

Attachment Theory and Aquinas's Metaphysics of Creation

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1. The Psychoanalytical Discovery of the Importance of Attachment

Since theology and the philosophy inspired by Christian faith consider relationships between humans to be of utmost importance, it is no surprise that thinkers like Hans Urs von Balthasar, Gustav Siewerth and Ferdinand Ulrich are interested in the relationship between mother and child: The mother-child relationship stands at the beginning of the development of human freedom; it is the basic paradigm for receiving one's freedom in relationship to another human being. Balthasar describes how, in the first encounter with the mother, the child experiences the —fullness of reality,| a meeting in which everything is already implicitly there.¹ In volume three, part one of his *Theological Aesthetics*, this experience of fullness is described as the starting point for an inquiry into the fourfold difference of being which leads to cognition of the creator.² In *Wenn ihr nicht werdet wie diese Kinder*,³ a small book written shortly before his death, Balthasar further contemplates the relationship between mother and child, speaking of the —archetypal identity| (*urbildliche Identität*) between them—one that refers to an even deeper archetypal identity between creator and creature.⁴ Balthasar's archetypal identity echoes Gustav Siewerth's notion of exemplary identity (*exemplarische Einheit*)⁵ which for Siewerth is exemplified in the relationship between parent and child.⁶ Ferdinand Ulrich portrays the child as representing the ontological difference between *esse* and *ens*, receiving himself

¹ Hans Urs von Balthasar, —Bewegung zu Gott,| in *Sponsa Verbi* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1967), 13-5.

² Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, vol. III, part 1, *Im Raum der Metaphysik* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1965), 945-948.

³ Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Wenn Ihr nicht werdet wie diese Kinder* (Ostfildern bei Stuttgart: Schwabenverlag, 1988).

⁴ Balthasar, *Wenn Ihr nicht werdet wie diese Kinder*, 12.

⁵ Gustav Siewerth, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 2, *Der Thomismus als Identitätssystem*, ed. Franz-Anton Schwarz (Düsseldorf: Patmos Verlag, 1979), 220.

⁶ Gustav Siewerth, *Metaphysik der Kindheit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1957), 55, 78.

in the interpersonal interplay between the mother and father.⁷

Each of these authors situates the relationship between parent and child in the context of a philosophy of being, a meta-anthropology, inspired by Thomas Aquinas.⁸ The parent-child relationship becomes for them the basic paradigm for the reception of being in an interpersonal context. In turn, the philosophy of being, deepened by theological insights, sheds light on the nature of this relationship. For this reason, philosophy and theology would do well to become concerned with what psychology has to say about early childhood development, in the same way that psychology stands to benefit from paying attention to what philosophy and theology have to say about creation.

It is interesting to note that the mother-child relationship stands today at the centre of the anthropological sciences. How did this come about? Twentieth-century psychology stands under the spell of Sigmund Freud. Even Rudolf Allers, who wrote a fierce critique of Freud, was bound to call Freud's theory a successful error.⁹ Although few can accept Freud's reductionism, the impulses Freud gave to psychology—particularly his interest in the determinative effects of early childhood experiences¹⁰—are still very much alive. Freud's theory of the Oedipus complex has come under fierce critique.¹¹ John Bowlby has convincingly shown that Freud's interpretation of the case of —little Hans is a product of fantasy rather than a genuine attempt to understand the child. Bowlby is one of the most important pioneers of a new kind of empirical approach to the phenomenon of early childhood, an approach that emerges out of personal involvement and does not forget that psychology is about people, not objects. In the preface to the first volume of his trilogy *Attachment and Loss*, Bowlby observes that —the young child's hunger for his mother's love and presence is as intense as his hunger for food.¹² Bowlby admits that his frame of reference is psychoanalysis; he does not see any contradiction between his views and those of Freud.¹³ He writes: —A great number of central concepts of my schema are to be found plainly stated by Freud.¹⁴ Bowlby departs from Freud, however, by observing children directly in their relationship to their mother, and by including

⁷ Ferdinand Ulrich, *Der Mensch als Anfang. Zur philosophischen Anthropologie der Kindheit* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1970).

⁸ See Martin Bieler, —Meta-anthropology and Christology: On the Philosophy of Hans Urs von Balthasar, in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 20 (1993): 129–46.

⁹ The original title of Rudolf Allers' book —What's Wrong With Freud? (Fort Collins, Colo.: Roman Catholic Books, 1941) was —The Successful Error.

¹¹ Sigmund Freud, —Zwei Kinderneurosen, in *Studienausgabe*, vol. 8 (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1969), 9-123; Malcolm Macmillan, *Freud Evaluated. The Completed Arc* (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1997), 480-4; Frederick Crews, *The Memory Wars. Freud's Legacy in Dispute* (New York: The New York Review of Books, 1995); John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. II, *Separation, Anxiety and Anger* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 284-287. See also Martin Dornes, *Die frühe Kindheit. Entwicklungspsychologie der ersten Lebensjahre* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 2002), 191-197.

¹² John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. I, *Attachment* (New York: Basic Books, 1982), xxix.

¹³ Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, I, xxxi.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, xxxii.

ethology in his approach.

Bowlby's turn to ethology betrays his preoccupation with Darwin, on whom he wrote a lengthy biography.¹⁵ He shares with Darwin the basic conviction that —biological structure is unintelligible unless it is considered in terms of survival within a very particular environment.¹⁶ What human beings need in order to survive is a working model of their environment. The species' capacity for language renders such a model very complex. In addition to a working environmental model, humans also need a motivational structure that makes possible the initiation and termination of actions. For Bowlby, individual motivation is to be examined in the wider context of the species, which determines the behavioral system of the individual. When seen in the context of the species, motivational —alternatives (egotistic versus altruistic) are irrelevant: —In every case the behavior is readily intelligible in terms of gene survival.¹⁷ The fact that children develop an attachment, —a strong tie to a mother-figure, within the first twelve months of their lives has the very practical consequence of offering —protection from predators— for Bowlby, the most likely reason for human and animal attachment.¹⁸ From this point of view it is clear why Bowlby retains the notion of —instinct or *Trieb*, despite his sense that Freud's psychical energy model is an obstacle.¹⁹ The term is valuable because the child is not born a *tabula rasa*; —the building-bricks for the later development of attachment are already there, which means that the child can react accordingly from birth.²⁰ The behavioral orientation is clearly more basic in Bowlby's theory than the instinct, the latter of which is determined by this orientation.

In the second volume of his trilogy, Bowlby presents impressive evidence of the importance of attachment to a child's psychological health by showing what happens if the person the child is attached to becomes inaccessible for a period of time, or permanently.²¹ Here he sides once again with Darwin in his opposition to Freud. The largest part of the book is dedicated to the question of what humans fear most: separation. The threat of being abandoned by their parents is the most devastating of children's fears.²² According to Bowlby, the attachment issue is therefore of crucial importance to the working model humans need: —In the working model of the world that anyone builds, a key feature is his

¹⁵ See Robert Karen, *Becoming Attached. First Relationships and How They Shape Our Capacity to Love* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 426-7.

¹⁶ Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, I, 53-5.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 177, 226.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 38.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 265.

²¹ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, Vol. II, *Separation, Anxiety and Anger* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 81-2.

²² Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, II, 211. This refers not only to bodily absence but also to the psychological inaccessibility of the caregiver. See Allan N. Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self. The Neurobiology of Emotional Development* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1994), 378.

notion of who his attachment figures are, where they may be found, and how they may be expected to respond. Similarly, in the working model of the self that anyone builds a key feature is his notion of how acceptable or unacceptable he himself is in the eyes of his attachment figures.²³

The third volume of the trilogy is dedicated to the reaction to actual loss—to the sadness and depression experienced when a child is separated from his attachment figure. Bowlby describes the child slipping into —a state of unutterable misery that is not only painful to experience but also painful to witness.²⁴ He emphasizes that this kind of pain is not a short-lived one, but lingers on. In describing the phases of mourning in adults who lose a spouse, Bowlby remarks how similar these phases are —to a child’s initial protest at losing his mother and his efforts to recover her.²⁵ In concluding his research Bowlby offers the following formulation: —Intimate attachments to other human beings are the hub around which a person’s life revolves, not only when he is an infant or a toddler or a schoolchild but throughout his adolescence and his years of maturity as well, and on into old age.²⁶ Bowlby’s research demonstrates not only that attachment is absolutely crucial for humans, but that it is pre-wired from the start. Attachment is —a built-in necessity, and the baby’s efforts to obtain it, like the parents’ eagerness to give it, are biologically programmed,²⁷ as Robert Karen rightly points out.²⁷ It is puzzling to read Karen’s description of the resistance René Spitz, John Bowlby and others met with when they tried to convince a broader audience of the vital necessity of attachment for children, a necessity that common sense has always recognized.²⁸ Today, however, the findings of Bowlby and others can no longer be ignored.²⁹ In psychology, attachment theory establishes the fact that love is the center around which human existence revolves.

According to Karen, Mary Ainsworth contributes to Bowlby’s project by offering an assessment of the effects of certain parenting styles. Her work enables a closer look at the specific quality of parental attachment. In her examination of the behavior of children first separated and then reunited with their mothers, Ainsworth designates the nature of the parent-child relationship on the basis of each child’s response to the reunion experience. Her findings help her to discern three main categories of attachment: the securely attached, the avoidantly attached and the ambivalently attached.³⁰ By relating children’s behavior to the parenting of their parents, Ainsworth opens up an empirical

²³ Ibid., 203.

²⁴ John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, Vol. III, *Loss, Sadness and Depression* (New York: Basic Books, 1980), 7-9.

²⁵ Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, III, 87, 290.

²⁶ Ibid., 442.

²⁷ Karen, *Becoming Attached*, 90.

²⁸ Ibid., 67-125, 209, 248.

²⁹ On the relationship between attachment theory and psychoanalysis, see Peter Fonagy, *Attachment Theory and Psychoanalysis* (New York: Other Press, 2001).

³⁰ Karen, *Becoming Attached*, 172.

approach to the kind of attachment children need. It becomes apparent to her that not just any kind of attachment suffices for children—only a loving one is sufficient, she discovers. Indeed, the quality of attachment makes all the difference: —For the first time, something could be said with scientific accuracy about the emotional impact that parents’ everyday behavior has on their young.³¹ A key element of this behavior is the —sensitive responsiveness to a baby’s needs.³² Peter Fonagy and his colleagues have done extensive research in this field and have further explored the traits of a parenting style that best supports the child. Drawing upon neurological data, Allan Schore, Colwyn Trevarthen and others have made interesting contributions to this field, showing the ways in which relationships actually influence the development of brain structures.

Apparently, the orientation toward the other is fundamental for a child. Trevarthen speaks of the child’s —innate intersubjectivity.³³ Of primary concern is the way in which the child experiences not objects, but another human being. Margaret S. Mahler and her colleagues observe that —infants with harmonious relationships with their mothers develop ‘person permanence’ prior to ‘object permanence,’ while the reverse is true where the relationship is dis-harmonious.³⁴ Whereas Allan Schore and Peter Fonagy emphasize the affect-regulating effect that the prime caregiver has on the child, Trevarthen rightly places emphasis on the presence of an —innate ‘virtual other’³⁵ in the child, an other who makes it possible for the child to engage at a very early stage in a mutual exchange with the caregiver:

Researchers found that as early as two months, infants and mothers, while they were looking and listening to each other, were mutually regulating one another’s interests and feelings in intricate, rhythmic patterns, exchanging multimodal signals and imitations of vocal, facial and gestural expression.³⁵

³¹ Ibid., 159.

³² Ibid., 177.

³³ Colwyn Trevarthen, —Infant Intersubjectivity: Research, Theory and Clinical Applications, in *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, vol. 42 (2001), 4. See also the critique by Peter Fonagy, György Gergely, Elliot Jurist, and Mary Target, *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and the Development of the Self* (New York, Other Press, 2002), 210-22. Contra this critique, see the following papers: Martin Dornes, —Der virtuelle Andere. Aspekte vorsprachlicher Intersubjektivität, in *Forum der Psychoanalyse* 18 (2002): 303-331; Colwyn Trevarthen and V.

Reddy, —Consciousness in Infants, in *A Companion to Consciousness*, ed. M. Velman and S. Schneider (Oxford: Blackwells, 2006), 1-27; Colwyn Trevarthen, —The Concept and Foundations of Infant Intersubjectivity, in *Intersubjective Communication and Emotion in Early Ontogeny*, ed. Stein Braten, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15-46.

³⁴ Margaret S. Mahler, Fred Pine, and Anni Bergman, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant. Symbiosis and Individuation* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 111.

³⁵ Trevarthen, —Infant Intersubjectivity, 5. See also Jacqueline Nadal, Isabelle Carchon, Claude Kervella, Daniel Marcelli, and Denis Réserbat-Plantey, —Expectancies for social contingency in 2-month-olds, in *Developmental Science* 2 (1999), 164-173; Daniel Stern, *The Interpersonal World*

The emotional responsiveness of the child can be observed at an even earlier stage.³⁶ The child is by no means an emotional *tabula rasa* at birth, but is innately on the lookout for other persons. Children —experience persons as unique forms from the start.³⁷ Especially interesting is Trevarthen's observation that infants . . .

. . . have been found to have astonishing powers of discrimination for subtle features of musical sounds and melodic forms, especially as these are represented in the inflections of a mother's voice. . . . These features are evidently manifestations of a fundamentally innate process of emotional physiology, by expression of which a primary level of intra-mental communication is established between human subjects.³⁸

It is not only the facial realm that is involved in the mutual attunement between caregiver and child at this age, but also the senses of touch and hearing.³⁹ When the child is still a fetus, it is capable of reacting to sounds and to the biological rhythms of the mother; furthermore, it seems as if these impressions cannot be fully replaced by artificial clinical technology.⁴⁰ Daniel Stern rightly calls the described mutual —attunement between mother and child a —stepping stone toward language.⁴¹

The emotional responsiveness of the child makes her vulnerable to emotionally —dissonant communication: —Evidently the infant, at six to twelve weeks of age, is able to anticipate and join a sympathetic conversation, and is distressed by mistuned maternal expressions, no matter how joyful and playful they may be.⁴² At the same time, the child is by her very responsiveness a powerful being who is able to unlock the positive reaction of the caregiver—as the philosopher Siewerth points out.⁴³ The vulnerability as well as the power of the child testifies to the fact that he brings with him his own —measure in the encounter with the caregiver.⁴⁴ In this respect we can speak, with Trevarthen, of the virtual other. The child needs the real other, however, in order to realize his

of the Infant (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 21.

³⁶ Nadal, et al., —Expectancies for social contingency in 2-months-olds, ¶ 7, 11. Daniel Stern confirms that he is —now convinced that early forms of intersubjectivity exist from almost the beginning of life. ¶ Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, xxii.

³⁷ Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 63.

³⁸ Trevarthen, —Infant Intersubjectivity, ¶ 8.

³⁹ Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 105.

⁴⁰ Trevarthen, —Infant Intersubjectivity, ¶ 20. See also eds., Theodor .F. Hau and Sepp Schindler, *Prinatale und Perinatale Psychosomatik. Richtungen, Probleme, Ergebnisse* (Stuttgart: Hippokrates, 1982).

⁴¹ Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 161.

⁴² Trevarthen, —Infant Intersubjectivity, ¶ 9.

⁴³ Siewerth, *Metaphysik der Kindheit*, 23.

⁴⁴ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologie I* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1985), 35.

possibilities. Even if he needs to be contained by the caregiver in order to learn to dwell in himself, the child's self is not created, but only mediated, by the caregiver.⁴⁵ If containment succeeds, the child truly learns the meaning of what the tradition calls —*habitare secum* (—dwelling in one's self).⁴⁶ The mothering partner's holding behavior toward the child is the —midwife of individuation, of psychological birth, as Mahler puts it.⁴⁷ If this process fails, the child experiences a being enclosed within the self; the self becomes a prison, a place of exile.

Both aspects of the failure of containment can be referred to the parable of the lost son (Lk 15: 11-32).⁴⁸ The younger son represents more the aspect of exile, and the older son, more the aspect of enclosure; both sons, however, experience both aspects of estrangement, which are two sides of the same coin.⁴⁹ To paraphrase Søren Kierkegaard: Desperately wanting to be oneself (exile) and desperately not wanting to be oneself (enclosure) are both distorted relations to the self.⁵⁰ The experience of lacking containment, which cannot be simply reduced to the lack of parental care, leads to this kind of distorted relation to oneself and others—to distrust, fear, disorientation, anger and greed.⁵¹ From such distortions stem the avoidance and ambivalence in attachment observed by Ainsworth. They are also the reason for the development of the False Self, which is supposed to protect the True Self.⁵²

Peter Fonagy and his colleagues take up the concept of containment and connect it with mentalization, a process that allows the self to develop a realistic understanding of that which is inside versus outside of it by establishing a healthy difference in unity between —you and —me.⁵³ Fonagy argues that —the

⁴⁵ For the term —containment, see Wilfred R. Bion, *Learning from Experience* (London: Karnac Books, 1991). For a therapeutic application of the containment concept, see Gianna Williams, *Innenwelten und Fremdkörper. Abhängigkeitsbeziehungen bei Essstörungen und anderen seelischen Erkrankungen* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2003).

⁴⁶ Mirjam Ellinger, —‘Habitare secum-Wohnen in sich selbst.’ Kontemplation bei Papst Gregor im zweiten Buch der Dialoge, in *Erbe und Auftrag* 78 (2002): 452-71. See also Martin Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe. Ein schöpfungstheologischer Entwurf* (Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 1991), 397-403.

⁴⁷ Mahler, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, 47.

⁴⁸ Ellinger, —‘Habitare secum,’ 459.

⁴⁹ See the extensive exploration of Ferdinand Ulrich, *Gabe und Vergebung. Ein Beitrag zur biblischen Ontologie* (Freiburg i. Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 2006).

⁵⁰ Søren Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1980), 15.

⁵¹ —‘The child's experience of the environment is what counts.’ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 114. Lack of parental care always means trouble for the child. But the trouble does not necessarily mean that the parents are the cause of it, for the child is an agent in his or her own right, who can also refuse the parental care and hence the experience of it. But one may ask how probable such a refusal is in early age, for the child simply needs this kind of care. In spite of such need, the child's refusal cannot be ruled out. Human actions are not always —rational.

⁵² Donald W. Winnicott, *The Maturation Processes and the Facilitating Environment* (London: Karnac, 1984), 140-52.

⁵³ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 14.

equation of external and internal continues to dominate the subjective world of individuals with severe personality disorders.⁵⁴ This equation between external and internal is an indicator of the reification of freedom. When persons become mere objects, there is no longer any real difference between them; they are basically interchangeable, hence the confusion between inside and outside. True containment leads to the opposite experience: I am contained by the other who invests her time, energy, interest and understanding in holding me (unity), but I am contained in a way that sets me free (difference) insofar as the other does not capture me by containing me. The caregiver does not take me to be part of herself (which is only achievable through reification), but sets me free.⁵⁵ Genuine containment presupposes on the caregiver's side the sensibility to grasp the state of the child as free, intentional being,⁵⁶ in other words, it is a loving understanding of the child: empathy, which is a *cognitio per connaturalitatem* brought about by lovingly —becoming^{||} the other, as Thomas Aquinas says.⁵⁷ It is precisely in —becoming^{||} which involves a union between you and me, that the other turns out of himself toward me and takes the risk of going to the other side by enacting and —suffering^{||} the true dialogical difference between us.

Fonagy does not describe containment on the level of —becoming the other.^{||} He remains in the realm of cognition, where many features of containment may be seen reflected. He equates sensibility with the ability to mirror to the child the child's true state (categorical congruence). And yet this mirroring is at the same time —marked^{||} which means that it transmits to the child a difference in the caregiver's experience compared to that of the child.⁵⁸ The child's self is reflected back to her by the mirroring of the caregiver, but it is at the same time a transformed self—a reflection of the specific contribution of the caregiver. If the mirroring is categorically congruent but not marked, the emotions of the child have not been successfully contained by the caregiver; the child is simply inundated by them. The child consequently does not notice her own emotions as belonging to herself, but sees herself as belonging to the other rather than to herself.⁵⁹ If the mirroring is marked but not congruent, containment fails because the parent refuses and replaces the child's emotions. In such cases

⁵⁴ Ibid., 10.

⁵⁵ Ulrich describes in a very subtle way the drama of the fight between the reification and the setting free of the self in the process of becoming oneself in his interpretation of an African fairy tale. See Ferdinand Ulrich, —Das Märchen von Mrile. Eine vergebliche Archäologie der Freiheit,^{||} in Ferdinand Ulrich, *Erzählter Sinn. Ontologie der Selbstwerdung in der Bildwelt des Märchens, Schriften*, III (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 2002), 153-282.

⁵⁶ —The caregiver's perception of the child as an intentional being lies at the root of sensitive caregiving.^{||} Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 54.

⁵⁷ Thomas Aquinas, *De malo*, 6, 1, ad 13.

⁵⁸ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 193-195. See also p. 9: —For affect-mirroring to serve as the basis of the development of a representational framework, the caregiver must somehow indicate that her display is not for real: it is not an indication of how the parent herself feels. We describe this characteristic of the parent's mirroring behaviour as its —markedness.^{||}

⁵⁹ Ibid., 193-4.

the child is confronted with a distorted picture of herself, one that will be a hindrance in the development of an authentic self.⁶⁰

Containment is clearly a very far-reaching phenomenon. Containment implies the willingness to bear and even to suffer the difficult emotions of the child, but at the same time it requires not breaking down under these emotions. What the child cannot bear, the caregiver must bear. The caregiver should neither ignore nor downplay the difficulty that is presented by the child, but rather show the strength that only love can show. This means that, in the end, the genuine loving bearing of the child's difficult emotions is identical to the overcoming of their threat.

These reflections on containment are reminiscent of what the New Testament describes as the eternal Son —being made sin— without him knowing of sin (2 Cor. 5: 21). Christ is the only one who can contain all of us to the fullest extent. What Fonagy describes as congruence without marking is the result of the caregiver's drowning in the difficulty presented by the child: participation becomes identification. On the other hand, marking without congruence indicates a refusal to participate or be —made sin. Both possibilities miss the true meaning of containment, and children have a keen sense for it. The structure of containment resembles in an astonishing way what is called in theology —substitution, a term that is first of all used to describe the cross of Christ as substitutionary atonement. But substitution is also an anthropological phenomenon that is present in every kind of interpersonal relationship.⁶¹ Ferdinand Ulrich demonstrates how the logic of substitution/identification and simultaneous differentiation with the other is inherent in both knowledge and love.⁶² On Ulrich's view, containment differentiates and unites by acceptance. In recognizing and accepting the child, the caregiver —enacts the child by receiving from the child and giving to the child. Here it is particularly crucial to see with Kierkegaard that love presupposes what it is ready to give—as deeply buried as that may be.⁶³ The love the caregiver is ready to awaken in the child is already there, otherwise it could not be awakened. This shows that substitution does not empty the other in a problematic way, but renders a service to the other's freedom, what Winnicott rightly calls —devotion.⁶⁴

Containment in this sense offers the child an experience that might be called —densification, for it is in light of the acceptance of the caregiver that the child gains access to her own density as being (*ens*).⁶⁵ She is not only an

⁶⁰ Ibid., 194-8.

⁶¹ Martin Bieler, *Befreiung der Freiheit. Zur Theologie der stellvertretenden Sühne* (Freiburg - Basel - Wien: Herder, 1996), 253-259.

⁶² Ferdinand Ulrich, *Leben in der Einbeit von Leben und Tod* (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1999), 157-176.

⁶³ Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, eds. and trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998), 216-217. See also Bieler, *Befreiung der Freiheit*, 398-407.

⁶⁴ Winnicott, *The Maturation Process*, 148.

⁶⁵ See also Aquinas's description of love as —virtus unitiva et concretiva (Thomas Aquinas,

exchangeable object (*res*), but a unique being containing an inexhaustible abyss of loving freedom, which is an incomparably stronger center of gravitation than a mere—object.⁶⁶ It is this experience of densification that allows the child to see things as they really are, and to differentiate between action and phantasy, substance and accident.

Both containment and the caregiver's marked mirroring of the child's emotion allow the child to differentiate between—mere thought or feeling and outer reality. This differentiation makes possible the child's playful exploration of the relationship between external reality and his own thoughts and wishes. In this way the child gradually learns to regulate his own feelings with respect to others by building inner representations of himself and others.⁶⁷ This kind of symbolization is precisely what Fonagy means by mentalization. The process of containment and mentalization is particularly important for negative feelings that the child experiences almost inevitably at the age of about fourteen months, when the newly gained bodily capacities bring the child into conflict with his caregiver. Allan Shore impressively describes the shame reaction in the child brought about by the experience of resistance through the mirroring person.⁶⁸ Unregulated shame can literally have toxic effects for the child. The child depends, therefore, on the caregiver's containment of negative feelings connected with shame in order to be able to integrate these experiences.⁶⁹ Without this integration there exists the danger of a—humiliation-induced narcissistic rage, which Schore considers to be the biggest threat to the further development of our species.⁷⁰ It is especially when play involves dangerous feelings that the child relies on the presence of a containing caregiver to provide security and protection.

When containment fails and the caregiver's mirroring distorts or else excludes the child's emotions, the child cannot find his own self in the other, but is forced to find the estranging other instead. As Fonagy says:

We follow Winnicott's (1967) suggestion that the infant, failing to find himself in the mother's mind, finds the mother instead. The infant is forced to internalize the representation of the object's state of mind as a core part of himself. But in such cases the internalized other remains alien and unconnected to the structures of the constitutional self.⁷¹

This internalized other in the child follows the laws of reification, for it is not a

Expositio super Dionysium De Divinis Nominibus, 4, 12).

⁶⁶ Augustine speaks of love as *pondus* in *Confessiones*, book 13, chapter 9.

⁶⁷ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 265-9. See also Donald W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1971).

⁶⁸ Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 200-212.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, 240-8.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 263-9.

⁷¹ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 11.

fostering freedom but a deeply ambivalent threat to the self—a threat that is at once both too immediately connected to, and at the same time too remote from, the child. This reified internalized other corresponds to the phenomenon of the disturbed child or youth who is unable to mentalize, and so depends—positively or negatively—on the immediate bodily presence of the other. The healthy child, on the other hand, can rely on her inner representation of the other that she has achieved through mentalization. The disturbed person, furthermore, may have to self-destructively fight the threatening other directly in her own body insofar as she lacks the ability to separate herself by way of mentalization from the threatening internalized other.

In ontological language we can say that where there has been a lack of mentalization, the true presence of the giver in his gift is missed, as well as the genuine separation of the gift from the giver toward the receiving child. On the one hand, the giver does not really give himself in his gift for the child. In what he says and does he remains external to what the child receives, and hence the giver is too far away from the child—not genuinely present to him. On the other hand, the giver does not allow himself to permeate his gift. He extends himself into the realm of the child in a manner of hostile occupation that threatens her freedom. He refrains from enacting the separation of the gift that is integral to respecting the freedom of the receiver. The giver is consequently too close to the child to the extent of reifying himself inside the child, who in self-defense has to throw out this hostile —thing. In contrast to this aberration of false giving, mentalization testifies that the giver has reached the child in his inner realm in a manner that respects the difference between giver and receiver. The giver is thus representable inside of the child as the personal other in the way of the child. The mental representation must be one that can precisely express this true unity in difference between giver and receiver. Such a representation does not preclude bodily communication; on the contrary, bodily communication must be embedded in the reality of what Thomas Aquinas called the *verbum mentis*.⁷²

The representatives of contemporary attachment theory make an impressive case for the necessity of human attachment, but the question remains as to attachment's deepest meaning. Most psychoanalysts refer to evolution and the necessity of survival as attachment's ultimate horizon. Fonagy, for instance, writes: —We shall argue that attachment is not an end in itself; rather, it exists in order to produce a representational system that has evolved, we may presume, to aid human survival.⁷³ Does this reading do justice to the nature of human

⁷² See Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 479-83. On the other hand it is important to value the —bottom-up approach starting from bodily sensations and emotions in therapy: David J. Wallin, *Attachment in Psychotherapy* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2007), 80-83.

⁷³ Fonagy, *Affect Regulation*, 2. Recently the emphasis has shifted from survival to procreation in order to explain attachment in a Neo-Darwinist framework: Jeffrey A. Simpson and Jay Belsky, —Attachment Theory within a Modern Evolutionary Framework, in: Jude Cassidy and Phillip R. Shaver, *Handbook of Attachment. Theory, Research and Clinical Application* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2008), 131-157. But the selfish genes idea which is supposed to deliver the solution

freedom and attachment? If we take seriously what happens in attachment, we cannot be satisfied with this kind of naturalistic reduction. Is love merely the best way to survive? If yes, the phenomenon of love is an illusion. But what could be more convincing than the reality of another loving human being who gives us access to ourselves and to reality in general—as attachment theory has convincingly shown? The reductive location of the *telos* of human beings in mere animal functions leads to an understanding of human beings which just about resembles the ideology the Nazis applied in their concentration camps. We don't need more of that.

Survival is, of course, a primordial good, but it is only good insofar as it enables us to strive for that which is more than mere survival: that which is absolutely good, that which brings you and me together in its goodness by granting us the ability to accept ourselves and others. The poor kind of philosophy that attachment theory ends in threatens to destroy the positive findings that attachment theory has contributed to modern psychology. For if mere survival is the deepest secret of attachment, a new and more subtle danger of reification lurks in the background, one that contradicts the immanent laws of attachment itself. Attachment is simply a reality in its own right that cannot be explained by anything less than attachment. If survival is the final horizon of attachment, we must ask *whose* survival is at stake in evolution. Is it the species that matters most? If so, then the individual is sacrificed on the altar of the species and becomes a mere instrument. If it is primarily the isolated individual who is supposed to survive, then we may object that the *bonum commune* is no less important than the individual good. (Otherwise all the others would become instruments of my survival.) In both cases the demands of genuine attachment in its specific quality are missed, and humans are reduced to mere instruments and objects. Could it be, rather, that what is really at stake is the simultaneous survival of the species and the individual—the human species in the interconnectedness of its representatives, a species in which every individual counts precisely in terms of her connections with all others? This would suggest that there is attachment for the purpose of the survival and development of overall-attachment, a purpose that in the end transcends the perspective of mere survival or development.

It seems that this is precisely the *telos* of evolution, a point that calls to mind Martin Buber's *Zwischen* (in-between), which is supposed to constitute the I and Thou relation.⁷⁴ But Michael Theunissen has shown that neither Buber's solution—giving priority to the relation—nor Husserl's alternative—prioritizing the subject—are sufficient for an adequate understanding of the constitution of

(ibid. 133-134) is very bad philosophy, not serious science: Joachim Bauer, *Prinzip Menschlichkeit. Warum wir von Natur aus kooperieren* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 2007), 133-174 and Conor Cunningham, *Darwin's Pious Idea. Why the Ultra-Darwinists and Creatio-nists Both Get It Wrong* (Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 2010), 25-78.

⁷⁴ Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip* (Heidelberg: Lambert Schneider, 1984), 7-136.

the related subject.⁷⁵ His hint at a theology of creation and the Christian notion of the Kingdom of God indicates that we have to come up with something that constitutes you and I—as well as what is in between us—in order to grasp the full reality and meaning of persons in relations. This leads us to the problem of the constitution of being in general. But before I tackle this problem I will look at the search for the self in attachment theory, a search that brings us closer to the philosophical and theological issues connected to the phenomenon of attachment.

2. In Search of the Self in Attachment

In creation, which is the giving of *esse*, being comes from below, from the principles of essence, from *forma* and *materia*, as Thomas Aquinas showed.⁷⁶ It makes sense, therefore, to speak of the physiology of freedom and to look at the neurological data relevant to attachment in order to clarify the nature of the attached self. Probably the broadest presentation of the neurobiology of attachment that we have today is Allan N. Schore's voluminous book *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*. Schore shows in detail why we must speak of an affect regulation of the child by the mother: how the mother or the primary caregiving person activates in the child certain emotions described extensively by Schore. He states at the beginning of his book: —The child's first relationship, the one with his mother, acts as a template, as it permanently molds the individual's capacities to enter into all later emotional relationships.⁷⁷ The self-regulation of the child is a structured process evolving in different periods, which are —critical or sensitive.⁷⁸ This is a first principle Schore formulates with respect to the growth of the developing brain. The second principle states: —The infant brain develops in stages and becomes hierarchically organized.⁷⁹ A third principle is the activation of genetic systems, which become influenced by the postnatal environment.⁸⁰ Finally, Schore suggests a fourth principle: —The social environment changes over the stages of infancy and induces the reorganization of brain structures.⁸¹

In the face of evidence of different stages of brain development, Schore sees confirmed the Freudian position of different developmental phases (oral, anal, phallic) although he criticizes Freud's lack of clarity on the subject.⁸²

⁷⁵ Michael Theunissen, *Der Andere. Studien zur Sozialontologie der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1981).

⁷⁶ See Ulrich, *Homo Abyssus* (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 1998), 153.

⁷⁷ Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 3.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 11.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 227-9, 538. See also Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 256. For a discussion of Freud's view in the context of infant research see Joseph D. Lichtenberg, *Psychoanalysis and Infant Research* (Hillsdale, N.J.: The

Schore himself relies heavily on Mahler's concept of stages, a concept he sees confirmed by neurobiology as well.⁸³ Indeed, the concept of developmental stages in infancy, with their specific consequences for the cultivation of autonomy, should not be too easily dismissed. But the question is legitimate: What kind of criteria must be applied in order to describe these stages? To project clinical findings back into childhood is highly problematic, according to Daniel Stern.⁸⁴ He particularly criticizes Mahler for setting up a symbiotic stage in which infants cannot differentiate between self and others: —They never experience a period of total self/other indifference. There is no confusion between self and other in the beginning or at any point during infancy.⁸⁵ Stern himself emphasizes that the child is a self from the beginning and develops different senses of self that remain constant, and eventually fuse together step by step. The child is apparently person-oriented from the beginning, an observation that makes it problematic to not ascribe selfhood to children from birth. It is clear, however, that the more abilities children develop, the more of a self they develop. The light shines, so to speak, from the beginning, but it grows stronger and stronger as the child grows. As Kierkegaard has shown, by being a self we are becoming a self—even beyond childhood. And as the writings of Stern and Trevarthen in particular show, the child is from the beginning a —selfl who is essentially related to others. This does not diminish the necessity of developing all of the abilities needed for mentalization in a specific process—a necessity that Fonagy rightly points out repeatedly.

Although I agree with Stern's main thesis concerning the primacy of selfhood in the child, I do not think we should underemphasize the developmental stages corresponding to clinical issues—not because all clinical issues are necessarily based in childhood, but because the stages leading to autonomy constitute the necessary interrelated elements of freedom that we rely upon as adults. These elements are the stuff human relations are made of, whether happy or unhappy. It is also apparent that infants are particularly vulnerable when they are first developing their capacities for relations.

An interesting attempt to describe the logic of childhood development with respect to developmental elements has been made by Erich Neumann, who looked at child development from a Jungian perspective. Neumann endeavours to show that the child has to —migratell into the individual singularity of his body during the early development of the self, a process in light of which it is easy to understand why bodily experiences are so decisive in early childhood. Certain zones of the body become in this process points of concentration for certain experiences. For example, —orall is in this context the realistic expression of a certain kind of exchange and relatedness with the world in general characterized

Analytic Press, 1983), 3-27, 151-182.

⁸³ Lichtenberg, *Psychoanalysis and Infant Research*, 23.

⁸⁴ Stern, *The Interpersonal World of the Infant*, 10, 18-25.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 10.

by nurture, reception, adaptation and personal expression.⁸⁶ Neumann is in agreement with Gustav Siewerth's dictum: —The body is itself the primordial action of the human being, who acting in it entered the world.⁸⁷ Despite the anti-Cartesian mood of much contemporary philosophy and theology, we tend to underplay the importance of the body for human psychological and spiritual development.

Schore shows in detail what the aforementioned elements of freedom are. First of all, he accepts Mahler's thesis of a symbiotic stage in infancy.⁸⁸ Nonetheless, he endorses Stern's critique by pointing out that there is no evidence of the child's limits of awareness of the other.⁸⁹ Schore characterizes this phase as determined by —moments of face-to-face affective synchrony,⁹⁰ which —generate high levels of positive arousal.⁹¹ The mounted emotional state is crucial for the development of autonomous affect regulation. Schore makes the important remark that affect regulation —is not just the reduction of affect intensity, the dampening of negative emotion. It also involves an amplification, an intensification of positive emotion, a condition necessary for more complex self organization.⁹² In order to understand the nature of this amplification and intensification, it is helpful to consider two major concepts of neurology: energy and information. Schore links emotion directly with a heightened state of energy. —The caregiver is thus modulating changes in the child's energetic state, since arousal levels are known to be associated with changes in metabolic energy. Indeed, energy shifts are the most basic and fundamental features of emotion.⁹²

⁸⁶ Erich Neumann, *Das Kind. Struktur und Dynamik der werdenden Persönlichkeit* (Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch, 1999), 28-32. See also Erich Neumann, *Ursprungsgeschichte des Bewusstseins* (München: Kindler, 1974). For another attempt to clarify the meaning of the developmental stages according to Freud, one which emphasizes the importance of the body, see Norman O. Brown, *Life Against Death. The Psychoanalytical Meaning of History* (New York: Vintage Books, 1959), 110-34. See also the discussion of Brown's position in Martin Bieler, —The Theological Importance of a Philosophy of Being,⁹⁰ in *Reason and the Reasons of Faith*, ed. Paul J. Griffith and Reinhard Hütter (New York: T & T Clark International, 2005), 320-3.

⁸⁷ —Der Leib ist selbst die Urhandlung des Menschenwesens, das in ihm wirkend in die Welt eingegangen ist.⁹¹ Gustav Siewerth, *Der Mensch und sein Leib* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1953), 34.

⁸⁸ Allan Schore, *Affect Dysregulation and Disorders of the Self* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 11. —The concept of symbiosis is now solidly grounded in developmental research, and it should be returned into psychoanalysis.⁹² See also Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*, 14. According to Mahler the symbiotic phase starting at the second month follows an autistic phase: Mahler, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, 41-43. But with respect to an autistic phase we should have Stern's critique in mind.

⁸⁹ Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*, 149.

⁹⁰ Ibid., 149. According to Schore, moral development in this early phase of life —is much more of a visual than a verbal process⁹¹ Ibid., 354.

⁹¹ Ibid., 78. This arousal is connected with resonance, attunement and synchronization: Ibid., 39,

⁹² Ibid., 96. —Indeed, these interactive refueling reunion transactions involving patterned energy transmissions between caregiver and infant may represent the fundamental mechanism of the attachment dynamic⁹² Ibid., 12.

But also for states of consciousness, the rise of energy is indispensable, as can be concluded from the scale of attention devised by Antonio Damasio.⁹³ Energy and information cannot be separated.⁹⁴

Here again we are reminded of Freud: —Freud was correct in emphasizing the importance of internal bioenergetic events to psychological functioning. . . .⁹⁵ Schore knows, however, in contrast to Freud, that the unconscious is more than —a repository of archaic untamed passions and destructive wishes.⁹⁶ The positive experience of —increased energy and alertness⁹⁷ are the basis of the appraisal process in the symbiotic state. This is so fundamental that Daniel J. Siegel sees the self as created by the regulation of the flow of information and energy in the brain.⁹⁸ The symbiotic stage is the experience of an extremely intense flow of energy and of profound appraisal. Erich Neumann describes the symbiotic stage as a quasi-mystical state, a not unpromising lead, because mystical states are an experience of deep union without a lack of difference.⁹⁹ It is this first experience of an intense flow of energy and of profound appraisal that forms the foundation for the development of emotions. From a Thomist point of view one can speak of love (*amor*), which is nothing other than the body-based power to appraise, as the basis of all emotions.¹⁰⁰ The *vis concupiscibilis* and the *vis irascibilis*, which make up this power, are structurally in coordination with the *voluntas*: —The will itself may be said to irascible, as far as it wills to repel evil, not from any sudden movement of a passion, but from a judgment of the reason. And in the same way the will may

be said to be concupiscible on account of its desire for good.¹⁰¹ The question is then how *amor* and *voluntas* can be unified in the act of *caritas*.¹⁰²

Schore highlights the importance of these early experiences of high arousal as the first communication (before the development of conscious

⁹³ Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 89.

⁹⁴ Schore, *Affect Regulation*, 536.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 536.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, xvi.

⁹⁷ Daniel J. Siegel, *The Developing Mind. How Relationships and the Brain Interact to Shape Who We Are* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1999), 126; *The Mindful Brain. Reflection and Attunement in the Cultivation of Well-Being* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2007), 5.

⁹⁸ Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 159.

⁹⁹ Neumann, *Das Kind*, 53. For a phenomenology of mystical states of consciousness see Carl Albrecht, *Psychologie des mystischen Bewusstseins* (Mainz: Grünewald, 1976).

¹⁰⁰ See Alexander Brungs, *Metaphysik der Sinnlichkeit. Das System der Passiones Animae bei Thomas von Aquin* (Halle / Saale: Hallescher Verlag, 2002).

¹⁰¹ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa theologiae*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benzinger Borthers, 1920), 1, q. 82, a. 5, ad 2. *Ipsa voluntas potest dici irascibilis, prout vult impugnare malum . . . et eodem modo potest dici concupiscibilis propter desiderium boni*. See Stephanus Pfürtner, *Triebleben und sittliche Vollendung. Eine moralpsychologische Untersuchung nach Thomas von Aquin* (Freiburg / CH: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1958), 307.

¹⁰² See Pfürtner, *Triebleben und sittliche Vollendung*; Jörn Müller, —Willensschwäche als Problem der mittelalterlichen Theologie. Überlegungen zu Thomas von Aquin,— in *Recherches de théologie et philosophie médiévales* (2005): 1-28.

memory) from the right side of the child's brain to the right side of the mother's brain. The emotional memory, however, is already working. The impressions of earliest experiences, therefore, may well be initially registered as emotional memories.¹⁰³ This explains how the unconscious of the mother can be in direct communication with the unconscious of the child.¹⁰⁴ Schore goes as far as equating the right brain with Freud's unconscious.¹⁰⁵ But emotion exists on both sides of the brain, and each hemisphere has its own conscious and non-conscious process.¹⁰⁶ It is the brain as a whole that carries the mind.¹⁰⁷ And it is always the human being as a whole who acts, even if only a specific part of her being is particularly involved.¹⁰⁸

It is not possible, therefore, to locate specific elements of the mind in isolated areas of the brain. —Rather different parts of the different hemispheres are recruited into the complex functional systems that mediate all our mental faculties. . . .¹⁰⁹ The faculties of the soul are working in between different areas of the brain that contribute to the functioning of the mind. The mind is like a hologram —constituted by different —sources of light. But in spite of the diversity of its —sources, it influences these —sources as one unified force that cannot be reduced to any material substratum.¹¹⁰ It is one of the most intriguing findings of current research on the neurology of attachment theory that attachments actually do change the brain.¹¹¹

But again, consciousness is not independent of brain structures. When the brain is damaged, certain abilities of memory or expectation can no longer be activated, and this entails the atrophy of certain aspects of consciousness. The difficulty arising from the fact that the mind changes the brain, and, at the same time, depends upon the brain leads to the question of the ontological relationship

¹⁰³ An impressive example of different memory systems is given by Damasio, *The Feeling of What Happens*, 42-50. Damasio tells the story of a man with brain damage who could not recall the hostile behavior of others consciously, but could recall it emotionally.

¹⁰⁴ Louis Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy. Building and Rebuilding the Human Brain* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), 192.

¹⁰⁵ Schore, *Affect Regulation and the Repair of the Self*, 250-77.

¹⁰⁶ Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 181-5.

¹⁰⁷ —The whole brain creates the mind. Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 185. I prefer to speak of —carrying rather than —creating.

¹⁰⁸ —Operari siquidem non proprie attribuitur potentiae, sed rei subsistenti quae per potentiam operator. Thomas Aquinas, *Quaestiones quodlibetales*, 9, 4, 2 c.

¹⁰⁹ Mark Solms, Oliver Turnbull, *The Brain and The Inner World. An Introduction to the Neuroscience of Subjective Experience* (New York: Other Press, 2002), 244.

¹¹⁰ On the —irreducibility of consciousness see David J. Chalmers, *The Conscious Mind. In Search of a Fundamental Theory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 93-209; David Braine, *The Human Person. Animal and Spirit* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1992), 345-545. See also the interesting observations made by Jerome Kagan, *An Argument for Mind* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 210-257 and Alfred R. Mele, *Effective Intentions. The Power of Conscious Will* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 159-161.

¹¹¹ See Schore, *Affect Regulation*; Siegel, *The Developing Mind*; Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*; Jeffrey M. Schwartz and Sharon Begley, *The Mind & The Brain. Neuroplasticity and the Power of Mental Force* (New York: Regan Books, 2002), 362-3.

between mind and brain. Here it is still the position of Thomas Aquinas that offers us the most convincing answer: Body and soul have the same being; only from this being, in its oneness, can we understand human nature.¹¹² David Braine takes up this view: —Rather the action is a whole which proceeds, not from the brain or from the soul, but from the person, human being or animal.¹¹³ The oneness of being includes a hierarchical structure of parts in a being that renders a unified mode of action possible. No part can replace the whole; it is therefore not possible to reduce the whole to its parts, as the materialist endeavors to do:

The idea that the method of understanding things is always by picking out their parts and considering the inter-relation of their parts— explaining away the behavior of the whole in terms of the behavior of the parts—represents the arrival in the seventeenth century of materialism in its first *prima facie* successful form.¹¹⁴

It is of particular importance for psychology not to regard —sub-systems|| as —autonomous mechanisms|| that work independently of the whole.¹¹⁵ The individual human being remains accordingly the decisive authority for judging psychological issues. Only the individual in her wholeness can judge matters of the human psyche in its holistic nature. Goethe’s insight that the human being, using his —sane senses,|| is the most perfect physical apparatus can also be applied to psychological matters.¹¹⁶ The attempt to replace personal judgment in psychology by seemingly more objective patterns is a gross error.

In his further exploration of the developmental stages, Schore follows Mahler’s model, which describes the so-called —practicing subphasel| from ten to fifteen months, in which the child learns to move away from the mother and is joyfully aroused by the discovery of new abilities and possibilities.¹¹⁷ This practicing phase is followed by a —rapprochement subphasel| from fifteen to twenty-two months, in which separation experiences cause fear and shame (here

¹¹² Tobias Kläden, *Mit Leib und Seele . . . Die mind-brain-Debatte in der Philosophie des Geistes und die anima-forma-corporis-Lehre des Thomas von Aquin* (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2005).

¹¹³ Braine, *The Human Person*, 145.

¹¹⁴ Braine, *The Human Person*, 259.

¹¹⁵ Braine, *The Human Person*, 308.

¹¹⁶ Johann Wolfgang Goethe, *Sämtliche Werke*, vol. 8, *Wilhelm Meisters Wanderjahre / Wilhelm Meisters theatralische Sendung* (Zürich: Artemis, 1950), 507. For a concrete application of this insight in the realm of psychology and beyond see Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge. Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974); Erwin Straus, *Vom Sinn der Sinne* (Heidelberg: Springer Verlag, 1956); Viktor von Weizsäcker, *Der Gestaltkreis* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1973); Hubertus Tellenbach, *Psychiatrie als geistige Medizin* (München: Verlag für angewandte Wissenschaften, 1987); Josef Pieper, *Werke in acht Bänden. Ergänzungsband 2: Autobiographische Schriften* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2003), 156.

¹¹⁷ Schore notes with Ainsworth that —attachment forms at about the same time that loco-motor exploration appears. | Shore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*, 97.

the father becomes more important for the child¹¹⁸), and a —consolidation subphase¹¹⁹ from twenty-two to thirty-six months leading to more autonomy and further exploration of the outside world by the child. Mahler's model of separation and individuation, a valid attempt to describe the stages of early childhood development, can be integrated with Freud's: Orality is a specific way to let the world inside oneself as a nourishing reality.¹¹⁹ This is particularly relevant in the symbiotic stage and in the practicing subphase. Anality deals with the ability and the necessity to control my bodily frontier, the ability not only to take in but also to let out, to —express¹²⁰ myself in a responsible way. This is relevant in the rapprochement subphase, in which the child has to learn how to cope with negative feelings such as shame and rage, a tremendous step in the self-regulation of affects.¹²⁰ The phallic phase¹²¹ finally deals with the position of the child in a wider sociological context that requires role-taking and hence a further step of —defining¹²² oneself. This latter process takes place in the consolidation subphase. The single criterion that must be applied in order to differentiate the phases of early childhood development is the ability to deal with one's own boundaries in the act of relating toward oneself and others. It is a criterion that has been successfully used by Helmuth Plessner to differentiate between the different forms of organic life (plant, animal, human).¹²³ It also corresponds to Fonagy's description of the development of mentalization and Kierkegaard's description of the self.¹²⁴

The drama of development and biological growth in interaction with others leads to changes and challenges that can be experienced as decisive turning points in specific situations and encounters with others. The child is continually confronted with the necessity of new decisions in order to cope with changes both inside and outside herself. This necessity makes it understandable that our identity memory is made up of narrative units according to which we

¹¹⁸ Shore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*, 233.

¹¹⁹ For the following description of oral, anal and phallic, see the excellent survey of Erik H. Erikson, *Identity Youth and Crisis* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1968), 96-122. As Shore has shown, the alternatives listed by Erikson (basic trust versus mistrust, autonomy versus shame, initiative versus guilt) actually are basic issues the child has to deal with, although the schedule presented by Erikson has to be modified.

¹²⁰ See Shore, *Affect Regulation and the Origin of the Self*, 228, 345. The experience of negativity and of being comforted leads at the age of eighteen months to the —pro-social altruistic behavior¹²⁰ of the child —in the form of approaching persons in distress and initiating positive, other-oriented, affective and instrumental activities in order to comfort the other. . . . Ibid., 351. This has also consequences for the child's self-relation. Ibid., 492.

¹²¹ The child's discovery of the anatomical sexual difference occurs —sometime during the sixteen to seventeen month period or even earlier, but more often in the twentieth or twenty-first month.

Mahler, *The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant*, 104.

¹²² The word —phallic¹²² denotes here only one side of the coin.

¹²³ Helmuth Plessner, *Die Stufen des Organischen und der Mensch* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1975).

¹²⁴ Søren Kierkegaard described the structure of the creaturely self as a —derived, established relation, a relation that relates itself to itself and in relating itself to itself relates itself to another. Kierkegaard, *The Sickness unto Death*, 13-14.

anchor our whole being, not only in time and space but also in a specific culture and network of relationships.¹²⁵ To gain an identity means participating in the drama of a wider story. Theology speaks in this context of a mission belonging to every human being—a mission that, in the course of a specific history with specific decisions, brings him into a unique connection with everything else.¹²⁶

Identity is not only shaped by social interactions and culture, but also by nature. Jerome Kagan has investigated the significance of the hereditariness of temperament. He follows the lead of Galen, who describes nine different temperaments, the four main temperaments being the melancholic, the sanguine, the choleric and the phlegmatic.¹²⁷ Like Galen, Kagan also discerns four basic temperaments, all of them biologically determined.¹²⁸ Kagan examines in particular what he calls the —inhibited and the —uninhibited temperament, both of which correspond respectively to Galen’s melancholic and sanguine temperaments.¹²⁹ But he also examines what Galen calls the phlegmatic temperament.¹³⁰ Ethical behavior is not determined by temperament, but the temperament does give each individual’s experience a special coloration due to the strength and the weakness connected to each temperament.¹³¹ Kagan confirms that the temperamental profile is —not totally reducible to physiological processes, even though physiology makes a contribution to it, but it is also clear that a temperamental bias is long lasting, as Kagan and Snidman show in their longitudinal study, —*The Long Shadow of Temperament*.¹³² According to their research, social interaction and other contexts work together with the hereditary element in the shaping of temperament.¹³³

¹²⁵ Cozolino, *The Neuroscience of Psychotherapy*, 166-169, 211-214; Siegel, *The Developing Mind*, 333-5.

¹²⁶The mission of Christ is the organizing principle of Balthasar’s *Theodramatik*. In the embedding of our narrative in a wider narrative a specific biblical anthropology, which unfolds the dynamics of love, has its starting point: Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments* (München: Cr. Kaiser, ²1974); Eckhart Reinmuth, *Anthropologie im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen - Basel: A. Francke, 2006).

¹²⁷ Jerome Kagan, *Galen’s Prophecy. Temperament in Human Nature* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 2.

¹²⁸ —Thus, there are, theoretically, four types of affective experiences, each linked to a different pattern of neural activity. When the right frontal and the right parietal areas are dominant, the mood is intense anxiety or fear, but when the right frontal and left parietal dominate, the mood is sadness; sadness is a less intense emotion than fear. When the left frontal and left parietal are dominant, a calm mood predominates. But when the pattern of dominance is left frontal and right parietal, the happy mood becomes intense joy. If these profiles of frontal and parietal activation are due, in part, to inherited differences in neurochemistry, the dominant mood of some persons could be influenced, at least in part, by genetic factors. Kagan, *Galen’s Prophecy*, 54-55.

¹²⁹ Kagan points out that these two also correspond to C.G. Jung’s two major psychological types: introversion and extraversion. See Kagan, *Galen’s Prophecy*, 252.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 280.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 77; Jerome Kagan and Nancy Snidman, *The Long Shadow of Temperament* (Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004), 31.

¹³² Kagan, *Galen’s Prophecy*, 274.

¹³³ Kagan and Snidman, *The Long Shadow of Temperament*, 230-7. See also Brian E. Vaughn,

As is readily apparent, every human being possesses each of the aspects that Kagan describes as the four types of affective experiences. It is also easy to see that human beings must go through the stages that Mahler, Schore and others have described as essential to the development of attachment, in order to become a self—as a self. The experience of primitive arousal; the ability to deal with shame; the ability to role-play; the characteristics connected to the four temperaments: these are the —building-bricks| (Bowlby) of our freedom. What is the theological significance of this psychological model? It is certainly not by accident that human development follows a specific course; and it is also not by accident that we have to deal with four basic temperaments: both features converge with basic ontological principles of Thomas Aquinas.

3. Attachment to the Wholly Other: Theological Meta-Anthropology

In attachment theory a tension emerges between the psychological necessity of attachment and the tendency of attachment theorists to reduce human nature to naturalism. The necessity of understanding the human being in his wholeness precludes any reduction of the experience of attachment to a material cause. It is neither possible to explain intersubjectivity as developing out of isolated subjects, nor to deduce the self from intersubjectivity. The self is interiorly related to others from the very beginning; the self is on the one hand autonomous from, and on the other, dependant upon, others for its own self-development. The psyche, which is not reducible to its relations with others, can only develop in the context of relationships. This paradox makes it necessary to investigate the constitution of being in general. Only ontology can overcome the impasse of either an isolated subject becoming dialogical or a relationship that is supposed to constitute a subject without whom there would be no relationship in the first place.

Thomas Aquinas's ontology is a metaphysics of creation. Creation means the constitution of substance by the communication of being (*esse commune*).¹³⁴ Being (*esse commune*) is, as Aquinas formulates it, —complete and simple, yet non-subsistent| (*completum et simplex, sed non subsistens*).¹³⁵ It is not merely another thing, but that *by which* everything exists. It is not subsistent (*subsistens*) but inherent (*inhaerens*).¹³⁶ The most telling picture Aquinas uses to illustrate the structure of being is light. As the light shines forth from the sun,

Kelley K. Bost and Marinus H. van IJzendoorn, —Attachment and Temperament: Additive and Interactive Influences on Behavior, Affect, and Cognition during Infancy and Childhood,| in *Handbook of Attachment*, 192-216.

¹³⁴I will not unpack here how Aquinas establishes his view of being (*esse*), because I have done so elsewhere (see Bieler, —*The Theological Importance of a Philosophy of Being*|); I am concerned here to show the relevance of this view to a better understanding of human nature in particular. For the importance of the category of substance and the consequences of its disregard in modern thought, see Pierre Manent, *La cité de l'homme* (Paris: Flammarion, 1997).

¹³⁵Thomas Aquinas, *De potentia*, q. 1, a. 1, c.

¹³⁶*De pot.*, q. 7, a. 2, ad 7.

created being (*esse*) flows from God into every being (*ens*) in order to let it be.¹³⁷ If the light would cease to shine, things would vanish into the darkness of nothingness. Therefore creation and conservation are the same act.¹³⁸ *Esse commune* is the primordial gift without which nothing at all could be given to us. In the double aspect of *completum et simplex* (fullness) and *non subsistens* (emptiness), *esse commune* is a likeness (*similitudo*) of God's goodness.¹³⁹ In its fullness it carries every being into that which flows out of God. It is the absolute gift in which nothing is held back. *Esse commune* is completely emptied into beings without losing its actuality. By the gift of *esse commune*, every single being in this world is literally a gift of God.

Esse commune is not parcelled out in creation;¹⁴⁰ it is fully present in every single being, although it is received in different ways. In the radicalism of its presence and its distinguishing power, *esse commune* is a participation in the being of God.¹⁴¹ For this reason Gustav Siewerth speaks of an —exemplary unity‖ between creator and creature. Because of this unity every being is an expression of God's loving freedom. A human being is not only a gift and an expression for others, but also for herself. Hence she finds in herself the imprint and presence of the giving other. Her whole being is a testimonial to the wholly other, the source of all being. This is the deepest explanation for the —virtual other‖ in the child. By the presence of the —wholly other‖ in us—the creator—we are also set in motion toward ourselves, because by this presence of the creator in us, we are more than ourselves: *homo abyssus*. The limit within ourselves, which we strangely transcend in our relation to the wholly other, is the consequence of being a gift given by the creator. Once we understand this we will be able to think of ourselves not as mere —things,‖ but as the precious mystery we can each call —I.‖

Only because the creator moves us by his gift, in a —*suavis dispositio*,‖ as Aquinas puts it,¹⁴² can we desire anything *at all*. And we must desire, for *esse commune* is something like a double-gift: Not only are we kept in existence by it; we are also drawn toward it, toward the origin of our being which alone can completely fulfill our desire. *Esse commune* is a gift that not only lets us be (in ourselves) but also gives us access to the origin of our being in his otherness and freedom. This contains the promise of a further gift, and opens up in this way a space for our striving, our acting, and our freedom, which has a particular aim: Our heart is restless until it rests in God.¹⁴³ In this way, we are truly set free by the gift of being (*esse*). The future is opened up for us by being in this world, in and through which we seek the source of all beings. Created in the image of God,

¹³⁷ *Sum. theol.*, 1, q. 8, a. 1, c.

¹³⁸ *De pot.*, q. 5, a. 1, ad 2.

¹³⁹ *De ver.*, q. 22, a. 2, ad 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Sum. theol.*, 1, q. 75, a. 5, ad 1.

¹⁴¹ *De div. nom.*, 5, 2.

¹⁴² *Summ. theol.*, 1-2, q. 1, a. 10, 2, c.

¹⁴³ *Conf.*, bk. 1, ch. 1.

we represent for each other the fulfillment of our deepest desire. But no —normal human being will be able to completely fulfill our nature's longing for the other, even if some others give us a glimpse of what that fulfillment might be. From a Christian perspective, only Christ can guarantee that the love of God and the love of one's neighbour are not mutually exclusive.

The possibility of self-acceptance is based on our natural, implicit acceptance of God. This is the reason why we depend upon others for our development: the others represent for us the creator whom we cannot see directly. Only by relating to the concrete other can we discover what is already in us.¹⁴⁴ This explains the child's openness from the beginning, an openness which in some way *seems to already know everything* and yet at the same time depends totally on other humans who *have to tell the child everything anew*. This positive paradox is only possible insofar as creation is the constitution of substance, and hence a dialogical event between creator and creature.¹⁴⁵ It is this original dialogue that makes us being-dialogical from the beginning. In this fundamental dialogue, every possible dialogue with other human beings is embedded; yet it is this dialogue alone that shows the ontological necessity of attachment.¹⁴⁶ Again, the concrete other opens up for us a way of understanding being (*esse commune*), and the source of all being. Metaphysics is therefore meta-anthropology: convergent with God's revelation in Christ, in whom God lives and speaks as a human being and enacts the unsurpassable quality of his love, which enables and defines all human love.¹⁴⁷

The gift of *esse commune* assumes the difference between *esse* and *essentia* because *esse* is received by beings (*entia*) through essence, which, in embodied beings, has the twofold aspect of *forma* and *materia*.¹⁴⁸ The soul of a

¹⁴⁴ Joseph Owens, *Cognition. An Epistemological Inquiry* (Houston: Center for Thomistic Studies, 1992), 33-62.

¹⁴⁵ Martin Bieler, —Seinsmitteilung und Bonität, in *Das Sein als Gleichnis Gottes. Symposium zum 100. Geburtstag Gustav Siewerths*, ed. Michael Schulz, (Freiburg i.Br.: Katholische Akademie der Erzdiözese Freiburg, 2005), 155-175; —*Analogia Entis* as an Expression of Love according to Ferdinand Ulrich, in *The Analogy of Being. Invention of the Antichrist or Wisdom of God?* ed. Thomas Joseph White, O.P., (Grand Rapids, Mi - Cambridge, U.K.: W.B. Eerdmans, 2011), 314-

337.

¹⁴⁶ See Ferdinand Ulrich, *Logo-Tokos. Der Mensch und das Wort*, Ferdinand Ulrich, *Schriften IV*, ed. Stefan Oster (Freiburg i.Br.: Johannes Verlag Einsiedeln, 2003), 507-693. —Worldly wisdom is of the opinion that love is a relationship between persons; Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between: a person—God—a person, that is, that God is the middle term. In Kierkegaard, *Works of Love*, 106-7. This —middle term is not a disturbing reality that destroys the intimacy between two persons, but the presence from which they both live, the very guarantee of their intimacy. Only if God himself is the *bonum commune* for us, as Aquinas states it in fact (*Sum. theol.* 1-2, q. 109, a. 3, c), the individual human being can keep his or her irreducibility over against anything worldly.

¹⁴⁷ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Herrlichkeit. Eine theologische Ästhetik*, vol. 1, *Schau der Gestalt* (Einsiedeln: Johannes Verlag, 1961); Hansjürgen Verweyen, *Ontologische Voraussetzungen des Glaubensaktes. Zum Problem einer transzendentalphilosophischen Begründung der Fundamentalthologie* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1969).

¹⁴⁸ On the question of the relation of this point to evolution, see Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 307-17

human being is the form of the body (*forma corporis*).¹⁴⁹ So we find the fourfold structure of *esse-ens-forma-materia* in the constitution of our being. We participate in *esse* as a *finite* substance that has *esse (ens)*.¹⁵⁰ We participate in *esse* through our form, which is completed in matter. These four aspects converge in Aquinas's teaching of the four causes that describe God's action toward us as the different aspects of God's love.¹⁵¹ *Esse* corresponds to *causa finalis* and emphasizes the goodness of the free God, who creates free creatures. *Ens* corresponds to *causa efficiens* and represents the true enactment of giving, the separation of the gift from the giver toward the receiver through the non-subsistent *esse*. *Forma* corresponds to the *causa formalis* and shows that the creator himself is present in his gift, for the *forma* is a *divinum quoddam* imitating God's own essence.¹⁵² *Materia* finally testifies to the *causa materialis*, which is usually not mentioned with respect to creation, because God himself is not the *materia* in the act of creation (But he provides the *materia primal*),—that the giver, God, is present even in the limitations of our bodily existence in time and space. This fourfold structure of the *separation* of the *gift* from the *giver*, by which the *giver* as such is truly *present* in the *gift*, has been elaborated by Ferdinand Ulrich.¹⁵³ It outlines a logic of love, a grammar of giving, that decodes the personal-dialogical meaning of the metaphysics of Aquinas and makes it possible to indicate the way in which the child deals with the boundaries of her being in the act of relating both to herself and others. It also fosters the possibility of asking the way in which the phases of child development emphasize the building-bricks of our freedom.

The first phase of child development accentuates the experience of being held in a symbiotic relationship with the mother. Here the foundation of basic trust is laid. The child has to learn that the world with which she is basically one is for her and not against her. This corresponds to the dimension of *esse* and its character of totality and non-limitation.

The second phase, which Mahler called the practicing subphase of the —separation-individuation process,¶ parallels the oral phase and accentuates the experience of being nourished and fulfilled by the other, whom I can let in or close out. The ontological reality of the finite *ens* as *esse habens* is here in the foreground. Connected to this is the realization of *passively* needing the larger other who gives the gift to the child; the child receives her *actively* by letting her into *his realm*. Here the ability to experience genuine closeness in the context of a distance, that does not threaten the child's own being, is enacted.¹⁵⁴

and Bieler, —*Analogia Entis* as an Expression of Love according to Ferdinand Ulrich,¶ 326.

¹⁴⁹ *Sum. theol.*, 1, q. 76, a. 1, c.

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Aquinas, *In duodecim libros Metaphysicorum Aristotelis expositio* 12, 1.

¹⁵¹ Martin Bieler, —Causality and Freedom,¶ in *Communio: International Catholic Review* 32 (Fall 2005): 420-427.

¹⁵² Aquinas, *Summa contra gentiles*, 2, c. 55.

¹⁵³ Ulrich, *Leben in der Einheit von Leben und Tod*, 63-79.

¹⁵⁴ See Walter Bräutigam, *Reaktionen—Neurosen—Abnorme Persönlichkeiten. Seelische*

The third phase, the rapprochement subphase, centres on the necessity to deal with the demands of the outside world. This corresponds to the anal phase, in which the child learns to control his own boundaries, to actively give as a unit, and to make himself present in the world. This phase presupposes the *forma*, by which my being and its identity are defined. The threat of shame to my identity has to be overcome here in order for me to gain autonomy.

The fourth phase, which starts in the rapprochement subphase and continues into the consolidation subphase, involves the role-play between different identities, a role-play that gives the identity a new flexibility and openness, but that can also bring with it the danger of dissolution. The identity of the other is now included in the development of my own identity, an inclusion that makes things both more complex and playful. The *informitas* of the *materia prima*,¹⁵⁵ with the promise of possibilities and freedom, is here the central issue. The challenge in this phase is to learn to be oneself by initiating decisions and playing one's role, instead of becoming guilty by remaining in the realm of mere wishful thinking.

These four phases or positions remain basic throughout life. Different descriptions of them can be found in the first chapters of the Old Testament as well as in Kierkegaard's analysis of despair.¹⁵⁶ This is a hint that we are dealing here with a structure that is built into every being. It is a structure that cannot be arbitrarily changed. It is recapitulated in the development of the child and present in the structure of every act (the four causes). If we ask about the criteria for distinguishing patterns of psychological disease, we should not only rely on the compilation of symptoms; we should also draw upon an anthropology that understands that human existence revolves around the laws of attachment and the logic of giving and receiving.¹⁵⁷ Only then can we understand the deeper meaning of pathological symptoms, not to mention psychological health. The fourfold structure is a powerful tool for understanding the human psyche, but it gains its healing power only in the concrete act of —being truthful in love (Eph. 4:15), for: —The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment (1 Cor. 2:15).

Krankheiten im Grundriss (Stuttgart: Georg Thieme, 1978), 54.

¹⁵⁵ *De div. nom.*, 4, 2.

¹⁵⁶ Bieler, *Befreiung der Freiheit*, 76-90; Bieler, *Freiheit als Gabe*, 108-38.

¹⁵⁷ This is also true with respect to bodily influences on the psyche. Therefore the old classical description of the four temperaments can be used to categorize mental illness: schizophrenia (sanguine), depression (melancholic), compulsion (choleric) and hysteria (phlegmatic). These four terms constitute something like a foundation for psychology. I do not agree that there could be a random number of temperaments, as Kagan suggests. But there certainly are endless possibilities of variations of the basic temperaments, which are always interrelated.