

Attachment Theory as a Bridge to Virtues and Creativity.

An end of year reflection 2016

derek dey

Last year was up and down, though we were put on a useful learning curve by it all. What surprised me at the end was the fact that by years end I had finished the core of my work on psychology and the growth stages. This was a complex journey which dismantled a lot of Freud; namely the Oedipal complex, psychosexual development, his conflicted and subjective topographical self eternally at war with itself, and ego-identity. There's more but much of this deconstruction he does himself and we read of the problems in his works and letters recently released. For example he can be quoted as saying, "My father was an abuser." We also find Freud struggling with the Oedipal complex in his own family where lust for the mother and rage against the father becomes evident. Moreover he runs an identity crises through life where he wonders who his father is, Jakob, the assumed biological father, or his son Phillip? Again he says so himself. The two fathers come up in his last fictional book Moses and

Monotheism, one of whom is murdered - his resentment against his father and confusion over the two are here. Jakob and Phillip are encoded into his book as two Moses. It is his story. Otherwise there is little in the record to support his speculations.

Freud's disciples abandoned him in many cases and challenged his theories. His works contained no studies of infant development. Indeed he was short on studies throughout and often inserted biographical material to cases which clearly reflected his penchant for self-analysis. His friend Fleiss warned him over this.

However a number of other psychologists challenged Freud including Otto Rank who introduced birth trauma. This diminished Freud's Oedipal theory which came in at three years and enraged Freud. Eric Erikson, who opened up Freud's stages of growth to developmental tasks running through life, not simply as psycho-sexual stages, those ending at the genital stage in Freud's work. I can run through a number of psychologists but in particular Daniel Stern dismantled the Oedipal Complex (incest and murder) and replaced it with copious studies to field his Motherhood Complex. This is a normative model for infant-parent relationships; it is warm and empathic.

At roughly the same time John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth introduced their Attachment Theory, although studies came up earlier. That is to say, from a good mother healthy growth in the infant takes place, through healthy attachments. Self is no longer an alienated and cold ego proposal rather, self is a relational proposition. A good family triad therefore offers a system of relationships and a secure base from which a secure social and healthy psychological human being emerges. This is not a self in isolation but a fully relational model, a psychosocial model from which healthy behaviors, empathies, socially responsive and virtuous behaviors become emergent and apparent properties. From a bad mother or dysfunctional family triad, insecurity is the theme of the day and this leads to developmental problems such as ambivalence, avoidant, and disorganized behaviors; and it can get worse, moving through rebellion to rage. Such a person is therefore anti-social by degree.

In current psychological models there is therefore a definition of the good and a shift

from cognitive psychology to the centrality of emotions and emotional bonding. This is a precursor for social and ethical behaviors if we are to consider what community needs to be. Affect Regulation taken up by Alan Schore in the early 90's, might be described as attachment theory at the next level with neuroscientific evidence thrown in to support; it deals with the emotional regulation of the infant by the mother and states the infants brain and healthy behaviors develop in the emotional matrix lying between mother and infant. Margaret Mahler's stages of growth in the infant period are referred to (the practicing period) but neuroscience also confirms the biological and neurochemical processes which are triggered in the developing infant brain and in the developmental cytoskeletal, neuronal architecture. In this, behaviors are also formed. For example in the coming online of the cingulate area starting at 3 or more months and maturing at one year, is also marked by the infants explorations of his/her broader world so boundaries are established but anxiety might come up. Subsequently this difficult situation for the infant is regulated by the infants return, the mother's more mature brain, and the child learns to return to a state of homeostasis.

Likewise, failures in this area can lead to shame or toxic shame so in later counseling shame can be found "stored" in the cingulate and permit pinpointing of the unfortunate event. Hence it is not simply a developmental theory but a useful psychoanalytic tool. Peter Fonagy is rather good at this and calls the process 'Mentalisation.' This suggests dysfunctional moments are recorded in the brains substructures and become moments which are 'mentalised.' In treatment these can be accessed and borderline personality disorders can thus be treated. Mentalisation is, in this sense, using Affect Regulation Theory and working backwards from adult behaviors to their origins in infancy. Put simply, these issues are described as a failure in mirroring and regulation which might have taken place in infant-parent transactions.

Love, joy and excitation, otherwise fire catecholaminergic, dopaminergic and noradrenergic processes whereby RNA functions, in response, increases brain development which then takes place. Here, it takes two to tango. One of the primary triggers for development takes place at 8 weeks or so, when gaze transactions operate

between mother and infant. Gaze transactions come online when the visual cortex does, hence the timing is tied to specific opportunities presented by neural plasticity; it all functions on a fairly tight schedule and it is so through all the stages. Likewise it is the emotional joy in facial recognition which triggers dopaminergic responses and therefore the growth of which we speak. Thus, three basic stages of development run from amygdala, to cingulate, to cortical and frontal lobes. In these intimate processes we find that whilst the infant brain develops, the mother also changes in synchrony. There is in all of this, well defined patterns tied to the first assumption that, attachment is an innate function of human existence. There is an extensive body of research now, demonstrating a significant association between attachment organizations and children's functioning across multiple domains.

Having understood the mothers brain changes in parenting current research tells us the father's, does too. What I then propose is that these developmental phases for the parents become a marker in their life's individuation processes. Indeed CG Jung introduced marriage as a psychological relationship which also emerged in three stages. This would be a maturation of the self in relationship to other, and then in childbearing experiences.

Largely, this early attachment process, self regulation, empathic nature and identity is complete by 18 months where the brain architecture is seen in adult-like maturation but then the father becomes an important influence on completing some final core brain areas and in particular the left frontal area. Naturally as areas of the brain develop so do behaviors. From the mother emotional responses translate to right side brain development more than left. The emotional world of empathies is therefore the first principle and it shows in brain scans where the right side through the stages shows an increase in development. The left side tends to be more rational but both hemispheres are interactive. In language the right side reads symbols rapidly then the left processes this acquisition more leisurely and in a more organized fashion to reveal full meaning. In this sense the brain structure is organized, interrelated, and hierarchical by nature. The hemispheres can therefore be said to be a Yang-Yin proposal. Whilst the mother

influences the emotional side, empathies and psychosocial development, the father becomes influential from age two in the infant and inculcates healthy responses to authority and the cognitive functions necessary for approaching school age.

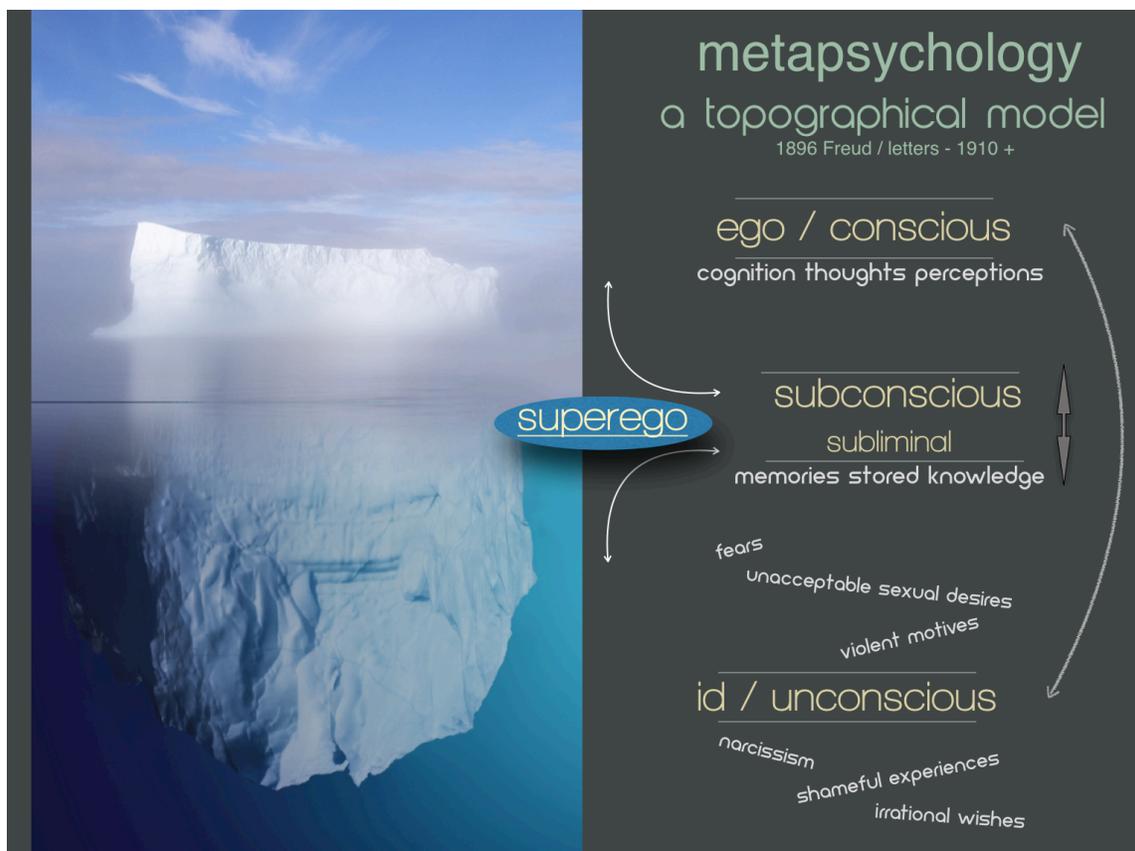
The father primarily influences the other dorsolateral prefrontal system, the dorsolateral prefrontal association cortex, this being the slowest to myelinated in the cortex. Late development like this is innervated by mitral dopaminergic neurons receiving and sending direct connections to the locus coeruleus. Poor regulation inhibits the prefrontal cortex and activates basal areas of the brain, all problems which interfere with higher order reasoning. However not to be overwhelmed by the neurobiology, Mahler, in her studies, noticed that infants shift attention from the mother to the father naturally and she reports that the father becomes a love object of a different stripe and it is to this influence a child will move from 16-18 months, in order to form a close attachment to them. There is much more to say about the nature of these relationships but by 18 months a mother-attachment-system and a father-attachment-system are both operational in the child. The family triad is therefore vital for normative growth.

This approach to developmental psychology confirms scientifically why a mother and father are necessary for optimal development in the infant. Indeed optimal development includes the functions of regulation - that is to say infant growth and responses are well regulated by first the mother then slightly later by the father. As the infant moves from being regulated to self-regulation in these stages of growth this optimal state of affairs comes to define psychological health. In this sense a persons ability to return to balance or homeostasis and the development of the hierarchical brain and attendant healthy social behaviors is also optimal saying here we have the True Self as Donald Winnicott stated in his earlier infant studies. the term authentic may be used as does the Theory of the Original Self. Moreover any hint of dualism is removed as behavior, emotion, biology, biosynthesis and neurogenesis are taken to an integral approach.

What remains to be done? Intrauterine psychology has to be tacked on as does transpersonal psychology, which next offers us more than psychosocial skills. This function could be stated as the transcendent function which is already recorded in a number of disciplines. The optimal mind as described, also meets The Good, The True, and the Beautiful; universal agencies as described in philosophic, ethical and neuroscientific language these days. Beyond that is the psychology of the creative and archetypal self which is now the task at hand. Some of this has already been broached.

Below: some useful references.

1. Freud's topographical conflict model of his subjective self. (This page)
2. Third Force or Humanist psychology. NB developmental stages go well beyond Freud's limited proposals.
3. Freud's psychosexual stages and Erikson's psychosocial development
- 4 The dynamics of Bowlby's attachment theory
- 5 The growth functions associated with neuronal development.



third force psychology

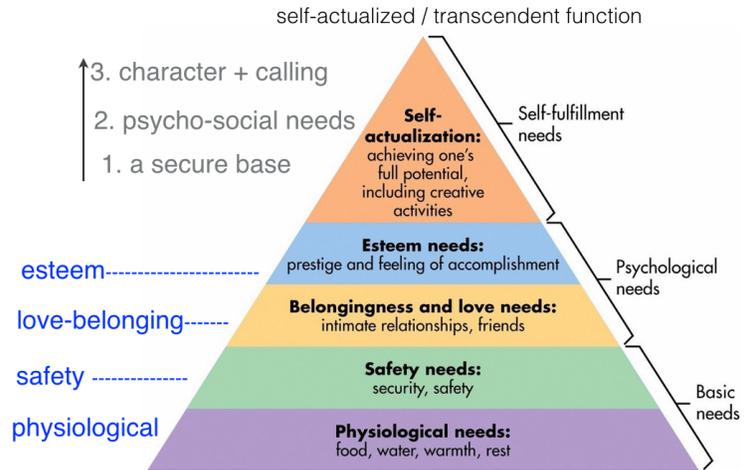
empathy / ideal self / real self

(humanist psychology)



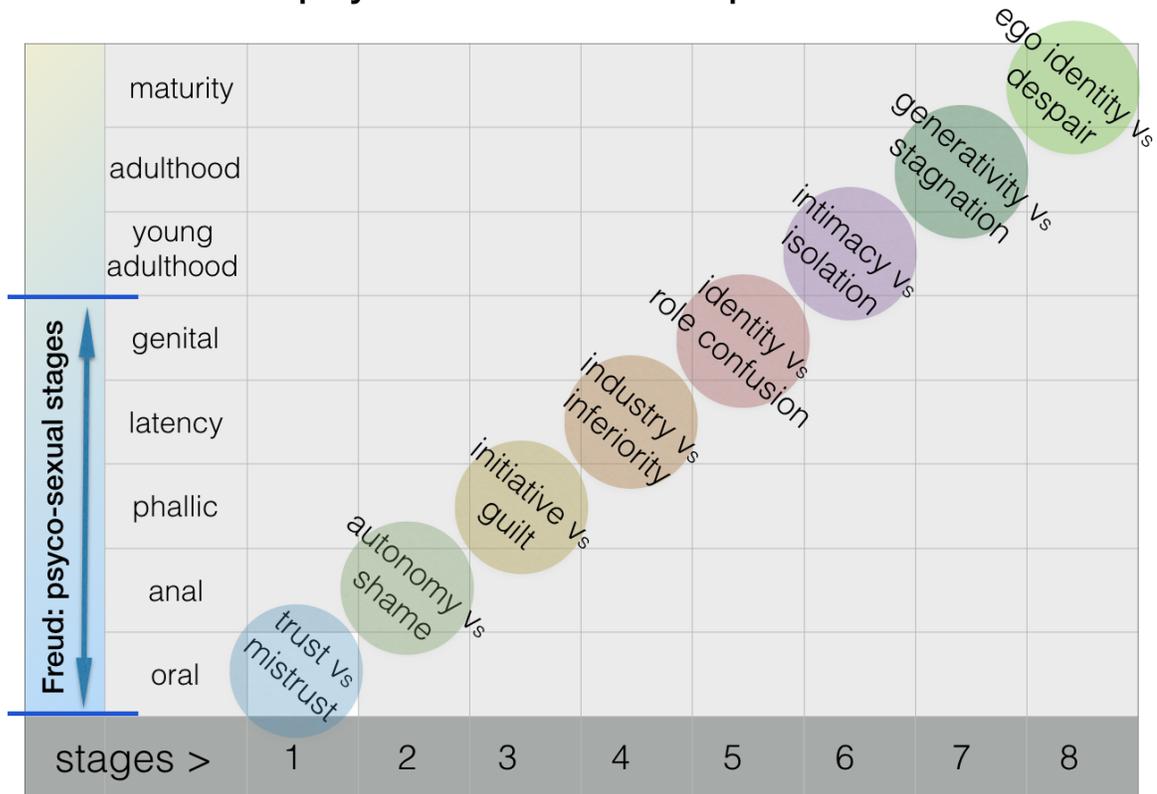
- erickson
- maslow
- karen horney
- erich fomm
- carl rogers

maslow
hierarchy of needs

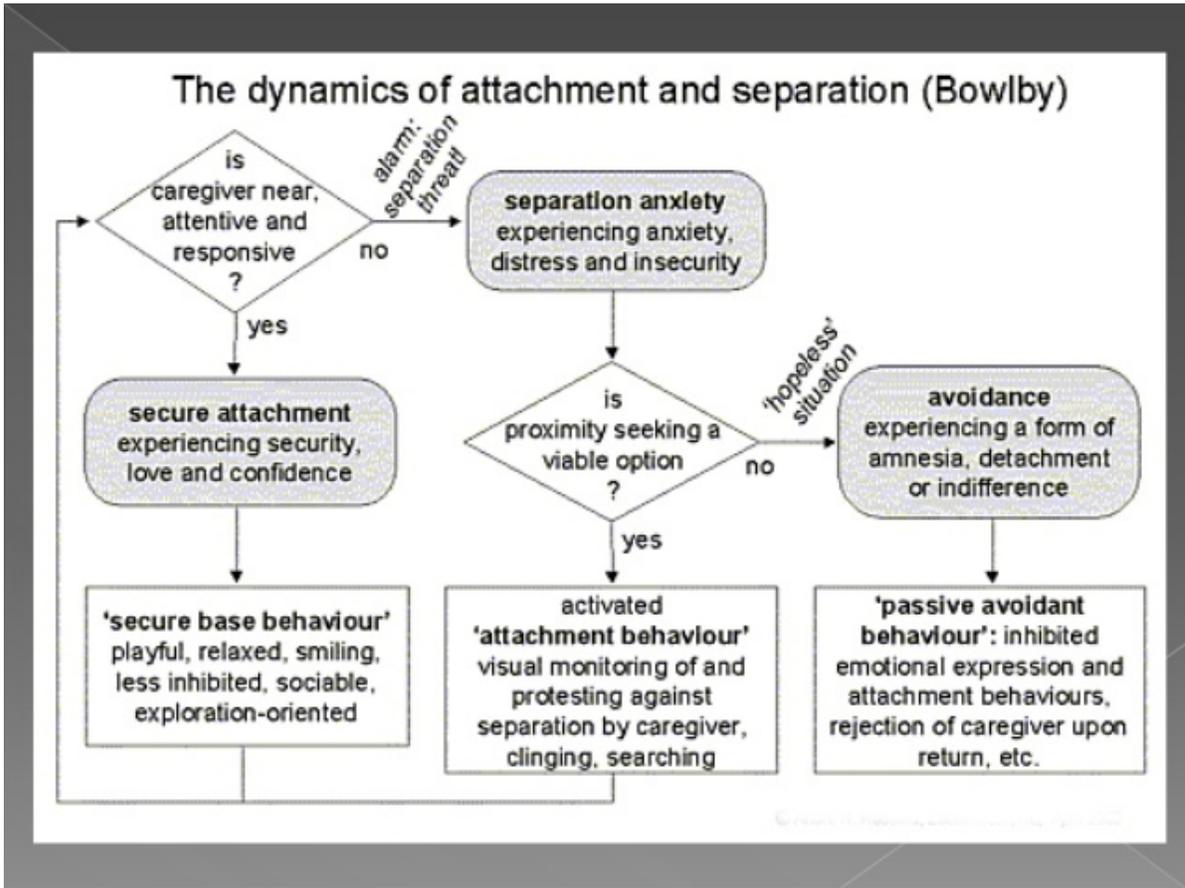


2.

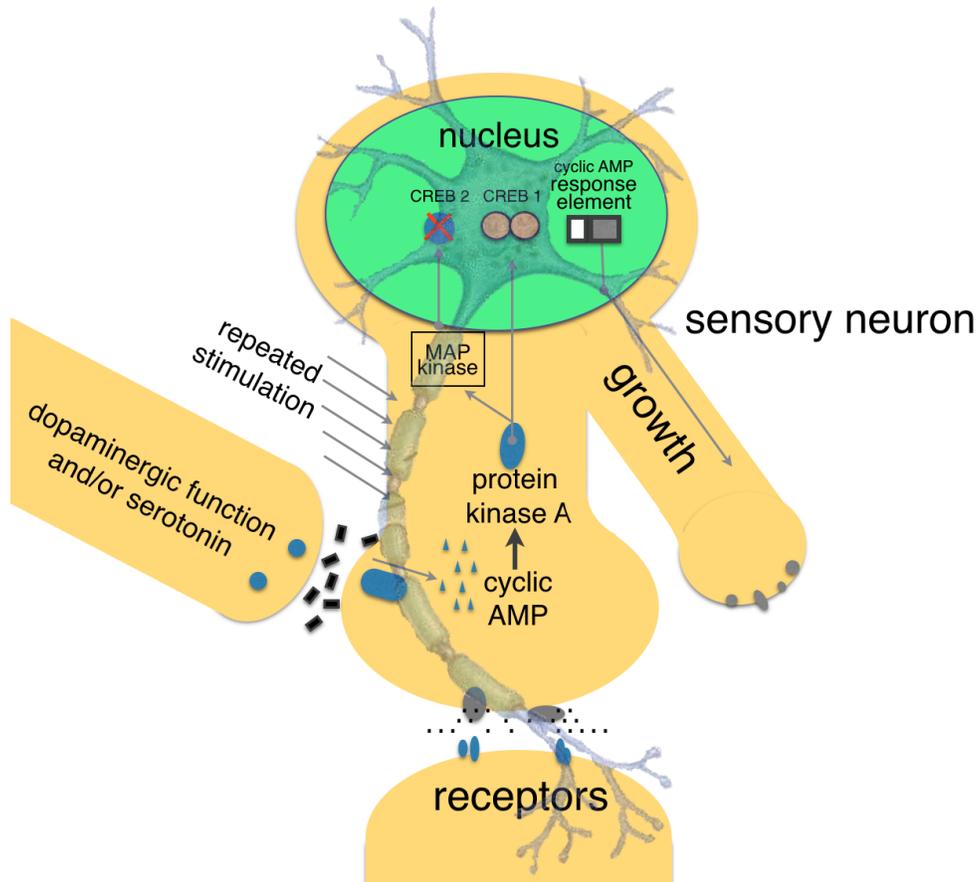
erik erikson: psychosocial development



3.



4.



5.