EMOTIONS AND INFANCY

I. THE SHADOW OF THE OBJECT

That night in Trinity College, when I dreamed about my mother, I saw her looking as she did when I was a child of two or three. In the intensity of my anxiety and love, I called her Mommy, a name I had not used since childhood. When, later, I saw her lying dead in the hospital bed, I saw, too, the many times that I had seen her lying asleep at home, in just that position, with just that lace collar around her neck. And even as my dream of her contained a desperate wish for her life and health, it also contained an anguished wish that I might give her some special happiness (in the dream, by saying something to please her that no one else had thought to say) - perhaps because that memory of her youthful face lay very close to two other memories, my earliest persisting memories from childhood.

In one, I am playing with some older children, who are experimenting by poking a stick into a hole in the ground into which some insects have been flying. Suddenly a fierce cloud of wasps swarms up out of the ground. The older children vanish. Terrified and totally bewildered, too small to run, I wail as loudly as I can, as the wasps sting me again and again. My mother runs me from the garden, where she has been working, sweeps me up in her arms, and carries me home. I recall the feeling of rescue and comfort that came over me as she ran with me in her arms and I clung to her neck like a small monkey. This feeling of holding is with me at many times, especially when I am working by myself and when I am with someone I love.

In the other picture, I am in the garden with her. I am very angry with her - I think because she is working and not paying attention to me. As she bends over to dig around a marigold, I bite her on the thigh. What I remember is the horrible black and bitter sensation of my own internal badness, of powers of destruction surging out of me that I had not known were there, a cauldron of corrosive liquid. I wept for my own blackness, my imperfect love. In my Trinity College dream, she looked just as she had looked that day in the garden - she was even wearing her gardening shorts; and I tried to please her. Then, when I awoke, I began to interrogate myself, asking whether my absence that day in Dublin was not at some level a kind of retribution for her early separateness in the garden. My grief therefore contained, as well, an anxious dialogue between the defense and the prosecution, between rational arguments assuring me that I had had no reason to expect a sudden complication, and voices of guilt, which accused me.

Emotions, in short, have a history. In this case, it would not be possible to have an adequate understanding of my grief without grasping it as one strand in a history of deep love, of longing for protection and comfort, of anger at the separate and uncontrolled existence of the source of comfort, of fear of one's own aggression, of guilt and the desire to make reparations. The grief itself bears the traces of that entire history; those other emotions, lurking in the background, give it its specific content and cognitive specificity. And this is true not only of the later history of an early childhood relationship. For new objects of love and anger and fear bear the traces of earlier objects; one's emotions toward them are frequently therefore also, in both intensity and configuration, emotions toward one's own past.

Proust's narrator, waking up in the night, feels a primitive longing for comfort that derives from his early childhood. In an attempt to mother himself, he presses his cheeks "tenderly" against the "comfortable cheeks" of his pillow, "as round and rosy as the cheeks of our childhood" - and thinks that it will soon be morning. "Soon someone will come to his aid. The hope of being comforted gives him the
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courage to suffer.” He now has a dream: sexually aroused, he sees a woman before him, and imagines that it is she who has caused his pleasure and his desire. He feels the warmth of his body mingle with hers; he feels the warmth of her kiss on his cheek, he feels his body pressed down by her weight. As he attempts to “become one with her,” he awakes.

By placing this dream near the opening of the Recherche, Proust draws our attention to what will be one of the narrative’s central themes: the continuity of later loves with a childhood history of need and longing. The woman seen by Marcel is an adult woman, as he, both as dreamer and in the dream, is an adult man. And yet, even as his attempt to comfort himself before sleep contained images of childhood comfort, so here his longing bears the trace of a small child’s longing: the strange woman kisses him on the cheek like a mother, and her posture, weighing him down, combines sexuality with the solidity and comfort of a maternal embrace. His ardent desire is for his body to “meet up with” the warmth of hers, to become fused with her. We know from this point on that what he will later call the “general form” of his loves points backwards toward the past, toward the solitary anxieties of the child who longs passionately for his mother’s goodnight kiss, that “concession to my misery and my agitation” – and views her arrival with “utmost pain,” since it is a sign that she will soon be departing. His insecurity and longing for comfort, his greedy desire to be held and immobilized – all this will mark his relationship with Albertine as surely as it here marks his dream of the unknown woman. Years later, needing Albertine’s comfort and reassurance, he accuses her of lesbianism and tells her that he can no longer love her – all in order to bring about the tender scene that ensues, so deeply desired, so unsatisfactory, in which she holds him still in her arms, and licks slowly

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with her tongue the lips that refuse to open. Albertine is the victim of this history; for it is thanks to his past insecurity, as he here acknowledges, that he can never really attend to her as a person in her own right and can therefore never really love her.

The Stoics, categorizing emotions, omitted the past as a temporal category. Their taxonomy made no place for emotions directed at past events. More important, they also failed to give prominence to the way in which past events, especially events in infancy and childhood, influence present emotions. Here their too-intellectual brand of cognitivism prevented them from fully comprehending the specific cognitive content of the emotions. Much the same is true, I believe, of some prominent recent attempts to defend a cognitive account of emotion in philosophy, which sever emotions from their past and depict them as fully and reliably determined by present input about one’s current situation.

I shall argue, by contrast, that in a deep sense all human emotions are in part about the past, and bear the traces of a history that is at once commonly human, socially constructed, and idiosyncratic.


4 Strictly speaking, the entire narrative is in the imparfait, and the experience of waking in the night is said to be followed sometimes by sound sleep, sometimes by nightmares of “childish terrors,” and sometimes by this dream of erotic tenderness.

5 Here I follow Moncrieff/Kilmartin rendering of “mon corps... voulait s’y rejoindre.”

6 Du côté, p. 21, my translations.

7 One of the desired effects of the mother’s embrace is to blot out disturbing stimuli from the world around him; I go on to discuss this further.

8 Proust, Du côté de chez Swann, II.863.

9 See Sodome et Gomorrhe (II.857–8 in the Moncrieff/Kilmartin translation), where the narrator ascribes to himself (in my own translation) “that binary rhythm that love adopts in all those who lack sufficient confidence in themselves to believe that a woman could ever love them, and also that they could really love her. They know themselves well enough to be aware that in the presence of the most varied women they would experience the same hopes, the same fears, would invent the same stories, would say the same words; and thus they know that their emotions and actions are not in a close and necessary relation to the loved woman, but pass by her side, brush up against her, surround her like the tide that crashes along the rocks – and this awareness of their own instability increases still further their conviction that this woman, whose love they so much desire, does not love them... [This fear, this shame, bring about the counter-rhythm, theebb tide, the need... to take back the offensive and to regain esteem and control.] I shall discuss this passage further in Chapter 10.

10 Some forms of modern cognitivism do include emotions, such as guilt and regret, which take a past object; my objection is to their failure to consider how present emotions are colored by the past. This dimension of emotions is omitted by both Lyons and Gordon, though not by de Sousa, whose account of “paradigm” scenarios leaves room for the introduction of the complexities of an individual history, though his book (1987) does not focus on that issue in the way I shall here. The absence of the past in Gordon's account is one reason why he has such difficulty distinguishing his computer from a person. Similarly Solomon, in thinking of the emotions in terms of existential value-positing, omits the past as a determinant of the present personality. (Sarrt would surely have rejected the ideas I am developing as a form of bad faith that masks from us the extent of our freedom to posit value.) In another area of the subject, Pinker (1997) also has difficulty distinguishing the human being from a computer.

11 See the similar observation in de Sousa (1987), Chapter 8.
spoken of emotions as urgent transactions with a changing environment. I have argued in Chapter 2 that we can understand both human and animal emotions to involve such transactions, mediated by a value-laden intentionality. Chapter 3 has added a social dimension to the account, while acknowledging that the social is always mediated by complex and highly varied personal processes. I shall now turn to those processes, building on the “common account” of human and animal emotions presented in Chapter 2, but focusing on human development. Understanding emotions developmentally will help us to complete the description of the revised neo-Stoic view. At that point, we will be in a position, too, to understand why some objections to cognitive views of emotion have force, and to argue that the present view is not vulnerable to such objections, precisely because of the way in which it incorporates a developmental dimension.

I shall argue, then, that adult human emotions cannot be understood without understanding their history in infancy and childhood. For this history will bring to light both the responsiveness of the emotions – their appropriateness to the life of an incomplete creature in a world of significant accidents, their connections to the development of practical reason and a sense of self – and their frequent lack of responsiveness, their rigidity before present objects as they project the images of the past upon them. The child Marcel, in his mother’s absence, amuses himself with a magic lantern that projects onto his wall images of his favorite stories, so that he sees his room as if illuminated by the presence of Golo and Bluebeard. Emotions are often like that magic lantern, coloring the room one is actually in with the intense images of other objects, other stories. This feature of emotion can lead into insight and deep love, as when childhood thoughts about the feelings of one’s parents enable a person to understand the needs and wishes of an adult love, and childhood confidence in the parents’ reciprocating love enables her to love an adult partner without suspicion. Not all failures to respond to the present evidence are normatively bad; no adult love would be possible without a degree of trust that goes beyond the evidence. But the same feature of emotion can also lead, as it does in the adult Marcel, to the absence of particular perception and love – or to a love that is the mask for a profound egotism, turned in on its own insecurities. When he sees the present through the lens of the past, he proves unable to accept any love that he cannot control.

Clearly, then, any assessment of the emotions that intends to raise normative questions – as I shall in Parts II and III – must investigate these developmental issues. We must ask, first, whether there are features of the typical human child’s history that make its emotions intrinsically problematic from the ethical viewpoint, and, more generally, from the point of view of practical rationality. Second, we must ask whether there are other features of typical emotional development that offer assistance to ethics. Finally, we must examine sources of variation in development, individual and social, asking how and to what extent it is possible to encourage developmental patterns that are more supportive and less subversive of ethical norms.

Investigating these issues will also help us to refine further the account of emotions sketched in Chapter 1, revising further the simple Stoic cognitive analysis of emotion. I shall argue that the cognitive content of emotions arrives embedded in a complex narrative history, without mentioning which one frequently cannot give an account of the full specificity of the emotion itself. I shall try to articulate these complexities here, sketching a general account of the roots of emotion in infancy and childhood that should also help us in analyzing particular emotion histories and understanding their variety. I shall put forward both a genetic thesis and a causal thesis: both that the emotions of later life make their first appearances in infancy, as cognitive relations to objects important for one’s well-being, and also that this history informs the later experience of emotion in various specific ways. I shall then argue that these findings explain why emotions, though in their origin and in many ongoing functions adaptively rational, may frequently also be irrational in the sense that they fail to match their present objects, as they project the images of the past upon them. This rigidity has consequences, as well, for any attempt to become ethical or to produce children who are ethical; and I shall examine contrasting developmental patterns with a view to a set of highly general ethical aims. An investigation of these normative issues will suggest an important role for the imagination, and hence for narrative art, in the understanding of emotion, and in emotional development itself.

My account of the development of emotion will be a philosophical account; I am neither an empirical psychologist nor a psychoanalyst. But the developmental aspects of the emotional life have been little treated by the philosophical tradition (although there are passages of
nating angle from which to view some of the traditional concerns of developmental psychology and psychoanalysis.

It has become fashionable in the United States to sneer at psychoanalysis. In part this dismissive attitude results from the fact that Americans are generally impatient with complexity and sadness, and tend to want a quick chemical fix for deep human problems. People who have that view of life will not have reached Chapter 4 of this book anyway, so I shall not attempt to address them here. There are, however, people who admire humanistic approaches to life when they are presented in literary or philosophical form (Proust, Plato), but who still react with suspicion to any mention of the names of Klein, Fairbairn, and Winnicott. In part, I believe, their skepticism stems from a view that these figures are pretend scientists, and simply don’t measure up to a model of science set by the natural sciences. To them I simply want to say that I myself treat these figures as humanistic interpretive thinkers, very closely related to Proust and Plato, whose work gains texture and depth through having a clinical dimension — and, in the case of Daniel Stern and Bowlby, also an experimental dimension. And I would ask them to consider the possibility that Winnicott’s perspective on human beings may be even more illuminating, ultimately, than that of Proust, whatever his genius, because Winnicott is simply a saner and more responsive person, more genuinely interested in human variety and interaction.

II. THE GOLDEN AGE: HELPLESSNESS, OMNIPOTENCE, BASIC NEEDS

Human beings, like the other animals, are born into a world that they have not made and do not control. After a time in the womb, during which needs were automatically met, they enter the world, making, as Freud put it in the passage that is this book’s epigraph, “the step from an absolutely self-sufficient narcissism to the perception of a changing external world and the beginnings of the discovery of objects.” Human infants arrive in the world in a condition of needy helplessness more or less unparalleled in any other animal species.

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12 Among the object-relations theorists, I have been especially influenced by the work of W. R. D. Fairbairn (1952), as well as by Winnicott (1965, 1986). Among more recent writers, I find valuable the account of the inchoate and archeic content of early cognitions, and of the longing for wholeness, in Christopher Bollas (1987); and the account of the questionable results of the pursuit of control and completeness in Nancy Chodorow (1978). Finally, concerns about the role of shame and its relationship to infantile narcissism are persuasively developed in Andrew Morrison (1989); although Morrison follows the self-psychology school of Heinz Kohut, rather than the object-relations school, in this case the two schools are very close in emphasis, and complement one another.

13 Bowlby (1982, 1973, 1980). Bowlby’s attachment theory is now supplemented and confirmed by Sarah Hrdy’s work with primates; see Hrdy (1999). Bowlby’s work is, like Fairbairn’s, of considerable importance for Chodorow’s account; and Bowlby, unlike the more orthodox psychoanalysts, has been influential in cognitive psychology — especially in the work of Lazarus and Seligman; oatley is unusual in cognitive psychology insofar as he draws on both Fairbairn and Bowlby — and also on the related anthropological work of Lutz. Bowlby’s attachment perspective has continued to be fruitful in contemporary experimental work: see the very interesting defense of the perspective, and review of the literature, in Lopez and Brennan (2000).

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What they encounter is both alarming and delightful. As Lucretius puts it: the infant, helpless and weeping from the disturbance of birth, like a sailor cast forth from the fierce waves, lies naked on the ground, without speech, in need of every sort of life-sustaining help, when first nature casts it forth with birth contractions from its mother’s womb into the shores of light. And it fills the whole place with mournful weeping, as is right for someone to whom such troubles remain in life. (5.222-7)

A “gentle nurse” now calms the child with calm talk and caresses – as well as nourishment. The poet bleakly remarks that the rougher, better-equipped wild animals have no need of such soothing (229-30) – a claim not altogether true, as we have seen and shall see, but relatively true. The prolonged helplessness of the human infant marks its history; and the early drama of its infancy is the drama of helplessness before a world of objects – a world that contains both threatening things and good things, the things it wants and needs. The infant’s central perception of itself, Lucretius suggests profoundly, is as an entity very weak and very powerless toward things of the greatest importance. Freud, noting the same facts, comments that “we cannot endure the new state of things for long, [30] that we periodically revert from it, in our sleep, to our former condition of absence of stimulation and avoidance of objects.”

But the infant is not altogether helpless. For from the first there are agencies in the environment that minister to its needs, supplying what it cannot supply for itself. These agencies therefore take on an intense importance in the infant’s inchoate and as yet undemarcated awareness of the world. Its relationship to them focuses, from the first, on its passionate wish to secure what the world of nature does not supply by itself – comfort, nourishment, protection.

Lucretius presents a picture, not a theoretical account. But we may extrapolate an account from it. The resulting picture will differ in several ways from classic Freudian and Kleinian psychoanalytic accounts. The central difference is that the Lucretian picture makes the drama of infancy have little to do with sexuality per se, little even with pleasure per se, and nothing at all to do with innate aggression, as Klein would hold. (I shall return to this important issue later.) Instead, the drama has everything to do with what the ancient world called “external goods” – with the infant’s relationship to objects of high importance. As we have seen, this is just the account of emotional development in animals on which cognitive psychologists have been converging. Both experimental and psychoanalytical work, as we shall see, gives it further support. Now, therefore, as I focus more closely on several aspects of the Lucretian infant, I shall begin to draw on some of this modern material.

Lucretius’ description points to three distinct facets of the infant’s neediness, each of which appears to be irreducible to any of the others. If we consider these in turn, we will have a starting point for talking about the infant’s emotions, which will be its recognitions of the importance of these external items. First and most obvious is the “need of every life-sustaining help,” the basic bodily need for nourishment and care, communicated to the infant through its appetites of hunger and thirst. This has been emphasized in all discussions of infancy, and needs little further comment here. If we focus on the infant’s evolving perceptions, we will see this need as both Lucretius and the modern psychologists present it – as a felt need for the removal of painful or invasive stimuli, and for the restoration of a blissful or undisturbed condition.

The connection of this restoration with survival is important to the evolutionary account of the infant’s development, and thus to the evolutionary significance of its developing emotions – as we have seen in reflecting about animal emotions. But this connection is not part of the infant’s own subjective awareness. The infant’s subjective perception of hunger is well captured by Daniel Stern in his metaphorical reconstruction of the “hunger storm” at the center of the child’s being, which explodes within, giving rise to pulsing currents of pain, until the arrival of food calms the storm. It is fascinating to see Stern, in his effort to

16 Some of the cultural biases of psychoanalysis are shown here: for Lucretius, with his own Roman upper-class bias, never supposes that the comforting and nourishing figure will be the infant’s own mother, whereas all psychoanalysts with the exception of Chodorow – and Bowlby in some later work – simply assume that it will be. Recent thinkers in the attachments tradition are much more flexible, taking cognizance of the findings in evolutionary biology that show that a certain degree of flexibility in attachment relations (an ability, for example, to thrive in day care) is crucial for a species that is going to survive. If human infants were hardwired to require a single mother attending them at all times, they acknowledge, the human species would not have survived (personal communication, Kelly Brennan; see also Hrdý [1999]).

17 Stern (1990), pp. 33-43.
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capture in words the quality of the preverbal child's experience, drawn
to the very images of "storm" and "calm" that Epicureans characteris-
tically use to capture the ways in which we are troubled by hunger and
relieved by its gratification.18

These felt needs, as the infant's ability to perceive definite objects
and to become aware of its own boundaries develops - and it is now
clear that it begins to develop remarkably early in the first months of
life19 - gives a central importance in the infant's "object world" to that
or those object(s) who are perceived as the agents of this restoration of
the world. Whether it is mother, father, nurse, or some other caretaker
or caretakers who plays or play the primary role here, this restorative
agency will at first be experienced by the infant not so much as a
distinct object, but as a process of transformation through which the
infant's own state of being is altered. For this reason Bollas speaks of
the caretaker as a "transformational object," and perceptively remarks
that much of a human being's subsequent history bears the imprint of
early longing for this object, in the form of a desire for a "second
coming" of that shift toward bliss, and for an object that can be its
vehicle.20 Still in a state of "infantile dependence,"21 the infant can do
little to control the arrival of the transformational process, and its
sudden arrivals and disappearances mark the infant's world as a chancy
and unpredictable one, in which the best things arrive as if by lightning,
in sudden penetrations of light and joy.

Consider a myth that plays a central role in ancient accounts of

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18 See, for example, Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, 128: as soon as a creature achieves a
state free of disturbance or pain, "the entire storm of the soul is undone." Cf. Lucretius
III. 1 ff.: happy is the person who watches others storm-tossed on the waves, while he
himself is safe on the shore.

19 See Stern (1985), Chapter 3 (1990), pp. 23-43. Stern's vivid depiction of the infant of
six weeks, an attempt to encapsulate the current state of research in developmental
psychology, ascribes to the infant perceptions of definite forms in space that stand out
from others, and of patterns of sound, touch, and light that mark off one region from
another. Between eight and twelve weeks, the infant becomes aware of the face, and
begins to make eye-to-eye contact, treating eyes as "windows" to events of crucial
significance for its world. By four months, the infant has highly complex social inter-
actions with the closest people in its world, and has begun to be able, in part through
awareness of its own voluntary responses, to demarcate self from nonself in a reliable
way.


21 Fairbairn (1952) uses this term by way of contrast with "mature dependence," in
which one acknowledges one's need of others but also recognizes and accepts their
separateness; I shall return to this topic, and to the way in which Fairbairn connects it
with a bold social-political thesis.

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emotion. It is, I think, best seen as an imaginative attempt to recreate
this world of infancy. This is the well-known story of the Golden Age -
an age in which people do not have to do anything for themselves, to
labor, to act, to move here and there. For the earth itself brings forth
nourishment exactly where they are. Rivers of milk and honey spring
up out of the ground; in the mild climate there is no need for shelter.
The people of this age, Hesiod remarks, lack prudential rationality -
presumably because they have no need of thought. They live in a state
of blissful totality. Stoics who repeat the story add that in this age
"crime is far off":22 there is no aggression, because everything is com-
plete. What this myth describes is the omnipotence of the infant, its
sense that the world revolves around its needs, and is fully arranged to
meet its needs.

But of course, as our Lucretian image lets us see, the infant's experi-
ential world is from the very start unlike the world of the Golden Age.
Perhaps, as Freud observes in our epigraph, rudimentary prebirth ex-
periences give the infant a true Golden Age: hooked up securely to the
sources of nourishment and comfort, the infant is indeed in a state of
blissful totality. But birth disrupts all that, as Freud says, bringing the
infant into a world of objects, in which it must depend on external
things and persons for its survival. Thus, although at times the infant's
world is a Golden Age world, these times alternate with times when
the world is hungry, distressed, and in discomfort.23 The Earth does
not give everything automatically, and the infant's world of sudden
transformations is felt from the start as chancy, porous, full of uncertain-
ty and danger. For this reason, the infant has a sense of its own
helplessness, which gives rise to a need for comfort and reassurance
that is not reducible to its basic bodily needs. Lucretius' image suggests
this already, with its account of the nurse, who both feeds the child
and calms it with soothing words and caresses.

Early psychoanalytic accounts of infancy reduced all needs to needs
for bodily gratification.24 A fairly early exception was Winnicott, whose
concept of "holding" incorporates nutrition, sensitive care, and the

22 See Seneca, Medea, 359-360.

23 I choose these odd locations - making the subject the infant's experience-world rather
than the infant - to remind the reader that the infant does not yet, in the first eight
weeks of life, begin to experience itself as a definite subject. Compare Stern (1990),
Chapter 3.

24 See the summary in Bowlby (1973); Chodorow (1978), p. 72ff., contains a good ac-
count of the issue.
creation of a “facilitating environment.” As Winnicott remarks, a reasonably supportive “facilitating environment” is one in which the omnipotence of the infant (which is also to say, its total helplessness, which explains its demand to be at the center of attention) is met and acknowledged. Through an identification with the infant, the caretaker or caretakers know what it needs, and supply those things: not only food, but also sensitive interaction and comfort. Bowlby shows, similarly, that we should think of the need for security as a distinct need, and think of the infant’s attachment to its caretaker or caretakers as having these two distinct aspects, which may in principle be separated. Experiments with monkeys suggest, he argues, that animals who are well fed from a hard prickly mechanical device still need to cling to something soft and comforting and to be caressed. If this need is not met, the infant grows up with severe behavioral disabilities; it fails to develop the kind of confidence in its environment that makes normal cognitive functioning and acting possible. And if this need is met, but by a figure who is not identical with the source of nourishment, the monkey will attach itself far more firmly to the comfort source than to the nourishment source. Given the choice between a hard mechanical food source and a soft cuddly non-nourishing object, the monkeys spend a very short time getting the necessary food from the food source, the rest of the time clinging fast to the soft cuddly object. Bowlby makes a very convincing case for seeing the need to be held and comforted as a part of our common primate heritage, highly adaptive in evolutionary terms as a source of protection from danger. Clinging is a pervasive feature of infant primate life; the main difference in the human case is that the human infant is so physically immature at birth that it cannot initiate contact on its own, but must rely on the agency of its sources of transformation. As Winnicott says, “The infant who is being held... is not aware of being preserved from infinitely falling. A slight failure of holding, however, brings to the infant a sensation of infinite falling.” This acute helplessness makes much room in its life for uncertainty, anxiety, and rage.

Thus Proust’s narrative of the self-comforting that precedes sleep gets at something that is deep not just in human life but in the development of animals as well. The need for “soulagement” against the painful intrusive stimuli of a strange world is an independent and very powerful need, in some ways even more powerful, as a bond between infant and adult, than the bond of nourishment. As biologist Sarah Hrdy puts it, “Human infants have a nearly insatiable desire to be held and to bask in the sense that they are loved.” Through holding, the infant becomes willing to live in the world, develops the conviction that the world is sufficiently benign, despite its dangers, to support its own active efforts. The idea that one is not completely helpless, that one’s demands will meet some response from the environment, is an essential foundation of all learning. In early infancy, when action is more or less impossible, the passive experience of receiving comfort removes the incipient sense of helplessness. In the light of this, Bollas’s picture of the “transformational object” acquires new depth and complexity: for this object now does far more than minister to bodily need. It makes a world worth living in.

Many accounts, whether experimental or clinical, assume that care will be given primarily by a single figure, who is assumed to be the mother (although Winnicott stresses that this is a generic term, intended to include fathers as well, insofar as they play the standard maternal role). Experimental evidence shows that infants can recognize a particular caretaker almost immediately: at only three days, an infant is already able to discriminate the smell of its own mother’s milk on a breast pad from the smell of another mother’s milk, and will turn to its own mother. In general, the ability to recognize a particular caretaker and to develop a strong and exclusive attachment is a surprisingly early and pervasive feature of primate life. But the object of the infant ape’s affections may be its mother, or a male, or another

25 Again, I note that these experiments are morally controversial, since some of them did produce psychotic monkeys who were unable to lead a normal life.
26 Bowlby (1982); and on attachment as a basic element in primate behavior, see Hrdy (1990).

19 Bowlby persistently downplays the dangers, suggesting that an infant who is properly cared for by its mother will see the world as perfectly benign and have no anxiety. This is implausible — and, as I shall argue, it would also mean disaster for the child, who needs to learn how to get around in the actual world.
31 Bowlby (1982); he observes that this ability is also evident in birds, but that here it has no evolutionary significance for the human case, since birds and humans diverged at the point of common reptile ancestry, where there seems to have been no such ability.
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female, or even a human researcher— who may be either female or male. Bowlby speaks at times as if the reliable presence of the child’s own mother is essential for good emotional health, and he seems to suggest that any other child care arrangement is a dangerous thing for very young children. But his data show something much weaker: that human infants, like those of other primates, need security and stability in their environment, and need, for this purpose, the ability to recognize and enjoy the comfort of one or a small number of reliably caring individuals. As our knowledge both of primate cultures and of other human cultures expands, Sarah Hrdy points out, we have come to see that secure attachments may be nourished in many different ways; children raised by multiple caretakers can be just as secure, or “if anything more so,” than children raised by a single mother.

As the relationship between child and caretaker(s) develops, it is important that the caretaker(s) show sensitivity to the child’s particular rhythm and personal style, which Stern calls a “dance.” The balance between indifference and intrusiveness, attention and the giving of space, must be struck in the right way, or the result will be an inability to trust. Winnicott plausibly argues that this balance can be best struck by a person who has a good imagination and who is able to identify with the child in fantasy. Stern’s photographic studies of mother-

32 See in this connection Bowlby’s story of Dr. Z, who, during the absence of the researcher originally in charge of a young chimpanzee, became that ape’s favored and beloved object from then on.

33 See Chodorow (1978); Hrdy (1999), pp. 483–581; Lopez and Brenman (2000). Hrdy points out that the idea of a “critical period” of bonding immediately after birth has long since been revised: data show that such “imprinting” occurs in sheep, but that primates are far more flexible. In human subjects, where the mother is not already at risk for abandoning her child, a period of separation after birth does no harm (pp. 486–8). The mother-separated children studied by Bowlby are of three sorts: children displaced to the country because of the war, children who suffered an early bereavement, and children of poor families who were in institutions because of the mother’s need to work. All three situations deprive the children of stable and constant care. Surprisingly, Bowlby never considers the fact that in the England of his time, privileged children were rarely raised by their own mothers— and yet presumably the constancy of the nursery relationship led to an outcome different from those he describes.

34 Hrdy (1999), p. 495, speaking of the Aka and the EEs, “where infants from birth are passed among multiple caretakers with whom they become very familiar and are quite at ease.”

35 Stern (1977); see especially the chapter “Missteps in the Dance.”

36 Kurtz’s account of large Indian working families reminds us, however, that a familiar middle-class American norm, where the mother spends much of the day cooing to her child interactions reveal the subtle interplay of eyes and face that characterize most such relationships—and also show how the relationship can go awry, through excessive intrusiveness, overstimulation, or depressive neglect.

I now turn to the third aspect of the Lucretian child’s experience. It is introduced by the beautiful phrase “into the shores of light,” in luminis oras. This phrase lets us see that the world into which the child arrives is radiant and wonderful, claims its attention as an object of interest and pleasure in its own right. (Later on, in the context of describing our fear of death, Lucretius speaks of the pain with which people leave “the sweet light of life,” dulce lumina vitae.) The wonder and interest of the world are too little stressed by psychoanalysts, who are usually stricter Epicureans than Lucretius himself, portraying the infant’s basic tendencies as directed toward the removal of pain and disturbance alone. But Aristotle got it right: the interest in cognitive mastery is a part of human infants from the start of life. Thus Stern, drawing on recent experimental work, stresses the infant’s intense interest in cognitive stimulation and its surprisingly mature early ability to make distinctions. It is now clear, for example, that extremely young infants seek out intensity of light, and turn their attention to the brightest or most intense stimulation in their world that is not actually painful. This tendency is extremely valuable in helping it begin to sort out the world. In a related way, Winnicott draws attention to the importance of the child’s creative impulse, its delight in initiating imaginative activity.

Indeed, quite apart from this evidence, we need to posit an original need for cognitive distinction-making, and an original joy in sorting baby, is not necessary for psychic health, and may even at times conduce to excessive intrusiveness: see Kurtz (1992). (On the cover of the book is a photograph, taken by Kurtz, of a mother sitting on the ground cleaning lentils, while her baby, on her back, looks over her shoulder and another young child plays on the ground at her feet.)


38 Lear (1990) appears to be an exception, since he speaks often of the sufficient lovability of the world, and even argues that there are signs of this view in later writings of Freud.


40 See Stern (1996), p. 17ff., where the infant stares with fascination at a patch of sunlight on the wall, and, in Stern’s metaphorical recreation, the sunlight is a moving, dancing magnet drawing the child’s attention— until the child, seeking new stimulation, turns to the exploration of the adjacent patch of wall.
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out the world, in order to explain why infants get going and pursue projects of their own in the uncertain world. For if the only positive value with which they invest items in their environment is instrumental value toward the removal of some negative condition, then it should be as Epicurus says: when once pain and disturbance is undone, “the animal has no need to go off anywhere.” But animals initiate projects of their own. In human animals the independence from mere self-protection of curiosity, cognitive interest, and wonder is especially apparent, and essential to explain initiative and creativity.

III. EARLY EMOTIONS: “HOLDING,” LOVE, PRIMITIVE SHAME

Where in all of this do we find emotions? At first, as I have said, the infant has no clear sense of the boundaries of self and other. It experiences mysterious transformations, and it does not yet trace them to a distinct external origin. We have the roots of the emotions already, in the inchoate sense that some processes of profound importance to one’s being are arriving and departing in a way that eludes control. Emotions are recognitions of that importance coupled with that lack of full control. This means that they develop gradually, as the infant becomes more and more cognizant of the importance of the transformations to its being, and of the fact that they arrive, so to speak, from outside. When they are traced to a definite agency, and when that agency is to some extent distinguished from the self, the emotions will be provided with an object. The earliest emotions are likely to be fear and anxiety, when the transformation is temporarily withheld, joy when it is present, and increasingly, as time goes on, a kind of hope for its blissful arrival. Love is not yet fully present, insofar as the infant is as yet unable to conceive of the caretaker as a whole person with a separate career in space and time. But a kind of rudimentary love and gratitude are involved in the awareness that others aid it in its attempts to live (Spinoza’s definition of love). At the same time the infant has an incep-

41 Epicurus, Letter to Menoeceus, 128, on which see Nussbaum (1994), Chapter 4.
42 Cf. Wittgenstein (1967), p. 459: “One might observe a child and wait until one day he manifests hope; and then one could say ‘Today he hoped for the first time’. But surely that sounds queer! ... And why queer? ... Well, bit by bit daily life becomes such that there is a place for hope in it.”

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ient kind of wonder and delight at parts of the world that are not related to its own states. These parts of the world include persons and parts of persons, toward whom wonder and gratitude may be profoundly interwoven.

At this point (in the first few months of life) the infant has no clear sense of external objects as persisting continuous wholes, nor of itself as a distinct whole and persisting substance; its thoughts about objects and about self are less definite. Insofar as emotion has an object it may be a region of the world, or, a bit later, a part or stage of the caregiver, not the caregiver as a complete person.

How are these emotions connected to the child’s appetites? The fact that an infant is a needy appetitive creature, whose earliest and most intense news of the world comes in part from its own appetites, is a central part of the story of its developing emotions. Many of its most intense concerns revolve around getting fed, and at first its anxiety and its hunger are hard to distinguish, a general turbulence that seeks pleasure in the Epicurean sense, an absence of disturbance and pain. On the other hand, the need for security and holding is distinct from the need for appetitive gratification; this distinctness manifests itself increasingly, as the child becomes increasingly aware of sources of comfort in its world. Nor, I have argued, is the pursuit of cognitive mastery reducible to appetite satisfaction. But this pursuit provides the child’s inner life with emotions, such as wonder, that are nongoistic and even, to some degree, non-eudaimonistic; it also infuses the structure of the other emotions, giving object relations a noninstrumental and even non-eudaimonistic aspect from the start, and allowing the child to take its own emotional states as objects of curiosity.

If gratitude is present in a rudimentary form, in the thought that others aid it in its efforts to live, then, by the same token, anger should be present in a rudimentary form, in the thought that others sometimes fail it in its efforts to live. As Spinoza stresses, a dependent being who sees itself as such will experience both love and anger toward the agencies on which it depends. The infant does not yet understand, however, that love and anger are directed toward the same source. Indeed, its uncertainty about the boundaries of self and other may make it unclear about whether the source of frustration is in or outside of itself. It may develop a vague sense that there are bad and good agencies that are somehow parts of its own self, and it may confusedly
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direct anger against these parts as well as outward, or fail to make this distinction. Such ambivalence may possibly arise in the lives of some nonhuman animals; but the human child's unique combination of cognitive capacity and bodily incapacity gives rise to an equally unique emotional complexity.

Anger understood in this way is not an innate instinct of destruction: it is a reaction to one's life situation. As Fairbairn, Bowlby, and other object-relations theorists argue, we have no need to introduce a destructive instinct to explain infant behavior, and much reason, in the infant's primary clinging and comfort-seeking behavior, to refuse to introduce it. On the other hand, the process of development entails many moments of discomfort and frustration. Indeed, some frustration of the infant's wants by the caretaker's separate comings and goings is essential to development - for if everything were always simply given in advance of discomfort, the child would never try out its own projects of control.

On the other hand, the infant can hardly be in a position to comprehend this grand design. Its posture is one of infantile omnipotence, in which the entire world revolves around its wants. Any failure on the part of the caretaker to fulfill those wants will lead to reactive anger, as if (to put it in prematurely complex terms) some right of its own had been slighted. Another way of putting this point is Seneca's: in the Golden Age "crime is far off," and greed and anger are absent - because the world operates to fulfill people's every want in advance. But, as we have insisted, our world is not and never was that world. The child's evolving recognition that the caretaker sometimes fails to bring it what it wants gives rise to an anger that is closely linked to its emerging love. Indeed, the very recognition that both good things and their absence have an external source guarantees the presence of both of these emotions - although the infant has not yet recognized that both take a single person as their object.

This anger will soon produce a crisis in the infant's life. But we can already observe that the nature of parental holding itself affects the child's situation as the crisis approaches. Winnicott draws attention to the way in which holding that is "good enough" permits the child to be at one and the same time omnipotent and utterly dependent, both the center of the world and utterly reliant on another. The parents' (or other caregivers') ability to meet the child's omnipotence with suitably responsive and stable care creates a framework within which trust and interdependence may thus gradually grow: the child will gradually relax its omnipotence, its demand to be attended to constantly, once it understands that others can be relied on and it will not be left in a state of utter helplessness. This early framework of steadiness and continuity will provide a valuable resource in the later crisis of ambivalence. On the other hand, to the extent that a child does not receive sufficiently stable holding, or receives holding that is excessively controlling or intrusive, without space for it to relax into a relationship of trust, it will cling, in later life, to its own omnipotence, demanding perfection in the self and refusing to tolerate imperfection either in object relations or in the inner world.

These ideas receive a fascinating development in the fragment of a lengthy analysis by Winnicott posthumously published under the title *Holding and Interpretation*. The patient B, a young male medical

43 This is the basic idea behind the elaborate accounts of "introjection" and "splitting" in Kleinian psychoanalysis; the basic idea, if not all of the elaborate superstructure, is endorsed by Fairbairn as a reasonable way of making sense of the rudimentary nature of emotions at this stage.

44 Contrast Klein (1984, 1985) on the death instinct; she derives this idea from Freud (1920).

45 See also Bollas (1987), p. 29: "Transformation does not mean gratification. Growth is only partially promoted by gratification, and one of the mother's transformative functions must be to frustrate the infant." Compare Seligman (1975) on the importance of learning that voluntary responding can control the environment.

46 This is well captured in Freud's famous (if sexist) phrase, "his majesty the baby" - endorsed minus the gender narrowness by both Fairbairn and Bollas.

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student, suffered from an inability to be spontaneous or to express any personal thought. In the presence of others, he could not initiate either conversation or activity, and he was found extremely boring. The petrified and lifeless persona he presented to others was an attempt to maintain omnipotent control over his inner world, by constant vigilance over language and thought.

During the analysis, it emerged that B had suffered from rigidly anxious and unresponsive parenting in early life. His mother required perfection of herself, and interpreted any neediness on the part of the infant as a signal that she had not achieved the desired perfection (which she saw as commanded by a quasi-paternal idealized husband). (Winnicott notes that the mother's tendency to idealize her husband implied that she did not love him. “[N]ot being concerned with a real person, she emphasized the quality of perfection.”) As B makes contact with these memories of a holding that was stifling, the patient gradually becomes aware of his own demand for perfection in everything — as the corollary of his inability to permit himself to be a needy child. Because his mother wanted perfection (which he felt as a demand for immobility and even death), he could not allow himself to be dependent on, or to trust, anyone. “Imperfect for me means being rejected,” he finally tells Winnicott. And then: “I feel that you are introducing a big problem. I never became human. I have missed it.”

stating that, though difficult, it was not impossible to remember what had transpired. Fourteen years after the completion of the second analysis, Winnicott wrote to B to ask how he was doing; he had done well in both life and work.

52 Winnicott (1986), p. 101: the patient's symptom was a fear of annihilation as a result of satisfaction itself, as if, once he finished feeding, he had no way of knowing that the good things would ever come again. The interpretation of B's early life that was developing in the analysis was confirmed by Winnicott's interview with his mother, during which she told Winnicott about material she had discovered in analysis with another analyst. As she reported to Winnicott during their interview, she became aware of a rigid demand for perfection in her maternal role and of a refusal to tolerate the separate life of the child: she understood perfection as a kind of death of the child, in which he would have nothing more to demand. Notice that B's mother is in many ways similar to George Pitcher's mother, as he describes her in Pitcher (1993), and produces some of the same emotional problems in her son: see Chapter 2.

53 The mother emerges as an anxious but by no means passive figure: one gets the impression that she is flamboyant. In his last letter to B, responding to the news of the mother's death, Winnicott writes, “She was indeed a personality.”


55 ibid., p. 172. See also p. 163: “The difficulty is the fear of the anger.”

56 ibid., p. 123.

57 See ibid., p. 96: “I do not know if I could describe her. I have tended to assume you are not interested in her as a woman. Also I always have a difficulty in describing people. I never can describe a personality, the colour of people's hair, and all that sort of thing... I am always reluctant to use Christian names...”

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Signs of humanness were rejected by his mother, who, because of her own anxiety, was pleased only by a quiet perfect baby.

Already in the first months, then, the character of parental care and “holding” shapes the child's attitude toward its own human neediness — either creating the sense that human neediness is all right, and that its helpless body is a source of pleasure and concern — or, on the other hand, sending the message that perfection is the only tolerable state and that anything else will be repudiated.

In our terms, what has happened to the early emotions of this unfortunate man? First, the dynamics of both love/gratitude and anger have been thrown off by his inability to trust that he is being held, that his mother wants to hold and care for a dependent needy baby. A feeling of “infinitely falling” lurks in the background. This feeling gives rise to an especially intense anger, and a possessive love that brooks no human reality. (In this the patient resembles Proust's narrator.) The patient so fears his own anger that he frequently makes himself fall asleep. As Winnicott says to him, “there is very great hostility wrapped up in this sleepiness.” Second, for this reason the play of wonder and curiosity has been arrested: the creativity that grows in a context of trust and holding has never matured, and the patient's way of presenting himself is stilted, rigid, entirely impersonal. In a personal relationship, imperfect things might happen, but the patient's way “makes it all impersonal, and there is no excitement or anger or elation, and I do not want to get up and hit you.” This rigid impersonality, in turn, marks his relations to other people: one constant feature of the analysis is the patient's inability to describe his wife or any other person, and his frequent inability to use people's Christian names. Winnicott tells the patient that in a real personal relationship there is an element of “subtle interchange”; this was lacking in his early relationship with his mother, and his sleepiness expresses hopelessness about finding such a relationship anywhere. The patient responds with real excitement: “I
must have been aware of the idea of a subtle interchange because I recognize that I have been looking for just something like that, without really knowing it.” Winnicott points out that he has just been achieving it: “We are both engaged in this matter of subtle interplay. I think that the experience of subtle interplay is pleasurable to you because you are so vividly aware of hopelessness in this respect.” The patient responds: “I would go so far as to say that it is exciting.” Love, concludes Winnicott, means many things, “but it has to include this experience of subtle interplay, and we could say that you are experiencing love and loving in this situation.”

Finally, we notice that there is another primitive emotion that dominates this patient’s entire existence: it is the emotion of shame, connected to the very fact of his own humanness. All infant omnipotence is coupled with helplessness. When an infant realizes that it is dependent on others, we can therefore expect a primitive and rudimentary emotion of shame to ensue. For shame involves the realization that one is weak and inadequate in some way in which one expects oneself to be adequate. Its reflex is to hide from the eyes of those who will see one’s deficiency, to cover it. If the infant expects to control the world, as to some extent all infants do, it will have shame, as well as anger, at its own inability to control.

Notice, then, that shame is far from requiring diminished self-regard. In a sense, it requires self-regard as its essential backdrop. It is only because one expects oneself to have worth or even perfection that one will shrink from or cover the evidence of one’s nonworth or imperfection. To the extent that all infants enjoy a sense of omnipotence, all infants experience shame at the recognition of their human imperfection: a universal experience underlying the biblical story of our shame at our nakedness. But a good development will allow the gradual relaxing of omnipotence in favor of trust, as the infant learns not to be ashamed of neediness and to take a positive delight in the playful and creative “subtle interplay” of two imperfect beings. Winnicott’s patient’s mother, instead, believed that all that was not perfect was worthless, and that her child was worthless just by virtue of being a child and wanting to be held and comforted. “Imperfect for me means being rejected.” His crying, his demands to be fed, all these signs of his human nakedness were so many signs of worthlessness in her own eyes. The good feeding, as he understood, would be one that blotted him out completely. (Thus he dreams of being smothered by his mother’s hair.) “There is only one way of achieving anything,” he concludes, “and that is by perfection.”

B therefore becomes obsessed with the way in which others will look at him, wanting them to see him as perfect, and knowing that if they see the real him they will not see perfection. His rigidity, his unwillingness to express himself, are attempts to maintain omnipotent control over his inner reality, so that he need not feel the shame of allowing his needy dependent self to emerge. Sleep is a defense against anger – but it is also the reflex chosen by his shame lest some human part of himself be revealed. A baby asleep is a good and perfect baby, and this is what his mother had wanted. Shame, then, causes the real vulnerable self to hide, the robotic and inauthentic “false self” to come to the fore. Recognizing that he had also expected perfection in Winnicott, and prompted by the analyst’s gentle reminder that this idea is a defense against anxiety, the patient remarkably states, “The alarming thing about equality is that we are then both children and the question is, where is father?” Here he arrives momentarily at a position of trust and playful holding that many children attain in infancy.

This case shows us the extent to which the infant’s ambivalent relation to its own lack of omnipotence can be shaped for better or worse by interactions that either exacerbate primitive shame or reduce it. A primitive shame at one’s weakness and impotence is probably a basic and universal feature of the emotional life. But a parent who takes delight in having a child who is a child, and who reveals in interacting with the child that it is all right to be human, eases the ambivalence of later object relations; B’s mother so exacerbated primitive shame that the real man was obliged to go underground, his place to be taken by a simulcrum, or by prudent sleep. “A feature of excitement,” says B,

58 For fundamental discussions of shame, see Morrison (1989), Piers and Singer (1955).
59 See the perceptive discussion in Doig (1966), pp. 236–47.
61 See ibid., where he describes wanting women to look at him as a perfect lover, and giving up in despair when he realizes that he is seen as human.
62 Ibid., p. 95.
63 Compare ibid., p. 147, where the patient gets angry at Winnicott and says he is like “the ogre of childhood play.” Winnicott expresses pleasure: “So you have been able to reach play with me, and in the playing I am an ogre.”
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"is irritation that it is not private... I have always had a difficulty that in sexual relationship with a girl there is no privacy, because there are two people. It is undesirable." (Proust would, perhaps, agree.)

Shame, of course, comes in many forms. Any ideal to which one holds oneself has shame as its permanent possibility. What I have termed "primitive shame" -- the demand for perfection and the consequent inability to tolerate any lack of control or imperfection -- is a specific type of shame, closely connected with narcissism, or infantile omnipotence. I have said that all human beings very likely have this emotion in some form. Doubtless, too, it is renewed and deepened by awareness of one's own mortality, when that awareness comes. Nobody wants to be condemned to die, and everyone would like to exert control over death; yet, of course, we are all powerless to do that. In that way the body may come to be a primary focus of primitive shame, as the seat of our inability to master the world and to go on living. But if these developments are in some form universal, B's history shows an exaggerated and paralyzing hypertrophy of both shame and the narcissism (demand for omnipotence, grandiosity) that is its counterpart. As Morrison nicely expresses the point, "Thus, shame and narcissism inform each other, as the self is experienced, first, alone, separate and small, and, again, grandiosely, striving to be perfect and reunited with its ideal."

By focusing on B, whose shame was closely related to his mother's demand for perfection, we have so far concealed other sources of individual and social variation in primitive shame. Psychoanalytic accounts of these issues typically focus on the role of parents, although they do not always exclude other variables. But we can easily see that there are many issues that might contribute to a hypertrophy of the sense of shame. One issue is physical disability. C, a child of my acquaintance, combined precocious cognitive gifts with a right hemisphere dysfunction that affected spatial perception, motor coordination, and the ability to adjust to new physical surroundings. We might say that C is doubly human: more cognitively able at an early age than most humans, and much more physically helpless. The extent of this discrepancy was striking: C learned to read before the age of two, and learned to tie her shoelaces at the age of eight. IQ tests showed, similarly, off-the-chart gifts in verbal and conceptual skills, mild retardation in spatial and physical skills. To the infant C, the world is more than typically alarming; it impinges on her in ways that she cannot control, and, with her highly acute cognitive capacities, she is especially keenly aware of these impingements. This is a set-up ripe for the development of an unusual degree of shame about one's capacity for mastery. Cognitive gifts help, and the drive to cognitive mastery was unusually strong in C. One day Henny Wenkart, an authority on the teaching of reading who knew C's mother, gave the mother a copy of a reading instruction manual she had just published. On its cover was a picture of the author, sitting and reading with a young child. C, just under two, already fluent in the alphabet, kept coming to her mother with this book, which clearly fascinated her. "Teach me, Mommy, she kept nagging," and then, when her mother capitulated -- "I'll be Henny Wenkart, and you be the child." This game continued until, after a very short time, C could carry on reading on her own. Notice the significance of C's choice of roles: she wanted to be the teaching adult, in control of the cognitive process, rather than the vulnerable child she felt herself to be. Reading was for her a passport to that ideal of control. When asked, at age six, to make up a story about the creation of the world, she wrote that the world was created from a book. And indeed, for her, this was so.

But all that cognition can do is insufficient to dispel the accurate perception that one cannot move the way other people move, cannot find one's way from here to there the way other people do, cannot learn to ride a bicycle, and so forth. All human bodies are limited, and all give rise, in that sense, to some shame. But a body that is relatively much more limited than others disproportionately gives rise to shame. So shame, present for C already, grew in her life in a virtually unavoidable way. The fact that peers tease uncoordinated children only exacerbated her problem. Thus, as with any disability, the biological and the socially constructed interact in an extremely complex way.

In C's case, then, we see an etiology of shame different from that of

64 Ibid., p. 166. Compare the experimental data in Lopez and Brennan (1990), concerning the relationship between early attachment problems and inability to tolerate ambiguity and uncertainty, particularly in romantic life. 
65 Morrison (1989), p. 66. See also Wurmser (1981), with numerous detailed clinical studies; Chapter 1 has the title, "Shame, the Veiled Companion of Narcissism."
66 Compare Lopez and Brennan (1990) on the influence of a variety of life events on the development of secure attachments.

67 See the excellent account of this interaction in Bérubé (1996), a moving account, by a social constructionist literary critic, of the life of his son, born with Down Syndrome.
B. Nor did it lead to the same result, since C had many more emotional resources than B, formed richly loving relationships, and had a rich inner world of imagination and creativity. Nonetheless, exaggerated shame caused her pain. More generally, in a world made for the normal, any child who is in any way non-normal is at risk for shame hypertrophy, particularly if the culture is intolerant of difference, as most cultures, especially child cultures, are.

Another source of difference in shame may come from the fact that cultures impose different ideals on different children. In some cultures, for example, males may be expected to show perfect control and mastery to a greater extent than females — in a way that produces at least some of B’s rigidity and inability to play or engage in “subtle interplay.” Elsewhere, little boys may be encouraged to play and explore the environment while little girls are treated as future brides and carefully guarded as they lead an indoor life. (When I encountered such girls in rural Rajasthan, India, they proved rigid in their attitude toward schooling, and had a very hard time learning to tell stories and engage in imaginative play.) Thus we need to think resourcefully about the issue of primitive shame, seeing the many different types of influences that may combine to augment it.

So far, then, we see emotions — not formal acceptances of propositions, but inchoate cognitive appraisals — arising out of the infant’s developing awareness of the uncertainty of the good and its own lack of omnipotence. Now I shall argue that emotions, so construed, are essential to the development of practical reason and the sense of self; that they bring problems to the moral life, but also substantial resources without which that life would be drastically incomplete.

**IV. DISGUST AND THE BORDERS OF THE BODY**

There is another related emotion that we must now consider: the emotion of disgust.  Disgust arrives somewhat later than primitive shame; it seems to be absent from children until the time of toilet training; so in considering it we are to some extent getting ahead of our developmental account, which is still focused on the first two years of life. But because disgust has a close relationship to shame’s concerns about bodily insufficiency, and because in later chapters these links will prove important, we must introduce it now; in Part III we shall carry the story further.

Disgust appears to be an especially visceral emotion. It involves strong bodily reactions to stimuli that often have marked bodily characteristics. Its classic expression is vomiting; its classic stimuli are vile odors and other objects whose very appearance seems loathsome.

Although important research by psychologist Paul Rozin has made it evident that disgust has a complex cognitive content, which focuses on the idea of incorporation of a contaminant. His core definition of disgust is “[r]evulsion at the prospect of (oral) incorporation of an offensive object. The offensive objects are contaminants; that is, if they even briefly contact an acceptable food, they tend to render that food unacceptable.”

Rozin does not dispute the idea that disgust may well have an underlying evolutionary basis; but he shows that it is distinct from both distaste, a negative reaction motivated by sensory factors, and (a sense of) danger, a rejection motivated by anticipated harmful consequences.

Disgust is not simple distaste, because the very same smell elicits different disgust reactions depending on the subject’s conception of the object. Subjects sniff decay odor from two different vials, both of which in reality contain the same substance; they are told that one vial contains feces and the other contains cheese. (The real smells are confusable.) Those who think that they are sniffing cheese usually like the smell; those who think they are sniffing feces find it repellant and unpleasant. “It is the subject’s conception of the object, rather than the sensory properties of the object, that primarily determines the hedonic value.”

In general, disgust is motivated primarily by ideational factors: the nature or origin of the item and its social history (e.g., who

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68 See Nussbaum (2003a), Chapter 1.
69 See Nussbaum (1999b) for a more extended analysis, and related social/legal reflections.
70 By “classic,” Rozin and I mean both that these are ubiquitous occasions of disgust and also that these are the central paradigm cases to which people typically turn in explaining disgust or why a particular thing is disgusting.
71 Rozin has published many articles on aspects of disgust, but a comprehensive account of his views is in Rozin and Fallon (1987).
72 Ibid., p. 24, n. 1.
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found disgusting, presumably because they are thought to be uniquely human, and hence do not remind us of what we have in common with animals. Feces, snot, semen, and other animal bodily secretions, by contrast, are found contaminating: we do not want to ingest them, and we view as contaminated those who have regular contact with them. (Thus “untouchables,” in the Indian caste system, were those whose daily function was to clean latrines; oral or anal reception of semen, in many cultures, is held to be a contamination and a mark of low or base status.) Insofar as we eat meat without finding it disgusting, we typically disguise its animal origin, cutting off skin and head, cutting the meat into small pieces.

Rozin tentatively concludes that the core idea in disgust is a belief that if we take in the animalness of animal secretions we will ourselves be reduced to the status of animals. We can extend this thought by adding, along lines suggested by Rozin’s research, that we also have disgust reactions to the spoiled or decaying, which, on this picture, would make us mortal and decaying if ingested. Disgust thus wards off both animality in general and the mortality that is so prominent in our loathing of our animality. Indeed, we need to add this restriction in order to explain why some aspects of our animality – for example, strength, agility – are not found disgusting. The products that are the ones that we connect with our vulnerability to decay and to becoming waste products ourselves. Thus in all cultures an essential mark of human dignity is the ability to wash and to dispose of wastes. (Rozin points to analyses of conditions in prisons and concentration camps that show that people who are forbidden to clean themselves or to use the toilet are soon perceived as subhuman by others, thus as easier to torture or kill. They have become animals.)

A prominent feature of disgust is the idea of “psychological contam-

73 Some people find okra disgusting, and it has been suggested that this may be because it has what seems like a mucous membrane and thus strikes them as animal-like. This reaction seems less prevalent in cultures where okra is typically stir-fried so as to lose its mucosity (it is, for example, a staple, in this form, of Indian cuisine).

75 Ibid., citing research by A. Angyal. When we do not disguise the meat – roasting a whole lamb, eyes and all, on a spit, or serving a pig with the head intact and an apple in its mouth – there is typically an air of macho bravado attaching to the gesture, as when hunters display the head of a quarry as a trophy, expecting to shock and a little disgust the faint-hearted. (In that sense, the famous and much-discussed Playboy “beaver hunters” cartoon strikes deep to the roots of misogyny, with its picture of a woman splayed across the roof of the hunters’ car in the manner of a deer.)
76 Rozin and Fallon (1987), citing T. Despres. For more examples of this tendency, and its negative relation to empathy and compassion, see Chapter 6.
inatation.” The basic idea is that past contact between an innocuous substance and a disgust substance causes rejection of the acceptable substance. This contamination is mediated by what Rozin, plausibly enough, calls laws of “sympathetic magic.” One such law is the law of contagion: things that have been in contact continue ever afterwards to act on one another. Thus, after a dead cockroach is dropped into a glass of juice, people refuse to drink that kind of juice afterwards. A second is “similarity”: if two things are alike, action taken on one (e.g., contaminating it) is taken to have affected the other. Thus, a piece of chocolate fudge made into a dog-feces shape is rejected, even though subjects know its real origin; subjects also refuse to eat soup served in a (sterile) bedpan, or to eat soup stirred with a (sterile) flyswatter.

These reactions are at one level irrational; and they display an error that mars many emotions: the object is identified, it would seem, at the wrong level of generality, and thence linked with objects from which it is crucially different. But while we can call this tendency irrational if we like, we must recognize that it is in two ways quite functional. In evolutionary terms, overgeneralization about what objects to avoid no doubt served to steer our ancestors more successfully away from truly dangerous items. As Nietzsche long ago said, a species that refused to overgeneralize, investigating each particular object precisely before any generalization, would probably have perished long since. And even in contemporary terms, it appears that a firm and overgeneral bounding off of the self from the disgusting serves to reassure the self about its own solidity and power. That is why disgust tends to spread itself so promiscuously over people and groups, as we shall see.

Disgust appears not to be present in infants during the first three years of life. It is taught by parents and society. This does not show that it does not have an evolutionary origin; many traits based on innate equipment take time to mature. But it does show that with disgust, as with language, social teaching plays a large role in shaping the form that the innate equipment takes. Usually this teaching begins during toilet training; ideas of indirect and psychological contamination are usually not firm until much later. Both parental and social teaching are involved in these developments. (The disgust levels of

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77 This law has a positive side, in our eagerness to possess or even just to touch objects that have been the property of celebrities, to sleep where they have slept, etc.


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children correlate strongly with those of their parents, and disgust objects vary considerably across cultures.)

Disgust, as Rozin says, is an especially powerful vehicle of social teaching. Through teaching regarding disgust and its objects, societies potently convey attitudes toward animality, mortality, and related aspects of gender and sexuality. Although the cognitive content and etiology of disgust suggest that in all societies there are likely to be certain primary objects of disgust — feces and other bodily fluids — societies have considerable latitude in how they extend disgust reactions to other objects, which objects they deem to be relevantly similar to the primary objects. Thus, although it seems right in a sense to say that there are some “natural” objects of disgust, in the sense that some broadly shared and deeply rooted forms of human thinking are involved in the experience of disgust toward primary objects, many objects become objects of disgust as a result of highly variable forms of social teaching and tradition. In all societies, however, disgust expresses a refusal to ingest and thus to be contaminated by a potent reminder of one’s own mortality and animality.

Our child, then, absorbs from toilet training and related social teaching some definite attitudes toward her own bodily wastes and toward other related substances. Disgust plays a valuable role in motivating the avoidance of genuinely harmful substances, and it does appear to have an evolutionary basis: so it would not be wise or perhaps even possible to bring up a child to lack it altogether, although both parents and societies can surely exercise great influence over its intensity and its manifestations. In this way, another root of conflict arises in the child’s life: for her own body now seems to her problematic, the source of vile substances. She learns to some extent, in some way, to cordon herself off against the decaying and the sticky in herself, and she comes to see herself in a new way as a result. A ubiquitous reaction to this sense of one’s own disgustingness is to project the disgust reaction outward, so that it is not really oneself, but some other group of people, who are seen as vile and viscous, sources of a contamination that we might possibly keep at bay. As we shall see in Part III, misogyny has been an especially potent instance of these projection reactions, as have anti-Semitism and loathing of homosexuals. For now, however,
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our child, as she becomes toilet trained and moves into her peer group, will start thinking about cooties, and who has them. By the age of six or so, she will target other children who are in some way different, saying that they have cooties. She will make paper cootie-catchers, and pretend to catch disgusting bugs on the bodies of these children. In that way, she will create an in-group and an out-group, the out-group serving to reassure the in-group that they are one step further away from being disgusting (oozy, sticky, decaying) themselves.

With disgust as with primitive shame, our ambivalence about our bodily makeup, its helplessness and its connection to mortality and decay, color the emotions of the child's developing social life, sowing the seeds of some tenacious moral and social problems.

V. PLAYING ALONE, THE AMBIVALENCE CRISIS, AND THE MORAL DEFENSE

We now return, however, to our somewhat younger child. The people of the Golden Age were, as Hesiod puts it, népioi – infantile, lacking speech and reason. This condition fit their blissful environment. For they did not need to learn to protect themselves, to farm or search for food, to form societies, even to speak. They did not even need to learn to move from here to there: for just as they were, they were complete. Closely connected to this is the fact that they are without the emotions of the ordinary infant. It is not only anger that they lack, lacking frustration; they also fail to have that infant's joy, insofar as they fail to conceive of the objects that fulfill their needs as external, and the transformations as taking place from outside their own wishes. And of course fear and anxiety will be absent from a life that knows no threat of pain.

It was all right for the people of the Golden Age to be emotionless, since that condition was suited to the world in which they lived. But in our world emotions are needed to provide the developing child with a map of the world. The child's emotions are recognitions of where important good and bad things are to be found – and also of the externality of these good and bad things, therefore also of the boundaries of its own secure control. Fear and joy and love and even anger demarcate the world, and at the same time map the self in the world, as the child's initial appraisals, prompted by its own inner needs for security and well-being, become more refined in connection with its own active attempts at control and manipulation, through which it learns what good and bad things are parts of its self, or under its control, and what are not. Among these external good and bad things it also learns that some are inert objects and some are endowed with their own agency. A child who does not learn fear is a child at risk; even anger is, I have suggested, a valuable effort to seize control and to assert the integrity of damaged selfhood. This emotional demarcation is adaptively valuable, teaching the child the importance of its boundaries, and rescuing it from a sense of helpless passivity before the world.

The infant we imagined had an inchoate awareness of self as various transforming processes, of others as parts or agents of such processes. As emotions and efforts at voluntary control develop in tandem, the picture of a substantial self develops more and more, as that of a container with boundaries, fortified against but also seeking the aid of the external world. Of course the self never is self-sufficient; and the images that the Stoics like to use – images of roundness, hardness, impermeability – are not only inaccurate images but also quite dangerous images for someone whose life is carried on in a world full of actual dangers and urgent needs for goods. Winnicott's patient B learned such ideas of the self: the tightly controlled impermeable person, the body asleep. One task of this phase of development will be to accept images that permit trust and vulnerability.

On the other hand, it seems to be essential to the child's growing ability to think and to act that it think of itself as a relatively enduring and stable thing in a not-too-hostile world, and that it become confident that it can achieve things on its own. It is at this stage that Winnicott revealingly introduces the concept of the child's ability to

80 Ages given for the recognition of ambivalence vary widely, from the second half of the first year to several years later; I shall be thinking of the crisis as occurring when the child is around two, but I don't think that the precise age is very important for the overall account.

81 In this connection, Aristotle's insistence that anger is not over just any damage, but always over something felt as a "slighting," begins to seem deep rather than narrow. For anger is not a reaction to just any bad event, but to one touching on what the person perceives as his or her sphere of value, things she would like to have go well and to some degree control. Thus the prompting event always has an aspect of invasion, the response an aspect of self-vindication and the affirmation of one's own boundaries.
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"be alone in the presence of mother," occupying itself with its own projects rather than constantly seeking comfort. His idea is that the sense of the self, and especially any inner depth or creativity in the self, require a sense of safety that is not always being reinforced by the physical holding of a caretaker.\(^\text{82}\) In order for this sense of safety to emerge, the child must be able to feel held even when not being physically held: she\(^\text{83}\) must come to feel that the environment itself holds her. At first, this environment is supplied by the presence of the parent, available in case of need but not making demands. Secure in that presence, the infant can relax and turn inward, discovering her own personal life. As time goes on, real physical aloneness is increasingly possible: but, as Winnicott stresses, physical aloneness is not sufficient for “the capacity to be alone,” which requires trust and confidence, and the ability to be preoccupied with one’s own thoughts and one’s inner life. (Only in analysis does B acquire the sense that he could be alone, since previously his inner world had been an object of shame.)\(^\text{84}\)

The personal kind of aloneness is always inherently relational; someone else is always there, and it is from the shadow of the early holding object that creative aloneness derives its richness. “A large number of such experiences form the basis for a life that has reality in it instead of futility.”\(^\text{85}\) This is the basis of the memory I recorded at the opening of this chapter, in which the thought of my mother holding me was continuous with later feelings of personal joy and reflection.

Another valuable concept Winnicott introduces is that of the “transitional object,” such as a blanket or stuffed animal, through which the child assures her need for reassurance without needing to seek the presence of the parent. She thus increasingly becomes – as in Proust’s narrative of adult sleep – her own parent and her own reassurance. Both the concept of playing alone and the concept of the transitional

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object give a crucial role to imagination. Just as the parent exercises imagination in responsively meeting the child’s needs, so now the child plays at being her own solace, imagining a safe world in the absence of visible sources of safety.

To a certain extent, then, the child’s emotions, if things go well, evolve in relation to an environment that is relatively stable, which provides spaces for the development of wonder and joy, as well as stable love and gratitude. But of course no such environment is completely stable, nor can it be, if the child is to learn to be active and independent. Caretakers must come and go, support the child and allow her to fend for herself, so that, through her evolving emotions of fear and joy, she will learn how to get around in the world. So the child is always inhabiting a world that is both safe and dangerous, aware of herself as both hard and terribly soft, both able and unable to rely on receiving nourishment and security from her caretakers. This intermittency of care, and the intermittency of safety that results, is an essential part of becoming able to live.

Before long a time comes when the child, further cultivating her imagination of absent possibilities, recognizes that the very same objects who love and care for her also go away at times and attend to other projects, heedless of her demands. Even as she gradually forms the conception of herself as a definite persisting substance, so she realizes that her caretakers or parents are such substances, that she depends on them, and that they are not in her control. This means that love and anger come to be directed to one and the same source. As Bowlby puts it: “Thus love, anxiety, and anger, and sometimes hatred, come to be aroused by one and the same person. As a result painful conflicts are inevitable.”\(^\text{86}\)

This is a pivotal stage in the child’s emotions. For she now really has love for the first time – if we think of a recognition of the separateness and independence of the object as a requirement of real love. But this love is colored in its very genesis by a profound ambivalence. (This ambivalence seems not to be present in the attachments of young animals of other species, who are far less physically helpless and also far

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82 Winnicott (1965), pp. 29–36.
83 At this point, it seems necessary to supply the child with a gender, since I shall go on to mention gender differences in development.
84 Winnicott (1965), p. 126: the patient says that he feels that “the barrier” is “almost broken through,” and that this means that he is no longer so worried about how to occupy the time: he doesn’t feel the same pressure to fill it up by “idle chat,” and he is more willing to sit with nothing to do. Winnicott replies: “You are telling me that for the first time you might be able to be alone, which is the only satisfactory basis for making relationships.”
85 Winnicott (1965), p. 34.
86 Bowlby (1973), p. 153. This stage is a central focus of object-relations psychoanalysts, including Fairbairn and Bollas. Klein already gave a good account of this phase, although she was, I think, in error to explain it with reference to an innate “death instinct” of aggression.
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less capable of these integrative perceptions.) Still unable to accept the
separate life of the caretaker, still intensely needy even while more
cognitively mature, the child feels that very separateness as a cause for
furious anger. Anger, which previously was inchoate rage directed at
the frustrating processes or parts of the world, now becomes full-
fledged and takes a person as its object, seeing the person as a blame-
worthy agent of damage. This anger, as Bowlby correctly emphasizes,
is itself ambivalent, for it is mixed up with the wish of love to incor-
porate and possess the needed object, and the anger itself may be used
as a device of control.

In consequence, next to anger we now also have on our hands the
emotion of jealousy – the wish to possess the good object more com-
pletely by getting rid of competing influences, the judgment that it is
very bad that there should be these competing influences and that it
would be good for them to vanish from the earth. And jealousy, which
has the caretaker as its focus, is next-door to envy, which takes as its
focus the competing objects who for a time enjoy the caretaker’s favor
– especially other siblings, and the lover or spouse of the primary
caretaker – or their love for one another, if both are primary. In envy
the child judges that it would be a good thing for her to displace the
competing objects from their favored position.

It is here, as Fairbairn convincingly argues,\(^87\) that we should locate
the Oedipus complex. For at this early stage, rather than finding an
emotional drama that revolves altogether around specifically sexual
needs and aims, we seem to find instead a more inclusive family of
emotions connected with the child’s desire to possess and control, her
inability to renounce omnipotence. We find jealous hatred of those who
compete with her for the attention of the one(s) she loves, and whom
she wishes to possess completely; and we also find the envious wish to
displace those competitors from their favored positions. Rather than
being about sex per se, this drama is about the infant’s object relations
more generally – her need for sustenance, security, and love, her un-

\(^87\) See especially Fairbairn (1952), p. 175, where he notes that the child may have ambiv-
alent relationships of love with both parents, and then may “constitute[s] the Oedipus
situation for himself” by focusing on the exciting aspects of one parent and the
rejecting aspects of the other. In drawing this constructed situation together with other
forms of envy and jealousy, I am, however, going well beyond Fairbairn, who still stays
more or less within orthodox psychoanalytic confines in his account.

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willingness to accept the separateness of the source of these good
things, and her primitive shame at the fact of her own needy incom-
pleteness.

It is difficult to say precisely where sexuality itself fits into this
drama, and I believe it is not possible to make convincing arguments
on this score in universal terms. In all cultures, of course, sex can figure
as an element in the competition, as sexual needs and sexual intimacy
remove the beloved object from the infant’s control. And the infant’s
own nascent sexuality can become a device through which she seeks to
compete with her rival or rivals. Beyond this, however, a great deal
depends upon culture: on the degree to which dwelling patterns have
made the infant aware of sexual activity, on the intensity of the bonds
within the family unit, and on the degree to which culture and the
individual family have saturated the child’s experience with intimations
of sexuality.\(^88\) We should not assume that the intense and often highly
eroticized bonds of the Western nuclear family are ubiquitous, and
Stanley Kurtz’s work on India has given us at least some reason to
think that they are not.\(^89\) Similarly, the fact that ancient Greece knew
nothing of the Oedipus complex is best interpreted not as a failure to
grasp what lay at the roots of their own experience, but as a sign that
they had different patterns of emotional development (almost never
seeing their fathers, for example), in which jealousy and envy took
slightly different forms.\(^90\) In the case I have described, my intense and
eroticized love for my father was an extremely important part of the
picture somewhere along the line. It would be difficult to say (and
certainly memory does not say) whether my anger at my mother in the
particular case was occasioned by competition for her attention against
other distractions (her gardening, my father), or whether it also in-
volved an element of competition with her for the attention of my

\(^88\) Proust draws our attention to these facts by pointing out that Marcel’s mother’s idea
of a good bedtime story for an anxious boy of around twelve is George Sand’s François
le champi, a sentimentalized tale of virtual incest in which a foundling infant is
raised by a young wife whose boorish husband he later displaces. The novel contains
scenes that closely resemble scenes that Marcel enacts with his mother or other women; and
it ends with an incestuous triumph, as Francois actually marries the woman who raised
him. Just as Francois, at age twelve, implores his guardian for a goodnight kiss and,
receiving it, weeps tears of bliss, so too Marcel learns to demand a maternal kiss, and
to experience a temporary cessation of anxiety.

\(^89\) Kurtz (1992).

\(^90\) See Nussbaum (1993c).
father. But both sorts of anger could certainly be found in my childhood. What I am claiming, however, is that the most powerful and to some degree universal element in this phase of development is ambivalent love/anger, attended by shame and envy. Whether and to what extent these emotions are sexual in the narrow sense, or involve a specifically sexual jealousy, will vary across societies and individual cases.\textsuperscript{91}

This jealousy and anger grow out of the asymmetry of need that characterizes the child’s relationship with her caretakers;\textsuperscript{92} for the child now realizes that she depends almost totally upon a person or persons who do not need her at all, who can walk away at any time, leaving her immobilized and helpless, and who indeed at times choose other relationships. The object of Oedipal envy is, then, anything that competes with her own need. Very often this may indeed be the other parent, but it may equally well be siblings, or any person or activity to which the caretaker is passionately devoted. The object of Oedipal shame will be the child’s own needy self, seen as insufficient for the omnipotent control of the object. Shame and envy are closely connected, since primitive shame involves the judgment that anything short of perfection is hideous, and this entails that any life in which the child shares the good object with others is unacceptable. The child can renounce envy only if she is able to tolerate living in a world in which others make demands on the good object, and these demands are granted legitimacy. But these demands will not be given legitimacy if the situation of being partial and incomplete is itself felt as shameful, and perfect control is the only acceptable goal.

Another way of putting this is to say that the “subtle interplay” characteristic of mature love permits the other to be independent, and takes delight in that independence; it thus works in favor of the renouncing of envy. But “subtle interplay” will be rejected by the child who is profoundly in the grip of the demand for perfection, since only a complete manipulation of the object will stave off shame. (To anticipate a theme of Chapter 8, Proust’s narrator is never so happy as when he has turned real people into literary characters, thus succeeding in the primitive wish to incorporate and control the good objects. It is only toward literary characters, he tells us, that we can have love without jealousy and envy. He can love real people without jealousy only when they are asleep.)

Before we describe the “ambivalence crisis,” let us recall some resources the child has by now acquired to meet it. First, she has nascent love and gratitude, now directed toward a whole object. If early holding has been successful, she has developed an increasingly subtle interplay with the object, which contains elements of trust and willing self-exposure. Second, she has curiosity about the world, combined with wonder and love of what is seen. Third, through her capacity to be alone and her play with transitional objects, combined with the subtle interplay she has developed with her caretaker, she has a nascent ability to imagine. In particular, by this time she is likely to be able to imagine the suffering of the good object. I knew that my bite had hurt my mother; I learned this by the kind of exercise my capacities got in periods of both solitary and interactive play, as I sang songs and told stories involving the experiences of others. (The impulse of wonder and the ability to imagine another’s pain work closely together, since wonder turns the child outside herself to involve her with lives she doesn’t know.) This development of imagination requires that the child not be unduly focused on primitive shame, an emotion that paralyzes play and cultivates rigidity.\textsuperscript{93}

Consider again Winnicott’s patient B. He had to make himself sleep so that he would not show any playfulness, or weakness, or anger. This pathological situation resulted from his inability to be imperfect, which paralyzed all three of the resources I have just described. He could not be alone or play. Preoccupied with being seen as imperfect, he had to go into hiding. Nor did he have much wonder and delight at the world: he could not attend to people as interesting in their own right, because he was so busy hiding his true self from discovery. Finally, his nascent capacities for love and gratitude were also stifled, since he could not trust another to see him, and therefore could not develop with them.

\textsuperscript{91} There is also the issue of age: object-relations theory posits ambivalence at an earlier stage of development than the original Freudian Oedipus complex; one will then have to ask what the child could be aware of, and how. Winnicott recognizes both a twoperson relation of ambivalence at a very early age, and a triangular relationship of jealousy/ambivalence at a later age.

\textsuperscript{92} On the asymmetry of need, see Bowlby (1982), p. 196, and Chodorow (1978).

\textsuperscript{93} Disgust also inhibits empathetic imagining; not in general, but in relation to the experience of any person who becomes its object.
the subtle interplay that is characteristic of love. As we shall see, this meant that he lacked resources for an adequate confrontation with the ambivalence crisis.

Let us now describe the crisis, as it might occur in a child who has had a more fortunate development. It is nonetheless a painful and terrifying crisis. First, the child feels the pain of frustrated need itself, and the corrosiveness of the accompanying anger. But, given that the child now knows that the object of her anger and the object of her love are one and the same, awareness of her angry wishes will also bring the pain of guilt, an emotion that is now felt for the first time. My memory of biting my mother is as vivid as it is because of the tremendous upheaval occasioned by this early experience of guilt – which involves the judgment that there are parts of oneself that are very bad, and have done bad things. My horrible feelings arose out of the awareness that the very person who had saved me from the wasps was the one whom I had bitten; this meant that my own love was tainted with badness. Finally, there will also be a powerful emotion of primitive shame, reflecting the fact that one has been imperfect, and thus fallen short of one’s aims and wishes, which continue to retain traces of infantile omnipotence. The degree and nature of this shame will vary with the extent to which the child’s first relationships have prepared her to take delight in her own humanness.

At first it may be impossible for the child to accept the co-presence of goodness and badness in herself, or to conceive of any way in which the badness can be discharged. This complex situation leads to grief, and to what Klein revealingly calls “the depressive position,” a position that is at least temporarily that of psychological helplessness. The child has in a very real sense experienced a profound loss – of the totality of its world of bliss, of the purity of the object of its love, of the full attention and love of that object, and, finally, of its own full goodness and purity. The world is no longer a golden world punctuated by moments of external danger. Danger is now seated at the heart of love, and of oneself. At first, it would seem that there is nothing to be done about this situation; one is, quite literally, helpless before the nature of one’s wishes.

On the other hand, the child now has resources to meet this crisis. She has gratitude and love, which involve wishing well to the parent who cares for her and holds her, and a subtle interplay with the parent’s expressions of concern. She has wonder and curiosity about the parent as an independent part of the world, which already renders her love partly noninstrumental and even, to some extent, non-eudaemonic. And she has the ability to imagine the parent’s pain (indeed, this ability explains why her suffering and guilt are so intense). These capacities suggest a strategy, which she will increasingly follow: to wipe out bad things with good things, damage with loving deeds. A crucial part of this strategy of “reparation” is the acceptance of proper boundaries to one’s demands, as the child understands, and shows increasingly in her acts, the fact that she lives in a world in which people other than herself have legitimate demands, in which her own needs are not the center of the universe. In other words, catapulted into a kind of rudimentary thought by the pain of having injured someone she loves, the child comes up with the ideas of justice and reparation. Gratitude and wonder already turn the child outward to some extent. But it seems plausible to suppose that much of the intensity and urgency of its transactions with others is fueled by the sense that something very bad must be atoned for; and this means that the very badness itself can be made a source of good.95

What is remarkably suggestive about this line of thought is that it shows that the ambivalence of human love – which might at first be thought to be a bad feature of our difference from the animals – may also be an important source of the intensity and creativity of human love, the terrifying moment of discovering one’s own impurity the source of a genuine turning outward toward the recognition of another person’s needs.

As Fairbairn perceptively notes, this rudimentary moral idea that one can pay back the good with the good comes as an enormous relief to the child, who would otherwise be condemned to live with the awareness of a kind of limitless badness in herself. He speaks of the so-called moral defense as follows:

95 This is a very important contribution of Klein (1984, 1985), whose powerful intuitive grasp of human situations here goes beyond the limitations imposed by some aspects of her theoretical structure.
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It is obviously preferable to be conditionally good than conditionally bad; but, in default of conditional goodness, it is preferable to be conditionally bad than unconditionally bad. If it be asked how it comes about that conditional badness is preferred to unconditional badness, the cogency of the answer may best be appreciated if the answer is framed in religious terms; for such terms provide the best representation for the adult mind of the situation as it presents itself to the child. Framed in such terms the answer is that it is better to be a sinner in a world ruled by God than to live in a world ruled by the Devil. A sinner in a world ruled by God may be bad; but there is always a certain sense of security to be derived from the fact that the world around is good ... and in any case there is always a hope of redemption. In a world ruled by the Devil the individual may escape the badness of being a sinner; but he is bad because the world around him is bad. Further, he can have no sense of security and no hope of redemption. The only prospect is one of death and destruction.96

In other words, morality, by limiting a child's badness, defends the child against being devoured by it. It makes the child have a feeling of safety and protection from harm, and permits the child to renounce wishes for complete control of the object, and the envy and jealousy that attend those wishes. From this point on, the child agrees to live in a world in which others make legitimate demands and one's own desires have appropriate boundaries. If one oversteps those boundaries, one must pay a penalty; and insofar as one forms aggressive wishes toward others, one must struggle to limit the damage these wishes do, and to repay the objects of aggression by creative and benevolent efforts. But because those moral demands rescue the child from helplessness and depression, they are at the same time welcome demands. Moral guilt is so much better than shame, because it can be atoned for, it does not sully the entirety of one's being. It is a dignified emotion compatible with optimism about one's own prospects. The structure of morality thus performs a "holding" function for the child, giving her a feeling of safety. In this sheltering structure she can play and exert herself. Unlike Winnicott's patient, she need not put herself to sleep for fear of murdering someone. Indeed, a good cycle now ensues: because she has accepted moral demands, she agrees to renounce envy and jealousy; but to the extent that she is able to renounce these, she has less ambivalence and less occasion for guilt.

Notice that this story of the origin of morality gives morality itself a particular character. Morality protects the intrinsic worth of persons and their dignity, at risk from the damaging effects of the child's internal aggression. It is nonegoistic and focused on the intrinsic worth of objects outside the self; it sets limits to self-interest and enjoins respect for the legitimate activities of others. But it is also infused by love and wonder, and thus it is not a gloomy authoritarian morality. Indeed, morality performs the holding function of a loving mother (if we may use Winnicott's proviso, that this "mother" may also be the father playing a "maternal" role). Rather than making a forbidding and stifling demand for perfection, it holds the child in her imperfection, telling her that the world contains possibilities of forgiveness and mercy, and that she is loved as a person of interest and worth in her own right. She therefore need not fear that her human imperfection will cause the world's destruction.97 And because she is not stricken by annihilating shame at her imperfection, she will have less need for envy and jealousy, emotions that express her desire for omnipotent control of the sources of good; in this way, too, a benign cycle is established.

The "moral defense" does not always take this form, as we have seen. In Winnicott's patient, morality had the visage of an ideally perfect father in whose eyes his mother and he both judged themselves to be shamefully imperfect. The perfection of the imagined father strengthened primitive shame, and prevented the child from understanding the potential for "holding" and mercy inherent in human love. Because nobody in the environment had any capacity for flexibility or mercy toward human frailty, and because nobody had the slightest interest in imagining the experiences of another, the child's ambivalent feelings became a source of unbearable anxiety, which never quite metamorphosed into a guilt that could be atoned for. Because he had to be perfect, he could not see his imperfection as anything that might be forgiven; he probably didn't even see it as a bad deed that he had

96 See Fairbairn (1952), pp. 65-7, esp. pp. 66-7. Winnicott has a similar account of the origins of morality, which also invokes, as has mine, the trust occasioned by early "holding": see Winnicott (1965), pp. 73-82, 93-105.

97 Winnicott (1965), notes that this idea of a good and merciful parent can frequently be associated with a corresponding idea of God: "man continues to create and re-create God as a place to put which is good in himself, and which he might spoil if he kept it in himself along with all the hate and destructiveness which is also to be found there" (p. 94).
done, but instead as an inexorable badness covering his whole self. Shame, not guilt, was thus his primitive response: hiding, and shutting down. He had no way of coping with his own anger, and so he simply refused to go through the struggle most children fight with their anger and envy. “I see now,” B concludes, “that there can be value in a struggle later when things have gone well at the beginning . . . To sum up, my own problem is how to find a struggle that never was.” 98 The moral crisis felt like a death sentence, and he made himself die. Winnicott says he is “cluttered up with reparation capacity” because he has not yet found the anger “that would indicate the use of the reparation phenomenon.” 99 In consequence, he of course became utterly incapable of morality, since morality involves the use of reparation capacities, respect for the humanity of another person, and regard for the other’s neediness.

Notice that my account gives an important role to both shame and guilt; but it sees guilt as potentially creative, connected with reparation and the acceptance of limits to aggression, whereas shame, at least shame of the primitive sort, is a threat to all possibility of morality and community, and indeed to a creative inner life. Guilt can, of course, be excessive and oppressive, and there can be a corresponding excessive focus on reparation, one that is unhealthy self-tormenting. On the other side, shame of a specific and limited sort can be constructive, motivating a pursuit of valuable ideals. But in their role at this pivotal stage of a child’s life, shame, with its connection to narcissism, would appear to be the emotion, of these two, that poses the bigger danger to development. I connect this suggestion with the idea that one of development’s central tasks is the renunciation of infantile omnipotence and the willingness to live in a world of objects. Guilt is a great aid in this task, whereas shame threatens to undermine it entirely. 100

In a lecture on “Morals and Education,” Winnicott suggests that religious systems of morality harm development if their central focus is on original sin rather than on goodness, and if they neglect the human conditions for the growth of trust and “belief in,” which include a central role for love and holding. “Actually moral education does not

work,” he concludes, “unless the infant or child has developed in himself or herself by natural developmental process the stuff that, when it is placed up in the sky, is called God.” 101 (Winnicott’s criticism does not pertain to one religious system rather than another, or lead us to

prefer one religion to another. The contrast he makes is internal to all of the major religions, in all of which we find interpretations that emphasize perfect obedience, and versions that emphasize flexibility and mercy.)

In the light of our account we can flesh out this suggestion further. Any strong emphasis on the badness of human imperfection, any strengthening of primitive shame through the image of a perfect and intolerant parent, may exacerbate the child’s moral crisis to the point of producing moral death. On the other hand, a merciful “holding” encourages the child to combat her aggression with reparative efforts. For this to happen, it seems important that the parent understand herself as imperfect, and nourish in the child a sense of delight in the sort of “subtle interplay” that two equally human figures can have. This can be done, for example, by showing delight in the child’s playfulness and creative efforts. But creating a relationship that builds the child’s love of the human in herself and in others requires giving up a certain type of safety, namely, that to be found in the type of rigid system in which a perfect and merciless father prescribes all duties from on high. As B says: “The alarming thing about equality is that we are then both children, and the question is, where is father?”

B’s is an extreme case. But we should note that many familial and cultural norms contain elements of the demand made by B’s mother, the demand to be without need, the demand not to be a child. Such a demand, Nancy Chodorow argues, is implicit in the developmental history of males in many cultures of the world. 102 Taught that dependence on mother is bad and that maturity requires separation and self-sufficiency, males frequently learn to have shame about their own hu-

99 Ibid., p. 29.
100 On shame and guilt, see, more generally, G. Taylor (1985), Piers and Singer (1953), Morris (1971).

101 Winnicott (1965), pp. 93–103, at p. 94. Winnicott may be wrong to treat belief in original sin as the target. The real target is a belief that it is impossible to achieve redemption through one’s own reparative efforts; a view of original sin may or may not be coupled with that idea.

102 But note that, insofar as some cultures treat girls as marriage material from an early age and carefully guard their purity, they may also be deprived of the ability to play and be interdependent—albeit in a quite different way, with a focus on renunciation of their own agency: see my earlier remarks about girls in Rajasthan.
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man capacities for receptivity and play, whereas females are more likely
to get the message from their parents that maturity involves a con-jued relation of interdependence, and that emotions expressing need are
appropriate. In the light of our discussion of B, we can now see that
the males Chodorow describes will frequently, like B, though less ex-
remely, both hide their need for others and avert their gaze from their
own inner world, not mapping it with care. This can become a vicious
bad cycle, as unscrutinized and undeveloped emotions remain at an
infantile level and are therefore felt to be all the more shameful, all the
more out of step with the controlling adult self who appears. Winnicott's
theory of the "false self" and Bollas's related account of the
"normotic personality" inform us that such people may function well
up to a point, frequently using intellectual competence to conceal need-
lessness, while the needy emotional elements lie dormant, lacking love
and cultivation. This can lead to a situation of helplessness like, though
less extreme than, B's, as the needy elements are inarticulate, unable to
make demands. This condition is highly correlated with depressive
illness in later life. In other words, many people receive a type of
emotional development that puts them on the road to B's situation,
with its lack of the capacity for "subtle interplay," although few suffer
B's complete emotional impoverishment.

We must now return to disgust, which also poses dangers for moral-
ity. The threat posed by disgust differs from the threat posed by primiti-
ve shame, although both take as their focus aspects of our imperfection
and lack of control. Whereas shame remains focused on the self,
disgust spreads outward. The parts of the self that are disgust's focus
are found disgusting after they leave the body, and the wish of disgust
is to remove them, to expel them from the sphere of the self. This wish
typically issues, as we have seen, in magical projections of the disgust
properties onto people or groups who from then on become a device
by which people create more secure boundaries between themselves
and aspects of their own animality and mortality. These vehicles of
the disgusting are rarely if ever the child's own parents or her closest circle:
for that would not accomplish the desired cordonning off. If your cootie-
catcher finds cooties on your mother, they are probably already on you
too. So the disgusting people are typically people who are different,
and who can be avoided as bearers of the contagion of slimy anim-
ality.104 Disgust poses a threat not to morality itself, then – one can have
a type of moral system while treating certain people as vehicles of
disgust; but it does pose a threat to the idea of the equal worth and
dignity of persons that is a very important part of any morality that
most of us would favor. Primitive shame and disgust are, however,
closely linked, in the sense that both spring from an unwillingness or
inability to accept one's actual situation as a needy animal, mortal and
highly dependent on others. One might say without exaggeration that
the root of disgust is primitive shame, the unwillingness to be a needy
animal. Of course all human beings have some primitive shame, and
probably could not function without it; disgust, too, is ubiquitous and
in some ways functional. But in both cases the hypertrophic forms are
not inevitable, and it is in these forms that these emotions pose a
particular threat to morality.

Once again, development creates different paths for disgust, and
these paths are often correlated with gender. In his ambitious study
The Anatomy of Disgust, William Miller, analyzing disgust's content
as I have here, closely links disgust to misogyny and the male's longing
to distance himself from the slimy products of his own body, ultimately
from his own animality and mortality.105 The woman becomes disgust-
ing and slimy because she is the vehicle of the man's semen. She be-
comes, by projection, the bearer of all those animal characteristics from
which the male would like to dissociate himself. Although Miller at
times suggests that this gender difference in disgust is inevitable, there
should surely be no doubt that it is social, and closely connected to
teachings concerning ambition and control. And societies vary consid-
ierably in the extent to which they encourage such projection reactions.

104 One of the irrationalities in disgust is its association of dirt with nonhuman animals —
for nonhuman animals are, on the whole, much cleaner than humans. But the associ-
atations, I have argued, are symbolic, aimed at shoring up the sense of power and
inviolability of a dominant group. Similarly impervious to reality was the belief of
upper-caste Hindus in India that they were clean and "untouchables" dirty. In actual
fact, as Gandhi discovered while working to prevent the spread of a cholera epidemic,
the lower castes had cleaner surroundings, since they defecated at some distance from
their dwellings, while the upper castes, who frequently used the gutters outside their
windows for this purpose, were at high risk of infection.
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Klaus Theweleit's remarkable *Male Fantasies*, a detailed study of an elite corps of German soldiers after World War I, finds in the writings of these soldiers a hypertrophy of disgust misogyny, in which the clean, virtually mechanical body of the soldier is strongly contrasted with the sticky polluted bodies of the women from whom they were born and into whom they ejaculate. One of his significant findings is that, while at some level the bodies of all women and perhaps especially one's mother are objects of disgust, at the level of conscious conceptualization there is a sharp splitting — wives, mothers, and nurses being represented as pure and "white," prostitutes and working-class women as sticky and disgusting. So in that sense the disgusting remains "other," and it is always possible to imagine removing it from the world the way one flushes away feces or disposes of spoiled food. We can see, even before embarking on our discussion of compassion in Part II, that disgust is thus likely to pose a particular threat to compassion, or at least to any form of it that extends it to human beings generally, without hierarchy or discrimination.

As we see, then, a view of emotional development reveals some problems that emotions, as acknowledgments of neediness and incompleteness, contain for morality; they also reveal rich resources for morality. Indeed, the story strongly indicates that without emotions morality could not come into being, and that it relies on them continuously for sustenance.

A view of what morality should be like and a view of psychological health are mutually supportive, though each also needs to be supported by independent arguments. When we see that a particular sort of moral system aids and abets primitive shame or conduces to the stifling of "subtle interplay," we have at least some reasons to be skeptical about that system. At the very least, we have reason to wonder about its transgenerational stability, since it seems likely to produce people like B, who shut down morally and cannot find access to their reparative capacity. But we may also make a deeper criticism: that such moral systems harm elements of the human being that need support and sustenance. When, on the other hand, we see that a morality that incorporates a large role for flexible judgment and mercy supports the child in her ambivalence crisis, reinforcing her sense that the world is worth living in despite her own badness, this gives us some reasons for being interested in that moral view. At the very least, it is likely that such a view can replicate itself stably across the generations, producing people who continue to inhabit and endorse it. And we may also give the view a deeper sort of praise, saying that it is gentle and supportive toward vulnerable parts of the personality that badly need support.

Similarly, if a moral view encourages children to project their disgust reactions onto vulnerable people and groups, we may wonder about that system from the psychological viewpoint: for, as Theweleit's study shows, people who cannot abide their own animality and learn to fantasize their bodies as pure machines are telling lies to themselves, and sustain a brittle and difficult existence. If, on the other hand, we discover that a moral view insists on equal respect for all persons and therefore teaches children that it is wrong to single out a group as the disgusting ones, because we are all equally moral and animal, we will suspect that this view is psychologically promising, because it tells no lies and does not require children (and adults) to live lives of brittle self-deception.

From the other direction, when we see that "holding" and the capacity for imaginative play support the renunciation of envy and the acceptance of the legitimate demands of others, we have reasons to think them important and attractive parts of child development, over and above the reasons given in the account of development itself. When we see that an upbringing like B's, with its stress on perfection and primitive shame, produces a person who cannot respect or attend to others as ends in their own right, we have additional reasons for being critical of such an upbringing, over and above those given in B's sad developmental history itself. Similarly, when we see that a type of toilet training that does not encourage a hypertrophy of disgust, and later parental efforts to inhibit the projection of disgust onto other children and groups, are supportive of a just society that accords respect to all persons, then we have reason to support that type of development, over and above the psychological reasons that have been mentioned. When we see that the developmental history of the German officers studied by Theweleit produced people whose rabid anticommunism and anti-Semitism were the vehicle of a hypertrophic and in origin misogynistic disgust, we have reason to shun that sort of child development even if it had otherwise appeared to be conducive to happiness.

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In this way, the developmental story I have presented seems well suited to one broad type of ethical view, one that is both merciful and committed to equal respect. We might still select a morality of the sort that I have characterized as rigid and lacking in mercy, if we were convinced that other powerful arguments supported it. But if we did select such a normative view, we would need to beware of the strains it imposes on the human child, and the possibility that these strains would produce not perfect morality, but moral collapse. Again, we might still prefer the social norms of gender described by Chodorow, or even the male education of Theweleit's officers, if we should conclude (per impossibile, as I believe) that they promote social justice and general well-being in ways that we could independently justify (though surely one prominent aspect of general well-being ought to be the health of individuals). But we would then still need to beware of the strains that they impose on the personalities of individuals, and on the needs of individuals for the "subtle interplay" that is an essential ingredient of love.

VI. "MATURE INTERDEPENDENCE" AND THE FACILITATING ENVIRONMENT

Winnicott and Fairbairn describe a norm of health, which is said to be the condition in which this story of emotional development culminates in a person who has not suffered some unusually disturbing blow. Fairbairn revealingly uses the term "mature dependence," rather than "independence," and contrasts this with the young child's "infantile dependence."107 In infantile dependence the child perceives herself as terribly needy and helpless, and her desire is to control and incorporate the sources of good. In mature dependence, by contrast, which from now on I shall call "mature interdependence," the child is able to accept the fact that those whom she loves and continues to need are separate from her and not mere instruments of her will. She allows herself to depend upon them in some ways, but she does not insist on omnipotence; and she allows them, in return, to depend in certain ways upon her; she commits herself to being responsible for them in certain ways.

Although this acceptance is never achieved without anger, jealousy, and envy, the story of maturity is that at a certain point the child will be able to renounce envy and jealousy along with other attempts to control, and will be able to use the resources of gratitude and generosity that she has by now developed — and developed in part on account of her guilt and sorrow — to establish the relationship on a footing of equality and mutuality. She acknowledges that she will always continue to need love and security, but sees that this can be pursued without a jealous attempt to possess and control. It is only at this point, Fairbairn stresses, that adult love is achieved, since love requires not only the recognition of its object's separateness, but also the wish that this separateness be protected.

Analysts sometimes speak as if health were a rather easy thing to achieve. Proust's narrative of the "intermittences of the heart" gives us a valuable reminder of the tensions and ambivalences of the adult human emotional life, and therefore of the enormous achievement represented by what Fairbairn so calmly describes as health, which may require a continuous struggle against the desire for perfection and totality. Behind the increasing competence and maturity — and, indeed, the mature and generous love — of a "normal" human adult lurks much that the Stoics and Proust correctly describe, in an inchoate and often preverbal form that is therefore, while cognitive, especially impervious to reasoning and argument — a seething jealousy, a demand to be the center of the world, a longing for bliss and comfort, a desire to wipe the competing object off the face of the earth — any of which may be very ill-suited to some of the adult's chosen plans and projects. The ambivalence crisis is never completely resolved, and reparation remains a lifelong task.

This being the case, we should not ask about the "facilitating environment" for development by looking to the family circle alone (even in its cultural context). To the extent that it ignores roles and institutions, object-relations psychoanalysis has shortcomings as an account of emotions and the imaginative capacities they involve. People cultivate emotions in larger social and political groupings, and they need to learn the types of imagination and empathy suitable to those interac-

107 Fairbairn (1952); compare Winnicott's use of the terms "absolute" and "relative" dependence.
tions. Chapter 6 will describe those processes and the role of institutions in them. At this point in the account, however, we should acknowledge that political institutions and systems of law are also part of the facilitating environment for the development of all the emotions of a citizen—and we now need to ask, at least in a preliminary and general way, what features such an environment might need to have, if it is to be capable of supporting the adult’s continued search for health.

Once again, any such political view would need to be well supported by independent arguments; but we can at least get some general sense of the “fit” between a certain account of the personality and a certain set of institutions. At the very least, seeing this “fit” will help us to address issues of stability, showing us that certain sorts of institutions can replicate themselves over time through the personality, and that others cannot. But we have independent reasons to prefer institutions that support individuals in their efforts to develop their capacities for love and reparation, since these are “primary goods” that any just political system should support.

Of necessity these remarks must be sketchy; they will receive further development in Chapter 8. I begin with some suggestive remarks by Fairbairn. Invited in 1935 to lecture on the relationship between psychoanalysis and communism, Fairbairn decided to construct an argument about the political view suggested by his psychology of mature interdependence, acknowledging that it was highly speculative. Just as the mature psyche, he argues, is one that accepts the other’s separate (and imperfect) will and life, and seeks to foster that—while still accepting the fact of mutual dependence—so too, a political life governed by that sort of maturity will be a liberal one, in which individual choice and autonomy are protected and fostered, and people agree to the Millean condition of the maximum liberty that is compatible with a like liberty for all. In this respect, he acknowledges that communism (as then practiced) fares very badly. On the other hand, he also holds that the child’s development away from infantile dependence and toward mature interdependence involves the renunciation of exclusive and local loves and the acceptance of ever-broader forms of community, governed by reciprocity and mutual care. “Mature dependence”

108 See Rauds (1971). I pose the question he poses, using a somewhat different account of moral development.

109 See the list of “central human capabilities” in Nussbaum (2000a) and elsewhere.

Involves a recognition of the parent’s separateness and liberty. But by the same token it involves the recognition that others have a claim on the parent—more generally, that others have needs and have, like oneself, a right to the good things of life. Thus, while communism must be rejected because of its assault on liberty, some forms of democracy should also be criticized for being excessively nationalistic and ethnocentric. Ultimately, he argues, a full recognition of human interdependence should lead in the direction of internationalist humanism and away from local, tribal, religious, and ethnic particularism. (Thus he defends something like Kant’s idea of a global federation of free republican states.)

Fairbairn does not dwell on material need: but it is easy to take the argument one step further, with help from Winnicott. Mature interdependence requires acknowledging the imperfection of the human body, and its needs for material goods; it also involves renouncing the wish of envy to monopolize the sources of good. We might then suggest that mature dependence entails the determination to pursue the fulfillment of basic material needs for all citizens, granting that all have rights not only to liberty but also to basic welfare. All are allowed to be children, in the sense that all are permitted to be imperfect and needy, and an essential part of regard for the humanity in them is to attend to the “holding” of those needs and the creation of a political “facilitating environment.” Thus a norm of psychological maturity also suggests a norm for public life, a commitment to the meeting of basic needs, or, to put it differently, to support for a group of basic human capabilities. I have defended this view of the goal of political organization elsewhere, with independent arguments. At this point, we can see that such a view supports psychological health, as I have described it. It is also well suited to replicate itself stably over time, since its leading ideas support the formation of personalities that are likely to be intensely concerned with the needs of others, and thus to support for its leading ideas.

Facilitating environments are created, then, not only by individual parents, but also by customs, institutions, and laws. Institutions can express the view that we are all people who exercise initiative and creativity on a footing of equality; or they can express the view that there is a perfect patriarch who denies to the child the right to be alone. I b comes up with this idea on his own, on the last day of analysis,
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when he is about to leave Winnicott: “The great master, Freud, the Pope, Stalin: the acceptance of dogma is something that takes the place of father.”  They can express the idea that need is a sign of shameful failure, or they can express the idea that need is a normal part of being human. Finally, they can express the idea that our aggressions can never be redeemed, or they can express the idea that we may make reparation for our aggressive wishes and acts. In thinking about material need, political structure, the choice of a system of punishment — in all these areas we should ask what capacities of the personality different institutions support, and to what extent this gives us reason to choose one set over another.

We can give one more example of how such deliberations might go, by thinking about punishment. In childhood, an essential goal of punishment, according to the view I have developed, must be to support the child’s reparative capacities. Punishments will do this best, my argument indicates, if they do not strengthen primitive shame, which undercuts the reparative capacity. The child should be encouraged to feel guilty, since that is a moral emotion appropriate to what she has done. But she should not be encouraged to have shame at her imperfection, as B did, since this will be likely to create rigidity and terror in the personality, causing the reparative capacities to go underground. This means that the punishing parent should treat the child with dignity and not mock her, since this will give the message that “imperfection means being rejected.” The parent should choose a method that strengthens the child’s confidence in her reparative capacities, what Winnicott calls her “growing confidence that there will be opportunity for contributing-in.” For example, this might involve a period of separation from the family context, followed by a reintegration, as the child is allowed to make reparation for what she has done.

Public punishments have to meet many demands that parental punishments do not. They must be chosen with an eye to protecting society from violent offenders, and also with an eye to deterring crime. So anything we say here will represent only a part of what must be considered. Nonetheless, the view that I have developed gives us some reasons

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for skepticism about the current revival of interest in “shaming penalties” for offenses such as drunk driving, soliciting prostitutes, and so on.112 Societies that use shaming penalties to mock criminal offenders reinforce primitive shame at the frailties of the human being. In the case of the particular offender, this may prove psychologically damaging; it may even produce a moral shut-down like B’s, as a crippling anxiety about imperfection paralyzes the ability to attend to others as worthwhile in their own right. In society generally, shaming others contributes to a merciless rigidity such as that characteristic of the B family, in which one was either the father or one didn’t deserve to be on the face of the Earth. What we want is more like what B found with Winnicott, a society in which all are children, needy and fallible, and all respect one another as of interest and value in their own right. In dealing with a criminal offender (of the kind, let us suppose, who does not pose an immediate threat to the safety of others), society can perform the function of a parent who “holds” the child despite its imperfection, by allowing an offender to display and strengthen reparative capacities, in community service, conferences between offender and victim,113 and so on. This should have healthier effects for the individual, strengthening his confidence in his capacity to contribute to society; and it should also lessen the amount of anxiety and hiding in society generally, given that we do not say that “imperfection means being rejected.” In general, the argument of this chapter is that most people have too much shame already; what they need is to develop confidence in their capacity to make reparation.114 We recall, too, that it was B’s mother’s anxiety that led her to persecute and stifle her infant; and we can guess that as people jump on the shaming bandwagon, their own anxiety will exacerbate their aggressive and persecutory tendencies toward others. Again, we still might choose such punishments for other reasons — if, for example, they were shown to have a deterrent effect vastly superior to others. But we should do so in the light of a knowledge of the strains that they are likely to impose on the personality.

110 Winnicott (1986), p. 186. Winnicott points out that B avoids naming him, and that he probably wants to name him, since Winnicott has been both a mother and a father figure in the analysis, and he wants to establish independence by defying him.


112 See Kahan (1996).

113 See Braithwaite (1999).

114 There are other reasons for being skeptical of shaming: in particular, it is difficult to calibrate the quantity of punishment to the quantity of the offense. See J. Whitman (1998), E. Posner (2000).
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VII. THE NEO-STOIC VIEW REVISED AGAIN

I have argued that the childhood history of emotions shapes adult emotional life: that the emotions of adult life originate in infancy, and that this infantile history shapes their adult structure in powerful ways. Cognitive views that leave out infancy cannot explain the way in which the emotions of adult life bear the shadows of earlier objects. Neither, I have argued, can noncognitive views. The difference between B and a more fortunate man, archaic though it is, is still at root a cognitive difference, a difference in one’s perceptions of value and salience, a difference in the narratives of need and dependency one has come to accept.

We can now understand more deeply, however, some of the motivations underlying opposition to a cognitive/evaluative view. The emotions of the adult life sometimes feel as if they flow up out of nowhere, in ways that don’t match our present view of our objects or their value. This may be especially true of the person who maintains some kind of false self-defense, and who is in consequence out of touch with the emotions of neediness and dependence, or of anger and aggression, that characterize the true self. We should remember that in Winnicott’s terms the “false self” is a matter of degree, and that we all have one to some extent, if only the polite social veneer we use to mask our deeper emotions. But for many people the conscious valuings of daily life serve also as a mask worn in the presence of oneself; deeper emotions persisting from childhood operate, and motivate, in ways that the person may not consciously understand. When these emotions manifest themselves, or when their motivating activity is made clear, the person may well feel as if forces of a noncognitive kind were pushing her around: for the cognitive content of these emotions may not be available to her, and even to the extent that it is available it may have an archaic and infantile form. Moreover, it may not match at all the thoughts about the value of objects that she is aware of having. And she may stick to her view despite her conscious thoughts and the evidence before her.

Thus, R may be carrying around a great deal of anger against paren-

115 Winnicott (1965), pp. 140–54, esp. p. 143: “In health: The False Self is represented by the whole organization of the polite and mannered social attitude, a ‘not wearing the heart on the sleeve,’ as might be said.”

tal objects without recognizing that she has anger at all, and she may even, like Winnicott’s B, have a very strong determination not to allow anger into play, for fear of the destruction that might ensue. R may think of herself as someone who wishes all of her objects well, and she may actually wish them well. If she should become aware of murderous anger against them, this might seem to her like being possessed by an alien force, and she might easily form the view that energies of a noncognitive type were pushing her personality around. But she would not be right. We can see that we would not fully understand her anger unless we understood its intentional content; thinking of it as merely impulsive, we do not see that she wants to kill a parent, and thus we miss what really explains her actions.

Or take Q, a more healthy personality, who has found ways of atoning for aggressive wishes through reparation, and who has developed at least some confidence that she can overcome love by hate. Such a person does not allow a false self to push all primary emotions from the scene; and yet, in her intense focus on creative or reparative efforts, Q may not be fully aware that anger and guilt toward parental objects is a crucial part of her motivation, essential to the explanation of her intense need to make reparation. To the extent that she becomes aware of her anger, she too may feel that it is like an alien force: for precisely what she is doing in her reparative efforts is to make herself into a person who produces good for others. And yet we would not have a complete account of her motivation if we were to treat the anger as an alien impulse, failing to note its intentional content.

Take, finally, P, a man who has been raised as the males described by Chodorow are raised: taking pride in self-sufficiency, believing that he has no need of anyone. Like many such males, P continues to have intense needs for holding that will manifest themselves under certain circumstances, and are crucial to the full explanation of his actions. On the other hand, he may have a very strong interest in not identifying those needs as part of him, since he is ashamed of them. When they erupt, he will think: “Who is this needy child? Certainly not me.” And he may form the view that emotions don’t at all manifest the way the person views his objects; indeed, they may seem to him like invading and obtuse forces that resist seeing things the way the personality sees them. Nonetheless, in such a case we see that the intentionality of early object relations is a crucial part of explaining how he will act. It is
important both to see that his love has an early object and also that the emotion's intentionality has remained at an archaic level, rather than getting further development through "subtle interplay" and creative imagining.

In short, the phenomenology of the adversary's view is appealing precisely because it does capture the dissonance that many of us feel between what we are aware of intending and what we suddenly find ourselves experiencing under certain circumstances. These may be differences of kind, as when we are aware of goodwill and experience sudden anger; or they may be differences of degree, as when we think we have a mild emotion toward someone and suddenly discover a very strong emotion. The past wells up in us, in ways that surprise the deliberately intending self. But once we see that it is the past that so wells up, and not some shot of adrenaline, we also see that we cannot understand it without getting at the intentional content that is proper to it. The difference of kind is ultimately explained by the fact that infantile emotion toward a beloved object has somehow come to take this present object as its occasion or symbol; the difference in degree is explained by the fact that the present object, not terribly important in my scheme of goals and ends, somehow represents an early object of great centrality. A cognitive view will be obtuse if it does not make room for such archaic and infantile cognitions and for their present force; but a noncognitive view cannot do justice to the way in which the past wells up, to the intense attachments to early objects that are manifest in it.

Thus my cognitive view, by including a developmental dimension, makes room for the mysterious and ungoverned aspects of the emotional life in a way that many such views do not. This has consequences, as well, for the picture of character the view will support. All cognitive views of emotion entail that emotions can be modified by a change in the way one evaluates objects. This means that for such views virtue need not be construed (as Kant construes it) as a matter of strength, the will simply holding down the brutish impulsive elements of the personality. Instead, we can imagine reason extending all the way down into the personality, enlightening it through and through. If a person harbors misogynistic anger and hatred, the hope is held out that a change in thought will lead to changes not just in behavior but also in emotion itself, since emotion is a value-laden way of seeing.

Clearly this view has important implications for moral education, in the area, for example, of emotions toward members of other races and religions: we can hope to foster good ways of seeing that will simply prevent hatred from arising, and we don't have to rely on the idea that we must at times suppress an innate aggressive tendency.

Some such views suggest that emotional change will be a relatively easy matter: thus Aristotle gives the aspiring orator instructions for taking anger away, by presenting the objects of anger in a new light. If, say, we understand that the Persians have not really wronged us, we will stop being angry at them. But of course life is not always like that. Some angers may indeed shift directly with a new account of the facts; many do not. Again, some hatred and disgust toward groups can be prevented from arising by a good moral education; and yet, hatred seems to arise again and again, despite our best efforts, as if it had some deeper root in the personality.

Seeing this recalcitrance in emotion may then make us doubt the cognitive account: if persuasion doesn't bring change directly, and if our efforts at moral enlightenment don't eradicate prejudice, this must be because we are dealing with something other than evaluative thought. I have already addressed this point in Chapter 1, pointing out that many nonemotional thoughts are also resistant to change, particularly thoughts that are formed early in life, and in which we are deeply invested through reliance and habit. Emotion-thoughts involve, in addition, a stronger kind of investment, for they concern elements of our conception of well-being. Surely the Stoics already showed that the emotional life is hard to change: their cognitive view implied only that there was a task to be undertaken, not that this task could be easily accomplished; perhaps it could not be completed at all. Similarly, among modern writers on virtue, Iris Murdoch has stressed the long and patient effort of vision, the painstaking inner moral work, that is required if we are to change our ways of seeing people we fear, or hate, or resent. Precisely because such matters are both habitual and important to us, change will not be easy.

My view, however, goes further than these views, which ascribe the difficulty of emotion change to habit and the early roots of the relevant cognitions. For my view suggests that we may be quite ignorant of what our emotion-cognitions are, and also that we may have a lot invested in not changing them. For B, seeing himself as perfect/shame-
fully imperfect was not just a habit to be addressed by behavioral therapy. These ways of seeing himself were not fully conscious: they emerged into full awareness only in the analysis. Moreover, so much of his life had been organized around them that any change brought a sense of large-scale upheaval: in that sense, one’s own character becomes an object of attachment, and poses resistance to alteration. Where early moral development is concerned, my account suggests that we are never dealing with a purely benign picture, into which hatred will enter only if we put it there. The roots of anger, hatred, and disgust lie very deep in the structure of human life, in our ambivalent relation to our lack of control over objects and the helplessness of our own bodies. It would be naïve to expect that projections of these negative emotions onto other people will not take place—although we may certainly hope to moderate their number and intensity.

My view, then, urges us to reject as both too simple and too cruel any picture of character that tells us to bring every emotion into line with reason’s dictates, or the dictates of the person’s ideal, whatever that is. Given human ambivalence and neediness, and the emotions that have grown out of that, this is simply not a sensible goal to prescribe; and prescribing an unachievable norm of perfection is the very thing that can wreak emotional havoc, as B’s case shows us. If Aristotle’s view entails that the good person can and should demand emotional perfection of herself, so that she always gets angry at the right person, in the right way, at the right time, and so forth, then Aristotle’s view is tyrannical and exacts of us more than humanity can deliver.¹¹⁶

One way of bringing this out clearly is to refer to a criticism of Aristotle—and of modern Aristotelians—made by the late H. Paul Grice, the distinguished philosopher of mind and language. In a lecture delivered in the early 1980s at the Princeton Ancient Philosophy Colloquium, Grice claimed that Aristotle has “a Prussian view” of human life. “I cannot lie in the sun,” Grice said, “simply because I want to.” Everything, he said, has to be justified by its role in eudaimonia. This was a shocking claim: Kant, of course, is usually taken to be the Prussian one, both literally and figuratively, and Aristotle the sunny Hellene. Grice was arguing that it should be seen the other way around: Aristotle exercises surveillance over every aspect of life, whereas Kant lets the passions go, so long as they don’t interfere with the will.

Now of course the response to this—which Aristotelians were ready enough to give—is that an Aristotelian view can, as Aristotle’s does, make ample space for virtues of playful friendly association, and we can easily defend lying in the sun as a virtuous deed on some such conception. The virtuous agent will be the one who chooses and desires to lie in the sun at the right time, in the right way, for the right reasons, and so forth. But Grice’s point remains: the sheer wish to do some things not for a reason, and the merciful willingness to cease interrogating oneself about the appropriateness of one’s motives and passions, are given no place at all in Aristotle’s conception.¹¹⁷ Kant is less “Prussian” than Aristotle in two crucial respects: (a) once duty is fulfilled, I can do other permissible things as I like; and (b) my duty does not extend to the formation of appropriate desires in the area of sunbathing. It was Epictetus, not Aristotle, who said, “Watch over yourself as over an enemy lying in wait.” And it is the Stoic tradition that develops to the most extreme point the idea of zealous critical surveillance over desire and emotion (including the extirpation of the latter where possible).¹¹⁸ But there is something like this in Aristotle, too, albeit more cheerfully expressed. To this extent, my neo-Stoic view of emotion, by providing the emotions with a history, has already diverged from normative Stoic ethics, and even from Aristotle: for already in my psychological account I provide the basis for condemning those normative approaches as excessively violent toward human complexity and frailty.

¹¹⁶ Notice that Kant, by contrast, is less harsh toward the vicissitudes of passion. If we do the right thing with reluctance, or perform our duty with little sympathy, Kant will not think the less of us, so long as we were using every means in our power to do the right. For Kant thinks that some things just can’t be helped, and he is inclined to be merciful to the deficiencies of the passionate personality.

¹¹⁷ A valuable discussion of this issue, apropos of the relationship between Dostoyevsky’s Notes from Underground and the Aristotelian view of motivation, was given in a Ph.D. dissertation by Eunice Belgum, (Harvard, 1976). Because of her untimely death, this material remains unpublished.

¹¹⁸ As Seneca’s De Matrimonio puts it, “The wise man loves his wife by judgment (judicio), not by passion (affectio); he controls the desire for pleasure, and is not easily led to intercourse.” Kant is, again, less rigorous: even though sexual desire, in his view, always leads to the objectification and use of persons, it is vain to try to reform it; instead, we simply hedge it round with an institution (as marriage is, in his view) that guarantees mutual regard and noninstrumental treatment.
PART I: NEED AND RECOGNITION

VIII. IMAGINATION AND NARRATIVE

We have had several occasions to refer to narrative and to imaginative play. This theme needs further development, since it is fundamental to our later inquiries into love and compassion. Emotions, we now can see, have a narrative structure. The understanding of any single emotion is incomplete unless its narrative history is grasped and studied for the light it sheds on the present response. This already suggests a central role for the arts in human self-understanding: for narrative artworks of various kinds (whether musical or visual or literary) give us information about these emotion-histories that we could not easily get otherwise. This is what Proust meant when he claimed that certain truths about the human emotions can be best conveyed, in verbal and textual form, only by a narrative work of art: only such a work will accurately and fully show the interrelated temporal structure of emotional "thoughts," prominently including the heart's intermittences between recognition and denial of neediness.

Narrative artworks are important for what they show the person who is eager to understand the emotions; they are also important because of what they do in the emotional life. They do not simply represent that history, they enter into it. Storytelling and narrative play are essential in cultivating the child's sense of her own aloneness, her inner world. Her capacity to be alone is supported by the ability to imagine the good object's presence when the object is not present, and to play at presence and absence using toys that serve the function of "transitional objects." As time goes on, this play deepens the inner world; it becomes a place for individual creative effort and hence for trusting differentiation of self from world. Winnicott speaks of artistic activity, therefore, as a type of "potential space," sacred to the individual, that mediates "between baby and mother, between child and family, between individual and society." Notice that it is only because the mother herself has cultivated her own "potential space" that she is able to imagine the experience of her child and to respond appropriately to its needs: so imagination is a crucial part of the reproduction of healthy character, and hence of a society's transgenerational stabil-

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ity. The "subtle interplay" between baby and parent is crucially mediated by play with narratives and images, as the child too becomes able to imagine another person's experience.

During the ambivalence crisis, narrative play provides the child with several distinct benefits. First of all, spending time in narrative play has already given her ways of understanding the pain that her destructive wishes would inflict on others, and therefore of taking their full measure. At the same time, narratives have given nourishment to curiosity, wonder, and perceptual delight, strengthening her ability to see other people in non-instrumental and even non-eudaimonistic ways, as objects of wonder in their own right. This assists her in her own reparative efforts. Furthermore, this same wonder and delight give her ways of relating to her own sometimes frightening and ambivalent psychology: she becomes interested in understanding it, rather than fleeing from it and pushing it underground in the manner of B. This project of understanding, in turn, militates against depression and helplessness, feeding her interest in living in a world in which she is not perfect or omnipotent. Finally, and perhaps most important, by dressing imperfection in a pleasing and playful shape, narrative play can undercut primitive shame at all that is human, helping a child to attain a certain forbearance and even joy about the lives of imperfect beings. If I am right, that development in turn contributes to the struggle of love and gratitude against ambivalence, and of active concern against the helplessness of loss.

See Nietzsche, *Gay Science* 107: art saves us from nausea at human life by giving us a good will toward things that we have made. We can relax the demand for omnipotence and perfection because we find that we enjoy something that is fully human.

119 Winnicott, in Rudnitsky (1993). See also the essays by Bollas and Milner in the same volume.