

Early development and symbolic physical action

An Email from:

Joan Chodorow

Joan, Ph.D., Jungian analyst, author of 'Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology' and 'Jung on Active Imagination', is well known to us in Australia as Keynote speaker for the DTAA's Dance Therapy Conference in Melbourne in February 2000. Deeply involved in dance and dance therapy, with interests in early development and active imagination, Joan lectures and teaches both nationally and internationally. We hope to persuade her to make a return visit to Australia in the near future. The following email, first published on the ADTA listserv, was revised by Joan for the benefit of the DTAA community.

From: <loujoan@itsa.ucsf.edu>

Sent: Wednesday, March 17, 2004, to the ADTA and updated February 11, 2005 for the DTAA

Dear Colleagues,

Jane Guthrie contacted me in January 2005 with the request to publish and perhaps update some "thinking out loud" I did on the ADTA Listserv last year. I'm delighted to comply. In reading it over again, I was able to correct a few typo mistakes in the original message that may have been confusing. Here is a slightly revised version, with warm greetings and appreciation to Jane and the DTAA.

I am not sure how many of us know about or remember the cross-cultural studies back in the 1960s and 1970s by Mary Ainsworth and her associates. Based on their observations of infant-mother attachment, they identified 4 pairs of opposites regarding helpful and problematic patterns of behavior. These are: accessible-ignoring, cooperative-interfering, accepting-rejecting, and sensitive-insensitive. Drawing from these as well as other studies, Charles Stewart added a 5th pair of opposites: Easy to read-indecipherable. To put it another way, securely attached infants were found to have mothers/parents who show a predominance of accessible, cooperative, accepting, sensitive and easy-to-read behaviors. By contrast, insecurely attached infants were found to have mothers/parents who show a predominance of ignoring, interfering, rejecting, insensitive, and indecipherable behaviors. The sensitive-insensitive dimension was found to be the most important in the sense that sensitive parents tend to show a predominance of accessible, cooperative, accepting, and easy to read behaviors, etc. The material is simple and self-evident, based on observations of physical action including tone of voice, interactive rhythms, and more.

Interestingly, the problematic dimension of these five pairs of opposites seem to correspond to Winnicott's agonal states and also certain basic emotions:

A predominance of Ignoring behavior would be linked to experiences of the void, loss, sadness,

and Winnicott's primitive agony: "no relationship to the body"

A predominance of Interfering behavior would be linked to experiences of chaos, restriction, anger, and Winnicott's primitive agony: "going to pieces"

A predominance of Rejecting behavior would be linked to experiences of alienation, rejection, disgust (contempt/shame), and Winnicott's primitive agony: "complete isolation"

A predominance of Indecipherable behavior would be linked to experiences of the unknown, the abyss, fear, and Winnicott's primitive agony: "falling forever"

A predominance of insensitive behavior would be linked to the unexpected shock and disorientation of startle (quickly replaced by another emotion. If the behavior were insensitive, startle would likely be replaced with one of the crisis emotions). Insensitive parental behavior would also be linked to Winnicott's primitive agony: "Having no orientation," leading perhaps to any or all of the other agonal states, depending on the situation.

By contrast, when sensitive mothers and their securely attached babies interact with each other, the mothers instinctively do everything they can to maximize joyful and interesting experiences, as well as happy and interesting surprises. Sensitive parental behavior is correlated with a predominance of accessible, cooperative, accepting, and easy-to-read behaviors, depending on the situation (Stewart 2001, pp. 47-49).

For DTAA colleagues who are interested in this material, here is a schematic view of some of the connections, for your consideration.

Helpful patterns of parental behavior	Reliable, consistent, easy to read	Accessible	Cooperative	Accept-ing	Sensitive (Ainsworth)	
Problematic patterns of parental behavior (Ainsworth, Stewart, Jung)	Indecipherable (Stewart 2001) "Uncanny" Jung MDR, p. 50)	Ignoring	Interfering	Rejecting	Insensitive	
Agonal states (Winnicott 1962,1963; Stewart 2001)	Falling forever	No relationship to the body	Going to pieces	Complete isolation	No orientation	Having no joy and having no interest would be a condition of Winnicott's primitive agonies, that is, in the intensity of the moment.
Innate affects	Fear	Distress and Grief	Anger	Disgust (contempt/shame)	Startle	Joy Interest
Life situations	The Unknown	Loss	Restriction of freedom	Rejection	Unexpected	Familiar Novel
Innate image-imprints	The Abyss	The Void	Chaos	Alienation	Darkness	Illumination : Diffuse & Focused

Work in progress, 2005

Reference list provided by Joan Chodorow:

Ainsworth, Mary, et al. 1974, "Infant-Mother Attachment," in *Integration of a Child into a Social World*, p. 106, MPM Richards (ed).

Chodorow, Joan. 1991. *Dance Therapy and Depth Psychology: The Moving Imagination*. London and New York: Routledge.

Chodorow, Joan. forthcoming. *Active Imagination: Healing from within*. College Station, TX: TAMU Press

Damasio, A. 1999. *The Feeling of What Happens: Body and Emotion in the Making of Consciousness*. New York: Harcourt.

Ekman, Paul. 2003. *Emotions Revealed*. New York: Times Books, Henry Holt and Company.

Jung, C. G. 1961. *Memories, Dreams, Reflections*. New York: Random House – Vintage Books, 1965.

Meltzoff, Andrew N. 2002. "Elements of a Developmental Theory of Imitation." *The Imitative Mind: Development, Evolution, and Brain Bases*, edited by Andrew N. Meltzoff and Wolfgang Prinz, pp. 19-41. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available on line:

<http://ilabs.washington.edu/meltzoff/publications.html>

Stewart, Charles. 2001. *The Symbolic Impetus: How Creative Fantasy Motivates Development*. London: Free Assoc. Books. Links between Winnicott, Ainsworth and existential affects are on pp. 18, 46, and 48.

Stewart, Louis, and Charles Stewart, 1979. "Play, Games and the Affects." In *Play as Context*, TAASP Proceedings.

Stewart, Louis. 1992. *Changemakers: A Jungian Perspective on Sibling Position and Family*. London: Routledge.

Winnicott, D. W. 1962, "Ego Integration in Child Development," in *Maturational Processes*, p. 58.

Winnicott, D. W. 1963, "Fear of Breakdown," in *Psychoanalytic Explorations*, pp. 89-90