

DEPENDENCE — INTERDEPENDENCE

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The detachment of the infant from his mother is a slow, and in part a painful process. In its totality it exceeds the physical separation of the baby from his mother at birth. The progress of growth follows a line from below to above, that is to say, from almost complete dependence in early infancy to the maturity of the adult. Dependence undergoes a broadening in scope during that transition: from the physio-biological dependence of babyhood transcending into the "interdependence" of the adult as a social being. Thus, dependence can be recognized as the main factor to insure the individual's survival as a part of a whole. "Man does not want to be independent, in the sense of functioning independently of the interest of his fellow, freely and detached." (1 p. 181)

The baby's dependence might appear parasitic as he takes what he needs for his survival from his host, the mother. In reality, however, that dependence is of a symbiotic nature benefitting both, mother and baby, revealing itself as a manifestation of interdependence: the baby e.g., obtains gratification of his basic needs while the mother, in offering these gratifications, experiences the awakening of "mother-love," as a combination of protectiveness, devotion and possessiveness. This way the reciprocity of benefitting through dependence presents itself as an aspect of cooperation, the manifestation of a capacity characteristic for man: social interest.

In accordance with the transition from dependence to inter-dependence two sets of characteristics can be discerned: a genetically older set, serving primarily the physical survival of the newly born, such as the organ systems for the utilization of food, and a genetically younger set, which serves the growing child to gradually integrate himself into the whole of mankind, comprising the characteristics of communication, in particular social interest. Genetically social interest appears to be the youngest of the higher human characteristics, its development only setting in postnatally. Its existence as an innate capacity can be established empirically by observing the manifestations of it. By definition social interest is the potentiality of man to experience himself as an integral part of all mankind; its manifestations are the contributions to the harmony and progress of mankind and the cooperation with the fellow-man through which the individual reaches his optimal development. Through it man has transcended the more primitive stages of the herd-instinct, birds migrating, and the social-instinct, bee hive. Co-existence and co-function have evolved during that process into co-operation of the individual with the whole, for the benefit of the whole, thus for his own security. The transition from dependence to inter-dependence can therefore be understood as the consequence of the individual moving from seeking security by being taken care of (dependence) to seeking security by becoming part of the whole (interdependence).

The transition from dependence to interdependence goes parallel with a shift in predominance of the two sets of characteristics. While functioning as a whole and manifesting themselves in the "basic needs" and the "higher needs" respectively, they differ as to the extent of development at birth and as to the ratio of their development in the course of the individual's

growth: the older set being in its main parts fully developed, the younger one continuing its development well throughout the life of the individual after a rather rudimentary start at birth. Consequently, the individual will seek satisfaction of his basic needs through being dependent upon his surroundings, mainly his mother, while satisfaction of the later manifested higher needs will be sought by integration into the whole: thus the basic needs are ego-related, the higher needs community-related.

In that light the development stages as described by Arnold Gesell (2) assume particular significance: while reflecting the progress from the predominance of the thalamic level towards the predominance of the cortical, they also reflect the shift in the predominance from the ego-related basic needs, (dependence) toward the community-related higher needs (interdependence). Progress is directly related to the individual's detachment from his mother during the formative years. Since the higher needs, such as self-assertion, acceptance, love and others depend for their satisfaction to an increasing extent on the inter-action of individual and surroundings (his field of inter-actions), language and social-personal behavior will, in its totality, reflect the progress in the development of social interest.

Following Gesell's (2) developmental curves, the shifting in predominance and, with it the progress in integration becomes obvious as e.g. in the sequence of play-activities from solitary-onlooking play to group-play with the noticeable change from 'interest' to 'preferring'; or in the sequence of social relationships from 'imitative activities', to 'stronger friendships', with the change-over point at 'co-operative activities replacing physical content.' With the development of verbalization, communication and self-assertion, the shift in predominance and the progress in integration can be followed e.g. in the sequence of verbalization from 'verbalizes end of action', to 'can tell story accurately . . .' with the change-over at 'demands to do things by himself', to 'expresses desires verbally . . .'

II

Progress in that transition, however, will not go on without tensions being created, as the child advances in seeking security from being taken care of to projecting himself into his surroundings. As he experiences the response of the environment to his actions he will learn to interpret and evaluate these responses more correctly, this way finding relief from these tensions. Childhood curiosity and the keenness of observation can thus be understood as the child's way of collecting responses, which will help him in evaluating his chances of obtaining security by relying on either one of the two sets of characteristics. In this adaptive approach to life, the child manifests his creative power in his style of life. (3)

Considering the great probability of the child to make mistakes in his interpretations we can understand the often contradictory attitude of a small child who, in trying to get relief from his tensions may turn defiantly against his mother, who may deny him what he wanted, — basic need, seeking at the same time her affection, — higher need. We can understand the attitude of a younger brother, who by admiring his older brother's play-project will, at the same time get ready to destroy that project: by ad-

miring he asks for his "big" brother's recognition, — higher need, by destroying the project he expects to turn his brother's attention towards himself, — basic need. The sameness of purpose, the attainment of a feeling of security, is revealed in both, contrasting attitudes as the child, still unable to give preference to one set over the other, feels his way towards forming his particular style of life.

How far an individual will succeed in developing his "ability to experience himself as an integral part of mankind" will depend on the extent to which he succeeds in detaching himself from his mother, that is to say, on the extent of his self-realization. This is gained in a process of exchanging stimuli and responses between the growing child and his surroundings which places him in the center of a field of inter-actions.

The field of inter-action consists of the sum total of people as well as animated and inanimated objects with the child's parents functioning to a large extent as interpreters of the inter-actions. At the beginning the infant will be mostly the recipient of stimuli reaching him from his field of inter-actions as e.g. from within the need for food or, from without, mother's soothing voice. As he experiences these stimuli and responds to them, he begins to move along the never ending road of learning, of becoming familiar. Soon he will move out of this predominantly passive role into the more aggressive one of evoking responses from his surroundings by ways of probing, trying out, testing, questioning. The limit to which an individual is capable and permitted to become familiar with his surroundings will determine the extent of his feeling secure and the degree of obtained self-confidence. The fact, that there is a limit to which familiarity can be obtained is in itself a phenomenon of the field of inter-actions, making it necessary for the individual to learn to live with a certain amount of insecurity and inadequacy which can only be diminished but can never be fully compensated.

The process of maturation can be understood as growing in one's self-awareness: from the infant's identification with his mother, experiencing himself as the center of his field of inter-actions through childhood and adolescence, striving to be "like the others" by identifying oneself with the peers or a selection of grown-ups, hero-worship, as a form of inter-action, towards finding one's own identity by seeing oneself as part of a whole, which is composed of the sum total of the fields of inter-actions of its parts.

Growing in the realization that there is something larger than oneself, of which one is a part, and that progress of that, which is larger than oneself depends upon one's contribution is the ultimate goal of human maturation. For the young child that which is larger might be his family; as he grows it becomes his neighborhood, the community of friends, the team; still later he will experience it through the emotional, practical and spiritual participation in the solution of problems concerning the local-, state- and nationwide community and, finally, he will experience himself as part of mankind. That realization as expression of a well developed social interest, carries with it the recognition of self-value. Therein lays the ultimate in finding one's own identity: realizing oneself as part of the largest whole, the universe. It is the manifestation of social interest in its highest development, when it "works as normally as breathing." (4)

III

Like any other capacity social interest has an area within which to function, to grow and to develop. At the beginning its development as "the ability of man to experience himself as an integral part of mankind," will depend on the individual's success in detaching himself from his mother, that is to say on the extent of his self-realization, self-awareness.

Experiencing stimuli and responses within the field of inter-actions the child will be stimulated into drawing conclusions and forming of opinions which, in many instances will prove erroneous; accidental and non-systematical education. He is, however, assisted in that process by those interested in his growth, his parents in the first place, later on the rest of his family, teachers and others; non-systematic and systematic education. As people within that environment will in one way or the other become associated with these responses, the childhood-curiosity with its probing, trying out, testing and questioning will provide the bridge between the child and these people. Their "do or don'ts," interpretations, encouragement or discouragement will convey to the child the meanings, values and standards of the adult world. Yet, as the people in his environment are themselves part of it, of his field of inter-actions, these standards and values will, in their entirety represent the manifestations of the inter-relations of man.

Yet, belonging means more than just partaking in the activities of a group, to be carried along by the group or to enjoy the position of a junior member. It means to accept the reciprocity of the relations within the group, accepting the responsibility for the group. The child has to be helped in learning to take his share of that responsibility in accordance with his growing pattern, as a means of assisting him in the development of his social interest. Aiding him in learning the techniques of cooperating and contributing we make use of the child's inclination to learn by imitation, of his desire to be "big," and his need to experience himself as self-sufficient. We not only guide him in that process by our own examples, but also help him along in demonstrating how it is done in a kind of slow-motion movement, which facilitates his observing and comprehending: e.g. A child, as he comes crying to the adult for instance, should not be told: "stop crying," or "crying does not help." We tell him to go right on with his crying, if that makes him feel better. However, we suggest to stop crying long enough so we could understand what it was all about and then could help him; then he may resume his crying. We convey to him this way that his cooperation is to consist in making it possible for the adult to find out where he needed help. As the child has to experience that actions are proceeded by decisions and are followed by results, the consequences, disciplining has to be based upon the concept of the field of interactions, as outlined above. As he experiences that actions will be followed by consequences, good ones or bad ones, the child will gradually become aware of the real meaning of responsibility as the acknowledgement of having caused a change by setting an act.

As soon as a child's actions are understood as movements toward a goal of security it will not be enough to satisfy oneself when searching for the motivation for a given behavior pattern by merely stating that this is an "attention getting device," or that "he does it in order to get attention." Recognizing the importance of the shifting in the predominance from the

basic needs towards the higher needs, a behavior pattern, that continuously interferes with a community setting, a group life, can be understood as a stress-signal of a child, who cannot resolve the tensions which arise from that process of changing in predominance. The child will attempt to extend that situation, which offered security through protection, in other words he will try to continue an infantile relationship by seeking to be taken care of. Recognizing, thus, a behavior pattern as a symptom we can now "ignore" the symptom beyond its significance as a stress-signal, but we have to find a way to help the child in solving his conflict by strengthening his social interest.

Summary

Social interest is an innate capacity, genetically acquired by man. With the evolution of the central nervous system, culminating in the particular structure of that of the human race, man has transcended the more primitive stages of the herd-instinct, as an unstructured form of living, of banding together, and of the social-instinct, as a more structured form of living together, in his Social Interest as the capacity of becoming aware of his interdependence as a part of a whole. Co-existence and co-function, as manifestations of these instincts evolved in that process into co-operation of the individual with the whole, for the benefit of that whole and, consequently for the benefit of the individual. From the stage of early infancy in which security is obtained mainly by having the basic needs gratified, through the intermediary stage of adolescence during which security is sought by gratification of the higher needs, in the main by conforming with the "ought", the individual grows to maturity by finding security in contributing to the security of the whole, that which is larger, thus experiencing his own importance for the whole: adulthood.

The meaning of growth reveals itself as a movement from ego-relatedness towards community-relatedness. This is manifested in the development of the individual's relationships with his environment: from the stimulus-response relations of dependence in early infancy towards the inter-action of interdependence of adulthood, and the progress from the unawareness of the existing chain: decision-movement-consequence towards the acceptance of responsibility for the results brought about by setting an act. Consequently, all education has to be directed towards facilitating of that transition as a process of growing away from parental protection towards an ever expanding ability of maintaining oneself within the whole, in other words: education has to serve the growth and development of social interest.

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