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The Sources of Experience in Infancy

As explained in the introduction, the project of this book presupposes that the contradiction between the psychoanalytic and Jungian conceptions of the unconscious can be eliminated. The psychoanalytic notion of the id and the Jungian notion of the collective unconscious must be rendered consistent if the Jungian-transpersonal theory of ego transcendence is to be grounded in the psychoanalytic theory of ego development. Given the importance of this matter to the book as a whole, I am placing it at the top of the agenda and addressing it here in the first chapter.

Finding a way of reconciling the psychoanalytic and Jungian conceptions of the unconscious is important not only to the book as a whole but also to the specific topic of this chapter, which treats the sources of experience in infancy. Both classical psychoanalysis and analytical psychology agree that the unconscious is a primary source of experience during infancy. They agree that the ego emerges from and is intimately open to the unconscious during infancy. If, then, we are to be able in this chapter to shed any light on how the unconscious functions as a source of the infant's experience, we must first address the issue of the nature of the unconscious itself. Accordingly,

in the next section I shall present a brief sketch of the conception of the unconscious that will serve as the basis for the perspective of this book. This sketch, it must be stressed, is only a sketch. It is a preliminary formulation of a view that finds its full working out only in the book as a whole.

THE NONEGOIC CORE OF THE PSYCHE

Classical psychoanalysis and analytical psychology agree that the deep unconscious—that is, the id or collective unconscious—is a realm of possible experience that lies beyond (or beneath) the egoic system.¹ It is a nonegoic realm that is the source of the dynamic depth potentials of the psyche. In the terms I shall be using, psychoanalysis and analytical psychology agree that the deep unconscious is a *nonegoic core* of the psyche from which derive the following *nonegoic potentials*:

1. Energy, dynamism
2. Instinctual drives and predispositions
3. Affect, emotion
4. The imaginal, autosymbolic, process
5. Collective memories, complexes, or archetypes

Although psychoanalysis and analytical psychology both posit a nonegoic core of the psyche as just described, they of course interpret the nature of this core in radically divergent ways. Psychoanalysis interprets the nonegoic core and its potentials exclusively in a preegoic (i.e., biological, infantile, prerational) and negative (i.e., ego-alien, regressive) manner. Analytical psychology in contrast interprets the nonegoic core and its potentials in a much more complex manner, dividing nonegoic potentials into preegoic and transegoic (i.e., transcendent or spiritual), negative and positive (i.e., ego-transforming, redemptive), types.

For example, classical psychoanalysis interprets the nonegoic potentials listed above in the following way:

1. Libido, aggressive energy
2. Sexual and aggressive drives
3. Modulated and sublimated instinctual drives
4. The primary process
5. Phylogenetic memories and infantile complexes

This list, which is an inventory of the id, clearly reflects Freud's one-sidedly pregoic (henceforth, *pre*²) and negative interpretation of nonegoic potentials. (1) Energy is interpreted exclusively as bioinstinctual energy, specifically as libido and aggressive energy. (2) Instinctual drives and predispositions are reduced to the sexual and aggressive drives, which are considered the basic moving forces of the psyche. (3) Affect and emotions are interpreted reductively as discharges, modulations, or sublimations of the instinctual drives. (4) The imaginal, autosymbolic, process is interpreted as the prerational primary process, a cognitive process that is immensely creative (e.g., the creativity of dreams) but that also suffers from serious shortcomings (e.g., illogical condensations and displacements of meaning). And (5) collective species experiences are interpreted as either phylogenetic memories (e.g., the killing of the primal father) or infantile complexes (e.g., the Oedipus complex). In sum, Freud interpreted nonegoic potentials as forces or processes that are lower than the ego in evolutionary and developmental status and that are basically negative, ego-dystonic, in character. To be sure, the ego, for Freud, is a servant of the nonegoic id, which is the sovereign power of the psyche. Nevertheless, the ego is considered superior to the "bestial" master it serves.

Jung's understanding of nonegoic potentials is much more complex and ambivalent than Freud's. For whereas Freud interpreted all nonegoic potentials in a one-sidedly pre and negative manner, Jung tended to interpret nonegoic potentials in both pre and trans, both negative and positive, ways. This fact is evident in the following interpretations. (1) Energy is conceived as neutral psychic energy, as energy that empowers all psychic systems, processes, and experiences, whether lower or higher, merely biological or spiritual, pre or trans. (2) Instinctuality is interpreted very broadly to include not only biological instincts such as those of survival and procreation (pre) but also inherited developmental and spiritual predispositions such as those governing the individuation process (trans). (3) Feelings are interpreted in an equally broad manner to include not only primitive instinctual feelings and infantile and malevolent feelings deriving from the shadow (pre) but also sublimely numinous and beatific feelings issuing from inner spiritual resources (trans). (4) The imaginal, autosymbolic, process is considered the source of all dreams, spontaneous fantasies, symbols, and myths, whether primitive or spiritual, archaic or prophetic, pre or trans. And (5) collective species experiences are interpreted as the archetypes of the collective unconscious, which include both pre archetypes reflecting the prior

evolution of the species and trans archetypes pointing toward future or higher developmental possibilities.

In Jung's account, as just stated, nonegoic potentials are either both pre and trans (e.g., instinctuality, feelings, archetypes) or neither pre nor trans but capable of serving both pre and trans ends (e.g., psychic energy and the imaginal or autosymbolic process). In either case the two-sidedness of Jung's perspective is clearly visible. Unlike Freud, whose conception of the nonegoic core of the psyche is exclusively negative, Jung's conception seems to go in opposite directions at once and to include both negative and positive aspects. Accordingly, whereas Freud unambivalently recommended that the ego protect itself from the depth potentials of the nonegoic core, Jung recommended that the ego be both wary and respectful, both cautious and inviting, in its relation to these potentials. For Jung, the nonegoic realm of the deep unconscious contains forces that, on the one hand, can engulf, regress, and even destroy the ego and that, on the other hand, can lead the ego toward higher wholeness and fully realized selfhood. For Jung, the nonegoic core of the psyche is the focus of both our deepest fear and our highest hope.

The conception of the nonegoic core that I shall recommend is Jungian in the general sense that it sees the nonegoic core as a source not only of lower, pre, but also higher, trans, influences. The major way, however, in which the conception I shall propose differs from Jung's is that it understands these influences exclusively in a developmental sense. That is, it understands *pre* and *trans* as referring to *stage-specific manifestations* of nonegoic potentials and not, as typically is the case with Jung, to opposing *sides* or *types* of nonegoic potentials. Jung, I believe, is correct in emphasizing our ambivalence toward nonegoic potentials, because these potentials can affect us in radically different, indeed opposite, ways. Jung, however, I suggest, is mistaken in assuming—as I believe he does, tacitly—that our ambivalence toward nonegoic potentials implies that nonegoic potentials are themselves inherently two-sided or of two contrary sorts. For the assumed implication, if stated as an inference, is clearly invalid. To infer opposing nonegoic potentials from our opposing reactions to nonegoic potentials is to infer a conclusion that is stronger than the premise allows. Moreover, the conclusion, I believe, is false. Although we have sharply divided reactions to nonegoic potentials, these reactions are due not to the divided nature of nonegoic potentials themselves but rather, I suggest, to developmental factors deriving from the unfolding interaction between the ego and the nonegoic core of the psyche.

Disentangling pre from trans expressions of the nonegoic core is an extremely difficult task to which I shall be returning repeatedly during the course of this book.³ For the present it suffices to sketch a framework that includes a place for both Freud's one-sidedly pre and Jung's ambivalent pre-and-trans accounts of nonegoic potentials by reinterpreting these accounts in developmental terms. This framework, which is here sketched only in the broadest outline, is elaborated in this chapter and the chapters that follow.

Early Preoedipal Symbiosis

During the early preoedipal period, the nonegoic core expresses itself in a freely spontaneous but almost completely undeveloped (i.e., egoically unregulated and culturally unformed) manner. Moreover, because the nascent ego as yet knows no distinction between inner and outer, it experiences nonegoic potentials primarily as they are bound up with the experience of the primary caregiver, who is the emerging ego's initial "object" or "other." For the emerging ego, the nonegoic core is predifferentiatedly fused with the primary caregiver, who therefore is perceived not only as a being possessing basic personal qualities but also a being possessing magical endowments and archetypal dimensions, a being, that is, amplified and embellished by the nonegoic potentials that the caregiver's ministrations elicit from within the infant. For the preoedipal child, the nonegoic core and the caregiver coalesce as a single multidimensional being: the Great Mother. During the early preoedipal period, then, the nonegoic core expresses itself in a manner that is freely spontaneous but also undeveloped and not yet differentiated from the preoedipal child's principal outer "object" or "other."

Late Preoedipal and Oedipal Periods

At approximately eighteen months, as Margaret Mahler (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman 1975⁴) has explained, the young child begins to experience a rapprochement crisis in its relationship with the primary caregiver. The young child begins to experience intense ambivalence toward the caregiver, and this ambivalence splits the child's world in two. The caregiver is split into a "good object" and a "bad object"—or in the more Jungian terminology that I shall be using, the (inner-outer) Great Mother is split into a Good Mother and a Terrible Mother. Correspondingly, the child's sense of self is split into disconnected "good" and "bad" self-representations. This splitting marks a serious impasse, for the young child cannot continue to de-

velop so long as its world and self are so seriously fissured. Continued development requires that the child reunify its experience. The child, I shall propose, accomplishes this reunification only by means of creating yet another division, namely, a division between itself and the sources of its ambivalence. That is, the child reunifies its experience by severing its remaining symbiotic ties to the Great Mother. Now because the Great Mother is not just the primary caregiver but the primary caregiver *as empowered and projectively elaborated by nonegoic potentials*, this severing of ties to the Great Mother is not only an interpersonal alienation of the primary caregiver but also an intrapsychic repression of the nonegoic core of the psyche. The outer dimension of this momentous act, the alienation of the caregiver, I shall call *primal alienation*; the inner dimension, the repression of the nonegoic core, I shall, following Freud, call *primal repression*. Primal repression is the first and ultimate layer of repression separating the ego from the nonegoic core of the psyche, which now becomes the deep dynamic unconscious organized as the id. Primal repression, originating during later preoedipal development, is consolidated with the resolution of the Oedipus complex when the child finalizes its divorce from the Great Mother by making a decisive commitment to the father and to the ego functions the father represents.

Latency through Ego Maturity: The Period of Dualism

The consolidation of primal repression quiets or deactivates nonegoic potentials, thereby ushering in the period of latency. With the exception of adolescence, during which nonegoic potentials are stirred by the awakening of sexuality, nonegoic potentials typically remain weak or dormant throughout childhood and early adulthood. Moreover, in suffering repression, nonegoic potentials are not only muted or silenced in their expression; they are also arrested in their development and subjected to a negative interpretation. They are arrested at a primitive-infantile level and interpreted as dangerous or evil. Negatively organized in these ways, nonegoic potentials are precisely the elements of the id as described by Freud. This organization of nonegoic potentials prevails throughout childhood and early adulthood, during which ego functions are developed without significant interference from nonegoic influences. The id, brought into being by primal repression, is only one developmental form assumed by the nonegoic core of the psyche. It is, however, an enduring form. It is understandable that Freud believed it to be the inherent or constitutional form of the nonegoic core.

Midlife Transvaluation

The full maturity of the ego—which is achieved, typically, after completion of the identity and relationship tasks of early adulthood—marks the turn of midlife. No age exactly corresponds to this transition, and the transition is by no means developmentally mandatory. Nevertheless, the ego is susceptible at midlife, or later, to experiencing a fundamental change in perspective. Having forged an identity, having worked at a primary relationship or relationships, and having otherwise established itself in the world, the ego is here prone to turn its attention inward toward a possible rapprochement with the nonegoic core of the psyche. Having completed the tasks of early adulthood, the ego has completed the agenda of its own development and is therefore ready to turn to a deeper developmental agenda, that of whole-psyche (egoic-nonegoic) integration. Accordingly, there is a developmental tendency at or after midlife for primal regression to loosen or begin to give way and for the ego to reopen itself to the nonegoic core. This tendency is frequently expressed in a loss of interest in worldly goals and compensations (existential alienation, “dying to the world,” the dark night of the senses) combined with or followed by a strongly ambivalent fascination with nonegoic possibilities. The ego is drawn away from the outer world and drawn toward as yet unrevealed inner depths, toward a “within” that is “beyond”: the nonegoic core. The nonegoic core at this juncture is still the submerged and feared id, but it is now also an impelling unknown, a *mysterium tremendum et fascinans*.

Initial Reopening to the Nonegoic Core

When primal repression finally gives way, the ego ceases being protected from the nonegoic core and comes under the direct influence of nonegoic potentials. These potentials spring to life in dramatic and diverse ways. Initially, the ego tends to be intoxicated and awed by resurging nonegoic potentials, intoxicated by liberated energy and awed by numinous feelings, images, and insights. This initial sense of ecstatic breakthrough (the “illuminative way,” “pseudonirvana”), however, very soon gives way to disturbing prospects. For the ego’s openness to the nonegoic core is not only a receptivity but also a vulnerability. It is an openness that renders the ego subject not only to infusive-intoxicating upwellings from the nonegoic core but also to the gravitational-abyssal suction of the nonegoic core. It is an openness that renders the ego subject not only to wondrous feelings, images, and insights but also to an ominous sense that it has suffered a

wound deep within, a wound that exposes the ego to a terrifying "black hole" at the seat of the soul. The ego's initial reopening to the nonegoic core therefore has a double, "breakthrough-breakdown," character. This sharply divided experience intensifies the ego's ambivalence toward nonegoic potentials, which the ego is here disposed to perceive as if they were inherently divided into positive and negative, trans and pre, types. This divided experience is in certain respects an intrapsychic replay in reverse of the preoedipal rapprochement crisis. Nonegoic potentials are split into seemingly all-good (upwelling, bright, enrapturing) and all-bad (abyssal, dark, and frightening) forces. The realm of the deep unconscious is experienced as both a rejuvenating wellspring and an abyss-maw, as both a fount of spiritual life and a pit of seething energies. This splitting of the ego's experience places the ego in a precarious position, rendering the ego susceptible to borderline difficulties and even to episodes of psychotic regression. The ego's initial reopening to the nonegoic core thus divides the ego's experience into powerfully opposed possibilities and exposes the ego to very real psychological dangers. These difficulties attending the ego's reopening to the nonegoic core help explain why Jung thought that nonegoic potentials are inherently or constitutionally divided into higher and lower, redemptive and regressive, types. They do so because they were part of Jung's own reopening to the nonegoic core. Jung's conception of the collective unconscious was originally worked out while Jung was himself undergoing an acutely painful reopening process.

Regression in the Service of Transcendence

After the initial reopening of the ego to the nonegoic core, the ego enters a difficult period during which it suffers the fury of the "return of the repressed" and struggles to preserve its independence against the resurgence of nonegoic life. The ego is drawn into the unconscious and besieged by forces of the "underworld." This descent into the deep is a redemptive regression that I ([1988] 2d ed. in press) have called *regression in the service of transcendence*. It is what Jung (1912), following Leo Frobenius (1904), called the *night sea journey*, what St. John of the Cross (1991a) called the *dark night of spirit*, and what now, following Joseph Campbell (1949), is popularly known as the *hero's journey*.⁵ During this phase of psychospiritual development, the ego's ambivalence toward nonegoic potentials is weighted heavily in the negative direction, and nonegoic potentials, reflecting this weighting, present themselves to the ego primarily in negative guises. The ego therefore is prone to suffer disturbing experiences, for example,

menacing instinctual impulses, tempting or terrifying imaginal formations, disconcerting feelings such as dread and strangeness, and frightening or morbid states of mind such as flooding, involuntary trance, and engulfment. Regression in the service of transcendence is rarely if ever an exclusively negative experience. The ego enjoys periods of relief and even periods during which positive expressions of the nonegoic core come to the fore. These periods, however, are exceptions to the rule during regression in the service of transcendence, which is for the most part a harrowing transformative process.

Regeneration in Spirit

If and when the ego weathers the regression to origins and finds that it can withstand the potent-numinous energy arising from the nonegoic core, the ego gradually loses its fear of nonegoic potentials and begins experiencing these potentials in increasingly positive ways. Accordingly, the ego's ambivalence and consequent splitting of nonegoic life begin to change from a predominantly negative to a predominantly positive weighting. This reversal marks the transition from regression in the service of transcendence to what in traditional religious terminology has been called *regeneration in spirit*. Regeneration in spirit is a period during which the negative experiences distinctive of regression in the service of transcendence gradually give way to positive correlates. For example, menacing instinctual impulses give way to a sense of general somatic awakening; tempting or terrifying imaginal formations give way to "visions" that guide, inspire, and comfort; feelings such as dread and strangeness give way to feelings such as euphoria and enchantment; and states of mind such as flooding, trance, and engulfment give way to states of mind such as rapture, transport, and ecstasy. If regression in the service of transcendence is not an exclusively negative affair, neither is regeneration in spirit an exclusively positive one. During regeneration in spirit, the ego suffers occasional regressive relapses and at times falls under the grip of ominous feelings and fantasies. Nevertheless, as regression in the service of transcendence gives way to regeneration in spirit, a pervasive change from dark to light occurs: the ego's experience of nonegoic potentials becomes decreasingly negative and increasingly positive.

The Ideal of Postdualistic Integration

As the ego takes root in the nonegoic core and is progressively regenerated by nonegoic potentials, regressive relapses and ecstatic eruptions gradually disappear and the ego's experience begins to sta-

bilize on a superior plane. The experiences distinctive of regeneration in spirit cease being eruptive "breakthrough" or "peak" experiences and become experiences that are more evenly integrated within the fabric of transegoic life. Accordingly, somatic awakening stabilizes as polymorphously sensual embodied life; spontaneous "visions" stabilize as disciplined symbolic creativity; feelings of euphoria and enchantment stabilize as feelings of bliss and hallowed resplendence; and states of mind such as rapture, transport, and ecstasy stabilize as states of mature contemplative attunement or absorption. The transition from regeneration in spirit to postdualistic integration joins nonegoic potentials and ego functions in harmonious and effective complementarity, in a *coincidentia oppositorum*. The ultimate goal toward which this transition moves is an ideal that may never be reached. To the degree the ideal is approximated, however, the ego reexperiences on a higher (i.e., developmentally mature) level the radical spontaneity, creativity, and sense of seamless wholeness that were first experienced in a primitive way during the early phases of preoedipal life. Full integration is an ideal higher harmony of the ego and the nonegoic core of the psyche: it is a transegoic rather than pregoic harmony.

This sketch of the main developmental expressions of the nonegoic core implies that the nonegoic core is not just a primitive-negative id or a split, lower-higher, collective unconscious. According to our sketch, these two conceptions of the nonegoic core of the psyche accurately describe specific developmental expressions of the nonegoic core but are incomplete as descriptions of the intrinsic character or constitution of the nonegoic core. Freud, oblivious for the most part to the preoedipal period of development and focusing almost exclusively on the psychic organization that obtains during the first half of life, understandably interpreted the nonegoic core as the id. And Jung, unconcerned for the most part with the first half of life and focusing almost exclusively on the ego's ambivalent reopening to the nonegoic core during the second half of life, understandably interpreted the nonegoic core as the collective unconscious. Each of these conceptions captures a distinctive mode of expression of the nonegoic core. The two conceptions, however, have to be placed in a larger developmental framework if they are to complement rather than contradict each other.

To avoid misrepresenting the larger project of this book, I should stress that the preceding sketch, in describing the developmental interaction between the ego and the nonegoic core, focuses only on the intrapsychic side of an inherently two-sided, intrapsychic-

interpersonal, depth-psychological–object-relational process. The dialectical interplay between the ego and the nonegoic core is at the same time a dialectical interplay between the ego and the “object” world, that is, between the ego and primary others as experienced through evolving object representations. This unity of the inner and the outer is evident in all of the stages of development covered in the sketch just finished. For instance, the primitive ego–Great Mother symbiosis of the early preoedipal period is, albeit by default (i.e., by *lack* of differentiation), at once an inner (egoic-nonegoic) and an outer (infant-caregiver) symbiosis. The dissolution of this preoedipal symbiosis, the disconnection of the ego from the Great Mother, is at once an inner and an outer “act”: primal repression and primal alienation go hand in hand. The commencement of latency, therefore, is at the same time the achievement of libidinal object constancy. That is, it is the beginning of dualism in both its inner (egoic-nonegoic) and outer (self-other) expressions. Dualism remains stable until puberty, at which time it is challenged both intrapsychically (by sexual awakening, which destabilizes primal repression) and interpersonally (by the emergence of sexually driven intimacy needs, which destabilizes primal alienation). Following adolescence, dualism is restructured in both its inner and outer dimensions and typically is not challenged again until midlife.

The unity of the inner and the outer is also evident in midlife transvaluation and the stages leading to integration. The midlife loss of interest in the world and ambivalent attraction to the deep unconscious is at the same time a loss of interest in others as “inauthentic” personas and an ambivalent attraction to others as beings possessing powerful hidden depths (e.g., charismatic personalities, psychopomps, anima-animus figures). The ego’s “breakthrough-breakdown” reopening to the nonegoic core is at the same time an ambivalent reopening of the ego to others, a reopening riddled with borderline approach-avoidance, disclosure-exposure, connection-contraction countertendencies. The defenseless vulnerability of the ego to the “return of the repressed” during regression in the service of transcendence is at the same time a defenseless vulnerability of the ego to others, a vulnerability to being seen and taken advantage of by “bad objects.” The healing rerooting of the ego in the nonegoic core during regeneration in spirit is at the same time a healing reconciliation of the ego with others, a reconciliation that transforms the ego’s vulnerable openness to others into an intimate openness through which the ego is able internally to connect and bond with others. And, finally, the attainment of intrapsychic integration is at the same

time an attainment of stable I-Thou intimacy: the higher union of the ego and the nonegoic core is at the same time a transegoic intersubjectivity of ego and "object," of self and others.

Every major step of human development, from the earliest pre-egoic step to the final transegoic step, has mirror-image inner and outer, intrapsychic and interpersonal, depth-psychological and object-relational sides.

Having set forth the notion of the nonegoic core of the psyche and having seen how the psychoanalytic and Jungian conceptions of the unconscious can be rendered consistent as stage-specific expressions of the nonegoic core, we can now turn to the more proper topic of this chapter: the sources of experience during infancy. In what follows, I shall propose that the nonegoic core of the psyche is a primary source of the infant's experience. The infant's experience consists not only of stimuli arriving from without but also of a wide range of nonegoic potentials upwelling from within. These outer and inner sources of the infant's experience flow together as one, especially in the infant's experience of the primary caregiver as Great Mother.

THE TRADITIONAL VIEW OF THE INFANT'S EXPERIENCE

We have long been fascinated by the mind of the infant. A primary reason for this is that we have assumed that the infant possesses a type of consciousness significantly different from our own. In the traditional view, the infant's consciousness is, as William James so famously put it, a "blooming, buzzing confusion." It is a form of consciousness with little or no cognitive structure. The infant, in the traditional view, is unable to distinguish one thing from another and is even unable to distinguish itself from the world. The infant's consciousness, that is, lacks both object discrimination and ego differentiation. According to the traditional view, the infant's experience is a stimulus field without discriminable entities and without inner-outer, subject-object, self-other boundaries. To cite a typical example of the traditional view, René Spitz, in his influential *The First Year of Life*, gave this description of the neonatal condition: "At this stage the newborn cannot distinguish one 'thing' from another; he cannot distinguish an (external) thing from his own body, and he does not experience the surround as separate from himself. Therefore, he also perceives the need-gratifying, food-providing breast, if at all, as part of himself. Furthermore, the newborn *in* himself is not differentiated and organized either . . ." (1965, p. 36). According to

Spitz, and the traditional view generally, the newborn enters the world in a completely unstructured state, a primitive state of undifferentiated unity.

If the newborn's state is primitive and undeveloped, it is not for that reason, according to the traditional view, a state plagued by a sense of deficiency. For the traditional view holds that the infant's consciousness is not only unstructured and undifferentiated but also, and by virtue of these very facts, undivided and seamlessly whole. Freud's (1930) account of the newborn as enjoying a limitless "oceanic" feeling, a sense of expansive unity with all existence, is the most influential statement in the psychological literature of this side of the traditional view. An even more idealized statement is to be found among the Jungians. Erich Neumann, for example, describes the newborn as existing in a state of preegoic bliss: "The ego germ still exists in the pleroma, in the 'fullness' of the unformed God, and, as consciousness unborn, slumbers in the primordial egg, in the bliss of paradise" (1954, pp. 276-277). The traditional view sees the infant as being immediately in touch and undividedly at one with experience, intimately immersed in a sensoridynamic world of color, sound, smell, sensation, energy, and affect. The infant, in the traditional view, is not separated from experience in any way and therefore is unfettered by the many dualistic divisions (e.g., subject versus object, mind versus body, thought versus feeling) that tend to plague adult life.

In sum, the traditional view sees the newborn's consciousness as both unstructured and undivided, undifferentiated and full, primitive and whole. Accordingly, in the traditional view, the infant's consciousness has represented something that is not only primordial but also, in its own way, perfect. It has represented not only an aboriginal form of consciousness long ago left behind but also a pristine form of consciousness for which we experience a strong nostalgia.

The traditional view of the infant's experience has been subject to considerable criticism in recent decades. One major criticism is that the view is mistaken in holding that the infant's consciousness is a cognitively undifferentiated field. Contradicting this view, research in the last twenty-five years has revealed that infants are much more cognitively focused and developed than hitherto had been recognized. We now know that the child is born not only with perceptual systems already in operation but also with a remarkably sophisticated cognitive program already loaded and running and with considerable powers of learning and memory ready to add to or modify this program.

For example, virtually from birth, babies exhibit visual preference for the human face (Fantz 1963; Haaf and Bell 1967; Sherrod 1981) and are attuned to the rhythmic movements of human speech (Hutt et al. 1968; Demany, McKenzie, and Vurpillot 1977; Condon and Sander 1974). Also, infants in the first months of life are capable of discriminating and exercising preference for a wide variety of sensory stimuli, not only stimuli bearing upon immediate biological needs but also stimuli of a seemingly purely cognitive sort, for example, patterns, shapes, colors, and sounds (Fantz and Nevis 1967; Tronick and Adamson 1980; Kagan 1984). Furthermore, as parents have known for a long time, and as research has more recently confirmed (Brazelton, Koslowski, and Main 1974; Stern 1974; Trevarthen 1977, 1979; Bower 1979; Kaye 1982; Schaffer 1984), the infant is a social creature who comes into the world preadapted to distinctively human interactions. This social character of the infant is expressed, for example, in the differential perception of the human face and voice, in subtle interactional coordinations and synchronies, and in turn-taking imitation interchanges between the infant and caregivers.

Infants arrive in the world not only with preexisting cognitive programs but also with the ability to alter and add to these programs. From the very beginning, that is, children are able to learn from experience. T. G. R. Bower states this point in an emphatic manner: "This notion [of infant learning] was controversial in the early 1960s but is surely no longer so, complex learning in newborns being no longer thought worthy of particular mention" (1989, p. 150). Bower stresses that babies are capable of discerning contingent connections among stimuli, for example, of recognizing that changes in one stimulus produce changes in another. Grasping connections of this sort is learning in the strict sense of the term. Also, infants in the first months of life habituate to repeated stimuli and therefore are capable of memory of a rudimentary sort (recognition memory). This initial kind of memory can be extended rapidly, even in babies as young as three months, by the employment of reinforcement procedures (Rovee-Collier et al. 1980).

The traditional view of the infant as a completely passive blank slate has been decisively overturned. The infant, we now know, enters the world already gifted with considerable powers of discrimination, attunement, communication, learning, and memory.

A second major criticism of the traditional view is that it too easily assumes that the newborn has no sense of itself as an ego, subject, or self distinct from its environment. This point is controversial and perhaps undecidable. Freud, as we noted, held that the newborn ex-

ists in a completely undivided "oceanic" state, a state of egoless absorption that he called *primary narcissism*. This classical psychoanalytic view has been followed and reformulated in many ways, notably by psychoanalytic ego psychologist Heinz Hartmann (1939; Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein 1946), who hypothesized that psychic life begins as an undifferentiated matrix that is prior not only to the ego but also to the id, and by psychoanalytic infant researcher Margaret Mahler (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman 1975), who concluded from her studies that approximately the first month of life is lived in a completely undivided autistic state.

This classical view, however, has been criticized or rejected by many developmental theorists. Melanie Klein (1952b, 1958, 1959), for example, argued long ago that a rudimentary ego and object relations exist at birth. Among Jungians, Michael Fordham (1980, 1981), has strongly criticized Neumann's notion of an original infant-caregiver fusion. And more recently, in the psychoanalytic community, Joseph Lichtenberg (1981, 1983, 1987) and Daniel Stern (1985) have challenged the classical view. Lichtenberg, drawing on the most recent results of neonatal research, has argued that the newborn, although lacking a symbolic self-representation, is nonetheless highly differentiated, object related, and interactive in its modes of experiencing. And Stern has argued that the newborn enters the world already situated in a context of self-other differentiation and relationship. Stern, for example, counters the classical psychoanalytic view in emphatic terms. He says:

Infants begin to experience a sense of an emergent self from birth. They are pre-designed to be aware of self-organizing processes. They never experience a period of total self/other undifferentiation. There is no confusion between self and other in the beginning or at any point during infancy. They are also pre-designed to be selectively responsive to external social events and never experience an autistic-like state. (1985, p. 10)

The traditional view that the newborn's consciousness is altogether without ego-nonego, subject-object, and self-other boundaries has, then, been seriously challenged. Contemporary opinion seems to favor the view that babies enter the world already differentiated, related to objects, and aware of themselves to some degree.

These criticisms of the traditional view have significantly changed our understanding of the infant, who is now seen to be much more cognitively competent, socially interactive, and ego or

self-differentiated than had previously been realized. In fact, by the late 1970s the consensus among experts in the field of infant research had moved so far away from the traditional view as to reject it entirely. This position is forcefully expressed by Robert Emde, who said that "the 'study babies' of today and the 'thought babies' of just twenty years ago are so dissimilar we might mistake them for members of two different species" (Tronick and Adamson 1980, p. 9). By the late 1970s, the prevailing view had become that the growing body of experimental findings had decisively invalidated the traditional view and had demonstrated that infants are *not at all* like the traditional view had thought.

In 1982 Kenneth Kaye maintained that the movement of consensus away from the traditional view had gone too far. He said:

Ten years ago, this chapter would have reviewed traditional descriptions of the young infant as disorganized, victimized by the "blooming, buzzing confusion" all around, and a passive recipient of nurturance; and then would have proceeded to debunk those myths by discussing the evidence then beginning to accumulate. The evidence indicated that infant behavior is organized in certain respects right from the start, that the newborn's visual and auditory apparatus bring a degree of order to bear upon the stimulus world, and that the behavior of mothers and other caretakers is influenced by their babies' behavior.

Now these recent findings have themselves become the prevailing myths that need to be at least partly debunked. We should try to do so without letting the pendulum swing all the way back again, for the truth lies somewhere in the middle. (1982, p. 30)

As Kaye says, the truth lies somewhere in the middle between the traditional and antitraditional extremes. This middle ground, I suggest, is one from which the traditional view can be restated in relative terms. We must remember that the traditional view was formulated from the adult's perspective. The point of the traditional view was that, relative to the consciousness of the adult, the consciousness of the infant is unstructured and undifferentiated, open and whole. Unfortunately, the relative nature of this point was not emphasized and, consequently, the traditional view was formulated in absolute terms. Rather than simply saying that the infant is radically less structured and differentiated, closed and divided than adults are, the traditional

view said that infants are completely unstructured and undifferentiated, open and whole. This overstatement has been deservedly criticized. Regrettably, however, the criticism led to an equal but opposite overstatement rather than to a qualification of the traditional view. In responding to the exaggeration of the traditional view, the criticism dismissed the relative truth implicit in the traditional view.

The relative truth implicit in the traditional view is assumed in the discussion that follows. Accordingly, when I speak of the infant as being unstructured, undifferentiated, open, whole, and spontaneous, I should be understood as speaking of the infant as being *radically but relatively* unstructured, undifferentiated, open, whole, and spontaneous.

THE NONEGOIC CORE AS A SOURCE OF THE INFANT'S EXPERIENCE

According to both classical psychoanalysis and Jungian psychology, most if not all of the potentials of the nonegoic core of the psyche are spontaneously active at birth, if not before. The newborn's state of undivided openness allows nonegoic potentials to express themselves without psychodynamic inhibition. To be sure, nonegoic potentials express themselves in the newborn in a manner that is as rudimentary as it is spontaneous. Although many nonegoic potentials are functionally related to objects at birth, nonegoic potentials in general are at first lacking in significant articulation and, of course, culturally derived meaning. Despite this rudimentary character, however, nonegoic potentials *are* powerfully active in the newborn. Psychoanalysts, Jungians, and other psychologists studying early childhood acknowledge that the newborn experiences discharges of energy, instinctual responses, upwellings of unnuanced affect, and perhaps primitive imaginal formations. With the possible exception of the imagination and archetypal processes dependent thereon, all nonegoic potentials are active at birth, plying the newborn with a profusion of primitive but powerful experiences.

Theorists of infant cognition differ on whether the imagination is active at birth. Freud (1911a) held that infants respond to unmet instinctual demands by hallucinating objects that would satisfy those demands. Melanie Klein espoused an even stronger view, holding that the imaginal process is active from the very first assertion of the instincts. This view is implicit throughout Klein's work (see Segal 1964, 1991) and is given explicit statement by Susan Isaacs (1943),

whose formulation was endorsed by Klein. In Isaacs's account, fantasy is a natural mode of expression of the (object-directed) instincts and spontaneously represents the objects of the instincts from the moment the instincts assert themselves. Accordingly, Isaacs interprets Freud's hypothesis about hallucinatory instinctual satisfaction in infancy to mean that the infant's first tendency is to satisfy an instinctual demand in an hallucinatory manner. For Isaacs, then, the instinctual demands themselves, rather than accumulated tension from *unmet* instinctual demands, cause hallucinatory images. In fact, she argues, such accumulated tension, rather than causing hallucinatory images, is what causes such images finally to break down. According to the Klein-Isaacs view, then, the imaginal process is active from the very beginning of life.

If the imaginal process is not active at birth, it is unclear just when it comes into play. Jean Piaget argued that the infant does not begin to produce mental images until significant progress has been made in understanding the object concept, and object permanence in particular. The infant, he argued, must first have some comprehension that objects have an enduring and independent existence before the infant can reproduce in the imagination an object that is no longer within the field of experience. Piaget's studies (1954) indicated that the first major step toward understanding object permanence occurs at about eight or nine months of age, because this is the age at which a child begins to look for objects that it has observed being hidden from view. Full understanding of the independence of objects, however, is not achieved until around sixteen to eighteen months, because, as Piaget's studies demonstrated, only at this age do children begin to understand that objects have an existence in no way tied to or determined by the child's present of past sensorimotor experience. Accordingly, for Piaget, mental images are not even possible until near the end of the first year and can appear at this point, if at all, only as fleeting reproductions grounded in the child's more or less immediate sensorimotor interactions with objects.⁶ Piaget (Piaget and Inhelder 1971) believed that in fact images likely appear later than this, near the middle of the second year, and that in any event images do not become adequate object representations until approximately this later time. It is only at about sixteen to eighteen months, Piaget held, that images can arise without being tied to specific sensorimotor stimuli and, therefore, can be evoked voluntarily as symbolic representations of fully independent objects.

Selma Fraiberg (1969), in a classic paper, explicitly applied Piaget's views to the psychoanalytic hypothesis of hallucinatory image

production in infancy. Following Piaget's account of the learning of object permanence, Fraiberg dated the possible first appearance of images at about eight months and argued that any images appearing at this early point are tied to immediate or near-immediate stimuli in the child's experience. Fraiberg's position, however, diverges from the general Piagetian perspective in stressing that the stimuli in question need not be only sensorimotor stimuli but can be instinctual stimuli (as emphasized by psychoanalysis) as well. According to Fraiberg, initial images are either images of objects that have just exited from the sensorimotor field or images of objects needed to satisfy occurrent instinctual demands. Whether produced by sensorimotor or instinctual causes, however, initial images, according to Fraiberg, are stimulus bound and short-lived, coming into existence only in response to stimuli and vanishing soon after the stimuli that prompted them have ceased to exist. Fraiberg agreed with Piaget that voluntarily evocable, stimulus-free, images do not appear until about eighteen months.

We may never know the exact age at which the child begins producing images. The Klein-Isaacs view probably estimates this age too early, and recent research indicates that Piaget's view may estimate it too late. T. G. R. Bower (1982) reports on studies indicating that infants possess some sense of object permanence as early as five months, before they are able to express this understanding in motor behavior by looking for objects that have been hidden from view. Renée Baillargeon (1987) has conducted studies that have detected a presumption of object permanence as early as three and one-half months. And, in general, a growing number of researchers have become critical of the narrowly sensorimotor focus of Piaget's studies of infant cognition as wrongly presupposing that cognitive achievements cannot precede the action schemes and motor capacities through which these achievements are outwardly expressed. Jean Mandler (1990) reviews the evidence accumulating against the Piagetian view and concludes specifically that cognitive achievements relating to object permanence and mental imagery occur much earlier than Piaget had thought, perhaps as early as the first months of life.

Whenever images initially appear, they are likely at first extremely primitive: fragmentary, transient, vague, and idiosyncratic. The first images produced by the child are probably merely partial images bound to short-term perceptual or instinctual cues. And these images probably incorporate not only visual but also auditory, olfactory, and other sensory elements that happen, accidentally, to have been conjoined in the child's experience. Images only gradually be-

come more complete, stable, exclusively visual, and adequately representative of objects. Although Piaget may be mistaken in his view on the sensorimotor origins of images, he is probably correct in holding that images do not become adequate object representations until well into the second year.

Although the imagination (and archetypal processes dependent thereon) may not be active at birth, most nonegoic potentials are. Indeed, some nonegoic potentials are probably active *in utero*. And even if the imagination is not functioning at birth, it likely comes into play within the first year, and perhaps within the first months, of life. Accordingly, if not at birth, then not long thereafter, the infant experiences the full range of nonegoic potentials, which express themselves spontaneously in a virtually free play of sensations, energies, feelings, images, and archetypal perceptions and projections. The infant's experience, then, includes not only externally derived stimuli but also a wide variety of indigenous contents, contents that emerge from the nonegoic core of the psyche. The infant of course is unable to distinguish the internal from the external elements of its experience; nevertheless, both of these elements are present.

THE NONEGOIC CORE AND THE PREOEDIPAL "OBJECT"

In focusing on the nonegoic core of the psyche, I have so far been giving primary attention to the inwardly derived content of the infant's experience. In this section I shall shift the focus and consider the outer side of the infant's experience and in particular the principal outer "object" with which the infant interacts: the primary caregiver. At the very outset of life this object has probably not yet been brought into focus as a fully formed entity with object permanence, that is, as a single and enduring entity. At first, the infant probably perceives the primary caregiver, if at all, only as loose groupings of sensory stimuli tied to basic caregiving functions. The infant, however, soon begins to gather these fragments together and, thereby, to bring the caregiver into focus. This initial discernment of the caregiver gives the infant's experience two distinct points of reference, which Margaret Mahler and John McDevitt describe as follows: "In other words, we assume the infant has two basic points of reference from which he builds up his self-schemata: (1) his own inner feelings (or states)—forming the primitive core of the self [viz., the nonegoic core of the psyche], on the one hand—and (2) the care-giving by the libidinal object [i.e., primary caregiver], on the other hand" (1982, p. 837).⁷

The infant is as intimately at one with the external dimension of its experience as it is with the internal dimension. The infant's intrapsychic openness to the nonegoic core of the psyche is at the same time an interpersonal openness to the primary caregiver. The infant therefore experiences a unity or symbiosis with the caregiver, who is not just an object but, to use Heinz Kohut's term, a *selfobject*, that is, an object that is integral to the infant's experience and rudimentary-narcissistic sense of self.

The infant is completely unaware that some elements of its experience have an inner and others an outer origin. In consequence, the inner nonegoic content and the outer caregiving object of the infant's experience are predifferentiatedly fused and apprehended as a single reality. The infant, open to and at one with both of these sides of experience, knows no distinction between them. Accordingly, nonegoic potentials are from the very first associated with the modes of manifestation of the primary caregiver, and the primary caregiver, in turn, is imbued with the qualities and powers of nonegoic potentials. This fact is of immense significance because it is the primary basis for the archetypal association of nonegoic potentials with femaleness and, conversely, of women with nonegoic potentials. Because nonegoic potentials and the primary caregiver are initially experienced as intimately interfluent aspects of a *single* experience, each acquires a deep and permanent association with the other.

The primary caregiver, who is perceived by the infant as the embodiment of the nonegoic, is a being whose function in relation to the infant is, ironically, to a great extent egoic: the caregiver is the infant's external or auxiliary ego (Spitz 1951, 1965). The infant, without a sufficiently developed ego of its own, is unable to perform its own life-sustaining functions. It needs the caregiver to perform these functions for it and in general to provide a "facilitating environment" (Winnicott 1963a, 1963b). The primary caregiver is for this reason not only a selfobject with which the infant is symbiotically merged but also, to use Christopher Bollas's (1987) term, a *transformational object* that stimulates and guides the infant's growth. If the caregiver did not test reality for the infant and attend to its biological and growth needs, the infant of course could not survive. The caregiver, then, performs a role in relation to the infant that is at once indispensable and, ironically, in many respects the opposite of what the child perceives in the caregiver. The infant depends upon the caregiver to serve as a surrogate ego; at the same time, however, the infant is completely unaware of the ego functions performed for it by the caregiver and instead perceives the caregiver entirely in nonegoic terms.

To repeat, the infant's experience of the caregiver is at first fragmented and only gradually coalesces into a configuration that the infant recognizes as a recurring pattern tied to an enduring object. At the outset of life, the infant perceives the caregiver only as an array of impermanent and disconnected objects or stimuli: face, breasts, enveloping embraces, nurturing gazes, comforting intonations. Four or five months may pass before fragments such as these begin to be grouped in the form of a recognizable gestalt grasped as an enduring entity.⁸ The integrated object that emerges in this way is at first extremely vague, possessing indefinite boundaries and inconstant properties. Nevertheless, this object is a reality of immeasurable importance to the infant, for it is the central focus of the infant's attention and the primary "other" of the infant's world.

The object that emerges in this way is not just the caregiver: it is the archetypal Great Mother. This Great Mother is a complex being possessing both outer and inner, personal and prepersonal, human and superhuman aspects.⁹ Because the infant does not distinguish between the outer and inner elements of its experience, the Great Mother is not just the outer caregiver but also all of the inner (non-egoically derived) experiences elicited by the caregiver's attentions. Accordingly, the Great Mother is a gestalt consisting of both outer, object-derived, and inner, depth-psychological, elements. The Great Mother is a gestalt composed of both the caregiver as the source of infant-directed actions and the myriad sensations, dynamisms, feelings, and images that the infant experiences in conjunction with these actions. The Great Mother is a complex reality embodied in an outer being and drawing upon the deepest of the infant's internal sources: the nonegoic core of the psyche.

In addition to having both outer and inner dimensions, the Great Mother has both personal and prepersonal aspects. A considerable body of research indicates that infants, virtually from birth, respond differently to persons than to nonhuman objects and, therefore, that infants can at some level discriminate between personal and nonpersonal qualities. I referred to some of this research in the last section in noting that newborns respond preferentially to the human face and voice and that infants as young as just a few weeks participate in interactional synchronies and turn-taking interplays with the primary caregiver. These behaviors indicate that infants in some sense have a differential perception of the caregiver as a person.

If, however, infants have such a perception, they are still unaware of many if not most of the caregiver's personal qualities. For, as noted previously, infants need several months to integrate their ex-

perience of the caregiver, and even then the "person-object" brought into focus is far from a complete human being. We of course cannot know exactly how infants perceive the caregiver. Nevertheless, we can reasonably assume that their perception is both indefinite and primitive, only minimally personal. The perception of the caregiver's personal qualities is likely limited to such basic human expressions as communicative gazes, vocalizations, facial gestures, and embraces. Except for preferential response to expressions such as these, infants probably perceive the caregiver primarily as a prepersonal being, a being who is less than human, a "mere" source of warmth, food, and comfort. The experience of the caregiver at this point lacks many distinctively human qualities.

In perceiving the caregiver as a being who is less than human, the infant, paradoxically, also perceives the caregiver as a being who is more than human. For the preoedipal child perceives the caregiver as a vast and magical being. The caregiver qua Great Mother is a being who omnipotently meets the child's every need and who manifests herself to the child in extraordinary, nonegoically empowered and elaborated, ways. Among the Great Mother's powers and guises are (1) numinosity, which makes the caregiver awesome and enchanting; (2) magnetic-solvent love, which makes the caregiver not only irresistibly attractive but also inescapably tractive, not only enveloping but also engulfing; and (3) imaginally and archetypally accentuated appearances, which reconstellate and exaggerate the caregiver across all dimensions. These powers and guises quite evidently derive not only from the caregiver but also from the child's nonegoic responses to the caregiver. The caregiver qua Great Mother is a being who, outwardly embodied, is amplified and embellished by forces, feelings, and images that arise from within the child. The child is astir with nonegoic potentials and, as yet unable to distinguish inner from outer, experiences these potentials as emanating from the primary "object" of its world: the Great Mother. The child's primary "object" is thus an amalgam of elements derived not only from the "object" itself but also from the nonegoic core of the psyche.

The Great Mother is, then, both less than and more than a human being. This primary reality of the preoedipal child's world is a *subhuman goddess*, a being with minimal personal qualities but extraordinary nonegoic powers and appearances. The Great Mother, as we shall see in the next chapter, is also a being subject to being split in two, that is, to being perceived as two opposed and seemingly independent beings: the Good Mother and the Terrible Mother. The cause behind this splitting is the child's growing ambivalence toward

the Great Mother. Beginning in the second half of the second year, as Margaret Mahler (Mahler, Pine, and Bergman 1975) has shown, the child experiences a crisis in its relationship with the primary caregiver. The child begins at this point to develop feelings for the caregiver that are so sharply ambivalent that the child is prone to divide its representation of the caregiver—or rather, as I am formulating it, its representation of the Great Mother—into separate all-good and all-bad representations. The child relates to these two representations as if they were representations of two separate beings: a Good Mother and a Terrible Mother. Like the original Great Mother, these split-off Good and Terrible Mothers are, for the child, subhuman goddesses. The Good Mother is a benevolent being incorporating all of the Great Mother's positive qualities; the Terrible Mother is a malevolent being incorporating all of the Great Mother's negative qualities.

The child must endure the conflicting influences of these Manichaeic semigoddesses until sometime in the fourth year, which by most accounts is the time when the child finally achieves the maturity to perceive the caregiver in integrated and realistic terms: as a single, neither all-good nor all-bad being, as a being who is at once fully human (i.e., a complete person) and merely human (i.e., no longer a bearer of special nonegoic powers and guises). The child's primary object representation at this point becomes both unified and demythologized. The representation ceases being a split representation of the Great (= Good-Terrible) Mother and becomes a unified representation of, simply, the caregiver. In psychoanalytic parlance, this development is what is known as the achievement of libidinal object constancy.

CONCLUSION

The infant's experience has both a distinctive inner content and outer "object." The inner content derives from the nonegoic core of the psyche and its varied potentials; the outer "object" is the primary caregiver. These two sides of the infant's experience coalesce and are indistinguishable at the outset of life, and they remain intimately interlinked throughout the preoedipal period of development. The result of this undifferentiated confluence of the intrapsychic and the interpersonal is the Great Mother, a larger-than-life presence that is at once less than and more than a human being.

I have noted that the relationship between the young child and the Great Mother is an ambivalent and unstable one, a relationship

subject to conflict and splitting. In the next chapter I shall discuss the unfolding of this relationship during the preoedipal and oedipal periods of development. The instability of the relationship, I shall argue, has momentous consequences for the child: it leads the child finally to break its intimate bond with the Great Mother and thereby to divorce itself from both the outer and inner sources of the Great Mother's being. That is, it leads the child simultaneously to sever its symbiotic ties to the caregiver and to close itself to the spontaneous play of nonegoic potentials. The child at once withdraws into itself, thereby putting a distance between itself and others, and seals the nonegoic core of the psyche, thereby quieting nonegoic potentials and submerging them into unconsciousness. In other words, the child commits itself to both primal alienation and primal repression. In short, the child commits itself to dualism.