

SYMBIOSIS AND SEPARATION: Towards a Psychology of Culture

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1—Margaret Mahler has developed the hypothesis of the “symbiotic phase” as a central feature of human development. Mahler defines symbiosis as “that state of undifferentiation, of fusion with mother, in which the “I” is not yet differentiated from the “not I.” (1968, p. 9)

She describes the symbiotic phase as follows:

The essential feature of symbiosis is hallucinatory or delusional, somatopsychic omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother and the delusion of a common boundary of the two actually and physically separate individuals. (1968, p. 9)

The symbiotic phase, then, it would appear, consists of the cognitive experience of “oneness,” a sense of narcissistic unity and omnipotence, the central feature of which is the illusion that the other is a part of the self.

2—The mother is experienced, in a delusional way, to be a part of the self. This is the psychic delusion of symbiosis, the delusion of a “common boundary” which encompasses two separate individuals. This delusion of “two within one” is the “dual-unity” situation.

4—The body-ego, in the dual-unity phase, is an ego which reflects the child’s experiences of his own body plus the experiences of one’s mother’s body as connected to one’s own body. The body ego is a mother in child body-ego.

5—The symbiotic phase proper begins only when the infant becomes “dimly cognizant” that need satisfaction is coming from outside the self rather than from within the self. It is at this point that the symbiotic fantasy or hallucination develops, the function of which is to extend or perpetuate the pleasurable illusion of oneness. The function of the symbiotic fantasy is to perpetuate the dream that the mother’s body is a part of one’s own body.

6—We may hypothesize that the gradual perception that one is separate from the symbiotic half of the self is one of the profound traumas of childhood, and of human life. It is simultaneously to be separated from the delusion that gratification is automatic, and to be separated from the illusion of narcissistic omnipotence. The loss of what was imagined to be a part of oneself means that one becomes a “shrunk” version of what one once imagined oneself to be: one becomes a frail, human individual.

10—The perception of loss is not bearable, it cannot be integrated by the ego. The conversion mechanism means, essentially, that parts of the body come to symbolize the lost object. Deutsch states:

The feeling of object loss [is] a ferment for the symbolization process each part of the body possesses the potentiality for the symbolic expression of loss and separation. This loss evokes anxiety which, as Freud stated, is a separation anxiety. Hence it calls for replacement. A more highly developed ego turns to different parts of the body which are adequately symbolized and may serve as substitutes for the loss. (1959, p. 79)

11—The body itself, in other words, acts as the container for the lost other. Separation of a part of oneself from one’s self is denied, and the child fantasizes that the other is still a part of one’s self, but now symbolized or contained in specific bodily parts. The beloved object, in this way, comes to be “embodied” within the self. This “conversion” of a bodily part, the identification of a part of the body with the mother, leads to the inhibition of function of that body part, or its over-stimulation. The bodily part comes to be “possessed” by the lost object, now introjected into the self. The body has been “taken over” by the object.

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13—According to Brown:

The primal act of the human ego is a negative one—not to accept reality, specifically the separation of the child’s body from the mother’s body. (1959, p. 160)

Like Deutsch, Brown sees the origin of fantasy in the denial of separation:

Separation in the present is denied by reactivating fantasies of past union.

(1959, p. 161)

15—According to Brown, the denial of separateness, and subsequent effort to install the other within the self, is the fundamental act of fantasy:

It is through fantasy that the ego introjects lost objects and makes identifications. Identifications, as modes of preserving past object-cathexes and thus darkening life in the present with the shadow of the past, are fantasies. Identifications as modes of installing the Other inside the Self are fantasies. (1959, p. 164)

Brown perceives the dramatic psychosomatic implications of the evolution of fantasy:

Fantasy has the power to alter the body since life is of the body, fantasy as the negation of life must negate specific bodily organs, so that there can be no fantasy without negation—alteration of the body. (1959, p. 164)

23—What we are suggesting, in this monograph, is that the process of human psychic development is much more intimately linked with the processes of human cultural development than has ever been acknowledged by psychoanalysis...The guiding proposition of this study is that “external reality” does not exist as some mystical domain “outside” of human psychic development; that it is not a question of “man,” on the one hand, and “reality,” on the other. Rather, in my view, human beings are deeply implicated in the social reality which they create.

23—The tendency toward extrajection, I believe, is linked with the human tendency toward the creation of, and the attachment to, transitional objects, objects which serve as substitutes for the internalized objects. As the human being struggles to separate, to gain autonomy, to achieve freedom, he struggles to rid himself of the internalized object, which acts as a burden, a weight of oppression. He does so by projecting the internalized object onto objects in the external world, thus creating a certain “distance” between one’s own ego and the object. To “extraject” the object, therefore, is to distance the object from the self; it is a mechanism toward the development of autonomy.

41—What oppresses is precisely the burden of one’s own dependent attachment. The attachment to an omnipotent object may make the ego feel “bigger” (e.g., a primary identification with “Germany” as a substitute for the primary identification with the mother); but the internalization of such a massive object into the self also weighs one down; it is a heavy burden to carry such an object within. So, the wish to destroy the object, the hostility and the anger experienced in relationship to the object, represents a wish to liberate oneself from the object which is the source of one’s oppressive, dependent attachment.

When Hitler acts, in the end, toward the destruction of Germany, one of his motives, I believe, is to free himself from the burden of his attachment to Germany, to destroy the object which has held him “in thrall” for so many years, to “sever” the symbiotic bond which has connected him to this symbolic mother. If Hitler destroys himself while he destroys Germany, it is because he has so irrevocably committed himself to the dream of symbiotic oneness. Hitler and Germany remain “fused” as the world war ends, embracing one another in the fire of war and death.

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43—The child begins to separate from the illusion of symbiosis. But he is not yet strong enough to give up this “magical” state; he is unable, and unwilling, to renounce the dream of omnipotence. So, the issue is: How can he get away from the symbiotic mother without being forced to renounce the omnipotent fantasies which are associated with the mother? How can one give up the illusion of total security...without plunging headlong into a confrontation with the reality of insecurity? How can one abandon the attachment to the mother without having to abandon the attachment? Or: How can one move toward separation-individuation without having to abandon the symbiotic fantasy, which provides a kind of “base of security”? (One way is internalization.)

43-4—What I am now hypothesizing, and shall attempt to demonstrate, is that the struggle to escape the “gravitational pull” of the maternal matrix is enhanced by the existence of various institutionalized, cultural forms, whose basic function is to act as a “centripetal force,” to draw the individual away from the infantile “paradise,” to encourage him to abandon the symbiotic attachment to the mother and to move forward into reality. These mechanisms are built into the social structure, they are forms which already exist within the society; to reveal the nature and meaning of these forms is to reveal their psychic function, to show the way they function as a “link” between the infantile ego and the maturing ego.

The function of such social forms, I shall argue, is to assist the individual in breaking the spell of the symbiotic fantasy, and thus to permit the individual to move forward into reality. “Society,” from this point of view, functions as a defense against regression. But it cannot merely “squench” this fantasy; the fantasy is far too powerful. Rather, it must use the dream of symbiosis, sequester the libidinal and psychic energy attached to it, by creating possibilities for the displacement of this fantasy.

Social forms, in other words, we shall argue, function to provide a “solution” to the “impossible” conflict described above: the conflict between the wish to progress and the wish to regress; between the wish for omnipotence and the wish to become a human individual; between the wish to “connect” and the wish to separate; between the wish for omnipotent fusion and the wish to abandon this desire.

Social forms, we hypothesize, represent humanly created, institutionalized “solutions,” whose purpose is to answer questions such as the following: How can one give up the dream of omnipotence and at the same time perpetuate it? How can one become a separate individual without giving up one’s dream of connectedness? How can one perpetuate the experience of oneness, the dream of fusion, without losing one’s self? Human cultural forms, in short, are designed to “get one out” of the narcissistic bind,

45—to pull one away from the symbiotic bond; but, at the same time, to soften the blow, to provide “consolation”; indeed, in many instances, to pretend that separation has never actually occurred.

47—(The question of how do human beings achieve separation from the omnipotent, symbiotic mother, how is independence achieved) —One of the ways in which human beings attempt to resolve this dilemma, attempt to get out of this bind, is using various social forms or cultural mechanisms whose purpose is to ease the transition from one psychic place to another psychic place to another psychic place. The transitional object, specifically, is that object which permits the individual to transfer or project the psychic energy and affects which had been bound up with the omnipotent mother into external reality. The transitional object is the object which inherits the attachment to the mother, and which thus permits the transfer of libidinal energy...

The transitional object is that object which permits the individual to leave the mother because this object symbolizes the mother, or is endowed with some of the “magical” properties of the omnipotent object. In the absence of the beloved object, the individual creates a “dream of love,” a fantasy which preserves the idea or memory of the beloved object. When these inner emotions

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are projected into objects which have an existence as a modality of culture, they become shared transitional objects.

48—A “love song,” for example, hummed or imagined by a given individual, may serve as a transitional object. One is dreaming of the beloved object, and this dream is concretized in terms of a melody or song. If the song which one is humming is a popular song, then one’s own dream of love may be shared; there exists, in the culture, a shared vehicle for expressing the dream of love. The song is a shared transitional object. If this song exists as a record, we can see the meaning of Modell’s definition above: the object exists “in” the environment, it is an “external object.”

But it is not an external object in the way psychoanalysts have usually thought of external objects: as objects which exist apart from the subject. Rather, the song or the record, is a “created environment,” in the sense that its properties “reflect the inner life of the subject?” In short, if we may conceptualize a piece of music as a transitional object, may we not consider the possibility that all the objects of culture function as transitional objects?

But let us focus here upon the function of the transitional object as serving to get the child away from the symbiotic object, to provide a modus operandi for separating from the object, and for transferring psychic energy away from the fusion fantasy and the maternal matrix, and into external reality.

The transitional object may be viewed as a substitute for the symbiotic mother, an externalized representation of

49—the “symbiotic half of the self.” The transitional object is like an “externalized internal object.” Instead of internalizing the object as a response to loss, setting up the object as a psychic structure within one’s own mind/body (the psychosomatic conversion symptom), the object is perpetuated in the form of an external symbol of the object...

As a substitute for the symbiotic fantasy from which the child has unwillingly separated, therefore, the transitional object functions to provide “solace,” to make separation bearable. The transitional object is endowed with some of the magical, comforting properties of the maternal object...The child “clings” to the transitional object and experiences it as an extension of his self; it is a container for his fantasies of connectedness. It is an external object, but it is an object which exists within the boundaries of his inner psychic space.

It is our view that the creation of transitional object is one of the fundamental human mechanisms in terms of which development occurs. We have noted the highly ambivalent and conflictual nature of the separation-individuation process, due to the child’s unwillingness to separate from the symbiotic mother, which has constituted such an enormous part of his ego and his identity. The transitional object serves to make separation bearable insofar as the new object is endowed with the omnipotent properties of the first object. The transitional objects which permit the child to “bridge the gap” from an attachment to the mother to an involvement with external reality are “new” in a sense. But they are also “old” insofar as they are perceived in the image of the early love-object. The transitional object functions to “contain” the affects, the illusions, the overall perceptual structure which developed in relation to the symbiotic mother.

The object thus permits the child to sever the attachment to the mother, but only under the condition that he can perpetuate this attachment, insofar as the new object is a symbol of the omnipotent mother, to which the child is mystically “connected.” Thus, by transferring his fantasies and psychic energy from one transitional object to another, the individual can “move along” in his development without, however, abandoning the psychic bond with or attachment to the symbiotic object. Separation is achieved, the ego can accept separation, only under the condition that it is not actually abandoning the fantasy of omnipotence.

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Development occurs under the assumption that one is moving from one omnipotent object to another, leaving one "realm of omnipotence" in order to enter another realm of omnipotence. The fantasy of omnipotence is never abandoned. But developmental movement is achieved insofar as the object upon which the fantasy of omnipotence is projected changes.

51—Adolescent attaching to a baseball team—The motivation for his involvement remains the dream of narcissistic omnipotence, the dream of being "connected" to a powerful object, which functions as a substitute for the infantile object. The "symbolic object," the baseball team, functions as a transitional object, functions to permit the individual to displace the psychic energy which had been bound up internally onto an object which exists in social reality. The function of the transitional object, here, is to facilitate the shift in cathectic energy.

The mechanism of externalization or "extrajection" or projection thus permits the regressive attachment to act as a progressive force. This mechanism, I believe, is built into the very fabric or structure of society. It is not sufficient to conceptualize this process by stating that **52—the individual "uses" the objects of culture as transitional objects.** Rather, what I am suggesting is that the very meaning of culture, the very nature of its structure and form, develops by its capacity to provide this psychic function.

The culture (and all cultures differ the pattern which they provide; each is a different solution) exists as an already "tested" pattern of transitional solutions, and thus the individual's own psychic development is intimately bound up with the structure of his culture. The culture defines the nature of the transitional solutions. To grow up in a culture, therefore, is to be strongly inclined to "plug in" to the transitional solutions which the culture provides.

To "plug in" to a culture, then, is to "move along" from one transitional object to another, to transfer one's omnipotent attachments from one symbolic object to another.

52—We shall focus, in subsequent sections of this monograph, on one transitional object which is highly significant in contemporary culture in providing an anchor for identity: the country, or nation. This is a fundamental symbolic object in modern life, serving, for great numbers of persons, as a "container" for the dream of omnipotence, the dream of symbiotic fusion. Adrift in the world, once separated from his family, the individual becomes an "American," a "German," a "Frenchman." He fuses his identity with this new omnipotent object. He identifies with it, as he once identified with the omnipotent mother. He "re-connects" with the omnipotent mother by connecting with his country. By linking one's own sense of self with this massive transitional object, the individual is striving to "recapture" infantile omnipotence.

What is interesting about the human tendency to attach to transitional objects and is an important aspect of the mechanism, I believe, is the tendency to perceive the object as existing "out there," as having an objective existence in the world, as being part of "external reality." Even though we cannot point to a referent which equates with it, we tend to experience the country, for example, as existing "out there," somewhere external to us. We rarely tend to experience the nation as existing "in here," within ourselves, as a psychic structure that exists because we have created it, as an idea which reflects the "inner life of the subject."

53—The entire "world" which exists "out there" is not some "external" domain, foreign to man; rather it is a world which man has created, a world which is a response to his own needs and fears. It is a world which is consistent with his psychic structure, it reflects his psychic structure; it was created by man to assist him in the development of his psychic structure. To say that "culture determines," therefore, is only a small part of the story.

54—What is occurring is that culture is providing; it is providing objects, institutions, ideologies, processes which represent time-tested "solutions," methods which man has discovered or invented for resolving his transitional dilemmas.

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Culture is a human creation or invention. And one of its major functions, I have hypothesized here, is a psychological one: to provide various “transitional solutions,” various methods or mechanisms or techniques, shared by members of the culture, whose function is to get persons out, to sever the tie to the symbiotic mother. Cultural forms are created with the purpose of assisting the individual in his struggle to separate. Civilization or culture, from this point of view, may be viewed as a pattern or structure of ideas, modes of behavior, etc., whose function is to assist the individual in his struggle for separation-individuation; to structure the struggle against regression to the symbiotic object; and to provide various “sublimations,” substitutes for the symbiotic dream in the external world which serve to make life (in the absence of the symbiotic bond) bearable.

57—The human connection to the social world, then, is fueled by the attachment to inner objects; the institutions of society attain their power and hold upon individuals because they serve as containers for the infantile energies\58—and affects. The objects of culture become symbols of inner objects, and because they do so we idealize and become attached to these objects.

The attachment to society is an “energetic” event, and the energy which sustains the attachment to cultural objects is energy derived from the internal objects, which continue to exert their power upon the individual. Viewed more positively, we may suggest that the cultural objects serve as “releasers” for the energy which was previously “bound” in relationship to the internal objects. By virtue of their capacity to act as symbols of the inner objects, the individual is willing to abandon the attachment to the inner objects. Or, more precisely, the symbiotic fantasy of connectedness is not abandoned, but only transferred onto new objects, which serve to replicate the infantile experience of connectedness.

57—According to Faber, what binds the individual to his culture, what ties the human being to the institutions of society, is precisely this projection of the infantile situation. The “bind” which we experience in relationship to culture is a replication of the earlier, infantile bind:

The individual’s struggle to establish and maintain “dual-unity” binds him to the objects of his inner world and, hence, to an overestimation of external objects that “automatically” become projective exemplifications of either acceptance or rejection; in other words, psychological symbols. (1981, p. 171)

People are tied to the “institutions” of their “society” out of the tie that binds them to the parental figures within. The projection of internalized affect into the symbols of security and control, or more properly, the epiphenomena [eliciting of internalized affect by the existing symbols of cultural life, is an energetic event (1981, p. 200).

The tie to society, the “social aspect,” is ultimately rooted *zu liebe*, in the internalization, identification, and object relation, that commences during the early period and is subsequently projected onto the “social” landscape. (1981, p. 236)

The human connection to the social world, then, is fueled by the attachment to inner objects; the institutions of society attain their power and hold upon individuals because they serve as containers for the infantile energies

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59—We begin our analysis by emphasizing that, according to psychoanalysis, the fundamental source of human identity is the body. Thus, Freud's famous statement that the ego is first and foremost a bodily-ego; it is not merely a surface entity, but it is itself the projection of a surface. (1962, p. 26)

Similar, Deutsch states:

The body represents to an individual the very reality which he cannot deny because to do so he would have to deny his existence. A new born child knows only one reality, i.e., his body which he can feel, touch, and perceive with his senses. (1959, p. 75)

60—If the ego is a body-ego, and the ego is also dual in nature, consisting of the child's perception of his own body plus his experience of the mother's body as an extension of his own body, it follows that the body ego is dual as well.

The body ego constitutes both the experience of one's own body and the experience of one's mother as she ministers to one's body. As the term "symbiosis" implies, it is the experience of a dual-body which is the source of the human ego.

61—The development of the symbol, or symbolic object (such as the nation) occurs later, and its function is to represent the lost mother or the symbiotic part of the self from which one has been separated. The object serves to "re-connect" the individual with the lost part of the self, but now through the mechanism of attachment to an object which symbolizes the lost part of the self. This "transitional object" serves to link the individual with the world, where once he had been attached to his mother.

Put somewhat differently: The mother, in the symbiotic situation, is "coenesthetically experienced as a part of the self." Separation from the mother, therefore, is separation from the "omnipotent body of childhood," separation from 62—the "dual unity." This experience of the diminution of the self, of the mutilation of the self, of the loss of omnipotence and sense of "smallness," leads to the effort to reconnect with another omnipotent object. This re-connection often takes the form of an attachment to a symbol which represents the omnipotent mother. The symbol, therefore, may be viewed as the container for the lost part of the self, the form in which the omnipotent mother is "embodied."

We have hypothesized that, in contemporary cultures, the "nation" functions as a shared symbolic system. And that this shared symbol, the nation, is a symbol of the omnipotent mother, a substitute for the symbiotic part of the self. This "omnipotent body," the nation, is a substitute for the mother's body. Now, the individual "re-connects" with his lost omnipotence by attaching himself to the omnipotent nation.

65—The mechanism of symbolism, then, is a mechanism which involves the projection of an intrapsychic perception of the body into the external world, into various objects in the world which symbolize the body. The burden of being fused with an internal object, the burden of having an object so close to one's body, is lifted through the externalization of the internal object; the object in the external world is an object which symbolizes the internal object. The individual continues to connect with, to attach to, the object. But now he connects to an object "out there," an object which seems to exist within social reality. There is a distancing of the object from the self, and thus it can be "perceived," and managed more easily.

66—We may hypothesize an additional consequence of this projective mechanism: Once symbolization occurs, once the body is projected into an external object, then the body or self comes to be "contained" in the external object; a part of the self has been projected "out there,"

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so that the body or self now exists in the form of an external object which symbolizes the body or self. In attempting to liberate the body or self, the individual loses himself. The human being no longer contains himself, he no longer exists within himself; now he exists in objects outside the self. He exists as a symbol of himself.

In other words, the external object contains the projected part of the self. The individual's ego has been split into two. Now the "other half of the self" (the symbiotic mother), previously internalized, has been externalized. The self-object has been split into two, the ego becomes a duality, and part of the self exists in the form of a symbol into which the self has been projected. The individual identifies himself with these "surrogate objects," such as the nation, objects which come to stand for the self. The body has been placed for "safe-keeping" in an external object, which now contains and "preserves" the object. One identifies with the object (e.g., the nation) into which one's self has been projected.

67—Deutsch defines this process of re-internalizing the symbiotic object as "retrojection" (re-introjection), and describes it as follows:

[The] specific sensory stimulus ... serves as the mediator for the retrojection of the lost object onto that organ system which is its symbolic representative. (1959, p. 76)

The sense of reality originates from the projection of sensory perceptions of one's own body onto objects outside of it, since external objects are perceived as if severed from the body and lost. This separation leads to the continual wish to restore the loss of the bodily wholeness. The objects outside become reunited with the body by way of symbolization. I propose to call this process "retrojection."

68—In order to recover the unity of the body, the wholeness of the body, which was lost because the body was projected into objects outside the self, it is now necessary to retroject back into the body the symbols of the body which contain the projected body. Thus, for example, the individual "identifies with the nation." That object which had served as the container for the internalized object, which represented a projection of the symbiotic mother, must now be retrojected back into the self. The Nazis, for example, commonly made statements such as the following: "Hitler is Germany, just as Germany is Hitler." Thus, by virtue of this mechanism, the primary identification with the mother is restored. The dual-unity of self-mother is restored by an equation which makes "self-country" a singular entity.

The lost part of the self has been "recaptured" through the mechanism of an absolute identification whereby the object in the external world which symbolizes the lost self has come to be identified with the self. In thus retrojecting the symbolic object (the nation) back into the self, the unity of the self is restored.

Put another way: In separating from his actual mother, Hitler identifies with the German nation, which serves as a symbolic substitute for the lost object. As a lost, wandering youth, with no anchor in reality, he projects his existence into Germany which, however, is perceived to exist at great distance from himself. He has "split" his ego into two, the concrete person, Adolf Hitler, and that part of himself which exists in the form of a projection, that part of himself which "identifies" with Germany. The "self-object" has been split into Hitler-Germany. His "soul" has been externalized.

69—Hitler seeks to attain power, therefore, as a way of consolidating the identification between himself and

Germany, as a way of getting closer to the projective object (which contains his self). He seeks to attain power as a way of recapturing the lost part of himself. When he becomes Fuehrer of the

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German nation he can finally say: “Hitler is Germany. Germany is Hitler.” Now he has recovered, so to speak, the lost part of himself, by creating an absolute identity between himself and the object which contains the lost part of the self. He has now, in this symbolic form, “restored his body wholeness” by completely retrojecting the symbolic object into the self.

Now, however, in spite of the fact that he has “fulfilled his wish,” he is confronted with the fundamental dilemma all over again: the danger of fusion, the danger of merging with, and being overwhelmed by, the omnipotent object.

Now Hitler is possessed by the object, he is possessed by Germany. Germany exists within the very fiber of his physiology, just as the symbiotic mother once did. Consequently, in my view, Hitler then must act in such a manner as to destroy the object with which he imagines himself to be fused.

The destruction of Germany, for Hitler, has the purpose of a struggle to liberate himself from the object which possesses him, to liberate himself from Germany. He imagines himself to be connected to, to be fused with, this massive, omnipotent object; to manage the entire German nation is a tremendous burden. To liberate himself, therefore, is to destroy the object which oppresses him, the object with which he identifies, Germany. By this time, however, the identification is so complete that Hitler must destroy himself in order to destroy Germany.

71—Every human being compensates for the early loss, a loss which is conceived to be an enormous one, by attaching himself to his country or “culture” as a symbolic object which can symbolize, or substitute for the lost part of the self, which can serve as a substitute for the omnipotent, symbiotic mother from which one has been forced to separate.

72—The transformation of libido attached to the body into libido attached to symbolic objects has a particular psychic function, and that function is to get the child away, to free the child from his mother’s body, and to connect him with objects in the external world which constitute the pathway toward social reality. The symbol is a “linking object” which gets the child away from the mother; it is a “way station,” both a point of departure and a new reality.

72—The path toward the symbol, toward projection, toward externalization, toward culture and civilization, is the path toward the desexualization of the early bodily, libidinal attachments. Sexual energy is used to create something new; the attachment to one’s own body and to the body of one’s mother is sequestered for the creation of cultural reality.

74—What is emphasized in the work of M. D. Faber is that the symbol never loses its connection with the body. And that, therefore, all of the conflict and ambivalence surrounding the fantasy of merger and the struggle for separation-individuation are “inherited” in the individual’s relationships with the objects which symbolize the infantile objects. He states:

Mental contents cannot be separated from bodily contents The symbol, with its space and time, is rooted in the body, grows out of the body, is but a “higher” development of body awareness. (1981, p. 97)

83—If we return to Mahler’s definition of the symbiotic phase, we will be able to perceive this process more clearly.

Mahler defines symbiosis as “somatopsychic omnipotent fusion with the representation of the mother,” as the “delusion of a common boundary of two actually and physically separate individuals,” and as the phase in which the infant behaves and functions as though he and his mother were “an omnipotent system—a dual unity with one common boundary.”

84—Libidinal energy which is bound up with the internalized object and later projected into the body of the nation, then, functions to sustain the illusion that one is a dual system. The “dual

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unity” of self-mother becomes the dual unity of “self-in-nation.” We sustain the illusion that we are a dual-system rather than a unity by linking our personal identities to this “omnipotent object,” the nation. The “boundary” of this system is the boundary of one’s nation, and one exists “within the boundary of one’s nation;” one is fused with the body of one’s culture.

The delusion of “somatopsychic omnipotent fusion with the (mental) representation of the mother” becomes the delusion of fusion with a symbolic projection of the mother, the nation. One exists in a somatopsychic tie with one’s nation. The blood which is sacrificed in the name of the nation (whether in the name of “wars,” or more directly, as in the case of Aztec civilization) is a paradigm for the sacrifice of one’s life energies in the name of preserving the delusion of the omnipotence of this symbolic object, with which one is now “fused.”

When the totalitarian argues that there does not exist a dimension of reality which is separate from the state, when the Communist declares that individual life has meaning only as it contributes to the life of the “whole,” he is replicating this delusion of an “omnipotent system,” of a “dual unity.” He is affirming that existence is not possible in separation from the symbiotic mother; and that, in fact, there is a common boundary which links the individual, which “contains him”—the boundary of the nation-state.

So, it is not precise to state that “civilization causes repression,” as if civilization were a force independent of the wishes and psychic structure of human beings. What occurs is that the individual needs to attach to civilization as 85—a means of replicating the omnipotent, symbiotic bond. And it is precisely this need for attachment which is the motive for “sacrifice,” the motive which causes him to “bleed for the country,” to sacrifice his own energies in the name of preserving the idea of this omnipotent object.

We can thus understand the manner in which the individual’s body can be taken over by civilization, the manner in which the libidinal energies of individuals can be “sequestered” for the “civilization project.” It is not that “society” acts at a distance, controlling one’s behavior as if through magic. Rather, it is an inner fantasy which connects the individual to society, a fantasy which is displaced onto the idea of society; and it is therefore the fantasy of being connected to the symbolic object, society, which motivates the individual to perform activities “in the name” of this object. The fantasy is the link between the body and the symbolic object. And, as we have seen, the fundamental fantasy which fuels the connection to society is the symbiotic tie to the mother, which is “replicated” as a tie to the body of the nation. The individual is held in thralldom to this giant “transitional object.” The “giantess of the nursery” (Edmund Bergler) becomes the great and glorious country, and the infantile attachment is perpetuated.

In summary: Repression, as a psychic mechanism, is rooted in the tie to the internal object. Libidinal energy is used in sustaining a relationship with the inner object and, because it is thus “bound” within, is not available for use in relationship to external objects and reality. Libidinal energy is used, rather, to sustain the fantasy of the “second part of a dual system,” an inner psychic system which seems to promise power, security, gratification.

84—Libidinal energy which is bound up with the internalized object and later projected into the body of the nation, then, functions to sustain the illusion that one is a dual system. the “dual unity” of self-mother becomes the dual unity of “self-in-nation.” We sustain the illusion that we are a dual system rather than a unity by linking our personal identities to this “omnipotent object,” the nation.

86—When the infantile, symbiotic object becomes projected into the country, or society, ...the energy which had been used to sustain the inner object is transferred onto the symbolic object, and the energy is used to sustain the fantasy of an omnipotent object “in reality,” and to sustain the delusion that one is connected to this object. Energies which had been bound within are now somewhat liberated, insofar as the energy can be transferred to an object which seems to exist as a part of the external world. The energy “reaches out” to become transformed into a devotion to

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one's nation, to one's society, to one's culture, etc. But this "third dimension" of reality, the dimension of the "public sphere," the dimension of the nation, is actually, still, an emanation of inner psychic functioning.

RAK notes, subsequent to publication: But it may be that the first delusion of symbiosis is perceptual rather than sexual, the proprioceptive experience of the body connected to the self, the crippling experience of a body within one's own body. Sexualization or the erotic symbiosis is already the experience of the beginning of the dissolution of the symbiosis. The experience of excitement or libido or need occurs when there is already an experience of separateness, and then this libido can be used to create symbols. Or I suppose when can try to substitute the writing for the internalized body, but without the libido it's such a struggle, just a fight for liberation, to express oneself toward the world.

When the object begins to "liquefy," then the creation of symbols (in place of the external erotic body which has replaced the internalized body) becomes more pleasurable (and when I'm trying to communicate my ideas to actual human beings, there's a further liberation from bondage to the object, an externalization of my grandiose "ideas," the "genius" or "thinker" who embodies my omnipotent, symbiotic aspirations...If Susan Kavalier-Adler can read my writings, then that libidinal entity, the body-of-work, connects me with another who is using her work to escape the object and connect with others).

Internalization is a kind of insulation or protective coating or cocoon: the self "contained within" the internalized objects, a kind of greasy or "smarmy" quality (one can feel the masturbatory libido in Steven): a kind of erotic experience of the others within the self that effects "maturity" and which permits separation.

But this internal object is also a kind of humiliation (Kafka's cockroach), a sense of weakness or wound within the self: a shameful dependency. It is almost as if another body is within the self, another object, and "shame" occurs when this sense of the self's omnipotence (due to being fused with an omnipotent object) begins to be deflated.

The experience of the object within the self is also a source of oppression, a "weight," an omnipotent object within the self which "weighs the self-down," but also stimulates accomplishment, which is to dislodge the object, to "push it off," to fulfill the ambition of the ego-ideal and thus be rid of the symbiotic object, which stimulates aspiration.

Symbolism is treating objects in the cultural world as if they were part of one's own self or body. These objects "plug up the loss," like a cork in a bottle. These objects compensate for the wound of separation, the split from the omnipotent object, the "hole" created by virtue of separation. Objects in reality that one incorporates into the self-help to "mend" the self, "put the self-back together" by providing new "omnipotent objects" in the external world that can compensate the self for the dream of omnipotence that has been lost.

The self-clings to and connects with, new omnipotent objects in reality which constitute the "hope" that someday one will become "whole" once again, will "recapture" the "glory" of childhood. Symbolic objects in reality "beckon" the individual as containing the hope of omnipotence for oneself, a dream of "greatness" or power in the "external world," which motivates the individual to strive for such omnipotence for oneself.

"Heil Hitler" is the worship of the omnipotent male because he suggests that it is possible to escape the symbiotic pull of the mother: escape weakness and passivity, actualize the dream of brutal omnipotence in the external world, and to "re-fuse" with an omnipotent object. But now the object is one that exists outside the self, at a distance, and therefore does not seem to be a source of oppression. **THE EFFORT TO EXTERNALIZE THE IDEA OF OMNIPOTENCE, TO SEPARATE IT FROM THE SELF, EXTERNALIZE IT INTO REALITY, IS THE ESSENCE OF THIS ENTIRE PROCESS.** The idea in the external world, idea one worships, is a kind of "savior" that

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promises to inspire one with power, give one the strength to separate from the symbiotic object. But eventually such an object too can be a source of symbiotic oppression as one identifies too closely with the idea of omnipotence, negating the human self.

Nationalism = fantasy of symbiosis: being connected to a larger object bound to the self. Illusion of oneness. Symbiotic wish is the source of nationalism.

Dream of an omnipotent nation releases one from omnipotent (infantile) symbiosis. The trauma of separateness or separation confronts the delusion of omnipotent symbiosis. Dream of symbiosis displaced into the idea of one's nation. Nationalism = new dream of symbiosis. Helps to get one out. Yet becomes normative: the foundation of a stable self. Mahler: symbiosis as fantasy of "somatopsychic omnipotent fusion." Nazism sought to recreate the delusion of symbiosis in the individual's tie to his nation. Men must be "thrown into the great melting pot, the nation, to be purified & welded one to another." Mass rallies were H's deepest desire.

The nation is experienced or imagined as an enormous body with which one's own body is fused. This is what symbiosis is. The nation is a mental representation of a body, but also an entity that constitutes a psychosomatic presence within the self. The relationship to one's nation: attachment to an omnipotent selfobject. Symbiotic fusion: self and nation. Fantasy that all citizens are fused to create one body.

Symbiosis is the compulsion to connect: irresistible attraction to an object: lack of autonomy based on an almost physical identification with an object that makes one feel a part of it. Almost everyone has this profound identification with. People identify with these cultural objects so entirely that they hardly know that they are under their power.

Fantasy of omnipotent nation rescues one from infantile symbiosis.

The symbiotic part of the self, omnipotent dual unity from which one had split off is what is "recaptured" when one identifies with the nation: "Oh beautiful, for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountains majesty above the fruited plains, God Bless America, our home sweet home." "From the mountains, to the prairies, to the oceans white with foam." "America, America, God shed its grace on thee, and crown thy good with brotherhood, from sea to shining sea."

The idea of the nation is the dream of a vast body of territory representing an extenuation of one's own body. The individual's attachment to the nation is a recreation of the dual-unity of mother and child. The dual-unity, fantasy that one is connected to an omnipotent object, is replicated in one's attachment to the nation. The individual in his or her relationship to the nation becomes a "dual unity with one common boundary." The person is contained within the body politic, a "member" of the omnipotent symbiosis.

"Fusion with the Nation": One's own body and the nation (body politic) are imagined to be co-joined. Symbiotic fantasy = the entirety of culture (the symbolize order) is conceived as part of the self. Magical connection to the idea of the nation. Nationalism = the projection of one's body into the body politic (relocation of the self). The dream body of culture: the super-organic. The nation is the dual-unity of self and country, body and body politic: body united with the body politic.

One's small body binds together with other bodies (one's fellow citizens) to create/merge to form an omnipotent body. This bond is **PSYCHOPHYSICAL OR PSYCHOSOMATIC**: Fusion with an omnipotent entity. We thus become a "dual system:" self-fused with nation: one's own body fused with the body of culture. It's a somatopsychic tie, an **INNER FANTASY THAT FUELS ONE'S ATTACHMENT TO SOCIETY**: the fantasy of being **BOUND TO AN OMNIPOTENT ORGANISM**. The omnipotent object with which the self-imagines itself to be fused can become **PARASITIC UPON THE SELF** (feed the monster).