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Representation and story : a conversation between the theology of John Shea and psychoanalytic object relations theory

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REPRESENTATION AND STORY: A CONVERSATION BETWEEN
THE THEOLOGY OF JOHN SHEA AND PSYCHOANALYTIC
OBJECT RELATIONS THEORY

by

Philip Patrick Baxter

A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School
of Loyola University of Chicago in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in Pastoral Counseling

May

1992

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Dedicated

to my father, John Baxter, whose journey ended while this thesis was in process, and through whom, God's fairness and fun came to me,

and

to my mother, Elizabeth Conboy, who mediated God's consoling presence and faithfulness to me.

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expression of gratitude for the hope, joy, and vision that his writing arouses in me, and in so many other readers.

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INTRODUCTION

Wisdom does not burst forth fully developed like Athena out of Zeus' head.

--Bruno Bettelheim

The sun shone while we were on the lake. The light breeze helped keep us cool. When we docked it was just two in the afternoon. There was plenty of time to have a bite to eat and to catch the number six bus home--the last bus runs at 7:00 P.M. from State Street. As I came to the bridge on the Chicago River at Michigan and Wacker, a young man, beating drums, with a sign before him which read "unemployed," looked me straight in the eyes. I had a handful of loose change in my pocket, the day's collection. I put the coins in the box and kept going, quickly. I crossed the bridge going south, and reached the Public Library, on Michigan Avenue. There I met a second man, this time old. He simply shouted his needs. "Spare some change. I have no bed for the night." I deftly moved to the right of the sidewalk and then her eyes squarely met mine. She was an old scrawny woman, with grey thinning hair and her hand out. This was too much. I could find my anger rising. My shame and guilt were engaged. Gruffly, I edged my way passed her. The evening had turned suddenly chilly, and I shivered a little. I no longer noticed people on the street, and I muttered my depression to myself: "what do these people expect me to do for them?" "What have I ever done to them, that they should make me this upset."

This self-talk became more accusatory. I began to repeat "there must be something I can do. I must do something. I must do something." It was as clear as dish-water to me what I must do, and I could feel my anger escalating, each time I repeated "I must do something." All this was going on as I rounded the corner into Washington Street, and then into State Street, where I stood, numbed, at the bus stop. After a few minutes, I began to look around. I could not believe it! Right there across the street, sitting on the cement casing of a flower bed was a fourth--again an old man--just staring, staring, staring, vacantly into space. Behind him a fifth trudged by. This time, an old woman carrying two carrier-bags. The words of a song from the seventies, "The Streets of London," came to mind and I began to hum the words

. . . so how can you tell me your are lon-o-n-ly
and say for you, that the sun don't shine . . .

This reverie was suddenly sundered by a shout from behind me. And, My God!, here was a sixth! This time, a young man again. He hopped along, I suppose one could call it, in the most grotesque manner, for he bent his knees and consequently moved along in a manner reminiscent of a monkey. His arms were rigid, fingers extended, he moved his head jerkily from side to side. He literally was in peoples' faces. He jumped at them as he passed by, and shouted something at them, not six inches from their nose. I could feel my numbness deepening, I began to stare in front of me--not unlike the man on the opposite side of the street. To relieve the depression, the shame, the guilt, the helplessness, and the boredom that I felt creeping all over me, I reached into the bag I was carrying, and pulled out a book I had bought earlier in the day, by Bruno Bettelheim. I began to read the first

paragraph. This is how Bettelheim began his introduction to The Uses of Enchantment, "If we hope to live, not just from moment to moment, but in true consciousness of our existence, then our greatest need and most difficult achievement is to find meaning in our lives" (1989, p. 3). I stopped reading. I thought for a new moments, stunned at the coincidence, and I reread the passage. I was having one of these "ah-a" moments people speak about. My own depression, my sense of uselessness, and isolation, had its roots in the utter meaninglessness that I felt, as I failed to relate to these six people who had crossed my path, in a time-lapse of less than five minutes. Meaning for me, is that sense of connectedness that I feel at times, when I recognize, more, when I know, in my heart of hearts, how I am related to the important people, events and circumstances of my life. Meaning goes hand in hand with a sense of "wholeness" of my life, each part, like a piece of a jig-saw puzzle, fitting, with precision, into the next part. As I put words on what I felt happening deep within me, some of the awfulness, and the boredom lifted. I began to think a little more clearly, reflecting on how important connection with other people is to me, how vital it is for me to see and feel meaning in my relationships with other people. I remembered how humiliated I feel on those occasions when I respond to people out of shame or guilt. As I meditated in this way, I began to think of the weeks and weeks of work that has gone into this essay. I realized it was that I had chosen to work with the theology of John Shea and the psychological discipline of Object Relations Theory. Shea explicitly sets out to uncover the depth dimension to all our relating, whether it be to human beings or to the

cosmos and all the things it contains. Object Relations is a powerful tool with which to uncover the psychological byways and highways we travel, on the journey to a cohesive self, and hence to meaning--for those of us who are lucky, that is--and the psychological detours, cul-de-sacs, and the landmined-highways that those who are less fortunate take, all the time. None of us, maybe, escape hitting a landmine, from time to time. As a result of my six encounters, on that Saturday evening, I know I have a powerful existential interest in working with this theology and psychology. They may help me to cope with the effects of the landmines I may have wittingly or unwittingly set off in my own life, assist in undoing some of the damage that has occurred, and improve my skill at mapping that part of my journey that still remains to be navigated. On that Saturday evening, on State Street, Bettelheim's further reflections were truly music to my ears.

It is well known how many have lost the will to live, and have stopped trying, because such meaning has evaded them. An understanding of the meaning of one's life is not suddenly acquired at a particular age, not even when one has reached chronological maturity. On the contrary, gaining a secure understanding of what the meaning of what one's life may or ought to be--this is what constitutes having attained psychological maturity. And this achievement is the result of a long development: at each age we seek and must be able to find, some modicum of meaning congruent with how our minds and understanding have already developed. . . . Contrary to the ancient myth, wisdom does not burst forth fully developed like Athena from Zeus' head; it is built up, small step by small step from most irrational beginnings. (Bettelheim, 1989, p. 3)

I am not sure that I would want to say that the beginning of wisdom has any irrational roots--my reading of Piaget, and Mahler, as we shall see, makes me think otherwise. Perhaps, non-rational is a preferable term. But I do agree wholeheartedly that meaning and wisdom have to be created,

small step by small step, over and over again, throughout our life cycle.

Chapter I begins with an effort to uncover how a human being may know the Ultimate, or God, which Shea refers to as Mystery. The purpose of this chapter is, first, to present the way in which John Shea conceptualized the human encounter with Mystery, who is ground of all being, the foundation of valuing and the inspiration of all concrete action. Mystery's gracious approach to the two-legged, upright being, that the human person is, might be described in a spatial metaphor, as directed downward. This meets the upward, transcending movement of the human being. The fundamental characteristic of the human being, is his or her ability to know in a sacramental manner. Human beings can raise questions, and as we discover, at the end of Chapter II, the question which lies behind every other question is "what is real?" The first part of Chapter I, is an effort to illustrate the potential meaningfulness and worthwhile nature of human existence.

How do human beings penetrate the Mystery-human relation, which, at its most intense moments, is entirely a pre-thematized, preconscious event? This is where myth, myth-making activity, and story-telling (which is one form of myth) take center-stage in a person's life. The second purpose of Chapter I, is to outline the nature and function of myth or story-telling. We need to know how it relates to consciousness, to the shaping of attitudes and how it might give direction to patterns of behavior. We need to ask the question of how traditional Judeo-Christian theological stories, first woven, as long ago as the year 2000 B.C.E., can still make sense in our twentieth century. Hence we will

review the processes of interpretation that are current among scholars nowadays, which augment our skills in the task of creating meaning.

The third goal of this theological chapter is to describe the experience that is possible, if we choose to inhabit a world, whose contours are shaped by the Judeo-Christian stories. We need to know more about Mystery's graciousness towards us, and the nature of our response; we want to know what we will be like, as a result of our relationship with Mystery. Then, of course, meaninglessness, and the threat of anxiety and fear, are never far away--where do they fit in?

We fulfill the fourth goal of the first chapter by reviewing two stories which John Shea weaves--stories of "Hope and Justice" and of "Trust and Freedom." In these stories, he takes our current twentieth-century conditions seriously, and brings them into dialogue with some of the major metaphors of the Judeo-Christian tradition. In this conversation, we see how the biblical images give birth to healthy attitudes for contemporary living, which in turn, suggest the concrete patterns of behavior one should take.

A final section of this chapter answers the question of where exactly to locate John Shea in the whole of the Christian tradition, and helps us find the basic question Shea and his tradition ask: "What is real?"--a question that offers us the bridge, so to speak, that will span the distance between the theology we work with in this essay, and the psychology we turn to, in Chapter II.

In Chapter II, as we acknowledge the achievements of Freud, we achieve our first goal. Passing onto a detailed examination of one of the strands of psychodynamic theory and practice, that has sprung from

his seminal work, Object Relations Theory, we discover the importance of the framework of Margaret Mahler and her collaborators. They furnish the paradigm which enables us to order the variety and the richness of insight, not only of the Object Relations tradition itself, but of psychologist Jean Piaget, of attachment theorist, like John Bowlby, and of psychodynamic theoreticians/clinicians such as Selma Fraiberg and Ana-Marie Rizzuto. Our second goal for this chapter is to present that paradigm. The third aim is to attend to the special contribution of D. W. Winnicott. His reflections on the first "not-me" possessions of a child--the so-called "transitional objects"--form a crucial link in understanding the bridge that we can deduce between the theology of John Shea and the work of these Object Relations Theorists. Fourthly, the fundamental aim of this chapter is to understand how meaning becomes a quality of experience that blossoms, as it were, when a person's self attains a satisfactory level of cohesiveness and integration.

Chapter III presents Ana-Marie Rizzuto's splendid study of the formation and function of God-representations. Building on the work of Freud, who was the first to speak of God representation as a transformation of paternal imagos, she offers us a way of understanding the psychological resources we bring to the life-project of faith. She eschews Freud's negative view of religion and religious experience. Thanks to her creative use of the work of Winnicott, she corrects and reinterprets his findings. Especially important, as we shall see, is her rehabilitation of illusion and imagination. Like Selma Fraiberg, Rizzuto thinks that the fictive creations of the human imagination are a storehouse of creative energy and humanizing potential.

Chapter IV is really the heart of this study and is in two sections. In the first section, using a methodology that John McDargh calls the "constructional-relational model" (McDargh, 1983, p. 69), a conversation between our theologian and Object Relations Theory is set up. Faith, a human dynamic of knowing, which empowers a person to construct a meaningful world and which finds its fulfillment in compassionate living, stands at the interface between theology and psychology. The first effort in this chapter is to establish the nature of faith as a knowing activity. Once this is done, the task is to uncover the various dimensions of meaning that a person uncovers through faith: one develops a sense of oneself as real; one's relationship to a real and meaningful world becomes consolidated; one can enjoy solitude; and the final aspect of enjoying a meaningful world centers on one's ability to tolerate dependence. Funded by the resources that are rooted in a meaningful world, the individual is then in position to enjoy a sense of cohesiveness and integration and move out towards others in radical self-giving and compassion.

In the second section, the dialogue between the theology of John Shea, and the psychological perspective of the Object Relations Theorists, continues. This time we allow the theologian to critique the fundamental and world-creating metaphors of the Object Relations Theorists. The purpose of this is to remind ourselves that "pure" scientific activity is often impossible to sustain, and that the scientist, whether she be a psychologist or not, may, consciously or unconsciously, slip into prescriptive and world-creating mythic activity. Our question to Mahler, Winnicott, and the other Object

Relations Theorists is "What is the nature of your fundamental metaphors and what is the nature of the obligation that they imply?"

The fifth chapter, drawing not only on the published work of John Shea, but also on a series of interviews, which this author conducted with him, attempts to provide a tentative account of some of the more prominent characteristics of the God representations with which he works. In this chapter, we will use the theory elaborated in Chapter III.

When we reach the Conclusion, the hope is that we will be equipped with compatible, and mutually enriching, theological and psychological perspectives, to help us undertake and navigate what is often referred to as the "hero's or the heroine's journey"--a journey which always includes awesome perils and surprising joys.

CHAPTER I

STORIES OF DWELLING IN EXCEEDING DARKNESS AND UNDESERVED LIGHT

Introduction

In this chapter we are in search of John Shea's theological anthropology. The terms theological anthropology indicate my interest in discerning what his vision of being human is, a vision that is rooted in, and shaped by, his theological concerns and commitments.

There are two kinds of issues in recent Western hemisphere cultural history that are of special interest to this professor of theology at Mundelein seminary. The first group of issues center on such experiences as disenchantment, contingency, temporality, autonomous freedom and the pursuit of science--the list is not exhaustive. The second group of concerns focus on the place and function of myth in human existence. The list of experiences we have just met, names some of the powerful and typical experiences of secular scientific people of the twentieth century. Shea, and his mentor before him, Langdon Gilkey, have at least two reasons for focusing on these experiences. Grounded in such experiences, many people of our century have adopted attitudes, and made choices, that threaten the very ecological survival of the planet. Second, these same subjects, in the name of such experiences, exclude any religious language as meaningless and condemn the truth

claims of religious symbols, as mystifying hocus-pocus.

John Shea's work is an effort to illustrate not only the meaningfulness of religious language, but to ground the truth claims of religious symbols, in a way that dialogues with people rooted in the scientific secular community. His work helps those Christians who, while remaining within a religious faith vision of the world, would like to integrate what they can of the undoubted goodness of scientific advances.

I would like to approach John Shea's work with two questions:

1. What are the contours of a meaningful human existence?
2. How does a person create a meaningful world?

By means of these two questions, I hope to allow John Shea to speak as clearly for himself as possible, so that we have a solid statement of his positions and enough material to facilitate a fair dialogue with Object Relations Theory.

I. The Birth of a Meaningful World

The Breakthrough of Mystery

We start with the question of the nature of God's relationship to the human person. Shea refrains from using the word God, and instead speaks of "the graciousness of immanent-transcendent Mystery." "This is not meant as a replacement for the word 'God.' It is rather an attempt to disclose the experiential base of God language and so rehabilitate the word" (1980, p. 92). We all participate, Shea says, in "a common set of environments. The self, family and friends, society and institution, and universe are relationships that no human life escapes" (1978, p. 12).

The Self. We have the amazing ability to be self-reflective, to comment on what we think and feel; "to remove ourselves from ourselves to see how we are doing with ourselves" (1978, p. 13). This ability means that we can never have "a simple animal reaction to stimuli."

Family and Friends. We are born into this second environment. We are introduced to intimacy and personal contact, by and with them. Our development within the bosom of a healthy family and of friends fosters the seeds of hope that will flourish throughout our lifetime, and scatters the chaff that will yield its harvest of anxiety and persistent fears. "Intimacy or isolation, love or loneliness are the qualities which are generated in the environment of interpersonal relationships" (1978, p. 14).

The Third environment which shapes us, is that of society and its institutions. While not as personal as that of family, the relationships at this level are powerfully influential.

Society and institution assign roles, grant legitimacy or illegitimacy to certain behavior, control the means of production and provide sanctions, as Michael has said, "from raised eyebrows to death penalties." (1978, p. 14)

The fourth environment is that of the non-human universe. Shea reflects on how closely we are linked to the whole of creation; on how the weather's moods affect our own; on how the very landscape where a person is born and grows up in, contributes to growth. A careless or wasteful attitude toward the resources of the earth begets an ecological crisis, and humankind's dangerous interaction with the non-human universe has left us all in a precarious position.

Having described these four environments within which we live, Shea goes on to describe the dimension of experience that is so often

neglected in secular times: that of Mystery. He begins Stories of Faith by illustrating how the revelation of Mystery is anchored in "the ordinary process of human perception and feeling" (1980, p. 33). These illustrations center on three developmentally significant experiences: the experience of generativity in the case of the late-middle-aged businessman, who exclaims "that's what life is about" as he reflects on how his friend welcomes his grandchildren to his retirement home each semester holiday; of the young adult who reflects on the impact of meeting Mother Theresa, and who understands that identity achievement lies in a life spent selflessly, rather than egotistically; of the younger middle-aged man whose father lies dying, who is prompted to say, "Let it go dad," and who thereby surrenders to the mystery of life and death. Each of these people come to a recognition of "the Mystery which we dwell within." They are in touch with a dimension of experience that is variably referred to as "the transcendent, the Ultimate, the Sacred, the More, the Whole, the Inexhaustible, the Encompassing . . . [and which we] call the dimension of Mystery" (p. 17).

Shea insists on the reality of this experience of Mystery and its reality. One of the clearest expressions of his convictions occurs in An Experience of Spirit (1983, p. 97).

We may be able to blot out other relationships by banishing them from our minds; but this is an ontological constant. Two of the metaphors of divine presence from the Hebrew Scriptures are breath and blood. Divine influence is as subtle and as influential as the inhalation and exhalation of air and the rush of blood. The words on the wall at Delphi are eternally true: "invoked or not, God is present."

The heart of Shea's contention is, that Mystery addresses the human person. This is what he understands is conveyed by the notion of

Revelation. In Stories of Faith (1980, pp. 15ff.) he conceptualizes the process of Mystery's address, and the human response to it, that is faith, as having five moments.

1. There is a relationship to mystery.
2. Mystery communicates meanings about the nature of the relationship.
3. This meaning is initially formulated, then pondered, acted on, rephrased, reopened, reacted on, etc.
4. The meaning that is received is related to the conflicts, questions and needs of the people involved.
5. Although there is an enshrined religious vocabulary to talk about these experiences, it is seldom used.

I proceed now to consider the first four of these ideas and leave aside the fifth since it is not directly useful for our purposes here.

The Relationship to Mystery

Mystery is not a "thing" that is given to us directly in experience, nor does it ever enter our awareness directly. We become aware that we are related to mystery as we operate within the four environments of self, family, society and universe. It is a matter of discovering how all data are tinged with mystery. Shea claims that a special way of knowing, or better, of acknowledging, ultimate reality--he calls it the "Sacramental way"--is involved here. In Stories of God (1978, pp. 17-18) he contrasts it with mysticism and rationalism. In mystical experience, a person has a sense of merger with Mystery, and "the everyday environments of the self are leapt over and left behind"

(p. 17) since they are hindrances rather than helps to contact with the Divine. A Rationalist approach, on the other hand, begins with a datum of sense experience, and then through a process of logical inference, it reaches out to transcendence. Rationalism and Mysticism share the common characteristic of moving away from ordinary experience. A sacramental understanding of awareness is much richer. His own words on this are:

Everyday awareness has two points. For example, I [1] see a bird [2]. Sacramental awareness has three points--[1] see a bird [2] and in and through this interaction become [3] aware of the dimension of mystery. Gerard Manly Hopkins sees a windhover fighting the currents of the wind and in his struggle he is plunged into the mystery of human redemption. . . . This is sacramental awareness. Unlike Mysticism it does not bypass our immediate environments but goes through them. Unlike rational awareness it does not engage in an extensive logical process. Mystery enters into consciousness as the premise of life and not as the conclusion of logic. (1978, p. 18)

Elsewhere Shea calls this the "in and through approach" to awareness (1980, p. 17). Talk of knowing of this kind has affinity with the language that Heidegger uses when he speaks of

all reality as constructed of Being-beings. Beings are all objects which are available to the procedures of practical and theoretical approaches. Being is the "to be" of whatever is, the power which makes beings possible. Being and beings are distinct but never separable. A being is never without Being for Being makes beings possible. On the other hand Being is never without beings, for being only reveals itself, if it does at all, through beings. Therefore an awareness of beings, the surface of reality, can bring with it an awareness of Being, the depth of reality. (quoted, 1978, p. 19)

Shea himself talks about this kind of perceiving as perception through feeling, a mode of acknowledgment that is both cognitive and affective:

[Feeling] is the way in which the total person appropriates Whole or Mystery or Encompassing. Since the dimension of mystery in Gilky's phrase "is not so much seen but the basis of seeing; not what is known as an object so much as the basis of knowing; not an object of value, but the ground of valuing; not the thing before us, but the

source of things; not the particular meanings that generate our life in the world, but the ultimate context within which these meanings necessarily subsist," it is not observed and detected like individual objects. Feeling perceives by participation. (1978, p. 19)

This is the kind of "knowing" that is typical of the artist or the musician. It is the "knowing" that grounds myth-making and ritual behavior, two of Shea's major points of interest.

The core myth (the death-resurrection of Jesus) and ritual (Eucharist) of Christianity reflect the artistic dimension of the human person. . . . The artist in each person appropriates reality by feeling its fullness. . . . Feeling responses to divine-human interaction are usually expressed in imaginative forms. (1983, p. 64)

In Stories of Faith (1980, p. 92) Shea sharpens his account of the developing divine-human interaction by contrasting supernaturalistic and sacramental imagination. For a person who operates with a supernaturalistic imagination, "God" is a flat, descriptive word, referring to a Supreme Being whose relationship to us is understood through the use of analogy. But analogical knowledge of God is unsatisfactory. That is not the only way in which use of the supernaturalistic imagination is inadequate: it leads to our addressing God as if He were simply another being; it leads to our expecting God to intervene in the gaps that our own activity cannot fill; and finally it reduces the possibilities of contact with God to those special times and places, where an ordinarily absent God, mysteriously makes Himself available for contact. In this mode, the human imagination is utterly trapped. It recognizes the poverty of its contents and resorts to the use of reason to compensate for its deficits. Reason becomes the pawn of supernaturalistic imagination, and is pressed into the defense of its cause. Thus, reason develops treatises on the limitations of analogy,

combines negative and positive language in God-talk, and develops theories of secondary and primary causality to account for divine activity. Then he adds

imagination is an orientation toward reality more fundamental than thinking. It has tendencies which pull us in a certain direction; and although the mind might pinpoint the problems and try to solve them, it cannot change the direction. In another image, if the imagination has a gaping hole, thinking will not patch it for long. In a final image, imagination is the room and thinking is the furniture. (1980, p. ??)

Having dismissed supernaturalistic imagination as an adequate mode for receiving Mystery's address, Shea now must give his own account of how there is a proportion between Mystery and the human being's capacity to receive It. To attune us to a completely different form of human imagining, Shea invites us to turn to our experience for a moment. He recalls for us the reaction of a father who sees his newborn baby for the first time: "God." Again, the word that is on the lips of a dying person frequently is "God." These people are echoing the cry of the slaves in Egypt who address the heavens in their suffering by exclaiming "God." Or again, says Shea, take the example of the girl who has been blind from birth. Now, thanks to some surgical intervention, she can see for the first time. She looks around at the beauty and color of the room she is in, and she exclaims "Oh My God! Oh My God!" Her exclamation expresses not only her intense gratification at being able to see, but her sense of overwhelming amazement at the beauty she sees, as well. She does not see God. She sees color and form, but in the interaction between her and color or form, she is triggered into an awareness of the greater Mystery she lives within. She indicates this awareness by calling out "God" (1980, p. 96). In all these cases, the

exclamation of the word "God" indicates the movement of the imagination into the mode that Shea calls "sacramental imagination."

Rooted within this mode, we do not restrict the word "God" to an exclamatory use only. We use God in the nominative case as well. The reason for this arises from a quality, which Mystery has, as it discloses Itself to our awareness. We do not experience Mystery in a continuous way, nor is our ability to experience it dependent on our willing it. It comes and goes, and we do not control it. We are graced with it.

In order to communicate this felt perception (that the initiative rests with Mystery) we make God the subject of the sentence. . . . To start a sentence with "God" is simply to state the fundamental dynamic of the relationship. The referent in experience for "God" as subject is completely different than the referent in an experience for "Joan" as subject. At this moment we are not engaged in analogy, but in linguistically expressing the felt perception that the Mystery instigates all interaction. (1980, p. 97)

With God in the nominative case we soon use verbs and objects. We say God is love. In the context of sacramental imagination, we are not ascribing qualities to God. "We mean our relationship to God is loving" (1978, p. 97). The person who says God is love, and speaks out of a sacramental imagination is not someone who betakes himself or herself to an uninhabited island and cuts connection with every living soul, in order to enjoy God's love. Rather, this person is someone who has loved another and in and through that love has discovered that a greater love, which supports and encourages the interpersonal love, has been disclosed.

In sacramental imagination God, self and others are permanently bound together. We cannot talk of our relationship to God without talking of our finite relationships; and we cannot talk about our finite relationships at any depth without talking of our relationship to God. (1980, p. 98)

Sacramental imagination takes the universal presence of Mystery for granted, so it is never a question of making the absent God present. The question is how does the ubiquitous God enter the heart and mind. The answer to that question is by responding in the mind, heart and action to what has been disclosed. This is what faith is: "responding in mind, heart and action to what cannot be escaped" (p. 98).

Among the consequences of being able to perceive sacramentally which Shea considers worth noting let us attend to two. The first is that what we are brought in moments of sacramental awareness, is not an awareness of ourselves in ourselves, or of Mystery in Itself. "What is revealed and responded to is not the fact that there is a Mystery, but the fact that we are bonded to that Mystery" (1980, p. 19). Second, this relationship is perceived as very real. The Mystery we have encountered is truly other than the person encountering it. It is not a projection of fantasy, nor a concept, but a reality which invites us to become engaged with Itself. Having said all that Shea drives home his thesis: "Therefore the first element of revelation faith experiences is, that in and through our concrete interactions we are involved in a real relationship with Mystery" (p. 19).

In this section I have tried to present the way John Shea perceives the human person as being adequately equipped to acknowledge and receive the address of Mystery. It is thanks to the ability to use imagination in a sacramental way that the connection between Mystery and the human person enters awareness. Reason functions within the "room," to use his own metaphor, that sacramental imagination provides, in the process of explicating that awareness. We now turn to the task of

forming an initial understanding of what is communicated in the divine-human encounter.

Mystery Communicates Meanings About
the Relationship

It is not enough to say that "I'm in a relationship with Mystery." A meaning is also given in the encounter concerning the way that the relationship is to be lived. In Stories of Faith, Shea returns to his senior middle-aged businessman, his young adult and young middle-aged son, to illustrate just how the flow of their relationship is indicated, in their encounter with Mystery. It "hit" the first man that he should have contact with his grandchildren "It 'jumped out of' his experience, appearing as an invitation he had very little to do with" (1980, p. 20). The girl listening to Mother Theresa knew that "something came to her." She did not deliberately set out to find some kind of meaning for herself in the lecture. "She received it more than she manufactured it" (p. 20). The man at his father's death bed, who whispered to his father that it was time to let go, was expressing a meaning that came to him as a response to his father's situation. "This was the truth of the situation and I responded. I didn't take it on my own, but only spoke what was already there" (p. 20). These incidents illustrate how we do not have to be Sherlock Holmes-like types questing frenetically for Mystery. Rather Mystery is "on the make," ready to surprise us everywhere. It is this sensitivity on the part of Mystery-- constantly moving towards us--"which is the experiential base for all talk of grace" (p. 21). This talk of grace might seem to leave us all sitting on our oars with nothing to do, but Mystery's communications are

not sedatives, they "also have the quality of an imperative" (p. 21). The meaning which we perceive in our encounters with Mystery are pointers to how our life is to be lived in such a way that there is compatibility between Mystery and the unfolding of our life story. "As such the meanings do not appear as options but as truths that must be conformed to" (p. 21).

To avoid getting the impression that John Shea is preaching some kind of illuminism it is necessary to hear him tell us that

the felt perception that the meaning is given and therefore imperative does not mean that it appears in awareness untouched by the person who receives it. The given never actually appears as given, but only transformed by its reception. (1980, p. 22)

Part of this transformation is effected by the very fact that we exclaim "God," or whatever word carries the affective response to the disclosure of mystery. The reception of the disclosure is further transformed by what happens next: the experience evokes images, which have both an affective and cognitive power.

Through the images we know something about the relationship to God, but we also have "some feel" for what it is like to live in that relationship. This rounded ability makes images an appropriate first form to convey the experience of God" (1980, p. 99).

Use has been made of a multitude of images, in the Christian tradition, to convey this God experience, though the reality of God is never fully captured in one or in all of them. Yet, on the other hand, we can both establish and deepen our contact with Mystery through them. "This paradox, an imageless God, available through images, is at the heart of sacramental imagination" (1980, p. 100).

The images a person uses may come from diverse sources. Sometimes they may reflect the medium through which Mystery has been

disclosed in his/her life. For example, one may look at a beautiful sky at sunset, have intimations of Mystery and exclaim "Heavenly God!" The disclosure came through interaction with the sky and sky is used to convey the meaning of transcendence. Another common example is that of interpersonal love. A man loves his wife and becomes aware of a transpersonal source, which encourages and authorizes his feelings and behaviors. Thus he says "God is a lover." "To focus on the illusive presence he linguistically 'separates it out' and names it with the feelings, attitudes and values through which it entered awareness" (1980, p. 100). Parental imagery, rooted in the human experiences of fathering and mothering, has frequently been used to express the Mystery of Ultimate Reality, as generative loving. A person may choose imagery, not because it has been associated with experiences which have mediated Mystery in the person's own life, but for the simple reason that they accurately convey the felt perception of the relationship.

The experience of the relationship is logically prior to the images. So various images are tried out to see if they capture the nuances of the relationship. In the book of Kings, Elijah is ordered outside the cave to watch the Lord pass by. The writer then uses the images of a mighty wind, an earthquake and a fire; but God is in none of these images. Finally, a whispering sound carried the presence of God. (1980, p. 101)

Once the divine-human encounter breaks into consciousness, images are born. The process does not end there however. The images are explored so that the felt perceptions of the relationship between the person and Mystery can be further appropriated. It is to that exploration that we now turn.

Meaning Is Initially Formulated.
Pondered. Acted On

As we have seen, since Mystery suffuses the totality of our lives, we are able to receive and express Its intentions towards us. But at the same time Mystery is transcendent to us and therefore every formulation of Mystery's intentions will be incomplete and inadequate. Quoting Schillebeeckx, Shea describes Mystery as the "Ultimate-Intimate."

As Intimate we receive and articulate our relationship to it.
 As Ultimate, the meaning of our relationship eludes full expression.
 (1980, p. 23)

Since our formulations are always partial, we constantly return to the experience, to "remember, rehash," and slowly clarify the meanings. As this happens, the original experience yields what Shea calls "a distilled meaning." "This meaning, now detached from life-giving dialogue with experience, accompanies the person through life. It often takes the form of a proverb, slogan or one-line truism" (p. 23). And so, his friends will hear the businessman say: "You've got to get to know your grandchildren." The young adult will appreciate or criticize her friends on the basis of whether she perceives them as self-centered or not. And the son will often repeat "When it's your time, it's your time. You've got to go with it." The danger with these distilled gems is that they can appear arbitrary to anyone who is unacquainted with the process which gave rise to them.

Shea takes pains to point out the misunderstanding that can occur when he talks of "faith formulations." This can be taken to mean that his concern is with an intellectual response to a revelatory event.

But faith-revelation experience engulfs the whole person. It affects the centred self, addressing the heart mind and behaviour. In a similar way the faith formulation process is an activity of the whole person, unfolding the convictions, feelings and behaviours which are suggested in the experience. (1980, p. 24)

In An Experience Named Spirit, Shea returns to this topic and clearly describes how a person negotiates the process of translating the ineffable experience of Mystery into "faith formulations." He speaks here of Mystery stirring the "soul," "the ultimate source of human activity . . . the hidden, unifying centre of the person" (1983, p. 68). Once an experience of Mystery occurs in a person's life, there is an immediate bubbling forth of image after image--theologians assign the term "first order language of religious experience" to this outpouring. However, as soon as this prayerful explosion of expressive and evocative language subsides, the mind wants to get a clearer grasp of what has happened in the Mystery-human interaction. And so it "inhabits anew the first order language of religious experience" and thus explores the relationship with Mystery.

Through this activity it comes to some touchstone truths and states them in a first order language of its own: . . . the first order language of cognitive appropriation (the first order language of theology). . . . Some biblical candidates (of which) might be: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself" (2 Cor. 5:19) or "It is precisely in this that God proves his love for us: that while we were sinners, Christ died for us" (Rm 5:8). (1983, p. 69)

In expressions such as these, we have a cognitive expression of our experience and a statement of the basic tenets of our faith. They express the experience in a summary phrase, in order to clarify it. The distilled truth becomes permanently available. Once these touchstone truths are in place, the mind begins another task: that of investigating these truths: "This is the second order language of

theology" (p. 70). In this task of exploring the meaning of the basic affirmations of faith, theology takes into account the findings of the various human sciences and sets up a dialogue between them and the faith-expressions. "This mental activity is a drive toward intelligibility and coherence" (p. 71). That still is not the end of the story. The next move the mind makes is that of trying to extend the influence of the basic beliefs to every area of human functioning.

So the mind works to construct an appreciation of everything within life, from its foundational convictions about the mystery of life. What does our relationship to God have to say about: joining the military, sexual love, the distribution of wealth. . . . This theological activity constructs a world in which we see properly, the dynamics of every area of life. (p. 72)

There is yet a third moment in this mental activity, which focuses on the "personal and social ecology of beliefs" (1983, p. 73). That is to say that theological reflection has a self-critical moment. "It is deeply suspicious and attempts to unmask false processes that may be operative in the espousal of belief and the construction of theology" (p. 73). If, for example, I choose "the poor shall inherit the earth" as the hermeneutical key to the New Testament, then engaging in theological reflection of this third kind, I will ask myself: "Am I involved in some reaction formation here? Is it because I am convinced I can never be rich, that I adopt this perspective as central?" On the social level, this kind of reflection looks for the ideological mechanism in belief and theology. "After a theology of salvation has been elaborated and the Catholic Church is more gloriously reigning than ever before, the critical mind becomes suspicious" (p. 74).

We still have not yet touched on the final item of the heading of this section: "action." From Shea's perspective, every Mystery-

human interaction has a "core imperative," a drive to action, going with it, inevitably (1983, p. 77). It may well be in many instances, that the need to translate the experience into action is much more pressing than the need to ritually celebrate it or to cognitively grasp it. "The ethical impulse is to pass along what has been experienced. . . . The experience of God catapults the person into the human world with a divine agenda" (p. 77). Not that this agenda is spelled out in specific strategies, rather the ethical imperative that flows from an experience of Mystery "is an overall orientation" (p. 77). They might have the form: be just, be loving, be caring, and thus direct our energies in a general direction.

The Meaning That Is Received Is
Related to the Conflicts, Needs,
and Questions of the Person

John Shea is concerned lest we attribute a causal power to our own needs, conflicts and questions in our talking about our encounters with Mystery. Rather these needs, conflicts and questions predispose us to a certain kind of openness to, and "gear us to certain communications" from Mystery. They "shape the content of revelation" (1980, p. 25). He recalls Thomas Fawcett's rendition of the dynamics of a faith-revelation experience, which explicitly refers to the conditions previous to an encounter with Mystery.

1. The presence of an existential need.
2. The moment of disclosure or perception itself.
3. The embodiment of the experience in symbolic form.

The connection between the moment of encounter and that of embodying it in language, or symbolic form, is close indeed--so close that in stage

two, Fawcett uses both the word disclosure and perception. The former expression attends to the movement from Mystery to the subject, while the latter points to the person's apprehension of the meaning of the encounter. Stage two immediately opens out into stage three. Quoting Fawcett, Shea continues "The moment of revelation cannot therefore be separated from its symbolic formulation, because the subject can never speak of the experience without the use of symbol" (1980, p. 26). While there are distinguishable moments in the encounter with Mystery, the experience of that encounter, and the formulation of its meaning is a single unified process.

Lest we come away with the idea that the revelation of Mystery is always a positive, affirming perception, Shea reminds us that this may not always be the case. Where persons have spent their lives systematically opposing Mystery's invitations, "the interchanges are often anything but smooth" (1980, p. 26).

The existential situation is often not one of sincere search but one of distortion which is not recognised. A life has so gone against the grain of mystery within which it lives, that the revelation-faith experience is the recognition of its wrong-headedness, and the possibility of change. (p. 26)

In this case there is a striking congruence between a person's existential situation and the demands of Mystery, but this congruence brings shock, disbelief or discomfort in its wake. While the person is now receptive to what Mystery has to say she or he has lost control, in a real sense.

The Origin and Function of Myth

We have a first answer to our question: How does a person create a meaningful world? It is an answer in broad strokes. Meaning

is grounded in the dynamic interrelating that goes on between the self and its multiple environments, and which, thanks to our ability to use our sacramental imagination, unfolds for us the attractive and enrapturing presence of Mystery, whose demands on us are the source of our values, behaviors and the object of our affections. It still remains for John Shea to spell out in detail, how imagination, engaged in its sacramental mode, conducts itself, and how in metaphorical terms, the furniture in its room is to be arranged, how, in other words, reasoning unfolds under its influence. Let us use Shea's own words to map out for us the further horizons we have to explore in our quest for the detailed answer to our question:

We are inescapably related to this Mystery which is immanent and transcendent, which issues invitations we must respond to, which is ambiguous about its intentions, and which is real and important beyond all else. Our dwelling within Mystery is both menacing and promising, a relationship of exceeding darkness and undeserved light. In this situation we do a distinctively human thing. We gather together and tell stories of God to calm our terror and hold our hope on high. (1978, p. 39)

Why is story selected to play this important role? Shea chooses "story" to fill such a role because story is one of the two principal forms of myth, and myth is the means by which meaning is generated and the medium through which our relationship to mystery is expressed (1978, pp. 47-52). Though some would lean towards an explanation of myth as an escalated idea (e.g., Evolution as a total explanation) Shea himself clearly prefers the description of George Whalley:

(Myth) embodies in an articulated structure of symbol or narrative a vision of reality. It is a condensed account of man's Being and attempts to represent reality with structural fidelity, to indicate at a single stroke the salient and fundamental relations which for a man constitute reality. . . . Myth is an indispensable principle of unity in individual lives and in the life of society. (p. 51)

In Stories of Faith, our author elaborates further on the characteristics of story.

(a) Stories are interesting. They have the power to engross both the teller and the listener. The teller is engrossed because when one speaks, one is touching the inner core of one's identity. Shea shares with his readers, a reflection of Gertrude Stein:

What is interesting is the way everyone tells their stories. If you listen, really listen, you will hear people repeating themselves. You will hear their pleading nature or their attacking nature or their asserting nature. (1980, p. 87)

Hearers are engrossed because they become participants in the story. Think of Jesus telling the story of the Good Samaritan to the Scholar of the Law in Lk: 10:29ff. In my own case, I can still feel the hair on my head standing up as I joined my neighbors back home telling ghost stories. Shea calls this "entering into the time of its happening." When we tell stories in this way we are using the concrete narrative form and are willing to

re-experience in diminished form the feelings and insights of the event. In re-experiencing it, we see it differently, and "unpack" its meaning further. Storytelling has a power of involvement and appreciation that the mere noting of patterns and talking analytically about experiences does not have. (1983, p. 104)

Stories told in this form are indeed interesting because of their personal significance. Personal significance gives rise to what Shea calls a preference for existential, rather than chronological time, in these narratives.

This means the person creates time units in terms of their personal impact with only a nod to the hours, days, weeks, months, and years way of counting. An experience may take place in five minutes or five years. But however long or short, the time is unified in terms of its significance for the person. (1983, p. 104)

Stories are often engrossing because an image has emerged which

"kernalizes" an experience. The image is not a replacement for the story, but somehow grasps its core. "As such it functions as a code for the experience, anchors it in memory, and is its main linguistic medium through which it is shared with others" (1983, p. 106).

(b) Stories are accessible. They are concrete and their basic material is the everyday events in the lives of ordinary people.

To ask what someone's values are is often to be greeted by silence; but to ask them about a time when they "felt on the line" is to reach the question of values through the world of story. The mystery of story is that everyone is one and everyone has some; and in a conducive setting, everyone wants to tell them. (1980, p. 87)

(c) Narrative is an inherent quality of human experience and so a primal form of human discourse.

A person like J. P. Sartre may complain that each moment of existence is a separate entity in itself, isolated, unconnected with every other moment and therefore meaningless, yet, he can spend page after page narrating this meaninglessness and at the end of it all "courageously accepting that existence" (1980, p. 88).

(d) There is a religious or sacred dimension to storytelling, where religious or sacred is defined as the affirmation of ultimate meaning. Shea identifies with the position of Sam Keen on this, where he claims that storytelling undoes the randomness of the present moment by inserting us in the larger framework. Storytelling allows a sense of the sacred to break through. How this happens is elaborated by Charles Winquist. He contrasts

the act and the content of storytelling, "What is absent in many modern stories is a content of positive affirmation. What is present, even in relating a story of nothingness is a positive act of affirmation. . . . The escape from meaninglessness is achievable through the transcendence of act over content. "True existential

atheism is not telling a godless story, but having no story to tell." (1980, p. 89).

(e) The stories of the Christian tradition are crucial in the process of growth into a religious self-understanding. These stories bear a sufficiently strong resemblance to our own story that we can see ourselves in them, and yet they are different enough from our life-story for us to have our conscience pricked and see new possibilities. Traditional stories, whether they are historical accounts (David and Bathsheba) or fictional ones (the creation story) "reflect concerns and conflicts present in our lives and suggest ways of dealing with them" (1980, p. 89).

When we tell traditional stories we are searching to give meaning to all that we experience in our relationships with our proximate environments (through which we engage the dimension of mystery). When we succeed in generating such meaning, we end up with "a personally shaped world where faith vanquishes fear, freedom wins out over slavery and hope vanquishes despair" (1978, p. 42). This meaning is functioning for us in an "ultimate way"--it grounds the meanings of our proximate environments, gives them vitality and sustains them. Shea accounts for the passion with which we quest for ultimate meaning, not by an appeal to innate curiosity or need for neatness. Rather we search for ultimate meaning in order to have a "perspective which enables us to orient ourselves within 'the givens' of any situation" (p. 47). Once we have this perspective we can relate to even the harshest and violent of realities, such as death in a creative way, without succumbing to panic and chaos.

The drive for ultimate meaning is for the purposes of salvation, not curiosity. This redemptive function is cryptically conveyed in Isaac Dinesen's remark "any sorrow can be borne if a story can be told about it." (1978, p. 47)

It is our ability to engage in myth-making that answers our need to discover or create ultimate meaning. Our task now becomes that of describing the function of myth within human consciousness.

The Four Functions of Myth

What does Myth do? It has three functions, says John Shea, "Mythic activity creates worlds by structuring consciousness, encouraging attitudes and suggesting behaviours" (1978, p. 52). We shall add a fourth.

Myth Structures Consciousness

We can illustrate what is meant by myth structuring consciousness (Shea also calls this the "attention directing" function of Myth) by referring to the examples used in Stories of God (1978, p. 53). In his clinical practice, Freud was struck by the conflict between son-mother-father, that frequently emerged in the lives of his clients. He named the syndrome of characteristics that emerged in these conflicts "The Oedipus Complex" and thereby unwrapped an ancient story which provided the psychoanalyst and his clients with a powerful myth by which to interpret the conflict which was tearing their nuclear families apart.

What makes this story mythic is that its plot is accepted as applicable to every family situation. It creates a world, a perspective, an angle of entry into the primordial situation of father, son and mother. (1975, p. 53)

The second example is that of Gilgamesh, an ancient, near-eastern heroic

figure. In the story, he has to struggle fiercely against death and searches for the secret of immortality. If people today show interest in the story, it is not because they are especially interested in the man himself, but because in some way his story is everyone's story. "The pattern of the story creates a context in which personal death, and life lived in the face of death, can be appropriated" (1975, p. 53).

From these examples we can learn what Shea means when he says that myths structure consciousness. Amidst the welter of stimuli which hit us from the multiple environments we inhabit, myth focuses our attention on certain elements of the incoming reality rather than others. It helps a person then, find patterns in these elements and "entices the person to relate to that reality through those patterns" (1978, p. 52). Whether the myth takes a story or an idea form, it deals with individual, concrete cases, but at the same time it transcends its concrete reference, and has the power to touch into and cast light on the "formless but powerful impulses" of a multitude of circumstances. Trivial events can never be the stuff of myth. It grows out of the primordial circumstances of human living, and intends to shed light on every and all experience of birth and death, awe and reverence, psychic and political struggle, natural disaster or beauty, etc. "The ambition of myth is not to be one more interesting for forgettable account, but to become the structure of consciousness through which human situations will be appropriated" (p. 52).

Myth Uncovers Values and Arouses Commitment to the Values

Mythic activity's second task is to uncover a set of values for

the subject and to awaken commitment to these values. Shea illustrates what is involved here by retelling the Darwinian evolutionary myth (where one might expect to find a "scientific facade of distance and non-involvement" (1975, p. 54) as it has been recast poetically by the Greek poet and novelist, Nikos Kazantzakis:

Animals appeared--worms--making themselves at home in water and nude. "We're just fine here," they said. "We have peace and security; we're not budging!"

But the terrible Cry hammered itself pitilessly into their loins. "Leave the mud, stand up, give birth to your betters!"

"We don't want to! We can't!"

"You can't, but I can. Stand up!"

And lo! after thousands of eons, man emerged, trembling on his still unsolid legs.

The human being is a centaur; his equine hoofs are planted in the ground, but his body from breast to head is worked on and tormented by the merciless Cry. He has been fighting, even for thousands of eons, to draw himself, like a sword, out of his animalistic scabbard. He is also fighting--this is his new struggle--to draw himself out of his human scabbard. Man calls in despair, "Where can I go? I have reached the pinnacle, beyond is the abyss." And the Cry answers, "I am beyond. Stand up!" All things are centaurs. If this were not the case, the world would rot into inertness and sterility. (pp. 54-55)

Such a story is recounted, not so much to pass on information, but to arouse the teller and the listener to a passion for the particular rendition of the processes of life that it conveys. Referring to Donald Evan's study, Shea says the language of this story, and others like it, is "self-involving." "To speak the myth is to adopt the attitudes the myth proposes. . . . Myth creates worlds by providing patterns of interpretation and urging commitment to the values they embody" (1978, p. 55).

The process of generating different values and insights from a story is illustrated with an example from St. Luke's gospel (1980, p. 115), with the parable of the "Unjust Steward." This story ends with

applause from Jesus for the Steward. Luke asks why the steward was praised and gives two reasons. The first, a chilling thought for a Christian, is that cheating simply is not an option for him or her: "Because the worldly take more initiative than the other-worldly when it comes to dealing with its own kind" (Lk. 16:8). Second, wealth will finally fail us. St. Luke has the addendum: "make friends for yourself with dishonest wealth, so that when it fails, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings" (Lk. 16:9). But there is a third insight or value, which is that intended by the historical Jesus, namely that the way to react in a crisis is to exercise ingenuity. Shea goes on then, to speak like this:

If, when Christians gather today, the story is read, it will undoubtedly trigger other meanings. They will not be the exact insights of either Jesus or Luke. Of course they must be in general conformity with scriptural insights, and this is basically assured by the fact that the same story instigated them. But they will also be different, and this is basically assured by the fact that we are neither first century Jews nor Hellenistic Christians. (1980, p. 117)

Myth Suggests General Patterns of Behavior

The third function of myth is to suggest general behavior patterns. It is less a matter of myth telling us what to do in particular circumstances and more the case of its indicating "a broad directionality." If we adhere to the myth of the loving God then we will develop a lifestyle of caring; if we espouse the myth of the liberating God, then we will cherish activity related to the liberation of the marginalized.

This does not really tell us anything and the difficulty Shea himself raises in Stories of God, still stands unanswered:

But the arena of personal and social interaction is vastly complicated. To be dedicated to loving activity does not assure the ability to love or the knowledge of what the "loving thing" is in any situation. To be committed to the causes of justice give no indication of what is just or how justice is to be enacted. Myth paints activity in broad and generally motivational strokes. . . . The working out of mythic demands in the complexities of concrete life is a process of on-going evaluation and mediation. (1978, p. 55)

In Stories of Faith (1980, p. 119) we find Shea dealing again with this function of the mythic story under the heading of "Implications." There he spells out the steps in the "decision-making-that-leads-to-action" process, in greater detail. Yes, stories do sensitize us to areas of life that we might otherwise neglect. Yes, values do flow from the archetypal experiences as these are told in story, and values do elicit stable attitudes. Indeed, "they push toward concrete embodiment. They unravel into strategies." But the strategies are not the product of strict deductive process. Rather when faced with a concrete situation we consult the myths, insights and values and out of that consultation comes an approach to the situation which is genuinely influenced by them. Shea approves of David Tracy's formulation of the steps involved in moving from values to action, and quotes it, saying while Tracy's specific concern is social ethics, his distinction applies to any area of human activity:

There is a well recognised set of distinctions in contemporary social ethics which bears recalling here: the distinction between general [and usually fairly abstract] ethical principles [love thy neighbor]; middle axioms, or ethical dictates which are still relatively abstract but more concrete [racism is in all circumstances wrong]; and finally, concrete social ethical policies [the debate on bussing as a specific policy to fight against racism]. (1980, p. 122)

Christian mythic stories provide the general, more abstract principles but at each "out of God," so to speak, and "into" the world,

more and more human initiative is demanded, and more and more ingenuity is called upon. Perhaps the account of these strategies that Shea gives, as they have flowed from his own ministry is the best commentary on this:

No one is long in ministerial game before they know a big piece of it is fidelity to people in the grip of destructive forces. . . . The teenage dropping out of school has to be pursued; the grieving widow has to be "sat with"; the divorced have to be patiently helped back to trust; the sick have to be visited. What is important is the actual other. The vast abstractions I so easily fall into are a falsification of the real. There are no poor students; there is only Mary who needs some help. There is no problem of divorce; there is only John who is hurting and needs to be put in contact with other people. . . . All that is important is concrete and actual. The abstractions are meant to serve that. (1983, p. 110)

This is John Shea's account of the functions of myth. But there would be serious shortcomings about it, were there not another function that myth fulfills. The person who uses myth, as he has described him up till now, tends to live in isolation and independence, from all round him or her. However, Shea knows as well as anyone, that no one is an island. Myth does indeed have a fourth function--that of grounding a person in his or her cultural world. As he describes this additional function, Shea celebrates the primacy of the relational in human existence and the bonding of each person to his or her own culture. We turn now to a consideration of myth as an initiation into the life of a tradition.

Tradition, Myth and the Person- in-Community

Each one of us arrives in a community that existed before us. The evolution of this community has occurred on the "rails," so to speak, of its own myths with their corresponding worlds of attitudes,

values and behavior patterns. John Shea reflects on how a person's identity is formed in dialogue with these worlds. Birth into this community means a person inherits its legacy: a particular imaginative atmosphere; contact with a special pattern of relationships, a pattern that is the embodiment of particular mythic stories.

As we grow, we are in dialogue with the world-creating tales of our people. These stories are encouraging and critiquing us, setting boundaries and modelling behavior. It is in the intricate interweaving of community myth and personal experience that identity is born. (1975, p. 57)

Let us look at this "intricate interweaving of community myth and personal experience" in action. In Stories of Faith (1980, pp. 76ff.) Shea asks us to consider the person in the process of appropriating the tradition. The typical case is that of someone who has chosen Scripture as the exemplary expression of the Christian myth (liturgy, hagiography, the great church councils, are other examples that might be chosen as modes of faith expression). Our Christian might sit down and read the bible alone, or pray with it, or talk to another or others, about what was striking. But for Shea, the most powerful reading of the scriptures occurs, when it is done in a group setting. Since they have come together to discern the meaning of these documents, in an interactive setting, all with their own preunderstanding and insights, Christians generate new vision and possibilities, of which independently, they would never have dreamed. "When this happens, and the awareness of the group is that they are responding to a reality they share, but which is greater than they are, they talk about the movement of the Spirit" (p. 81).

In a situation like this, the individuality of a person (she

achieves her identity as "an innovator of insights and attitudes . . . a unique embodiment of the human" [1980, p. 81]) and her embeddedness in her multiple environments (genetically and culturally she is a "walking tradition") are both acknowledged, and the task of living, in Marshal McLuhan's phrase, of "driving into the future looking through the rearview mirror" is taken care of (p. 81).

In a group like this, there are those whose primary concern is to understand "the convictions, feelings and behaviors of those who preceded us" (1980, p. 81). They like to express the link between our lives and those of our predecessors--"they are one partner in the dialogue" (1980, p. 82).

Then there are those who spend their times embroiled in the turbulence of everyday problems and issues, "trying to celebrate the ongoing hopes." "They are one partner in the dialogue" (1980, p. 82).

Two moves are made in this conversation between tradition and experience. First, people search the tradition through the lens of their own special interests, in the hope of discovering perspectives and values that resonate with their concerns. For example:

The awareness of social, economic and political injustices sensitizes us to the Exodus story of liberation, the political bite of Jesus' message, and the ideological mechanism of all our doctrines and theologies. (1980, p. 83)

If our initial interests are in ecstatic experiences then we will turn into very different themes (creation, resurrection and pentecost). If we have feminist concerns or liturgical concerns, then we will have different readings of this same scripture. But then comes what Shea called the second move: The scripture talks back. It can do this in either of two ways. First, it may say: "Yes . . . but":

The tradition affirms the insights and values that are genuinely Christian but contextualizes them with other insights and values. The tradition offers direct critique when it spots a conviction (we have no reason to hope) or a value (hoarding the goods of the earth) which is directly contrary to the Christian vision. (1980, p. 83)

Second, in a more creative kind of critique, it may ask us to expand our interest and the scope of our concern, and prods us to develop a broader approach to the issues.

To the affirmation of ecstatic experiences which have the backing of creation, resurrection and spirit is added the consideration of fall, crucifixion and sin. . . . Yes we must be actively engaged in the political, social and economic spheres, but this involvement stems from belief in God; and this belief means we enter the struggle in a specific way. (p. 83)

I have been faithful, I Hope, to Shea's description of the process of how the personal and the communal are interwoven in the case of a person, who is a Christian, and who creates her own meaningful world through the appropriation of the myths of her tradition. But there are real difficulties standing in the way of such an appropriation that must be dealt with. As we saw earlier, once the work of shaping a "first order" theological language has been completed, there immediately emerges another task--that of formulating a "second order" theological discourse. This is the task of making the Christian message comprehensible to contemporary hearers. As we have just said this may sound easier than it actually is. What are these difficulties and how can we overcome them? I hope I can answer this question in the next section.

The Need for Hermeneutics

When a community has an ancient history--as is the case with the Christian community--the people who enter that community have to face

the fact that the mythic stories of the Judeo-Christian tradition go back, in the oldest strata, to the dawn of human history. Even the "youngest" writings are at least 1,850 years old! This is a first and major obstacle to the process of appropriating the tradition. The creative imagination they reflect is light years removed from our own. Second, biblical research, which has been spectacularly successful, overwhelms us with information about the bible's origin and the process of its formation. This flood of information, very often, reduces us to silence, because it is not clear how to connect it with the live issues of today. John Shea draws the inevitable conclusion for us: "If the Christian Stories of God, whose basic shape is given in Scripture, are to create worlds and mediate the sacred, they must go through the process of interpretation" (1978, p. 68).

We can begin our process of interpretation with questions generated with the method of scientific historiography: Did the events recounted in this story really happen? What is factual here? When questions like these are asked, one is seeking historical support for a story, and if it is not forthcoming, then a historian will cast doubt upon the truth of the story. On the one hand, Shea welcomes the application of the Historical Method to Christian sources, since the events celebrated in the Christian tradition are rooted in history. On the other hand he adds a caution.

Yet myth, even when based on history, is more than history. Historical inquiry can place the story in a context, show its limits vis-a-vis the present understanding of historical fact but it cannot validate or falsify it with regard to its nature as mythic . . . rational and historical inquiry does not exhaust the mythic story. (1978, p. 69)

A second kind of historical question takes the form of: "What

did it mean for the people who first told the story?" Asking this question is a first step in exploring the meaning of any story. It is essential to ask it, since a mythic story has its roots in a particular community and is rooted in its life. If a modern reader can understand how they understood it, then she or he can begin to construct a contemporary meaning for it.

When the work of the preceding two types of inquiry is completed a third type of question awaits an attempted answer: "What picture of self, others, nature, history and God does this story convey?" (1978, p. 70). With this question on our lips, we set about exploring the mythic meaning of the story and the emphasis is on finding out how the myth functions as a world-making reality. To link up with the preceding two paragraphs, let us imagine a court scene. Myth is on trial. The prosecutor is not History or Science. The prosecutor is The Quality of Life of people who want to see if the world that the myth holds out as possible is fit for human habitation.

Shea is drawing on the work of Paul Ricour at this point. Ricoeur's concern centers around determining the sense of a text. Do we have to get behind, or beneath the words to an existing reality in order to get to its sense. Ricoeur denies this. He says on the contrary, as Shea quotes him.

The sense of a text is not behind the text . . . not something hidden, but something disclosed. What has to be understood is not the initial situation of discourse, but what points towards a possible world, thanks to the non-ostensive reference of the text. Understanding has less than ever to do with the author and his situation. It wants to grasp the world propositions opened by the reference of the text. To understand a text is to follow its movement from sense to reference; from what it says to what it talks about. (1978, pp. 70-71)

Shea spells out for us the process that is involved in moving towards the "non-ostensive reference" of the biblical mythic narratives. We approach the text with the question "what are the enduring religious situations that give rise to these symbolic stories?" This is a different question from that raised by the scientific historian or the form or redaction critic. It is a question that tries to touch into the primordial experiences of birth, death, fate, love, fear, anxiety or hope, etc., that ground these mythic stories. What this gives rise to is the phenomenon of the birth of a possible world, engendered by the religious foundation which stands as the source as the mythic narrative. The reader who approached the traditional myths with this question is setting up the possibility of a collaboration between biblical and contemporary religious situations, and actively pursuing the task of creating a world that is meaningful, and yet drawing nourishment from the sources of his/her community's genius. Shea now can comment

Through the process of interpretation the contemporary person's relationship to the Christian symbolic stories changes (in the language of Ricour) from a primitive to a second naivete. For the pre-modern person there existed an immediacy of belief, a flush-tight relationship to religious symbols, a primitive naivete. But the modern person, precisely because she is modern, is a critical creature. She is informed by philology, exegesis, history and the phenomenology of religion. . . . Consequently she does not have an immediate and undifferentiated rapport with the symbolic stories. . . . For the modern person, primitive naivete has been irrevocably lost.

Yet . . . the modern person is able to inhabit them in a second naivete. The second naivete is achieved . . . in and through criticism. The story is critically assessed in such a way that its power is restored rather than destroyed. (1978, p. 72)

This helps us appreciate the struggle we have to make as human beings to

create or uncover meaning and to develop a lifestyle that is congruent with it.

Summary

At the beginning of this section we set out to answer the question: "How does a person create a meaningful world?" We have a rather complete answer at this time. Meaning is first of all rooted in the gracious approach that Mystery, without interruption, makes to human beings. That is the foundation of everything else. Rather than imposing a fixed meaning on human beings, this address from Mystery arouses human creativity and responsibility. There is a proportion between the revelation of Mystery and the human capacity to know Mystery's relationship with us. Each of us is graced with what Shea calls a "sacramental imagination." Through the use of sacramental imagination, we come up with, first, images which are a first effort to enter the meaning of the relationship we unveil as present in our experience. Hot on the heels of image, we pour forth words, the words of first order theology, then second order and finally of the self-critical moment of theologizing. None of us is ever entering virgin territory when we give birth to the images that try to contact the Mystery that reveals Itself so graciously. We are part of a long line of a tradition, bursting with images and theological discourse, the legacy of our ancestors' attempt to appropriate that same Mystery, in a different age and in a different culture. If we approach this tradition and see in it a collection of stories, then we can begin to create a dialogue between these stories and our own, personal, story. Part of that dialogue involves a hermeneutical effort that will allow the

tradition to speak to us, in our contemporary setting, in a way that is still immediate, attractive and empowering. In the next major section of this chapter, we will look at what happens as we engage in the dialogue with our tradition. We shall hear Shea tell us of the contours he sees as shaping his twentieth-century, American, Christian life. We will see his answer to the second question we asked at the beginning: "What are the contours of meaningful existence?"

II. The Contours of Meaningful Existence

The Varieties of Faith-Revelation Experiences

Put in its simplest form, John Shea proposes that our bond to what is ultimate is the nucleus on which human capacities work in order to create world. "Certain events of our lives bring with them the awareness that we have a relationship not only to the events themselves but also to the mystery of life with which they occur" (1980, p. 16). Through everyday events like that of the grandfather on the plane who reflects on how his friend welcomes his grandchildren to his retirement home, and who can say "that's what life is all about," or like that of the young woman, who while listening to Mother Theresa comes to the realization that she is called to a life of selflessness or the middle-aged man, at his father's deathbed who sees the need to surrender to the flow of life, the truth about Mystery of life is being discerned and all of us are being "enticed to think feel and act in accordance with that truth. This everyday way of proceeding, this ordinary and unavoidable human process goes by the name of revelation and faith" (1980, p. 15).

Each of these experiences are Revelatory experiences through which Mystery discloses itself. There are two other kinds of

experiences which Shea points to: conversion experiences and experiences of expansion of consciousness. We shall examine each of these in turn. We have to keep in mind that these experiences overlap and are not meant to be mutually exclusive.

Revelatory Experiences Where the Stress
Is on the Communication of a Message

The experience of the grandfather on the plane whom we mentioned earlier typifies this experience. To Mystery's disclosure, he responded: "that's what life is all about." Life may well be about other things, for but him it is certainly welcoming his grandchildren to his home, after retirement. Though this experience took place on the plane to Chicago, what was revealed is true no matter where he goes. What the man carries with him is not the solution to a problem. The truth he has, is an insight into what constitutes the secret of a full life for him, it is the secret to being "fully alive."

Experiences Which Stress the
Process of Change

Rarely does anyone solicit conversion experiences. Sometimes they happen. One perceives one's life sharing in what Tillich called the structures of destruction. The choice then is to remain within these structures, or to freely choose to extricate oneself. The conversion process comes to term, if one chooses to change; it is aborted where there is refusal. "The pattern of the experience could be laid out as destructiveness, catalytic occurrence, human freedom, movement toward new life" (1983, p. 100).

Mystery Experiences Which Stress
Expansion of Consciousness

All these moments we are brought to consider the wider, more encompassing context in which we live. Four possibilities have been suggested for the quality that these experiences may take. Sometimes, these experiences confirm the beliefs we have held up to that point. We simply are aware of God's presence. There are others, where we sense there is a mutual recognition between the self and God: God notices me and I God. When this mutual recognition is acknowledged as loving, then there is an ecstatic experience: that which I notice and in turn notices me, loves me. And this expanded awareness experience may finally include a revelation, in which Mystery lets me know of Its plan and invites my participation.

Qualities of Our Relationship with Mystery

Shea emphasizes that what is revealed to us by sacramental perception is not truth about ourselves or truth about Mystery itself, but rather "the fact that we are bonded to mystery" (1980, p. 19). He enumerates some qualities of this relationship: because of it we are made people of depth; this relationship has the strong accent of reality because the mystery encountered is other than we are; we may be enthused by the encounter with Mystery, but Mystery cannot be reduced to this enthusiasm: while Mystery is genuinely other than we are, "it is an otherness we participate in"; while Mystery has the feel of being objectively real, we cannot treat it in a detached manner, because it is a reality which always involves us. When he says this Shea is protecting the experience of Mystery from any kind of psychological or

sociological reductionism. What he says, in this connection, in An Experience Named Spirit echoes what he says elsewhere, many times,

Psychology and Sociology can illuminate what happened, but in the last analysis, they cannot determine what happened. The experience becomes explicitly religious when it is judged to be a time of contact with a transcendent otherness. (1983, p. 101)

In an earlier book, Shea wrote many pages describing the privileged moments when the awareness of Mystery has broken through into human consciousness (1978, pp. 25-39). Some have come to an awareness of mystery through experiences of contingency, dialogue, communion, moral ambiguity and disenchantment. Others have realized relatedness to mystery through nature. Experiences of order, play, hope, damnation and humor hint at a transcendental dimension for Peter Berger. Michael Novak points to freedom, honesty, community and courage as experiences that open into the transcendent.

Yet there is more to this than just the mere fact of our relatedness to Mystery. Our relationship to it has definite qualities and nuances. Three qualities in particular hold Shea's attention in Stories of God (1978, pp. 37-38).

- i. We sense a closeness and yet a distance with Mystery. Mystery is within us and yet without. It is in our midst and yet beyond us. In traditional language it is both immanent and transcendent.
- ii. Our awareness of Mystery is not continuous. Sometimes it is there without our willing it, and when we want it, it does not come. Mystery comes upon us unsolicited. We are invited to awareness. This is not comfortable for anyone who always wants to be the initiator. With Mystery, we learn we are not the first.
- iii. Our relationship to Mystery is ambiguous. Sometimes it seems to be on our side, at others it seems to be our deadliest enemy.

This ambiguity of the intentions of Mystery is taken up at length in Stories of Faith (1980, pp. 36ff.). The question is: "Is the

Mystery of life ultimately gracious to all that is within it and in particular to this two-legged stand-up that is asking the question?" (p. 39).

The Ubiquity of Faith-Revelation Experiences

Before answering that question, he pauses to clear the ground. Shea first turns his attention to the claim that even asking such a question is narcissistic, appearing to once more place the human person at the center of the universe with everything evolving around her. Such an interpretation, he claims distorts the real intention of the question. Mystery permeates all the environments we live in. We cannot be indifferent to the question, because we are not neutral about the answer. We simply need to ask it. But the real answer to the charge of narcissism is that people who have lived out of a sense of the graciousness of Mystery have shown a great freedom from self-preoccupation. Such people have been able to lower their defenses and risk themselves in the world around them. "The paradox of theistic faith, which is exemplified in the life of Jesus, is that living in a relationship to a gracious God means living dangerously in an ungracious world" (1980, p. 40). Shea's use of "faith" and "religious" gives these words a special significance. "Religious" designates the bond that exists between each person and that which is perceived as ultimate. Faith in conventional use refers to theistic faith, but this language neglects the fact that everyone, "believers and unbelievers" work out of faith assumptions, based on faith-revelation experiences.

Faith is as common and as unavoidable as air. . . . Theistic, atheistic and agnostic positions are faith assumptions garnered from experiences taken to be revelatory of the ultimate meaning of our relationship to Mystery. (1980, p. 44)

The question is not "Do you have faith?" but "What is your faith?" With this understanding of faith then, it is clear that reason is not opposed to faith. Faith and reason are not enemies, for all human knowing is initiated from fundamental assumptions which are not the product of logic, but which mark the point from which logic starts. As we saw earlier the starting points for logic are the images provided by the imagination. "All efforts of reason are grounded in assumptions derived from faith-revelation experiences; all faith assumptions are eventually tested in experience and explored by reason" (1980, p. 44).

The Ultimate Graciousness of Mystery

Having done that groundwork, Shea now is in a position to tackle the question as to whether Mystery is ultimately capricious or gracious. To do so, he turns to the literature of Annie Dillard since she, like other artists, is in contact "with the springs of creative imagination" (1980, p. 45). Theological thinking springs from the imagination's contact with Mystery and Annie Dillard's imagination has had that contact. Her book, Holy the Firm (1977) is an exploration of the experience of being both caressed and violated by Mystery.

Holy the Firm is the story of three days, November 18th, 19th and 20th. The first two days reveal life as capricious, at one moment thrilling us, at the next terrifying us. The third day is given over to the experience that there is a reality that holds us beyond thrill and terror. (1980, p. 46).

On November 18, Dillard is enraptured by the beauty of Puget Sound, the setting of the book. "The god of this day is 'child, a baby new filling the house'" (1980, p. 46). November 19 is a very different day, named "God's tooth." Dillard is terrorized as she witnesses a plane crash and sees the face of a seven-year-old burned off. "The god

of today is a delinquent, a barn burner, a punk with a pittance of power in a match" (p. 46). And hence her question: "Is there anything firm or is time on the loose?" In theological jargon this translates into "Is there a God beyond the gods, a Lord of History?"

The answer to this question comes to her as she is walking to a communion service on Sunday the 20th, carrying the wine for the liturgy. She becomes aware of the wine on her back. She stops to look down from the mountain which she is climbing, to view the sea beneath here, and as she does, she has a vision of Christ being baptized. Coming out of the water, Christ's body is caressed by beads of water which sparkle in the sunlight.

Each one bead is transparent and each has a world. . . . I deepened into a drop to see all that time contains, all the faces and deeps of the world and all the earths contents, every landscape and room, everything living or made or fashioned, all past and future stars, and especially faces, faces like the cells of everything, faces pouring past me talking, going and gone. And I am gone. (Quoted from Dillard, 1977, p. 67. 1980, p. 47)

Out of this mystical experience comes her conviction, the sense, of the gracious grounding of all her life--"Holy the Firm." Of course Annie Dillard will face November 21, and God alone knows the disaster that it will bring. God's tooth may well appear as a fang again. But the Sunday experience was not a repetition of the 18th, just another day up among the many of up and down days.

It is an entirely different calibre of encounter with an entirely different communication. It generates an assurance beyond the capriciousness that continues to characterise human living. As such it becomes an "anchor," a touchstone for belief in God. (1980, p. 47)

The sense of the ultimate graciousness of Mystery towards "the two-legged stand up" that we are, does not thereby make all things

understandable. When we have said that the ultimate power in the universe is on our side, we still have to make sense of the experience of indifference. We have not solved the riddle that tormented Job or answered the torturing puzzle of why Christ dies, abandoned on the cross. All we have, Shea says, is "a perspective, a stance, a posture, an orientation within the continuing ambiguity" (1980, p. 49). So, the question of ambiguity survives and so does a host of other questions. Once we have contacted the graciousness of Mystery, we are obliged to offer an explanation of, and live creatively with, those aspects of the relationship that appear capricious: senility, death, sickness and moral evil. Once the graciousness of mystery is perceived by us, or better is revealed to us, the struggle begins of trying to bring every event of our personal and communal life within the sphere of influence of the graciousness, but yet at the same time, taking care not to violate life's integrity.

An answer to the question we are asking in this section--what are the contours of a meaningful existence?--is beginning to emerge. The first horizon that appears is that of the approach of Mystery to us. What is rather staggering for us to absorb, is that Mystery's intention towards us is gracious. Such is the second horizon. The presence of gracious Mystery is not a magic wand that waves away all hopelessness or the meaninglessness that we frequently have to cope with. It is rather the firm footing we can stand on, in order to begin to creatively deal with them. In what follows, John Shea leads us through a process of reading the stories of our tradition in such a way that links our efforts to live out of graciousness, with those of some of the great

heroes of our tradition, especially, with the efforts of Jesus of Nazareth. The key metaphor he uses to do this is that of the journey of faith, though he also uses four other metaphors, of God as companion, God as path, God as seductive lure, and that of "dangerous exchange," to deepen the exploration of the world opened up by the key metaphor.

Facing the Ambiguity and Celebrating the Graciousness

Through the use of a series of metaphors, drawn from the Judeo-Christian tradition, John Shea introduces us to the actual process of meaning-making and the creation of a world that is congenial to human existence and which engenders nurturing, mutual patterns of behavior. The ambiguity that he has spoken about is not lost sight of, but he invites us to test out the three metaphors: Mystery as Companion, Mystery as Path and Mystery as seductive lure.

Mystery as Companion

The journey of faith begins with the conviction "of an all powerful and faithful presence" (1980, p. 54). Discourse about this belief in God is less a statement about the essential structure of reality and more a daring statement of the speaker's conviction that she or he can overcome anything that enslaves him or her. Contact with Mystery brings "an influx of power" (p. 55). The Jesus of Mark's gospel, whose experience of gracious contact with Mystery, causes him to call out "Abba," becomes an interpreter of this power for us. His image for this power is nurturing fathering love. To understand what this power is doing in him, Jesus tells the parable of "tying up the strong man" in Mk. 3:27 "No-one can enter into a strong man's house to plunder

his property unless he first tie up the strong man." The story is autobiographical for Jesus. Through him God is plundering the house of Satan, the source of alienation and destruction. The graciousness of God is "a matter of superior strength before it is a matter of superior knowledge" (p. 56). The resurrection is a celebration of the lengths that this power will go to, in order to oppose ugliness, evil and death. It is a power, which at the same time, is love. The meeting of love and power gives a peculiar twist to the way that power operates in human life.

To illustrate the twist in the story of power with us, Shea recalls the story of Elijah (1 Kg. 18), a story with two scenes. In the first scene, with Yahweh's help (he cracks the match at the right moment Elijah triumphs over his rivals, drags them to the river and slits their throats. Every believer's fantasy! God's mighty power vindicates belief. The people who see it are fervent in their conviction, and enthusiastic in their commitment to God. We might be tempted to say that miraculous events elicits faith, but there is a wisdom in listening to what Claudel puts on Judas' lips in a meditation on the relationship between Jesus and Judas. "Claudel has Judas say that he would rather watch a cat walk tightrope along a fence than watch Jesus unbend another twisted leg" (1980, p. 59). Rather than eliciting faith, miracles are much more likely to arouse curiosity which is followed, nearly always, by boredom.

Shea then turns to the second scene of the Elijah story (1 Kg. 19). In this scene the queen, Jezebel, is in hot pursuit of Elijah, through the desert, having sworn to do worse to him than he did to her

prophets. After a day's journey he is depressed. He lies down under a tree and prays for death. In his misery he falls asleep. And then the angel arrives, bringing him bread and water. Refreshed, Elijah falls asleep again. A second time the angel comes and prods him: "Get up and eat, else the journey will be too long for you." He eats and drinks and walks "forty days and forty nights into the desert to the mountain of God, Horeb." Shea invites us to understand this scene in the light of the faith-revelation processes that he had proposed, and then he suggests that the meaning of graciousness is brought into focus. Elijah wants to give up; but the touch of Yahweh is the power to go on.

The graciousness that characterizes our relationship to mystery is made concrete in the sustenance and encouragement to continue. The extended insight of the story is that in every situation of life the nurture and the lure of God is present. This is one of the meanings the Christian Cross conveys. To look at a broken man on a cross and say "Son of God," is to say that there is no situation where the divine power to undergo and overcome is not present. If this man who is abandoned by friends, church, and state, is the presence of God, then no-one will be abandoned by that presence. Graciousness is experienced as water and cake in the desert and the unrelenting commands, "Get up," "Eat," "Walk." (1980, p. 60)

With a bond like this linking us to Mystery, we become people with three major characteristics:

1. We become a people of courage, ready to risk the unknown, unwilling to shrink from new possibilities, and desire to go beyond the familiar and secure. We are courageous because Mystery trusts us. "Trust is the God-ward-side of human courage" (1978, p. 156).
2. We choose humility as a basic virtue. We become adept at distinguishing between "Mystery" and "problem." We are ready to fall in love with Mystery, more and more, while embracing our

limits to control or understand it. We are ready to recognize our problems and to struggle to overcome the limits they impose. Humility is not a rejection of the human person, but a perspective that gives us truth. A humble person rejoices in the power that is in him or her and that he or she channels, but neither he or she has the ambition to be all-powerful. Humble people recognize the people they are, but do not regret that they are not all loving.

3. We become a people who can laugh at ourselves. In this way, we stay in touch with our creaturehood, and remind ourselves of God's transcendence, just at the moment we are most likely to forget it.

Our courage, humility and laughter are all rooted in the gracious quality of Mystery towards us, in the companionship God extends towards us, on a continuous, uninterrupted and intentional basis.

This metaphor of God as companion is open to abuse. It may lead us to image Mystery as "saccharine god"--"me and my best friend God approach"--one who becomes anything we want him to be, a chameleon god, who is a crutch for the insecure as much as he is a weapon for the envious or another angle for the shrewd. Hence, it needs to be complemented by at least two other metaphors: God as path and God as seductive lure (1980, pp. 63-66).

Mystery as Path

When we talk of God relating to us as a path, we are acknowledging that Mystery is not indifferent to who we become. If God is path, then our lives are "impelled by the perspectives and values of

the divine companion" (1980, p. 64). The desire, above every other desire that moves us is that expressed in the ancient prayer: "Breathe in me, O Breath of God." We commit ourselves to bringing everything about us into conformity with Mystery. Shea goes on to reflect that if our experience of mystery is that it is indifferent, then we will try to live out of that indifference. If on the other hand we find mystery is gracious, then we will try to go with the flow of graciousness, even when we are tempted to prefer indifference. "Religious passion is initially blind. It does not specify its content. It is a raw drive to think, feel and act out of whatever is the ultimate truth" (1980, p. 65).

Jesus, like all of us, was motivated by this passion to be one with ultimate reality, as can be seen from the reply to the question of why enemies should be loved: "My Father makes the rain to fall on the wicked and the good, the sun to shine on the just and the unjust" (Mt: 5:45). The equality of the sunshine and rain is not a sign of cosmic indifference, but one of universal love. Love is grounded, not in an astute law, or the necessity to build a just society, but is a command flowing from the heart of reality. "'Be you perfect as my heavenly father is perfect' is not a plea to become like God, but to live in Communion with God" (1980, p. 66).

Mystery as Seductive Lure

The metaphor of God as path corrects any tendency we might have to create God in our own image, but it takes another metaphor, that of God a seductive lure, to help us talk about the passion we experience on recognizing ourselves chosen as God's companion, for the journey on his

path. Shea introduces his reflections on this metaphor by recounting a scene from Kazantzakis' Zorba the Greek, which he claims has autobiographical truth for the novelist. This is Kazantzakis as Shea quotes him:

I was at an exhibition of Rodin's works, and I had stopped to look at enormous bronze hand, "The Hand of God." This hand was half closed, and in the palm an ecstatic man and woman were embracing and struggling.

A girl came up and stopped beside me. She looked, and was moved at the disquieting, eternal embrace of the man and woman. She was slim, well-dressed; and had a wealth of fair hair, a powerful chin and thin lips. There was something determined and virile about her. I normally hate inviting a conversation, and I do not know what urged me to turn to her and ask:

"What are you thinking about?"

"If only we could escape?! she murmured resentfully.

"And go where? The hand of God is everywhere. There is no salvation. Are you sorry?"

"No. Love may be the most intense joy on earth. It may be. But now I see that bronze hand, I want to escape."

"You prefer freedom?"

"Yes."

"But supposing it is only when we obey that bronze hand that we are free? Supposing the word 'God' didn't have that convenient meaning the masses give it." (1980, p. 67)

Shea comments on this story: "Religious passion wants to obey the 'bronze hand.' It does not seek to escape, but to merge, to be in communion with the ultimate truth" (1980, p. 67).

Once we are fired with this passion for merger, for communion, a "complex and dangerous" exchange takes place: We hand over, and receive back, our life from God, at which point it is utterly focused on God's concerns. God receives it and gives it back. Before we look at this process of handing over and receiving back, let us look at its result as these are seen in Jesus. At the time of Jesus it was unthinkable that a decent person would eat with those marginalized people referred to in scripture as "tax collectors and sinners." Jesus ate and drank

with them? Why? At that time, it was absolutely forbidden to work on the Sabbath. Jesus picked ears of corn on the Sabbath and untwisted contorted limbs. Why? At that time the class distinction between master and servant was rigorously enforced. Jesus washed the feet of his servants. Why? "Because Jesus is acting out the power and perspective of the One he had handed himself over to as a carpenter and received himself back as the Son. Jesus carries the cause of God" (1980, p. 70).

Now we turn to the task of understanding what is involved in "handling oneself over." Shea is at pains to say that there is more involved here than "mental moves" or psychological mechanisms. "It is an inner act which we perform out of a spiritual centre" (1980, p. 67). This is a way of referring to the existential and total nature of the surrender of "the heart." In An Experience Named Spirit (1983, p. 147) he writes

the heart is hidden in the cage and ribs which is further covered by muscle and skin. It cannot be seen; but it pumps blood and is the source of life. When the heart is damaged in any way, the entire person is affected. It is these physical facts that make it an apt metaphor for the relationship with God. The relationship to God is the invisible centre of the person . . . the heart is the ultimate relationship to God, which is the permeating context of all other relationships.

Everything is surrendered, including those aspects of our life, our "extremes" which are hardest to separate from. Instinctively, we cling to our achievements and talents, for it is these that give us value, maintain our self-worth. The fear of letting them go is "awesome," lest we become indistinguishable from the mass of others who surround us. On the other hand there is our smallness, the mean, petty, sordid part of self. The terror involved in letting them go is even greater, because

in order to let them go, we have to name them for ourselves. Letting them go, means knocking down so many of the defenses we have erected to stay functioning. Letting go both beauty and wart means that the total self is involved in the transaction, and the Mystery whom we approach with them, will settle for no less, as we know from the prophets. Echoing their words, what God wants is broken hearts (as in Ps. 51:17, R.S.V. translation) not burned sacrifices.

Once our "heart" is surrendered, it is returned, and in the traditional language, what arrives is "a new person." "We now possess ourselves in and through God's possession of us" (Shea, 1980, p. 69). With St. Paul then, we can rejoice in our greatness, even if we would not dare boast about it, since the greatness we are and the great things we do, are gift. Our meanness is accepted and in the acceptance is paradoxically transcended.

This does not mean that it disappears, but that its destructive hold on us is broken. We experience ourselves through a distinction that is perhaps Christian theology's greatest contribution to human wisdom. We love our finitude and battle our sin. (p. 69)

We are "loved sinners," and in that awareness comes an outburst of energy which many name freedom. This freedom is not so much release from all structures and circumstances that alienate us, but an awareness that we are "funded from beyond," attached and bonded to ultimate graciousness. We cry, not "We can do everything" but "in God all things are possible."

Shea inverts normal Christian language in a reflection on this "surrender and receiving back of our heart." In the gift to us of ourselves, God entrusts Himself to us, and invests us with the mission of looking after His concerns:

Our faith in God becomes God's faith in us. Our handing of our life over to God is reciprocated by God handing his life over to us. In standard Christian theology, God is the saviour of the human race. Kazantzakis calls the human race the saviours of God. God is more than a faithful and power presence. He is a presence that provokes. What he provokes is activity on behalf of his cause. This would be reprehensible manipulation except for the fact that his cause is us. (p. 70)

Taking Stock

Meaning then, is created as we discover how--as others like Elijah and Jesus before us--to journey with Mystery as our companion, but also as our path, as the lure which draws us on and with whom we enter into a surprising exchange. As we have said, all of this does not magically wave away a reality that has to be faced, in all places and at all times. That reality is sin. One of the tests any map of the Christian world must face, is that of showing its value in empowering those who use it to negotiate the roadblocks that sin erects on the faith-journey. Let us watch John Shea's map prove itself in this matter, in the following pages.

Recognizing the Strategies of the Panicked Heart

Earlier, we briefly alluded to the insight, that though we perceive Mystery as gracious towards us, ambiguity still remains. Perhaps, we might have come away with the impression that waiting for Mystery's approach is a matter of merely being quietly patient. We have not really said anything either about the human sinfulness that Mystery must grapple with, and has grappled with, throughout the story of the Hebrew and Christian testaments. What we need to consider is what happens to the human "heart" while it struggles with the ambiguities of life, while it tethers on the brink of faith on the one hand and

nihilism on the other. These issues are faced in An Experience Named Spirit (1983, pp. 155ff.). When the human "heart" is panicked by life's ambiguity, Shea suggests it takes, "two different but complementary tracks." "The first is to court the attitude of waiting for one who does not come and to live in rejection. The second is to try and please and not be able and to live in envy" (p. 155). The heart that waits anxiously for its love to arrive, begins to spurn itself, and though it might like to stop hoping for Mystery's approach, it cannot. Its defense then, is to strike back at Mystery by proclaiming that it is rejected by Mystery, and plays out this rejection in all it does. In answer to the question what the rejected heart "sees," Shea poetically answers thus:

It sees everything in devalued form; it reduces everything to the lowest common denominator. Nothing true, good, one or beautiful flourishes in its sight. In sexual love it perceives lust, in sacrifice and dedication, guilt; in charity, condescension; in political skill, manipulation; in the powers of mind, rationalization; in peacefulness, ennui; in neighbourliness, self-interest; in friendship, opportunism. The vitality of the old is pathetic; the exuberance of the young is immature; the steadiness of middle age is boredom . . . and the rejected heart gloats . . . when sex falls to lust, sacrifice is grounded in guilt . . . peace sleeps and friendship turns ego-centered. . . . (p. 156)

And as sure as night follow day, as the rejected heart sees, so it acts. The behavior that flows from it is like an acid that burns everything before it. Dignity is granted to no one and community norms are spurned. Anything goes and the more outrageous the behavior the better. "Each act that tears down and destroys symbolizes the unloved centre which the rejected heart takes as the premier truth" (p. 157).

There are times when the rejected heart will act out in a much more passive way. It is as if it had a radar that surely guides it to

those places in life where all there is is wasteland.

This strategy of the rejected heart attempts to crush all desire [for Mystery]. The spurned heart compounds the ignominy of poverty by deigning it appropriate for one so unlovable. . . . It bows its head in obedience [to other people] not because it hears the author of life, but because a non-assertive self is the natural weakness of a heart that is not cherished. It makes a home in places where life is perishing. (1983, p. 157)

On the other hand, the track that the envious heart follows is one of self-beautification. It whispers to its panic, "Maybe if I make myself attractive enough I can force Mystery's attention, and end this waiting" (1983, p. 159). And so this heart undertakes the mammoth task of trying to please and persisting in that activity, even when it is clear that it cannot succeed. This heart will use whatever is at hand in its pursuit of beautification: high grades in school; high productivity at work; it will fall back on sex, wealth power or fame and the message always is: 'How can you fail to love me, I am so bright, personable, wealthy? And yet all that ever greets its frenetic activity is silence.

[This heart] is trying to please, but it is not able. Once our panicked heart begins this process of preening and strutting, we are on our way to a life of anxious striving, self deception and oppression. . . . We live a life of anxious and hopeless striving. (p. 159)

The envious heart falls a prey to idolatry. A finite reality is invited in to fill the place of Mystery and then it is twisted in such a way that it is made to promise fulfillment. But talent or wealth, or fame, or whatever, is ill-equipped to fill Mystery's place and such a person becomes a victim of making their self-worth depend on a part of the self--that part that is put on display. "The totality of the person is tied to one segment of the person. The mystery of who we are in

relation to all there is is restricted to 'the stuff we strut'" (1983, p. 160).

Hot on the heels of idolatry, follows another unwanted, and painful reality: self-deception. The envious heart is so intent on preening itself, that it dare not take the risk of checking out the success or failures of its strategies. It dare not look for, or accept, feedback. It an never acknowledge that it may do wrong.

yet, inevitably we do wrong. Sin runs deep in us and breaks out in ways that we do not expect. The generous deed is done for self-serving motives. We are silent in the face of unjust systems we are benefitting from. There are no innocents East of Eden. (1983, p. 160).

The coalition of idolatry and self-deception spawns a third reality: oppression. The envious heart only knows who it is when it can say who it is not. If one had placed one's salvation in knowledge, then there is a vested interest in keeping others ignorant; if goodness is one's game, then it cannot be recognized or encouraged in others; if Paradise is found in prestige, then others must be kept in their-second-place. "Making ourselves loveable means making other people unlovable. All our efforts to build ourselves up mean that other people will be automatically put down" (1983, p. 161).

Such are the strategies that are used by the heart in its raging desire to be filled by what it desires. When and if this desire is met may be this destructiveness could be redirected. We will see, I hope that indeed such an eventuality is possible, as we try to see how contact with Jesus of Nazareth, opens up renewed possibilities.

Looking Back and Plotting Forward

In this section of the chapter, we have been trying to answer

the question of what the contours of meaningful existence are. Faith is the basic human activity. No one--theist, agnostic or atheist--can escape this basic structuring activity of human existence. "What faith have you?" is the question that counts. In the case of the theist, her faith is in the ultimate gracious intention of Mystery towards us: Mystery's graciousness towards us, funds our lives. The cry on her lips is that "in God, all things are possible." And so, she chooses to become a courageous, but humble person, a person who can throw back her head and laugh at her own foibles and seriousness. Faith of course has to take sin and evil as important parts of experience. Coping with them is the heart of the creation of a meaningful existence. What we ask John Shea to do for us now, is to weave stories from the Christian tradition. In these stories we want to see a faith-world open up that is credible to us, we want to see faith come face to face with contemporary forms of evil, and to point out to us the directions we might seriously choose, to create a viable future for ourselves. We want to hear these stories in order to be enthralled, attracted, by graciousness at work. We are ready to have these stories teach us how to live creatively, connected, one to another, in a world that frequently is dangerous.

Stories of God for the Contemporary World

Shea weaves many tales that shape a world where faith vanquishes fear and freedom wins out over slavery. In Stories of God he tells two such tales of special interest to us. In the tale of "Hope and Justice" he brings together the fundamental Judeo-Christian metaphors of rescue and covenant, judgment and apocalypse, resurrection and parousia. He

summarizes his vision of the world shaped by these metaphors in this way:

The story places us in a world concerned with justice and urges compassion. The compassion is neither pity nor condescension. It does not imply an inequality, one group suffering and helpless and another group neither suffering nor helpless but "compassionate." On the contrary, compassion is rooted in the felt perception of solidarity. It is the attitude of people who understand that, despite all that separates us, the last truth is a common humanity within a common mystery. Compassion is the way into the lives of others to understand their claims and shape our social and political institutions to respond to them. This sense of solidarity is grounded in the valuation of life. The story stresses justice because life, every life is valuable. We do not struggle for a just world for the sake of justice, but as a way of valuing what we have received. Justice in the last analysis is an act of respect. To tell the story of hope and justice is to live in compassion, solidarity and care. (1978, p. 114)

Then there is the tale of "Trust and Freedom." This time the story is told around the metaphors of "Creation, Incarnation and Spirit." In this story these great metaphors have to take account of another tale that is told while using the metaphors of "Fall, Crucifixion and Church." There is a story within a story here. "The Story of Creation, Incarnation and Spirit is a skeleton; its heart is Fall, Crucifixion and Church. The story within a story does not bring contradiction, but explosion" (1978, p. 120).

As Shea tells the creation story of Genesis 1, its message is one that celebrates God's gracious celebration of the goodness of all that has been created. The symbol of the Sabbath rest is a statement of the purpose of creation which is to delight in its own holiness. We can understand the holiness which God's sabbath presence bequeaths to all creation through the category of dignity. All people share in the same dignity that is conferred through God's presence to creation. And dignity is the basis of meaning, which Shea proposes is found when each

person senses and knows how he or she is related to the larger context in which he or she moves. Once the meaning of one's life is grasped a deeper question emerges: "Do I have worth? Is what I do valuable?" God's sabbath presence speaks of that worth, too.

God goes beyond the presence of the sabbath rest. Looked at from Shea's point of view, the sabbath is "the world's aptitude for incarnation."

[Christ became incarnate] because we were made for him and his presence makes us holy and we delight in ourselves in him. He came primarily because he wanted to, not because we needed him. This is the reason of a friend whose presence brings dignity and worth. (1978, p. 128)

The story of the incarnation delights in telling about our dignity and worth, because God is Emmanuel, God-with-us. When we recount the Story of Pentecost, we discover we are holy (dignified) not merely because God is Emmanuel, but because God is present in us. The friendship God had with us in Jesus, has not become an event in the past, it is contemporary, for each of us.

Creation makes way for the Incarnation and Incarnation unfolds in the Spirit. All three symbols have a common aim. They wish the sanctification of the world through the presence and indwelling of God. (1978, p. 129)

From Shea's reading of the Creation story in Genesis 2, comes a vision of human existence that is positive and optimistic. The human beings there are of the earth, yet name the animals. There is a balance between kinship and stewardship which fosters an ecological balance. God's pronouncement that "it is not good for man to be alone" is the canonization of the relational nature of human existence. Pride, which leads a person to be contemptuous of human relating, and sloth, the failure to respond to another's approach, are both anathema to God's

intention. Sexual union between the man and woman is affirmed as good. The molding of the woman from Adam's rib prompts a reading of the text that sees Eve and Adam as radically equal. The woman is made, not from the earth, as all the animals are, and over which the man is given stewardship. The woman is "bone of his bone," his equal. This is the key to interpreting the text. The fact that she is made after him is not the major point, and should not be taken to mean that the later is the least (Brown, 1990, p. 12).

[The] man and woman live with each other in nakedness. The goal of the interdependent sexuality is healthy community.

The whole account of what it is to be human--to be related to God, to be both kin and master of the earth, to live in interdependency--is pervaded by a sense of entrustment. Humankind is entrusted by God with the Garden . . . and with each other. . . . This is preeminently the story of trusted creatures, empowered by God to live life and care for creation. (1978, p. 132)

The message of Genesis 2 compliments that of chapter 1. The same power of God, in chapter 1, which made human beings holy or "dignified" becomes their empowerment in chapter two.

The world of created dignity unfolds into the world of the trusted creature. The world of friendship and celebration unfolds into the world of sexuality and communion. The world of reverence and beauty unfolds into the world of freedom and solidarity. If people are the stories they tell, the people who tell the stories of Creation, Incarnation and Spirit, are, most surely, a people of God. (1978, p. 141)

To say that estrangement and alienation of human beings begins with the abuse of freedom is to tell only half the story. The question of why freedom is abused is the heart of the matter. One traditional interpretation is that God gave a command, and human beings transgressed it. The source then of alienation is disobedience. A second traditional interpretation focuses on the content of God's command. In this interpretation, humans want the prerogative of determining for

themselves the limits of right and wrong. They want to be "god." Pride is their undoing. Shea would deepen these two interpretations and he focuses on trust. The root of the problem lies in those moments when we attempt to move outside of Mystery by not trusting it, even though we are grounded in it. This happens on those occasions when we lose sight of creation's goodness. Then we try to control the givens of life, rather than relate to them. "We seek to be god because we have lost confidence in being a creature. . . . The heart of the matter is that the trusted creature does not trust" (1978, p. 145).

There is of course evidence which supports the option not to trust in the goodness of all there is. We have already pointed out that our relationship to Mystery can be ambiguous: we get sick, age, and die. Shea reviews some of the answers that the Jewish tradition came up with as answers to this ambiguity.

The first was based on a firm belief in a cause and effect structure. . . . If suffering visited you, you had brought it in your own head. . . . A second response . . . was the idea of training. God sends suffering, not because of previous sins but because they are purgative and pedagogical. (1978, pp. 148-49)

While there might be a limited validity to both these responses to suffering, they cannot be made to bear the burden of being a total explanation of death and suffering. Shea then turns to the Cross as a response to the question: "How do we trust in a world that is distorted by our own betrayals and filled with deliberate sin and arbitrary suffering?" (1978, p. 151).

The Cross is a symbol of the most cruel and outrageous death and torture. Yet the person on it is not just anyone, but the Son of God, as the centurion at the foot of the cross, in Mark's gospel, confesses.

The Cross revolutionizes our understanding of God and presents to us new possibilities for life. God is not a heavenly king and the question is not how does he reward good and punish evil. God is a passionate presence to all human life, never deserting it. The Cross is the symbol of the fellow suffering of God. . . . The love of God demands that he be wherever his creation is. (1978, p. 151)

To accept the symbol of the Cross is to commit oneself to trusting that God has penetrated to the most unholy of places and situations. God is present in loneliness, suffering, self-hate and sin. She is there not with a wagging accusing finger, but with open arms. The Cross speaks of God's care, God's care as given from the inside, from the position of suffering. "The Cross is God loving us from the inside" (1978, p. 152). The Cross speaks to us of God's uninterrupted presence to us. Even in the experience of alienation and estrangement, we are not abandoned. When we have said this, complacency can have no part in our lives. Set free from anxiety over our own precariousness, or the fear of nonacceptance, or the fear of all kinds of dangers, we have solid grounds for caring action.

When the acceptance symbolized in the Cross, suffuses our lives, we are free to be for the other, to love in the same way that we have been loved. . . . In the deep peace that acceptance brings, there is an imperative to change, a mission to share what has been experienced. (pp. 153-54)

Shea asks a question, typical of medieval times, but which can be interpreted as a question about the possibility of authentic human living: Would we still have to die had Adam not sinned? He answers that positively, since death is part of the natural process of reality. What would be missing though is the anxiety we bring to death. We would be able to trust and get beyond the debilitating effects of anxiety. We would face up to our social responsibilities, not shrink from .

relationships, sexuality or friendship. This leads him then to suggest that fear is trust's real enemy.

Fear is suspicious of the contours of life. To fear is to experience the last covenant curse and to think that both waking and dreaming are tricks. For the person who lives with the Cross of Christ, trust is the Godward side of human courage. (1978, p. 156)

The final metaphor in this group is that of Church. Shea returns to the Jesus on the Cross, in John's gospel, to begin his reflection on the contribution of the church metaphor to human living. Devotion is quite sure that the church was born from the blood and water that flowed from Jesus' side. How does this image speak to us of what the church is? Three things follow, Shea says. "The Cross is the grounding of the Christian community, its symbol of realism and its ongoing principle of critique" (p. 158).

The Cross Is the Grounding of Christian Community

The Cross clearly reveals God's self-giving love which liberates us from egoism. Since we have handed ourselves over to God and received ourselves back from Him, entrusted with His cause, we are empowered to belong to each other in a life-giving manner. The God in Jesus has taken the worst that humans can do into Himself, and has turned it toward the good.

The law of the Cross is not that evil has been eliminated but that it has been transformed into possibility. The power of sin and suffering which generated the anti-community styles of domination and manipulation and deceit have been broken. If we dwell with the Cross of Christ, the compulsion to protect ourselves at all costs yield to the possibilities of dialogue, respect and integrity. The funding experience which makes Christian Community possible is God on the Cross. (1978, p. 158)

The Cross Introduces a Note of
Realism into Christian Living

If, in the process of setting us free, God had to enter into suffering, struggle and sin, then anyone who engages in a similar presence to others can expect no less.

To pursue a life of trust, friendship and justice is to follow the discipleship of the Cross. In the concrete world in which we live, the trusted creature is often the suffering creature; the one who is responsible is the one who risks his life. (1978, p. 159)

The Cross Is the Church's Ongoing
Principle of Critique

Traditionally we have looked on God as the almighty, the powerful one. We see that power hang on the Cross. Jesus got there by his opposition to the false power, which eventually crucified him. Jesus was God's ambassador on a mission of self-giving love, which brought people together in genuine community. His mission, and the memory of it, continue to cut through all the machinations of self-protecting fear.

The God on the Cross will not sanction our manipulating ways and dominating styles. The facile wisdom that power is for control, and muscle makes community, is folly before the cross. Vulnerability . . . the vulnerability of those who care . . . is what binds together, the vulnerability of God on the Cross. Before the God on the Cross, our strivings for total control and absolute power are unmasked for what they are: fear of life. (1978, p. 160)

Telling the Story of Jesus' Identity

In weaving these tales from the great metaphors of the Judeo-Christian tradition, Shea is exploring the historical nature of human existence. His concern with human well-being, with human development and the transformation of human persons is evident. This concern flows from a conscious choice he has made in his approach to Christology--to

the burning questions of "Who Jesus is for us today?" and "Is contact with the graciousness of Mystery possible for us through Jesus of Nazareth, today?" Before elaborating his own Christological choice, Shea reviews some of the current, influential approaches of other theologians. He presents the approach of those who chose "the way of admiration," and marvel at the story of Jesus; the way of imitation, which tries "to put on the mind and the heart of Jesus" (Phil: 2:5), as well as, sometimes at least, literally imitating the behavior of Jesus; the way of explanation, which focuses on the person of Jesus and pursues the question of his identity. He entitles his own approach "the way of telling his story" (1980, p. 127). This is an approach which consciously adopts a trinitarian perspective and thus presupposes "the primacy of the relational" (p. 140). By this latter expression he emphasizes that if Jesus is at all important today, it is because we have an encounter with him of such depth and power that we want to extend its influence to every area of concern in our lives. We want to find ourselves in the position of those, who "in the days of his flesh," discovered God striding into their lives in the approaching footsteps of the carpenter from Nazareth, who talked, not at all about himself, but about what he called the "Kingdom of God." The primacy of the relational also means that when we speak of Jesus, we are speaking of our own commitments and experience. "There is always a self-referent in Jesus-Talk" (p. 140). If I say "Jesus is Love," I mean that "When I am with Jesus, I experience myself as being loved." In other words, I do experience the graciousness of Mystery through him. If this were not the case then "he would be dispensable" (p. 141). The conditions which

permit this redemptive encounter with Jesus are fulfilled in the telling and the hearing of the stories others have told about Jesus, as long as these stories are told within "a fully appropriated trinitarian perspective," within a trinitarian experience of God, which prevents Jesus of Nazareth from sinking into "the seas of the past" (p. 146).

Shea explains what he means by reflecting on how Jesus "leaves twice," "First he departs into the realm of death from which he emerges triumphant. Secondly, he departs for his permanent home with God" (1980, p. 147). The gospel narratives are clear: after the ascension, Jesus was not available as he used to be. When this happened, people began to tell stories of what they remembered about him. Their preferred place for storytelling was in the context of the meal they celebrated, in memory of his own favored practice, which was also an expression of their hope that he would "return to establish a new fellowship" (p. 147). In their view, Jesus came once to live his life among them, he would come again in power, with the escathon. This earliest view of Jesus followers soon gave way to another--that of the Jesus who led an earthly life and who now, at the right hand of God was Lord of life and the sender of the Holy Spirit. As time passed and Jesus did not return, there was an increasing emphasis on the Spirit's activity. Christians increasingly came to view the resurrection in terms of their own experience of the Spirit which anointed them for mission, in terms of the reconciliation and metanoia they practiced, and of the eucharistic fellowship they enjoyed. They realized that the absence of Jesus was real. But there was a paradox: he was still present, they could encounter him as forcefully as when he walked the

streets of Capernaum, only now this encounter took place "through the Spirit of God."

The experience which Jesus was able to trigger [when he was on the earth] did not go into the far reaches of God with him. What had happened when the earthly Jesus was with people continued to happen when the earthly Jesus was not with them. Yet this experience was so linked to the person of Jesus that it was inconceivable to experience God as Father without simultaneously experiencing the Son who bodied him forth. The logic was inescapable. The God of Jesus was here, so Jesus must be here. But Jesus is definitely not here as he once was. Rather his Spirit is here among us. And since the Spirit belongs to Jesus and to the Father, it is capable of initiating the experience of God as Father through Jesus. (p. 148)

Telling the Story of the Trinity's Presence in History

At this point, what we are getting from Shea seems to me to be Christian specification of "the gracious mystery" that reveals itself at the heart of reality, to every person. This gracious Mystery in Christian terms, has a threefold relationship to humans:

We dwell now with the Spirit, who is actively at work soliciting our freedom and transforming our lives and our environments. But this Spirit directs our minds and hearts to the events of which Jesus is the center. Jesus is the Son, the concrete embodiment of God; and any experience of the divine gravitates toward him. Yet the Son carries our minds and hearts to the ultimate reaches of transcendent Mystery we live within and calls it Father-generating love. (1980, p. 149)

The Trinitarian structure of our faith is traditionally expressed in the formula: "we live in the Spirit and go through Christ, to the Father. Shea now applies this formula to the metaphor of the journey of faith and demonstrates how the contours of that journey are clarified.

When we initially become aware of Mystery, we are caught up in the "fray of everyday living." There is the experience of ambiguity we have already described, and we are not at all clear about what we are to

think, how we are to deal with the confusion of feeling, much less be clear-sighted about what we should do.

But the Story of Jesus is the story of faith in the concrete. He is the visibility of the invisible movement of God: and contact with him, means the specification of God's intention and the spark to go on. To experience Jesus is to experience yourself "on track" in the Spirit on the way to the Father. This trinitarian approach is the inevitable structure of every meeting with Jesus after his death, resurrection and ascension. (1980, p. 150)

When the evangelists got around to telling their stories, they were not in the ahistorical and uninvolved position of giving a heavenly account of what happened to Jesus. Theirs, like ours, was the "murky" situation of everyday struggle. So, while they knew Jesus as a historical figure, and while they proclaimed him as "seated in glory, at the Father's right hand," they also knew him as a presence among them through his Spirit.

Therefore, they structure the remembered elements of his earthly story so that his continued presence in the Spirit can be discerned. The Spirit of Jesus is at work in the community, but its intentions are difficult to discern. The story of the Giver of the Spirit clarifies the Spirit's urgings and maps the journey to the Father. (1980, p. 151)

This accounts for the very different Jesus-story that is told by each of the evangelists. We might contrast the story of Mark with that of Luke. For Mark's persecuted, yet expectant, community Jesus is the Suffering Son of Man who will return in judgment. For Luke's community, which is settling down in history, such an account of Jesus is inadequate. Luke makes his Jesus the exemplar of Christian life: if Jesus prays and attends worship, so does the believer; if Jesus forgives his enemies, so does the believer (Stephen).

Differing historical and religious conditions provoke different renditions of Jesus. Certain features of the story become prominent, because they speak to a given situation. These features

in turn reorganize and interpret the rest of the tradition. (1980, p. 151)

These writers teach the rest of us an important lesson: in our efforts to faithfully respond to Mystery's self-disclosure, our situation makes us attentive to certain dimension of the story of Jesus, and we all retell the Story of the Son so that the path to the Father is revealed, and the movement of the Spirit is clarified.

Exploring Our Historical Existence Through Story

We are now in a position to understand why Shea weaves the tales he does from the great metaphors of the Judeo-Christian tradition and why he explores the historical nature of human existence. Today,

under the impact of the Holy Spirit, people are deeply exploring their commonly shared humanity, specifically in terms of its historical development. The way to the Father is not to escape the conditions of individual and social living but to transform them. (1980, p. 152)

Consequently, people have a lively interest in "the quest for the historical Jesus" and in the "portrait of him which current historical methods would consider reliable. . . . In pursuing the historical Jesus we are attempting to "enter our own humanity and historicity through his" (p. 152).

We allow the life story of Jesus to focus the areas of importance in human life and to give a perspective on these areas. In no way do we give up our critical faculties but we allow the story to guide and sharpen their use. The story of Jesus which is the initial partner in this dialogue, is the historical portrait. (p. 156)

Shea does not want to deny the value of the faith portrait of Jesus which the gospels give us--the portrait that is an interpretation of Jesus, that has the inner meaning of Jesus and his impact as its guiding principle. He values the stories of the faith portrait. These

stories highlight what happened to the followers of Jesus in their interaction with him.

To call Jesus the Lamb or the Vine is not to engage in historical reconstruction. These are metaphors of significance. They carry acknowledgement and allegiance. However, it is the portrait of the historical Jesus which is most fascinating. Today, to say the historical Jesus is the Christ of faith . . . enshrines a contemporary preference. People take their lives to this historical Jesus for affirmation and challenge. (p. 155)

III. By Way of Conclusion and Contextualization

At the conclusion of this chapter I want to do two things. Firstly, I want to try to organize all that we have heard John Shea say, into a single perspective, in order that when we have reviewed what Object Relations Theorists have taught us about human experience and God-human relationship, we can engage the two disciplines in conversation. It seems to me that a powerful metaphor which organizes much of his insight into an organic whole is that of graciousness. All living and all life is pregnant with graciousness. The details of each person's life-journey open out into Grace, which is Mystery. No one, potentially, is excluded from the possibility of gracious experience, (cf. pp. 14-19, 47-52, above) since every person is able to engage all reality through the use of his or her sacramental imagination. Shea calls the response he makes to the invitation Mystery offers him, faith. There are individuals, of course, whose depth experiences lead them to perceive Ultimate Reality as indifferent or even hostile. Shea is respectful of their perceptions, and of their beliefs, attitudes and values, which flow from these experiences. His faith response joins him to, rather than separates him from, these others. They, no less than

he, are engaged in the quest to bring every aspect of life under the influence of these revelatory experiences--whether gracious, indifferent or hostile. Agnostics or atheists differ from Shea, only in that their faith assumptions see Ultimate Reality as indifferent or hostile, while he is urged to see the same Reality, Mystery, as gracious. The metaphor which helps me appreciate "the faithing" a person carries on, is that of self-interpretation. I use the word "faithing" because faith is an active process. Once Mystery takes the initiative to reveal Itself, faith begins, with the exercise of sacramental imagination, continues, as an appropriating response to the gracious relationship to Mystery that is revealed, and climaxes, as a capacity to celebrate life's goodness or to creatively live in the presence of the ambiguities of human existence, such as senility, illness or moral evil (p. 27). On the humanward side, the appropriating response to Mystery is fundamental. It involves the telling of the person's own lifestory, retelling it in the light of his or her appreciation of the story of Israel and of Jesus (pp. 28-32); the forging of his or her own preferred metaphors or adoption those of his tradition; working out a set of values which are shaped by these stories and metaphors; and finally the incarnation of these stories, values and attitudes in the concrete behavior-patterns of his or her daily life, in the context of intimate interpersonal relations with others, and of the less personal milieu of social roles and involvement, as well as in the context of his relatedness to the whole of creation.

The "From Whence of Faith" for John Shea and the
Tradition of Which He Is a Part

The second thing I want to do is to locate Jack Shea within the Catholic tradition, on the question of faith, and to point to his affinity to that part of this tradition that has been developed in the work of Karl Rahner. Whereas much of the Catholic tradition, since the Reformation has looked on Revelation as a fixed body of Truth, and on Faith, as the graced assent to these truths, typically, the Rahnerian view looks on human existence itself as the graced locus of God's revelation and faith as an ever present human activity, developmentally prior to an explicit formulation of faith-propositions. The roots of faith plunge down to the very sources of the human personality, and anyone who reflects on faith is invited to look for faith, not only in his or her own believing community, and in other faith-systems, but also must look to his or her own earliest and inner experience, in order to find the basis for faith. As Rahner writes "to lead to [explicit] faith, is always to assist understanding what has already been experienced in the depths of human reality as grace" (quoted by McDargh, 1983, p. 47).

Rahner's approach contrasts with the position of Niebhur for instance, a well known and respected interpreter of the Protestant tradition, whose basic question is "whom shall I trust?" a question that arises from a vision of the human condition as haunted by brokenness and alienation (cf. McDargh, 1983, pp. 27ff.). The Catholic position, one shared by Shea, operates with a sense that faith operates out of a "plenum," a fullness of life, which of its very nature is pointing beyond itself to the "fullness of life" of which Jesus speaks in John

10:10. It is concerned to show that the human person is invited, called, impelled or persuaded to reach out to the "yet more" that is the Ultimate. We have seen Shea espouse a theory of knowledge which accounts for faith as a very powerful form of human knowing, and have heard him protest against any effort which would set knowing over against faith. This knowing is of course, not just an intellectual activity, rather it is a mode of "perception through feeling," that knows through participation in its object. This is a way of viewing knowing that has biblical support. Scripture views knowing as a total human activity, in which one enters a relationship which participates in the reality of that which we desire to know. What we desire to know is reality, that which is real and ultimately true. Within the Catholic tradition "the primal human question which is the beginning of faith, might then best be put 'What is the real?'" (McDargh, 1983, p. 48). Right from the beginning of psychic life, there is a desire to know that assumes that there is a horizon of intelligibility that holds out the promise that the quest for the real will not ultimately be in vain, even if it will have to face severe obstacles. Let Michael Buckley comment on this:

The drive of the mind is towards the real. The drive of the intellectual search is for more inclusive contexts, in which the real, either understood or simply encountered, exists. Even the drive for meaning is not for abstract formulae which bear no relationship to existence, whether possible or actual, but towards those which provide an understanding of, and a context for everything affirmed as real. Human inquiry takes place within a primordial grasp of the real, and is an effort to deepen and extend that grasp. The real is found--or rather speaks to me--right from the beginning of rationality. (Quoted McDargh, 1983, p. 49)

In this philosophical context, the "endlessly intelligible or infinitely rational" horizon of all knowing is identified as Mystery, the

Transcendent. When rationality meets Mystery, it is not the case that it has run into a limiting and impenetrable wall, rather it has touched a loving Reality, which fascinates and draws one into every deepening levels of personal engagement and knowledge. It is this absolute Mystery "present to consciousness as the asymptotic horizon of its transcendence" (Buckley, as in McDargh, 1983, p. 49) that this tradition identifies as the experience of God. People like Rahner or Shea do not necessarily imply that God is immediately and always present, as a thematized and conscious reality, at the level of ordinary knowing, or at every moment of one's life. What they wish to assert is that Mystery or God is there, as the direction or horizon of our consciousness.

The "To Where of Faith" for John Shea and the
Tradition of Which He Is a Part

We have looked at how this tradition has understood the "from whence" of faith, but we have said nothing about what it perceives as the goal of faith, its "to where." Shea leaves us in no doubt but that he sees our ability to use our sacramental imagination as severely impeded by emergence of what he calls the envious and rejected hearts, by sin in other words. The net result of all this is that the drive to know, and to become involved in the fullness of life, is experienced in its fragility and in its wounded form as much as in its free exercise and completeness. This explains why it is that human beings are unable to enter fully into many of their moral acts and especially many of those acts by which one intends one's relationship with Mystery.

Thus in many, or maybe even most, efforts to know, each person is limited by that which is in her that does not want to know.

In all our efforts to meet and be met by that which is real and lasting, at some level of our being something is reserved from that meeting, some part of ourselves holds back in fear, in doubt, in the sheer inertia of old ways of knowing and relating, which however unsatisfying they are, are at least familiar. The "from whence of faith" by this analysis is not only the conatus towards Divine Reality, it is also the resistance to that pull. (McDargh, 19834, p. 51)

If this is congruent with what Shea says about the envious and the rejected heart, then perhaps we can see what he suggests as the "to where" of faith: it is a personally shaped world, a meaningful world where people tell stories of "Hope and Justice," of "Trust and Freedom," in such a way that "faith vanquishes anxiety, freedom wins out over slavery, and hope banishes fear" (Shea, 1978, p. 42). In this world, a person finds fulfillment as her imagination is increasingly peopled by images that are more and more in tune with the Kingdom-Images of Jesus. These images ground the values and the attitudes which govern the person's life, more and more, until they become beatitudes. In turn these attitudes motivate and inspire behavior that is self-affirmative, that promotes mutuality and begets compassion.

These are the very characteristics, I submit, that we find present in the cohesive self, described as the end of the developmental process in Object Relations Theory. Before we turn to a consideration of the psychological aspects of faith development, just let us keep in mind something that is vitally important for John Shea and for the tradition of which he is a part: while the transformation of human consciousness, which is the term of the faith journey does involve the psychological processes of growth or impairment and integration, leading to a discovery of one's self, it is not to be reduced simply to these processes. The transformed consciousness of faith is incomprehensible

apart from the content of what faith grasps: one's relationship with Mystery, a relationship whose model is that of Jesus with "Abba," his Father, who not only sustained him in life, but who was faithful to him in death and raised him from the dead.

CHAPTER II

MEANING AND PSYCHOLOGICAL BIRTH

Listed by John Shea as one member of the set of environments in which each person necessarily participates, is the environment of the "Self." This chapter will try to understand this "environment," using Object Relations Psychoanalytic Theory. In this chapter we will pose the same questions to Object Relations sources as we posed to the Shea tests: What are the contours of a meaningful human world? and How does a person create a meaningful world?

It is fitting to begin with a review of the work of Sigmund Freud and acknowledge this man's genius in struggling towards the development of an Object Relational conceptualization of experience. Though he was never quite at ease in acknowledging the pure psychological strand in his own thinking as distinct from the psychobiological strand (cf. Guntrip, 1971, p. 81) others carried on from where he left off. I will then move on to the developmental paradigm suggested by Margaret Mahler. I will use that as an organizing schema for the material I will present about Object Relations Theory, though I shall modify or complement her insights with those of researchers and of other Object Relations theorists as the need for a more complete picture, or one which mitigates the Freudian view of the

role of instincts as an explanatory principle in human experience, emerges.

Freud postulated the existence of two fundamental urges or "instincts" in the depths of the unconscious (cf. Wulff, 1991, pp. 264ff.). The first, which he termed **Eros**, the life instinct, seeks to preserve the unity and harmony of life; the second **Thanatos**, the death instinct, seeks to sever connections between the person and reality and to return life to an inorganic state. Eros grounds the sexual interests of people. Thanatos is accountable for the aggressive, destructive dimensions of human existence. It is the mutual opposing pull of these two instincts which explain the multiple vicissitudes of life. "Yet they are only the first, though also the most fundamental, of the antinomies that constitute the human drama" (p. 264).

Immediately after birth, according to Freud, the neonate is governed completely by the **Pleasure Principle**. His (Freud's choice of pronoun) world has little or nothing of the clarity that adults take for granted. He vaguely apprehends that he is in a general state of excitation. If there is an increase in tension the child experiences unpleasure. When tension is reduced he experiences pleasure. Gradually, the infant becomes able to imagine states or object which bring him relief and consolation. These imaginings are incapable of satisfying his biological needs. This bad situation is made worse by the fact that the nursing adults do not appreciate that the infant considers them at his beck and call. Only gradually does the child relinquish his total dependence on "the autistic and illogical laws of the infantile psyche, laws in their totality that Freud called **primary**

process" (Wulff, 1991, p. 265). As long as the child is influenced by primary process thinking, he demands instant gratification of his wishes, and he does not mind where this satisfaction comes from, he is **polymorphously perverse**. Once he finds an object that yields pleasures, he invests sexual energy or **libido** in it, a process termed **cathexis**. The mother is the first target of this cathexis, and the parts of her body which gratify the child's desires are especially cathected. The child also invests part of his own body, which in the early stages is scarcely differentiated from that of the mother, with libido, and so the child is described as existing in a **narcissistic** condition--after the Greek hero, Narcissus, who fell in love with his own reflection. But reality impinges before long on this condition, and the child must withdraw his cathexis of many satisfying objects. Primary process thinking yields to **secondary process** thinking, the logical thinking of conscious awareness, and the pleasure principle cedes to the **reality principle**, which eventually permits the person to effect a compromise between the demands of outer reality and inner instinctual drives. These new capacities that the individual develops, are the achievements of the young **Ego**. The psychological province from which the ego grows is termed the **Id**, which remains unconscious, in eternum, and retains the character of the infantile psyche. The **Id** continues to be the home of primary process and the pleasure principle, but these are now controlled by unconscious parts of the ego, whose task it is to decide which impulses can be safely satisfied and which may not.

The **Ego**, Freud claimed, is forever the servant of the **Id**. It seeks to find gratification for **Id** impulses, in ways that avoid anxiety,

which signals imminent danger of displeasure. It is responsible for **sublimation**, an unconscious process through which strongly conflicting impulses are transformed and expressed as socially acceptable activities. The Ego is also responsible for **dream work**, the complex mental operations that change unconscious thoughts and wishes into well disguised dream fantasies. These dreams represent fulfillment of latent wishes. By interpreting dreams, Freud endeavored to bypass the Ego's unconscious **defense mechanisms** and uncover the repressed psychic contents that cause mental illness.

The development of the infant from an irrational pleasure-centered organism to a mature, reality-oriented adult, is a pilgrimage through several clearly defined, though overlapping stages. The first three stages are identified in terms of different body zones, erotogenic zones, that serve as the first source of "sexual" excitement. Libido flows in turn towards each of these zones and the pleasure giving object associated with them. The first stage of the developmental sequence is that of the **Oral Stage**, when the mouth is the principal source of pleasure. Through the mouth comes food, but much more, too: utter satisfaction and blissful fulfillment, which Freud dubs as the prototype of adult sexual satisfaction. Even after being fed, an infant seeks this satisfaction and hence the practice of thumbsucking. In adulthood the same pursuit of pleasure is seen in the practice of gum-chewing or smoking. The later oral period is characterized by a new behavioral item--biting and chewing. This indicates the appearance of sadistic impulses to find pleasure in inflicting pain on another, and illustrates how sexual and destructive impulses interpenetrate. The child is marked

forever by what happens to him in the oral stage. If he has been caringly nurtured he will enjoy unconscious blissful memories and develop an optimistic outlook on life. If he is disappointed then he will be fearful and pessimistic. Over indulgence is likely to encourage an attitude of passive expectation that there will always be someone there to look after his needs. Neglect, on the other hand, breeds impatience, a tendency to cling, or a demanding, aggressive social attitude.

During the **Anal Stage** (anal-sadistic, as Freud referred to it), the libido relates to feces and processes of control. Retention of feces, and then, its sudden expulsion, is intensely pleasurable, and maybe, sometimes suffused with pain. Initially the child views his feces as a detachable, interesting, and valuable part of his own body. He shares neither adult disgust for it, nor dislike of its odor. Feces are the child's first gift to external reality: by producing them he complies with external authority, by withholding them he can defy it. Thus, fecal matter is a means of producing pleasure and expressing his relationships to his caretaker. Freud viewed the attitudes associated with learning bowel control as have far-reaching consequences for later values and tendencies. Intense anal eroticism frequently finds later expression in qualities of miserliness, obstinacy, and orderliness. A broad range of traits from sadistic cruelty to creative productivity are considered by some, to be rooted in this developmental stage.

Around the beginning of the third year a new stage is begun, at the end of which boys and girls will be very different. Freud named this stage the **Phallic Stage**. Already, the child has achieved a

considerable degree of psychological integration and objects, particularly the mother, have become stable. The child develops a keen interest in his genitals at this stage, which are a mystery to him, but the sensations which he associates with them, are somehow connected to his mother. He intensely wants exclusive rights to her love, and, at the same time, experiences jealousy and rage towards any rivals, especially his father. Freud names this pattern of object relations the **Oedipus Complex**, after another Greek hero, who unwittingly murdered his father and married his mother. The Oedipus Complex is a tempestuous, but inevitable, affair. As long as family pathology does not get in the way, the complex is brought to an end by the tormented ego. On the one hand, there is the simultaneous hate and love of the same sex parent. The father is indeed the cherished protector, as well as the hated rival. The mother may excite intense jealousy, when she spurns her would be lover--her son--in favor of her husband. On the other hand there is fear of castration--the revenge of the father because the son covets the mother. Three factors encourage the child to be aware of the possibility of castration. He has already experienced the loss of two things which he initially considered as parts of his own body--his feces and the mother's breast. He may have been threatened with the loss of his penis when an adult caught him manipulating his genitals. Thirdly, he may have seen human beings who lacked the prized organ, not because they are female, but, he reasons, because they too had forbidden desires, and got punished for them. Eventually, the narcissistic interest in his sex organ is sufficiently strong to encourage him to

withdraw the libinal cathexis of the mother, and thus the Ego finally renounces Oedipal desires.

The foregoing of the cathexis to the mother opens the way for the child to identify with the father. Instead of trying to displace him, he identifies with his authority and values. In this process, he either desexualized the libido towards the mother, or inhibits their aim, changing them into bonds of affection. The ideal outcome is that the Oedipus complex is totally resolved--which Freud thought to be a rare occurrence--or the complex is repressed, and thereby becomes a pathogenic element in the id.

We now come to the third structure in Freud's account of the psyche--the **Superego**. The parental attitudes and values which are introjected, form the nucleus of this structure. These introjects take over the function of parental authority, and often function in a manner far more severe than do the parents. The excessive severity of the superego is the consequence of the strength of the defenses used against the temptations of the Oedipus Complex. Though the superego will normally undergo further development, thanks to further identifications in later childhood, adolescence and adulthood, the original nucleus always remains the firmest and most active part.

Like her brother, the young girl starts out by cathecting her mother. She too interprets sex differences as the result of castration. But instead of the fear which her brother experiences, she is enraged, envious and jealous. She blames her mother for the castration, and turns to her father for consolation. The unconscious logic of the primary process takes over, and she hopes to be comforted for the loss

of her penis, by identifying with her mother, and in her mother's place, wishes to receive a baby from her father. Even after she learns that she shares the fate of all females, she still retains the fruitless hope of having her father's baby and is still plagued with feelings of inferiority. Because females do not abandon the Oedipal triangle as effectively as males do, they have a less developed superego--according to Freud. It is less strong and more dependent on its emotional origins. Not many men attain the ideal of masculine maturity and all human beings, thanks to their bisexual disposition and cross inheritance, combine in their person, both masculine and feminine characteristics.

With the resolution of the Oedipus complex, children enter into the **Latency Period**, a time when they are relatively free of the crude sexual interests of infancy. Thanks to sublimation and reaction formation, libinal activity is directed into new activities and objects in the environment, many of them in school and peer friendships.

The fourth, called the **Genital Stage**, emerges as the child enters puberty. Thanks to physiological sexual maturation, the person has to organize the revived cathexes of early childhood, and subordinate them to the primacy of the genitals. Freud understood that these early cathexes had a variety of fates: some are maintained as they initially developed; others have a secondary role in the preliminary stages of sexual intercourse; still others remain outside the organization, either to be suppressed or to be transformed into character traits, or into sublimation with new aims. Since the process of development is so complex and subject to some many difficulties, in

childhood, it is likely that this process is frequently aborted or seriously inhibited. Libido may be fixated at an early stage of development, and thus the precondition for sexual deviation is established. A different scenario emerges when genital organization is incompletely attained, which leaves earlier pregenital cathexes intact. When faced with stress, this individual is likely to regress when there is unsatisfactory genital stage experience.

If a person successfully attains genital stage organization, then the pilgrimage from the stage of being a narcissistic pleasure-seeking infant to becoming a well socialized, reality oriented, adult is completed, and he is capable of mature heterosexual relationships. The crass, self-seeking interests of the earlier period are replaced with altruistic, morally enhancing and culture-appreciative motives. There is a cost to this transformation: high motives are won only if there is a large measure of instinctual renunciation--civilization depends on this. Yet even this assures only a partial victory, for each generation must begin anew. The victory is precarious in each person's life, for the loftiest achievements of instinctual transformation retain the marks of their original in the irrational demands of the Id.

From a Freudian Psychobiological Theory
to Object Relations Theory

Freud's concern to have his new science accepted within the nineteenth-century scientific community precluded him from following through the distinction he made

between psychoanalysis as the psychodynamic science of our subjective life as persons in relationships, and physical or natural science as the science of the material basis and setting of our personal life. (Guntrip, 1971, p. 80)

Up to the end of his life, he never wavered, in his theoretical reconstructions, from giving the drives the prime place in his view of human functioning. He insisted on the instincts, their innate nature, and on the earliest state of the child as being narcissistic libidinally cathecting his own ego. All of this leaves the child, in the Freudian world, without a preordained tie to other people. The drives precede the object, and even "create" the object by the experiences of satisfaction and frustration. They are the determinants of the quality of relationships, and object relations are simply a function of them. Yet it is clear that that is not the whole story. Guntrip is prompted to say

Freud's ideas fall into two main groups: i) the id plus ego-control apparatus and ii) the Oedipus complex of family object relationship situations. The first group of ideas tend to picture the psyche as a mechanism, an impersonal arrangement for securing de-tensioning, a homeostatic organization. The second group tends toward a personal psychology of the influence people have on each other's lives, particularly parents on children. (1971, p. 28)

The second group of Freudian ideas that cluster around the notion of the Oedipus complex of family Object Relationships, is the object-relational strand, and gives us Freud's view of the individual as located at the heart of his relational situation with external reality.

From an Object Relations perspective, the way a person relates to people in the external world is determined by the intrapsychic structures, or object relations, that he or she has developed. These structures are the residue of the person's relationships with those in his or her environment, who, in the days of infant-dependence, and early stages of maturation, nurtured and cared for him or her. Here is the

part of the Freudian legacy that has been maintained. In 1914, Freud could write

The nature and quality of the human child's relations to people of his own and the opposite sex have been laid down in the first six years of his life. He may afterwards develop and transform them in certain directions, but he can no longer get rid of them. The people to whom he is in this way fixed, are his parents and his brothers and sisters. All of those whom he gets to know later become substitute figures for these first objects of his feelings. . . . These substitute figures can be classified from his point of view according as they are derived from what we call "imagos" of his father, his mother, his brothers and sisters, and so on. . . . All his later choices of friendships and love follow upon the basis of the memory traces left behind by these first prototypes . . . the imagos--no longer remembered. (1914, p. 243).

This passage suggests the main features of a theory of Object Relations, toward which Freud was ambivalent (cf. McDargh, 1983, p. 119): (1) that our earliest involvement with parents and family members has a lasting influence on later relationships; (2) that this influence is mediated by the "imagos" or representations of the earlier personages, which may be transformed and changed, but which (3) can never be destroyed, and hence are, in the psychic sense at least, "immortal" (Schafer, 1968, p. 220). There are two other features added to this list by Rizzuto, an author who is of special interest to us. I include them here, and will return to them later. She adds that (4) the process of object internalization ceases with the end of childhood and (5) the final internalization is that of the divinity, in whatever form it may take (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 29). She quotes (p. 30) a 1924 study of Freud to illustrate these features.

The course of childhood development leads to an ever increasing detachment from parents, and their personal significance for the superego recedes into the background. To the imagos they leave behind there are then linked the influences of teachers and authorities, self-chosen models and publicly recognised heroes,

whose figures need no longer be introjected by an ego which has become more resistant. (Freud, 1924, p. 168, as quoted by Rizzuto)

And again for point number (5)

The last figure in the series that began with the parents is the dark power of Destiny, which only the fewest of us are able to look upon as impersonal. . . . All who transfer the guidance of the world to Providence, to God, and Nature, arouse a suspicion that they still look upon these ultimate and remotest powers as the parental couple, in a mythological sense, and believe themselves linked to them by libidinal ties. (Freud, 1924, p. 168)

What is new with Object Relations theorists, and very different from Freud's theoretical assumptions, is the way that they explain how the psyche evolves and comes to be structured. In the quotation from Freud's 1914 paper, he is describing the evolution of the superego, the third of his psychic structures, alongside the Id and the Ego. The Freudian psychic structure and the explanation of its origin, are challenged by Object Relations theorists. They explain the formation of the Ego in a way that resembles Freud's account of the superego. Their focus is on the influence of external objects (parents and significant others) for the building up of the whole internal psychic structure. Internalization is the process through which this is achieved. This has been defined by Schafer as

those processes by which the subject transforms real or imagined regulatory interactions with his environment, or real or imaginary characteristics of his environment, into inner regulations and characteristics. (1968, p. 8)

In the case of Object Relations theorists, the Freudian emphasis on drives, and their repression, has been emphatically replaced by an interest in relationships. Structural formation involves a process by which an aspect of the external world has been abandoned as an external object, and taken into the Ego through identification, thus becoming a

part of the infant's internal world. This internal agency now carries on the same functions that had been provided by the people, or abandoned objects, in the external world.

Like Freud, Object Relations Theorists propose a developmental theory. Unlike him, and his focus on the Oedipal conflict in the Phallic Stage, their interest focuses on earlier developmental stages and processes. They see as crucial the infant's move from a state of fusion and dependence on the nurturing person to a state of increased independence and differentiation.

Object relations theory links the emergence of the self with the increasing maturity of relationships with objects. Theorists discuss the timing of the formation of the various psychic structures, especially the Ego, by closely observing the processes and interactions that go on within the child-mother dyad. They are also keenly interested in the quality of the relationships that these psychic structures have with their objects.

In the (1914) quotation above from Freud, if we pay attention to the metaphors and languages he uses, we shall see that they tend to imply that object representations or imagos are "things," concrete and discrete entities, which can attract desires, both sexual and aggressive, and in turn, exert a powerful influence over us. This static character to the notion of representation was picked up by later theorists as well, and little attention has been paid to the question of how these change throughout the life cycle. Though this is a criticism, a profound truth lurks here as well. When clients report the experience of their flow of consciousness, they often speak of processes which are

genuinely in interaction with what Schafer calls "primary process presences" (1968, p. 220). There is an important sense in which it is true "to speak of object representations as consoling or persecuting, comforting and confronting, provoking anxiety and demanding restitution" (McDargh, 1983, p. 120). What we must realize, when we talk like this, is that we are engaging in a phenomenology and not speaking of metapsychological entities (cf. Rizzuto, 1979, pp. 60-64).

Before we conclude this section on the move from Drive Theory to Object Relations Theory, a word on how pathology is conceptualized in each approach. The traditional Freudian model understands pathological disturbance as conflict between instinctual demands and the demands of reality, and conflict between the Id, Ego and Superego. The unresolved conflicts of childhood, especially those involved in the Oedipal Complex, can continue to unconsciously emerge in adulthood. The Ego then defensively responds to threatening thoughts and libinal feelings, and thus, the person begins to manifest neurotic symptoms. The task of the Freudian Analyst is to uncover these conflicts and seek the unconscious causes of these neurotic symptoms.

The Object Relations Theorists see things differently. Pathology arises because of damage to the self and the psychic structures. Early deficits in development hinder the formation of a cohesive self and prevent the integration of psychic structures. These deficits may result in narcissistic and borderline personality disorders, which are more serious than the classical Freudian neurosis (cf. St. Clair, 1986, pp. 13-17).

Margreat Mahler's Developmental Paradigm

As I indicated earlier, I will use Mahler's developmental paradigm as the organizing schema, to account for the ways in which the human person organizes her experience, and creates meaning in the world which she inhabits. Althea Horner (1984, p. 26) presents the stages and processes of Mahler's developmental paradigm in this manner:

Stage I	Normal Autism
Process A	Attachment
Stage II	Normal Symbiosis
Process B	Separation-Individuation
Stage III	Identity, Object Constancy, and healthy self-esteem.

Normal Autism

The period of normal autism begins at birth, and lasts until the baby is about a month old. During this time, the periods of sleeplike states far outnumber the states of arousal. The neonate seemingly is in a state of primitive hallucinatory disorientation. Echoing Freud, Mahler uses the image of a bird's egg as a metaphor for the child's closed psychological system:

A neat example of a physical system shut off from the stimuli of the external world, and able to satisfy its nutritional requirements autistically . . . is afforded by a bird's egg with its food supply enclosed in its shell; for it, the care provided by its mother is limited to the provision of warmth. (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 41)

By way of mothering, the infant is gradually brought out of the inborn tendency towards vegetative regression, into sensory awareness of, and contact with, the environment. The task of this phase is for the newborn to achieve a balance of homeostatic equilibrium of the

organism outside the womb, "by predominantly somatopsychic, physiological mechanisms" (Mahler, 1975, p. 43). The infant has impressive strengths at birth. Though her condition at birth is one of "mental and psychological non-organisation and non-integration" (Horner, 1984, p. 9) she is endowed with a central nervous system, which grounds her capacity for mental activity, and thanks to which, she can at birth, or soon thereafter, set about the task of organizing the world of experience. She is ready to receive, and to respond to, stimuli and patterns in the environment.

Sensation occurs when a sensory system responds to a particular stimulus. Perception occurs when the brain recognises that response so that the individual becomes aware of it.

At birth, both sensation and perception are apparent. Newborns see, hear, smell and taste and they respond to pressure, motion, temperature and pain. Most of these sensory abilities are immature, becoming more acute as the child develops.

The perception demonstrated by newborns is very selective. Neonates pay attention to bright lights, loud noises and objects within a foot of their eyes and usually screen out everything else. Their perceived world is very simple--not at all the "great, booming, buzzing confusion" psychologists once believe it to be. (Berger, 1983, p. 108)

In what concerns motor abilities, the newborn has several important reflexes which may be essential for life itself--as for instance, the breathing reflex, the sucking reflex, or the rooting reflex. In the process of using these abilities the infant begins to organize experience. In so doing, he initiates the process that eventually leads to the formation of character structure, that gives rise to ego-structures, and establishes a sense of self. While this is true, in terms of Object Relations Theory this first stage is "objectless." Mahler retained the Freudian term of primary narcissism, and dubbed this stage as one of absolute primary narcissism. She hypothesized that

towards the fourth and fifth week, there develops a stage of

dim awareness that need satisfaction cannot be provided by oneself, but comes from somewhere outside the self (primary narcissism in the beginning symbiotic phase). . . . We might term this stage of primary narcissism the conditional hallucinatory omnipotence. (Mahler, 1975, p. 42.)

Mahler's findings indicate however that this stage is truly one of undifferentiation. The infant cannot differentiate between its own attempts to reduce tension (by urinating, vomiting, squirming) and the actions of the mother to reduce hunger, and other tensions and needs.

As we can see from the foregoing, Mahler is a theorist who accords an important role to the mother. I would like to round out Mahler's picture of the infant by reviewing Winnicott's understanding of the importance of mothering, because he, more than anyone else, has been able to clarify the conditions that make possible an infant's emerging awareness of being a person separate from others. The infant will flourish, says Winnicott, if he or she is surrounded by a facilitating environment. The mother is this facilitating environment, because after delivering her baby, the predominant feature of her life

may be a willingness, as well as an ability . . . to drain interest from her own self on to the baby. I have referred to this aspect of a mother's attitude as primary maternal preoccupation. (Winnicott, 1960, p. 15)

It is this preoccupation which will enable her to be the "good enough mother" who can provide the highly specialized conditions necessary for development in the infant. Good enough mothering in its earliest phases involved three functions: (1) holding, (2) handling (which we will deal with when we come to Mahler's symbiotic phase, later in this chapter), and (3) object presenting or realizing (cf. p. 128 of present chapter).

Holding includes the whole routine of care throughout the day,

especially the physical holding of the child. Its main task is to reduce to a minimum impingements that the infant cannot manage, and which cause the infant, in Michael St. Clair's words to "shut down or feel annihilated" (1986, p. 76). A successful holding environment builds up the positive feelings of being actual and in existence, in the infant. It promotes psychic integration. Also vital for the creation of a "perfect environment" is a responsive maternal face that, like a mirror, faithfully reflects back to the child what the concerned mother sees in him or her. Mirroring is preeminently a matter of eye contact. Eye contact is the first indication of that exclusive human capacity to symbolize. In this experience, two human beings respond to each other beyond the boundaries of need satisfaction, and through it enter the area of play and transitional space, which we shall have occasion to reflect on later (cf. Rizzuto, 1979, p. 184). As the child's eyes meet her mother's, in the healthy situation, she discovers her own beauty and value mirrored in the eyes of the caretaker; she knows herself to be an appealing, wonderful and powerful person. Kohut and Winnicott describe this phenomenon of need for reflection by the other, as a core experience in the process of becoming human. Mirroring is a phenomenon that is not restricted to Mahler's Normal Autistic stage--it extends far beyond it to the phase of object constancy and into adult life. When mirroring is successful, the child will have seen her own grandiose self-representation in the magnifying mirror of her maternal aggrandized imago, and will be ready to emancipate her own representation from the maternal one. More of that anon. A third characteristic of the mother's presence to the child is that it is non-demanding--it allows

him to develop the capacity to experience the state of "formless being" typical of the early post-natal period.

Fortunately, the infant's need for such an idyllic milieu soon diminishes, at the same time as the mother begins to become preoccupied again with her own life concerns. It is essential that the mother gradually introduce the child to the hard realities of the uncontrollable world, by progressively "failing" in her adaptation to the infant's needs. Supported, as we will see, by the growth of ego functions, and an emergent urge towards separation, the child grown in his perception of the reality of objects, and learns to express a variety of needs through gestures and other expressions (cf. Wulff, 1991, p. 339).

If the holding is faulty, then the infant manifests extreme distress, which Winnicott believes grounds a later sense of disintegration, a feeling that external reality cannot be used for reassurance and many other reactions, that have been commonly called "psychotic" (1960, p. 18). Rizzuto gives a graphic description of the situation of the person for whom holding and mirroring are aborted. If holding and mirroring

[have] not sufficed to assure the child that for his mother he is a wonderful creature, the individual may suffer partial arrest of his development and remain fixated to a narcissistic need for psychic mirroring as well as to an actual need for mirrors. Bewilderment, narcissistic rage, vengeful, grandiose wishes (hidden in fantasy or enacted in adaptive or maladaptive behavior) and identification with God are the common adaptational reactions to make the painful state of not being mirrored as oneself, tolerable (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 186)

A little earlier I referred to Horner's judgment that at birth the human infant is born in a state of mental and psychological non-organization, but that she very quickly sets about organizing her

experience. Horner (1984, p. 6) quoting Beres lists seven ego-functions: (1) Relation to reality; (2) regulation and control of instinctual drives; (3) object relations; (4) thought processes; (5) defense functions; (6) autonomous functions; (7) synthetic function.

Horner concedes priority to the synthetic function as it is responsible for the assimilation, organization and integration of experiences that are carried out by the Ego. She then acknowledges the value of the work of Piaget in gaining an understanding of the processes or organization, and in demystifying some of the metapsychological concepts of Object Relations Theory. We follow her example here and briefly present Piaget's work as it bears on some of the major conceptualizations of Object Relations Theory, and on the early stages of development.

Intelligence, in Piaget's view comprises two interrelated processes: **organization** and **adaptation**. We organize our thoughts so that they make sense. We separate the more important ones from the less important, and we establish links between one thought and another. In learning about animals for instance, a child may organize them mentally in clusters, according to whether they are birds, animals or fishes. At the same time, people adapt their thinking to include new ideas, as experience provides further information. This adaptation occurs in two ways: through **assimilation** and **accommodation**. In the process of assimilation, information is simply added to the cognitive organization already there--in everyday life we interpret reality in the light of what we already know. In the process of accommodation, the organization has to adjust to a new idea--a child looking at a nature movie may

discover whales for the first time and has to rearrange his prior schema on mammals--there are some which look like, and live like, fish (Berger 1983, pp. 49-50). These cognitive processes are at work in the child from the earliest stages of development "during which the infant organises its experiences into patterns and then into patterns of patterns. Eventually meaning is ascribed to these patterns, which Piaget designates "schemas" (Horner, 1984, p. 10). There are three other processes connected with the schemas which are important. First there is the process of **generalization**, by which the schema becomes representative of a class of events or experience. Secondly through the process of **differentiation**, a global schema comes to be divided in several new ones. Thirdly, **integration**: as individual schemas develop, they begin to form more complete and interlocking relationships with other schemas. Two schemas may enjoy parallel development up to a certain point, and then integrate, to form a single "supraordinate" schema. Horner cites the example of the gradual integration of good and bad object representations into a single, ambivalently experienced representation (1984, p. 10).

Piaget's discussion of the Sensorimotor Developmental stage is helpful in enlarging the picture Mahler draws for us of the infant's development and will help us clarify her thinking at several points as we proceed. The Sensorimotor Development stage, is Piaget's first stage of cognitive development. It begins at birth and lasts until the child is two years. Unlike his parents, the child thinks exclusively with her senses and her motor skills. If she is given a rattle, a baby will

stare at it, suck it, shake it or bang in on the floor. One author describes it this way:

[The infant] exhibits a wholly practical, perceiving-and-doing, action-bound kind of intellectual functioning; he does not exhibit the more contemplative, reflective, symbol manipulating kind we usually think of in connection with cognition. (Flavell, as in Berger, 1983, p. 122)

Calling this stage the Sensorimotor stage is an acknowledgment of the fact that the child learns about her world, and expresses this learning, chiefly through her senses and motor skills. Piaget subdivides this stage into six stages, each characterized by a somewhat different way of understanding the world. We confine our remarks here to those aspects of Piaget's work that have direct bearing on Object Relations Theory. The following diagram illustrates Piaget's understanding of the Sensorimotor Stage.

The Six Stages of Sensorimotor Development

To get an overview of the stages of sensorimotor thought, it helps to group the six stages in pairs.

The first two involve the infant's own body.

- I. Birth to 1 month Reflexes--sucking, staring, listening.
- II. 1 to 4 months The first acquired adaptations--accommodation and coordination of reflexes--sucking a pacifier different from a nipple; grabbing a bottle to suck it.

The next two involve objects and people.

- III. 4 to 8 months Procedures for making interesting sights last--responding to people and objects
- IV. 8 to 12 months New adaptations and anticipation--becoming more deliberative and purposeful in responding to people and objects.

The last two are the most creative, first with action and then with ideas.

- V. 12 to 18 months New means through active experimentation--
experimentation and creativity in the actions of
"the little scientist"
- VI. 18 to 24 months New means through mental combinations--thinking
before doing provides the child with new ways of
achieving a goal without resorting to trial and
error experiments.
-

Stage Four--New Adaptations and Anticipations

The major intellectual achievement that marks the onset of stage four is the child's dawning understanding that objects continue to exist even if they cannot be perceived. This recognition is called **object permanence**, a phenomenon we shall return to later when we deal with object constancy. With the neonate, "out of sight is out of mind." If a three-month-old drops a toy, she will not look for it. It is as if it had completely disappeared from her consciousness. From approximately eight months on, babies begin to show evidence of realizing that just because a thing cannot be seen does not mean that it has ceased to exist for them. If they lose something, they search for it. Piaget designed a simple test for object permanence. He showed his daughter an interesting toy, then covered it up with a blanket. At seven months, she made no effort to search for it, once he hid it. At eight months, the story was completely different: she immediately searched for it and found it.

Between eight and twelve months, as infants become more knowledgeable about their environment, they also become more deliberate and purposeful in what they do with what they meet. Instead of merely applying one schema to a variety of objects, now they apply a variety. They suck a toy, for example, but then they will rattle it, shake it,

drop it, throw it and be very satisfied when they have used their whole repertoire.

Stage four babies can also anticipate events. If they enjoy splashing in water, they will squeal with delight when they hear the water turned on. If they see the mother putting on her coat, they may anticipate separation and begin to cry. Younger babies may spit out food that is not to their liking after they have taken it into their mouths. A year old will keep her lips firmly closed when she sees the dreaded porridge on the spoon.

Stage Five--New Means Through Active Experimentation

As the toddler begins to anticipate, she contributes to the onset of the next stage, which is a time of active exploration and experimentation, in which the child often seems hell-bent on discovering every possibility that may exist in her world. Because he noticed so much experimentation at this stage, Piaget called the stage-5 child "the little scientist." Once one possibility is discovered with an object, it is as if the toddler then went on to ask: "What else can I do with this?" Through trial and error experimentation, a toddler can discover that by pulling the table cloth the jar of cookies on the table comes within reach.

Stage Six--New Means Through Mental Combinations

At this point, toddlers begin to anticipate and solve simple problems by using mental combinations before they act. That is, before they do something, they can rehearse them before they do them. Thus the

child can invent new ways to achieve a goal without resorting to trial and error experiments.

The key to understanding the mental combinations a child makes is to appreciate the nature of **representations**--of the emerging ability to create mental images of things and actions that are not currently in view. Representation is a primitive form of symbolic thought. It also allows the child to reproduce behavior she has seen in the past. For example a quiet child sees her neighbor throw a tantrum, screaming and thrashing about. She has never manifested such behavior until the day after seeing it. Piaget named such behavior of acting out of a mental image, **deferred imitation**.

It is at this stage that a child develops the ability to pretend. Pretending involves not only deferred imitation (a child digs the soil with her toy spade in imitation of her mother) but also mental combinations, as an action from one context (riding a car) is mentally combined with another (pushing a toy car around a table).

At stage six, there is full object permanence. As we saw, at stage four, a child will search for a hidden object. As time passes, the child's search becomes more prolonged and earnest. But this child can still make a striking mistake. If a ball rolls under a chair, and the child sees it, she will follow it and retrieve it. But if the ball rolls away a second time, but this time under a couch, and is not found quickly, the stage four will look where it was previously found--under the chair.

A stage five baby will not make that mistake. As long as she sees the ball disappear, she will retrieve it. However, the stage five

child is unable to imagine "invisible" displacements, that is, places that she has not seen used as hiding places.

When a child arrives at stage six, she will look in the places she has seen used, in order to hide the object, but then she will turn to places she has not seen used. Her ability to use mental combinations, helps her imaging where the object might be, without having seen it hidden. At this point full object permanence is attained, according to Piaget.

We have followed Piaget to a stage that goes far beyond that with which Mahler deals in her Normal Autistic Stage, but it would be ungainly to try to split up the presentation of Piaget's work on the sensorimotor stage. The limitations of the nature of Piaget's work, from an Object Relations point of view should be noted. As Horner has it, Piaget is concerned to describe the "how" of organization. The central focus of Object Relations Theory is not really the "how," but the "what" that is being organized--the ego. We can put this in another perspective if we look at the functions of the ego that we listed earlier. We have dealt with the development of the synthetic and thinking functions, but with none of the others. We now turn to the second of Mahler's stages and see how further functions of the ego are said to evolve during the process of Symbiosis.

The Symbiotic Phase

As we have seen, Freud postulated that during the phase of primary narcissism, the infant exists in a world where all libido is cateched by the child's inner reality--there is no connection with external reality. In the history of Psychoanalysis (cf. Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983, pp. 281ff.), Hartmann is the figure who tentatively

begins to alter this understanding when he talks of the human organism being brought into contact with the environment, through adaptation to "the average expectable environment." Mahler fields this ball that Hartmann threw, and specifies what the "average expectable environment" is. It is the mother, who in response to the affecto-motor discharges of the infant, functions as "an auxiliary ego." The human infant, at birth, is at a severe disadvantage for two reasons: (1) she is physically immature and (2) in Freudian language, her instincts of self-preservation have decayed substantially. Mahler proposes that human beings are rescued from this predicament,

by the evolution of "species specific social symbiosis," which provides for the survival needs of the child. The neonates rudimentary ego is helpless against the world at large, but it is uniquely suited to deal with the environment as it is redefined by Mahler: it can illicit the aid of the mother who, in the capacity of the auxiliary ego, supplements the infant's abilities. (p. 283)

Mahler thus not only specifies what adaptation means, but spells out how adaptation occurs--through the establishment of a specific mode of object relationship with the mother, "the ordinary devoted mother," which she calls symbiosis. In passing, let us note that what is denoted by "mother" is an interpersonal reality. A person of either gender could, conceivably, fulfill that role.

There are two characteristics of symbiosis that are particularly important. If symbiosis is to occur, the mother must be willingly available to the infant, caring for him, for only then can the symbiotic object be created. Symbiosis is essentially a dyadic phenomenon, which ensures survival within a field of interpersonal relationships. Mahler's claim is that specific human objects and a relationship to them are essential to respond to the child's need for survival. Second,

Mahler's emphasis falls on the child's innate ability to adapt to the caring environment: "What impressed us . . . was the great extent to which it is the normal infant who actively takes on the task of adaptation in the mother-infant interaction. (Quoted by Mitchell & Greenberg, 1983, p. 284).

We pass now to a description of the symbiotic phase as Mahler conceptualizes it. Round the second month of life, the autistic envelope that has surrounded the neonate begins to dissolve and a new, more positive psychological membrane develops. The child experiences herself, not as a differentiated, experiencing self, but as a "dual unity" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 48). From this time, Mahler and her associates postulated that the infant has an increased "perceptual and affective investment" in external stimuli (which the observer sees as coming from outside) but that the infant does not recognize as having an external origin (the observer theorizes). This is the beginning of the normal symbiotic phase, during which the neonate behaves and functions as though she and her mother were an omnipotent system, a dual entity. They propose that within this dual unity, the infant experiences a boundless oceanic feeling, a sense of omnipotence and perfection, precisely because she is merged with the mother. Kohut called this experience "primary narcissism." Thus, the discriminating quality of this phase is the hallucinatory or delusional omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother, and in particular, the delusion of a common boundary joining the two. The average mother functions like a magnet for the child, pulling her from the tendency to regress to autism, to an increasing sensory awareness of the environment. There is

a movement of libidinal investment from inside the body (centered on those body-parts associated with urinating, vomiting, etc.) to the body-surface which permits tactile, visual, and auditory awareness.

Gradually, the child begins to differentiate between pleasure, and therefore good experiences, and experiences which are painful, and therefore bad. The child is oriented to distinguish between the good-pleasurable, and the bad-painful experiences of extra-uterine life. She is exposed to a rhythmic pattern of need, tension and hunger. Only an outside agency can satisfactorily answer these needs.

It is the repeated experience of a need satisfying, good outside source that eventually conveys a vague affective discrimination between the self and non-self. To the bad stimuli coming from outside or inside, the infant reacts with aggression and by ridding and ejective mechanisms. To the "good" stimuli coming from inside or outside, the baby reacts with bliss and reaching out. (St. Clair, 1986, p. 109)

Mahler proposes to account for a nascent sense of self by suggesting that the autonomous ego function of memory begins to play an important role in the child's life. Predominantly good memory islands become allocated to the self and predominantly bad memory segments get associated with the non-self. Mother is linked to both pleasure-giving and pain-inflicting qualities. Memory also plays its part in the evolution of an image of the child's own body, since sensations of pleasure and pain from within the body are also stored. Winnicott talks of this as "personalization." As memories of a parent touching and gently handling the baby are accumulated, the baby's person becomes grounded in its own body and the signs of this are good muscle tone and reflex coordination (cf. 1960, p. 19). This marks a movement from the

birth-situation, when the child's soma and psyche are not closely bound together.

When a reasonable degree of adaptation to the needs of the infant is provided, this gives the best possible chance for an early establishment of a firm relationship between psyche and soma. Where there is a failure of adaptation, so there is a tendency for the psyche to develop an existence that is only loosely related to bodily experience. (1958, p. 6.)

Let us return to Mahler: with the accumulation of memory traces of pleasurable (good) and unpleasurable (bad) instinctual and emotional experiences, images of the love object, of body image, and psychic self, begin to emerge. The ground is prepared for the emergence for a sense of a core self, around which a sense of identity--"that I am"--will form. We shall have more to say about this later on.

During this phase, no clear differentiation of "inner" and "outer," of self and non-self is possible. Mahler terms the level of object relations "preobjectal," but she stresses that it is thanks to the capacity to invest in, and connect with, the dual unity of child-mother, that further development in the ability to relate becomes possible. Moreover, during the symbiotic phase, the primal soil out of which all subsequent relationships will grow, is laid down. Mahler believes that the vestiges of this stage remain with us for life. Whether as toddler or adult, the representations of the symbiotic phase remain with us to lend power and confidence to life, through the feelings of being part of the omnipotent other. Helplessness is manageable, because one feels merged with someone who is able to provide (cf. Garanzini, 1988, pp. 81-82).

The symbiotic phase is a time when the infant thoroughly familiarizes herself with the mothering half of the symbiotic self, as

indicated by the unspecific, social smile. "The smile gradually becomes the specific (preferential) smiling response to the mother, which is the crucial sign that a specific bond between the infant and his mother has been established" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 52). Mahler acknowledges her dependence on the work of John Bowlby for this insight. Familiarization with his work on the vicissitudes of attachment and bonding that emerge as critical, at this point in a human being's life, will help us to add a balance to the emphasis placed on cognitive development by Jean Piaget.

Attachment Theory, as developed by Bowlby, conceptualizes the state of the mature person as being one in which the individual has built up "a representation model of himself as being both able to help himself and as worthy of being helped should difficulties arise" (Bowlby, 1976, p. 136). Erikson talks of such a person as showing "basic trust." Bowlby stresses the interpersonal nature of the neonates world. If the child is to grow up healthily, he needs caregivers who fulfill the crucial role of being responsive to the cues for care that the child gives, as and when he gives them, and who intervene judiciously when the child is heading for trouble. Bowlby singles out three patterns of behavior as prime examples of the kind of behaviors emitted by the child, which he calls attachment behavior. The child cries and calls, behavior which elicits care; he follows and clings; and he protests when he is left alone, or in the presence of strangers. He defines attachment behavior in this way:

[It is] . . . conceived as any form of behavior that results in a person attaining or retaining proximity to some other differentiated or preferred individual, who is usually conceived as stronger and/or wiser. (Bowlby, 1976, p. 129)

Such behavior is emitted most intensely and frequently during childhood, but does in fact perdure throughout the life cycle. Bowlby rejects any suggestion that such behavior has anything intrinsically childish or immature about it. Attachment theory emphasizes seven features of attachment behavior:

- a) Specificity. Attachment behavior is directed towards one or a few intended persons, usually in a hierarchical order of preference.
- b) Duration. An attachment is often life-long, though at different phases in the life cycle old attachments may be attenuated, or die, to be replaced by new ones. However, early attachments are abandoned only with great difficulty, and commonly persist.
- c) Engagement of emotion. The deepest and most significant human emotions are roused during the formation, maintenance, disruption and renewal of attachment relationships. People describe the formation of the attachment bond as falling in love, sustaining the bond as loving someone, and losing the object of the bond as grieving. When the threat of loss of the object arises there is anxiety, and its actual loss induces sorrow. In all of these situations anger is never far away. As long as the bond is firmly established a person feels a great sense of security and overflowing joy when an attachment is renewed.
- d) Ontogeny. The critical period for the development of affectional bonds is the first nine months of life. Newman and Newman, after their review of the pertinent literature, conclude

their answer to the question of whether there is a specific time, during infancy when the child develops a strong, well-differentiated liking for one person in this way:

We can say that the onset of a critical period for attachment must begin some time after about the age of 6 months of age. This does not mean that the first six months play no role in the establishment of a strong bond between the child and the caregiver. On the contrary, these early months provide the background experiences of consistency, warmth, and familiarity upon which the specific attachment is built. (Newman & Newman, 1987, p. 171)

The more frequent contact a child has with a particular person, the more likely that person is to become the attachment figure-- normally this will be the mother. Attachment behavior continues to be easily activated until the end of the third year. When a person has not successfully completed his or her developmental tasks up to that point, it becomes less readily activated after that.

- e) Learning. Conditioning may account for some part of the attachment process, but only for a small part. Attachment is still likely to develop despite repeated punishment from the attachment figure.
- f) Organization. In the initial stages of attachment, behavior is mediated through the reflexes and capacities with which the infant is endowed. From the latter part of the first year it is mediated by "increasingly sophisticated behavioral systems organised cybernetically and incorporating representational models of the environment and self" (Bowlby, 1976, p. 131). Certain conditions activate and terminate these systems, as for example, strangeness, hunger, or tiredness. Terminating

conditions would include such things as the reappearance of the mother and soothing interaction with her. In instances where there is a strong arousal of attachment behavior, it may not cease until the child is hugged and has had the opportunity for extended tactile contact and clinging. Once soothing has occurred the child becomes free to explore his environment.

- g) Bowlby suggests that the biological function served by attachment behavior is survival, especially protection from predators.

Before leaving Bowlby there is one other point that deserves a little more attention than the sentence we have devoted to it in (f) above. There we referred to the child exploring the environment, once soothing has taken place. Exploratory behavior is now recognized as being crucial in its own right. Because of it, a person is able to build up a coherent picture of the world into which she is inserted. It may even be vital for survival to have such information.

Children . . . are notoriously curious and inquiring, which commonly leads them to move away from their attachment figure. In this sense exploratory behavior is antithetical to attachment behavior. In healthy individuals the two kinds of behavior normally alternate. (Bowlby, 1976, p. 133)

Mahler's most significant contributions to object relations theory are precisely in this area of attachment and autonomy. She postulates that as internal tensions are felt to be reduced, thanks to safe anchorage in the symbiotic unity, and as pleasure in maturationally increasing sensory perception invites cathexis of external reality, the child is empowered to leave this ideal symbiotic state and to embark on

the next developmental task--that of differentiation and separation (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 53).

The Process of Separation and Individuation

After the achievement of symbiosis, there are two parallel tracks that the child embarks upon. One is the track of individuation, "the evolution of intrapsychic autonomy, perception, memory, cognition and reality testing" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 63). The second is the intrapsychic developmental track of separation "that runs along differentiation, distancing, boundary formation and disengagement from mother" (p. 63.)

These two processes of separation and individuation issue in the child's capacity to function separately, but yet in the presence, and with the support, of the mother. One of the challenges that the child needs to navigate, at this time, is that of separation anxiety, which arises as he takes distance for the first time, from mother. This phase will have reached a successful term when the child has achieved an awareness of the separateness of the self from others, which coincides with the emergence of a sense of self, of true object relationships and an awareness of external reality (St. Clair, 1986, p. 110).

The First Sub-Phase: Differentiation and the Development of Body Image. Also Called "Hatching"

The unfolding cognitive development of the child, as Piaget understands it, will have reached stage III, which he calls "procedures for making interesting sights last," when the child has reached four or five months, which in Mahler's terms, is the high period of symbiosis.

In the language of attachment theory, this is the time when the background experiences "of consistency, warmth and familiarity upon which specific attachment is built," are facilitated. Mahler, like Piaget notes how outward perceptual engagement is increasing, at this time, and how, when awake, the child is observed to have "a more permanently alert sensorium"--the perceptual conscious system (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 54).

Mahler estimates that at about six months, the child begins his first experiments in separation-individuation. She and her associates have noted how the infant begins pulling at the mother's hair, nose or ears, and putting food into her mouth; how he begins to arch his body away from her, so to gain a better perspective of her. He attempts to scan her and her environment. The contrast here is with the baby just molding her body to that of the mother.

There are definite signs that the baby begins to differentiate his own from his mother's body. Six to seven months is the peak of manual, tactile, and visual exploration of the mother's face, as well as of the covered and unclad parts of the mother's body; these are the weeks during which the infant discovers, with fascination, a brooch, a pair of eyeglasses or a pendant worn by the mother. (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 54)

A new characteristic of the child's behavior at this phase, emerges at the seventh to eighth month--what Mahler calls "the visual pattern of 'checking back to mother'" (Mahler, 1975, p. 55). She judges this to be "the most important regular sign of beginning somatopsychic differentiation." The baby seems to visually scan others and to compare mother with others, the familiar with the unfamiliar. In doing this, the child, in the first instance, seems to be familiarizing himself more thoroughly "with what is mother, what feels, tastes, smells, looks like,

or has the 'clang' of mother" (p. 56). His continuing explorations, begun in the earlier days of this phase continue, and deepen his appreciation of what does, or does not belong to mother's body.

Many psychoanalytic writers have commented on the "stranger anxiety" which begins to manifest itself at around eight months. While not denying it, Mahler would like to situate such behaviors in a wider context, one of wonderment and exploration--a context which Bowlby would appreciate.

Once the infant has become sufficiently individuated to recognise the mother's face . . . and once he familiarizes himself with the general mood and "feel" of his partner in the symbiotic dyad, he then turns with more or less wonderment and apprehension to a prolonged visual and tactile exploration and study of the faces and gestalt of others. He studies them from afar or at close range. He appears to be comparing and checking the features of the stranger's face with his mother's face, as well as whatever inner image he may have of his mother (not necessarily or even predominantly visual). He also seems to check back to his mother's gestalt, particularly to her face, in relation to other interesting, new experiences. (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 57)

The child who has a strong ability to approach a widening world, is the one for whom the symbiotic phase has been optimal, and who has emerged from it with "confident expectation": his experience of life is such that he can rely on reality to respond to his needs. In the hatching phase this "confident expectation" encourages curiosity and wonderment in the child, which manifest themselves in the "checking back" pattern. To the degree that the development of basic trust has been inhibited, stranger anxiety is likely to be present.

Hatching, or the emergence of the child from inward directed attention to outward-directed attention and alertness, can be seriously interfered with in many ways. Hatching may be delayed or premature. Mahler cites the case of Peter, a boy whose symbiotic experience was

intense, but unsatisfactory. He moved early to the phase of differentiation, extricating himself from the uncomfortable symbiosis. He manifested severe levels of stranger anxiety, and later this pattern of anxiety would reoccur whenever Peter was under stress. Mahler comments:

It seems as if the unsatisfactory symbiotic phase had prevented Peter from accumulating a sufficient reservoir of basic trust, of that normal narcissism, which provides the solid base from which to reach out confidently into the "other-than-mother" world. (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 59)

Mahler also describes the case of a little boy who did not get sufficient emotional supplies from his mother, because of her depressed condition. His specific smiling response to her came late. He was late in using his visual modality, to keep distance-perceptual contact. He apparently "prolonged the period of symbiosis as if to give himself and his mother time to catch up" (p. 59). In another case, where the child's mother was symbiotically too enveloping, the child learned to push her away, and was more comfortable in the arms of other people. There are thus a wide range of factors that can disturb the hatching process, and among them Mahler ranks indifference, depression, unpredictability, as well as too intense or intrusive mother, as being of special significance.

Object and Self-Representations

We have referred in the foregoing pages, among other things, to the child's delusional omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother, to how his representation of himself is a source of comfort and valuation. We have spoken of how a sense of self begins to emerge as memory traces are established. At this point we need to inquire into

the nature and function of these representations.

As we saw when we dealt with Piaget, the eighteen-month-old child reaches the stage of object permanency, and has the capacity to retain mental images of things and actions not currently in view. Thanks to this ability, the child can engage in such symbolic activities as deferred imitation and pretend play. Piaget is of course concerned with establishing the objectivity of perceived objects "out there." His use contrasts with that of clinicians like Anna Freud, for example, who talks, not of object permanency but object constancy and who is quoted by Selma Fraiberg as saying:

What we mean by object constancy is the child's capacity to keep up object cathexis irrespective of frustration or satisfaction. At the time before object constancy the child withdraws cathexis from the unsatisfactory . . . object. . . . After object constancy has been established the person representing the object keeps his place for the child whether he satisfies or frustrates. (1969, p. 14)

Object Relations Theorists would not talk of the cathexis of libidinal drives, but their concerns too, would be different from those of Piaget. His concern is not with what psychoanalysts call the libidinal investment in objects, or the nature of the attachment bonds between a child and her caretakers, or the mothering dyad. From within the psychoanalytic tradition, Rene Spitz, who used the criterion of stranger anxiety, spoke of the child having achieved object constancy, at eight months. His rationale for this is that stranger anxiety implies the capacity to evoke the image of the mother in her absence. Others, Negara, for instance, spoke of the attainment of object constancy as being a gradual process which starts at three or four months and reaches its full development at eighteen months. For her part, Mahler envisages the attainment of object constancy at around twenty-four months.

Selma Fraiberg illustrates how the term object constancy acquired different meanings, and explains why different authors suggest widely varying ages for the attainment of object constancy.

The writers who ascribe object constancy to the middle of the first year, are using "constancy" only in the sense of attachment to the love object. The writers who give a range from eight to eighteen months are adding some form of mental representation to the criteria for libinal cathexis of the object; those who place object constancy at eighteen months appear to be following Piaget's criteria for mental representation and object concept. [Mahler] . . . who placed object constancy at twenty-four months was using a still more restrictive criteria, in which mental representation of the mother had attained a high level of stability. (1969, p. 19)

Fraiberg goes on to suggest that some of the ambiguities evaporate if we distinguish between "recognition memory" and evocative memory," following the example of Piaget.

Thus a memory trace or a mental image of the mother does not in itself imply the capacity to evoke the image of the mother independently of the presenting stimulus of her face or voice. Recognition can take place when the person or thing perceived has the characteristics or signs which revive mnemonic traces laid down through previous experience. The test for evocative memory is the demonstrated capacity to evoke the image without the presenting stimulus. (1969, p. 22)

A simple example from everyday experience illustrates the difference between these two types of memory. If one thinks back to one's undergraduate class of three hundred students, one might be able to image the face of twenty of them. Should one meet one of the other two hundred and eighty in an airport, one might recognize her face immediately. This means that the presentation of the forgotten face revived the image stored in memory; the face acted as a sign, the image was "compared by means of this sign, and recognition occurred." This matching of images by means of signs, is what Fraiberg intends by "recognition memory." She reserves "evocative memory" for those

instances like the first one mentioned above, where the image can be produced without the mediation of signs.

The question now is: "At what age can the child use evocative memory?" Is it at around six months, when the baby smiles preferentially for the mother? Is it during the eight to twelve month period when manifestations of stranger anxiety are at their highest levels? Fraiberg suggests that it is not necessary to claim that evocative memory is already developed at this stage. When the eight-month-old child demonstrates stranger anxiety, he certainly displays the ability to make perceptual discriminations between the familiar and unfamiliar, but "the act of recognition may only tell us that recognition memory has progressed to a certain level of complexity" (Fraiberg, 1969, p. 23). Mahler's explanation for stranger anxiety, as we have seen, is that the "confident expectation" which should be awakened in the symbiotic phase, has failed to occur. From Fraiberg's viewpoint, what stranger anxiety indicates is that the mental image of the mother is unstable, and still dependent on affirmation derived from visual perception.

Recognition memory stabilizes itself through repetition. The appearance in the perceptual field of the mother's face elicits the joy of recognition. . . . In this transitional period for the baby, when mental operations begin to take into account the objective attributes of persons and things, we may suppose a kind of "expectation" in the baby that people and things in his world should have resonance in memory. At the eight month level of cognitive development, is it possible that the face that cannot be affirmed, "placed" through memory, is momentarily disruptive to the child's sense of the "real," that expectations are not confirmed. (1969, p. 24)

Fraiberg's contention is that the unfulfillment of the child's "expectation" of a familiar face does not require us to suppose the

intervention of evocative memory. If evocative memory were indeed at work, then the evoked image of the mother would soothe the child, and eliminate the anxiety. While Fraiberg is willing to admit that the image of the mother, provided by evocative memory is available to an infant sooner than an evoked image of a thing--since libidinal investment is much greater in the mother--she is not prepared to argue that the time lapse between the occurrence of an evoked person-memory, and that of a thing-memory is great.

Fraiberg's reflections, and the use she makes of Piaget's work, have helped us, I suggest, to understand those "representations," in the psychoanalytic meaning of the word, which are formed at the later stages of infant development.

Now let us consider the following vignettes taken from chapter four of Ana-Marie Rizzuto's 1979 work, The Birth of the Living God.

A Visceral Memory

A 26-year-old woman comes to Rizzuto's clinic. Her breathing is fast and shallow. Her mouth is wide open, her eyes bulging. She talks of her mother who has told her that she and her father will be cremated. In the telling of this story she recalls having had pneumonia when she was seven. She remembers no one held her, and the longing she had for human touch. Her mother had not touched her, even when she was in an oxygen tent, though she could remember her mother's concern for her on that occasion--the only childhood memory she had of such care or closeness with mother. The patient was hesitant about seeing the therapist, because of her wish (the patient) for closeness with her.

Rizzuto called attention to the pattern of the patient's breathing--it was as if she had pneumonia.

The wish for closeness, the representation of the mother as caring and the feeling of having been "touched in the lungs" by her mother during her illness, became a compound object relation in connection with me as the caring therapist. (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 58)

A Sensorimotor Memory

As Rizzuto rose from her chair to welcome her next client, she was struck by his unusual posture. His knees were bent, his hips were flexed forward, his back and shoulders hunched, his head bent and slightly turned away from her. He squinted at her from the corner of his eye, and began to tell his story of how his wife was uncaring and bad for him, how she refused him sex. He admitted to an extramarital affair. Then he remembered his mother, and how she used to get mad at him, yell at him, and hit him. His fantasy was, at that moment, that the therapist would hit him.

The patient was not aware of his posture, when he entered the room, but he was aware of having acted out. The memory of his mother hitting him became conscious; it had been already present in his posture when he entered the room. I call this a sensorimotor representation of the object. (1979, p. 58)

An Auditory Memory

A female client has great difficulty in talking during sessions. At last she blurts out that she cannot talk. She feels as if her mother is in the room repeating an order she gave to her child repeated: "Never tell anyone about us. Don't betray your family." Breaking this taboo caused this woman great guilt.

An Iconic Memory

This anorexic patient feels that her mother's presence invades every space she enters, although the mother lives on the other side of the world. The woman feels that only her mother's death will set her free. She fantasizes splitting her mother with an axe. But the mother will not go away, she clings to the daughter. She fantasizes hitting her a second time. She became convinced that only the actual demise of her mother would bring her freedom. "The visual--nonhallucinatory--presence of the mother was the object representation that made this patient's life quite unbearable" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 59).

A Conceptual Memory

A 27-year-old patient repeatedly insisted that she was shameful, because she was not as "sophisticated" as her mother. In the eyes of this woman, her mother was a cosmopolitan, poised proper woman of the world. The word "sophisticated" captured for her all that her mother was. In fact this was a word that the mother used as a self-description, and used too, in her instructions to the patient. Every time the patient felt "unsophisticated," she felt shame for not being like her mother.

As a child develops, her interactions with the significant others in her life are codified, and then throughout the life cycle are retrieved, as representations, "in which multiple, and even contradictory aspects of the object are simultaneously included" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 57). We have just seen five levels which may contribute to the content and tone of a representation. The

representation may involve physical sensation, either the remembrance of past sensations, or their actual physical enactment in the body of the person--visceral and sensorimotor memories. The object representation may also take the form of a sense of presence, visual or auditory that is not hallucinated, but experiences as real--perceptual or iconic. Finally, the object representation may operate at a certain level of abstraction and secondary process elaboration, and survive in the association of certain sentiments and sensations evoked by certain ideas and words.

In her review of psychoanalytic literature, Rizzuto briefly refers to the work of Sandler and Rosenblatt (The Representational World of the Child, 1962), where they underline the active role of the child in creating the internal world of representations. She approves of their view that this "means that in order to know what is 'outside,' the child has to create a representation of that 'outside' as part of his representational world" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 68). In their account, a representation is an "existence," more or less enduring, an organization or schema, which is constructed out of a multitude of impressions. "On the basis of these, [the child] gradually creates a whole range of mother images, all of which bear the label 'mother'" (quoted by Rizzuto, p. 68). To understand what is meant by saying that the child actively contributes to the creation of a representation of the external world it is helpful to recall what Winnicott says about the third function of the good enough mothering, that we referred to earlier in this chapter. There we saw that the mother has to be "object-presenting, or realizing," that is, she presents to the child, what the child needs, at

the right time, and thus initiates his or her capacity to relate to external objects. For example, the mother has a breast with milk, and she would like the infant to nurse at her breast. The mother needs to shape how the infant deals with this external object. There needs to be the illusion that the child can either experience the breast as its own hallucination or as a thing belonging to external reality. The infant needs to come to the nipple excited and ready, so that when the actual nipple appears, it is the nipple that the infant has hallucinated. And so the infant begins to build up the capacity to conjure up what is actually available. The mother needs to continue providing this type of experience, where the child seems to create the object, and actively participates in his or her own instinctual satisfactions, rather than having them imposed from without. Winnicott wrote:

Each infant must recreate the world, but this is possible only if, bit by bit the world arrives at the moments of the infant's creative activity. The infant reaches out, and the breast is there, and the breast is created. The success of this operation depends on the sensitive adaptation the mother is making to her infant's needs, especially at the beginning. From this there is a natural progression to the individual infant's creation of the whole world of external reality. (1958, p. 12)

Rizzuto's quotation of Sandler and Rosenblatt supports what Winnicott emphasizes. They note three aspects of the "representational": " (i) the child (his ego indeed) constructs or creates the representation; (ii) he does this in an active way and (iii) he does it to organise his world in a meaningful way" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 132). Then they say

The representations which the child constructs enable him to perceive sensations arising from various sources, to organise and structure them in a meaningful way., We know that perception is an active process, by means of which the ego transforms raw sensory data into meaningful percepts. From this it follows that the child

creates, within its perceptual or representational world, images of his internal as well as his external environment. (1979, p. 132)

In an article written in 1970, by Beres and Joseph, entitled The Concept of Mental Representation in Psychoanalysis, the authors point out the failure of many writers to consider the unconscious components of representations. To take account of both the conscious and unconscious elements, Beres and Joseph propose a working definition of the representation as "a postulated, unconscious psychic organization capable of evocation in consciousness as a symbol, image, fantasy, thought or actions" (quoted by Rizzuto, 1979, p. 71). Rizzuto is critical of the attempt by these authors to differentiate representation from memory, when they point out that perceptual experience is changed by the human capacity to transform the perception of a stimulus into a more complex mental representation. In itself, such an observation is true. But, says Rizzuto, all that amounts to saying is that animal and human memory are different. The latter never deals with facts as facts, but with the meaning of facts, and when it does so, it "transforms a memory into a memory with intrapsychic and interpersonal meaning that is a representation" (p. 71).

We might summarize Rizzuto as saying that object representations are the actual perceptual memories, of the original interpersonal experience, at whatever level of cognitive development they occurred. But, as yet, we have made no reference to the ways in which the defensive and adaptive distortions of that perception, which were historically needed at the time the memory was registered, or which are active dynamic factors in the present. Rizzuto quotes Jacobson on this (from The Self and the Object World, 1964, p. 21):

The cutting out of a considerable sector of unpleasurable memories by infantile repression eliminates a large amount of unacceptable aspects of both the self and the outside world. The defects caused by the work of repression, may be filled in by screen elements, by distortions and embellishments, produced by elaborate maneuvers of the ego's defence system. (Quoted by Rizzuto, 1979, p. 69)

All defensive maneuvers prevent the maturation of self-awareness and an awareness of the historical process through which we have come. Where there is massive repression of objects and their corresponding self-representations, then, says Rizzuto "the individual may experience loneliness, emptiness, a fear of losing oneself, a feeling of being abandoned, or when it is expressed in bodily metaphors, of having a hole where objects supposedly belong" (p. 81).

I appreciate McDargh's concrete illustration of how an individual's object representations of his parents might have been formed under the influence of the defensive need to idealize one and devalue the second. In the historical present, as long as the need for the idealization and devaluation continues, such an object representation would persist. But supposing, says McDargh, that such a defensive need diminished with time, either because the person's relationship to the parents has improved, or because of maturational factors, where the sense of self does not depend on such distortions--what then? There may be a reconstruction of the representation of the parents, which may well resemble their actual characters, in a more realistic fashion.

This transformation of object representations is another factor to which Rizzuto calls attention. She refers to an article by Kestenbergs--which is marked, in its vocabulary, by the psychobiological

strain in the Freudian heritage--From Organ-Object Imagery to Self and Object Representation (1971, pp. 76-77):

Each developmental phase is distinguished by a heightened cathexis of a dominant organ by a zone specific pleasure and a phase specific contact with the drive object from which a united organ-image emerges. At the end of each phase, new shapes of self and object representation differentiate from the global imagery of a united organ-object. . . . Through successive phases of separation-individuation the child forms self and object representations from the images of his own and his mother's satisfying bodies.

Kestenberg's reference, not only to object representation, but to self-representation affords the opportunity to turn specifically to the relationship between these two inseparable aspects of representational activity. The formation of self-representations is always concurrent with the formation of an object relationship. In other words, we form memories, not only of significant others in our life, but also of how we felt, sense ourselves to be, as we engaged another person in a relationship. At this point, Rizzuto turns to the work of Kernberg, for whom the prototypic internalized object relation is that with the mother. This internalized relation is unit with three parts (1) an image of the object in the environment, (2) an image of the self in interaction with the object and (3) a feeling that colors the object image, under the influence of whatever drive was present at the time of the interaction (St. Clair, 1986, p. 127). Without getting into an expose of Kernberg's theory, I just remark that the process of the formation of self and object representations takes place in the service of the child beginning to make the discrimination between self and other. Throughout the life cycle, self and object relations are in continual dynamic interaction. Growth experiences, which result in changes in the one, will introduce a sense of incongruence and conflict

that induces the modification or reelaboration of the other. The pattern of change-conflict-change lies at the heart of the process of the maintenance of the self. As Rizzuto expresses this insight,

The richness, the complexity, the dialectical connection which object representations have with our self-representations, is what gives the constantly reworked memories their paramount importance in mental life (1979, p. 78)

The Practicing Subphase

Mahler defines this period as the time when toddlers invest much of their libido in their own autonomous functions, and in expanding reality testing. Three developmental events occur which contribute to the child's awareness of being separate. There is (1) rapid body differentiation from the mother; (2) the establishment of the specific affectional bond; (3) and the rapid development of the autonomous ego functions while in proximity to mother (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 65).

It is these developments which pave the way for the interest in reality, personified in the mother, to spill over into interest in a still wider world. Mahler distinguishes two distinct periods in this subphase: early and late practicing. The early period overlaps the hatching phase. Practicing, the child's ability to move physically away from mother, is exemplified, in the early period, by crawling and standing up, but while holding on. As the child wanders from mother, Mahler notices how absorbed she seemed, how oblivious of the mother's presence. But accompanying this movement away from the mother, the observers also noticed how the child would return periodically to reestablish contact with the parent. Mahler reports Furur as calling this "emotional refueling" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 69). In

reestablishing contact, Mahler notes how the wilting infant "perks up" and immediately afterwards sallies forth, once more, to explore. Some mothers and their children, who value independent functioning, like to refuel at a distance. Such children are reassured if they can just look and see the mother or hear her voice (p. 67).

The condition necessary for the successful emergence of the early practicing period seems to be the acquisition of the "confident expectation," during the symbiotic stage, that mothers will be available to relieve distress and emotional closeness--when the child needs it, and not merely when mother is ready to be available or because such availability answers her needs. When mother is available in an optimal way, the condition is present wherein the child can "separate out and differentiate the self-representation from the previously fused selfobject representation: (St. Clair, 1986, p. 111). Selfobject is Kohut's term for the object representation formed during the symbiotic, "dual unity," phase. During the practicing phase the child's self-representation is not yet firmly established and integrated as a whole representation. The ability to crawl, and then the facility for upright locomotion, play a crucial role in the development of a clear psychic representation of the self.

Once he can walk upright (a stable capacity at eighteen months), a point which marks the beginning of the later period of the practicing phase, the child begins "his love affair with the world," and takes his greatest step in human individuation. From his new bipedal position, he has a new vantage point on the world, which brings unspeakable pleasures --and equally as powerful frustrations (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 71).

Characteristic of children during this period is the narcissistic investment in their own functioning, in exploring the world and their obliviousness to danger and falling. They delight in escaping from fusion and engulfment with mother. Running away, but then to be swooped up, seems to be the toddler's way of working out autonomy and a way to get reassurance that the mother is still available (p. 71). Toddlers at this period are at the peak of their belief in their own omnipotence, which is derived from their sense of sharing in the mother's magical powers (St. Clair, 1986, p. 112). The child lives out of grandiose, idealized, sense of self. Still possessed of a maternal selfobject, the child is exhilarated by her developing autonomous functions, which permit her to believe in the magic of her own powers.

"No" is a word readily on the lips of the toddler. This is the behavioral accompaniment to the process of distancing from the child-mother symbiosis. The child seems to fear reengulfment, just when the process of differentiation has begun. A special word about mothers seems in order. Late in their study Mahler and associates noticed that it is the rule rather than the exception that the child's first, unaided steps are in a direction away from the mother, rather than toward her, or she takes them while the mother is absent. This only underlines the crucial role of the mother in helping the normal child to feel encouraged and to gradually relinquish symbiotic omnipotence and to delight in a more interpersonal form of functioning. This period is especially significant for those who have had an intense form of symbiosis. There are classic traps in which mothers may fall. Some get nostalgic for the symbiotic days, and become intrusive in the child's

life. Others are relieved that the child can function on his own, and behave towards him, as if he were already grown up. This makes it difficult for the child to grow apart and, not surprisingly, he will often demand closeness. Other mothers fail their "fledgling" because they find it difficult to balance being supportive and merely watching from a distance.

Transitional Objects

Some of D. W. Winnicott's contributions have already helped us in trying to understand how to conceptualize the structuring of experience, in an object relations mode. There is a further aspect of his work that deserves our appreciation--his understanding of the nature and role of transitional objects.

The classic exposition of Winnicott's thoughts on this matter, is found in his article Transitional Objects and Traditional Phenomena, a Study of the First Not-Me Possession. In this article, Winnicott is concerned to draw attention to what he calls a "third part of the life of a human being," an intermediate area of experiencing, to which both inner reality and outer life both contribute" (1951, p. 4). The transition from the hallucinatory omnipotence of the child's fantasy life, to the recognition and acceptance of objective reality--a transition for which good enough mothering is a sine qua non--is eased by the transitional object, the child's first "not-me possession." Whether it is the soft and shapeless blanket that is cathected around six months or the stuffed cuddly animal adopted during the second year of life, the transitional object occupies "the intermediate area between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived" (p. 4).

The transitional object and the transitional phenomena start each human being off with what will always be important for them, i.e., a neutral area of experience which will not be challenged. Of the transitional object it can be said that it is a matter of agreement between us and the baby that we will never ask the question "Did you conceive of this or was it presented to you from without?" The important point is that on this point no decision is expected. (p. 12)

Thus the child is accorded certain rights over the self-chosen object, and no one shall raise questions about its source or nature. In this way, the transitional object is preserved relatively free of disillusionment, and it affords relief from the strain of bringing together the inner and outer worlds. In this capacity, Winnicott affirms "The transitional object stands for the breast, or the object of the first relationship" (p. 11). Evidence for this interpretation says Wulff, is found in the blanket's being typically brought to the mouth at bedtime, or in moments of crisis (1991, p. 338). Although widely assumed to be symbolic of the mother and her nurturing, the transitional object gains an autonomy of its own. Should it be mislaid, even the mother may be unable to console her offspring.

Winnicott assures us that no one completes once and for all the difficult transition from "primary creativity" or hallucinatory omnipotence, to full reality acceptance. Hence every person stands in need of an intermediate area of experience, of illusion and transitional phenomena, which are present in the whole of human culture, but which are particularly prevalent in art and religion. As long as we are not over insistent that others accept our "illusory experience," as being objectively real, we are free to enjoy it, and even gather with others to share and deepen such experiences. However if an adult "make(s) claims on us for our acceptance of the objectivity of his subjective

phenomena, we discern or diagnose madness" (1951, p. 13).

Mahler has occasion to make use of the concept of transitional objects in her description of her third subphase, the consideration of which, we now turn.

The Rapprochement Phase

Mahler calls the ability for upright, free locomotion, and the attainment of the beginnings of representational intelligence the midwives of the child's psychological birth. By the middle of the second half of the second year these are in place. The maturity they bring enables the child to recognize both her separateness from the mother, as well as her inability to function without her. Because the infant no longer feels omnipotent, but on the contrary dependent, she turns back to the mother. Mahler and her associates witnessed an increased level of separation anxiety, which they interpreted as fear of object loss, and which was manifested in many types of behavior, but especially in restlessness and hyperactivity--a defensive activity to ward off the painful effects of sadness that separation entails. They showed a concern with the mother's whereabouts and active-approach behavior toward her. Children at this stage constantly "shadowed" the mother--incessantly watched her and followed her, and also "darted" from her, with the expectation of being chased and swept into her arms--symptoms, says Mahler, of the child's wish for reunion with the mother, but also of a fear of reengulfment. On the one hand the toddler is sensitive to disapproval of the mother, but on the other hand, shows increased aggression, by her incessant "No." By fifteen months, the toddler has discovered that the world is not his "oyster," that he is

relatively helpless and unable to command assistance, just by feeling the need for it. Thus he has an increased need to seek the closeness with his mother, which, during the practicing subphase, he held in abeyance.

From their intense observational study of nine toddlers, Mahler and her associates found that the rapprochement subphase could be divided into three periods: (1) the beginning rapprochement period; (2) the rapprochement crisis; and (3) the individual solutions of this crisis (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 89).

Beginning Rapprochement

Up to about fifteen months, the child returns to mother for refueling, but does not seem to recognize her as a separate person. Now it is different. The toddler seems to want to share everything with her. She continually brings things to the mother, and puts them on her lap. The emotionally important issue seems to be the child's need to share with the mother, she wants the mother to enjoy her discoveries with her. Along with the dawning awareness of separateness, comes the realization that mother's wishes are not always identical with her own. This is a major blow to the child's sense of grandeur and omnipotence--gone is the symbiotic sense of unity. The shock of this dampens the child's preoccupation with locomotion, and her greatest source of pleasure now becomes social interaction, especially with other children, but with adults who may enter her world. This is the time too, when the child's desire for extended autonomy finds expression in a reaching out to include father. He is a figure who has not been quite outside the

symbiotic dual unity, but never fully a part of it either (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 91).

Early rapprochement culminates at around seventeen to eighteen months, with what Mahler calls "a temporary consolidation and acceptance of separateness" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 93). This goes along with great pleasure in sharing possessions and activities, not only with mother but with father, other adults and younger or older children. However, the increasing frequency of temper tantrums, signs of helplessness, of impotent rage, greater vulnerability, and bouts of stranger "shyness," are all harbingers of difficulties yet to come in the individuation process.

The Rapprochement Crisis

At around eighteen months, there is the onset of the rapprochement crisis, a phrase Mahler uses to describe the conflicts the child experiences in trying to work out her increased need for mother, at the same time as she asserts her autonomy, by refusing to acknowledge the need for external help. This may last until the child's second birthday.

In more cases than not, the prevalent mood changed to that of dissatisfaction, insatiability, a proneness to rapid swings of mood, and to temper tantrums. The period was thus characterized by the rapidly alternating desire to push mother away and to cling to her-- a behavior sequence described most accurately by the word "ambitendency." (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 95)

The observers noted how at this stage the child uses the mother as an extension of self--a process which diminished the pain of separation. The child uses, for example, the mother's hand as a tool for picking up an object. A strange phenomenon also appeared: the

child's anxiety that the mother had left, when she was all the time sitting in her chair--a precursor, Mahler says, to projection of negative feelings, and an indication of the stress of having to function separately.

The range of affect experienced by the toddler seems to widen. The variety of the children's behavior, during observation, suggests the presence of sadness, anger, disappointment with mother, and frustration at one's helplessness. Children in this period were noticed, for the first time, fighting their tears, and suppressing the need to cry. Children develop an early form of the capacity to identify with others and to empathize with them.

Teddy . . . could not bear to see another child cry. This seemed to stimulate his aggressive defensiveness; unprovoked he would attack other children. His undeniable awareness of separateness . . . seemed to have given rise to a capacity for empathy which was expressed in positive ways. . . . For example he would bring his bottle to Mark, when Mark was crying. We saw, at this stage many signs of identification with the attitudes of others, especially those of mother and father. (Mahler et al., 1975, pp. 97-98)

The great danger for children at this period, who have a disturbed relationship with mother, is that of "splitting." Mahler illustrates what she means by citing at length (1975, pp. 82-84) the case of one of their subjects, a verbally precocious little girl. When left with one of the observers in her mother's absence, the observer became "the bad mother." She could do nothing right. A mood of crankiness descended upon her. She craved for the "good mother" who seemed to exist only in fantasy. On the mother's return there was no greeting, no delight in seeing her, just a grumpy "what did you bring me?" followed by a series of angry, disappointed, and negative reactions. Sometimes, the observer was treated as the "good symbiotic

mother" and the toddler would sit on her lap and eat cookies, like an infant. On the mother's return there might be an impulse to run to her and at the same time, another to withdraw, rejecting the mother's overtures, as if to spare herself further disappointments. In the latter instances, it would seem that the absent mother had become the "bad" mother, and thus was avoided.

Another mechanism observed for dealing with separation was that of the use of transitional objects. One little girl for instance, transferred the demand for exclusive possession of mother to mother's chair (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 100). The repertoire of coping mechanisms also included symbolic play, through which they betrayed their identification with mother or father, in the way they held on to the teddy or the doll; and internalization of the object representation (p. 92).

The Individual Patterning of Rapprochement

By twenty-one months the toddler is able to find an optimal distance from mother, which enables her to function at her best. Three factors make growing individuation possible: (1) the development of language; (2) the internalization process, inferred from acts of identification with the "good" father and mother and from the internalization of rules and demands (the beginning superego); and (3) progress in the ability to express wishes and fantasies through symbolic play. Mahler's observation of the children at this period led her to believe that it is very difficult to group toddlers in accordance with the kind of general criteria they had been using up till now. Each

child's progress was very distinct, "different from one child to the next: (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 102)

By the children's twenty-third month, it seemed that the ability to cope with separateness, as well as physical separation, was dependent in each case, on the history of the mother-child relationship, as well as on its present state. . . . We found it hard to pinpoint just what it was in the individual cases that produced more anxiety in some and an ability to cope in others. Each child, had by this time, developed his own characteristic way of coping. (Mahler, p. 103)

She also reports that boys seem to develop with less difficulty than girls, the crucial factor being the realization of sex differences (pp. 102-3).

A key factor in the child's development at this subphase is the attitude of the mother toward the toddler (cf. St. Clair, 1986, p. 115 for the following). Some mothers are unable to accept the child's demandingness. On the other hand, others are unable to face the child's gradual separateness. Anxious because of their own symbiotic and parasitic needs, a third group hover over, and shadow the child. In response to this, the toddler is likely to become more determined in his drive toward separateness.

Maternal unavailability can make practicing and exploratory activities brief and subdued. A child who is concerned with mother's availability, is unable to invest energy in his or her environment, in the development of other important skills, and often returns to her in an effort to engage her. The child may even become insistent and desperate in attempts to woo her. This depletes energy from the ego, and the child may revert to earlier splitting mechanisms. Two forms of serious pathology have their roots in the developmental arrests of this period (cf. Garanzani, 1988, pp. 86-87). In narcissistic disorders,

while separation and a sense of a cohesive self have been attained, autonomy has not. Thus, others are needed to shore up self-esteem, due to a growing, and all pervasive, fear of an ability to survive outside of the symbiotic pattern. Making demands, and refusing to accept limits, become part of the relational style of such persons, especially when it comes to important caretakers. Borderline disorders are typical of those who have not been able to rely on transitional objects as aids for separating from, or internalizing the mother. Such persons have not achieved a cohesive self, and so are unable to differentiate a self from important others. In the case of borderline parents, they find it almost impossible to differentiate themselves from their children. The loss of the object results in a dangerous threat to the regulation of self-esteem, and threatens the very organization of the personality.

Both borderline and narcissistically wounded people try to assert control over their milieu (especially over people) in order to maintain a vulnerable self-esteem. When these people have a family of their own, the children are pawns of parental psychopathology. One therapist, S. Slipp, quoted by Garanzani says

Lacking internal tension-relieving mechanisms for sustaining narcissistic equilibrium in their psychic structures, they remain excessively sensitive to environmental self-objects to relieve tension and modulate self-esteem. (1988, p. 86)

Success or failure then, in negotiating separation from the mother at this subphase has a crucial impact on the success or failure of later attachments and separations, because it determines the relative ease of difficulty in handling anxiety in relationships.

Emotional Object Constancy and Individuality

This fourth subphase of the separation-individuation period, occupies mainly the third year of life, without a distinct ending point. There are two main tasks which have to be accomplished in this phase: (1) the attainment of some degree of object constancy and (2) the consolidation of individuality.

We have already discussed the achievement of object constancy at length. Mahler sees object constancy as quite a late achievement-- "according to our conceptualization it does not seem to occur before the third year" (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 110). We have seen how, once object constancy has been achieved, a child is able to function separately, despite moderate degrees of tension and longing. Mahler sees the conditions necessary for object constancy are many. She includes object permanence, in the Piagetian sense, as a necessary but not sufficient, prerequisite for object constancy. Chief among the other conditions is the unification of the "good" and "bad" part object representations into one whole representation. "This fosters the fusion of the aggressive drives and tempers the hatred for the object when aggression is intense" (p. 110). As we saw with Anna Freud, so also with Mahler: in the state of object constancy, the love object will not be rejected or exchanged for another, even if it proves to be unsatisfactory; even with frustration, the object is still sought after, and not rejected or hated as unsatisfactory just because it is absent.

The second task of this fourth subphase is the consolidation of individuality. The unfolding of such complex cognitive functions such as verbal communications, fantasy and reality testing, witness to the

child's self-identity formation. An important part of the process of working towards her own individuality consists in the struggle with aggression. In those situations where the selfobject of the symbiotic phase was experienced as "good," but where the caregiver was experienced as unpredictable or intrusive, then there is a strong possibility that the object becomes "bad." The effort to "eject" this bad object focuses aggression, and there is a strong inclination to confuse the selfobject with the bad introject. Aggression may become so powerful that it sweeps away the "good" object and with it the good self-representation. The signs of this are intense temper tantrums, and efforts to force caregivers to function as auxiliary egos.

We have almost reached the term of this effort to understand, using the conceptualizations of Object Relations Theory, how human experience is structured. In order to highlight the most important aspects of the terrain we have crossed, I suggest that we try to work out a tentative definition of The Self.

Object Relations and the Quest for Meaning

At the conclusion of this chapter, we are in a position to answer the questions with which we started. The heart of the contribution that Object Relations Theorist make to our understanding of the psychological basis for meaning, lies in the Freudian insight that

the nature and quality of the human child's relation to people . . . have been laid down in the first six years of life. . . . All [one's] later choices of friendship and love follow upon the basis of the memory traces left behind by these first prototypes . . . the imagos--no longer remembered. (Freud, 1914, p. 243)

Winnicott, Mahler and the rest, have tried to clarify for us, the ways in which human experience is structured, and thus made meaningful, by

talking about the representations of self and others, that each person forms. Mahler's developmental paradigm might be likened to a light-source which allows us to see the details of the various representations in the succeeding phases of their evolution, or, if the representations are already formed, to understand the vicissitudes of the process that has led up to their present shape. Let us try to draw together some of the insights this chapter has generated about the human quest for meaning and the ways in which that quest is either thwarted or satisfied.

Meaning is a description of a quality that attaches itself to the experience of the person whose process of separation-individuation has reached a healthy term. Such a person has attained an integrated or healthy self. To the degree that one's self is healthy, to that degree, one experiences meaningfulness. The following paragraphs try to lay bare the nucleus of the process through which the "self" passes as it evolves towards integration, and hence towards meaning.

The Healthy Self

The variety of good and bad selfobjects, experienced throughout the duration of the autistic, symbiotic and separation-individuation processes established and develops an inner organization of wholeness, cohesion, continuity, goals and values. This inner organization is the self (cf. Garanzani, 1988, pp. 100-3). When we talk of the development of the self, the suggestion is not that it is set over and against others, rather the self is envisioned as being in relation to others. In terms of Object Relations Theory, the more mature a relationship is, the more it involves two differentiated selves, and the less it is

characterized by "primary identification," that is the internalized other. The uniqueness of this relatedness is such that it is its own reality, an independent entity.

The Wounded Self

If a relationship is characterized by a symbiotic-like intensity, then there is really a failure to differentiate between the self and the object; it is a failure in separation-individuation. When, and to the extent that such a state persists, there is a driven quality to the relationship. In the language of Melanie Klein, such a relationship is typical of the "schizoid position"--a state of affairs where a person is actually withdrawn from object-relations. Garanzani says that this belongs to a pre-moral stage of self-development and psychic life. The second Kleinian position, the depressive, is one where a person has overcome the difficulties of the schizoid position, and is able to enter more fully into whole-object relations, only to be exposed to guilt and depression over the discovery that he can hurt those whom he has become capable of loving. In Garanzani's words again, "the depressive problem exists on the level of psychic life and belongs to the pathological moral level" (Garanzini, 1988, p. 101). All this is a way of illustrating how the self may be poorly evolved, even ill. There is a degree to which each person has within the self a "split," due to the failure of "good-enough" parenting or less than adequate biological endowment or the combination of both. To this degree, the person experiences meaninglessness. This "wound" within can only be healed through adequate relating to another or to others. Pathology, and especially severe pathology, represents the extreme wound to the self. This happens when the caregivers, given to the child, or

individual, are not up to the task of helping to heal the wounded self, due perhaps to their own inadequate and fragile selves. There can be no doubt about the primacy that Object Relations Theorists accord to relating in the struggle to create a meaningful world.

In the next chapter, still using the key concept of "representation," and by suggesting a process of transformation which it undergoes, we will see how Object Relations Theorists offer an explanation of the psychological resources for a living relationship with Mystery, or with God, if one prefers that language.

CHAPTER III

FAITH RESOURCES IN A PSYCHOLOGICAL KEY

Lessons from Freud

We turn our attention now to the task of trying to understand the psychological resources that a person employs in his or her breakthrough to Mystery, as these resources can be understood in the context of Object Relations Theory. We are following a tradition established in Freud's own writings, when we turn to the ways in which God is represented in the human psyche, and from our understanding of this process to discern the function of the God-human relationship within the psychological economy. For Freud, gods and demons "are the creations of the human mind" (1913) and are based on "revivals and restorations of the young child's ideas" of his father and mother (1910, p. 123). Ana-Marie Rizzuto concludes "What Freud calls 'revivals and restorations of the young child's ideas of them' is what psychoanalytic theory would later call object relations" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 15).

Freud was bitterly anti-religion, especially of the Roman Catholic nineteenth-century Viennese variety, but he did not reserve his contempt for Catholicism only. His own tradition of Judaism was not spared either. It might seem strange then, to attempt to bring psychoanalysis into a conversation of the sort that interests us here. However, as others have said before, the outcome of applying

psychoanalytic theory to religious phenomena is dependent above all on the interpreter's fundamental attitude toward religion (Wulff, 1991, p. 271). If one is a Freud, then one will conclude that religious experience, ritual, and ideas, are simply the product of human needs and desires. But if instead, one perceives a larger reality behind the panoply of religious phenomena, then psychoanalysis may be used as a means to comprehend the extraordinary responses to the transcendent, whether positive or negative. It can become a factor in the purification of religious faith.

Freud set out to examine religion in the context of his general theory (Wulff, 1991, chap. 6). His presupposition was that "religion is nothing but psychology projected into the external world" (Freud, 1901, pp. 258-59) and on the basis of this assumption declared his ability to explain the myths of paradise, the Fall, of God, and of good and evil. In his study of Leonardo da Vinci (1910), he was able to demonstrate his theory. Leonardo, an illegitimate child, lived for the first few years of his life, without a father figure in his home. In later life he found himself exceptionally free of the fetters of authority, including those of religion, and was exposed to several charges of apostasy. Leonardo illustrates the fundamental claim of Freud's psychology, namely that religiousness in all its manifestations is ultimately rooted in the Oedipus complex.

A personal God, is psychologically, nothing other than an exalted father. . . . The almighty and just God, and kindly Nature, appear to us as grand sublimations of father and mother. . . . Biologically speaking, religiousness is to be traced to the small human child's long-drawn-out helplessness and need of help; and when at a later date he perceives how truly forlorn and weak he is when confronted with the great forces of life, he feels his condition as he did in childhood, and attempts to deny his own despondency by a regressive

revival of the forces which protected his childhood. (Freud, 1910, p. 123)

A person's longing for father, Freud said, which is the ground of all religion, inevitably reverberates with echoes of the Oedipus complex, including the affects of fear and guilt. Obedient submission to the all-powerful father of childhood, introjected as the ego-ideal and projected as God, restores the long lost relationship, although it may well continue to be tinged with ambivalence.

Although many of Freud's patients brought problems tinged with religious dimensions, to his consulting room, it was the cultural process of religion's origin and function in the human race that was of major concern to him. In 1907, he published Obsessive Actions and Religious Practices, and pointed out the parallel between neurotic ceremonials and religious ritual. In both cases scrupulous attention is given to every detail; they are executed in isolation from every other action and no interruption of them is tolerated; if they are neglected, the individual is torn by guilt feelings. There are differences of course: ritual occurs in a community setting, in contrast to the solitariness of neurotic ceremonies; religious practices are meaningful in each detail--but, says Freud, most devotees are completely unconscious of these meanings, not unlike the neurotic, who is unaware of the meaning of his rituals. From his clinical work, Freud had developed an understanding of the compulsive rituals of neurotics. These were performed as a defense against the temptation to commit a forbidden act and also as a protection against some unknown punishment which the neurotic fears. Obsessive actions also involve a compromise: they afford, to some degree, the pleasure they are designed to

forestall. "The formation of a religion too, seems to be based on the suppression, the renunciation, of certain instinctual impulses" (1907, p. 125, quoted by Wulff, 1991, p. 273).

As in the case of neurotic suppression, so in the case of religion, suppression is always unsuccessful. Periodic penance is required. Freud drew the momentous conclusion: religion is a Universal Obsessional Neurosis.

Freud's interest in religion found further expression in his 1913 publication, Totem and Taboo. Freud set to examining two practices that he thought exceptional among "primitive" peoples. In the first place, the tribe and its members came to be symbolized by means of some object, frequently an animal. This animal, called a totem, is regarded as sacred and may not be killed. Second, these people establish a number of taboos, significant among these being the prohibition against intermarriage between group members. Freud found traces of obsessional neurosis here too, especially in submission to inexplicable prohibitions, accompanied by an unshakable conviction that violation of them would bring the direst of consequences. The chief prohibition of both obsessional neurosis and taboo, is against touching, either literally, or in the form of any contact whatsoever. Displacement operates in both cases: the prohibition extends from one object to the next, like a contagion. Following on both, comes a set of rituals designed to expiate, purify or to achieve reconciliation.

The parallels between neuroses and religion prompted Freud to look deeper for connections between the two. He was struck by the correspondence between the basic prohibitions of totemism--against

killing the animal and the taboo against incest--and two dominant aspects of the Oedipus complex--the desire to kill the father and the wish to possess the mother.

Freud next launches into a brave explanation of the origins of totemism. Drawing on highly speculative scientific hypothesis of the day, Freud proposed the following scenario. The setting is a Darwinian one, of the primitive "horde" in which early humans were supposed to have lived. The horde was under the control of one dominant and jealous male, who had total control of the harem, having driven off his sons as they challenged him and killed off all other rivals.

One day the brothers who had been driven out came together, killed and devoured their father and so made an end of the patriarchal horde. United, they had the courage to do, and succeeded in doing, what had been impossible for them individually. . . . Cannibal savages as they were, it goes without saying that they devoured their victim as well as killing him. The primal violent father had doubtless been the feared and envied model of each one of the company of brothers: and in the act of devouring him they accomplished their identification with him, and each one of them acquired a portion of his strength. (Freud, 1913, pp. 141-42)

Having slain their father, the brothers were gripped by remorse and guilt, for they had loved their father as well as hated him. Besides, once their father was dead, there was violent competition among themselves for the harem. Prey to guilt, and amid social anarchy, "they revoked their deed by forbidding the killing of the totem, the substitute for their father; and they renounced its fruits by resigning their claim to the women who had now been set free" (p. 143). Thus were born the basic taboos of totemism. Contemporaneous with these events, Freud postulates that a gynecocracy emerged along with the acknowledgments of mother deities (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 17).

The sons did not forget their terrible deed, rather they

remembered it and commemorated, symbolically, in the yearly totem feast. In Freud's view, the totem feast represents a temporary suspension of guilty obedience to the father, and a renewed effort to appropriate his power. Freud further opines that each succeeding generation, down to our own day, has inherited the sense of guilt resulting from having killed, and eaten, the primal father. While he admits that his evidence for this claim is rather sparse, he says that such a theory is necessary to account for the survival of religious practice through the centuries.

In 1939, Freud eventually published Moses and Monotheism. Its themes are continuous with those of the 1913, Totem and Taboo. Freud, in this book, asserts once again his view that totemism, the earliest form of religious tradition, gradually ceded place, to other forms, as "the return of the repressed" made its influence felt, until eventually the totem animal was replaced by a single anthropomorphic deity. "Thus while the totem may be the first form of father surrogate, the god will be a later one, in which the father has regained his human shape" (1913, p. 148). Men, on initially recovering the primal father, were rapturously devoted and filled with awe and thankfulness. Before long however, the flames of old feelings of hostility were fanned. Freud drew the consequences of this process for Judaism, in particular, and to a lesser degree for Christianity.

In Moses and Monotheism, Freud sets out to explain how the Jews have a single non-representable God. He speculates about the origins of Moses. He claims the biblical account of Moses' rescue from the reeds is an effort to cover up his real identity. In reality Moses was an aristocratic Egyptian, perhaps even a priest from the followers of

Ikhnaton, the Pharaoh who had promulgated a religious monotheism, focused on the sun god Aten. When the Pharaoh died, the people returned to their traditional religion, and Moses, in disgust turned to the Hebrews, and adopted them as his proteges. He instructed them in the ways of his faith, introduced them to the custom of circumcision, and successfully led them out of Egypt. Freud is clear, at least in his own mind, that the God whom Moses presented to the people coincided with the representation of the father of the primal horde, and its concomitant feelings (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 20). Moses' tyrannical rule over the Hebrews was deeply resented and eventually they rebelled against him and killed him. Many generations later, during which time the Levites maintained the memory of Moses and his teaching, the Hebrews came under the influence of another religion, whose focus was Yahweh, a bloodthirsty and demonic volcano god. The mediator in this religion was the son-in-law of Jethro, a Midianite priest, whose name was also Moses. The outcome was a compromise. The practice of circumcision was retained. Yahweh was credited with the liberation from Egypt. To make it appear that Yahweh had been the god of the Hebrews, the legends of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were introduced.

Like repressed childhood traumas, the disavowed facts and ideas that did not fit into the new ideology lived on in the descendants of those who had followed Moses out of Egypt. Like repressed events, the religion of the Egyptian Moses gradually crept back, until it dominated once more. The Jews owe to this religion their conception of a single, Almighty God; their sense of being a chosen people; and their great intellectual advances and instinctual renouncement, which are the result

of the taboo against images. Yet they are burdened with the guilt of patricide, which itself harks back to a far earlier one, in the totemic past. Remorse for having killed Moses, stimulates the wish for the return of the Messiah, the return of the murdered father.

In Moses and Monotheism, Freud also touches on the origin of the Devil representation. Mosaic religion was acquainted with only positive affect toward the father-god. But it was incapable of absorbing the complexities of the representation of the primal father. Hence there was the need of a new character--the Devil--to account for the hate, fear and envy, of the primeval brothers. In 1923, he returned to the theme. He clearly states here, that God and the Devil have a common origin. However he had another explanation for the origins of the Devil representation: as far back as the 1890s he cited aspects of the self-representation as the source of the devil representation.

Rizzuto then summarizes the review of the evidence and writes

From the point of view of mental representation, the psychic mechanism involved in the formation of the Devil representation is, in both cases, splitting, although in one case it is splitting of the ambivalent father image and in the other of the good-bad self-representation. (1979, p. 21)

Thus while the splitting of the primeval representation of the father created the Devil representation, this is a process that repeats itself in each individual. If the God-representation is a reflection of the benevolent aspects of a man's relationship to his father, then it is no surprise that his Satanic representation reflects the hate, envy and fear he feels toward him.

Rizzuto lauds Freud's achievement of being able to begin to think of these issues in object-relational terms, rather than in the

mechanistic terms of id-ego control apparatus, the predominant model for Freud's thinking, as we saw. She calls it

one of his major contributions to the understanding of man-- particularly of man as an object-related being, of man's lifelong use of early imagos and object representations, his dependence on object relations and not least his religiosity as an object-related activity. (1979, p. 28)

She summarizes the significant object-relational findings of Freud in eleven propositions. Primeval man was thought to be capable of:

1. having a fully developed and internalized representation of the paternal image.
2. experiencing intense ambivalent feelings in relation to the father and his representation.
3. acting out of his ambivalence and murdering the father
4. experiencing object guilt for killing the father
5. but in spite of this, splitting the wished for aspect (strength) of the object representation from the rest of the paternal representation.
6. identifying partially with the split off part of the representation.
7. projecting that split off partial representation on to an animal
8. symbolic reactivation of the primary identification by means of the ritualistic killing and eating of the totem animal
9. repressing the rest of the parental representation, which remained latent until the arrival of monotheism.
10. transmitting the repressed representation of the primal father-- and the corresponding guilt and longing--to every male child.
11. transmitting the split-off partial representation symbolically reactivated in the totem sacrifice and meal. (p. 23)

Further elements of the object relational stand are found in Freud's reflections on the superego which we dealt with earlier. There, we saw that the final imago to be internalized was that of God, which says Rizzuto, may be understood, in part, in the way Freud suggested--as a transformation of the paternal imago. At the resolution of the Oedipus Complex, for Freud, "the paternal representation--exalted, sublimated and merged with the memory traces of the primeval father--becomes the representation of God" (p. 30). As we will see, Rizzuto's own position is more nuanced. Before we turn to her, let us ask another question:

"What is the exalted father and the process of exaltation?" Freud gives two answers to that question. Answer one is already given in the last quotation. The original imago of the father merges with the imago of the primal father. In other places Freud claims that the original paternal imago undergoes important changes--either transfiguration or sublimation--which means that the God image is different from that of the original paternal one. Rizzuto points out that both the ancestral and the individual paternal imagos should be unconscious, because both are linked to powerful emotions incompatible with the resolution of the Oedipus complex. In the effort to explain a conscious God, Freud therefore has to resort to the twin ideas of exaltation of the paternal imago and the sublimation of the child's libidinal attachment to it.

She quotes him:

the transformation of object libido into narcissistic libido, which thus takes place, implies an abandonment of sexual aims, a desexualization--a kind of sublimation, therefore. (Freud, 1923b, p. 30, quoted by Rizzuto, 1979, p. 32)

Hence, at the term of the Oedipal crisis, the boy would identify with his real father, repress the earlier paternal imago (which is tinged with intense feelings) and then sublimate the libidinal attachments to that representation, so that it becomes transformed into a nonsexual image of God. While forgetting about the hateful feelings a child may have toward the father at the time of the crisis, Freud is satisfied that he has explained that

it is the sublimated, aim-inhibited, parental imago that permits the appearance of religiosity and pious devotion to God, which can now be not only conscious, but even become a source of self-esteem, love and feelings of security. (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 32)

God representations are often unstable and subject to change.

For our purposes it is sufficient to note how a person's dealings with God may vary according as his relationship with his father in the flesh changes. Freud says himself that "young people lose their religious beliefs as soon as their father's authority breaks down" (1910, p. 123). Rizzuto culls these further thoughts on the matter from his writings: (1) the appearance of a real fatherly object may change the relation to God or make it vanish; (2) the coming of the father to his proper proportion in the young person's life, makes him forget about his imago sublimated into God; (3) the attachment to the father persists, and so does the one to God, and when one diminishes, so does the other; (4) the individual, for various reasons, drops his relation to God, but preserves the representation unchanged. Freud's own ideal, is of course, that these God representations be left behind entirely--self-confessed atheist that he claimed to be. But he failed to give an account of why, unlike theists, that he, and people like him, did not have recourse to the "regressive revival" of God imagos when under stress and faced with overwhelming impotence. Freud is quite clear that parental imagos are immortal. The question remained unanswered: "What use of parental imagos does the unbeliever make, when the realities of life replicate the emotional situation of childhood?"

Beyond Freud

Freud is basically correct when he traces the origin of the God representation to early parental relations. Such is Ana-Marie Rizzuto's position. Yet he underestimated the complex way in which the representation is derived. Her complaint centers on the fact that he neglected the role of the mother and forgot the contribution of

siblings. "My study, and present knowledge of the complexities of object relations, make it impossible for me to accept that the paternal imago is the only one used to form representations of God" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 44). She made a study of twenty Jews and Christians, who were her patients, by means of questionnaires, interviews and drawings of their families and God. Her findings are reported in her 1979 study, The Birth of the Living God. Although she grants the importance of the Oedipal phase, she challenges Freud's exclusive focus on this crisis.

As for the developmental level from which the image originates, persons whose oedipal conflicts are minimal but whose preoedipal processes are prominent have as much an image of God as those who have reached the oedipal crisis. I therefore conclude that formation of the image of God does not depend on the oedipal conflict. (p. 44)

Her main, and substantial disagreement with Freud lies deeper than this, however. It centers on his claim that the God image is nothing but the father-image, exalted and cathected with desexualized and aim-inhibited libido. Such an explanation freezes the representation. It is not the type of energy that cathects the image that is significant, but rather "the many complex sexual and nonsexual, as well as representational, ideational components, present in the child which contribute to the genuine creation of an imaginary being" (p. 46). She reports that she has found God images belonging to every stage of the developmental itinerary. The formation of a God image is an object related representational process,

marked by the emotional configuration of the individual prevailing at the moment he forms the representation--at any developmental stage. The clinical cases show God belonging to each level of development, from anal to oedipal" (p. 44).

What are the conditions that prepare the child to form a God

representation? By the age of three, Rizzuto suggests, a child is deeply concerned with "animistic notions of causality" (p. 44). She is an implicit philosopher, possessed by an urge to know the why and wherefore of everything, and inevitably the harried caregivers end up telling the child that God stands behind everything as cause. There is a remarkable fit between this answer and the readiness of the child's mind, who at precisely this stage, is in awe at the "superior beings," of great size and power whom she needs to look after her. It seems true to claim that the image of God "is developmentally necessary to ground our earliest awareness of the existence of things" (Jones, 1991, p. 43).

In psychoanalytic terms, the child is dealing with the idealized representations of his parents, to whom he attributes great perfection and power. He is also struggling with his own grandiose wishes for power of his own. (p. 44)

The child has before her the example of the parents who pay homage to this great being they talk about and this impresses her immensely. In Rizzuto's own words:

The fact that the parents mention [God] frequently to the child, send the child to Sunday School . . . and beyond that, worship such a being themselves, produces a profound impression on the child, for whom the parents are the biggest visible beings. All of these factors contribute to the creation of a sense of God's reality which inevitably becomes linked to the reality of the parents and their personalities. (1979, p. 50)

She also describes the circumstances that will shape the nature of the God-representation, its content, in other words.

The type of God each individual produces as a first representation is the compounded image resulting from all these contributing factors--the preoedipal psychic situation, the beginning stages of the oedipal complex, the characteristics of the parents, the predicament of the child with each of his parents and siblings, the general intellectual and social background of the household. As though all these antecedents were not complex enough, the circumstances of the moment in which the question of God emerges may

color the God representation with insubstantial coincidences that become linked to it by primary processes. (p. 45).

A child does not, obviously, create his or her object representation of God because of encounters with a perceptual object with the concreteness of a parent or a sibling. The representation of God is produced later than the first representation of the caregiver(s), but it can and does draw upon the resources of those parental imagos, though not necessarily in the straightforward way that Freud suggested. Rizzuto postulates that

constant dialectic processes between primary object representations and the sense of self, bring the preoedipal child to form some representation of a being "like" the parents (mother and father), who is "above all" and bigger and mightier than anyone else. This being becomes a living, invisible reality in the child's mind. (p. 50)

Furthermore, as we have seen in the last paragraph, the God-representation is influenced by a multitude of cultural, social, familial phenomena, and we might add from previous reflection on representation-formation, by the deepest levels of biological experiencing as well as the highest spiritual strivings. The task of integrating such a range of human experiencing, involves an understanding of the nature of the human capacity to represent and symbolize. Rizzuto does not want to enter into a detailed discussion of these capacities but does venture to say that

all representations originate in multiple sources of experience (from proprioceptive to conceptual) and have potential for multiple meanings. All representations can be used dynamically for self-integration under the never-ceasing synthetic functions of the psyche. The level of meaning as well as the shape and aspects of a given representation depend on the intrapsychic context of the synthetic moment when the representation is being used. From this point of view, very early representational components (as tactile or sensory elements) may serve in the context of a much later and more mature level of meaning (e.g., the subjective experience of a

priest's consecrating hands) as a constant process of self-integration in which all developmental moments may be present simultaneously. (p. 182).

Hence, the God-representation is a new, original representation and is possessed of potential to "soothe and comfort, provide courage and inspiration--or terror or dread" away and beyond anything that the actual parents could hope to engender (p. 46). This contradicts Freud's claim that the believing person is inescapably neurotic and immature. Pointing out, that just as a mature relationship with parents is possible, so may a relationship with God be also, does not exhaust the significance of what Rizzuto is driving at. She looks to the way in which a person continually reworks and transforms his psychic balance at each stage of the life cycle.

Those who are capable of mature religious belief renew their God representation to make it compatible with their emotional, conscious and unconscious situation, as well as with their cognitive and object related development. (p. 46)

Religion as Illusion

Winnicott's reflections on the nature and function of "transitional objects" offer critical help in mapping the creative process through which the formation of the God representation occurs. In the situation of "good enough mothering" where effective mirroring is available to the child, a sense of basic trust is born, a "resting place" is inaugurated, from which a creative reaching out to reality can occur, while both mother and child enter the area of play and transitional space. When the God-representation is first formed, like other transitional phenomena it enjoys an unchallenged status. By that is meant that it is regarded by the child, neither solely as a creation

of his or her fantasy, and hence under magical control, nor wholly external to the self, like the caregiver. Before I go on to say more about the origin of the God representation as a transitional object let us listen to Rizzuto, echoing Fraiberg, 1969, sing the praises of "the fictive creations of our mind," which are as influential in our lives as the flesh and blood people among whom we live.

We have forgotten the impressive power of muses, guardian angels, heroes, Miss Liberty, Eors and Thanatos, devils, the Devil and God Himself. Human life is impoverished when these immaterial characters made out of innumerable experiences, vanish under the repression of a psychic realism that does violence to the ceaseless creativity of the human mind. . . . In this sense at least religion is not an illusion. It is an integral part of being human, truly human in our capacity to create nonvisible but meaningful realities capable of containing our potential for imaginative expansion beyond the boundaries of the senses. Without these fictive realities human life becomes a dull animal existence. (p. 47)

Religion as an illusion! Have we returned to Freud's negativism and pejorative judgments on religion? Nothing could be further from the truth, and Paul Pruyser is someone who can tell us why this is not so. In what follows, I am indebted to Wulff's presentation, of Pruyser's position in Between Belief and Unbelief (Wulff, 1991, p. 338).

Illusion, Pruyser says, is etymologically derived from the latin word ludere, to play. So when we say that cultural phenomena, like religion or art, are illusionistic, we are referring to their origin in the play of the human imagination. While Pruyser agrees with Freud that such illusions are wish fulfilling, he insists that they serve as ideals, uncovering a person's shortcomings, but at the same time, affording direction and impetus for the attainment of loftier goals.

Pruyser's illusionistic world is Winnicott's world of transitional objects, a third world between the private inner world of

autistic fantasy, and the public, outer world of realistic, sense-perceived data. In contrast to these two worlds the illusionistic world is, in Pruyser's words,

the world of play, of creative imagination, in which feelings are not antagonistic to thinking, in which skills and talents are used to the utmost, and where pleasure is found without categorical abrogation of the reality principle. (Quoted by Wulff, 1991, p. 399 from The Seamy Side of Current Religious Beliefs, p. 334)

The distinctive character of this third world is clear in the following diagram Wulff, 1991, p. 339).

Pruyser's Scheme of the Three Worlds

Autistic World	Illusionistic World	Realistic World
untutored fantasy	tutored fantasy	sense perception
omnipotent thinking	adventurous thinking	reality testing
utter whimsicality	orderly imagination	hard undeniable facts
free associations	inspired connections	logical connections
ineffable images	verbalizable images	look-see-references
hallucinatory events/ entities	imaginative events/ entities	actual events/ entities
private needs	cultural needs	factual needs
symptoms	symbols	signs, indices
dreaming	playing	working
sterility	creativity	resourcefulness
internal object, imago	transcendent objects prefigured by the child's transitional object	external object

Religious language is particularly apt to describe the contents of the transitional or illusionistic world. As Pruyser sees it, the child's transitional object has a sacred quality about it. It functions as a kind of ritual object, subject to the reverent and ceremonial attention of all the family. Yet it is also "transcendent," in that it falls neither into the category of the autistic world nor that of the realistic. Furthermore, we can reverse the equation "the transitional =

the transcendent." Deities, ideal human virtues, and states of spiritual ultimacy are "all elaborations of the transitional sphere," symbols, about whose meanings there is communal agreement. It is Pruyser's thesis that religion finds its home in the transitional world, because

the transcendent, the Holy, and Mystery, are not recognizable in the external world by plain realistic viewing and hearing, nor do they arise directly in the mind as pleasurable fictions. They arise from an intermediate zone of reality that is also an intermediate human activity--neither purely subjective, nor objective. (Quoted by Wulff, 1991, p. 340)

The child encounters the raw material for the object representation of God in the same place, and in the same way, as the material for the imaginary companion (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 191) for the monster, the superhero, and the devil. The child brings to each of these the same vital agenda; the problem of becoming a self which means "the trauma of negotiating the terrors and the traumas of achieving a sense of self that is both separate and securely related" (McDargh, 1983, p. 123). McDargh, like Rizzuto, refers to Bruno Bettelheim's illustration of how the characters of classical fairy stories can be used by the developing child for the purpose of working through the assaults on his or her narcissism, inevitably sustained in the process of growing up (Bettelheim, 1976, pp. 24-25). And yet there is a significant difference between the transitional object, God, and other transitional objects. The others are eventually outgrown. As every parent knows, throughout childhood, the toy-closet eventually overflows with discarded transitional objects--teddies, bits of blankets and favored outfits. But, says Rizzuto, God is not among their number. In the normal course of events, the psychic history of God is the reverse

of other transitional objects: instead of losing meaning, God's meaning becomes heightened. Because God is a "nonexperiential" object, and the God-representation, unlike teddies and a blanket is infinite plastic, the person can throughout life, "create" a God according to his needs (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 179).

James Jones questions whether that is a sufficient explanation of the differences between God and the rest of the inhabitants of the transitional world (1991, p. 45). He notes how Winnicott, Rizzuto's source of inspiration in this matter, argues in a different way. When speaking about transitional objects, Winnicott is really talking about a certain capacity for experience, insisting that transitional phenomena point to "an intermediate area of experiencing to which both inner and external reality contribute." Teddy bears and security blankets are left behind, but the capacity to transcend the dichotomies of inner and outer, subjective and objective, continues to grow and blossoms into the talent to create, in the arts and the sciences. Winnicott's conviction is that the transitional object

is not forgotten and it is not mourned. It loses meaning, and this is because the transitional phenomena have become diffused, have become spread over the whole intermediary territory between inner psychic reality and the external world . . . that is to say over the whole cultural field. (Winnicott, 1953, p. 5)

Imagination represents more than the world of ghosts and goblins and fairy tales; it is the source of a "Hamlet" or Einstein's theory of relativity.

According to Jones, Rizzuto's misunderstanding of Winnicott, which leads her to focus on transitional objects, rather than on transitional experience, leaves her with the pseudo problem, with which

we have just seen her grapple. Jones notes how she often makes God sound like a supernatural version of the teddy bear and then speculates on why God is not discarded like other such "objects." What is crucial, then, is not the object, but the capacity for experience. He proposes that a person's "God" is not discarded, because it is the carrier, par excellence, of the capacity to experience in the "third way," where the subjective and the objective are both transcended.

The Epigenetic Origins of the God-Representation

I have mentioned how Rizzuto considers mirroring and holding as an important moment in the process of the creation of the God-representation; and how ghosts and goblins brush shoulders with God in the child's imagination; but I have not yet described how she sees these two realities as part of an epigenetic process. Rizzuto spends three pages, 185-88, describing how a mirroring transference, and a selfobject bond, explain the creation of the God-representation out of the experience with the primary caretaker, normally the mother. She is convinced that our earliest sense of self, grows from sensing ourselves mirrored in our mother's reactions. If the mirroring is hesitant, or not there, our sense of self will be distorted. The experience of mirroring lies at the basis not only of our sense of cohesive self, but also at the root of the God-representation. All other images that are joined to it, in the elaboration of our private God-representation are colored by that core mirroring experience, or the failure to be mirrored.

A second moment in the process of generating the God-

representation lies in the achievement and stabilization of object constancy, in the second and third year (Freud's anal phase). At this time, comes the procession of "imaginary companion," of monsters, and fairies, with God drawing up the rear. This procession helps the child tolerate his badness, rage impulses, frustrations and deceptions, on the one hand, and allows him to experience his grandiosity, on the other, by controlling them. We have seen too, how the special propensities of the child as an implicit philosopher, the characteristics of his object-related developmental stage, the attitudes of the parents to God, and the cultural "rumours" of God, all contribute to the nurturance of the God-representation.

A third moment in the evolution of the God representation occurs, at the point where "the child's narcissistic preoccupations become intertwined with object-related wishes to be found attractive" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 195). Rizzuto has reached the point where Freud concentrated his efforts to understand: the fateful moment when the child's struggle to gain the attention of the preferred parent is about to meet with failure, and the parental imago becomes cathected with sublimated libidinal energy, and is transformed into the exalted father-protector who will not castrate the son (p. 196). Rizzuto takes considerable distance from this understanding. Already, at the onset of the Oedipal crisis, in her view, the God-image has a venerable history; in the Oedipal crisis the child learns that he is indeed small, but is given the hope that he or she can come to be like the preferred parent, and marry someone similar; the self-image changes and the presence of the powerful phallic hero or heroine, and later, the superhero, mediate

the healing of the narcissistic frustration and object loss, and the object-related exhibitionism and sadism that follow the defeat; the parental object representations also change, desexualized to a tolerable degree, and a wider knowledge of the parents becomes possible. Her distance from Freud is clear in a statement like the following:

The God-representation suffers transformations that keep in step with the self- and parent-representations. The child's intellectual maturation permits him to think about God in relation to his enlarged experience of the world and his parents. At about the age of five, the representation of God, parents and the child himself become more pedestrian. (p. 196)

A second phase in post-Oedipal development occurs when the child experiences disillusionment with parents and family. Three fantasies are typically associated with this time: (1) the fantasy of the family romance (the child imaginatively develops a new family where experience is wonderful, and all the wishes which were denied by the real parents are fulfilled); (2) the fantasy of having an animal companion; and (3) the fantasy of having a twin (a being like the daydreamer himself or herself, with all the qualities he or she lacks, and from whom one cannot be separated). The psychodynamic interpretation of the "twin" suggests that the twin functions as an alter-ego, which helps reshape the self-image of the post-Oedipal child as someone whose separation from the parents is painfully obvious. Rizzuto proposes to see the God-representation functioning in a similar way to relieve feelings of isolation and loneliness (p. 98). Contemporaneous with these developments, the child is normally introduced to the heroes and heroines of his or her religious tradition. These function, says Rizzuto, as alternative models to the family, and psychically provide a group of people with whom one may wish to identify, and so have one's

worth validated. At the end of this period, before the onset of puberty the God-representation has achieved its "basic personality," "profoundly enmeshed with each developmental stage of childhood" (p. 199).

The fourth moment in the evolution of the God-representation occurs at puberty, and once again there are two phases of events here. With puberty the person is now able to conceptualize in logico-mathematical abstractions. For the first time he or she can grasp the concept of God beyond the limits of his or her God-representation.

This concept follows principles of philosophical inference, and though helpful for the intellectual integration of belief, it lends itself, not to belief, but to theorizing, and to the construction of theological or philosophical arguments. Properly integrated, it adds a dimension to whatever God-representation the child had at the time. Emotionally, it adds nothing. (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 200)

In later adolescence the individual has to face the challenge of integrating a more unified and cohesive self-representation which will empower him to make the major life-decisions that are calling for his attention. This developmental crisis, characterized by intense self-searching and remaking of the self-image, in the context of forging an identity for himself in the world of work and home-making, induces new encounters with both old and new God-representations, which Rizzuto says "may or may not lead to belief" (Rizzuto, 1979, p. 207). We will have occasion to return to this topic, in the next section, when we cite the example of Jean-Paul Sartre.

Finally, throughout the life cycle a person develops the need to critically assess changes in self-representation, in order to cope with the inevitable advance of the life cycle, as well as to the ever-changing encounters with peer and parental representations. The chances

are that the God-representation will not escape the need to be adapted too--right up to the moment of death.

Psychological Resources and the
Breakthrough of Mystery

As a conclusion, we need to specifically answer the question we posed at the beginning of Chapter II: what, in object relational terms are the psychological resources which facilitate a breakthrough to "Mystery." In a nutshell the answer is a transitional object or God-representation, which is compatible with the object and self-representations a person has evolved throughout his or her life cycle. That needs to be expanded.

I use Jean-Paul Sartre as an example to illustrate the value of thinking the religious quest in object relational terms. In his autobiography, Words, he describes how he was raised as the spoiled and worshipped child of a multigenerational French family, of bourgeois background. Bereft of a father from birth, his grandiosity was never "held" by the limitations and constraints of definite standards (cf. McDargh, 1983, p. 130). Thus, he suffered the confusion of a self that was continually on parade, and which was repeatedly forced into conformity by love, or worse as Kohut put it, "by the narcissistic needs of both a widowed infantilized mother and an inflated but death-haunted grandfather" (as cited by McDargh). The God served up to young Jean-Paul was that of the established bourgeoisie. All this God asked for was a polite deference, but made no real demands, nor inspired any enthusiasm. As we listen to the following extract from Words, let us

pay attention to the form of the God-representation that emerges from the text.

Raised in the Catholic faith, I learned that the Almighty had made me for his glory. That was more than I dared dream. But later I did not recognize in the fashionable God, in whom I was taught to believe, the one whom my soul was waiting. I needed a creator . . . I was given a Big Boss. . . . Good society believed in God in order not to speak of him. How tolerant religion seemed! How comfortable it was. In our circle, in my family, faith was merely a high-sounding name for sweet French freedom.

At bottom, the whole business bored me. I was led to disbelief, not by the conflicts of dogma, but by my grandparents' indifference. Nevertheless, I believed. In my nightshirt, kneeling on my bed, with my hands together, I said my prayers everyday. But I thought of God less and less. (Sartre, 1964, pp. 97-99)

The passion of this man's life is echoed in the opening lines of this quotation when he speaks of his learning that he was made for God's glory, that God was Creator. Here, Sartre is not dispassionately referring to an idea or concept of God, rather the close interaction between the ideas and the self-representation that Sartre brings to those ideas is what is uppermost. Long before Sartre was exposed to the insipid God of his family, or the formal religious instruction of his church, a powerful God-representation had gestated within him, and had made him his own theologian. The young Sartre has a powerful affinity with the Creator God. In his case, a God-representation which held great promise, met with another God-representation, that of the comfortable French middle class, and found no resonance. The primary creativity of the child died under the weight of social and institutional constructions. Rizzuto writes about this kind of situation:

But the child brings his own God, the one he himself has put together, to this official encounter. Now the God of religion and the God of the child-hero face each other. Reshaping, rethinking, and endless rumination, fantasies and defensives manœuvres will come

to the help of the child in this difficult task. This second birth of God may decide the conscious religious future of the child. . . . No child arrives at the "house of God," without his personal god under his arm. (1979, p. 8)

When Sartre tells his story, he recalls--more than that--he mourns, the abortion of an object relationship with the Creator God, which had held great potential for him. God as creator was a transitional object, whose presence to the young man had great promise as a source of creative energy for the process of self-becoming. Because they were unworthy of the object relations which he had already developed, and in order to remain faithful to the sense of self he had developed, Sartre chose to reject the ideas of God, and the kind of faith that his community offered him. For our purposes here, it is important that we be clear that it was not merely ideas or concepts of God that Sartre chose to reject. Let me quote McDargh again:

It is our position that an approach to religious development as a cognitive process and to God as a concept, while it draws attention to some important features of the total phenomenon of human religiousness, fails to grasp the psychological uniqueness and developmental complexity, of an individual's relationship with his or her God. At base, it is a failure to distinguish between the processes whereby the child handles concepts, and the processes whereby the child forms, and relates to, significant objects. (1983, p. 128)

I want to insist on a point here: Sartre rejects the beliefs of his community as unworthy of his trust and belief, because these ideas carried a set of object and self-representation which were totally foreign to those that were at the heart of his own personal project as a "separating-individuating" self, in Mahler's terms. It was not that the ideas themselves were illogical, or wrong, but simply foreign. Sartre's personal locus of trust--his faith--was grounded in his own self-becoming, and this led him to abandon his trust--his faith--in the

religious quest of his formal religion. The mourning for the possibilities of a genuine God-relationship, founded in a personal God-representation can still be heard in the following paragraph:

I have just related the story of a mixed vocation: I needed God. He was given to me, I received him without realizing that I was seeking him. Failing to take root in my heart, he vegetated in me for a while and then he died. . . . Whenever anyone speaks of him to me, today, I say with the easy amusement of an old beau who meets a former bell: "fifty years ago had it not been for that misunderstanding, that mistake, the accident that separated us, there might have been something between us. (Words, pp. 102-3, quoted by McDargh, 1983, p. 130)

As the aging autobiographer, Sartre adopts a Stoical attitude and puts a brave face on the loss of his relationship with God. He sees no possibility of an encounter with ideas of a different God, carrying a different set of self and object relationships, from that of the God of middle-class French people, which would open the door to reconciliation with the Creator God of his childhood. Yet such a reconciliation is a possibility, if not for Sartre, then at least for other people who might have taken leave of their God-relationship over similar faith issues. Exposure in later life to new sets of ideas about God, particularly at the critical points in the life cycle, may awaken the possibility of a renewed relationship with one's object representations of God, and be the catalyst which initiates a reworking of those representations, so that they are once more available for faith.

This is the heart of the matter of God-representations and faith as far as Rizzuto is concerned. She states her conviction in this way:

I propose that belief in God, or its absence, depends on whether or not a conscious "identity of experience" can be established between the God-representation of a given developmental moment, and the object and self-representations needed to maintain a sense of self which provides at least a minimum of relatedness and hope. . . .

[The God-representation] as a transitional object appears in

early childhood and must undergo transformations in the course of life if it is to keep up with the transformations of the life cycle. If it loses its meaning, however, it can be set aside without being forgotten. [Cf. p. 168 above, for Jones' reservations about this way of talking.] And it can recover its meaning at the time of a life crisis, either by a progressive new elaboration of the God-representation or by a regressive return to an earlier representation which once more lends itself to belief. (p. 202)

Examples of renewed contact with God representations are many.

From my own experience I can point to the impact that Liberation Theology made on me. The God who comes as Father from the future, to heal and lift up the wounded, and who entrusts his sons and daughters with his hopes for the world, empowering them to work for change oppressive structures, is the image that I have found most compelling throughout my adult life. It deeply touches into an earlier image of God as Father, strict but fair, powerful and somewhat remote, which in turn, for me was a transformation of the idealized representation of my father in the flesh. The new representation opened up possibilities for meaning and for sociopolitical action that I experience as exciting and a force for reconciliation. In my case at least, the work on the "self" gradually rendered the predominant older God-representation obsolete, and readied me for the ideas of Liberation Theology, which in turn carried a God-representation that I found congenial and have attempted to integrate. What bears repeating here, I think, is the fact that Liberation Theology was able to engage the very core elements of my personality, both conscious and unconscious. It was this appeal to my self-, object-, and God-representations that accounts for its effects on me, rather than the logical cogency of its discourse. Moreover, this transformation of my self and God-representations occurred only as the

new ideas allowed for the reorganization of alternative memorialized experiences. Rizzuto's way of putting this is:

Even someone who believes intellectually that there must be a God may feel no inclination to accept him unless images of previous interpersonal experience have fleshed out that concept with multiple images that now coalesce in a representation that he accepts emotionally. (1979, p. 48)

In other words no amount of talk of a God who offers the hope of a future, where justice and reconciliation reign will make any affective sense at all, unless the person who hears such a discourse has referents for the experience of living in that way. "Put more simply still, 'God is love' can make no saving sense to a human being who has never known what it feels like to be loved, however inadequately" (McDargh, 1983, p. 132).

I suspect that my work with the Theology of John Shea is another step in the process of adjusting my God-representation to my changing self and object representations. We now turn to the task of bringing Object Relations Theory and Shea's theology into a direct conversation.

CHAPTER IV

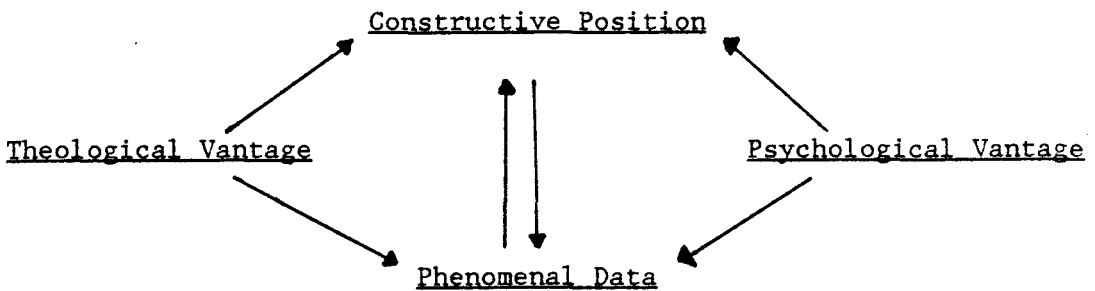
REPRESENTATION ENGAGES STORY AND VISA-VERSA

The moment has come to initiate the conversation between John Shea's theology and Object Relations Theory. Conversation is a two-way process. Thus, the first and major portion of this chapter, may be described as "representation engages story," and is entitled "a constructive-relational view of faith." By making representation the subject of the sentence, we want to suggest that the psychological theory we have been working with, can sometimes expand or throw light on, and sometimes challenge John Shea's theology. In the second moment, when the story-theology of John Shea engages Object Relations Theory-- and we will dwell but very briefly on this part of the conversation-- the attempt will be to measure the depth metaphors of the psychology against those of the theology, and to tentatively suggest the outline of the theory of obligation that is implied by Mahler and her colleagues in the Object Relations "school." This section of the chapter is entitled "Depth Metaphors and Obligation."

If our assumption that the metaphor of self-interpretation is a good one to express the kernel of what faith means, then we might suspect that there could be many points of convergence between this theological view and the views of the Object Relations Theorists we have studied. But before we develop these let us first say a word on the

method we will use to facilitate the conversation between the psychological and theological disciplines.

John McDargh uses a methodology, borrowed from William Rogers, to guide the interdisciplinary dialogue that he conducts in his book, Psychoanalytic Object Relations Theory and the Study of Religion, we propose to rely on that same methodology here. The methodology is called a "construction-relational model" (1983, p. 69).



For a constructive-relational model of interdisciplinary investigation, the object of study is some common data of human experience, which can be addressed from both a psychological and a theological perspective. This is what the above diagram refers to as "phenomenal data." In this chapter we will look at those inter and intrapsychic processes by which the person interprets his or her experience, unifies it, develops and experiences a cohesive self, and then can reach out to others in significant, "real" relationships. There is indeed data "out there" which begs to be understood. Children are born into a network of relationships, they do experience a species specific form of dependence, they do learn to symbolize, and they do carry with them a particular set of psychic wounds and strengths throughout their lives. Yet why do we

isolate this particular body of data and why link it to faith? That decision is based on the claim I have made about the essential core of John Shea's theology, and on the suspected convergence I perceive from the two perspectives we have examined--the theological and psychological.

I shall endeavor to bring these two vantage points into conversation and invite each one to support, or correct, or offer a critique, of the other. The result of this will be a constructive position. In this process, it is not a matter of theology subsuming psychology, or visa-versa, but rather of allowing each one to have its voice and adding its insights. The arrows in the diagram are intended to emphasize how, when this methodology is adhered to, the constructive position is always accountable to the data itself, to the actual life experience being studied. One insists on referring back to the data which was the ground for both the psychological and theological formulations.

Facilitating a dialogue between the psychological and theological disciplines, presupposes an openness on the part of these two areas of inquiry, and a readiness from each, to be sympathetic to the contributions the other can make. Rather than being contradictory, I suggest, that when they are related to one and other, the two perspectives may be able to convergently affirm a number of critical insights. Shea's view is, I believe, open to a conversation with psychology. This is so because he understands faith less as a graced assent to revealed truths, and more as a universal characteristic of human existence by which every person is oriented towards the Mystery.

Furthermore, he sees each person empowered to respond to It, my among other things, developing his or her life-story, through the metaphors and concomitant values of the religious tradition. Shea's analysis of the human condition has highlighted some aspects of faith as crucial for human living: the ability to symbolize and to create meaning, the sense of subjective and objective reality, the sense of being oriented within the flux of life, the ability to choose values which foster loving and enlivening interpersonal relationships. It seems to me that many of the developmental issues we explored in Object Relations Theory are closely related to, if not identical with, these same theological concerns.

A Constructive-Relational View of Faith

From the foregoing discussion I would like to propose a definition of faith, which I will develop, in the light of Object Relations Theory, in the following pages. Faith is a human dynamic of knowing what is real which is (1) foundational for the shaping of a humanly meaningful environment and (2) finds its fulfillment in an ever-growing capacity for self-affirmation, mutuality and compassion.

Faith as Symbolic Knowing, the Capacity to Construct and Know the Real

The emphasis that Shea and his tradition place on knowing as the basis of faith, sets the course for us, in approaching the wealth of the contributions of Object Relations Theory, for a psychological understanding of faith. We have seen that faith begins with the discernment of Mystery's approach to the human person. A person "knows" Mystery, thanks to the capacity for sacramental imagination. Remember

how the windhover was a symbol of Mystery's presence to Gerard Many Hopkins.

We might begin our examination of the contribution that Object Relations Theory makes to our understanding of the psychological resources for faith by recalling our discussion in Chapter II, on Object Representations. There (pp. 127ff.) we saw that in order to know "what is outside" the child must create a representation of that "outside" as part of his representational world. We reviewed the part that hallucination plays in this, and how good-enough-mothering is crucial, if reality is to match the child's hallucinatory activity. "Each infant must recreate the world" Winnicott (1958, p. 12) told us, "but this is possible only if, bit by bit, the world arrives at the moment of the infant's activity. The infant reaches out, and the breast is there, and the breast is created." To begin with, meaning happens, I suggest, because the child is involved in a symbiotic relationship. To the degree that this symbiosis is satisfactory, to that degree are sensations experienced as meaningful, the self experienced as real, and the basis for trust and a positive God-representation laid down. By the time the child reaches the stage of object constancy, he or she is ready to organize his or her world without being absolutely dependent on the caretaker, though the child still needs support and mirroring, of course. In Sandler and Rosenblatt's words:

the representations which the child constructs enable him to perceive sensations coming from various sources, to organise them and structure them in a meaningful way. We know that perception is an active process by which the ego transforms raw sensory data in a meaningful way. (1962, p. 89)

In the case of the lucky child, the world that he or she creates, comes

into being because of the cooperation between him or her and the caregiver. An essential element of the child's knowledge is the security of this cooperation, a sense of his inner core as safe. This security and safety continue to reinforce the sense of basic trust. The opposite may indeed happen, in which case the knowledge the child gains is that the real is threatening and untrustworthy. All of us, one supposes, fall somewhere on a continuum that stretches between the lucky and the unlucky.

At this point, there is already a convergence between Shea's theological viewpoint and that of the Object Relations Theorists. Knowledge and meaning are basic to both. For Object Relations Theorists, they are rooted in the body's experience of being held, of being safe. While I have not seen John Shea write anything like this, he did affirm it in his conversations with me. Trust and knowledge are two sides of a single coin. Again, Object Relations Theorists do not restrict knowledge to sensory experience. There is a depth in knowledge beyond that of merely looking, sensing, smelling, etc. That is something that Shea would applaud.

But that is only a start. What light does Objects Relations Theory throw on the claim that we know Mystery in and through the proximate environment of the self? To find the answer to this question, we need to return, first, to our considerations of the origin of the God representation, which as we have seen, Object Relations Theorists credit as a significant psychological event, which plays an honorable part in the psychic life of an individual. We have traced the birth of the God-representation through its five phases in Chapter III (pp. 169-73)--the

laying of its basis in the mirroring experiences of early infancy; the birth of the first representations with the onset of object constancy (when God takes his place with ghosts and goblins in a long procession of illusory productions, which help the child cope with his badness, rage and frustrations while allowing him space to experience his grandiosity); the changing God-representations of the Oedipal child, who evolves God-representations to fit the changing self and object representations she has, and which function to relieve loneliness and isolation; the broadening intellectual capacity of the adolescent adds the element of a concept of God, and the capacity to build theological systems; and finally, throughout the remainder of the life cycle, the person critically assesses the God-representations by which he lives, to take account of the successive challenges and crises that aging brings. There is a striking parallel, and compatibility, between John Shea's claim that we know Mystery in and through the proximate environment of the self, and the Object Relations conceptualization of the processes involved in religious knowing. For John Shea, Mystery is not a datum of experience, like a parent or a blade of grass. We experience Mystery's relationship to us, in and through our relationship to these things, as well as in our relationship to our "self." Object Relations provide a psychological explanation of how this is possible. We construct representations of external reality, and we relate to external reality through them. It is one, or many, of these representations, that are transformed in the God-representation, and it is by means of this representation that we relate to Mystery. Furthermore, each of these object representations has its corresponding self-representation. We

saw this illustrated in the case of Jean-Paul Sartre, at the conclusion of the last chapter. He had an early "love-affair" with "The Creator God." At an early age, his knowledge of God was vitally important to him--at least as he remembered this knowledge as an older person. His God-representation, which I term "The Creator God," was the psychological element in this existential relationship with God. This God-representation was in deep harmony with the self and object representations of the little boy. God, self and world fitted together, they were all aspects of a single project--the unfolding of Sartre's potential.

A second way that Object Relations Theory makes sense of Shea's claim that we know Mystery in and through our proximate environments becomes apparent when we look at what it says about transitional objects and experience. In his examination of religious experience, William Meissner acknowledges his debt to Winnicott, and accords a particular importance to transitional objects. His remark that "the use of symbols takes place within the intermediate area of experience that Winnicott designated as illusion" (Meissner, 1990, p. 105) establishes a significant link with Shea, and opens up the possibility of psychologically grounding "sacramental imagination." Let us try to see how this is so.

The initial step here, is to recall that recourse to "illusion" is not a flight to untutored fantasy, rather it is a necessary step in the process of learning, and of coming to a knowledge of reality. As we have seen, through the use of transitional objects, a child enters a mode of experiencing which stands at the intersection between the

experience of external reality, and that of internal subjective reality. Through the use of transitional objects, the dichotomy between the objective and the subjective is transcended. The primordial circumstance under which this occurs is that of the nursing dyad, where "the good-enough-mother" answers the needs of her child. The conjunction of the child's needs and the response of the real object, the mother, creates a situation of illusion in the child, in which, from the child's point of view, he has created the need satisfying object. This is the crucial insight for us here. Recourse to this transitional space is not a neurotic defense, rather, Winnicott argues, that illusion is an integral part of the developmental process whereby an individual engages his capacity to involve himself in the world of experience, "a human capacity that expresses itself in the creative shaping of a humanly meaningful environment" (Meissner, 1990, p. 102). It is an "interpretation" of reality that involves the experience of safety, of a proportion between the infant's self, and the external world, and of being appropriately linked to all the elements of reality (i.e., having one's place in reality). Learning, accommodation to reality, is promoted according as there is the repeated experience of being allowed the privilege of entering into illusional space. Illusion, in this sense, proves to be the doorway to knowing. Recall the nursing dyad again. An external observer can see, of course, that the mother's response comes from outside, but not to the child. With repeated experience of "resting" in this transitional space coupled with experiences of optimal frustration, the child's illusion of omnipotent control over the transitional object gradually diminishes. The child in

Piagetian terms accommodates to reality. There is a constant pendulum movement between illusion and disillusion. Thanks to Winnicott, we can recognize, without a sense of unease, that the use of transitional objects, and the occurrence of transitional experience, is a normal healthy phenomenon. In fact, it draws the person and his surrounding environment together; through it, reality is engaged, known, at newer and deeper levels. Moreover, it is not confined to the nursing-infant or playroom child, but is a characteristic of adult life as well.

This dialectic and tension between illusion and disillusion continues to be elaborated throughout the whole of human experience and life. The project of gaining knowledge and acceptance of reality is never fully completed. (Meissner, p. 103)

We take the next step in relating Shea's claims for sacramental imagination to those of Object Relations, by turning to the insights of Paul Pruyser. In his terms, the realm of play, the illusionistic world of "tutored fantasy," is the place where faith is at home. We can quote him again:

The Transcendent, the Holy and Mystery are not recognizable in the external world by plain realistic viewing or hearing, nor do they arise in the mind as pleasurable fictions. They arise from an intermediate zone of reality that is also an intermediate human activity--neither purely subjective, nor objective. (Quoted by Wolff, 1991, p. 340)

How does this come about? A moment ago, we quoted Meissner as saying that the use of symbols takes place in Winnicott's illusory space. The capacity to use symbols is a development of the very early use the child makes of the blanket or the teddy bear, to find relief from the interminable tension arising from the task of bridging the internal and external worlds. Let us examine the use the child makes of a blanket. Observers suppose that the blanket symbolizes the mother's breast, but

its status as a transitional object is as important as its symbolic value. The fact is, that the blanket, while it is real, is not the mother's breast. That is as important as its standing for the breast, since it is this objective dimension that prepares the human child's capacity to become a symbol-making, and a symbol-using being.

The use of transitional objects is more a step toward the symbolic function than itself a form of symbolism. When symbolism is achieved, the infant has already gained the capacity to distinguish between fantasy and fact, between internal and external objects, between primary creativity and perception, between illusion and reality. . . . I would argue that the use of symbols takes place within the intermediate area of experience that Winnicott designated as illusion. (Meissner, 1990, pp. 104-5)

Meissner then goes on to generalize from childhood to adult life. Entrance into the transitional mode of experiencing--recall that this is occasioned by the coming together of external reality and internal attributions--means that the same, sense-experienced, external objects can become invested with subjective intentions and meanings, time after time, and in this fashion its symbolic dimensions are strengthened (Meissner, 1990, pp. 105-6).

Symbols do not only draw on the conscious level of psychic life, of course. An adult, using her capacity for symbol-making, calls on two distinct levels of her psychic life--the conscious and the unconscious. We are using an insight here, that we met in Chapter II, when we referred to the Beres and Joseph article, wherein it was proposed to define a representation as a "postulated unconscious psychic organization capable of evocation in consciousness as a symbol, image, fantasy, thought or action" (cf. p. 130, above). Hence, it is possible that a person may, on the one hand, consciously decide to invest certain external objects with significance and power, and deliberately choose an

object, such as a person, a cross, a story or a church building, as a transitional object. On the other hand, she may be led to do so unconsciously, in which case "the meaning of the action or attribution is not immediately evident and can only be ascertained by interpretation within a broader social or historical context" (Meissner, 1990, p. 105).

Thus, both Shea and Object Relations Theorists hold that our relationships to events, circumstances as well as to persons, are the building bricks out of which we create a meaningful world. These relationships are not "flat," empirical realities, rather they have a depth dimension that arises from the human capacity for transitional experience, which is the psychic "space" wherein the ability to form and use symbol arises. Symbols not only draw on the conscious level of awareness, they are rooted too in the unconscious. When in transitional "space," a person uses symbol, then, all the creative potential of which he is capable begins to flow, and not only great art (Freud's one acknowledgment of transitional space) but great scientific theory, as well as religious ritual and story are born.

A further point of convergence is apparent, when Beres and Joseph talk of the interpretation that needs to be done, to bring unconscious material into consciousness. Shea conceptualizes the process in terms of myth-making and story-telling. His concern is with how the process works in the lives of adults, trying to create a meaningful world to live in, in the present. Story, as we know, gives rise to images. Images invite a conversation in order to distill values and attitudes, which then point to the practical strategies. Moreover, we saw Shea taking great pains to illustrate how biblical exegesis, the

scientific tools of contemporary western society, are powerful steps we can take in bringing the contents of the unconscious into consciousness. In the following quotation, used by Meissner (1990, p. 105), Andre Godin expresses his conviction that the two disciplines, psychology and theology, do indeed converge:

These two levels of symbolic expression, [the conscious and the unconscious] are closely linked and complementary to one another. The symbolic function is always exercised by an encounter between an interior urge, which results from the whole organization of the personality, and its actualization in exterior expressions of which most (but not all) are modelled by the surrounding culture, traditions, and social conventions. The symbolic act therefore unites not only several degrees of reality (matter and spirit), but several levels of human reality (conscious and unconscious, individual and social).

Godin not only points to complementarity around knowing as a phenomenon of sacramental imagination (in Shea's language) and symbolic knowing (in Pruyser's terms) as well as the importance of the unconscious in both, but he also speaks of the symbolic as involving the social dimensions of a person's life. Shea talks of an individual being bound to her community through the world-creating tales of her people. These tales and myths precede the individual and are a gift from his tradition with which he may choose to structure his life and give meaning to it. Object Relations Theory is, of its essence, interested in interpersonal and social phenomena--the emphasis accorded the mother-child dyad and the claims made for the immortal influence it exerts on all subsequent phases of a person's life, is enough to illustrate that. However, it has a relevance beyond that, for our understanding of culture and religion. Culture happens--and I would add religion happens--thanks to the human capacity to make and use symbols. A person exercising the symbolic function is creating the matrix within which

cultural experience (and religious experience) takes place. Cultural experience (or religious experience)

is not merely subjective (as derivative of and determined by intrapsychic dynamics only) nor it is exclusively objective (as a reflection of extrinsic and objectively determined qualities of the object); it is compounded of objective qualities, as of a painting or a statue or a piece of music, and the subjective experience that an individual brings to it. (Meissner, 1990, p. 105)

In the case of religious experience, there is the subjective dimension that comes from "the dynamic constituents of human understanding and motivation" (Meissner, 1990, p. 109) combined with the external objective dimension, which in John Shea's language is the traditional stories we inherit, coupled with the community's ritual. These stories, ritual objects, and ritual actions, are combined with the subjective element and are used in such a manner that they express meanings and values that transcend their physical characteristics. The symbolic dimension, Object Relations Theorists would tell us, is not something inherent in these stories or objects themselves. Meaning can come about only by the interpretative action of the believer:

Consequently, the objects as religious symbols are neither exclusively perceived in real and objective terms, nor simply produced by subjective creation. Rather they evolve from the amalgamation of what is real, material and objective as it is experienced, penetrated and creatively reshaped by the patterns of meaning attributed to the object by the believer. (pp. 106-7)

In this first moment, I have tried to uncover the convergence between the "from whence" of Shea's theological tradition and that of Object Relations Theorists in what concerns the view of faith as a human dynamic of knowing which is foundational for the shaping of a humanly meaningful environment. The Object Relational view has, I submit, given a psychological plausibility to the central claim of Shea's theological

account of faith as a form of knowing. As yet, little or nothing has been said concerning "the real" that is known through the form of transitional experience that we are calling faith. And it is to the issue of how psychologically, we may account for the sense of knowing reality, of being grounded in it, that is so typical of the "from whence," the starting point, of Shea's understanding of faith.

Faith and the Developing Sense of Being Real

In Shea's perspective, as we have seen, faith is a celebration of one's communion with Mystery. It is also a question, a hungering after Mystery, which is the ground of all that is real. In the light of Object Relations Theory, we can make a distinction between the subjective and the objective poles of this yearning. In doing this we are uncovering further dimensions of the psychological resources we bring to the faith-enterprise.

At the subjective pole of this desire for the real is the profound and unquenchable thirst to be real oneself, to feel, in Erikson's phrase that one's existence has an "actuality." Many people can take their sense of "being" for granted, most of the time, though for everyone there are moments when a sense of their life being disconnected, and falling apart, rushes through consciousness. There are times too, when one may disassociate from one's feelings, and experience oneself as existing in a vacuum. Therapists frequently describe a condition characterized by a nagging sense of unreality, of being detached and unconnected. Work with clients presenting these symptoms led Harry Guntrip to suggest that "an absence, non-realization,

or dissociation of the experience of 'being' and of the possibility of it, and along with that, an incapacity for healthy, natural, spontaneous 'doing' is the most radical clinical phenomenon in analysis" (quoted by McDargh, 1983, p. 77).

The sense of being self, of "being," is a developmental achievement that grows out of the child's relationship to his or her interpersonal world. We have reviewed how the holding environment, characterized by mirroring promotes psychic integration, how the child discovers her own value, beauty and worth in her reflection in the caretaker's eyes. This sense of affirmation is the basis for the realization of the potentialities given in the natural endowment of the child, for developing as a person through interpersonal relationships.

Theistic faith--the knowledge that is experienced in the Divine-human encounters of a person's life, such as those described by Dillard and recounted by Shea--is active not only in the formative process, but in all events and circumstances of the life cycle, "supporting the drive for a sense of personal reality, which may have been compromised or lost in the processes of the development of the self" (McDargh, 1983, p. 77). Shea's use of the stories of "tieving up the strong man" in Mk. 3:27, the Elisha story and the story of the Cross, to illustrate how knowledge of Mystery's presence, thematized as "water and cake in the desert," illustrates faith's sustaining and enhancing presence in the quest for a deepening and enlarged sense of participation in being, of being real. Perhaps, it is in telling stories of Mystery being "the seductive lure," that the self' truest nature is experienced. I am assuming that all we have already said about our capacity to use symbol--and story is a

symbol--is in our minds here. In telling these stories, and entering the transitional experience they promote, we engage in what John Shea calls a "dangerous exchange": we hand ourselves over, and receive back our life from God. The results of this exchange, effected through the symbol, is that we learn to "love our finitude and battle our sin." We know we are free. We are freedom, not in the sense that we can escape all the alienating structures of existence, but in the sense that we are funded from beyond. We say, not, "we can do everything," but "now, in God, all things are possible." From Object Relations perspective, we would say that the self has achieved integration. At the moment of expressing itself thus, it is a real self, a cohesive self.

Faith and a Developing Sense of Being in Relationship to a Real and Meaningful World

The second pole we referred to in the last section was that of the objective pole. As we have seen, from Shea's perspective, we need to be related to "what is." We saw that Freud was also attentive to "what is," and in his discussion of the reality principle he would have us believe that our acquisition of the sense of reality is a painful process indeed, forcing a compromise between the drive for pleasure and the demands of an inflexible world. McDargh points out that Hartmann tried to soften the opposition between reality and the drive for pleasure by suggesting that behavior under the control of the reality principle assures a deeper, more human pleasure than that of pure instinctual gratification--the pleasures of sublimated activities were not to be sneered at (McDargh, 1983, p. 79). This was at least a first step towards stating something that Bowlby was quite impressed by,

namely that human beings, from infancy, love to explore their environment and to enjoy manipulating it. Such exploratory behavior is as common as attachment behavior and every bit as important for development.

By exploring the "out there" the child or adult is engaging in a behavior that Bowlby considers vital for survival. However, if we were to use the metaphor of the child as the "scientific utilitarian" or the "calculating navigator" of hostile territory, who tries to make the best deal possible with reality, we would be wide of the mark, in getting a picture of the child's relationship to reality (cf. McDargh, 1983, p. 79). A much better metaphor, taken from our earlier discussion of the "practicing sub-phase" is that of the child as "the fledgling lover." As we saw, this is the period when the child takes the great step in individuation; when there is a powerful narcissistic investment in her own functioning, on the part of the child; when there is exquisite delight in exploring the world and escaping maternal fusion. And yet, this world is supremely interpersonal. For the very acquisition of the ability to "practice" depends on the "confident expectation" that needs will be met by the mother. It is the mother's presence, her ability to relieve distress, and to provide emotional closeness during the symbiotic phase, which birthed this "expectation"--and continues this service into the succeeding one. It is the mother's presence, and the confident expectation that she nurtures, that soothes the child's anxiety, and convinces her that the world is a welcoming place, that rewards her investigations with new delights and fresh wonders. When the toddler first ventures forth into the world, ideally, it is in

Michael Balint's image, with the belief that the entire cosmos is a kind of loving mother, holding the child tenderly in her arms--that it is solid and real.

With the onset of the rapprochement period comes disillusionment and anxiety. The child discovers her limitations and the limits of her power. The development of cognitive skills and the capacity for conceptualization make the world increasingly available to the growing child. The capacity for creative engagement with "reality out there" and for a courageous exploration of it, depends in a large measure on the continued renewal, in age appropriate ways, of that fundamental "expectation" which sponsored the first forays of investigation. To the degree that the world remains, in Balint's image, a loving mother, to that degree is the individual exposed to the sensory experience that will lead him or her to encounter--may be construct is a better word--reality. To the degree that "good-enough-mothering fails--and a person carries the corresponding self and object images with him or her, throughout the life cycle--or to the degree that one is driven by fear or anxiety, to that degree is one's reality subject to distortion and untruth.

John Shea does not concern himself with the psychological origins of the basic question "what is real." I think that Object Relations Theory supplies a deficit in his reflections at this point. It is not that the issue is unimportant for him. He can say things like: "The paradox of theistic faith . . . is that living in a relationship with a gracious God means living dangerously in an ungracious world" (Shea, 1980, p. 40). Where do the psychological

resources for such a faith stance come from? In the light of the reflection in this section the answer to that question lies in the existential knowledge a person gains, through the ministrations of "good-enough-mothering," of the reliability, the security, the "reality" of the "out-there-and-not-me." Perhaps it is true to say, that prompting the question "what is the real" as the starting point of faith, is the experience of the "confident expectation" of the "good-enough-mothered" child, who has been encouraged to engage in "a love affair with the world."

Faith Expressed in the Ability to
Enjoy Solitude

Stories of Faith begins with the telling of three stories.

Mystery reveals its bondedness to the three people concerned, as they enter deeply into their experience. Although, in the case of the grandfather on the plane, there is a companion with him, this companion acts principally as a sounding board, as far as the movement of the story is concerned. In the case of the other two characters, the teenage girl, and the middle-aged son, their solitude is complete. Through their relationship to what is, their bondedness to Mystery floods their consciousness, and they are "enticed to think, feel and act in accordance with this truth" (Shea, 1980, p. 15) Because of their awareness of their bondedness to Mystery, they become people of depth. Shea describes a variety of transforming experiences which are intensely personal and which take place in the solitude of each one's encounter with Mystery, the ground of one's being, of one's values and one's thinking--experiences that transform consciousness, conversion

experiences and revelatory experiences. Out of the encounter with Mystery in the solitude of a person's life, flows, not only a meaning for life--e.g., the girl listening to Mother Theresa sees that her life can be integrated around compassionate service--but also a set of values which give direction to her concrete behavior and which are an answer to her deepest needs, conflicts and aspirations.

In keeping with our intention to outline a constructive-relational view of faith we turn now to what we have seen of Object Relations Theory, and try to discern its contribution to our understanding of the place of solitude in the life of faith. The conceptualization of the challenges faced by the human person as he or she emerges from symbiosis to individuation, has exercised the imagination of people like Mahler and Winnicott. At a time when it appears that the major crisis in living, centers around the capacity for intimacy with others, and when the suffering that people most often experience is that associated with failed intimacy, it is striking that the capacity to be alone is hailed as a major developmental achievement. Mahler's work has provided an outline of the complex process through which a child must go in order to reach individuation, a state that involves the achievement of the capacity to be alone. We have augmented Mahler's outline, in Chapter II of this essay, with the work of other theorists and experimenters, and as a result, have an appreciation of the factors involved. The child learns to tolerate solitude only when she or he achieves object constancy. This capacity is the outcome of the developmental process that we have examined: the cognitive development described by Piaget, the affective bonding described by

Bowlby, the use of evocative memory, internalization, as well as initiation of exploration of the world, all of which find their place within the paradigm outlined by Mahler. At the time of achieving object constancy the child has the capacity to form whole objects, by which I mean she recognizes that the same mother is both "good" and "bad," and in parallel fashion, that she herself is a cohesive whole, both "good" and "bad" too. Thanks to the ability to evoke representations of caring others--which concomitantly evoke good self-representations--the child has internalized the capacity to self-sooth, to control anxiety, to experience the "non-I" as trustworthy and real (as we have seen earlier in this chapter) and thus to not only tolerate being alone, but to actually value such solitude. In terms of the lifelong project of relating to others, it is this capacity to tolerate being alone, without being inundated by the fear of abandonment, that empowers a person to embark on intimate relationships with others.

Correlating Shea and Object Relations Theorists, leads me to suggest that the psychological events which accompany the revelation experiences of Mystery in solitude are precisely those that we have considered in the preceding paragraph. Revelation-faith experiences have a psychological dimension which consists of the capacity to evoke a basic sense of trust, that holds annihilating anxiety at bay, that permits cognitive functioning; that involves the ability to bring together the "good" and the "bad," both internally and externally, and thus to tolerate the "bad."

Faith and the Developed Capacity to
Tolerate Dependence

The storied-world that John Shea offers us, is one in which human beings experience dependency. They are dependent on the gracious approach of Mystery towards them to reveal Itself as the ground of being and of valuing and of doing. Consequently, they depend on Mystery for the whole meaningful world that they construct through story-telling, image-making, value-naming and action-expressing. Think of the paradigm that Shea uses, taken from the writing of Annie Dillard, to illustrate our lack of control over, as well as our readiness for, the approach of Mystery. When he translates this image into a biblical one his choice is that of "Abba" the image of nurturing-fathering love, of the father, on whom Jesus depended throughout his life and ministry. Perhaps it is in the vision that Shea weaves from life as lived in the light of the creation story, that we have the clearest expression of how dependent on Mystery we are. The creation story is one of holiness--the holiness that pervades all creation. Creation can delight in itself because it is dependent on God's intention for it. Creation, human beings included, has dignity, a dignity conferred on it by God's presence to it. This dignity is an expression of the meaning God has given to creation. The experience of being dependent is brought home to one on every occasion one senses or knows oneself as related to the larger context within which one moves and has being. However, warns Shea, dependence is not an absolute--except dependence on Mystery itself. He sets boundaries around the dependence a person may have with another, or with a thing, when he begins to talk of the strategies of the "panicked heart," especially when these strategies take the track of "envy." This

"heart" follows the track of "self-beautification." It fawns; it tries to please in every respect. The person falls into the trap of idolatry, which leads to self-deception, and ends up in oppressing others.

It is part of our Freudian legacy that talk of being dependent is likely to arouse a certain uneasiness in us. People have found Freud's penetrating analysis of the relationship between dependency and neurosis so persuasive, that a person who speaks of any kind of dependency--especially one that has the blessing of religion--is likely to meet with severe suspicion, if not hostility. We are much more at ease talking of people being independent, coming of age, and responsible. Yet there is a fundamental truth about human existence stated in what Shea--and in this he joins a long line of theologians back to Augustine, who see creaturely dependence as a central character of the human person as the homo religiosus--has to say about the experience of being dependent. As we come to understand more about how the human person's journey through life and the developmental processes involved in this journey, we can assess dependency in a very different light from that of Freud.

Our study of Mahler and Bowlby have revealed that it is completely normative for the child to begin life in an utterly dependent condition. In this context, the meaning of dependency is colored by what these researchers have to say about attachment, and the intense emotional bond that develops between the child and mother. By virtue of its immature state at birth, and for many months thereafter, the neonate depends on the ministrations of others. It is not merely the physical needs of the child that are satisfied by the nurturing mother, but more

importantly the person's psychic structures begin to form during this period, thanks to what Kohut refers to as "transmuting internalizations." In Mahler's words "the child is at first absolutely and remains later on, 'even to the grave,' relatively dependent on the mother." From her perspective, Mahler defines dependence in this way: "the need each human has, whether child, adolescent, or adult, for a libidinal object relation in order to ensure his optimal psychic functioning" (quoted by McDargh, 1983, p. 84). In the case of the infant, dependence facilitates an important series of developmental increments: we saw that the child's dependence on the mothering figure draws him out of the tendency to autistically regress, into relationship with external reality (the mother herself); moreover, the memories of the experiences of being touched, while still utterly dependent on the mother, lead to "personalization," in Winnicott's term: the child's psyche becomes grounded in the body. When it comes to optimal psychic functioning in the adult we have to remember something that we said was the enduring part of the Freudian legacy:

the way a person relates in the external world, is determined by the intrapsychic structures, or object relations, that he or she has developed. These structures are the residue of the person's relationships with those in his or her environment, who in the days of infant-dependence, and early stages of maturation, nurtured and cared for him or her. (p. 93, above)

So our dependence as adults extends not only to those who are our friends, lovers, nurturing figures in the present, but those relationships from the past, which, leaving behind an internal set of object and self-representations, preserves a sense of continuity and "inner-sustainment." In McDargh's view, it is this inner-sustainment which enables us to accept the fact that we can never evade our

indebtedness to help that comes from the world outside us, and which impresses upon us the inevitability of the never-satisfied need we have of the love and acceptance of others. Dependence is an all-pervasive, but empowering reality in our lives. Thus, when Shea speaks to us of faith as involving dependence, he is touching, psychologically speaking, upon the inner sustainment which makes it possible for us to enjoy mature dependence, on other human beings certainly, but on Mystery, as well.

Perhaps we need to acknowledge that there is a continuum of age and condition-appropriate dependence--rather than a polarity of dependence/independence. During the autistic and symbiotic phases it is normative that the child emit attachment and "proximity-seeking" behaviors. But on a schedule, dictated by the security or insecurity of the child's attachment to the nurturer(s), a process of internalization begins, in the child, whereby he or she is capable of maintaining a sense of well-being and relatedness, even when the caretaker(s), is not present. This is what we have seen occurs with the attainment of object constancy. With the attainment of object constancy, the child no longer has to depend in a total way, on external figures for the sense of his own goodness and that of the world--he now carries within the capacity to not only self-soothe, but to affirm to himself, his own goodness and that of the world.

The Object Relations view of healthy development helps us challenge, what in some contexts, frequently passes for the height of maturity. I am referring to that view which holds that total independence is the essence of maturity. But the mishaps that can occur

in the individuation-separation process warns us against accepting the apparent, clear-as-day-truth of that position. Poor nurturing, or over-demanding nurturing can leave a person with an intolerable sense of weakness and vulnerability, in which the self is continually at risk. A lack of the sense that one can depend on caretakers, and on the world at large, for "goodness," may lead an individual to adopt what we have seen Melanie Klein term "a schizoid position." One develops a sense of self-reliance and self-sufficiency that is a defense against the inhospitable nature of the environment. In this case, all need for love and support from those (or that) beyond the person is denied, and all dependence is suppressed.

Time after time, John Shea insists on the primacy of the relational, and of our dependence on a greater reality. Once again there is a convergence of viewpoint between the theological and psychological disciplines. Both of them share a negative judgment of the assertions of the independence and adequacy of the self-made individual, as well as of the "implacable generosity of the relentless altruist who never seems to need or ask anything for him/herself" (McDargh, 1983, p. 87). Both the rugged individualist and the relentless altruist are touched by a quality of unfaith that looks on the world as hostile and threatening to that part of themselves which wants to acknowledge need, and which searches for relationship.

The admission of dependence would be an invitation to reexperience disappointment and betrayal. To push the matter to its most radical point, perhaps to admit ultimate need, one that exceeds the resources of any finite source of strength and love, would be to risk ultimate frustration. (p. 87)

A Pause for Orientation

At this point I have completed an expansion of the first part of the definition of faith that I gave earlier. I have attempted to show how Object Relations Theory helps us see the implications of saying that faith is a dynamic of human knowing, that is the foundational for the shaping of a humanly meaningful environment. We now turn to the second part of the definition: that faith finds its completion in an ever-growing capacity for self-affirmation, mutuality and compassion. As we have seen, this definition is largely inspired by our review of John Shea's theology. If we try to translate the theological language into a psychological register, then the fullness of faith development is reflected in the capacity for intimate, mature, mutual, loving relationships and self-commitment. This is what is involved in doing the "truth" that one knows. This loving will take many different shapes throughout a person's lifetime. I may be in the form of a child's first love affair with the primary caregiver, or that of a preschooler for her chum, or in adult life, the meeting with a stranger who is transformed into a lover or a spouse, or may be in the support and compassion offered to a neighbor. But given the fact that knowing in a "full" way is often very difficult--Shea's account of the envious and rejected heart reminds us of the possibilities of "missing the mark"--it is no wonder that doing the loving thing is often a test for even the greatest of heroes. Mature loving calls for resources as great as those which sustain a person in carrying the burden of solitude or coping with dependence. John McDargh comments in this respect: "In loving someone we make ourselves vulnerable to the first and gravest threat to the

integrity of the self--being bereft, abandoned, or disappointed by the loved one(s)" (McDargh, 1983, p. 90). Every time we love, there is a real possibility that the trauma associated with earlier experiences of living and leaving or loving and losing will be reawakened. But the reverse side of that scenario is no less true. All past love experiences in a person's life have been instances of profound knowing, of contact with reality, of encounters with Mystery. Experiences of caring, nurturing and mutuality, and the psychic residues they leave, are psychological resources a person has, to call on every time the invitation to engage in a living encounter is given in the present. Mutuality, compassion and mature loving, are both the goal of faith, and the source of the development which eventually empowers an individual to receive and to give love.

Just as we spoke of the notion of faith as foundational for the shaping of a humanly meaningful environment into five distinct, though related aspects, so now it may prove helpful to analyze the capacity for love, self-affirmation and compassion into two component parts, chosen because of their relevance to faith as a dynamic process (1) faith and the capacity to overcome splitting, or the rejected heart and (2) faith and the development of the capacity to give oneself.

Faith and the Capacity to Overcome Splitting or the Rejected Heart

As we saw in Chapter I, Jack Shea describes in powerful imagery, the rejected heart and its two pronged strategies. With the first prong, the rejected heart stabs at everything and everybody around it: it sees everything in its devalued form--for it, sexual love can only be

lust, dedication must be guilt; reason becomes rationalization and neighborliness can only be egoism. In other words, it projects badness and evil all around. Freud noticed the same phenomena, and, at least towards the end of his life, spoke of Thanatos to explain it. With its second prong, the rejected heart gnaws away at the integrity of its own inner core. It is self-loathing. It deems itself unworthy of love from anyone or anything, Poignantly Shea concludes, "it makes its home in places where life is perishing" (1983, p. 157).

In these passages Shea is dealing in theological terms with a phenomenon the Object Relations Theorists deal with in terms of splitting. Shea, at this point in his reflections, does not make mention of the fact that the very people or things that are hated, are, at the same time, the very people and things the individual longs for and loves. What is hated is loved; what is bad is good and good is bad. Ambivalence is everywhere. As I indicated a moment ago, when Freud met these data in experience he proposed an instinct theory, a dual instinct theory to account for them; alongside Thanatos, the aggressive drive, he enthroned Eros, the libinal drive. Object Relation Theorists see a different solution--these affects are not only resident in people, but they are also factors that are experienced in their interpersonal relationships.

In our review of the work of Mahler and others, we have repeatedly seen that it is normative that the caretaker frustrate the wishes of the infant. This happens even in the optimal case. In the less than ideal cases the frustration level is higher. From the baby's perspective there is the alternation between satisfaction and

frustration, between pleasure and goodness on the one hand and between discomfort and rage against the parent, on the other. The question then is: what does the child do with these conflicting affects? We have not treated this issue in any depth, previously. We hypothesize the answer that the child either "projects," and thereby locates the undesirable affects in the external world, or he "introjects," whereby he takes in those aspects of the interpersonal world that are associated with what is good and satisfying. Thus for example the child preserves the goodness of the mother by projecting both hatred and love, goodness and badness. Insofar as his experience is concerned, the "hated" mother is a different object from that of the "loved mother." The child, in other words has recourse to the defense of splitting.

Almost as though there were two separate and unconnected figures in the universe, the child identifies as good the parental representations associated with the memory of the satisfaction of the need for closeness, acceptance, nurturance and the alleviation of anxiety; and as bad those representations linked to the tension of unfilled needs. (McDargh, 1983, p. 94)

As a child matures under normal conditions, he or she gradually comes to recognize the "bad" bother and the "good" mother as a single figure--he recognizes that she is sometimes frustrating and sometimes satisfying. The child relates to a "whole" object. As we would expect from what we saw in Chapter II, as object representations change, so do self-representations. Thus, as the child develops a "whole" representation of the mother, so she develops a "whole" self-representation, and recognizes that she is capable of both love and hate, love and aggression. It is helpful to recall what Melanie Klein suggested about the problems the child finds herself in, as she tries to work out her relationships with the world. Klein proposed that the child, at various

times, finds herself in one of three "positions": the schizoid, the paranoid, or the depressive position.

In the schizoid position the infant is withdrawn from object relations. In the paranoid position, the infant is in relationship, but feels persecuted by his objects. In the depressive position he has overcome these difficulties and has become able to enter more fully into whole object relationships, only to be exposed to guilt and depression over the discovery that he can hurt those he has become capable of loving. (Guntrip, 1971, p. 61)

There are two things in this quotation that are especially noteworthy for our purposes: (1) Klein is saying that the child has become capable of loving and (2) that this loving is associated with guilt and depression. In the "depressive position," the child needs to make reparation for the injury that she perceives her anger as having caused the parent. Here, Object Relations Theorists propose, is the starting point of the capacity for mutual role taking and for empathy.

The drift of my argument at this point is, that we have, at a very early age, an orientation to look on ourselves as loving and loved creatures, who are at home in the universe and intimately connected with it. We assume that the universe is kindly disposed towards us and welcomes our initiatives. But from the beginning, before we have had the time to form even a primitive series of affects about our world, we come up against the unyielding character of reality, and this eventually arouses conflicting feelings within: love and rage. Introjection, projection and splitting are only three members of a defensive arsenal we form to help sustain a hopeful perception of the universe, and of ourselves as lovable. Rizzuto documents the result of the defensive maneuvers we make. She tells us that after we repress object-representation, we repress self-representation and we "experience

loneliness, emptiness, a fear of losing oneself, a feeling of being abandoned." I want to suggest that faith is a kind of antidote against the distortions caused by all the defensive maneuvers we make. Faith can be such, because as we have seen, it breaks the tyranny of the sense perception, it frees the imagination, gives birth to symbol, and allows the individual to give meaning to events and circumstances. Faith can help a person, not to get rid of all projections and introjections, but to mitigate these defenses against the ambivalence that splitting gives rise to. Faith teaches one to restrain one's polarization of the world and self as all good and all bad in order to preserve a sense of self as lovable and the world as a loving place.

Let us take an example to illustrate what I mean. A family is celebrating the second birthday of their child. Grandmother is present at the party. Midway through the afternoon they run out of pop. Grandmother offers to go to get some. She goes out, starts her car, but fails to see her grandson follows her. She reverses the car, runs over her grandson, and kills him. Many weeks later, and each day, she sits in her sitting room, holding a cross in her hand, rocking gently over and back, as she says "My God, you love me, I know you do, I trust you, help me to go on." The cross, for this woman, functions as a transitional object; holding it in her hands, she enters into transitional experience, and is no longer tied down by the brute, hard facts of the situation. The cross frees her imagination as well as her cognitive functions. Her situation is reshaped in such a way that she senses that she can trust that Love, or God, is present even in this horror, in the guilt and shame, in the loneliness and suffering that she feels.

Because she can experience the situation in this way, give it meaning in the light of the symbol of the cross, she does not have to judge herself as all bad because of what happened, or bitterly recriminate against her daughter for not watching her child better. She can tolerate the badness and the goodness present in both herself and in external reality. She can know the "whole" and this knowledge overcomes the ambivalence she feels, supports mature self-love as well as other-love, and promotes genuine intimacy with her family.

A person who knows in this manner, whose faith is like this, realizes that most of the attachments he forms throughout his lifetime are, at their best, less than the idealizations he makes of them, and at their worst, better than the severity of his judgments would paint them to be. Such a person knows his own loveliness and value in spite of the failures that might encourage self-devaluation. Despite his non-attainment of the lofty ideals and expectations he places on himself, he is good, and more adequate than his worst fears would have him believe.

Faith describes an underlying assurance of goodness and possibility that supports an awareness that the world as the object of my love and attention is imperfect, fallible, frustrating, and yet, confounding of all my efforts to divide it into good and bad, acceptable and unacceptable, us and them, mine and yours. (McDargh, 1983, p. 95)

Faith as Empowerment for Radical Self-Giving and Compassion

The touchstone of the importance of Jesus for John Shea is found in the answer to the question "Is contact with the graciousness of Mystery possible for us today, through Jesus of Nazareth?" While his answer to that question is in the affirmative, all is not light. The ambiguity of the situation we find ourselves in is due to the fact that

Jesus is absent; that contact with him depends on our hearing and telling the stories about him in the context of being in the presence of other people. People who gather to hear, tell, and celebrate the Jesus stories, are often led to a startling discovery: that what happened in the lives of the men and women who encountered Jesus in the flesh, continues to happen in their lives right now--their hope is rekindled, they experience an expansion of consciousness, undergo "metanoia," and deepen their fellowship and commitment to one another. The passion of Mystery, for the well-being of all reality becomes their passion too. In the shorthand of the Christian tradition, they discover that Jesus lives among them. To account for this experience of absence which is really presence, they say that the Spirit of Jesus is among them.

More than any other circumstance of the life of Jesus, it is the cross and the stories it has generated, that reveal Mystery's graciousness and compassion to Jesus, and through him, to all human beings. It is the cross that rivets the attention of Christians. The images associated with it, powerfully attract the human imagination. They excite attitudes and values that govern behavior. While the cross proclaims Mystery's sustaining presence to human beings even in the direst of circumstances, it no less eloquently speaks of Jesus' total response and commitment both to his Father and to the well-being of his fellow human beings: the cross is Mystery's finest statement, and example of compassionate service and creative empowerment for others. Shea speaks of the cross doing three things for Christians: it grounds the Christian community, it is the symbol of its realism and an on-going principle of critique (Shea, . 1978, pp. 157-60). As a symbol of

realism it is a reminder that responsible caring for others will entail risk and suffering. As a principle of critique the Cross states that while Jesus came, and in the Spirit still comes, to establish a genuine, nurturing human community, the machinations of self-protecting fear can never be underestimated. God on the cross speaks of his total opposition to "the facile wisdom that power is for control and muscle makes community" (1978, p. 160). God on the Cross unmaskes the use of abusive power as a fear of life. It is perhaps the first function of the cross--as grounding the Christian community--that is of most relevance to our concern here. The cross clearly reveals God's self-giving love, which liberates us from egoism and exploitation of others. Since we have handed ourselves over to God and received ourselves back from him, entrusted with his cause, we are empowered to belong to each other in a life-giving manner. The God in Jesus has taken the worst that humans can do into himself and has turned it toward the good.

The law of the cross is not that evil has been eliminated but that it has been transformed into possibility. The power of sin and suffering which generated the anti-community styles of domination and manipulation and deceit have been broken. If we dwell with the cross of Christ, the compulsion to protect ourselves at all costs yield to the possibilities of dialogue, respect and integrity. The funding experience which makes Christian Community possible is God on the Cross. (1978, p. 158)

A psychological analysis of what is involved in loving, nurturing, intimacy and compassion, offers us important insights into the humanside of the loving, respectful, holy (in the sense of dignified), service to which the Gospel calls all people. Psychology can help illumine the process by which people are led to commit themselves to the radical life of loving that is symbolized by the cross. What seems to be the case is that the capacity to be mutual in

one's relationships, to be compassionate and available for service has its source in the experience of fullness and completion of satisfying primary relationships. We are back at a point we have made on several occasions: where one has a history of satisfying object and self-representations, then one has a capacity for more comprehensive, more profound, and continuous sharing and compassionate engagement with others.

It seems reasonable to hold that the same conditions which induce a person to withdraw from human intimacy and to avoid taking risk in caring for others, are also at work in the resistances that same individual offers to an approach of love from Mystery or God. To the degree that an individual has experienced deprivation or neglect, whose self and object representations are negative, to that degree we can expect reluctance to enter the world of the Christian story of the Cross and to develop a lifestyle that is characterized by acknowledgment of the dignity of others and a commitment to them in a nurturing and caring way. Without the ability to sustain a sense of one's own reality, of the reality of the external world, without the ability to self-soothe--which presupposes the internalizations of satisfying functions performed by another for the individual, initially--then part of the person must always be held back, there cannot be total commitment to the welfare of another or others. Wholehearted giving for such a person would pose a grave threat to her sense of self and well-being. All this suggests that the prerequisite for authentic mutual loving and compassion is the prior experience(s) of receiving care and compassion oneself--it is out of a "fullness" that compassion flows.

I am not suggesting that Mystery's approach to human beings is curtailed by the psychological traumas a person may have experienced-- as we have seen the cross is the symbol of Mystery's intense presence in suffering contexts--what I am saying however, is that the person's ability to receive Mystery's approach as gracious, and to respond to It, as well as to translate his or her experience of Mystery into concrete, caring strategies, may well be limited.

From a theological perspective, it is totally fitting to suggest that the encounter with Mystery is therapeutic, that Mystery functions as a kind of self-object that holds, mirrors, affirms the individual and invites identification to the degree that he or she can form health-promoting ideals. Granted this, it remains true that, psychologically, it is difficult for someone whose self and object representations are negative, or threatening, to be compassionate, to serve and love after the manner of Jesus going to the cross.

John Shea offers an insight that throws a slightly different light on this issue. As he often repeats, it is in and through our immediate environments that we encounter Mystery, but the fact is that these immediate environments are often hostile and ambiguous. In that case, Mystery's intentions towards us are perceived as inimical or indifferent. Once a person makes such a discernment, then he or she must bring himself or herself into conformity with It, has to live out of that indifference. We "do not twist the Mystery to graciousness for personal benefits" (1980, p. 65). For such a person, the truth about himself or herself is found in the constant presence of fear and anxiety and the moments of graciousness and harmony are ultimately deception.

If, on the other hand, the relationship to Mystery is truly gracious, the effort is to move with graciousness, even though one may want to act indifferently.

Once again, I think we can see a convergence between the psychological and the theological perspectives. Rizzuto has shown us how the Image of God that we create, is totally bound up with the self and object images that we have formed. To have a representation of God which is gracious and benign, implies that one's self-image is positive. This in turn depends on the "good-enough" mirroring, holding and nurturing that an individual has received. To be gifted with a positive God-representation implies that an individual has the resources to pursue the on-going task of self-integration, and of confirming one's relationship with self-objects--people and things. The contribution of Object Relations makes it perfectly understandable that a person whose image of Mystery is negative, will be unable to pursue either self-integration or creative, healing activity in his or her world: the accompanying self and object images or representations means that the person has to busy himself or herself in the task of self-defense.

Let us examine both of these scenarios--of the healthy and less healthy person--and seek to understand further dimensions of the dynamics, from both a theological and psychological viewpoint, which ground radical self-giving and compassion. We will take the case of the healthy person first. For Shea, behaviors flow from values and attitudes, which in turn are shaped by images, which are part of the legacy bequeathed by stories which are ways of explicitating the nature of the gracious relationship with Mystery, grasped in the moment of

knowing it. We have seen how the great Judea-Christian images of rescue and covenant, judgment and apocalypse, of resurrection and parousia, all come together, to weave stories of hope and justice, which are the source of the horizons which shape human worlds of justice and compassion, respect and solidarity; we have seen how images of creation and incarnation, Spirit and Church, unfold into behavior patterns, which speak of equality and respect. I perceive a convergence between this point of view, and Object Relations, at the point where the latter talk about the qualities of the healthy self (cf. p. 147, above). When the self develops into a healthy, cohesive self he or she enjoys a healthy level of self-esteem, such healthy esteem expresses itself through a set of goals and values, which in turn guide the person's use of his or her autonomous ego-functions. Healthy self-esteem is the source of the values which urge a compassionate reaching out to others, and sustains the ability for mutuality in intimate relations.

Then, there is the case of the person who has been traumatized, who has experienced either serious or even mild and intermittent failure in the care offered by important others in his or her life. Elaborate classifications have been made of the disorders that result when a person's self has not been able to develop satisfactorily. Clinicians speak of psychotic conditions, borderline personality disorders, narcissistic behavior disorders, narcissistic personality disorders as well as of psychoneuroses. A clinical description of these conditions is not necessary for our purposes here. It suffices, just to refer to some of the behavior-patterns of people, who have not a cohesive sense of self. I use the description of these behavior patterns given by E.

s. Wolf (1988, p. 73). In the case of people who have a Mirror Hungry Personality, they like to display themselves to attract the attention of others, and in the attention they get, they find the counterbalance of the worthlessness they feel. People whose personality is what Wolf calls the Ideal Hungry Personality can only experience self-esteem if they have someone to whom they look up. Any impugning of the ideal leads to fragmentation of the self. If one has an Alter-Ego Hungry Personality then one needs confirmation through association with another self whose opinions, values and appearance one shares. Some peoples' behavior is intended to give them the experience of merger with another and thus to control the other. Often the need to control is experienced by the other as a feeling of being oppressed, because the hungry person cannot bear the other's independence or separation. Such is the behavior pattern of the Merger Hungry Personality. Finally there is the Contact Shunning Personality. The symptoms in this behavior pattern are the strategies the person employs to keep others at a distance, even at the moment when they experience an intense need for contact. Wolf mentions two constellations of behaviors--the schizoid and the paranoid.

There are certain in-built dangers in the efforts such people make to appropriate the story of the Cross, in particular. Above, we said that the cross liberates us from egoism, and that it reminds us that care for others entails risk and suffering. If these two functions of the cross are not balanced by the third function, that of critique, whereby each person is attuned to the particular ways in which he or she falls a victim to fear and anxiety, then a form of life may evolve that is anything but Christian: often a perverse lifestyle is dressed up in

Christian clothing. Behaviors as diverse as aggression and humiliating, shame-provoking unassertiveness--to which people with the "hungry" personalities, may well be addicted--are interpreted as the cost involved in "carrying the cross," and the highest expression of "self-sacrificing love." Shea, as usual, graphically puts it thus: "Asking people to stretch their skins is one thing, asking them to leave their skins behind is another" (1984, p. 160). He documents the terrible ways that love goes wrong. One of its most soul-destroying forms is that of identification, when the lover becomes the beloved, when the self is lost in the other. "This total love-alchemy, turning into another does not respect the non-fluidity of the self and definite 'not-me-ness' of all other people" (p. 175).

There are antidotes to such perversions. First, let the theologian say how an abusive spirituality of the cross may be avoided. Beyond recourse to the critical function of the cross itself, mentioned above, there is a further remedy: tell the Story of the Cross within the Story of Creation and Incarnation--as John Shea does. These stories, as we have seen, are the celebration of God's delight--and ours--in the goodness of all there is, and its readiness to receive and bear God's presence. Such being the case, one can use the category of "dignity" as the means of regulating one's encounter with, and appreciation of, the whole of reality--which includes the person's own self. As I wrote earlier,

dignity is the basis of meaning, which Shea proposes, is found when each person senses, and knows, that he or she is related to the larger context within which he or she moves. Once the meaning of one's life is grasped a deeper question emerges: "Do I have worth?" . . . God's sabbath presence speaks of that worth too. (pp. 66-67, above)

If a person inhabits this world shaped by the Story of the Cross within the Story of Creation and Incarnation, then his or her life is peopled by images which form attitudes, which in turn prompt concrete strategies in a lifestyle that is aptly characterized as one of "trust and freedom." When we try to interpret this in Object Relations terms, we are sent back to a suggestion that Rizzuto makes, which we dealt with in Chapter III. There we saw her looking to the characters, the heroes and heroines of the religious stories, as complementary or alternative models to one's family or friends (who, as we know are the source of our object representations, and as such impact our self and God representations). These figures may become people with whom we wish to identify, and in the identification with them, have our worth validated. Moreover, as I have said elsewhere, the stories may function as transitional objects, facilitating transitional experience. In this case, the characters may function as a kind of "self-object" which holds the self, empowering it to face life's terror, and to achieve a sense of its own cohesiveness which experiences, simultaneously, both the fact of separation and secure attachment to another. When the self is in this situation, then it can reach out to others in radical self-giving and compassion.

Self-Sacrifice and Equal Regard

Self-sacrifice may well be something extremely unhealthy and anti-Christian--such is the position we have outlined above. Is there then, no place at all for self-sacrifice, in the world of the person with a cohesive self, who reads the stories of the Cross in a healthy way? In the storied-world of creation-incarnation-cross, interpersonal

relationships are expressions of the equality, mutuality and liberating service to which one is committed. Spontaneously, we want to find a place for self-sacrifice in this world. Shea states it plainly: "Christian love demands a sacrifice" (1975, p. 172). He turns to the Christological Hymn of Phil. 2:5ff., and focuses in on the verse which reads: "Yet he did not cling to his equality with God." Thus, he concludes, the true nature of divinity is the outward movement towards all reality. A god who would stand on his privileges at all costs, is a false god. Such a god "has subordinated his true selfhood to his ego," which is the self determined to protect itself from suffering and anxiety.

Only when the ego is dissolved can the self move outward in genuine presence to the other. With this understanding, kenosis, the self-emptying of God, is also paradoxically his self-becoming.

If the love of God dissolved the ego and expanded the self to include humankind, the Christian is urged to participate in the same dynamic. (p. 173)

Shea has raised an important issue here, but I find his solution vague. The only thing to be sacrificed is the ego, the self in its fearful, protective aspects. I turn at this point to the work of Louis Janssens who has recovered an important part of the Christian tradition and who helps us deal more adequately with the issue of how we should consider self-sacrifice. For Janssens, self-sacrifice is not the ideal of the Christian life, as so much of the tradition would have it. Shea would have no disagreement with this. Next, Janssens launches a new line of reflection, as in this quotation: "In short, self-sacrifice is not the quintessence of love. . . . Self-sacrifice is justified derivatively from other-regard" (quoted by Browning, 1988, p. 152). By other-regard, Janssens means a regard for the other that is rooted in the

dignity, equality, and mutuality that are part of the world, which in Shea's terms, is shaped by the story of the Cross told within the story of Creation and Incarnation. Then, continues Janssens:

In accord with the impartiality of Agape, we maintain that one is to have equal regard for self and others, since the reason for valuing the self are identical with those for valuing others, namely that everyone is a human being. . . . Valuing the self, as well as others remains a manifest obligation. (Quoted by Browning, p. 151)

Commenting on Janssens, Browning goes on to conclude that we must regard and love the neighbor equally as ourselves, and we must do this, even if the neighbor does not reciprocate our regard and love, or actively works against us. When we do this, it is not because such loving is an end in itself, but because it is part of the fundamental obligation of mutuality and equal regard for the self and neighbor.

As long as human beings live in a world of finitude and sin, perfect mutuality will not prevail within the context of human affairs. There will always be unbalance, inequality and injustice. The Christian concept of Agape, does entail an active, self-giving, self-sacrificial effort to restore mutuality, when it has broken down. . . . Christians should do this [be self-sacrificing] not as an end in itself, but as a transition to the restoration and maintenance of true equal-regard and mutuality. (pp. 152-53)

There is need to add a few clarifications to this. The impartiality of self-love and other regard demands that we must be quite clear on the distinction between meeting the other's needs and submitting to exploitation by the other. Exploitation is to be opposed because it turns a person into an object and robs him or her of dignity. Moreover we must resist exploitation not only in the name of our own dignity, but for the sake of the other as well (p. 153).

We have seen how Object Relations Theorists have an interest in fragmentation of the self, and the conditions which result from this, which I have suggested are the psychological concomitants of the rather

sickly spirituality and theology of suffering that is sometimes peddled under the banner of "Christian." A world created in tune with the stories and images generated by the telling of the Crucifixion story within the context of the Creation and Incarnation, has many affinities with the world which clinicians, working out of Object Relations Theory, hope to encourage. In both these worlds, people interact with firm boundaries drawn around their own self, yet not inflexibly so. Neither the rugged individualist, nor the relentless altruist, is the most honored and welcomed citizen of this world--except insofar as they are invited to grow strong so that neither fear nor anxiety tears them apart. In both these worlds, it is the quality of the interpersonal, mutual relationships that provide the healing environment, wherein the fragmented self (Object Relations) or the rejected heart (Shea) can begin the process towards integration or healing.

Depth Metaphors and Obligation

Both as one reads, and talks with, John Shea, one is struck by his passion and concern for dealing with the present circumstances of the concrete, flesh and blood people who are part of his world. It is the successes and failures, the joys and anxieties, loves and fears of the present that are the raw data to which he brings the Stories, images and values of the Christian tradition, in order to create meaning and to empower people to transcend their present horizons. Yes, human beings can transcend the environments--of self, family, society, nature and cosmos--to which each person is so intimately related, and which, at the same time, powerfully shape the lives of every living, feeling and knowing human being. Out of this transcendence, flows a future for each

person, whose contours, as a result of the stories they tell, consists of trust, freedom, hope and justice.

On the other hand, Object Relations Theorists, have a sensitive concern for the past, or better how the past, in the form of the living, emotionally charged representations of parents, early caregivers, siblings and of many significant childhood possessions, continues to survive, and exert influence in the present.

I first became aware of these two perspectives while studying Shea's theology and Object Relations Theory. Later, I discovered that Don Browning generalizes this insight. He argues that it is the task of theology to look forward, to think "prospectively" and to outline life's goals. He sees the tasks of clinical psychology as very different. Its genius is to be able to think "retrospectively" and to help us understand the key connections between biology, familial and social influences, and the formation of the self

Theology has few concepts to assist in this retrospective analysis. With the advent of the clinical psychologies with their special languages to accomplish this task, we have a remarkable opportunity to forge new disciplinary alliances which will help provide both powerful procedures for retrospective analysis and powerful normative and prospective images of human fulfillment. (1988, p. 11)

It is my hope that the present chapter has already illustrated how one particular modern psychology can reinforce and expand a modern theological enterprise. There is another set of questions that come to mind as we work with these two disciplines. Now it is time to put the shoe on the other foot, as it were, and to scrutinize the psychology in the light of the theology. There are questions that need to be asked of the psychology. Is it a pure science? Where does its metaphors of

ultimacy cross the boundaries of pure science? At what point does it stop being purely concerned with health issues and become prescriptive? Can we describe the characteristics of this ethical view, its ethical principles--its deontology--and its ideals of the virtuous life--its aretaic preferences? What has theology to say about this ethics and its funding depth metaphors which function as world creating images?

Theology, which is self-reflectively the carrier of a particular world view and accompanying ethical values is entitled to engage psychology, which is much less aware of the ethical and/or "religious" (in the sense of ultimate, world-creating) baggage it implies. Psychologists have been known to protest their innocence of either the intention, or the fact, of crossing over the boundaries of "pure science" into the domains of ethics, religion and philosophy. Their protests are not always convincing. We turn now to the task of delimiting the ethics that may be carried by Object Relations Theory and practice. We will critique it with the ethics that we have seen are congenial to the theology of John Shea.

It is fair to say that Object Relations Theory gives a clear view of what its practitioners think human fulfillment is. Fulfillment is found in healthy existence and living. Health is the fruit of the formation of an integrated or cohesive self. I follow the lead taken by Don Browning--speaking of Kohut--(1988, p. 221) and use an Eriksonian term, generativity, as a description of the meaning of health, for the Object Relations "school." For them, the basic criterion of health is "a relatively nonconflictual capacity to care for the succeeding generations" (p. 221). In Mahler, this criterion is met in the picture

she draws of the mother who enters the "species specific symbiosis" in order to provide for the survival of the child (1975, p. 77). The mother's capacities are fine-tuned to meet the deficits of the infant's own abilities. Winnicott's parental functions of holding, mirroring, and object realizing (cf. pp. 100, 128 above) are further aspects of this fit between mother and child, that is the sin qua non condition for health. Recall that the experiences generated in "good-enough-mothering" influence the person, throughout the life-cycle, since they become part of the primary representations of self and object that form the person's core self. So we are talking here of health throughout the life-span and not merely in childhood. Object Relations practitioners have thus developed their criterion of health, and as such, observation and repeated testing can show whether this criterion is adequate or not. But the issue here for us, is whether these people move to making this health-criterion a statement of the goal of life, including its psychobiological dimensions. Do they move from the isness of health to the oughtness of obligation? I suggest that Winnicott is certainly one who does. His view is that the phenomenon that he has called "primary maternal preoccupation" (p. 100, above) "gives the mother the ability to do the right thing. She knows what the baby could be feeling like. No one else does" (1960, p. 15). He wrote an article on Advising Parents, and the message to doctors and nurses was "don't" or tread like angels if you do! It is much safer to rely on the mother's instincts as these come from her "primary maternal preoccupation." A clear statement of how the health criterion becomes an ethical statement. Without being able to prove conclusively that other Object Relations practitioners do

the same thing, I suspect they do. For instance their clinical goals of providing an empathic, caring environment, in order to provide the client with the opportunity to reexperience the early stages of development, and thus integrate the split or repressed parts of the ego, certainly points in this direction.

We have used the Eriksonian word "generative" to describe what Object Relations Theorists propose as a criterion of health and as an ethical imperative. In its original context generative means, not simply the ability to create, but the capacity to care for what one creates. Erikson's own words are that care "is the widening concern for what has been generated, by love necessity or accident; it overcomes the ambivalence adhering to irreversible obligation" (quoted by Browning, 1988, p. 222). Showing his reluctance to depart from his Freudian psychobiological legacy, Erikson maintains that there is an instinctual basis for generativity: "[Both animals and humans] instinctively encourage in their young what is ready for release" (quoted from Identity, Youth and Crisis, in Browning, 1988, p. 222). That is not the whole story, as Browning's amendment of Erikson states:

Really mature forms of generativity entail a subtle synthesis of instinctual needs of various kinds, early ego-strengths and virtues, and an artful coordination of these accrued powers with the developmental needs of those for whom we have been assigned to care. (p. 222)

Although I cannot remember meeting the term in the Object Relations literature, I do not think that we are doing such people as Winnicott and Mahler an injustice, by suggesting that they talk of a reality that is close to what Erikson conceptualizes as generativity. These authors, while welcoming many of Freud's insights, went beyond his

focus on the crises of the Oedipal Complex as the unique source of disturbed psychic functioning. We have seen how they adopted the insights he had developed around the formation of the Superego, to the development of the Ego, a term that for them, describes the processes through which the person relates and adapts to the environment. Attachment, affection, bonding, assertiveness and exploration are their favored concepts in describing the fundamental motivational directions of human beings, rather than libido, aggression, Eros or Thanatos, as was the case with Freud. Their changed perceptions of what human motivation consists in, gives birth to the criterion of human fulfillment that we have seen earlier: the capacity to care for succeeding generations. This criterion of fulfillment accords a vital role to the optimal parent, a role the parent must fulfill, if the child is to survive, or develop healthily, and if the parents, or at least the mother, is to achieve the fulfillment for which she has the innate potential. Thus while Object Relations Theorists have their roots firmly planted in Freudian soil, and make no pretense of shaking off all traces of a psychobiological view (excluding Fairbairn and Guntrip), they are not adverse to taking in nourishment from humanistic psychologists like Maslow, for whom self-actualization was the supreme aim of development, and the highest good.

We need to examine further, the role accorded to the optimal parent if we are to understand the nature of the ethics carried by Object Relations Theory. Winnicott calls her the "good-enough-mother," a phrase taken up by Mahler. This parent knows not only when to satisfy, but is expert too, in optimally frustrating the child, for the

sake of development. Kohut catches the nature of the role of the optimal parent when he writes:

Optimal parents--again I should rather say: optimally failing parents--are people who, despite their stimulation by and competition with the rising generation, are also sufficiently in touch with the pulse of life, accept themselves as transient participants in the on-going stream of life, to be able to experience the growth of the next generation with unforced, nondefensive joy. (Quoted from The Restoration of the Self, p. 237, by Browning, 1988, p. 223)

Although Kohut is a Self-Psychologist, there is nothing in this quotation which would be offensive to the position of the broad spectrum of Object Relations practitioners. For Mahler, no less than Kohut, the parent is "optimally failing," sufficiently in touch with her own feelings, and the baby's life, that she know when to support, and when to withdraw, when to envelop the next generation with affection, and when to separate.

Ethically, what we have in this position is, according to Browning, a marriage of a theory of self-actualization and a theory of motivation that finds a place for limited altruism. There is motivation to offer care to the next generation, a biological motivation, and in offering care, the parent attains the heights of self-actualization. Self-actualization is the highest good towards which one may aspire. The roots of this good are found in the biological make-up of the mother, since it is her innate capacities, capacities triggered by cues from the child, that push her into that psychic space that Winnicott described as "primary maternal preoccupation." At this point, Object Relations Theorists join Erikson, and conflate self-actualization and the generative care of the succeeding generation, as the deepest and most significant of human motives. All of these clinicians then, find

themselves in the happy position that what they consider to be their principle of obligation--one must care for the succeeding generation--is profoundly congruent with the deepest inclinations and motives of the human being. The highest good, self-actualization, is achieved by fulfilling the obligation, which simultaneously, is the basic natural instinct.

The result of this is that one has a moral obligation to do that which deep down one wants to do. Or to say it differently, it is morally justifiable to do what one is inclined to do, because what one is inclined to do is moral. (Browning, 1988, p. 225)

If we turn to Shea's theological perspective at this point, we can see that he would appreciate the notion of care for the next generation. In the world shaped by the Christian stories, people would indeed be available as soothing, empowering self-objects for others. In fact we have already seen how a solid cohesive self makes compassionate loving possible. However, Shea and the tradition of which he is a part would, I think, show reserve for the formulation of the fundamental ethical principle of Object Relations Theory: one ought to care for the succeeding generations, and from its choice of the highest nonmoral good: self-actualization. They are too restrictive. The experience of life's giftedness, the sense of reconciliation with the cosmos, and with everyone and everything in it, are more likely candidates for that honor. Self-actualization might well figure on a list of the nonmoral goods available, but would not emerge on top.

As I suggested earlier, the ethical principle that comfortably fits the theological outlook of John Shea is that enunciated by Janssens who claims that the fundamental ethical principle is "one ought have equal regard for others and for self." This is based on Mystery's on-

going self-revelation within human experience, as this is interpreted in the light of the Incarnation-Creation stories. We also saw, at that point in our discussion, how this tradition makes place for the idea of self-sacrificing love, where this does not entail the loss of dignity or make room for exploitation. The overall judgment then, is that while the ethical positions are not incompatible with those of this theological tradition, they are narrower and less all-encompassing.

Erikson, aware of the criticisms levelled against his position, has made some bold moves to interpret the notion of generativity, and hence the fundamental principle that goes with it, so that the latter is broadened and approaches the theological position that we have examined (cf. Browning, 1988, p. 227). Since we have seen that there is a near identity between the meaning of generativity in Object Relations circles and in Erikson, we can admit that the ethical principle of their position can be reinterpreted in the same direction as that of Erikson. In an article entitled The Golden Rule in the Light of New Insight, he proposes a restatement of the golden rule in the light of his understanding of the kind of mutuality that occurs in instances of real generativity. Thus the scriptural "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you" becomes the Eriksonian "truly worthwhile acts enhance a mutuality between the doer and the other--a mutuality which strengthens the doer even as it strengthens the other" (1988, p. 227). Hence there is a major, rapprochement, but not an identity, between his position and that of Janssens.

In his book on Ghandi, through a fresh interpretation of the theory of nonviolence, Erikson, not only extends his theory of

generativity, but also his interpretation of the golden rule, to include self-sacrifice. He takes his start from Ghandi's own position: "That line of action is alone just, which does not hurt either party to the dispute." Erikson interprets Ghandi as saying that this meant that truthful action (nonviolence) was governed by a readiness to get hurt oneself, but without hurting anyone else.

Erikson sees this (i.e., Ghandi's position) as similar to his interpretation of the golden rule, even though the form of these statements evolves far more around not doing harm than it does around the more expansive mutual activation seen in his version of the golden rule. Nonetheless these statements build into his ethics of generative mutuality a place for self-sacrifice, that is, a readiness for getting hurt. (Browning, 1988, p. 228)

"Getting hurt" is clearly something much more than what is involved in mutual relating. The person involved in nonviolent action, who seeks to help another change from nonviolent action to more just action, is willing to suffer himself, without hurting the other. At least, temporarily he is willing to go beyond an ethic of mutuality. In this he moves towards the position of Janssens, who sees a place for self-sacrifice, as a "transitional strategy" designed to get a mutual relationship back in place, and to restore or establish for the first time, a regime of justice and equal regard.

Metaphors of Ultimacy

The fact that, as psychologists and disciples of a particular school of psychology, they may unwittingly buy into a particular form of ethics, may not be the only feature of their preferences to which clinicians may pay scant attention. Are they cognizant of the fundamental metaphors which fund these ethics? Which Metaphors do they prefer? As was the case with ethics, so in the case of depth metaphors:

theology has its preferences, and is self-conscious in its use of them-- after all its task is to talk of Mystery, the Transcendent, or God, and it must have recourse to metaphors to do so. Thus, it will be interested to dialogue with, and critique other methodologies which use metaphors of the ultimate, in order to test their adequacy, to learn from them, or reject their inadequacies, when and where it discovers them.

We begin with John Shea's theology. Without justifying the claim made, I propose that there are eight basic metaphors, all drawn from the heart of the Christian theological tradition, especially in its Catholic form, underlying his theology, and which he uses to appropriate and make conscious the Mystery-human relationship and its consequences for the creation of a meaningful, human, world. The central metaphor, in my reading of Shea is that of Grace. He repeatedly insists that Mystery is Graciousness, Grace is God's name. The graciousness of Mystery is revealed in our relationship to It. Shea uses the creation stories to celebrate the hospitality the whole of creation extends to the human species, and our status as Mystery's trusted friends in creation. Everything, of course, is not all right. Human freedom has given rise to the phenomenon of the panicked heart, or sin. It is this which threatens, and is a source of destructiveness in everyone's life. There are however relationships which pulls us up short, maybe frequently in some cases, and encourage a change of heart, conversion. Other relationships and experiences may be cause for celebration, make life not only tolerable, but harmonious, and confirm that we are on track--Shea talks of Metaphors of rescue and redemption. We sell

ourselves short, if we focus our eyes uniquely on the present, because the present bears seeds that will flourish only in the future. We have hopes of fulfillment--and the metaphor of escathology allows us to talk of them. None of us enjoy the present, hope for the future, suffer the ill effects of freedom badly used, experience the call to change, or rejoice in creation, all alone. There are others around us, with whom we may choose to form an authentic human community, hence the metaphor of church. The final metaphor that I see as playing a vital role in Shea's theology, is one that is different from the others, in that it is more philosophical, and that is the metaphor of the human person as questioner. It is this metaphor which permits him to express the transcendental nature of the human person.

Let us turn to the metaphors in Object Relations Theory, which according to Don Browning, function in a way that is analogous to the way metaphors operate in religious discourse.

These deep metaphors give these psychologies their images of the fundamental possibilities of life. They convey a set of basic beliefs about what can be expected from life and hoped for in life. They do not necessarily dictate the content of their implicit ethics, but they set a context that supports or constrains what seems ethically possible or required. (Browning, 1988, p. 230)

Since I am not proposing to do an in-depth analysis of the texts of the Object Relations Theorists, I tentatively suggest that a basic metaphor that guides their view of the world is that of harmony. The ultimate aim of life is for every person to attain the highest possible self-integration possible, and through this process, an unfolding of their potential--biological as well as psychological--will occur. The unfolding of one person's potential will not interfere with that of another. In fact, the greater self-integration an individual achieves,

the more he or she will contribute to the integration of other selves. Hence harmony is promoted, when the processes of the psychological birthing of the human person are promoted. The ethical position which corresponds with this best is that of ethical egoism, which Frankenna describes in the following way:

ethical egoism holds that one is always to do what will promote the greatest good--that an act is right if and only if it promotes at least as great a balance of good over evil for [a person] in the long run, as any alternative would. (1977, p. 15)

The distance between this position and that of the ethical position compatible with Shea's theology is enough to show that if harmony were the only or even the principle metaphor guiding Object Relations Theory, there would be major irreconcilable differences between them. In the world of the ethical egoist, as Browning points out, where all potentialities complement, the need for mutuality as the core of morality is obscured. Reversible thinking--of putting oneself into another's shoes on moral issues--is not necessary.

Because there can be no conflict between my potentialities and the potentialities of others, it is not necessary for me to reach out and imagine how the other person feels about something and to moderate my claims or restrict the actualization of my potentialities in such a way as to make it possible for others to meet their needs as well. (Browning, 1988, p. 139)

However there is another aspect of Object Relations Theory that we need to look at. Winnicott is possibly the one we have seen, who most clearly typifies what I am getting at. At the birth of her child the mother enters into a state that he calls "primary maternal preoccupation" and in this state she can intuit the needs of her infant in a way no one else can. The state gradually diminishes, and at the appropriate time, the mother begins to optimally frustrate her child.

In Mahler's paradigm there is a "fit" between the developmental potential of the child and her need, on the one hand, and the maternal potential for care. Some developmentalists have referred to this as cogwheeling between mother and child. The potentialities which are referred to here, are psychobiological to a large degree, but nonetheless in the context of this psychology, this metaphor takes on the functions which in other systems would be attributed to God. Because of this cogwheeling the child is offered the opportunity to experience the world as basically trustworthy, and himself as fundamentally real--a sense of "that I am." This metaphor, is more basic than that of harmony. This metaphor creates the opportunity to introduce the notion of mutuality and equal regard. The mother mirrors the child, affirms him or her and in time, will recognize the look of recognition and response in her child's eye. The child's withdrawal from Autism, in Mahler's phrase, is a celebration of the mother's contribution to the child's development. Again, Winnicott's idea of "primary maternal preoccupation" refers to a phenomenon, that in theological circles might well be referred to as self-sacrifice. Winnicott says "there may be a willingness as well as an ability . . . to drain interest from her own self onto the baby" (1960, p. 15). This metaphor then, promotes considerable opportunity for agreement, between Shea's theology and the psychology of Object Relations Theorists.

By this brief consideration of the deep metaphors that govern both the theology and psychology we have worked with, we acknowledge the necessity of engaging these two disciplines, at this level. It in no way aspires to completeness. We see such an engagement as benefitting

the psychology in particular, and helping it to recognize where it leaves the frontiers of science behind, and tends to develop into a fully fledged weltanschauung.

Having identified the metaphor of "grace," which as I have suggested is Mystery's name, or in traditional language, God's name, as the central metaphor of Shea's theological efforts, I now turn to the task of uncovering the genesis of the corresponding God-representation which underlies it.

CHAPTER V

FALLING THROUGH DISENCHANTMENT--AND THE RETURN

The reality is the speaker, not the spoken.

--John Shea

In this chapter I shall try to discern some characteristics of the dominant God-representations that play a role in funding John Shea's theology. The data with which I will work has been gathered, not only from the three books referred to in Chapter II, but also from a series of five interviews which John Shea consented to do with me, between April and August, 1991. Each interview lasted about one and one-half hours and was conducted in his apartment at Mundelein Seminary.

There are severe handicaps in attempting to do this, First, the data from both these sources is not clinical data, nor have I been John Shea's counselor. Therefore this data is public by nature and is not likely to be, consistently, the most personal or dynamically significant material in this man's life. The second major limitation is that there is no possibility to lend the security of anonymity to the disclosures made in the interviews. This means that there is a deliberate censoring of material discussed in the interviews. Not only did John Shea make it clear that such would be the case in our initial interview, but I am satisfied that ethically, this is as it should be--his personal dignity and right to privacy demand it. The third limitation on the collection

of the data stems from the fact that it was not possible for John Shea to complete the God-questionnaire, developed by Rizzuto, in time for me to include the information on it here. This was due to illness.

At the time of this study, Jack Shea is fifty years of age. He is at that stage in his life, which, according to the relevant literature, we can expect that some critical assessments of the course of his life, and its achievements will be in progress. Typically, the mid-life phase is experienced as a time when there is a growing awareness of one's finitude, accompanied by an inevitable regret for choices not made, or opportunities missed. It is a time when people discover an uncertainty and a danger in life, the likes of which has not been their companion since adolescence. But it is a time of opportunity too, a time when questions of ultimacy, of what is the grounding of value, of knowing and of being, raise their heads; decisions about how one wants to live out one's remaining allotted time of "three score and ten" years (the psalmist says those who are lucky live this long) need to be made. Many people in this age bracket find that unresolved issues in identity may suddenly burst forth into consciousness, and insistently demand attention. The patterns of psychological cohesion and equilibrium which have been carefully established in the earlier life-stages begin to shatter when faced with both the new circumstances that mid-life brings with it and the new possibilities with which one is faced. The way ahead often depends on how the person is open or not, to examine, and use the personal resources that he or she has developed up until now.

We turn now to the case of John Shea, and attempt to trace,

albeit in a sketchy manner, one of the resources undoubtedly brings with him in negotiating his journey into the future.

Introduction

At this time, John Shea is dealing with a painful and incapacitating back ailment, which has confined him to his apartment. One would never suspect now, he says, but he once was a very accomplished athlete, who was a skilled basketball player, and accomplished golfer, and who was always selected for the baseball team. This was so much the case that, as a seminarian, he was categorized as a "jock" and was the master of sports. John speaks about these things in a warm, humorous way, and I was struck by the straightforwardness and firmness of his manner of speaking. His self-presentation communicates an air of self-confidence coupled with a no-nonsense readiness to get things done. He strikes one as a man who knows how to work hard, but who enjoys life intensely, and who can throw back his head and laugh heartily at life's ups and downs. This sense of self-possession, takes on special significance against the background of a story that he tells about his seminary days. As we shall see, it is a story about disenchantment, of the cracking of protective casings, which often give rise to a complacency or even idolatry in a person's life. Once he had gone through this, he found an inner source of strength and resources which continue to lend a solidity and depth to his life. It is true to say, that it is this sense of solidity of his own self, that gives direction to his life, and which ground the three virtues of the creative person: courage, humility and the ability to laugh at oneself.

Childhood and Family Structure

John Shea was born on Chicago's West side, in 1941, and lived there during all his childhood and adolescence. He is one of three children, having a sister who is eight years his senior and a second sister who is four years his junior. His family is solidly Catholic and Irish. This part of Chicago, at that time, was home to a community of people predominantly Catholic and Jewish. "I was twenty-eight," he says, "before I ever met a protestant." Though that is something of an exaggeration, there is a real truth to the claim. While the Austin area of Chicago was not exactly a Catholic "ghetto," there was a very powerful Catholic presence there. His family was a committed, church-going family, who sent their children to Catholic school. His father was a member of the Chicago police force, whose earning power in the fifties ranged between \$5,000 to \$6,000, per annum and who provided well for his family. His mother was a homemaker. The Shea family lived in the typical "Chicago-two-flat" which was owned by the maternal grandparents, who rented the upper apartment of the building to their daughter and son-in-law.

John used a striking metaphor to describe the relationship between himself and his parents. I think he uses it in a way that speaks volumes.

They are significant to me in the way that someone who has a butterfly in their hands and who let the butterfly fly away, is significant. The hand doesn't make the butterfly, but it lets it go. The hand nurtures the butterfly . . . may be that's the trick.

He insists, time and time again, on how his parents gave him "tremendous freedom," for which he is grateful and which still prompts him to love them. His father especially, encouraged independence. John has

recently seen a photograph of his father holding him, as a baby, on his knee. While he has placed his police cap on his head. His earliest memories of his father are from a later time. His father frequently took him to basketball games and these are perhaps the earliest memories he has of him. He can remember his father consoling him after he had played a match and things had gone wrong, or again, complementing him when things went well. When he did an imaginative re-creation of his home experience, he returned to a time when he was eight. In this "waking-dream," he came home at lunchtime. His mother was present, but his father was not there, which surprised him at first, until he remembered that it was lunchtime, and his father would have been working a nightshift, and was sleeping. His father was always present at dinnertime. Though these images were quite vivid, he did not have a conversation with his father. At one point he says: "remember this was the fifties." Balancing these remarks, one has the impression of a father to whom John was firmly attached, who comforted and encouraged his son well, but who, at the same time, was at a disadvantage, typical of the father of the fifties, when it came to emotionally relating to his son. At a point where I suggested that his father was a powerful, but distant, presence in his life, this is how he responded:

I don't know if he was a powerful presence . . . in my memory. . . . I don't know if he was powerful (then quickly) but he wasn't distant either though. Distance is not the word. The feeling was not distance. My father took me to trials for baseball . . . we connected through athletics. To this day he is the very same. He encouraged you to do things . . . but it was . . . I never felt from him--or my mother--that they ever had a major agenda for me.

His mother's presence was more immediate, constant, on-going and tender. I use the last adjective because it described the quality of

the earliest memory John has of his mother. As he remembers it, he was still in a crib, and therefore was under two. He recalls the details. His mother was going out somewhere and his grandmother was babysitting. His mother came into the room he was sharing with his sister. She stood at the crib and had to lean over it to kiss him.

My mother had on perfume, and I remember smelling the perfume. It was the most wonderful smell. It was so wonderful. And I remember thinking how beautiful my mother was . . . it is making me cry . . . that is my earliest experience.

It the same imaginative exercise that I mentioned in the last paragraph, when in his waking dream he returned home, at the age of eight, he came into the kitchen, where his mother was cooking. More precisely, she was baking waffles. John engages his mother in conversation. The image is one of nurturance, the mother's activity in the kitchen being the highly personal and caring one of feeding the family. Other memories, from a later time, all point to a continuing relationship of support and nurturance.

One of the most significant dates, from the time when he was in eighth grade, towards the end of the year. It was a time when there was "endless preparation for processing in and out of church, and it was just 'U G H. . . .'" He returned home at lunchtime, and shared his frustration with his mother, who told him that he could take the afternoon off, and go golfing. Moreover, he and his mother frequently went golfing together, around this time. These are the kinds of memories he has of his mother--a woman who was attentive to his needs, took time to hear about them, and was sensitive in finding solutions. In fact, it is hard for her not to do that right now, when he is indisposed, even though she is eighty and he is fifty. John does not

want her to do these things at this stage, and pushes her away.

The dominant early representations that John has of his parents, therefore, are positive. Here is a couple who welcomed their son, and who nurtured and cared for him, and who "gave advice in little proverbs, but who did not lecture." He was most intimate with his mother, whose image was--and is--predominantly that of a caring, nurturing woman who is sensitive to her child's needs. The father, a working man of the fifties, related with his son through "doing" things with him and managed to comfort and encourage him in the doing. But even yet, there is a certain ambivalence, which centers around the fact that "my parents never had an agenda for me." He even toys with the idea of naming their "lack of agenda," "neglect," though he rejects that as an adequate description of what he feels. To illustrate what he means, he tells a story about his seminary days. It was a time when the young men at the seminary were under pressure from their parents to stay, even when they themselves felt they should leave. In their sessions together, the students would share what this pressure was like. When it came to his turn, the seminaries would say: "well what about you."

Well my parents say the same thing they always say. And they (seminarians) would say "what's that?" "Well, do whatever you want to do." If you want to do this, that's fine. If you want to do that, that's fine. Just do whatever you want to do.

As John tells of this incident, his speech quickens and his tone of voice is harder, tinged with regret. He continues by repeating a conversation, which dates from after ordination, with his mother, who tells him that if he wants to leave, he should, and not ever think that he must stay, because they want him to stay. John explains what this means for him by telling another story. It relates to an incident that

happened only a few years ago. One day John was contacted by an ex-priest, who was doing research on men who had left priestly ministry. He wanted John's opinion on the difficulties of leaving ministry, particularly difficulties associated with negotiating with families afterwards. John's reply, spoken in the light of his own experience with his parents, infuriated the researcher, who accused him of being flippant, insensitive, and cavalier.

He took me to task. Part of me was saying: "hey man, you're not me, this is your stuff." The other part of me was saying: "Jesus, maybe I do it all to cavalierly." Since then I have seen how disruptive these things are. He was more correct than I. But I was working out of my past. My parents would be disappointed, but it just wouldn't cause that much difficulty.

Perhaps a way of interpreting all of this, is to say that John's early self-representation was one of being responsible for himself, of having to stand on his own two feet as soon as he was able, of being independent, and of using his own ability and judgment to get where he wanted. He developed his own ambitions rather than identified with parental ideals for him. The cherished virtues were independence and personal resourcefulness. While he experienced connection and closeness, especially to his mother, these realities were prized only in second place. This self-representation synchronizes with the object representation of his father as a man who was somewhat emotionally removed, but who nevertheless was available to do things which he liked, with him--such as basketball. It matches the maternal representation less, which was tender, nurturing, even indulgent, to the point of being over-indulgent. This interpretation fits in well with the metaphor of the butterfly that he used. While they certainly did "hold" him, the

ideal for him, on this evidence, was to be the butterfly which would fly away.

John remembers the early manifestations of this independence, though throughout his childhood, they were things he took entirely for granted himself. Already, by the fifth grade, he would go to the Loop on his own, and see nothing extraordinary about it. It was only when he went to high school that he learned that other parents were not as willing as his own, to let their offspring into the city by themselves. However, his parents were much less permissive in the case of their daughters, and held a much tighter rein on them.

In our review of Object Relations Theory, we have seen how all kinds of imaginative creations are part of a child's journey towards maturity and towards coming to terms with reality: there are ghosts and goblins, imaginary playmates, heroes and heroines, and then there is God of course. John and I conversed about his memories of these things. While there are not many such things that he can remember, there are a few. John has memories of his younger sister being attached to her blanket, but has no recollection that any such object played a part in his own life. He is unaware of any such stories as part of the family lore. Nor does he remember ever having the classical "imaginary chum." There is just one story that his mother tells, that points to psychic material, the function of which is similar to that of the "chum." One day, while she was on the porch of the "two-flat," overlooking the back yard and garage, which had two windows,

I was in the back yard and I had a cowboy gun on. I picked up a rock from the garden area, and I threw the rock, right through the window of the garage. My mother came down and said to me "what did you do that for?" And I said to her "they had me surrounded and I

had to get out" [they being Indians]. I think it saved me from punishment. It was such a bizarre . . . I must have been in some imaginative world, that I had to throw a rock through the window.

Rizzuto's explanation of phenomena like this, is, as we saw (p. 165, above) that they are imaginative productions, exactly as the chum, the monster, the superhero, the devil, or God, are. All of these help the child tolerate his badness, rage impulses, frustrations and deceptions, and allow him to experience his grandiosity in controlling them. They help him negotiate the vital problems he faces in the task of becoming a self "that is both separate and securely related."

John himself recalls two episodes of sleepless nights, one when he was in eighth grade, the other much earlier. In the later episode, he had a "tremendous anxiety attack" for about three nights in a row, during which he did not sleep.

I remember thinking at that time, that I had had one when I was a lot younger. I had sleeplessness around the question of death. The younger one is very vague. But I remember the one in eighth grade, that's very clear. That was the first of existential crisis and questions and stuff like that happened in my life, when I was about thirteen.

The circumstances which surrounded this sleeplessness are very ordinary. He was sleeping in his own room, the front bedroom, while his two sisters occupied the back bedroom. There was front porch on the house. Suddenly, he realized he was going to die. He was afraid of death. His fear was not associated with a fear of being punished, he adds, or a fear of hell, though he "was doing the usual thirteen year old boy things--girls and sexuality and all that." His fear, as he reports it, was centered on the fact that if he slept, he would not wake up. This lasted for two nights, after which he said to himself "what the hell!" and got back to sleep. John's interpretation of these events, that they

are his first acquaintance with the major existential dilemmas that face every human being. I do not dispute this. But my interest focuses on their psychological significance. I have not sufficient information to suggest what they might mean, in dynamic terms.

An Early Interaction with God

The earliest account of John's interaction with God, that I have access to comes from An Experience Named Spirit (1983, pp. 53ff.). It is the year 1954 and John Shea is an altar server, kneeling in adoration before the Blessed Sacrament, in a beautiful Gothic Church in Chicago. The location is important--a Gothic Church. I say it is important because of what he told me in one of our conversations.

I come back to the things that were important to me, in my early childhood. The church building as being a very important spatial environment for me. . . . It was a place which was tall. It did what Gothic Architecture was supposed to do. It had high ceilings, so you had high understandings.

Here, the Church functions as a transitional possession, which facilitate transitional experience. Notice the way in which he expresses the nature of the revelation he experiences, even as a child--at least as he now expresses this revelation: "high understandings." The intellectual thrust of faith-revelation experience is to the fore.

In our story, there are two other characters--his fellow altar server, a boy with big ears, and the Church, in the sense of the people. Significantly, John is not in an immediate intense personal relationship with either, though both are a familiar part of his life. He kneels, an individual, before the Host in the Monstrance. Then the Host "speaks" to him. He understands a message from the Host: "I'm not just a host, you know." Here is another "little proverb," not a long lecture, only

this time the teacher is not his parents, but The Lord in the Host. The "you know," tagged on to the end, was the part of the message that fascinated him the most. It echoed his father's mode of dealing with him, I suggest. Just as his father trusted him to use his resources in dealing with the difficulties of getting to the Loop, and praised his son's talents on the basketball pitch, so now the Lord who spoke to him, left him to his own resources to uncover just how his fellow altar server was more than just the boy, or the trees more than just the trees. The fact was that he did not know yet. The "you know" triggered the responsibility to see the "more," or the "depth" in the fellow-altar-boy, the old ladies he met on the street, of the trees that lined the sidewalks. At the same time, the effort involved in doing this is not overburdening. The speaker of the "you know" is not really named in the story, he remains quite unknown, yet the "Voice" is trusted, is experienced as speaking the truth and reliable. The trust is reciprocated. The parallels between this God-representation and the paternal representation with its concomitant self-representation are striking.

Adolescence and Early Adulthood: Social
Commitments, Vocation, and the Bursting
of the Shell

The major themes that we have already uncovered in the childhood phase appear in unbroken line during his adolescent period. One of the more significant events that John recounted from this period, was told in the context of telling his childhood memories. When he was sixteen, he wanted to learn to drive a stick-shift car. It was Sunday afternoon, and his father was watching a football game on TV and did not

want to leave the game to teach his son how to drive the stick-shift car.

He didn't want to teach me, so he took a piece of paper and drew the shifts of the car on a piece of paper, and then M.C. (a friend) and I got into the car. My mother was mad, because she didn't think I should be driving in the car, with just instructions on a piece of paper. I was bouncing up and down the street, but I finally learned to drive the stick-shift car.

John again recognizes the freedom he was given, and sees that freedom as completely "natural."

We can see the confidence, the initiative, that he speaks about to me in the interviews, shining through in the story he tells, again in An Experience Named Spirit (1983, pp. 89ff.). The Story might be called "The Kid With No Light in His Eyes." The essence of this story is this. In the summer of sixty-one, just as he was about to begin his theology studies, John was Camp Counselor, at a summer camp for kids, run by some sisters. The principal character in the story is a young boy who has definite sociopathic tendencies. Not only does he steal and lie, he is not beyond sticking fishing hooks in other boys, at the first possible opportunity. The story centers around the relationship that develops between the young man with no light in his eyes, and an elderly sister who is the camp "handyperson." What interests us here however, is the storyteller himself, John Shea. In this perspective two circumstances stand out.

The first circumstance emerges as John goes to the sister-in-charge to tell her about the young man with no light in his eyes and his proclivities.

"Before you tell me about it, Mr. Shea" [she was very formal], "I have a few problems I would like to discuss with you. About the record."

"Oh yes, the record," I smile. For you see I had been at many camps, but this was the most Catholic camp of them all. Lights went out at ten o'clock; and to waft the little darlings into dreamland, they played Schubert's Ave Maria over the loudspeaker. I thought this was a bit much. So on the second night of camp I substituted a popular camp parody of the time by Alan Sherman, "Hello Mother! Hello Father! Here I am at Camp Granada."

The head sister wanted to know if perhaps I had acted rashly and introduced radical innovations into the life of the camp before I had sufficiently understood its spirit. I said that this was a possibility and that from now on I would consult her. This was good training for dealing with Bishops.

The second event of interest to us, also involves sister-in-charge, who always kept the keys of the camp truck close to her person. She was not unjustifiably suspicious when camp counselors with a readiness to imbibe intoxicating beverages, asked her for the car keys. The sisters lived on the second floor of the building, in an area that was semi-cloistered. Access to the convent was by way of a rickety wooden stairs, which no one was permitted to climb. On the second day of camp John stood at the bottom of these stairs and shouted up that he wanted the keys.

"I'll be right down, Mr. Shea."

"That's O.K., sister, I'll come up and get them."

"Don't come up here, Mr. Shea."

"I'm coming sister."

And then I stood at the bottom of the stairs and pounded my feet, producing the effect of climbing the stairs.

"Mr. Shea, don't you dare come up here."

And then she arrives at the top of the stairs, habit somewhat askew and car keys in her hand. She saw that I had not moved from the bottom step and she glowered.

"You are a very cruel young man, Mr. Shea, a very cruel young man."

The self-representation that underlies all these events is one that empowers this young man to be self-assertive, initiative-taking, independent. It is the course of a high level of self-regard and self-confidence. The story of how his father presumes his competence, and

simply takes his responsibility for granted underlies once again the nature of the object representation that John has internalized.

The degree of John's internalization of his father is clear in a further story, which tells of an event that occurred when John was a senior in high school. It also illustrates, not only his father's confidence in him, but the direction of this young man's religious commitment, which, as is clear from the last story, has a distinctly social flavor. In 1959, the year he entered seminary, the box-office attraction was "Ben Hur," with Charlton Heston. The young Shea hit on a marvelous idea for a fundraiser for the missions. He and his classmates would hire The Michael Todd Theatre, which held 1,200 people, show the movie, and donate the proceeds to the charity of their choice. There was a major hitch, though. The downpayment for the hall was \$600. Collectively, the class did not have access to resources of that magnitude. He went to his father and told him the problem.

My father did not ask me one question. He just wrote the check . . . (pause, with tears) (laughs) . . . and we made \$2,000! . . . Since then I have done that for other people. I always feel that that is something given to be given away. So I've written checks for other people for large amounts, without asking questions. . . . It is very moving for me to remember this. It just releases so much. Not the nostalgia. Just . . . it is so close, symbolically, to what it is about.

Listening to this, I was struck by the confidence and trust his father had in John, but striking also was the fact that there was no dialogue. It illustrates, perhaps, what we saw earlier: his father's gaucherie in affectively communication with his son. Clearly his representation of his father as a generous man, is ripe for assuming the dimensions of ultimacy. His choice of metaphor--Mystery as Graciousness--with its fundamental assumptions, is, psychologically speaking, closely bound up

with his appreciation of his father's generosity. Such would be my suggestion. It is useful to remind ourselves here that we are not saying, as Freud would, that the Ultimate is nothing but the transformed father. What we see is the coming to be of the psychological structures, which will be John Shea's resources for his faith journey. I am not postulating his internalization of his father, as the cause of faith.

It if makes sense to see his representation of his father (this father is responsibility-evoking, emotionally maladroit in his dealings with his son--distant is not an adequate description--and yet generous) and a corresponding self-image, playing a major role in John Shea's developmental journey, then we can postulate, from Rizzuto's theory, that a parallel God representation will be involved. We can also expect, in terms of this theory, that as an individual faces the major life-decisions, as self-representations change, and adolescent self-cohesion disintegrates, that old God-representations will come up for review and new ones be forged. When and how did such an upheaval occur in John Shea's life?

A significant series of events were set in motion when he entered the seminary. By the time he reached the climax of these events, he was in his theological studies at Mundelein. On his arrival at the seminary, he made a startling discovery. The magnificence of the church buildings, which as we have seen was a powerful transitional object for him, left him cold. Moreover, he was put off by the monastic silence of the seminary, as well as by the monastic regimen of the institution. None of it mediated "the interior person at all." He felt

lonely, and for the first time in his life knew what it was to be homesick. After the Christmas break, he was sorely tempted not to return for the second term. By now, all the certitudes of his faith had all gone. He might have been physically present in the place, but that was all. He did not attend class, or even mass, which carried a double obligation on a Sunday. Since there were 600 seminarians in the place, he was never missed, though he adds, that he always turned up for exams, and was clever enough to do enough prescribed reading to carry him through.

So it was a very strange situation, here I was living in the middle of a seminary, but I was not attending Mass, nor was I attending classes. But I was a sort of living in the middle of the place. I didn't feel I needed to rebel, nor was I feeling angry. I just needed to explore why all this had become so much nonsense to me. The theology was surely pathetic. It was the corrupt neo-scholasticism that you read about and that Rahner attacks in his early writings, against the manualists and stuff like that. It was just terrible stuff. All the rules and the administration was terrible, it just seemed nonsense to me. It all broke down.

There was another dimension to this breakdown, which came a little later, but which was associated with the personal breakdown of meaning that he had traditionally associated with Church. This second loss of structure in his life was associated with the political fragmentation of American society, because of the Vietnam war. The pain of the memories associated with that is still enough to make him wince.

Instead of attending class and embracing the manualists, John's intellectual diet now included Jean Paul Sartre, and "some theologians" but above all he read Kazantzakis and Flannery O'Connor. At this time, he took an extensive tour in Europe, putting some space between himself and the Seminary. "It was a very disconcerting time, because the scaffolding of my life fell apart. It was like as if I were falling--

falling was my metaphor for it." It is helpful to recall the work that Erikson has done on the Psychosocial Crisis typical of the young adult's life at this time: that of Individual Identity versus Identity Confusion (cf. Newman & Newman, 1987, p. 398). John has given us rather a good description of the drifting and breakdown that is associated with Identity Confusion. At this stage, John describes a situation where he cannot commit himself to a single view of himself; the roles he plays are unintegrated and disconnected; the value system of his seminary is light years removed from the value systems of a Sartre or a Kazantzakis or an O'Connor--nor are the value systems of these "masters" congruent among themselves either. In such a situation, meaningful decisions are hardly to be expected. John, like many of his contemporaries, was in a period of psychosocial moratorium. The story which he tells of his hitting the bottom, and which marked the end of his moratorium, bears telling at length.

[The whole area of Mundelein] used to be lined with trees and they put big whitewashed signs, X's, on the trees and cut them all down. That's how I felt my life was. That someone had come along, and all these pillars that I had constructed, and put a big X on them, and chopped them all down.

The other thing was that the lake here was filled with fish. Carps. So the Illinois people decided to come and they would pay half the money and kill all the fish and restock the lake. The Seminary would pay the other half. And so, the whole student body--they poisoned all the fish--and so the whole student body had to go out in row boats, and net all the fish and row them to shore, where we had dug massive holes to bury them in--graves for the fish. And we would shovel all the fish in and Oh! it was stinking. It stunk. It took about a week. May be even more.

I was on the shore, shovelling the fish into the graves. And I look up and we had a priest here, called . . . who was here for a [lifetime] . . . and that was not too swift; that was a brick and oppressive too. He was standing out there in a rowboat, with his monsignorial cassock on, amid all these dead fish. And I'm shovelling away and I look up and see him. And it is late in the afternoon. The sun is setting. Here is this guy standing in a rowboat, in monsignorial robes, in a sea of dead fish and I thought

"Shit, this is how this place is. This is just how I feel." It was a symbol of this sinking . . . this disenchantment. I thought: "there it is. There is an external picture of my inside. Right there." That guy. If that is harsh on his memory I pray for him.

Our focus is on John's internal representational system, at this point. It is not hard at all on the man, in the rowboat, in the monsignorial cassock. In a sense, it does not really concern him. The staff, some of whom were psychologists, and with whom John shared this, diagnosed his problem as difficulties in adjusting, or suggested that he had an authority problem, and was angry. He himself felt that such diagnoses were focusing on the symptoms rather than the cause. His plunge into Sartre, Camus, de Beauvoir and the rest, was an effort to find out what was going on. This was followed by an attempt to find religious authors who could make sense of what he was feeling. He played around with the idea that he was losing faith. "Then I realized, one day, that it was not my faith that was going, it was faith that was coming?" Or, in language that he used earlier, he had fallen--and had hit bottom. The bottom was Mystery. The Moratorium was ended at that point. A new identity was born--individual identity, in Erikson's phrase.

In Stories of God (1978), John spends four pages, thirty-two to thirty-seven, plumbing the depths of the experience of disenchantment. In his conversation with me, he dwelled at length on the same thing. A comparison of the two is interesting. In Stories of God, he speaks from a theological point of view.

Disenchantment is an experience of Mystery reasserting itself. Whenever a person mistakenly equates Mystery with a finite reality, he creates an idol. An idol is not a symbol of Mystery, but the pretension to be Mystery itself. It insinuates a total revelation and creates a false consciousness that Mystery has dissolved into total availability. In the idolatrous situation Mystery does not appear within finite reality, but is identified with some part of

it. In this setting, disenchantment is also a process of disengagement, a double freeing. Mystery is freed from the idol's exclusive hold, and the idol is freed from its false identity. Mystery is restored to its status as genuine Mystery, and finite reality, previously idolatrous, now has the possibility of being appropriated as a symbol, not as the usurper of the sacred but one of its mediators. (pp. 35-36)

In his conversations with me, John was much more psychological in his formulations.

[I am] pushed back, again and again into ultimate mystery, which you have to relate to, in terms of an existential act of trust, that you hand yourself over to. And this moment, when you are not holding on to yourself but giving yourself to this Mystery, has many consequences, when it is done again and again. It cannot be done once, at least I cannot do it once. I'm not like that. If you do it again and again and again, certain steady structures or perceptions begin to develop. One of which is "this is where it is at, so to speak." Everything else is stuff you relate to, not stuff you relate from. . . . You don't relate from your will, you relate to it. You are always relating to the world from some deeper centre. Therefore there is a certain freedom from external form. . . . But you cannot mistake the external forms for the self. That is not where person is at. Person is not capable of description. You cannot describe person. Person is known in action, not in description. . . . The consequences of the breakdown of my world . . . are permanently with me in ways that I don't know. As I said to [someone], I don't think you can be certain of anything, can you? . . . The only thing you have is that you are part of this immanent-transcendent Mystery, which keeps throwing up life. You are one of the throw ups.

When we try to pull all this together in terms of Object Relations Theory and its accompanying theory of religious experience, what fresh insights have we about John's development? We suggested earlier that as he approached the end of adolescence, John worked with a self-representation that was closely linked to the object representation he held of his father. Thus he viewed himself as someone who was competent, confident, able to use his talents, but who, perhaps, was somewhat restricted in his affective responses to the world around him. Knowing certainly featured in his experience to a much greater extent

than feeling. It is this form of relating to the world that goes into crisis as he enters young adulthood. The resources provided by the dominant internalizations of his father, the self-representation, and the God representation as then constituted, were unequal to the task of coping with the environment this young man found himself in.

When he describes the aftermath of the crisis, there is a marked emphasis on the relational nature of human existence. The language that we might associate with self-representation aligned with a parental image that evokes independence, self-reliance and astute use of talent, has given way to a language of relationship, trusting others and of self-integrity. There is a sense of his having a more cohesive, integrated self than before, and one which prizes communion rather than independence. To account for this I suggest that the self-representation, more closely linked to the maternal object relation was reawakened at the moment of the crisis. The mother-son bond was strong. Mother was less emotionally "maladroite" than father. John spoke of how he loved his mother as she bent over him, as a two-year-old; how they went golfing together; how she was attentive to his needs in time of anger or frustration. The words that best describe it are connection, mutuality and affection. It is precisely the resources which he had internalized, through the maternal relationship, that came to play a more active part in John's relationship with the world, after the crisis. Then priest, standing in the boat in his monsignoral robes, is a symbol, of what John found inadequate. He himself says that. It is a symbol of the inadequacy of the predominant paternal representation and all that went with it. Letting the butterfly fly free away, without

connection, support, ideals or direction, is not enough.

Psychologically, the crisis was about installing affect as a mode of perception of, and communication with, all reality. It involved the fashioning of a self-representation that liberated the internalized energies of certain maternal representations. The crisis led to the evolution of a God-representation that encouraged a contemplative rather than a manipulative approach to all reality and that invited John to relate to God in an affective and passionate, rather than in an objective, rational manner. But maybe even more important than both of these was the way in which the new God-representation funded a vibrant sense of self.

[I am] pushed back, again and again into ultimate mystery, which you have to relate to, in terms of an existential act of trust, that you hand yourself over to, . . . giving yourself to this mystery has many consequences . . . one of which is "this is where it is at," so to speak. . . . You don't relate from your will, you relate to it. You are always relating to the world from some deeper centre.

Funded from this deep center, John typically expresses insights like the one which I include at the head of this chapter: "The reality is the speaker, not the spoken," by which I understand that it is the existential knowledge of being real, of experiencing the world as real, and as the arena in which one may interact with others in a compassionate, mutual manner, surpasses immeasurably any ideas we may have, in importance. It is not clever phrases or ideas that are the evidence that point to the deep center, or the self. The experience of being a real self expresses itself most of all in action, in the kind of action that means "living creatively in a dangerous world." The prime example of one who did just that is Jesus of Nazareth.

Again, it is not that this representation causes John's faith.

It becomes a resource which he can use, to respond, in his terms, to the approach of Mystery. The representation helps shape the way in which Mystery is appropriated, and at the same time it contributes to his ongoing personal task of developing an increasingly healthy, cohesive self.

There are two dimensions of John Shea's theology which have always seemed to me to be in tension. On the one hand, there is the emphasis on faith-revelation as a knowing activity. On the other hand, there is the profound relational aspect of all existence. Time after time, he insists that relating is primary. In his conversation with me, he made what amounts to an outright attack on ideas and mind.

More and more, I don't believe in the mind very much. If you give it rein, it objectifies everything and chops everything up, and then turns it into a puzzle. . . . You've got to keep the mind in its place, not by using it. That's the oldest trick in the world, to control the mind, with the mind. It is to dig deeper into the pit. You don't have to make it weaker. You've just got to make it serve. You make it serve the deeper stuff, the deeper signals that are sent out, and these signals that are sent out are like waves, and what the mind does is serve; what it does is like the surfer, it sits on the waves. But when the mind gets out of control and decides not to ride the waves, but to control them. . . . It has all sorts of tricks to do this. One of its tricks is to say "let's look at this and analyse it, then we'll know more about it. That the mind out of control. As I get older, I realize that the block to spiritual growth is in the mind and that original sin happens, and is reinforced, as the mind splits itself off from reality and tries to objectify, instead of living a freeflowing outpouring of life. And when life pours out, the idea is just to go with it. To me the quintessential story in the scripture about this, is the pouring of the perfume over Jesus and the disciples' [objection] "give it to the poor." There is nothing wrong with that, except that it just stops the flow. So when I feel this tremendous welling up in me, my question is not "why is it there?" or "where is it coming from?" but by question is "how do I ride it?" In other words, its truth is itself, it doesn't have to be validated by this mental thing.

This reminds me a little of the sons, who in Freud's reconstruction of history, rise up against the Father and kill him. John's mind has

surely served him well--and the rest of us too. It is true that when its constructions are pushed to the limit--and that the limit had been passed was symbolized for John in the ridiculous situation of the fully-vested priest in the rowboat--they end up being idolatrous. We may well have in the passion with which he speaks about the mind, the echoes of the struggle to modify self-representations influenced by paternal internalizations with those influenced by maternal ones. I would tentatively propose that the form of knowing, for which John so decisively opts, that of sacramental imagination, operates for him, psychologically as a bridge which spans the distance between the self-representations that have been formed through the very different internalizations he made of both father and mother. Furthermore, the God representation that harmonizes with this self-representation is one that has two dimensions. On the one hand, it resonates with God as the ultimate relating Reality, who constantly invites human beings to intimacy--in accordance with the maternal representation--and on the other hand, it envisions God as ultimate graciousness that is to be known--the contribution of the paternal representation.

CONCLUSION

Michigan Avenue, Chicago--and countless everyday places like it--is the stage where the experiences of "exceeding darkness" alternate with moments of "undeserved light." The characters on this stage cry and laugh, fight and make up, mutually wound each other, and have the capacity to heal one another if they really want, despise as well as nurture one another, ignore as well as affirm each other's beauty and importance. They are actors and actresses in real-life productions of drama as well as tragedy, comedy no less than one-man shows. The plot, if John Shea is to be believed, is inescapably the story of Mystery's determination to surprise the actors and actresses as they birth their freedom through what they do, as they mourn their weakness, throw off the chains of oppression, recognize their meanness, or come face to face with their own beauty, the beauty of each other, and the delightfulness of their relationship to the whole of reality. When we ask the scriptwriters to step forward--another surprise! The scriptwriters are the actors and actresses. They are the producers and directors too. It is they who compose the melodies that are sung--and Mystery writes the harmony. They are the choreographers who plan the dances, and Mystery blends with their rhythm. There are no spectators before the stage of Michigan Avenue. We are all involved in the action as long as we are there. When the curtain falls on one act, we pass on, and become actors, actresses, scriptwriters, producers, directors, dancers and

singers, on another stage--and Mystery follows us.

Staying within the world created by this metaphor, this essay has been an effort to become more attentive to the gifts, skills, techniques and processes that are involved in organizing the different acts and scenes of the human life-cycle. Having moved around "backstage," as it were, the intricacy and fine tuning of these processes arouse in us a sense of appreciation for what we find there. We have tried to describe these processes from two perspectives, a theological, and psychological, one. We have conceptualized these processes in terms such as symbiosis and separation, holding and mirroring, in the psychological register. In theological language we have spoken of story, image, values and behavior-strategies. Both these forms of discourse are metaphorical languages, which develop their insights in accordance with their fundamental metaphors. Two of the controlling images of Object Relations Theory, I have suggested are those of "cogwheeling" and "harmony." In John Shea's work, I have claimed, the axial image is that of "graciousness." As we have seen, these images create worlds that blend and overlap in significant ways. One of the reasons they do this, is that both of them carry a view of the human person and her world, that is fundamentally optimistic and hopeful. In the following paragraphs, in a series of propositions, we shall attempt to summarize the grounds for this optimism and hopefulness.

The first proposition is that knowing is central in the process of meaning-making. In the introduction to this essay, we set out on an odyssey, with the objective of gaining an understanding of the process

through which human beings create meaning. At journey's end, we look back to review the terrain we have crossed and to highlight its major features. The beacon which casts its light on all the paths we have travelled, is the set of insights that center around the human capacity to know. In the work of both John Shea and Object Relations Theorists, the centrality of knowing stands out. Through the activity of knowing, human beings carve out for themselves, as it were, a meaningful existence, from the welter of sensory stimulation emitted by a cosmos, a society and a family that existed, long before they arrived on the scene. When we speak of knowing, we are not primarily referring to an intellectual activity--and that is true for both Shea and Object Relations people. Undeniably, both these psychologists and this theologian approach knowing from their own perspectives. Object Relations Theorists are concerned, in the first place, to appreciate the primary and foundational forms of knowing, a knowing that is perhaps most adequately described as kinesthetic, in its earliest form. This phrase is meant to draw attention to knowing as something that is profoundly a body phenomenon, a knowing of oneself in one's skin. In Rizzuto's listing of the kinds of representation--visceral, sensorimotor, auditory, iconic and finally conceptual--we have an indication of just how corporeal the basis of knowing is. Knowing does become an increasingly rich phenomenon, as the developmental process unfolds and as memories and representations become increasingly complex. The context of this knowing is the mother-child dyad, where such processes as holding and mirroring, symbiosis and separation, occur. In this context too, the use of transitional objects gives birth to the

capacity for symbolic knowing, and hence to religious and cultural creations. Winnicott, Mahler, Rizzuto, and their colleagues, are not of course, interested in mental archaeology, when they return to the primitive origins of knowing. Their primary concern is to uncover how memories of past events, and the representations generated in earlier relationships are indeed immortal, and how they continue to exert influence in the present. John Shea's starting point is different. He is interested in how adults come to know and experience their relationship with Mystery. We saw how his insights are complemented and enlarged when we bring him into conversation with Object Relations Theorists.

The second proposition affirms the value, the legitimacy and the inevitability of faith, as a meaning-making activity. John Shea's optimism and hopefulness are grounded in his appreciation for the human capacity to know in a sacramental manner. Object Relations Theory lends support to his confidence, from a psychological perspective. The first consequence of this complementarity, is that a major obstacle, well established since the days of Freud, to viewing faith as a normal part of human experience, can be demolished. Since the beginning of this century, the claim that faith was a form of delusion and hallucination has been a kind of bogeyman for people whose experience led them to affirm a relationship with the Transcendent. John Shea's formulation of a faith perspective, is one that makes a consistent effort to take into account the contemporary secular experience of Western people, and to use a faith-language that they can understand. We have seen how his formulations are open to, and compatible with, the conceptualizations of

the Object Relations "school." They both agree that there is a special mode of experiencing, faith experience or transitional experience, which is neither totally objective or subjective. Certainly, this realm of experience is that of imagination, or in Pruyser's term, illusion, but far from being pejorative terms, they point to the creative sphere of human functioning, out of which has poured, not only the powerful rituals and stories of world religions, but also the great scientific theories of all ages, as well as the monuments of artistic and cultural genius. Time spent in this psychic space of illusion, far from destroying one's link with reality, enhances and promotes a person's connection and interaction with it.

In the third proposition, the focus is on the potential of the Judeo-Christian tradition as a resource in the process of personal development and meaning-making. Faith-revelation experiences carry certain ethical implications for the person's concrete situations. The stories of the Judeo-Christian tradition offer a wealth of images which help determine the meaning of these experiences. These images provide a directionality for one's attitudes and values, which in turn prompts the concrete strategies one chooses., Shea describes this process as the faith-appropriation of Mystery's gracious approach. Object Relations sheds its light on this same process. The characters in these stories function in ways that are similar to the procession of imaginative companions that pass through a person's life--the "chum" for instance, or the "twin," or the guardian angel, Miss Liberty, Eros and the host of "fictive creations of the mind," whose praises were sung by Selma Fraiberg:

an integral part of being human . . . [lies] . . . in our capacity to create nonvisible but meaningful realities capable of containing our potential for imaginative expansion beyond the boundaries of the senses. Without these fictive realities human life becomes a dull animal existence. (Fraiberg, 1969, p. 25)

The heroes and heroines of these stories function as figures with whom the reader or listener can identify and form object and self-representations congruent with them. Moreover, a person who uses the stories and rituals of the Christian tradition as transitional objects, enters into a relationship with a reality that functions as a nurturing, holding, selfobject, who mirrors him or her. In this experience of mirroring the person's self-esteem and self-evaluation are strengthened. The expression of greater self-esteem and self-worth lies in the quality of an individual's relationship with external reality--in the ability to perceive whole, rather than split objects; in the less defended and more spontaneous matter of approaching others, and finally in the readiness to welcome greater and greater segments of reality into his or her life. Both Shea and Object Relations Theorists map out for us the process through which an individual builds up increasingly solid and satisfying connections with all that there is. It is this increasing capacity for connectedness that lies at the heart of a meaningful world. Experiencing oneself as solidly connected to, yet separate from, external reality is what is meant by meaning.

A fourth point that is important for this conclusion, focuses on the God representation itself. Shea is clear that each person responds to Mystery's self-revelation, in a way that is personal and shaped by the concrete circumstance of that person's life. One person may experience the ultimate ground of reality as graciousness, for another,

Mystery's intentions are experienced as hostile, while for a third the Transcendent is indifferent to the human condition. Rizzuto's work translates this into a psychological register. She pinpoints the interpersonal source of the God representation and its origin, in the self and object representations of the person who carries it. As we tried to illustrate in the case of John Shea himself, the psychological resources he brings to his faith-journey are intimately colored by his relationship to his parents. Rizzuto accounts for the fact that the God representation that a person forms, while still in the cradle, may make it impossible for him or her to assume conscious, worked-out faith position, at the heart of the church to which his or her family belongs. Even when a person cannot express his faith in what is for him a traditional manner, he still maintains a "faith." The opposite is true too, of course. A person from an atheistic background may find it imperative to develop a conscious theistic stance in life. What is apparent is that one can no more shake off one's God representation, than one can lose one's self-representation.

The fifth proposition is that the process of meaning-making implies a recognition of, and confrontation with, failure. In the course of our odyssey we have met many possible ways in which a person's developmental journey may become derailed. Principal among these possible failures that we have considered, are the following:

- (1) Sometimes, the mirroring process is unsatisfactory to a serious degree, and results in an inability to self--soothe, which gives rise to a situation where a person cannot tolerate solitude, and simultaneously fails in efforts towards intimacy.

- (2) Others may experience a neurotic anxiety and fear of external reality, due to an unsatisfactory experience of support and security, with a resultant poor readiness to explore, and fall in love with, reality.
- (3) A third category of failures congregate around the issues of dependence and independence. Neither the rugged individualist nor the relentless altruist are healthy. Both bear the scars of battles fought and lost.
- (4) The categories found in Wolf help us name an array of developmental deficiencies--there are the failures associated with the Mirror Hungry Personality, the Ideal Hungry Personality, the Alter Ego Hungry Personality, the Merger Hungry Personality and the Contact Shunning Personality.

The sixth proposition is that the spurs which entitle a person to create a humanly meaningful environment are won in the struggle to know oneself as integrating both "good" and "bad," to perceive oneself and others, as whole objects, rather than part objects. The outcome of this struggle, at least for the child is determined, to a large degree, by the welcome he or she gets from caregivers. If the support offered, and the frustration encountered, approaches the optimal levels, then the outcome is likely to be a happy one. In the case of the adult, Shea tells us, that there is always the threat of falling under the sway of the panicked heart, in one or other of its forms--either under the influence of the rejected hearted or the envious heart. The outcome is rarely decided once and for all, either in childhood or in adulthood. The sense of goodness, or of a balance of greater goodness over badness,

is a personal achievement, that needs to be repeatedly striven for, throughout the life cycle.

The seventh proposition is that the fruit of facing failure, and of struggling to overcome ambivalence, is the capacity for compassionate service and mutuality in personal relationships. At those moments in a person's life, when service is genuinely compassionate and personal relationships are mutual, then he or she experiences the depth experience of living in a meaningful, human world.

An appropriate commentary on these propositions comes in the form of a story from a tribal tradition, in Kenya. It is a story of the heroine's journey.

Long, long ago, in a certain village, there was a tradition that at the time of High Summer, all the girls who were of marriageable age would make a necklace. The girl who made the finest necklace, the most beautiful necklace was the person who could choose to marry the most attractive and eligible young man, for that year. In this particular year, one necklace, made by Ngethe, stood out as the finest, the most elegant necklace of all. Everyone agreed about this. Her companions were filled with rage and jealousy. So they hit on a plan.

In the morning it was the custom that the girls would go to the Nuke, the local river, to bathe. It was an important time of the day for these girls. They loved to play, to frolic on the bank of the river. On the second day of the week, while they were at the river, one of her companions, Mwaura, asked Ngethe to take off her necklace so that she could examine it, and admire its beauty. Ngethe complied with the request, but no sooner had Mwaura the necklace in her hand than she

threw it away, far out into the deep river. In consternation, Ngethe jumped into the water. She swam out, far into the river and deep, deep, down into its depths. She could see her precious necklace nowhere. She swam, deeper and deeper, and then she noticed something strange. Deep below her, she could see the entrance to a cavern. Bright light shone from the inside. She swam toward the light and entered the cavern. When she entered, she was surprised to find that there was no water. But the place was flooded with light instead. As her eyes adjusted to the bright light, she perceived the outline of a human form. When she could see better, the sight that greeted her eyes, turned her stomach. Seated in the middle of this cavern was the ugliest looking hag she had ever seen. It seemed she was wounded all over. She had sores which were ages old, all oozing with pus. Ngethe recoiled, and wished she could escape the cavern. Then the old hag addressed her, as she extended her hand, her putrid hand, in Ngethe's direction. "Come, girl, and kiss my hand," the hag said. Ngethe could feel her stomach heave, but as she looked the old woman in the eye, she felt compassion sweep through her mind and body, and slowly she made her way towards the seated hag, with the outstretched putrid hand. She took the hand in hers, raised it to her mouth, and taking a deep breath, she kissed it. Suddenly, the hag was no longer a hag, but a beautiful woman, regal, stately, kindly, and attractive. She smiled at Ngethe, and enfolded her in a sisterly embrace. As she stepped back, she said "Because you have had the courage to kiss my wounds, I will give you a new necklace, more beautiful, more exquisite, than the one you lost." At that, there was a terrible bellowing noise, and a fierce dragon appeared at the entrance

to the cavern. The beautiful woman told Ngethe not to be afraid, because she would cast a spell on her which would make her invisible to the dragon. As Ngethe watched, the dragon searched for her, but because of the spell, it could not find her, and after a while, it gave up the search, and left. Taking a necklace of indescribable beauty from her pocket, the beautiful lady embraced Ngethe once more, and told her to return to her companions. On the bank of the Nuka, when her companions saw her new necklace, they were green-eyed with envy, and asked her for the secret of her find. She told them of the cavern, of the beautiful lady and of her gift of the necklace. On hearing this part of the story and without waiting for Ngethe to finish the story, they dived into the water. They swam far out, to the middle of the river. Then they plunged deep, deep, into the depths. They saw the light from the cavern. They swam towards it, and entered the cavern. They saw the old hag. They experienced the revolting feelings. They heard the hag invite them to come, and kiss her hand. Then, they began to curse her, and curse their luck. They abused her, shouted at her, swore at her. Just then, the dragon roared. It approached them. They were naked, unprotected. On the river bank, Ngethe waited for her companions to rejoin her--they never came.

The story's meaning is tropic--it has no one meaning. The context of its recounting informs its meaning. Here we are using it as an allegory of the heroine's journey. The young woman is an image of the adult who is graced with a theistic faith. Such a faith, as Shea told us, does not solve the problems of pain suffering and disenchantment for us, rather it puts us in a position to begin to deal

with these. This young woman has grown up, and achieved a sense of her own identity, within her cultural milieu. The necklace she has made represents that achievement. Part of that achievement, in this context, is that she has learned to creatively use the cultural legacy she had inherited--we would want to include Christian stories and rituals as part of the legacy. Through the use of the necklace, the girl enters, in Pruyser's word, the "illusionistic realm." In Shea's understanding, the use of the necklace becomes for her a moment of knowing, through sacramental imagination. Then the necklace is gone. Its importance recedes, once its function to draw her into a relationship with Mystery has been achieved. Mystery appears in the initial moment, as an old hag. Mystery, in other words becomes the recipient of all the girl's projections. The sores and pus are an image of the girl's own narcissistic wounds, which prompt her to split her objects into the "good" and the "bad"--and correspondingly, to experience herself as "all good" or as "all bad." The companions are a figure of this girl's selfobjects, whose failures towards the girl have been serious, but not mortal. At the crucial moment, the girl sees something in the old hag's eyes that draw her up sharply. Looked at from another perspective, the story is speaking about Mystery's determination to pursue a person no matter how objectionable or complete the negative projections are. Mystery's pursuit of us, is stronger than our projections. In the look she perceives in the hag's eyes, lies a call to her to engage her freedom, the call to balance the "bad" and the "good." The moment of the kiss is crucial. Psychologically, it is the moment when the self achieves integration and cohesiveness. It is the moment when the God

representation she is in the process of creating, becomes adequate to the task of welcoming Mystery's approach into her life. The girl's compassionate behavior--and she is really being compassionate to herself, first, since the sores with which the hag is infected are actually the projections of her own wounds--is the expression of her "wholeness," of being able to bring the "good" and the "bad" together, and to withdraw her "part" projections.

She returns from the encounter with Mystery to her companions--the encounter with Mystery always invites closer connection with other people. They are in awe at her new "necklace," a symbol of her whole demeanor and lifestyle with them. They are inflamed with a passion to be like her--but alas, when they meet the old hag, they cannot withdraw their projections from her, and founder in their own misery. The girl cannot complete the journey for the others. Each one has to do it for herself. The dragon represents the experience of Mystery as indifferent, hostile and life-threatening. Mystery is incapable of offering Itself as gracious, unless a person is willing to receive the offer as friendly. It is not that Mystery abandons such a person--rather Mystery's solidarity with the sufferer is most complete at that moment--such is the lesson of the Cross. A theology of the Cross takes Mystery's powerlessness seriously.

To complete this chapter, we now turn to the Pastoral Counselor, the context of his or her encounter with clients, and the situation of the clients themselves in interaction with the Pastoral Counselor. How can we interpret what goes on in the light of our conclusion in this chapter, and in the context of the "heroine's journey"?

Pastoral Counseling--A Ministry in
the Service of Faith

The Counseling Act

Have people who have launched themselves, or who are about to launch themselves on the hero's journey, any need for a companion who would nurture or sustain them on their pilgrimage? The answer to that question is in the positive. The question we now attempt to answer is: "what is the nature of the help that such a companion would offer the pilgrim?"

From the point of view of Object Relations Theory, we can expect that the counseling act will involve an encounter where the most salient characteristic is the empathy that underlines every interaction that occurs between the counselor and client. Such empathy not only implies a clear understanding of the client's predicament, as she experiences it, but it insists on a non-judgmental attitude, coupled with a behavior pattern designed to accept, and frustrate the client in as optimal a manner as possible--in a manner which approximates the attitude of the "good-enough-mother." The encounter is an activity in the present, for the sake of the present and the future. What is central, is the relationship between the counselor and the client, at the present moment, so that deficits in self-structure, the result of poor selfobject relationships in the past, maybe remedied. Looked at from the theological perspective of John Shea, the counseling act is an instance of a person entering a situation with genuine compassion, equipped to be self-sacrificing, in order to support the client in her efforts to develop behavior patterns that are compassionate and which invite mutuality and respect.

Pastoral Counseling, as I have said, involves an encounter, of two (or more) people, each one with a particular life-story. These two life-stories interweave, for the duration of the encounter. This is not just any encounter. It is rather, an intentionally organized encounter. It has a purpose: that the destructive images that guide the client's life and her self-conversations, which in turn give rise to her destructive behavior patterns, be changed, transformed, or replaced, with healthy images, which will breed new, liberating attitudes, and beget new, freer, behavior patterns. The stories of these two individuals are engaged at different points in the process of their unfolding. In terms of our earlier story, the counselor has returned from the cavern and is on the bank of the river, with the client, and is prepared, if necessary, to leap into the muddy waters of the river, with him or her. The client has not yet plunged into the water or is still struggling with the horror of the old hag's sores. The counseling act in this context, is a multifaceted reality which constantly changes in response to the needs of the client's "descent" or "return" from the cavern. We might compare it to a dance routine where one partner is so attuned to the other's body movement, that no matter how he moves, she moves in tempo, and in step with him. What goes into the counseling act includes rapport building, teaching the client to use talk as a tool for growth, contracting with the client, giving permission to feel, entering with the client into the whole range of his feelings, and receiving from the client whatever projections he or she may unload onto the counselor, without retaliation. But no matter what the activity is, it has the underlying qualities of empathy and solidarity, qualities supplied to

the act by the counselor, who has returned herself from the cavern, in possession of the beautiful necklace--who has the capacity to mirror and affirm others.

The Counselor and Faith

It is rather artificial to treat the counselor, and the counseling act separately, because the person, and what she does are so intimately linked. But for the sake of completeness and clarity I do so. From what I have said, it is clear that to be a counselor, one must have at least begun the heroine's journey oneself. This is necessary, because without having faced one's own failures, without having named them, experienced the sadness, the anxiety and fear that go hand in hand with these failures, and without having uncovered the defenses that one uses to protect oneself from these failures, great segments of experience must be denied, repressed or deleted from awareness. John Shea spoke of falling, falling and hitting the bottom, at the time when he was burying the dead fish. That is a good illustration of the hero's journey. Disenchantment was his name for the required shattering of delusion. He met Mystery at the bottom of his fall. Object Relations Theorists speak of the healing of the narcissistic split, and the emergence of an integrated self as the term of this process.

To the degree that a counselor has not undertaken the process of healing her own self, to that degree is it impossible for her to enter, empathically into the world of the client. Few, if any counselors can be expected to ever achieve the capacity to complete empathy--and since, on the "good-enough-mothering" model, optimal frustration of the client is desirable, maybe total empathy might hinder the healing process,

anyway. That said however, if a significant number of the counselor's responses are made out of her own need, or stem from the over-determined nature of her own motivations, then the healing, empathetic, and welcoming environment, which is the primary requisite, if the client is to undertake the process of restructuring the self, is missing. The condition of possibility of the counselor becoming the supportive, nurturing selfobject which the client is in search of, as a part of the journey to wholeness, is precisely, empathic, and supportive understanding.

In the previous paragraph, the ideal of optimal frustration was mentioned. Perhaps a little more needs to be said about the issues that cluster around it. Situations may arise where a client is unable or unwilling to assume self-responsibility. The temptation is for the therapist to take charge of the client's life. A therapist somewhere commented to fellow-therapists that while it is noble to assist a stricken elephant while it is rising, it is foolhardy to try to catch him while he is falling. In terms that we have used in this essay, what is important is that counselors maintain their own personal boundaries and the integrity of their own self. At times this may involve challenging the client, maybe even being impolite--but never without empathy. Looked at from the point of view of the client, he needs to experience the counselor as a separate, differentiated, person.

There are serious ethical issues raised, when we talk of a counselor bringing his or her faith commitments to a counseling situation. There are ways of bringing one's faith to bear on the counseling act, which are unethical--the attempt to impose one's own

theological viewpoint on a client is one such case. But, there is another sense in which one cannot escape the influence of one's faith in the counseling session--as is the case for every other activity one might undertake. We have defined faith in terms of a human knowing, basic to the creation of a meaningful human environment, and which finds its fulfillment in a growing capacity for self-giving and service. If this definition of faith is acceptable, then it is hard to see how it cannot influence what goes on in the counselling session. The basic images which structure the counselor's world, which are the "rooms" which contain the "furniture" of his thinking and feeling, and which give directionality to his concrete strategies, are the essential elements of his faith. Moreover, the counselor is there as a helper, precisely in order to give expression to the outpouring of the fullness of her inner life, to fulfill the sense of an inner imperative to share the goodness, wisdom and healing that she herself has already experienced. The counselor's faith provides the structure by which the meaning of the client's story is understood and reflected. To ask him to leave his faith at the door of his office, is like asking him to come without his skin. The issue for the counselor is not "Do I have a faith?" but "What kind of faith do I have?" The aims and values of counseling, as these have been enunciated by the major counseling and psychological associations (cf. for example, the AAPC Code of Ethics, Principle I), seem to be congruent with this definition of faith. Maybe they even imply it.

The Client and Faith

Just as the counselor arrives at the session as the subject of a

living faith, so does the client. She comes for counseling either because her world is upside down, and therefore meaningless, or because there are some areas in her functioning, which are distressful, and therefore need to be cared for. In the optimal case, the client enters a situation where the client and counselor together form a very special kind of world. The counselor offers empathy and solidarity, which is the fruit of her own maturity and faith-experience. The client is invited to experience this, and responds with his story. In the optimal circumstance, the client is testing the images, thoughts, feelings and strategies that he has evolved, against the images, thoughts, feelings and strategies of the counselor, within the context of a safe, holding environment, for whose maintenance, responsibility rests with the counselor. Certainly, it is never a matter of the counselor trying to replace the beliefs of the client--even if he considers them unhealthy--with his own. As Shea pointed out, the beliefs a person develops are only the conceptualizations of more fundamental experiences, and remain a mystery to another who has not had the opportunity to be privy to the process through which the conceptualization took place. Even where the focus of attention is the client's unhealthy beliefs, as in R.E.T., the effort is directed to help the client substitute new, more healthy beliefs, of his own choosing and formulation, for the old, crippling ones. But with a therapy which sees faith as a fundamental aspect of human living, it is not beliefs which hold the center stage. Much more fundamental is the relationship of the counselor and the client, and the breakthrough of Mystery to the client, in and through the relationship. This is Shea's formulation of the situation, and we have already spelled

out the psychological concomitants of this experience. In intimate, holding, mirroring relating, experience is generated which becomes the raw material for new, "whole" images of self, of others and ultimately of God. It is from these that healthy thinking, feeling, and behavior patterns will flow.

A Final Word

The end is a beginning. We have written at length about how human beings create meaning. The time for writing is now over. It is time to live, and simply appreciate the experience of meaningful contact with others. There is an important lesson in the following story, which I heard a long time ago:

A young man became obsessed with a passion for Truth, so he took leave of his family and friends and set off in search of it. He travelled over many lands, sailed across the oceans, climbed many mountains, and, all in all, went through a great deal of hardship and suffering. One day he awoke to find that he was seventy-five years old and had not still found the truth he had been searching for. So he decided, sadly, that he would give up the search and go home.

It took him months and months to return to his hometown, for he was an old man now. Once home, he opened the door of his house-- and there he found Truth that had been waiting patiently for him all these years.

The writing of an essay like this will never hand us truth or meaning, ready-made. But there is reason to hope that the struggle to write it, will prepare us to recognize and appreciate them when they happen for us.

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CURRICULUM VITAE

Philip Baxter was born in Co. Leitrim, Ireland in 1950. He is the eldest of three siblings. His parents farmed the family farm. He was raised a Catholic. When he was nineteen, he entered the Capuchin Franciscan community, making final profession in 1976. He was ordained to presbyterial ministry in 1977.

Academic History

Baxter attended the parochial primary schools of his home town, and graduated to the Marian High School, at Mohill, managed by the Sisters of Mercy, in 1963. In 1970, he began his undergraduate studies in the Arts Faculty of the University College, Cork, Ireland, majoring in Philosophy with Psychology as the subsidiary subject. He earned a Diploma in Education from the same college in 1978. He completed a primary degree in Theology at All Hallows Seminary, an accredited college of the National University at Maynooth. In 1978, he enrolled at Lumen Vitae, a Jesuit Theological School, affiliated with the University of Louvain, in Belgium. He completed a two year program there and graduated with a License in Pastoral Theology and Catechetics. He is currently completing the program for a Master's Degree in Pastoral Counseling at Loyola University, Chicago, and is a Clinical Extern at the Institute of Juvenile Research, at the University of Illinois at Chicago

Work Experience

Baxter began his working career as a teacher of Religious Education in a State High School, in Cork, Ireland in 1976. He transferred to a High School, owned and managed by the Irish Province of Capuchins, the following year, and taught Religious Education and French. Following his return from Brussels, he taught for a further two years at the High School Level.

In 1982, Baxter went to Zambia where he joined a team of Capuchins and coworkers, who were directing a relief program for Angolan and Namibian refugees, as part of a parish outreach. That program ended in 1984. Later that year, he was appointed rector of a new Franciscan Formation and Study Center, at Livingstone Zambia, and held that position for five years, before coming to Loyola. He intends to return to Zambia in September 1992.

APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Philip Patrick Baxter has been read and approved by the following committee:

Allan Schnarr, Ph.D., Director
Lecturer, Pastoral Studies
Loyola University, Chicago

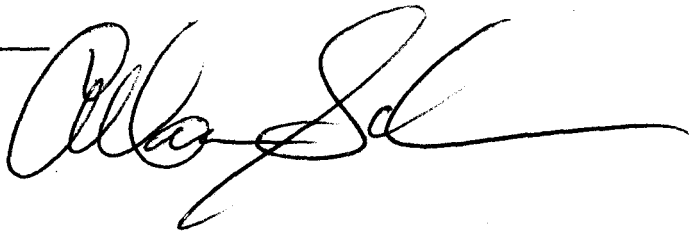
Frances Belmonte, Ph.D.
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The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated and that the thesis is now given final approval by the committee with reference to content and form.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

12/3/91

Date

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Allan Schnarr", written over a horizontal line.