

of self and of well-being, so that the simple discovery of a familiar object, such as Coca-Cola, can be greeted with an affection and celebration that other people reserve only for human beings.

CONCLUSION

There is a personality type that we psychoanalysts have tended to neglect in our writings, because, as Winnicott has suggested, this disturbance lies along the axis of the normal. Yet, if we look closely, we can observe that some persons are abnormally normal. They are unusually rooted in being objective, both in their thinking and in their desire. They achieve a state of abnormal normality by eradicating the self of subjective life, as they strive to become an object in their own being.

In his cultivation of material phenomena the normotic has become an object, both for himself and for his others: an object with no subject, an object alive and happy in a material world. Such a person suggests that mind itself, in particular the unconscious, is an archaism, a thing to be abandoned in the interests of human progress.

GENERATIVE mutuality in human relations depends, amongst other things, on an assumption that the elements of psychic life and their different functions are held in common. If A talks to B about his grief over the loss of a parent, then he should be able to assume that B knows what grief is and will 'share' A's problem with him. If A confides in B about her sexual frustration with her husband who is no longer interested in her, then A should assume that B knows about the need for sexual gratification and can understand what frustration would be like.

In an ordinary life, if it is possible to speak of such, couples and families share the elements of psychic life and their functions through a division of labour. In a marriage, a wife may tend to process the element of comforting physical care in relation to her children, while the husband may process the element of 'management' of the outside world. In contemporary life, partners pass the functions of these elements back and forth between themselves. The healthy wife and husband value and understand the elements being processed by the other.

In the modern child-guidance clinics, psychiatric hospitals, and in the secluded space of a psychoanalysis, however, the psychoanalyst is more likely to be aware of failures in mutuality, particularly breakdowns in the sharing and understanding of the common psychic elements and their functions.

Kleinian psychoanalysts, in particular, have focused on one way in which a person may rid himself of a particular element of psychic life. He does so by putting it into someone else. If a father feels guilty over impulse buying or the pressure created internally by the urge to be impulsive, he may break psychological contact with this impulse and its inspired guilt by criticizing his child's ordinary impulsiveness. As the parent unconsciously rids himself

of this unwanted part of himself, his overly censorious relation to the child's impulsiveness creates the 'desired' effect. Unable to bear the father's censorious approach, the child becomes even more impulsive. In studying human relations, whenever we note that one person compels another to 'carry' an unwanted portion of himself, then we speak of 'projective identification'.

I believe there is a process that can be as destructive as projective identification in its violation of the spirit of mutual relating. Indeed, I am thinking of an intersubjective procedure that is almost exactly its reverse, a process that I propose to call extractive introjection. Extractive introjection occurs when one person steals for a certain period of time (from a few seconds or minutes, to a lifetime) an element of another individual's psychic life. Such an intersubjective violence takes place when the violator (henceforth A) automatically assumes that the violated (henceforth B) has no internal experience of the psychic element that A represents. At the moment of this assumption, an act of theft takes place, and B may be temporarily anaesthetized and unable to 'gain back' the stolen part of the self. If such extraction is conducted by a parent upon a child it may take many years of an analysis before B will ever recover the stolen part of the self.

SOME EXAMPLES

A common event. B is a five-year-old child and is seated at a table with his parents. He reaches for his glass of milk and spills it on the floor. A parent yells: 'You stupid idiot, why don't you watch what you are doing!' In the fraction of a second prior to that comment, B has felt the shock of his mistake and has been cross and upset with himself. But A's comment steals from B the expression of shock, of self-criticism and of reparation to the group. These elements have in a sense been stolen by A. At this point B is likely to be further stunned by the parent, who assumes furthermore that B is not upset, critical or wishing to make it up to the family. It is this assumption and its expression that represents the violence against B and constitutes an extractive introjection, as A

arrogates to himself alone the elements of shock, criticism and reparation. These can, of course, be quickly restored to B if A were to say something like, 'oh, I'm sorry, B, I know this is upsetting to you, and we all do this sort of thing, so don't worry: here, have another glass of milk'; whereupon B might then say, with relief and also in contact with himself, 'I'm sorry, A, for being clumsy', having in that moment processed the elements of shock, criticism and reparation. Later I will explore how extractive introjection which is maintained alters the intrasubjective function of a psychic element. The victim could radically dissociate himself from the element of criticism because its function is to isolate him from the family world. He might willingly allow himself in such a circumstance to be the family fool in order to be part of the group, thus giving up his own contact with important psychic elements.

B is a four-year-old at play. He is moving small figures about and is engaged in a private drama that is nonetheless realized through actual objects. The space is entered by A, who creates such distraction that B loses his playfulness. This is a common enough occurrence, particularly if we say that A is also four. But let's imagine that A is the mother or father, and that each time B sets up a small group of objects to play with, the parent enters the scene and appropriates the playing by telling the child what the play is about and then prematurely engages in playfulness. B might continue to play, but a sense of spontaneity would diminish and be replaced by expectant gamefulness. If every time B is spontaneously playful the mother or father takes over the play and embellishes it with their own 'play', the child will come to experience an extraction of that element of himself: his capacity to play.

B is a student in a class. This can be as either a five-year-old or a twenty-five-year-old. The teacher, A, is knowledgeable and intense. Ordinarily, B is quite capable of representing his views coherently. But A does not permit this. He continually finds flaws in B's arguments and attempts to present a coherent point of view. B becomes rather confused and perplexed. He is less

late. The less articulate B is, the more aggressively coherent and knowledgeable A is. Gradually A assumes the total function of critical thought, as B simply provides the material for A's superior thinking. This procedure is in the nature of an extractive introjection, since A takes into himself what was partly B's ability, the capacity to think clearly and to put thoughts into words.

B is an adult working in a setting with quite a few colleagues. One day he says something that is rather insensitive – in effect, he is overly critical of a colleague. He has felt privately unhappy with this and in the course of the hour or two after the event he empathizes with his colleague (C). He feels true sorrow, realizes that his colleague's view is actually essential to the overall view of things, and he plans to apologize. At lunch that day B anticipates that he will apologize to his colleague, but before he has the opportunity to do so A enters the situation and upbraids B for his aggression. B nods and at first agrees that yes, he was too thoughtless. A goes on. He proceeds to go over the situation as if B had not acknowledged what A had said. Indeed, A proceeds to praise the offended colleague, C, and in so doing suggests that C has been wronged. B may have an internal experience of feeling that his own private feelings, recognitions, appreciations and reparations towards C have been extracted from him by A who uses the situation to presume himself the only party capable of such capacities. Again, it is A's assumption and its violent delivery that extracts from B what had been present.

B is alone in his room mulling over certain private internal issues. A arrives in a euphoric mood. What is the matter, A inquires of B. B tells A something of what is on his mind. A extracts the elements of B's concerns and with great speed and intensity organizes B's private concerns into a false coherence. The more A organizes B's state of mind into 'meaning' the less B feels in contact with himself and, if A is a manic personality, B may gradually begin to feel dulled and inert, since he is left to carry the split-off deadness that typifies the other aspect of A's personality. In this example, we can see how extractive introjection and projective identification may work together. As A

extracts B's sense of inner workings, he deposits in its place a split-off element of his own personality: a deadness.

It is a community meeting in a psychiatric hospital. Some thirty people are in the room together with a rather loose agenda that permits enough space for the introduction of feelings and thoughts as they arise. One of the unconscious issues of each community meeting is the feeling that no one person will ever have enough time to feel personally attended to. Thus, to some extent, each person is feeling neglected and irritated by the inevitable failure of the meeting. But A will not tolerate this. In a moment of fury, while getting out of his chair, A screams, 'you people don't know what it is to feel frustrated and angry', and he stomps out of the room, banging the door behind him. In that moment A may have successfully extracted from the group the individual experience of irritation, frustration and anger. Through a violent fit of temper he has left the group shocked and speechless. Only much later will individual members compete to have the right of fury returned to them.

Another meeting. This time the executives of a corporation are gathered together to work on a difficult problem. As the members of the group express different views and try to think their way through to a creative solution to the problem, A, who has been silent and perhaps envious of the creative capacities of his colleagues, makes the following speech: 'I think we must take this problem seriously. This is not a matter to be taken lightly, and we have to act with great responsibility and caution.' Up until that moment the group has indeed been approaching the problem with seriousness of thought. No levity or lack of seriousness is present and people are obviously thinking responsibly. By making his morally narcissistic speech, however, A appropriates for himself the elements of seriousness, responsibility and caution. It may be very difficult at this point for any other person to express an idea, as A's position suggests that all ideas up until his speech have been somehow irresponsible. Indeed, it is quite possible – largely depending on A's power in such a group – that the group will become silent or overly cautious in its thinking.

By utilizing a combination of curiosity, charm and quiet

persistence, A manages to get B to give intimate details from B's life, so B betrays important feelings, self states and historical material. The necessity of solitude is destroyed. A then organizes B's life and self into a coherent account, assuming a narrative authority and power, dispossessing B of his relation to himself as an object (see above, chapter 3). A's narrative grasp of B is 'greater'; that is to say, more organized, intense, comprehensive, certain. A has violently extracted B's relation to himself as an object. This sort of intersubjective violence is common in so-called encounter groups conducted by leaders who extract patients' relations to themselves as an object.

A and B have recently decided to live together. A is actually quite ambivalent about this because he does not like to share his space with anyone else and, although he quite likes B and is sexually attracted to her, she also infuriates him. A self-styled moralist, A is not comfortable with his irritations over B's existence. He aims to transcend this. One of the most irksome irritations in A's life are B's pets, which B has brought into their shared life together because she loves animals and is a very caring person. Indeed, we can say that one of the reasons why A has persuaded himself to live with B is that she is loving and nurturing. In a short time, A can no longer bear the pets and discovers a device for their removal. He is affectionate and shows intense interest in them, but, after a while and with apparent heavy heart, he tells B that he finds it personally unbearable that such lovely pets should have to be confined to the small flat. Both A and B work during the day, and the pets are alone. This has bothered B. A suggests that if one really loves one's pets this kind of treatment cannot be allowed, and he tells B that he cannot stand it any longer: the pets must be sent to someone who has the time to look after them. As A assumes the function of loving concern, B, who has loved the animals very much, now feels guilt (not love) and anxiety (as she knows something will happen to them). She gives up the animals, now believing that all along she has been cruel, when in fact she has been loving. A has extractively introjected the elements of love and care and appropriated them into himself, leaving B to feel dreadful.

I hope the examples given clarify the intersubjective process which I have termed extractive introjection, a procedure in which one person invades another person's mind and appropriates certain elements of mental life. The victim of extractive introjection will feel denuded of parts of the self. When this process occurs in childhood, the victim will not have a clear idea why certain elements of mental life seem not to be his right. For example, a child who is constantly attacked by a critical parent for the child's mistakes will in adult life discount the value of his guilt. He may expect punishment or harsh treatment since the healing value of the structure of guilt has been removed by the harsh parent. The said structure generates a mental process that moderates a potentially destructive error by means of the self-arresting affect of sorrow which leads to identification with the harmed other and sponsors the capacity to repair the damage. When the structure of guilt is removed by a critical parent, the person will feel anxiety but will have little sense of sorrow, empathy and reparation. He will never be able 'to make good'.

When we analyse our patients' projective identifications, we should simultaneously consider both the effects of extractive introjection as an alternative explanation and the interplay of these two defence mechanisms. For example, a patient may be internally damaged because he has evacuated parts of the self via projective identification, leaving him with a certain hollow or empty state of mind. The analyst will eventually come under considerable pressure to bear all the evacuations, as this patient tries to split off and project the psychic contents and mental structures that involve the elements of destruction. There might also be a very different kind of patient who is also rather empty, but who is not emptied by virtue of projective identifications. I refer to the person who has been emptied by the active violation of the other, his internal life having been extracted from him. In an analysis, the analyst will not come under pressure to take this analysand's unwanted parts into himself. On the contrary, this analysand will seem almost incapable of projecting into the analyst. More likely, the analysand will develop a parasitical transference in which he

assumes that all that is life-enhancing (including destruction) is inside the analyst, thus inspiring him to live as close to the analyst as possible.

It should eventually be possible for us to differentiate kinds of illness by considering the effects of pathological intersubjectivity. For example, a mother and father who projectively identify unwanted split-off elements of their own self into their child will burden this child with a highly complex and chaotic internal world. In adult life this person might be an unintegrated collation of parts of his intrinsic self and unwanted parental introjects. This is true of the borderline personality. Another mother and father may extract mental content and structure from a child, denuding the child of the contents and structure necessary to the processing of mental conflict. In this case the adult would seem mentally impaired or impoverished rather than overburdened with mental conflict. It may be that the person I have described in the previous chapter – the 'normotic' individual – suffers from a form of extractive introjection. If so, I do not think the normotic child is witness to the parents' extraction and identification (by assumption) of the stolen mental element, but is the participant-victim of a process of extraction followed by vaporization of the psychic structure.

Undoubtedly, each extractive introjection is accompanied by some corresponding projective identification. As a person takes from another person's psyche, he leaves a gap, or a vacuum, in its place. There he deposits despair or emptiness in exchange for what he has stolen. The situation is further complicated by the fact that a child who is the victim of consistent extractive introjection may choose to identify with the aggressive parent and install in his personality this identification, which then functions as a false self. He may then act in a similarly aggressive and greedy manner, subsequently extracting elements of psychic life from others. But this false self is just that: a false act, an empty theft. This person does not truly appropriate the stolen elements, he just acts as if he does. One can think here of certain psychopaths who violate other people's states of mind, but who do not over time use what they steal to dominate or control a person. The theft is quick, fleeting and empty.

I believe we can differentiate between four types of extractive introjection: the theft of mental content, the theft of the affective process, the theft of mental structure, and the theft of self.

Theft of mental content. We have our own ideas and mental representations. In a sense they are our creations, even though we hold ideas and representations in common with others. These are subject, of course, to correction and alteration, both by ourself and by others. The theft of ideas is one of the forms of extractive introjection and is often characterized by an act of assumption. B tells A about his latest thinking on a topic and A replies 'Yes, of course' or 'exactly' or 'naturally', and then A proceeds to say 'and furthermore', as if A has already thought B's ideas and adds many more of his own. This exchange is quite common, and its effect often relatively harmless, although B is likely to feel some irritation and perhaps a disinclination to talk much further with A.

Theft of affective process. If a person commits an error he is likely to feel the following emotional sequence: surprise/shock, anger with the self, sorrow, a sense of guilt and responsibility, reparation, and restoration of peace of mind. This affective process is an essential feature of the individual subject's experience in life. But it can be interfered with by another so that the process is interrupted and altered. The subject who has had the affective process interrupted has instead the following emotional experience: surprise, shock, acute anxiety and fear, humiliation, concealment and dread. If A extracts the element from B, thereby altering the course of the process, then the character of B's emotional experience is shifted. The damage has been done to B's mental content.

Theft of mental structure. The structure of that part of B's mind which is approached from within, eventually ceases to repress with either pleasing or deceiving. If this occurs, then there has

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structure. If A denigrates B's capacity to think issues through for himself and arrogates to himself the function of thinking, then the mental structure that generates rational thought and problem-solving will be dismantled, and B will not feel himself capable of solving a problem. Indeed, he may be left in a stupor with little confidence in thought itself, since he has come to regard thinking as a dangerous enterprise in which he feels anxious and threatened. B may give up secondary-process thinking and instead speak from the primary process, as a kind of fool or idiot savant who utilizes the licence of madness to engage in covert thinking.

Theft of the self. The parts of the self are multifold and, understandably, differ between people. I shall not outline them here. But each of us has a unique and idiomatic history. This sponsors the culture of the self, which is composed of many selves, and is perhaps our most valuable possession. The loss of a part of the self means not only a loss of content, function and process, but also a loss of one's sense of one's own person. A loss of this nature constitutes a deconstruction of one's history; the loss of one's personal history is a catastrophe, from which there may well be no recovery.

LOSS, UNCONSCIOUS GRIEF AND VIOLENCE

The person who has consistently had important elements and functions of his psyche extracted during childhood will experience a certain kind of loss. He will feel that a primary injustice has occurred, that he has been harmed by something, and like Captain Ahab he may seek a vengeful solution. Indeed, vengefulness of this kind is a bitter and agitated despair that constitutes a form of unconscious mourning, as if the loss can only be undone by the law of talion: an eye for an eye, a leg for a leg. In this respect, the law of talion is an unconscious act intended to recover the lost part of the self by violent intrusion into the other – to recover what has been stolen from oneself.

We may observe how some children can develop relevant patterns of behaviour if they have been violated by parents who have

stolen important parts of their psychic life. A man who burgles may be violating a home to steal the internal objects of a family, and in that moment his act may mirror his own experiences as a child, compulsively reversing his life pattern through violent redress.

When one person invades another's psychic territory he not only deposits an unwanted part of himself, as in projective identification, but in some respect he also takes something. At the very least he steals the recipient's peace of mind. That indeed is one of the functions of projective identification. By putting unwanted parts of oneself into another person the projector enjoys limited peace of mind, a psychic state that is extracted from the recipient who is left in confusion.

NECESSARY PARANOIA

One of the most important differential assessments a psychoanalyst can make in working with a severely disturbed person is to determine whether the individual's loss of mind is due fundamentally to projective identifications, that is, acts of expulsion which may reflect defensive manoeuvres against primitive anxieties over annihilation, or whether such a loss is due to the absence of internal integrity because of the other's violent extraction of the essentials of psychic life.

Because the child who has had his mind extracted by the other will have little ability to process the experience of being the victim of extractive introjection, he will in some fundamental way know very little of what has happened to him. Know, that is, in the sense of being able to represent mentally the nature of the intersubjective phenomenon he has experienced. As I have examined above, in chapter 6, the loss of mind may be stored in the individual's memory only as a life-defining event that is beyond comprehension. He may be either remarkably empty and indifferent to his existence, or he may be quite the opposite: angry, depressed and paranoid. But the paranoid process in this person differs from paranoia that represents the individual's projection of unwanted elements into others, a paranoia that precipitates anxiety in the person's relation to the outside world. For the victim of

extractive introjections, the paranoid state is an attitude of mourning, of loss over the 'gone', and constitutes a belief that something hostile 'out there' has taken something valuable from within.

Such a person does not live in hiding from paranoid objects, but quite the opposite – like Ahab, he seeks the other. He travels towards it in an effort to bring it back to him, or him to it. He does not identify it in order to expel it, but rather to continue the extractive process.

We may distinguish the paranoia that develops as a result of parental extractions of the child's psyche from the dynamically projective paranoia by examining the nature of the transference and the countertransference. The analysand whose paranoia is a form of anguished grief seeks a repatriation with the elements of the psyche. In the transference he believes that the analyst contains important psychic processes and he is determined to gain these talents for himself. Although the analyst will come under pressure to give the elements of psychic life back to the analysand – this will be the patient's unconscious concept of the transaction – the analyst will not find himself persecuted by the dynamic qualities of the more ordinary paranoid process. Namely, he will not have to carry or to bear unwanted sections of the patient's mind. Quite the contrary. The patient seeks to recover his mind and, as the analyst helps him to think and to repossess affects, mental processes and ultimately psychic structure, the analysand responds to the analyst's transformational function with something like object hunger, and eventually love.

My aim in this chapter has been to explore what I mean by the concept of extractive introjection and to provide vignettes to make the concept clear. I have not considered why some people are more vulnerable to extractive introjection than others, nor have I distinguished between its ordinary and pathological forms. It should be clear, however, that I believe extractive introjection to be a common and indispensable part of intersubjective processes.

I shall also have to postpone a more extensive examination of the interplay between projective identification and extractive introjection, as well as a full discussion of the implications for

psychoanalytic technique of working with a patient whose inner emptiness is determined by the other's extraction of mind rather than the subject's projective identifications.