Chapter 5

The Sense of a Core Self: II. Self with Other

SOMETHING of importance is missing from the last chapter. We have discussed the infant’s sense of self versus other, but not the sense of self with other. There are many ways that being with an other can be experienced, including some of the most widely used clinical concepts, such as merging, fusion, a haven of safety, a security base, the holding environment, symbiotic states, self-objects, transitional phenomena, and cathexed objects.

The sense of being with an other with whom we are interacting can be one of the most forceful experiences of social life. Moreover, the sense of being with someone who is not actually present can be equally forceful. Absent persons can be felt as potent and almost palpable presences or as silent abstractions, known only by trace evidence. In the mourning process, as Freud (1917) pointed out, the one who has died almost rematerializes as a presence in many different felt forms. Falling in love provides a different normal example. Lovers are not simply preoccupied with one another. The loved other is often experienced as an almost continual presence, even an aura, that can change almost everything one does—heighten one’s perceptions of the world or reshape and refine one’s very movements. How can experiences such as these be accounted for in the present infant’s and adult’s view of self and other?
the present framework? How can the ultimately social nature of the infant's and the adult's experience be captured?

In Winnicott's, Mahler's, and many other theoretical renditions, the various important experiences of being with mother are founded on the assumption that the infant cannot adequately differentiate self from other. Self/other fusion is the background state to which the infant constantly returns. This undifferentiated state is the equilibrium condition from which a separate self and other gradually emerge. In one sense, the infant is seen as totally social in this view. Subjectively, the "I" is a "we." The infant achieves total sociability by not differentiating self from other.

In contrast to these views, the present account has stressed the very early formation of a sense of a core self and core other during the life period that other theories allot to prolonged self/other undifferentiation. Further, in the present view, experiences of being with an other are seen as active acts of integration, rather than as passive failures of differentiation. If we conceive of being-with experiences as the result of an active integration of a distinct self with a distinct other, how can we conceive of the subjective social sense of being with an other? It is now no longer a given, as it was in Mahler's undifferentiated "dual-unity."

Clearly, the infant is deeply embedded in a social matrix, in which much experience is the consequence of others' actions. Why, then, is it not reasonable to think, from the infant's subjective viewpoint, in terms of a merged "self/other" or of a "we self" in addition to the solitary self and other? Is not the infant's initial experience thoroughly social, as the British object relations school has taught us? From the objective viewpoint there do appear to be amalgam-like events between self and other. How will these be experienced? Let us approach this problem of the social self by first considering the nature of the self with the social other as an objective event.

**Self with Other as an Objective Event**

The infant can be with an other such that the two join their activities to make something happen that could not happen without the commingling of behaviors from each. For example, during a "peek-
a-boo" or "I'm going to getcha" game, the mutual interaction generates in the infant a self-experience of very high excitation, full of joy and suspense and perhaps tinged with a touch of fear. This feeling state, which cycles and crescendos several times over, could never be achieved by the infant alone at this age, neither in its cyclicity, in its intensity, nor in its unique qualities. Objectively, it is a mutual creation, a "we" or a self/other phenomenon.

The infant is with an other who regulates the infant's own self-experience. In this sense, the other is a self-regulating other for the infant.¹ In games like peek-a-boo, it is the regulation of the infant's arousal that is mainly involved. We can speak of a self-arousal-regulating other. Arousal, however, is only one of many possible self-experiences that others can regulate.

Affect intensity is another infant self-experience of arousal that is almost continually regulated by caregivers. For instance, in smiling interactions the dyad can increase by increments the level of intensity of the affect display. One partner increases a smile's intensity, eliciting an even bigger smile from the other partner, which ups the level yet again, and so on, producing a positive feedback spiral. (See Beebe [1973], Tronick et al. [1977], and Beebe and Kronen [1985] for fuller descriptions of these leadings and followings.)

Security or attachment is another such self-experience. All the events that regulate the feelings of attachment, physical proximity, and security are mutually created experiences. Cuddling or molding to a warm, contoured body and being cuddled; looking into another's eyes and being looked at; holding on to another and being held—these kinds of self-experiences with an other are among the most totally social of our experiences, in the straightforward sense that they can never occur unless elicited or maintained by the action or presence of an other. They cannot exist as a part of known self-experience without an other. This is true even if the self-regulating other is fantasied rather than actual. (The experience of hugging demands a partner even in fantasy, or else it can only be performed but not fully experienced. This applies to hugging pillows as well as people. The issue is not whether the pillow hugs back, only that the pillow be physically present or the sensation of it be imagined. In this sense there is no such thing as half a hug or half a kiss.)

¹. "Self" is used here not reflexively but, as elsewhere in the book, to denote the infant's self. A self-regulatory other is thus one who regulates the infant, not the other.
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Attachment theorists have stressed the indispensable role played by others in the regulation of security. While attachment is of enormous importance as an index of the quality of the parent/child relationship, it is not however, synonymous with the entire relationship. There are many other self-experiences regulated by others that fall outside the proper boundaries of attachment. Excitation has already been described, and others will be described later.

Parents can also regulate what affect category the infant will experience. Such regulation may involve interpreting the infant’s behavior, asking questions like, “Is that face to be taken as funny or surprising?” “Is that cup-banging to be taken as amusing or hostile or bad?” In fact, from two to seven months an enormous sector of the entire affective spectrum an infant can feel is possible only in the presence of and through the interactive mediation of another, that is, by being with another person.

Both infant and caregiver also regulate the infant’s attention, curiosity, and cognitive engagement with the world. The caregiver’s mediation greatly influences the infant’s sense of wonder and avidity for exploration.

Historically most notable, others regulate the infant’s experiences of somatic state. These experiences are the ones that have traditionally preoccupied psychoanalysis, namely, the gratification of hunger and the shift from wakeful fatigue to sleep. In all such regulations, a dramatic shift in neurophysiological state is involved. One of the reasons why these events have received such attention in psychoanalysis, which eclipsed for a long while the ability to discern the importance of the other ways of being with a self-regulating other, is undoubtedly that they were more readily explicable in terms of libido shifts and the energetic model, which the other forms of being-with are not. And this way of being-with is clearly of great importance. It is these experiences and their representation, more than any others, that have been thought to approximate most closely the feeling of total merging, of obliterating self/object boundaries and fusing into a “dual-unity.” There is no reason, however, why satiation of hunger or falling into sleep should be construed as passing into a state of dual-unity unless one assumes that “symbiosis” is the lived experience of having excitation fall to zero, when subjective experience of any import effectively stops, as is described and implied in the pleasure principle. Most traditional theories do in
fact assume just that, and we will examine this assumption in detail in chapter 9. It is just as likely, however, that experiences of hunger reduction and other somatic state regulations are mainly experienced as dramatic transformations in self-state that require the physical mediation of an other (Stern 1980). In that case, the predominant experience would be being with a somatic-state-regulating other rather than merging.

There have now been enough observations of well-fed institutionalized infants and kibbutz babies, as well as of primate behavior, to make it clear that strong feelings and important representations are forged not necessarily by the very acts of being fed or put to sleep (that is, by somatic-state-regulating others) but rather by the manner in which these acts are performed. And the manner is often best explained by the previously listed forms of self-regulation by others. The great advantage of the feeding experience is that it puts into play and brings together, at one time, so many different forms of self-regulation. Finally, Sander (1964, 1980, 1983a, 1983b) has continued to point out that the infant’s states of consciousness and activity are ultimately socially negotiated states, taking their form, in part, through the mediation of self-regulating others.

It is clear that the social action of self-regulating others is a pervasive objective fact bearing on the infant’s experience, but how may this be experienced subjectively?

**Self with Other as a Subjective Experience**

Somehow the infant registers the objective experience with self-regulating others as a subjective experience. These experiences are the same ones that have been called mergings, fusions, security gratifications, and so on.

Psychoanalysis has made a distinction between primary mergers and secondary mergers, and the experience we are considering presumably falls into one or the other type. Primary fusions are those experiences of boundary absence, and therefore sensing oneself to be part of an other, because of a maturational inability—that is, the failure to differentiate self from other. Secondary mergers are...
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...ine this assumption in detail: that experiences of hunger are mainly experienced as that require the physical, that case, the predominant somatic-state-regulating other...tions of well-fed institutionally as of primate behavior, to important representations are of being fed or put to sleep, but rather by the manner in which the manner is often best of self-regulation by others. Experience is that it puts into so many different forms of, 1980, 1983a, 1983b) has states of consciousness and of states, taking their form, regulating others. If self-regulating others is a infant's experience, but how...

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...those experiences of losing one's perceptual and subjective boundaries after they have been formed and, so to speak, being engulfed by or dissolving into an other's semipermeable personhood. These secondary merger experiences are thought to be re-editions of primary mergers, brought about by regression secondary to some wish-related defensive operation.2

In the position taken here, these important social experiences are neither primary nor secondary mergers. They are simply the actual experience of being with someone (a self-regulatory other) such that self-feelings are importantly changed. During the actual event, the core sense of self is not breached: the other is still perceived as a separate core other. The change in self-experience belongs to the core self alone. The changed core self also becomes related (but not fused) with the core other. The self-experience is indeed dependent upon the presence and action of the other, but it still belongs entirely to the self. There is no distortion. The infant has accurately represented reality. Let us examine these assumptions in the form of several questions.

First, why does the experience with a self-regulating other not breach or confuse the sense of a core self and a core other? To address this question, let us return to the earlier example of the infant's experience of excitation as regulated by an other in a peek-a-boo game. Why does the infant continue to experience the cycles of anticipation and joy as belonging to the core self? Similarly, why do the wonderful disappearing-reappearing antics belong to mother, as a core other? Why are neither selfhood nor otherness breached or dissolved?

The core senses of self and other do not get disrupted for several reasons. Under normal conditions, the infant has experienced similar joyful cycles of suspense buildup and punch line in other, slightly...

2. The idea of subjective states of fusion was born of two quite separate concepts. The first concept embraced pathological states seen in older children (symbiotic psychosis), in which the child experiences the dissolution of self/other boundaries and resultant feelings of fusion. It also embraces the wish for merger and the fear of engulfment, which are not uncommon clinical features in adult patients. The second concept is the now-familiar assumption that the infant experiences a protracted period of self/other undifferentiation. It was not a long retrospective leap backward in time to assume that if infants could not discriminate self from other, they too would experience states of self/other unity of merger like those reported by older patients. In this way, the notion of primary fusion experiences was historically inspired by the observation of secondary fusion experiences. Primary fusion was a pathomorphic, retrospective, secondary conceptualization.
different situations: "I'm gonna get you" games, "walking fingers," "tickle the tummy," and a host of other suspense games that are standard fare at this age. The infant is also likely to have experienced a dozen or more variations of the peek-a-boo game to begin with: diaper over baby's face, diaper over mother's face, mother's face gets covered by baby's feet as they are brought together, her face rises above and sets below the horizon of the bed, and so on. No matter how mother does it, the infant experiences her antics as belonging to her as a core other; this is only one of the many ways of experiencing her organization, cohesion, and agency.

Moreover, the same general feeling state is engendered in the infant, regardless of which way the mother plays the game. And it is likely that this family of games has been played with the infant by others—father, babysitter, and so on. The particular affect, then, remains, despite variations in the interaction and changes in the interactants. It is only the feeling state that belongs to the self, that is a self-invariant.

Variety is what permits the infant to triangulate and identify what invariants belong to whom. And normal parent/infant interactions are, of course, necessarily extremely variable. To highlight the crucial role of variety of experience in distinguishing self-invariants from other-invariants, imagine the following:

Suppose that an infant experienced joyful cycles of anticipation and resolution only with mother, and that mother always regulated these cycles in the exact same way (virtually impossible). That infant would be in a tricky spot. In this particular, unchanging activity, mother would be sensed as a core other because her behavior would obey most of the laws (agency, coherence, continuity) that specify others as against selves. However, the infant could not be sure to what extent his or her feeling state was an invariant property of self or of mother's behavior since both would invariably accompany this feeling. (This is close to the picture of self/other undifferentiation assumed by many, except that we have derived it from the mother's limitations rather than from the infant's.)

Under the normal conditions of inevitable variety, then, the infant should have no trouble in sensing who is who and what belongs to whom in these kinds of encounters. There are, however, many games and routines in which a great degree of similarity of behavior between parent and infant is the rule. May not these present a more
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difficult task for the infant in distinguishing self from other and from "us"? These include early forms of pat-a-cake, where mother makes her hands and the infant's hands do the same thing, various imitation routines, aect leading and following as in the mutual escalation of smiles, and many more. One could imagine that at such times the cues that specify self-invariants and other-invariants could partially break down, because in imitative interactions, the behavior of the other may be isomorphic (similarly contoured as far as intensity and vitality affects are concerned) and often simultaneous or even synchronous with the behavior of the infant. One might expect that these experiences are the ones that come closest to the notions of merging or of dissolution of self/other boundaries, at least on perceptual grounds (Stern 1980).

Even under these conditions, however, it is quite unlikely that enough of the differentiating cues can be obliterated. Infants' timing capacities are superb. They can detect split-second deviations from simultaneity. For instance, if a mother's face is shown to an infant of three months on a television screen but her voice is delayed by several hundred milliseconds, the infant picks up the discrepancy in synchrony and is disturbed by it, as by a badly dubbed movie (Trevarthan 1977; Dodd 1979). Similarly, it is the ability to estimate time in the split-second range that permits the infant to distinguish the sounds /ba/ and /pa/, which differ only in timing of voice onset (Eimas et al. 1971, 1978). Even if the parent could act like a perfect mirror, the memorial continuity of a core sense of self could not be obliterated. 3

What happens to the sense of self in those mutual interactions

3. Moments of self/other similarity tend to occur at times of high arousal and retain throughout life their ability to establish a strong feeling of connectedness, similarity, or intimacy, for good or ill. Lovers assume similar postures and tend to move toward and away from one another roughly simultaneously, as in a courting dance. In a political discussion that divides a group into two camps, those of the same opinion will be found to share postural positions (Schefflin 1964). Mothers and infants, when feeling both happy and excited, will tend to vocalize together. This has been given several different names: cooing, chorusing, matching, and mimicking (Stern et al. 1975; Schafer 1977).

On the negative side, staring, facial or postural mimicking, and "shadow-talking" are all used by children to infuriate peers or adults. There is something intolerably invasive in the sense of negative intimacy in these particular experiences of self/other similarity (not self/ other unity). However, this sense of negative intimacy could not arise in infants in the domain of core-relatedness. It requires the assumption of the existence of separate other minds with intentions, and that is not available until the domain of intersubjective relatedness opens up later.
involving the regulation of the infant’s security or state transformations? While these interactions are no more devoted to affective alterations than the interactions already discussed, they are historically considered more conducive to experiences of mergers. During these experiences, the parent’s behaviors are complementary to the infant’s (holding the infant, who is being held). In this sense, each partner is generally doing something quite different from the other. The intactness of self and other is therefore readily maintained, since the perceptual cues reveal the other to be following a different temporal, spatial, intensity, and/or movement organization from the self. In other words, all the cues that specify self-invariants or other-invariants (discussed in chapter 4) are undisturbed, so that no confusion in the sense of self versus sense of other need occur at the level of core-relatedness. It is thus reasonable that the sense of a core self and a core other need not be breached by the presence of self-regulating others, even when the experience concerns the infant’s affect state.

A second question now arises. What is the relationship between the altered self-experience and the regulating role of the other who helped alter the infant’s self-experience? Or, more to the point, how is that relationship experienced by the infant? We can answer for an adult or older child. Sometimes it screams out and seems to fill the entire attentional field, as in the powerful feelings of being with someone when you are insecure or scared, being enfolded in that person’s arms and engulfed in something like security, of almost falling into the other’s personhood (what a normal “merger” experience is purportedly like).

At other times, the relationship between the altered self-experience and the regulatory role of the other is silent and goes unnoticed. This situation is analogous to the silent or invisible presence of the “self-other” as well expressed in the terminology of Self Psychology by Wolf (1980) and Stechler and Kaplan (1980).

Setting aside, for the moment, any particular age-appropriate form of the selfobject need, one may compare the need for the continuous presence of a psychologically nourishing selfobject milieu with the continuing physiological need for an environment containing oxygen. It is a relatively silent need of which one becomes aware sharply only when it is not being met, when a harsh world compels one to draw the breath in pain. And so it goes also with the selfobject needs. As long as a person
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is securely embedded in a social matrix that provides him with a field in which he can find, but does not have to be actually utilizing the needed mirroring responses and the needed availability of idealizable values, he will feel comfortably affirmed in his total self and, paradoxically, relatively self-reliant, self-sufficient, and autonomous. But, if by some adversity of events this person would find himself transported into a strange environment, it will be experienced as alien and even hostile, no matter how friendly it might be disposed toward him. Even strong selves tend to fragment under such circumstances. One can feel loneliest in a crowd. Solitude, psychological solitude, is the mother of anxiety. (Wolf 1980, p. 128)

Whether the relationship between altered self-experience and the regulating role of the other is obvious or unobtrusive, the alteration in self-experience always belongs entirely to the self. Even in the obvious situation of a security need being met, the other may appear to provide—may actually even seem to possess—the “security” before enfolding you. But the feeling of becoming secure belongs only to the self. In those situations when the regulatory role of the other goes unnoticed, the experience of self-alteration belongs only to the self by default.

The previous discussion addressed the question of who subjectively owns, so to speak, the alteration in self-experience—the self, the other, or some “we” or fused amalgam. The answer seems to be that it falls completely within the domain of the sense of self. This issue of subjective ownership, however, leaves unanswered the question of how the relationship is sensed.

Some relationship must come to exist between the change in self-experience and the regulating role, obvious or unobtrusive, of the other, simply because they tend to occur together. They become related as do any attributes of a repeated lived experience. They are not elements that are fused or confused; they are simply related. They are two of the more salient elements (that is, attributes) of any particular lived experience with a self-regulating other. Merger experiences at this age are simply a way of being with someone, but someone who acts as a self-regulating other. Any such lived experience includes: (1) significant alterations in the infant’s feeling state that seem to belong to the self even though they were mutually created by self with an other, (2) the other person, as seen, heard, and felt at the moment of the alteration, (3) an intact sense of a core self and
core other against which all this occurs, and (4) a variety of contextual and situational events. How can all of these be yoked to form a subjective unit that is neither a fusion nor a we-self nor a cool cognitive association between distinct selves and others? This yoking occurs in the form of an actual episode of life as lived. The lived episode—just as in memory—is the unit that locks the different attributes of the experience into relationships one with the other. The relationships are those that prevailed at the actual happening.

Viewed this way, the altering self-experiences and the regulatory role of the other are not simply associated in a learned way. Rather, they are embraced by a larger common unit of subjective experience, the episode, that includes them both along with other attributes and preserves their natural relations. Similarly, the altering self-experience and the perceptions of the other do not have to collapse into one another and become fused or confused. Rather, they can remain as distinct and separate components of the larger subjective unit, the episode.

Lived episodes immediately become the specific episodes for memory, and with repetition they become generalized episodes as described in chapter 4. They are generalized episodes of interactive experience that are mentally represented—that is, representations of interactions that have been generalized, or RIGs. For example, after the first game of peek-a-boo the infant lays down the memory of the specific episode. After the second, third, or twelfth experience of slightly different episodes, the infant will have formed a RIG of peek-a-boo. It is important to remember that RIGs are flexible structures that average several actual instances and form a prototype to represent them all. A RIG is something that has never happened before exactly that way, yet it takes into account nothing that did not actually happen once.

The experience of being with a self-regulating other gradually forms RIGs. And these memories are retrievable whenever one of the attributes of the RIG is present. When an infant has a certain feeling, that feeling will call to mind the RIG of which the feeling is an attribute. Attributes are thus recall cues to reactivate the lived experience. And whenever a RIG is activated, it packs some of the wallop of the originally lived experience in the form of an active memory.

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other relationships with the same person will have its own distinctive RIG. And when different RIGs are activated, the infant re-experiences different forms or ways of being with a self-regulating other. The activation of different RIGs can influence different regulatory functions, ranging from the biological and physiological to the psychic.4

Another question concerns the issue of being with self-regulating others who are present as compared with those who are absent, which in turn brings up the issue of “internalized” relationships. If the lines of argument presented here are followed, the distinction between present and absent self-regulating other does not loom so large, because in both cases infants must deal with their history with others. And this involves the subjective experience of being with an historical self-regulating other that may best be captured by the notion of being with an evoked companion.

Evoked Companions

Whenever a RIG of being with someone (who has changed self-experience) is activated, the infant encounters an evoked companion. This can be conceptualized as shown schematically in figure 5.1.

Suppose that the infant has already experienced six roughly similar specific episodes of a type of interaction with a self-regulating other. These specific episodes will be generalized and encoded as a Repre-

4. In discussing the psychobiology of bereavement in light of animal experimentation, Hofer remarks, Could the elements of the inner life that we experience with people who are close to us come to serve as biological regulators, much the way the actual sensorimotor interactions with the mother act for the infant animal in our experiments? And could this link internal object relations to biological systems? I think this may be possible. Certainly associative or Pavlovian conditioning is a well-known mechanism by which symbolic cues, and even internal time sense, can come to control physiological responses. Thus, it seems possible that the regulating action of important human relationships upon biological systems may be transduced, not only by sensorimotor and temporal patterning of the actual interactions, but also by the internal experiences of the relationship as it is carried out in the minds of the people involved. A permanent loss is sustained at both levels of organization, so that both representational and actual interactions are affected by the reality of the event. (Hofer 1983, p. 15)

Field (in press), in her work on the response of infants to extended maternal separation, reaches toward a similar conclusion as Reitz et al. (1981) in their work on infant monkeys.

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The evoked companion is an experience of being with, or in the presence of, a self-regulating other, which may occur in or out of awareness. The companion is evoked from the RIG not as the recall of an actual past happening, but as an active exemplar of such happenings. This conceptualization seems necessary to explain the form in which such events are encountered in clinical and everyday life—to put some experiential...
flesh on an abstract representation. Abstract representations such as RIGs are not experienced in the form of life as lived. They must be instantiated in the form of an activated memory that can be part of lived experience.⁵ (The evoked companion is not a companion in the sense of a comrade but in the sense of a particular instance of one who accompanies another.)

The evoked companion functions to evaluate the specific ongoing interactive episode. The current interactive experience (specific episode #7) is compared with the simultaneously occurring experience with the evoked companion. This comparison serves to determine what new contributions the current specific episode (#7) can make in revising the RIG₁₋₅. To the extent that specific episode #7 is unique, it will result in some alteration in the RIG, from RIG₁₋₅ to RIG₁₋₇. The RIG will thus be slightly different when it is later encountered by the next specific episode (#8), and so on. In this fashion RIGs are slowly updated by current experience. However, the more past experience there is, the less relative impact for change any single specific episode will have. History builds up inertia. (This is essentially what Bowlby means in stating that working models of mother, a different unit of representation from RIGs, are conservative.)

Evoked companions can also be called into active memory during episodes when the infant is alone but when historically similar episodes involved the presence of a self-regulating other. For instance, if a six-month-old, when alone, encounters a rattle and manages to grasp it and shake it enough so that it makes a sound, the initial pleasure may quickly become extreme delight and exuberance, expressed in smiling, vocalizing, and general body wriggling. The extreme delight and exuberance is not only the result of successful mastery, which may account for the initial pleasure, but also the historical result of similar past moments in the presence of a delight-and-exuberance-enhancing (regulating) other. It is partly a social response, but in this instance it occurs in a nonsocial situation. At such moments, the initial pleasure born of successful mastery acts as a retrieval cue to activate the RIG, resulting in an imagined interaction with an evoked companion that includes the shared and mutually induced delight about the successful mastery. It is in this way that...

⁵. Psychoanalysis also struggles with the same problems in considering representations. Are they to be treated as images in memory, concepts, abstractions, or a report on overall mental functioning about a focus of interest (see Friedman 1980)?
an evoked companion serves to add another dimension to the experience, in this case, extra delight and exuberance. So that even if actually alone, the infant is "being with" a self-regulating other in the form of an activated memory of prototypic lived events. The current experience now includes the presence (in or out of awareness) of an evoked companion.

The notion of RIGs and evoked companions bears important similarities to and differences from other postulated phenomena, such as the "working models of mother" in attachment theory, the selfobjects in Self Psychology, merger experiences in Mahlerian theory, early proto-forms of internalization in classical psychoanalytic theory, and "we" experiences (Stechler and Kaplan 1980). All these notions have arisen to fill a clinical need and a theoretical void.

The concept of the RIG and the evoked companion and the working model of attachment are different in several respects. First, they are of a different size and order. An individual RIG concerns the representation of a specific type of interaction. A working model concerns an assembly of many such interactions into a larger representation of a person’s repertoire under certain conditions. The RIG can be conceptualized as the basic building block from which working models are constructed. This is shown schematically in figure 5.2.

Working models, as a larger construct, change as new RIGs are included and others are deleted and as the hierarchical structure of RIGs that constitute the working model are reorganized. Nonetheless, there has recently been a remarkable confluence of concern with the nature of the earliest representations or internal working models of mother. The current work of Sroufe (1985), Sroufe and Fleeson (1985), Bretherton (in press), and Main and Kaplan (in press) is all...
consistent with the general outlines of this approach. They have also found it necessary to turn to episodic memory as a fundamental process in the formation of these personal representations.

Second, RIGs are different from the working model of attachment theory in that working models, at least historically, concern expectations about the regulation primarily of security-attachment states. RIGs embody expectations about any and all interactions that can result in mutually created alterations in self-experience, such as arousal, affect, mastery, physiological state, state of consciousness, and curiosity, and not just those related to attachment.

Finally, the working model is conceived in highly cognitive terms and operates much like a schema that detects deviations from average expectation. The evoked companion as an activated RIG is conceived in terms of episodic memory and lends itself better to the affective nature of being with others, since the affective attributes of the lived and retrieved experience do not get transformed into cognitive terms that simply appraise and guide. In this sense, also, the evoked companion comes closer to the vividness of subjective experience, rather than taking the more experientially remote position of a guiding model. Nonetheless, evoked companions function like working models in two respects. First, they are prototypic memories that are not restricted to one past occurrence. Rather they represent the accumulated past history of a type of interaction with another. Second, they serve a guiding function in the sense of the past creating expectations of the present and future.

The concept of the RIG and evoked companion differs importantly from selfobjects and mergers, in that the integrity of core sense of self and other is never breached in the presence of an evoked companion. It is also distinct from a “we” experience in that it is felt as an I-experience with another. Finally, it differs from internalizations in that these in their final form are experienced as internal signals (symbolic cues), rather than as lived or reactivated experiences.

At some point in development there is no longer the necessity to retrieve the evoked companion and get a dose of the lived experience. The attribute alone serves as a cue that alters behavior, without a reliving of the generalized event. (This is no different from Pavlov’s concepts of secondary signals in classical conditioning.) It remains an empirical question when this happens developmentally and whether, or under what circumstances, the secondary signal (the
attribute) is really acting all alone or whether it usually activates the
evoked companion to some extent. In either case, evoked companions
never disappear. They lie dormant throughout life, and while they
are always retrievable, their degree of activation is variable. In states
of great disequilibrium such as loss, activation is very manifest.

Evoked companions operate during actual interactions with another
person, as well as in the absence of others. They operate by becoming
activated, so that a self-regulating other becomes “present” in the
form of an active memory. Even during such interactions, in the
presence of an other, evoked companions function to tell the infant
what is now happening. They are a record of the past informing the
present. For instance, if a mother plays a game of peek-a-boo in a
very different manner from usual (let’s say she is depressed and just
going through the motions), the infant will use the companion
evoked from the peek-a-boo RIG as a standard against which to
check whether the current episode is something significantly changed,
to be marked as a special variation, or an entirely new type of self-
regulating-other experience. In this way evoked companions help to
evaluate expectations and perform a stabilizing and regulating function
for self-experience. This sounds like a working model in operation.
But the detection of deviation may come about subjectively, in
differences in the “presence” and “feel” of the evoked companion
compared with the “actual” partner.

So far, we have discussed the use of RIGs mainly in the presence
of the other, in fact, during an actual episode with the other. When
that is the case, the infant needs only recognition memory to call to
mind the evoked companion that is stored in memory, since the
actual episode is happening now before the infant. But what about
the retrieval of evoked companions in the absence of the other?
This, after all, is when the concept of internalization is most
generally needed for clinical purposes. The lived episode of being
with an other must be recalled when the other is no longer present,
requiring recall or evocative memory. It has traditionally been
assumed that the infant’s recall memory is not adequate to evoke the
presence of someone absent until the age of nine to twelve months
or so, as evidenced by separation reactions. Some theorists place the
timing for evoking absent partners even later, in the second year,
when symbolic functioning is available to be enlisted in the task of
evocation. That would put these matters beyond the age period we

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Whether it usually activates the character, evoked companions through life, and while they exist, it is variable. In states of interaction with another self, they operate by becoming present in the mind such interactions, in the sense of the past informing the game of peek-a-boo. In a say she is depressed and just not will use the companion standard against which to see significantly changed, an entirely new type of self-evoked companions help to lizing and regulating function working model in operation. come about subjectively, in of the evoked companion RIGs mainly in the presence episode with the other. When recognition memory to call to stored in memory, since the the infant. But what about the absence of the other? of internalization is most. The lived episode of being the other is no longer present, y. It has traditionally been is not adequate to evoke the age of nine to twelve months on. Some theorists place the en later, in the second year, to be enlisted in the task of rs beyond the age period we are now considering. From what has already been said (see chapter 3), however, the evidence supports the view that the infant is capable of acts of cued recall memory beginning in the third month of life and perhaps before.

In light of the infant’s cued recall memory and memory for interpersonal happenings in terms of RIGs, it seems likely that the

6. It is generally assumed that the infant’s elaboration of a “separation response” at nine months or so is the first major evidence of recall memory for interpersonal events. In addition to the other evidence of prior recall memory, there are several problems with this assumption. Schaffer et al. (1972), Kagan et al. (1978), and McCall (1979), among others, have criticized the more traditional view that separation distress comes about solely because the maturation of memory processes permits an internal representation of mother, so that at her departure the infant can evoke her memory and compare it against the condition of her absence, which reveals the infant’s loneliness. Kagan et al. (1978), most notably, have raised such questions as, Why does the infant cry as the mother is moving away but still in sight? Why does the baby not cry when she leaves to go into the kitchen for the hundredth time that morning?

An alternate interpretation, basically similar to that proposed by Schaffer et al. (1972), suggests that two processes must come to maturation in order to produce separation distress. The first is the necessary, but not sufficient, condition that the infant has an enhanced ability to retrieve and hold a schema of past experience, that is, to evoke with recall memory an internal representation of the other. The traditional explanation stops here. The second necessary maturation ability to emerge at this age is the ability to generate anticipations of the future-representations of possible events. Kagan et al. (1978) describe this new capacity as the “disposition to attempt to predict future events and to generate response to deal with discrepant situations” (p. 110). If the child cannot generate a prediction or an instrumental response to deal with the prediction, uncertainty and distress result.

It may prove more helpful to break these two processes necessary for the separation reactions into three distinct processes: an improved recall (evocative) memory; the ability to generate future-representations of possible events; and the ability to generate communicative or instrumental responses to deal with the uncertainty and distress that are caused by incongruences between present events and future representations of events. It is generally agreed that recall or evocative memory improves greatly toward the end of the first year of life. However, it is also clear that some recall is functioning long before the advent of separation distress at nine months. The notion, then, of “out of sight, out of mind” until nine months or so and “out of sight, but potentially in mind,” thanks to recall memory (for people) after nine months, is not as clearcut as it seems.

In holding this view, we are closer both to Freud’s original notion (1900) of the “hallucinated breast,” in which he essentially invokes the newborn’s use of cued recall memory (without calling it that), and to the recent findings on cued recall we have already alluded to. What Freud called the “hallucinated breast” could be called an attribute of a generalized episode of feeding. We would say that hunger acted as the cue to recall the other attribute, the breast. Freud would say that hunger created the tension that pushed for discharge, and in the face of a blocked motor discharge pathway, the impulse backed up and sought discharge through a sensory pathway, resulting in the hallucination. The sensory discharge was adaptive in that it would momentarily relieve the hunger, by the same amount as the sensory discharge reduced the tension.

Instead of emphasizing the discharge value of using a prototypic episode, we stress its organizing and regulating value. And instead of emphasizing the use of prototypic episodes under the presence of an acute need, we emphasize its continuous use in regulating and stabilizing all ongoing experience by providing continuity, that is, by contextualizing every experience in a history that is always being upgraded.
infant has almost constant rememberings (out of awareness) of
previous interactions, both in the actual presence and in the absence
of the other person involved in the interactions. I suggest that
Freud's original model of the "hallucinated breast" was descriptively
right, although it relied on the wrong mechanism. Whenever an
infant encounters one part or attribute of a lived episode, the other
attributes of that generalized episode (RIG) will be called to mind.
Various evoked companions will be almost constant companions in
everyday life. Is it not so for adults when they are not occupied with
tasks? How much time each day do we spend in imagined interactions
that are either memories, or the fantasied practice of upcoming
events, or daydreams?

Another way to put all of this is that the infant's life is so
thoroughly social that most of the things the infant does, feels, and
perceives occur in different kinds of relationships. An evoked com-
panion or internal representation or working model or fantasied
union with mother is no more or less than the history of specific
kinds of relationships (in Bowlby's terms, 1980) or the prototypic
memory of many specific ways of being with mother, in our terms.
Once cued recall memory has begun to function, subjective experi-
ences are largely social, regardless of whether we are alone or not.
In fact, because of memory we are rarely alone, even (perhaps
especially) during the first half-year of life. The infant engages with
real external partners some of the time and with evoked companions
almost all the time. Development requires a constant, usually silent,
dialogue between the two.

This view of being almost continuously with real and evoked
companions encompasses what is generally meant when one says
that the infant has learned to be trustful or secure in exploring the
surrounding world. What could create trust or security in exploring,
initially, if not the memory of past experiences with self and other
in exploratory contexts? The infant is, in subjective fact, not alone
but accompanied by evoked companions, drawn from several RIGs,
who operate at various levels of activation and awareness. The infant
is therefore trustful. This is a more subjective and more experience-
near version of a working model.

The notion of self-with-other as a subjective reality is thus almost
pervasive. This subjective sense of being-with (intrapsychically and
extrapsychically) is always an active mental act of construction,
ings (out of awareness) of presence and in the absence of interactions. I suggest that the breast was descriptively a mechanism. Whenever an of a lived episode, the other (IG) will be called to mind. Most constant companions in them are not occupied with send in imagined interactions eased practice of upcoming

that the infant’s life is so the infant does, feels, and relates. An evoked companionship model or fantasied than the history of specific ms, 1980) or the prototypic with mother, in our terms. the function, subjective experience. Whether we are alone or not. Rarely alone, even (perhaps life. The infant engages with and with evoked companions pleasant and silent, usually with real and evoked really meant when one says all or secure in exploring the trust or security in exploring, experiences with self and other in subjective fact, not alone is, drawn from several RIGs, on and awareness. The infant objective and more experience-subjective reality is thus almost with (intrapsychically and mental act of construction,

however, not a passive failure of maturation, nor a regression to earlier periods of undifferentiation. Seen in this way, the experiences of being-with are not something like the “delusion of dual-unity” or mergers that one needs to grow out of, dissolve, and leave behind. They are permanent, healthy parts of the mental landscape that undergo continual growth and elaboration. They are the active constitutions of a memory that encodes, integrates, and recalls experience, and thereby guides behavior.

BRIDGING THE INFANT’S SUBJECTIVE WORLD AND THE MOTHER’S SUBJECTIVE WORLD

We have discussed only the infant’s subjective world and its relation to those interactive events that are observable to all. This was schematized in figure 5.1. But that is only half of the story. The mother also participates in the same observable interactive episodes, and she too brings her own history to influence her subjective experience of the ongoing observable interaction. In effect, the observable interaction in which both partners participate is the bridge between two potentially quite separate subjective worlds. In principle the dyadic system is symmetrical. The observable interaction acts at the interface. It is not symmetrical in practice, however, because the mother brings so much more personal history to each encounter. She has not only a working model of her infant, but a working model of her own mother (see Main 1985), a working model of her husband (who the baby may frequently remind her of), and various other working models, all of which will come into play.

Accordingly, we can expand figure 5.1 to include the mother’s half as shown in figure 5.3. For the purpose of this expansion, what was called the “evoked companion” of the infant in figure 5.1 will be called more generically the “subjective experience of the observable event.” To illustrate how this schematization might work, imagine a specific interactive episode: a baby boy, Joey, makes repeated attempts for attention, while mother ignores or refuses to acknowledge his appeals. This specific episode will evoke from the memories of both infant and mother a subjective experience in light of which the currently occurring interactive episode is apprehended. On the mother’s side assume that the specific episode has evoked a particular RIG, that is part of the mother’s working model of her own mother as a mother (as indicated in figure 5.3). RIG, for example, is the
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specific representation of how the mother’s mother tended to meet the appeals for attention (of Joey’s mother when she was a child) with disdain and aversion. This particular aspect of the mother’s mother becomes activated in the form of an evoked companion (a “ghost in the nursery,” in Fraiberg’s words, 1974). The evoked companion then plays a role in determining the choice of RIG_e to be evoked within the mother’s working model of her own infant, Joey. The generalized interaction represented in RIG_e might be something like: Joey is always making unwanted, unreasonable demands for attention that are unpleasant. The evocation of the particular RIG_e will largely determine the mother’s subjective experience of Joey’s present appeal for attention.

In a similar fashion, the infant is forming a different subjective experience, from his past history, of the ongoing specific episode. It is in this way that the observable interactive event acts as a bridge between the two subjective worlds of infant and mother. In principal, this formulation is no different from that used in a global way by most psychodynamically-oriented clinicians. However, because it is conceptualized with more specificity and implies various discrete hierarchically arranged units and processes it may prove helpful in advancing our thinking about how maternal fantasies and attributions can influence not only the observable interaction but ultimately the shape of the infant’s fantasies and attributions. It may also prove helpful in understanding how therapeutic interventions may operate to alter the parent’s view of what her infant is doing and who that infant is. Further exploration of this enormous area is beyond the scope of this book, but active efforts in this direction are underway.7

We have attempted to retrieve what was missing in the last chapter, namely, the very social nature and presumably social subjective experience of the infant in the domain of core relatedness. There is one final issue to consider, which extends the social nature of the infant’s experience even further.

7. Dr. Cramer and I are currently studying the interplay between the levels of observable interaction and maternal fantasies as well as the impact of intervention on both. (See B. Cramer and D. Stern, “A bridge between minds: How do the mother’s and infant’s subjective worlds meet?” [In preparation, to be presented at the World Association of Infant Psychiatry and Allied Professions, Stockholm, August 1986].) The above schematization was greatly contributed to by Dr. Cramer’s group in Geneva.
Self-Regulating Experiences with Inanimate Things

Self-regulating experiences with things that have become personified can also occur at this age and level of relatedness. Such events fall at an early point on the developmental line that later includes transitional objects (like security blankets, which stand for and can be freely substituted for persons) and even later the larger realm of transitional phenomena embracing the worlds of art, as Winnicott (1971) has taught us.

During this period the mother very often enters into the infant's play by lending some things animate properties. She manipulates toys so that they swoop in and out and speak and tickle. They take on the organic rhythms and feelings of force, that is, the vitality affects of persons. And they elicit in the infant feeling states that are generally only elicited by persons. Both while and immediately after the mother imbues a toy with the actions, motions, vitality affects, and other invariant attributes of persons, the infant's interest in the toy is heightened. It is one of mother's main ways of maintaining the general flow of the infant's play with things. Once she has so imbued an object and withdraws, the infant is likely to continue to explore it alone, so long as it has the afterglow of personification. It has become, for the moment, a self-regulating person-thing, because like a self-regulating other it can dramatically alter experience of self.8

Well before the age of six months, infants appear to be able to discriminate animate from inanimate—that is, persons from things (Sherrod 1981). This means that they have identified the invariants that generally specify one or the other. Given this situation, a person-

8. We will encounter this again when the child starts to learn words, for a word can also become a personified thing. Fernald and Mazzie (1983) have shown that when a mother teaches a fourteen-month-old child the names of things, she uses a predictable strategy. When she wishes to mark a new or novel word in contrast to an old or familiar one, she does so by marking it with increased and exaggerated pitch contours, using both sharp pitch rises and rise-fall contours. Fernald points out that these marked pitch contours are intrinsically attention-getting, but she also implies that there is more to it than that. The most qualitatively special things to infants are the social behaviors of persons that are eliciting of and expressive of human vitality affects and regular emotions. When the mother intonationally marks a word, she is not simply raising the infant's attention nonspecifically; she is inbuing one particular word with human magic by making it a person-thing for the moment.
Our Senses of Self

Inanimate Things

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to learn words, for a word can also have shown that when a mother se uses a predictable strategy. When old or familiar one, she does so by s, using both sharp pitch rises and contours are intrinsically attention- that. The most qualitatively special t are eliciting of and expressive of sother intonationally marks a word, callly; she is imbuing one particular the moment.

The Sense of a Core Self: II.

performed-thing will be viewed by the infant as some form of composite entity, a thing that has taken on some of the characteristics of a person. It has some of the invariant properties of both. The infant maintains an intact sense of things versus persons. The wonder of a personified thing lies in a successful constructionistic effort. It, too, is a success of integration, not a failure of differentiation.

At this point in the infant's development, a personified thing is a short-lived self-regulating person-thing. It is different, in several respects, from Winnicott's transitional objects: (1) the transitional object appears developmentally later; (2) the transitional object involves symbolic thinking, while the person-thing can be accounted for by episodic memory; (3) the existence of the transitional object, Winnicott assumed, implies some remaining lack of (or regression toward) self/other undifferentiation, while a personified thing does not.

The phenomena of self-regulating others and personified things indicate the degree to which the subjective world of infants is deeply social. They experience a sense of a core self and other, and along with these, they experience a pervasive sense of self being with other in multiple forms. All of these forms of being-with are active constructions. They will grow and become elaborated in the course of development, a process that results in the progressive socializing of experience.