



METAPSYCHOLOGY OF THE INFANT BODY: PSYCHO-ANALYTIC AESTHETICS RECONSIDERED

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1: THE PREDOMINANCE OF THE PAIN PRINCIPLE IN FREUD AND KLEIN

I have been asked to say something about the body in pieces, and I thought that the best way to begin might be to try to situate the phrase “body-in-pieces” itself in roughly the way that psychoanalysis might see it. I shall take it for granted that the metaphor of the body in pieces has some relation to the making of art objects, and the ways in which we frame aesthetic experience. My principle concern tonight is with psychoanalytic conceptions of the psychic process, and how these may or may not be useful for aesthetics in general.¹ My central conclusion will be that, contrary to psychoanalytic opinion, the mind never is and never was a unitary phenomenon, that is a sort of nucleus of drives or needs which gradually develop into demands and desires, egos, superegos, and secondary processes, such as perception, cognition, feeling, willing, and acting. I shall argue that from the very beginning of life, in what I have come to describe as the infantile body, the mind is essentially an aesthetic phenomenon arising from the corporeal experience of multiplicity and difference. In short, a phrase like the “body-in-pieces” provides as good a description as any of the basic substance or condition of the psychic process. In order to establish this point, however, I shall have to spend some time trying to distinguish the aesthetic dimension of psychic life from central metapsychological concepts in Freudian and Kleinian psychology.

The phrase “body-in-pieces” is obviously inspired in some way by the psychoanalytic paradigm, but what does it actually signify from a psychoanalytic point of view? The short answer for most people would I assume be something like *violence*: the body in pieces presupposes an act of aggression, or a destructive wish, or some sort of fantasy about tearing a thing to pieces, whether it be the self or the object is not immediately clear. The importance of Melanie Klein’s views on these matters is obvious, but before we discuss her work, I would

like to say a few words about Freud himself, as a way of introducing Klein's ideas. The central theme of Melanie Klein's thought is the work of mourning and reparation, or the problem of how to make up for the destruction of the object. This emphasis on the internal consequences of aggression may be seen as a development of Freud's insight that psychic life entails a constant process of disruptive change: the psyche is forever moving in cycles, which begin with a cathexis (or libidinal investment), followed by some degree of withdrawal, and then recathexis. Libidinal-emotional commitments are continuously being threatened and sometimes they are irreparably shattered. In his discussion of the Schreber case, Freud spoke of the narcissistic neuroses, or what we now call psychosis, in this way: he thought of psychosis as a near complete withdrawal of interest in the real world, and he postulated that sometimes the wildest delusions are actually attempts by the psychotic to relibidinize the object, to reestablish emotional links with the external environment. What Freud was at first slow to recognize about this, at least at the official level of general psychological theory (or what he christened metapsychology), was that the inevitable experience of abandonment and the painful process of withdrawing and regrouping emotional investments naturally stirs up a sizable reservoir of aggressive feeling in the human soul. And to the destabilizing effects of loss in general may be added Freud's eventual emphasis on the apprehension or anticipation of separation from the object, and the attendant anxieties, that is, the fear of narcissistic injury, as in castration anxiety, and fear of loss of love. These very fundamental concerns are normally overlooked in the popular and academic literature on Freud's achievements. But Freud thought that this anticipatory mode of being, this sense of impending emotional or narcissistic catastrophe, though not necessarily always realistic, must nevertheless somehow be thematically foundational of human experience. In *Inhibitions Symptoms and Anxiety*, he speculated about the relation between trauma, and particularly the possibility of birth trauma – the primal form of separation – and something like what Heidegger in the following year called 'Being-toward-Death'; and in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, of course, he gathered these problems together around the concept of a primary anti-libidinal force, a sort of chthonic biophysical deposit of the aggressive instinctual drives – the death instinct. In nearly all of his writings, from the beginning of the First World War, when he wrote "On Narcissism", until the beginning of the Second, when he died, not long after publishing the profoundly pessimistic "Psychoanalysis Terminable and Interminable", Freud steadily shifted emphasis from sexuality to aggression. In adopting the mantle of increasingly stoical realism – an attitude compounded by numerous operations on his cancerous jaw – he seemed to assume that the facts of impermanence, separation, and loss may all be counted on to provoke a

continuous stream of defensive and controlling activities or fantasies, often of a highly destructive nature, and this is the key to almost everything that Melanie Klein wrote.

So what began at the outset, in Freud's earliest psychological writings, as a sophisticated kind of nineteenth century reductionist psychology of pleasure and pain evolved finally into a grand scheme of cosmic forces: *Eros* and *Thanatos*, the life instincts and the death instincts, the sexual drives and the aggressive drives. To the pleasure principle and the reality principle, Freud added the more fundamental idea of a repetition compulsion and a tendency to return to an original, inorganic state of nonstimulation and rest. It is worth pausing here in order to examine these concepts more carefully. What *did* Freud originally mean by the pleasure principle, and why did he come to subordinate it to the constancy principle and the death instinct? When I have answered this question, I hope you will see that Freud never really had a theory based on pleasure, and that what little insight into the nature of pleasure we do have was already reduced in the psychoanalytic project to the status of a secondary effect of the dynamics of pain. This subjugation is evident from the very beginning in Freud's *Project* in 1895 and *The Interpretation of Dreams* at the turn of the century.

In these founding texts, and particularly in Chapter Seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud proposed the first metapsychology of the infantile body, and it has remained the most influential one ever since, especially in the behaviouristic and social sciences. Ultimately, it is a model which identifies culture with linguistic mediation. Freud conceives the body-without-language according to the scheme of a reflex arc, and builds the psyche up from there. The basic aim of the "primitive psychic apparatus", as he called it, or reflex arc, is to reduce the unpleasure of drive tension through discharge. This is what Freud meant by the constancy principle: pleasure is defined in dependent relation to constancy as the negative of drive pressure; it arises from the diminution of stimulus innervation, and may be understood as an approximate return of the enlivened organism to the optimal level of inertia. In this formulation of the pleasure principle, pain is always the given. One cannot have life and especially psychic life without drive experience, and drive experience, when left to itself, naturally proceeds on a gradient toward excess stimulation, which must be siphoned off before it generates so much unpleasure as to overwhelm the organism. Pleasure, on the other hand, is really just a by-product of the discharge of excess stimulation, a contingency of the regulatory demand for 'drive reduction' (the constancy principle). In Chapter Seven of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, Freud illustrated these ideas most vividly in his little vignette about the hungry baby. The key to the hungry baby story is that the organism is essentially reactive. Pleasure-seeking and stimulus-seeking activities are explained as secondary derivative phenomena, or

sublimations, by means of the *reality principle* (not the pleasure principle), of the phylogenetically primary impulse to avoid pain. Thus the desire *for* pleasure is a much later development, an offshoot, of the hatred of pain.

If pain is defined as stimulation, it is really not such a long step from the so called pleasure principle to the death instinct after all. What remains constant throughout Freud's oeuvre is precisely his emphasis on the constancy principle, the idea that the organism is always striving to reduce stimulation. It should not be surprising, therefore, that the pleasure principle was originally, and more accurately, termed the *unpleasure* principle by Freud. Just to avoid any further confusion, I would suggest we call it the *pain principle*. So long as we remain within the parameters of classical metapsychology, we are really obliged to set the problem of pleasure aside, and to place a question mark beside it.

In connection with this, there is another matter of interpretation we should consider as well; there is a case to be made, I think, that what I am now calling the pain principle is essentially a retroactive extrapolation of the epistemological presuppositions of the reality principle. The aim of the pain principle is to discharge drive tension; but the purpose of the reality principle is to do just that – only in a more expedient and pragmatic fashion. What is 'real' about the reality principle is that, at a certain cost in terms of delay and effort, it actually gets things done: it satisfies the drive, but in a way which minimizes potentially painful side effects of gratification. From this point of view, the pain principle is the reality principle's false start. One might even aver that the pain principle is just the reality principle minus practical learning. So if there is indeed a privileged psychoanalytic insight into the nature of pleasure, it is nevertheless difficult to distinguish logically and developmentally from the reality principle as Freud originally defined it.

Freud's use of the hungry baby model was intended to illustrate the basic mechanism of the dream, that is, the thesis of hallucinatory wish-fulfilment which, incidentally, is so central to the psychoanalytic understanding of art. The question arises as to the internal state of the baby when it kicks and screams with hunger, and cries to no avail. Freud's answer was that this motor pattern of discharge is temporarily short-circuited, and the organism switches into reverse, in regressive flight from the painful stimulus to the memory end of the reflex apparatus, where the lingering trace of previous gratification is cathected, that is, the baby hallucinates a feed. In the absence of the real breast, the baby fantasizes one in a vain but momentarily effective attempt to ward off the unpleasurable internal stimulus. Thus we see that the drive puts pressure on the psychic apparatus to bring about satisfaction, which for the neonate is largely up to the environment. When the environment fails, the hungry baby

has no recourse but to resort to 'plan B': to hallucinate the fulfilment of the demand for nourishment – in effect to fantasize without a frame. (The alternative, of course, is to withdraw completely – to fall asleep, and perchance to dream.) So according to Freud (who always managed to warn that there is an element of fiction, or fantasy, in these thought experiments of his), the hallucinatory gratification experience of the hungry baby is the blueprint of the internal world, and the beginning of psychic life.

Notice that in all these metapsychological speculations, the psychic apparatus has no object. In fact, the absence of the object in the primitive psychic infrastructure is the basic premise of classical metapsychology. Of course, every drive must have an object, and in the case of the hungry baby, it is obviously the mother's tit; but according to Freud, there is no awareness of this on the part of the baby until well into the evolution of the reality principle, when word-presentations and conscious perception have consolidated their hold on the surface layers of the mind. Until then, reality testing is absent, and the drive presses unchecked toward discharge; even the perception of the object, i.e., the breast, cannot be told apart from the memory of it. So the organism, though itself an open biological system, turns out to be inhabited and governed by an apparatus which is essentially closed – paradoxically, the psyche itself – which always tends to return to the illusory, self-sufficient, omnipotent state Freud termed primary narcissism.

I should just mention in passing that the influence of this developmental model is quite pervasive. Academic discussion in the humanities has been dominated for some time now by the assumption that psychic life begins in narcissistic self-enclosure and proceeds only through the shaping contingencies of the environment, particularly language, toward differentiation, perception, and communication. The perennial effort to explain art and culture as ideological effects of socio-economic relations and conditions was originally a precursor of the drive-defence model, and has since, in its more modern, sophisticated versions, become a variation of it. Something like this might also be said about the current vogue of explaining subjectivity as a metaphysical derivative of primary 'material' forces like the will to power, desire, production, or *differance*. Marx's philosophy of production, with its hierarchy of base and superstructure, maps quite easily onto Nietzsche's philosophy of will, with its two-tier model of power and sign; and the two together easily combine with the pain-sublimation theory of culture which Freud elaborated in his later years.

We began with the suggestion that it was Melanie Klein who worked out the piecemeal concept of the body for psychoanalysis, and we have just reviewed the groundwork which Freud

laid for her. To the extent that there is, as I have attempted to demonstrate, a continuity of conceptual structure from Freud's pain principle to the death instinct, Klein was faithful to the implications of classical metapsychology. Her originality lies in the fact that from very early on, the late nineteen twenties at least, she was learning how to read the object back into the conventional account of psychodynamics. Turning Freud somewhat upside down, she reinterpreted the pain principle as a kind of flight from the self, toward the object. The issue was no longer just the way in which unpleasure mobilized psychic energy to cathect memories into vivid but illusory experiences of gratification; drive frustration for Klein came to mean the hopelessness of the fragmented self, in its struggle to establish inside itself the elusive wholeness and bounty of the object; and Freud's problem of distinguishing reality from hallucinations became the Kleinian problem of reconstructing or repairing the internal object (i.e., the good memory) which has been damaged by greed and envy (or what Lacan would call "desire").

William Bouguereau, *Return from the Harvest*, 1878 (detail).



There is no doubt that in all this, pain remains the over-riding consideration. Klein's infantile body is congenitally fragmented and disoriented by the paranoid-schizoid structure of defense against unpleasure, which are typically splitting and projective identification. The Kleinian baby attributes the problem of unpleasure directly to the object. As Freud had said: "Hate, as a relation to objects, is older than love. It derives from the narcissistic ego's primordial repudiation of the external world with its outpouring of stimuli" (1915, 139). Freud called this phenomenon the "pure pleasure ego", but note again its reactive quality: the pleasure ego is really the discharge, expulsion, or projection of pain.

Klein's contribution was to interpolate into this model the cognitive and emotional factors which Freud – and the hunger scenario of psychic life – had presupposed, but whose implications he had failed to elaborate (the psychological science of his day had constrained Freud to attribute the so called secondary processes to a later stage of development). Unfortunately, the more the baby knows, and the more it is able to feel, the more painful are the consequences of its helplessness, and the more destructive are its thoughts. The result is that the hungry baby's hallucination of satisfaction blossoms, in the writings of Melanie Klein, into an entire psychomachia of ornate fantasies about invading and controlling the object from inside. The splitting off of painful, bad object experiences leads to paranoid fears of retaliation and schizoid withdrawal, which in turn threaten the good and pleasurable object experiences, which cannot be maintained indefinitely in a state of idealized circumscription. At about six months, or roughly when academic psychology now dates the major breakthrough in preverbal development, Klein postulated the onset of a new phase of emotional growth concerned with the problem of reparation. In the depressive position, as she called it, the infant finally masters the agony of nonsatisfaction by consolidating a good internal object: the good breast, as she sometimes described it.

Thus, in contradistinction to Freud, and the whole range of mainstream academic psychology, from Watson and Skinner to Piaget, Klein always presupposed the object, even during the first few months of life. There is still narcissism and confusion, of course, but Klein's baby is no longer conceived as a psychological isolate. Just as the paranoid schizoid position can be interpreted as an object-libidinal elaboration of the pain principle, the depressive position is like a second edition of the reality principle. The burden of motivation shifts from instinct to emotion, and from aim to object. As we saw earlier, Freud's line of reasoning was pragmatic: the pain principle sets the agenda and what follows is essentially a programme of realism and expediency. To this Klein added a kind of object principle: the morality of the depressive position and its object of reparation.

The object of reparation is the centrepiece of Melanie Klein's contribution to psychoanalytic aesthetics (Segal 1947, 190). The Kleinian problematic of creativity and aggression in relation to the internal object is well worth studying, and I would recommend in particular a reading of Marion Milner (1950) and Anton Ehrenzweig (1967). In the meantime, you will already have surmised that the unconscious meaning of aesthetic activity for Klein is not just the sublimation of the instincts; it is also, as for Lacan, the search for the lost object, although for Klein the latter is not so much the impossible object of desire, the *objet petit a*, as the object that was destroyed in imagination before it could be fully experienced as part of the self.

Let us just pause for a moment to reflect on what we have so far. I have offered you two myths, both of them very well known through their popularizations, about the nature of the creative impulse, and the pleasure in art and cultural form. The first has to do with the human transcendence of nature and necessity, and the way in which the exigencies of life are compensated through the derivative pleasures of sublimation (at bottom, the hungry baby's hallucination). This is quintessential Freud, though it is encapsulated nowhere more succinctly than in Ernst Kris's (1952, 177) phrase, "regression in the service of the ego." The second involves a morality tale in which the paranoid attack on the object is symbolically redeemed through the reparative struggle to establish wholeness and harmony – to reintegrate experience (overcome splitting) and to recognize the independence and autonomy of the object – the object which of course every subject creates, perhaps inadvertently at first, but in the end always deliberately (Klein, 1975; Segal, 1981).

Now, I would like to ask the question: can psychoanalysis provide a genuine alternative to the pain-psychologies of Freud and Klein, an alternative to the view of the aesthetic as a compensatory sublimatory discharge of instinctual pressure and as a reparative atonement for destruction of the object? There is no doubt that art has practical and moral dimensions, but the aesthetic dimension of art is concerned chiefly with experience, with qualities of sensation, perception, gesture, movement, vitality, and above all those affective and cognitive surges through which the body directly translates itself into the psychical process. And yet, if the pleasure principle turns out to be the pain-reality principle in disguise, and if the lost object is perpetually returning in the ghostly form of a penance-demanding superego, with what means are we left to conceptualize the aesthetic dimension in psychoanalytic terms? Is there a *dynamic* cross-section of the aesthetic moment which is not merely a mechanism for the expression of motivational forces like pain and guilt?

2: THE BODY AND THE AESTHETIC DIMENSION IN PSYCHOANALYTIC THOUGHT

In his contribution to Mikel Dufrenne's UNESCO compendium on aesthetics, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1978) has touched on this question indirectly. Lyotard defines 'expression', in classical fashion, as "the presence in the secondary process . . . of operations pertaining to the unconscious system". Expression, he says, "is present when the signifier of the work cannot be translated into the language that provides the interpretive commentary" (1979, 136). This quality of untranslatability – of resistance to metalinguistic reformulation and abstraction – provides the basis for what Lyotard has called the "figural", a largely neglected term which, like Baudrillard's "symbolic exchange", emerges through opposition to the conventional formalism of semio-linguistic discourse. Lyotard argues that Freud intuitively perceived "the primacy of the figure, of an arrangement of the parts of an object which cannot be deduced from the laws of the structure to which it belongs . . ." (137-8). This is, of course, the territory of dreams, or what Lewin called the dream-screen: the expressive figure reveals another kind of meaning, deriving from "another scene", which is not that of ordinary language or representation, but of the wish, or the 'original fantasy' – the *fantasme originaire* (Laplanche & Leclaire 1960).

Now, if we think again of the figure of the "body-in-pieces" we may discern, in the light of Lyotard's reading of Freud, that the term 'pieces' cannot refer to the body as an organic combination of parts and functions, of which the mind would be one bit which can be prosthetically exteriorized like any other, in McLuhanesque fashion. Because they are figural in expression, the parts of the unintegrated body resist derivation from the totality which they comprise and to which they belong. Their meaning is neither the function of an organic whole nor the differential determination of a 'system'. They do not compose a language. The body from this point of view is like an activity with the quality of a substance – a "body in the act of becoming", as Bakhtin says – not a narrative sequence but a sensuous dynamic without structure. Of course, the perceptual, cognitive, and affective contents of bodily processes interact and relate, and in that sense, they generate aesthetic form – but they do not bring the object under the guidance of a concept (Kant 1790). This may be said of all moments of sublime shock: whether they pertain to feelings of love, terror, disgust, desire, or serene peace, they will have the psychological structure of aesthetic perception in relation to the 'found object' (cf. Fairbairn 1938; 1939). That is, the area of coincidence between the 'internal world' and 'external reality' becomes very large, as in the case of Winnicott's "transi-

tional object”²: somehow perception and projection have intersected in such a way as to create a focus of mutually reinforcing intensity.

When we find a leg or a head or a mass of entrails among the scattered remains of a corpse, we are horrified because we are stumbling upon something within, as if what were homely and therefore unnoticed in ourselves were suddenly flung out into the street where anyone might trip over it. Even horror is intimate (Freud 1919) and this is not just due to the fact that we have destroyed our internal objects in “phantasy”, as the Kleinians would say, and then encountered the remains; or that we have identified with the victim and the dismemberer and felt their suffering or guilt. When we talk about processes like introjection and projection – when we entertain the fiction of objects interacting inside a purely subjective space – we are also talking about a dimension of life, remote as it may be from the consciousness of everyday life, in which the experience of the body as a loose collection of parts and functions is deeply familiar and satisfying – a recurring and expected event – not merely the alienated product of conflict and aggression. The reports of the medical examiner and the story of the Ripper and his victims come later.³ They are secondary elaborations, like all formulations of the ego and the superego.

The same may be said of the carnivalesque body which Bakhtin has described in his study of Rabelais. Perhaps the aesthetics of Grotesque revelry can be explained away as phenomena peculiar to pre-capitalist formation; but whether or not we accept the proposition (not Bakhtin’s) that desublimated carnality is a construct belonging to another age – the fading effect of a defunct cultural code – we are still left with the possibility that behind the dialectic of social forms, the celebration of the detotalized body expresses a transhistorical psychic reality rooted in infant experience, and not engendered by anything remotely “historical” in the academically understood senses of the term (including theories about breast-feeding and toilet-training).

At some point, perception of the body ceases to be narrative in form, and passes over into some other way of organizing experience. In the analysis of all experience, including the experience of analysands on analytic couches, there is an irreducible aesthetic residue, which cannot be read off from theory (Lyotard’s *recits*), and doesn’t survive codification into theory – present case included. In fact, it is precisely what doesn’t carry over – what is immediate and untranslatable – which makes the transference (i.e., human sociability) so rich a source of information about fundamental psychological processes.

To illustrate this, we need to show that it is possible to extend Freud’s concept of ‘psychic reality’ beyond the horizon of Klein’s object-relational account of the internal world

under the domination of the pain principle. We need somehow to take account of the 'figural' as a dimension of embodiment: that the unintegrated fragments of the body have insides of their own, sustained by their conflictual engagements with outsides which might, in their turn, be insides as well, in relation to other parts.

Let us take the skin as an example, since it is primarily in terms of the skin as an organismic boundary that cultures define the spatial (and emotional) concepts of containment and exclusion. Like the other senses, the skin is of course an extension of the brain; but it also wraps the body in a penumbra of nervous tissue. It is important to grasp that the containing function of the body and its parts is more than a metaphor of external boundaries. The skin itself is part of the psychic apparatus (Bick 1968), highly differentiated in its own right, with active areas, of which the mouth, the anus, and the genitals are only the most codified in psychoanalytical lore. Through the skin, the psyche turns in on itself and probes into itself, encapsulating its feeling of itself, particularly in the relations between the fingers and the various orifices.

Alphonso Lingis (1985) has provided us with a brilliant description of the "spirals of ipseity", as he calls them, which characterize the unstructured body. The semantic unfolding of organic surfaces is grounded in a kind of parthenogenic involution and interplay of sensory experience. But following Deleuze, he autonomizes this autogenic activity, as if the psychic process had a foundation in a single mechanistic substance, the libido or play of "excitations" which, like Nietzsche's will, interacts only with itself in one dimension (Lingis 1983, 28-30), "circulating on the surface of the body without organs" (Lingis 1985, 98). But this concept of libidinal action without interiority reduces the unconscious to the status of an autistic isolate, with no objects, and without "fecundity", as Lingis (1985, 110) himself suggests, since it is sensitive only to itself, and remains unaffected by interaction with anything other than itself – just as Freud sometimes envisaged the id.

Animals do not as a rule experience things independently of the perception of their own bodies; and by the same token, enteroception usually occurs in conjunction with exteroception. Even in the infantile body, 'ipseity' is necessarily a multifactorial process, a way of relating actively to something else [an object] (Levin 1987a, 34-5; 1987b). There may be such a thing as pure primary process, but there can be no unadulterated id. Sensory involution never achieves the closure postulated by the theory of primary narcissism; it always has an otherness – the skin is never able to be simply the skin – the fiction of a purely textual surface – because it exists in tension with its own depth and limited extension. It gets inside itself, or 'writes' itself onto some other surface, thereby transmuting its own status from the container

into the contained. For this reason, the skin, like any other figment of the infantile body, is able to serve as a kind of three-dimensional external object and thus to provide a projective medium through which the psyche can interact with itself as a whole. In this sense, the skin may act as the first 'surrogate mother'. It used to be said that the infant related exclusively to the breast, or to breast-like objects such as the bottle; but we know that even adults find it difficult to isolate things in this way. The same is true of human infants, no matter how hungry they get. It is not just the mouth that wants to 'incorporate' objects; the eye drinks in, and from birth, the eye follows the ear.

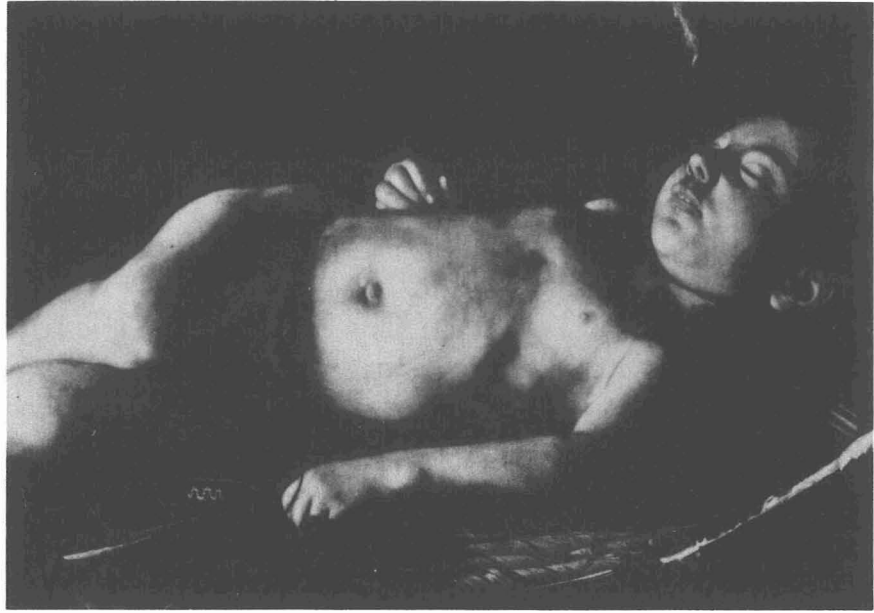
According to Bakhtin, "the artistic logic of the grotesque image ignores the closed, smooth, and impenetrable surface of the body and retains only its excrescences (sprouts, buds) and orifices, only that which leads beyond the body's limited space or into the body's depths". This is the essence of the piecemeal body – it is always becoming: "It is never finished, never completed; it is continually built, created, and builds and creates another body. Moreover, the body swallows the world and is itself swallowed by the world . . . This is why the essential role belongs to those parts of the grotesque body in which it outgrows its own self . . ." (317-18). This bawdy relation to the world is subtilized, but only barely sublimated, in the vivid conceptual language of Hegel's dialectic of the "inverted world" (203f.) and "Self-Consciousness" (218ff.).

Gradually, the hands combine with the sensorium, particularly the eyes, to blend the proximal and distal worlds, to bring things within range of personal boundaries by experimenting with the ambiguity of the distinction between the inside and the outside. From the point of view of general theory, when we try to understand the relation between interiority and exteriority, we are forced to confront the problem of informal differences – what Hegel (223) called "substantial differences" – which are neither discrete, nor structured into diacritical or oppositional relations. The unintegrated body is not just an additive series of binary-structured desiring machines; there is always a third term, which is implied in the ambiguity of the inside/outside distinction itself (just as there would be no possibility of third terms without interiority): the line, the border, the gap, the either-or/neither-nor/both-and, which defines the exact grey area of the psychic process.

Merleau-Ponty (1945) claimed that a theory of the body is, *ipso facto*, already a theory of perception, and he was, in my opinion, absolutely right in a depth-psychological sense which no psychoanalytic metapsychology has yet been able to account for. It is easy to be distracted from the extraordinary sensuality of the psychic process, to forget its vividness in order to make some point about pain, need, desire, the phallus, power, conflict, morality, and the like.

All of the arguments which Freud, Klein, Lacan, and others make about the facts of psychic life, sexuality, language, and dependence have been illustrated abundantly in the technical literature. But rarely does one find any explicit appreciation of the sheer wonderment of psychosomatic functioning, the utter *funktionslust* of ordinary being. In this respect, psychoanalysts are just as uncomprehending as linguistic philosophers and cultural theorists: they can talk forever about the intricate and seductive structures of signification, the ways in which this body part or that signifier slides into another, corresponds to another, substitutes for another, refers to another – and they can go on about history and society until everyone is blue in the face – without really encountering the blunt substance of meaning, the crude semantic fact of the body, which has no structure in itself, no status within any system of signification: it just means.⁴

People reveal the internal world in various ways, but its *internality* is never so clearly evident as it is in the psychoanalytic setting. White (1985) has argued that the psychopathological phenomena associated with hysteria in Charcot's day – Freud's 'discovery of the unconscious' – may be explained as a kind of return of the social repressed. According to White, the sensuous body of pre-modern societies has been fragmented, marginalized, and neurotically sublimated in contemporary civilization. He describes a suppressive transformation of "material, physical practice into purely *textual* semeiosis" (109), in which a robust communal expression of the body politic has degenerated into a morbid private fantasy. This insight is pushed into an argument against psychoanalysis, in favour of "a thoroughly historicized, social understanding of mechanisms that Freud mistakenly thought to be more or less universal" (108). Yet, as Burgin has pointed out (1986, 85-6), "Psychoanalysis does not construct a realm of the 'subjective' *apart* from social life". If the internal world is "more or less universal" [*sic*], this is true in the same sense that 'society' is universal: it is an irreducible dimension of human experience, not to be mistaken for an historical construct such as juridical individualism (Levin 1987a). But one does not have to believe that the internal world is an ephemeral effect of the historical process to appreciate White's central point – that the dynamic experience of the social body has been reintrojected and repressed in industrial civilizations. The situation that we are facing is not so much that the breakdown of communal life has forced the symbolic universe into a psychic underground (as if unconscious fantasy were a purely modern invention); what has become private, fragmented, and precarious is not the activity of the internal world (which, if anything, is more public than ever), but the forms and means of its *ritual* expression in social relationships. We can see now that the therapeutic function in contemporary urban societies is a distillation from



Carravagio, *Sleeping Cupid*, 1569 (detail).

traditional social dramaturgy (Diamond 1974); it is bottled and sold in the form of technical professional healing relationships.

Paradoxically, the aim-inhibited milieu of the psychoanalytic act reveals the primitive proprioceptive ground of psychic activity in a way which public rituals, such as Greek drama, nomadic storytelling, spirit possession, trance, peasant carnival, and pagan religion tend to deflect from attention (cf. Obeyesekere 1981). Derrida (1967) thought that Rousseau was naive to have yearned so for the collective immediacy of the Festival, and perhaps Derrida was right in the sense that it is only from the sophisticated, retrospective, fundamentally onanistic, clinical perspective of moderns like Sade, Rousseau, Nietzsche, and Freud that the intensity of bodily interaction is missed enough to be appreciated philosophically. If psycho-analysis is one of the significant practical realizations of modern radical social thought, this is because (unlike the usual doctrines of revolutionary progress and productivity) psychoanalysis understands the body as something more than mere socio-historical plastic. The body becomes, in Hegel's phrase, "substance qua subject" – not just the medium but the essence of social form (cf. O'Neill 1985).

In support of this point, I would like to draw attention to a tacit dimension of ordinary psychoanalytic therapy. Much ink has been spilled over the question whether an analyst

should be 'neutral' or interactive with his or her clients. But as everyone knows, it is more important that the analyst be sensitive to detail. Classical analysts were, I believe, just as likely to be personally engaging and directive with their patients as contemporary 'self-psychologists'. It may not be very good technique to apply the Oedipus model like a grid, or to dissolve everything the analysand says in a bath of empathic understanding; but it is amazing what a person at risk with some residual judgment can survive (and even benefit from) if only there be, on the part of the analyst, a fine-grained receptivity to the nuances of the psychic process. It is also important to emphasize that before particular qualities of truth, madness, and even suffering can be perceived and shared, the analyst must be able (at some level, if only through a kind of unconscious affinity) to experience the *exquisiteness* of the analysand. This is not just perversity on the part of the therapist, although the pleasures of voyeurism certainly help to sustain analytic attention; it is a fundamentally impractical and amoral stratum of object-related experience, having to do neither with reduction of tension, nor with redemption through reparation of the object; it is a kind of hypersensitive attunement to the ineradicable current of pleasurable functioning that flows in even the most painful psychopathology: a purposiveness without purpose. The awareness – or at least the perception of the affordance – of some linking, some communication, on this aesthetic level of experience, makes suffering bearable enough to interpret and to work through.

A further word needs to be said about the concept of an impractical and amoral stratum of object-related experience. Ideas like this are usually associated with the 'id' – an unfettered libido. But precisely the opposite is the case: the id is quintessentially practical; it presses towards the achievement of its goal, which is always the discharge of an organically-based drive (the pain principle). As we have seen, the "reality principle" entails little more than a reorganization of this essentially pragmatic structure of the drive along lines of expediency. In Klein's system, by contrast, the crisis of the depressive position (the object principle) counterbalances this id-organization of selfishness. Klein implies that where involvement with others does not arise out of need, as a secondary drive, it develops morally out of primary anxieties in relation to the object. In this respect, the Freud-Klein theory of motivation corresponds to a long-standing system of social-scientific ideas which has led to almost universal condemnation of the Kantian revolution in aesthetics. However, while Kant's concept of "purposiveness without purpose" may be impractical and amoral, it does not imply detachment and indifference, as his critics suggest, but the most rapt interpenetration with the object. Aesthetic reason conjoins the self and the object, whereas practical and moral reason, in their purposeful schematizations, *detach* the subject by means of the 'concept', and thereby *isolate* the object in the univer-

sal. As soon as this is understood, the political criticism of Kant's aesthetics (e.g., Hebdige 1987) loses its urgency, for it is precisely upon the aesthetic, in the sense which Kant began to develop the category (see Marcuse 1955, 159), which the "untheoretical sense of social solidarity" (Hebdige, 67) depends – not practical expediency or moral constraint.

3: BEYOND THE PAIN PRINCIPLE

Now, let us return to the question raised earlier, namely, the problem of how to conceptualize pleasure in psychodynamic terms which do not convert automatically into Freud's pain principle (practical expediency) or Klein's object principle (moral constraint). I think I can offer you the beginning of an answer to this question, although in order to do so I shall have to condense a great deal of material from psychoanalytic and developmental psychology and present it in somewhat dogmatic form. The first step is to redefine what we mean by the term 'dynamic'.

Traditionally, psychodynamic explanation in psychoanalysis has meant conflict between the earlier, more primitive and the later, more developed forms of psychic functioning. The secondary processes, among which all psychoanalysts include perception, cognition, memory, the refinement of affects, and the capacity to defer gratification, are supposed to be derived from the primary processes (the primary processes being more or less whatever the psychoanalyst happens to think the drives are like in the state of nature). Unfortunately, this hypothesis of the derivative character of secondary process types of thinking is incorrect. From a phylogenetic point of view, it may indeed be true that thinking evolved in order to insure the satisfaction of the drives. But Freud's assumption that perception, cognition, memory, and so on, are sublimations of the hungry baby's drive-induced hallucination of satisfaction no longer has much validity. More recent attempts to account for the rise of the ego by postulating complicated developmental schedules of frustration-gratification are just as unconvincing (e.g., Margaret Mahler et al.). Lacan's theory of the mirror stage may be placed in the same category: it is another constructivist allegory of the derivative, superstructural status of mental phenomena.

The few facts we now have about early development do not refute any of the leading psychoanalytic paradigms; but they do offer more encouragement for new directions in research. My own view is that the traditional emphasis on language as the antidote to infantile solipsism and as the principle agent of socialization cannot be pressed much further. It does seem that the many different characteristics of the so called secondary process are more like independent variables than epiphenomenal transformations of the drives. The secondary process

does not derive from the primary process so much as coexist with it, and it seems to do so from the beginning, as is now being observed in infants days and weeks old. For example, it is still widely believed that during the first year of life, we only see indistinct patches of colour in a two dimensional field, and that we are unable to relate what we see to what we hear and feel, or to recall our experience from moment to moment. Research on object perception and memory in infancy has quite conclusively refuted this assumption. Although it would be foolish to deny the epistemological significance of cultural variations in perception and the interpretation of perception, I do not think it makes much sense any longer to pretend that organized cognition is simply an arbitrary construction, as if learning to perceive involved some mysterious transformation of chaos into form, like the old Greek creation myths. There is no doubt that the infantile body is chaotic and unregulated by comparison to the adult, conscious body; and that even mature psychic life is treacherous at the best of times. As a species we rely much more heavily on learning, and on our capacity to internalize the environment, than on innate regulatory mechanisms. But it does not follow from this that perinatal life consists only of an undifferentiated self or id hovering somewhere beyond time and space (waiting for the societal influence of concepts and language to come and rescue it).

Piaget was on the wrong track when he concluded that the first year of life is dominated by solipsism and adualistic confusion.⁵ Infants perceive objects quite clearly, recognize their separateness, and figure out how to read them months before they have sufficient cortical control to handle the environment effectively in sensorimotor terms. Perhaps more importantly, from very early on in postnatal life, humans relate to other humans socially and emotionally as if they are like beings. As infants, we differentiate among caretakers and strangers by appearance, voice, and smell; and we remember what people are like even when they are absent. The tendency to run experiences together, for example to confuse memory with perception, as in the case of Freud's hungry baby, is neither inevitable nor exclusive to the infant mind – and it is not necessarily a sign of primitive thinking either. The neonate's ability to imitate and reproduce gestures requires cognitive equipment for intermodal sensory coordination and representation normally ascribed only to the child of eighteen months or older. I think it is safe to say that few if any of the components of adult mental functioning are wholly learned, or derived from simpler functions under the pressure of frustration and unpleasure which characterize the pure forms of motivation in drive psychology and classical behaviouristic research. My own view of the infant's hallucinated gratification is that it is first and foremost an aesthetic achievement (and the same claim could be made for the transferential material produced in the analytic process). The hungry baby's alleged denial of reality in fact

presupposes an intact secondary process, involving perception, cognition, memory, and object-relatedness. I do not think that the pleasure in the fantasy of gratification lies primarily in the discharge of drive tension. There is no doubt that the ability to fantasize can be and is regularly used in order to mask pain. But *the processes involved in generating and consolidating an internal world are pleasurable in themselves*. The hungry baby is not regressing to the primitive id; it is learning to use a kind of *intermediary process* – to bring the primary and secondary processes together – in order to think about the situation it is in, to symbolize a state of the body, and to create a kind of vision.

It is easy to show that the secondary process is not simply an adult unity; but there is also plenty of evidence that the primary process itself is not a homogeneous, primitive nucleus, but a multiplicity of competing and often incompatible capacities and functions. Freud often wrote as if the unconscious was a disembodied abstraction. But when he said that the id exists beyond time and space, functioning without regard to the law of contradiction, I think he was reaching for this sense which I am trying to convey of the sheer primal complexity of the psyche interacting with itself through the object. All attempts to formulate a unified theory of the unconscious, or to define the primary process as the simple opposite of rationality have in my opinion failed (e.g. Matte Blanco). Freud himself adumbrated many shades and dimensions of primary process activity. It is difficult to imagine how psychoanalysis could get off the ground without assuming unconscious perception in time and space, unconscious memory, unconscious emotion, and unconscious cognition. But these are all embodied processes, and they are qualitatively differentiated to a high degree. Most contemporary analysts get around this problem by talking about unconscious ego functioning, but this is just another way of admitting that the originary, unitary id is a fiction, and that psychoanalysis has never been in a position to assert the existence of one, supraordinate dynamic principle of the mind. In the notion of primary process, we must include the unconscious as the seat of the drives; the unconscious as the intermediary between the environment and the hidden recesses of the body, the lining of the stomach, the glands, organs, ducts, and corridors of the interior soma; the unconscious as the repository of the repressed; as dynamic, “unbound” energy; as a form of thinking, in which memories, ideas, images, emotions, and desires are fused, circulated, split up again, recycled, displaced, and generally worked over, yielding eccentric representations of the psychic state in consciously retrieved dream and fantasy; the unconscious as animal perception not only of the self, but of the internal states of other living bodies; and finally, there is the way in which this all seems to come together in the primary process as a sort of bizarre, plasticizing, conative organ of intermodal sense.

The infantile body has an internal world, an inner region of experience mediated by self and object perception, by means of which it is constantly translating one type of experience into another. Hallucinating, fantasizing, and dreaming, however unrealistic, however dominated by the imperious wish, however driven by the avoidance of pain, all depend upon the capacity to relate sensation to cognition, and to let the body come together and fall apart again in ceaseless reconfigurations of psychosoma. I do not think it is stretching a point to say that the plasticity and divisibility of the body in general are preconditions of psychic process. Thinking is a multiplicity of translations, which would be impossible if the body were not always potentially in pieces. But if this is so, then thinking has to be a pleasure before it can be a pain. Its object has to be loved by the senses before it can be devoured and incorporated in an oral panic; and the functioning of the body has to be treasured, offered to the world, before it can be denied, projected outwards in terrorized flight from the uncertainty of experience.

I am suggesting that psychodynamics must first be understood as multiple, reciprocal interaction, in which many parts, capacities, and functions jointly condition one another and collectively fashion the overall pattern Freud called psyche. Parts of this pattern normally achieve relative stability, while others do not, and certain functions come to be grouped together to form such entities as ego and superego. But even the sustained psychic formations remain volatile processes requiring periodic unintegration and redefinition. As Anton Ehrenzweig (1967) has argued, the aesthetic law of the psyche is dedifferentiation of figure and ground, a kind of anti-Gestalt, or perpetual violation of the principles of good form. This is not the absence of perception, but the presence of that which escapes dichotomization and hierarchization into figure and ground – in short, that which escapes defensive splitting and idealization. Now, if I am right in saying that psychodynamics must first be understood as joint action before it can be reduced to conflict between what is supposed to be primary and what is supposed to be derived from it – if the object is already perceived and enjoyed before the organism has had a chance to recoil from pain; if the external world is fundamentally accepted before it can be turned into a practical alternative to the internal world; if reality is not just a construction designed to supplement the intellectual poverty of the drive – then I think it follows that the first meaning of the term dynamic has to be an aesthetic one, and the first definition of the aesthetic has to be pleasure in the unintegrated body.

I have argued that the dynamic psychic process is not just drive versus defence, supplemented later on by the object, as psychoanalysts sometimes claim, but more fundamentally, a sort of *intermediary process*. In this regard, as I am sure you have already guessed, I am aligning

my own speculations with some of the implications of the philosophical concept of play. In contrast to Winnicott (1971), however, I do not think that play emerges in a transitional stage of development bridging the oblivion of primary narcissism with objective perception – it is primordial. Nor do I entirely agree with Lacan and Derrida when they argue that play subordinates presence to absence. I should also say something about the Enlightenment thinkers, Kant, Schiller, and of course, Samuel Taylor Coleridge. Much of what still needs to be explored in the psychic process was anticipated in Kant's theory of judgment as the free play of imagination and understanding. But we must assume that this activity of the "faculties" encompasses a wider field of mental phenomena than Kant or the Romantic poets could imagine. In general, however, it seems fair to suggest the following provisional formulation: the play of the psyche involves an interpenetration of the pleasure in functioning with pleasure in the object. It is as if the environment is somehow introjected into the infrasensory (intermodal) spheres of the body, whilst proprioception is simultaneously projected back into the field of perception and cognition. At any rate, this is one way of defining the symbolic process: the body interacting simultaneously with itself and its objects.

The always thorny problem of psychic defence will serve as a closing example. Splitting, projection, identification, repression, displacement, condensation, and the like, are all frequently cited as typical examples of primitive, primary process thinking. On the other hand, all these supposedly irrational mechanisms, including displacement and condensation, have been described as straightforward forms of ego defence. So which is it to be: primary process or secondary process, id or ego? I think the confusion lies in our failure to theorize the aesthetic substratum of psychic process. Splitting, for example, surely presupposes perceptual and cognitive discrimination; it cannot be the unconscious origin of differential thinking, but one of the symbolic elaborations of it. The capacity to split, to safeguard the desirable by dividing it from the undesirable, rests on the capacity to recognize differences, which is a pleasure in itself, as experiments based on stimulus habituation demonstrate over and over again. The secondary defence against a primary process activity is always a product of symbolic activities already in place; that is, the primary and the secondary processes are developments from intermediary processes. The so called laws of unconscious mentation, condensation, displacement (metaphor, metonymy), the mobility of cathexes, and the suspension of the laws of time, space, and contradiction are all forms of symbolization: they presuppose the whole psychic apparatus, including perception, cognition, memory, differentiation, deferral, and the ego itself: nothing can take place in the psyche, nothing in the mind can be *dynamic*, unless it is already caught up in a symbolic elaboration.

Now, let me take another, more speculative step. If there is indeed such a thing as an intermediary process, it must, I think by definition, be an *emergent process*: that is, if all of the components of mental functioning are already in place, organically, from sensation to cognition, and from memory to hallucination, as I have claimed, then the psyche obviously does not start out as a unitary nucleus, an originary atom, which develops eventually into a variety of functions; it is already a kind of overflow, an excess, an interactional effect of the piecemeal body. In this sense, psychological life contains within its precarious, intersubjectively sustained being, a significant element of indetermination. On this point, I must agree emphatically with the deconstructionists. One cannot deduce from the neurobiopsychological copresence of consciousness, perception, cognition, affect, and drive the exact parameters of the activity which will transmute them all into what Freud called collectively the psyche. The initial, multiple state of the psychesoma only comes into existence when its combined effects have begun to emerge; and it is this emergent property which constitutes the *substance* of subjective experience. In short, I agree that subjectivity is in itself merely an effect; but I do not agree that it is simply an ideological, or *metaphysical* effect.

Let us recall again Freud's speculation in *The Interpretation of Dreams* that the first internal psychic event must necessarily have been a compensatory response to the unpleasure of drive tension. The baby is unfed, so it resurrects the memory of satisfaction – the lost object – and fulfils the aim of the drive by means of hallucinatory gratification. As I mentioned in passing, this little story contains the essence of the psychoanalytic contribution to the understanding of art. The writings of Fairbairn, Klein, Winnicott, Milner, and Ernst Kris, to mention only the most famous psychoanalytic aestheticians, are all variations on this theme. According to Freud, the first meaningful *internal* psychic event is a substitution for the real thing. And so goes art, play, and the aesthetic impulse: they are reactions, substitutions, compensations. A great deal has been made of this in recent years – too much, I believe. Of course, we might lift a page from Marcuse (1972), and speak of art as a substitution, not for reality, but for something that is *missing* in reality, something which could and should be there. This is a utopian formulation of Freud which unfortunately has lately fallen into disrepute in academic circles. Marcuse's idea was that the political function of art is to open out a kind of custodial space for the ideal, to preserve within the safe confines of beautiful illusion the repressed possibilities of the future. Although I have always subscribed to this perspective, I think it involves too rational (too adultomorphic) a conception of the aesthetic to serve as a baseline for critical social theory. In the end, the deconstructionists are probably closer to the spirit of the infantile body – the 'inverted world' – than was Marcuse. But I stick to my argument that substitution

theory has offered us only a one-dimensional conception of the aesthetic impulse, implying a false reduction of pleasure to secondary and derivative status. In saying this, I do not intend merely to reverse Freud's hierarchy, in order to show that pain is somehow derived from pleasure. Nor am I denying that pain can turn into pleasure, and pleasure into pain. I am only asserting that it is false to infer from the phenomenon of transformation of affect that pleasure and pain, or for that matter, love and hate, are mutually exclusive, inversely proportional opposites. It seems to me more likely that pleasure and pain are equally powerful experiences with distinct psychobiological foundations. They usually coexist in varying degrees of admixture. But the capacity to generate internal pleasure – whatever its evolutionary status – is ontogenetically primary: without it, there can be no psychic process, no organismic gain from symbolization. Fantasy – and art – may serve as substitutes for reality and as masks for pain; and perhaps in the final analysis there is no other reality than substitution; but if biological responsibility for pleasure in experience lay entirely at the doorstep of the pain principle, psychic reality would long ago have slipped into oblivion. In Darwinian terms, it is hard to see how life would have evolved simply as a reaction to the goad of unpleasure and the necessity for deferral. Surely intelligent life would have given up under these conditions, which is probably why Freud (1920) felt it necessary to counterpose Thanatos with a cosmic Eros. In so doing, however, he admitted my thesis: that there must be a pleasure principle which is not simply the obverse of the pain principle. I have argued that this more fundamental pleasure principle is anchored at the intermodal level of the body, which is present in early infancy: sensation, perception, proprioception, affect, memory, and cognition, the interplay of which generates the psychic process of symbolization. The psychic body is first of all aesthetic experience. The practicality of Freud's pain-reality principle and the morality of Klein's object principle both presuppose this pleasurable rubbing together of the body's various innate dispositions – the pieces of the body – as they move outward in search of the world.

NOTES

1. By 'aesthetics' I mean (to use a phrase of Freud's) "not merely the theory of beauty but the theory of the qualities of feeling" (Freud 1919, 219).

2. In psychoanalytic discourse, the term 'external' is best read as if it meant 'beyond omnipotent [subjective] control'. The developmental vicissitudes of this issue have been handled with especial sensitivity by Winnicott (1971).

3. In the terms of formal aesthetics, the problem I am raising is illustrated rather nicely by Peter Fuller in his discussion of the *Venus de Milo*; and by the suggestive silences which enliven Leo Steinberg's historical examination of the sexuality of Christ in Renaissance art.

4. But in the best technical formulations, the aesthetic phenomena which presumably correspond in some way to the concepts of pleasure, experience, and drive remain latent and thus become accessible to reflective observation.

5. See in particular the articles by Butterworth and by Meltzoff & Moore in Lipsitt (1983, 1-29; 265-301); and O'Neill (1982).

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