, "Why does the boy kick her? Because he's cross . . . he's cross because he kicks her."

Finally, James was hopelessly lacking in a sense of time. Events which occurred months or years ago, he would refer to as happening "yesterday." He would ask me, "Remember when I was a baby?" He actually remembered things very well, and later, when he became more interested in comprehending the concept of time, would ask what "later" meant and what was five minutes or a month.

In summary, James' view of reality was constructed on the basis of his urgent concerns about the integrity and

functioning of his own body. His confusions about these matters were projected onto the world of inanimate objects, which he then misinterpreted in terms of his own conception of events within. He was vigilant in his attention to external events, and sought to find in them that which he could relate to himself. It is the same process by which normal children, although at an earlier chronological age, attempt to familiarize themselves with reality. By identifying external phenomena with that with which they are already familiar, they render the world comprehensible. This process was not available to James, because of his failure in the basic developmental task of establishing body boundaries and distinguishing self from non-self. As a result, he was not able to come to what Alice Balint (Balint, 1954) referred to as "friendly terms" with external reality, and he perceived his environment as fraught with the same devastating potential as he perceived the processes within his body.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY

In summary, James' disordered view of the world, of himself in it, and of his relationships to others, can be understood in terms of his gross failure to achieve a sense of his own body as distinguishable from everything else and a sense of himself as an individual, with thoughts, memories and feelings, different from others and autonomous.

This failure, arising from unknown factors in him and a defect in the caretaking environment, resulted in a basic sense of formlessness of the self and of external reality. As a consequence, James experienced profound anxiety of a psychotic nature, was impaired in his ego functioning, and related to objects as extensions of himself, as part objects, or as objects on whom he was dangerously dependent and whom he could lose or destroy. The level of his functioning, and his manner of viewing the object were subject to great variability and a strong tendency towards regression in the face of stress.

James made rich and varied use of language in attempting to master his fear and confusion. As a consequence,

his verbal material afforded greater access to the turmoil within, than is often the case with children of this degree of disturbance. However, he did not use language primarily for communication; not only was his speech governed by primitive modes of thinking which rendered it difficult to comprehend, he also used speech in the service of maintaining omnipotent fantasies intended to deny his vulnerability. Moreover, he often used language to ward off the object out of fear of merger or to avoid the risk of object loss. At the same time, verbal interaction was the main avenue of contact between James and the object, a link that was strengthened in the course of the therapeutic work. Once he could begin to use the therapeutic interaction for help in communicating his distress, he gradually revealed the specific nature of his concerns of bodily disintegration, of object merger and object loss, and of his utter confusion about his own body and the external world. Once a dialogue about these matters could begin, and as he came to use words less rigidly and defensively, language was drawn into the service of fuller object contact, of acquaintance with reality and in the overall enhancement of ego functioning and object relatedness.

This final point raises the question of the possibility of using the criterion of facility with language as a means of differentiating, not only the diagnostic categories,

psychotic and borderline, but also for making prognostic predictions. It is conceivable that language studies of severely disturbed children could reveal two distinguishable categories of disturbed children, according to the level or complexity of speech, or other discernable language attributes. The very possession of a rudimentary facility with and preference for verbal expression may reflect a potential that is not easily recognizable in other ways. Such a preference in the borderline child could reflect a history of qualitatively different and more useful experiences with the object than psychotic children have had, or an inherently better capacity for ego mastery and object contact, or some combination of these factors. There are cases in the literature that suggest this correlation.[1] The significance of language facility in the actual treatment situation is immense; it allows for an accelerating and expanding interactional contact between patient and therapist; it permits greater understanding on the part of the therapist and allows the patient to make fuller use of the therapist's interventions. The effect is somewhat comparable to the role of language in normal development during the second and third years of life.

Similar studies could be done to compare language among the three groups, very disturbed children (psychotic and borderline), neurotic children and normal children, to

determine if there are norms for these groups. This kind of information would help in therapeutic work in enhancing the therapist's understanding of the verbal material and in guiding interventions. It is well known that disturbed children especially, but to some degree all children, use words in a magical way, imbuing certain words and phrases with idiosyncratic meaning, or using them concretely. Child therapists are aware of the necessity of giving careful consideration to the difference between the meaning a child gives to a word and that which it conveys to the average adult. If norms do exist, knowledge of them would be useful to the child therapist in comprehending the child's meaning and in the therapist's choice of responses.

Studies of the role of language in the separation-individuation process in normal development would also be useful, both in terms of increased understanding of this developmental step, and the part that language plays in bringing it about. The question, again, is what if any norms exist here; for example, when do certain kinds of words and language usage appear in normal development, and what purposes do they serve. Spitz has written about the significances of the acquisition and use of the word, "no" in normal development,[2] and Mahler has written about the crucial role of language in the rapproachment phase of separation-individuation.[3] In particular, Mahler

discussed the importance of the child's ability to name things and to express desires in allowing the child greater control of the environment, which permits better handling of aggression and greater distance from the object. Studies could reveal the precise ways in which children use language for these purposes and perhaps others as well. Such information would also contribute to the understanding of the language difficulties of borderline children, who are to some degree arrested in this phase (separation-individuation) of their development.

Finally, regarding the content of the fantasies discussed in this study, the analysis suggests that the issues with which this child struggled, and the means he used to attempt to comprehend certain phenomena, bear some resemblance to similar efforts on the part of primitive man. In this study, the child's mental functioning, which led him to imbue the inanimate with human properties, was similar to the thinking of early religion and mythology. His use of the mechanisms of primary process thought--reversals, condensations, projections, and primitive identification--are similar to the thinking of all young children, and have something in common with the universal language of poetry, metaphor and humor. Indeed, his capacity for imagery was far ahead of his capacity to integrate it. This very lack of integrative ability gave him a point of

view comparable to a much younger child, and his facility with language and imagery permitted him to describe it. To stretch the analogy for the sake of clarity, he was somewhat like a talking baby, who could communicate his perceptions of this early stage of life, with all its confusions and misunderstandings. What he communicated from this place in development was his construction of a chaotic mythology of his own, which nonetheless bore some resemblances to the beliefs of early man as seen in myth and the roots of words. It seemed that the concerns with which he struggled, and the means he used to try to come to terms with them possessed a quality of universality.

The following are some examples of this phenomenon. James' overvaluation of his own feces is both a well known feature of early childhood and a recurring theme in dreams, folklore and primitive ritual.[4] James' confusion of rectum and uterus and, in consequence, of feces and babies, is also an ancient and recurring one, reflected in words, like the Latin "viscera,"[5] which included intestines, uterus and the "fruit of the womb."[6] James' intense interest in the mystery of birth is a primary preoccupation of all mythologies, which begin with the creation of the universe, which is invariably cast in terms of the birth of the human infant. James' view of the fiery interior of the body is a common one in primitive religion, and is reflected in

many words, for example the English word fornication, which is derived from a Latin root related to the word meaning furnace.[7]

There are many instances of such parallels, indeed most of James' theories about reality and its relationship to his conception of his body are to be found in various forms in ancient thought. Exploration of such parallels between pathological conceptions of reality and the mechanisms used to construct them and the myth making of early man could add to our understanding of the fantasies of disturbed children, but also to our knowledge about the development of thought in the normal child.

In conclusion, the study of one child's language and fantasy suggests areas of further study which would contribute to the understanding of the uses language serves children, the norms of language usage among various groups of children, and the relationship between language and aspects of primary process thinking and fantasy formation that are universal. Undoubtedly there are many other fruitful areas of inquiry relating to this complex subject, which are of equal interest and significance, and which can add to our understanding of the very important role of language in psychotherapy and the relationship of language to thought.

References--Chapter V

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[2]R. A. Spitz, No and Yes (New York: International Universities Press, 1957).

[3]M. Mahler, The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant (New York: Basic Books, 1975).

[4]S. Freud, "Character and Anal Eroticism," (1908), Standard Edition, edited by James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1961) and "On the Transformation of Instincts with Special Reference to Anal Eroticism" (1916), Standard Edition; K. Abraham, "The Narcissistic Evaluation of Excretory Processes in Dreams and Neurosis," Selected Papers on Psychoanalysis (London: Hogarth Press, 1927).

[5]T. Thass-Thienemann, The Interpretation of Language, Vol. I, Understanding the Symbolic Meaning of Language (New York: Jason Aronson, Inc., 1973), p. 230.

[6]Ibid., p. 231.

[7]Idem., The Interpretation of Language, Vol. II, Understanding the Unconscious Meaning of Language, pp. 179,180.

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