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OBJECT RELATIONS AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY:
AN EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE

By

Polly Lenore Crisp

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ABSTRACT

OBJECT RELATIONS AND MULTIPLE PERSONALITY:

AN EXPLORATION OF THE LITERATURE

By

Polly Lenore Crisp

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Multiple personality is a rare dissecciative hysterical condition in which at least two autonomous personalities exist in one individual. One of the most famous case presentations of a multiple personality is Prince's discussion of Miss Beauchamp. In considering Miss Beauchamp and other multiple personalities it is important to take into consideration preOedipal ego development. The depressive position, or integration of good and bad objects, has not been reached. Both repression and splitting are the primary defense mechanisms involved, and both appear to be necessary for the development of autonomous egos. Thus, multiple personality is felt to occupy a place between the psychoses and neuroses. The fixation point can be hypothesized to extend to both Oedipal and preOedipal ego developmental levels.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout this century multiple personality has been found to be an intriguing phenomena. Since the publication of The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, layman have been both fascinated and frightened by what was felt to be a certain type of "demon possession." Analysts have similarly been interested since the early development of psychoanalysis and Prince's publication (1905), The Dissociation of a Personality.

The purpose here will be to investigate the relationship of multiple personality and object relations. Such an exploration may appear to the reader as an ideosyncratic artifact as a result of the romanticism connected with this relatively rare dissociated condition. The need for consideration of this phenomenon is important, however, in treating the few cases that do appear in our own culture as well as the numerous cases that appear in the "possession states" of other cultures. Examination becomes even more important to the majority of people when attempts are made to better understand the structure and dynamics of the ego in that few conditions result in such overt manifestations of ego splitting.

Since multiple personality as a type of dissociative hysteria has been generally seen in terms of Oedipal conceptualization, very few articles exist that consider multiple

personality in object relations theoretical concepts. Also to the extent that multiple personality is relatively rare in this culture, most discussion existing in the literature has been presented as individual case studies. Thus, the purpose of this paper will be an attempt to integrate the existing literature dealing specifically with object relations and multiple personality rather than to present detailed summaries of individual case history material of multiple personality in general. What constitutes multiple personality and its manifestation in a few specific cases will be considered in order to obtain a concrete understanding of the condition. Cross-cultural comparisons of "possession states" of multiple personality will be beyond the focus of this paper since the attempt will be made to study intrapsychic structure while cultural variables are held constant. Thus, the concern will be multiple personality as conceptualized by such processes as splitting and repression. Furthermore, the difficulties of the theoretical conceptualizations in object relations and Oedipal theory will be explored.



MULTIPLE PERSONALITY STATES IN GENERAL

The incidence of multiple personality is extremely low. Somewhat over 100 cases have been reported in the literature (Lester, 1977). Multiple personality is classified in DSM-II among the dissociative hysterias (The Committee On Nomenclature And Statistics Of The American Psychiatric Association, 1968). Fugue states, amnesia, fainting spells, feelings of strangeness and unfamiliarity generally occur. Sommanambulistic states are often reported to have been present in childhood. The most important differential diagnostic criterion of multiple personality is that each personality exists in the body of one individual and has a highly developed autonomous personality of its own. The relationship between the personalities is variable from case to case, but certain basic patterns between the personalities have been found to occur. Taylor and Martin (1944) presented a summary of these basic patterns in their classical investigation of the literature. In one condition the personalities can alternate with each other in the sense that only one becomes the dominant conscious personality at any one time. The personalities can also be co-conscious in the sense that one functions consciously while the other functions unconsciously, except when made conscious in such states as automatic writing. Intra - conscious personalities are those that "know" the thoughts of

the other personality. In the above conditions the personalities may not "know" of each other's existence, or only one may "know" of the existence of the other or others. As indicated by Lester (1977) in his review of the literature on multiple personality, the personalities usually differ from each other, whether or not they "know" of each other's existence. Differences have been found to occur in attitudes, knowledge, sensitivity to stimulation, handwriting, and response to personality tests. Age differences and sex differences may also occur between the personalities. Furthermore, one personality may be physically healthier than the other.

Frequent debate has occurred as to whether or not multiple personality is a naturally occurring condition or simply an artifact of hypnosis. Multiple personality, however, has been found to occur aside from hypnotic induction, and the question no longer seems to be whether or not the condition can exist independently of hypnotic induction. Nevertheless, hypnosis can exacerbate the condition and should be used with care in both treatment (Howland, 1975) and in research, so that delin-
eation can more easily be made between artificially produced and naturally occurring conditions.

A FAMOUS EXAMPLE OF A SPECIFIC CASE

In order to obtain a more specific understanding of the manifestation of multiple personality both in the hypnotic and the waking condition, an example of a case study will be presented. The most famous case has probably been Miss Beauchamp in Prince's (1905, 1975) The Dissociation of a Personality.

Miss Beauchamp was a refined, conscientious, educated young woman from Boston who came to Prince with a neurasthenic condition. She described herself as having been extremely nervous and suggestible as a child, and as spending large amounts of time daydreaming. She had often suffered from fatigue, headaches, and nightmares. Somnambulistic episodes were also frequent. She described her father as being violent tempered and her parents' marriage as being unhappy. As a child she felt unwanted and rejected by her mother. As Miss Beauchamp became older she spent a great deal of time reading and was very concerned with religion. In the therapy sessions she appeared weary and depressed, and the neurasthenic condition did not seem to lift.

In order to attempt to help Miss Beauchamp with her neurasthenic condition, Prince frequently made use of hypnosis. On one occasion while under hypnosis Miss Beauchamp denied something that she had previously stated in a hypnotic condition. This new hypnotic self also spoke of the waking self

by using "She" rather than "I". The new hypnotic self (BIII) also had complete knowledge of what happened to Miss Beauchamp in the waking state (BI) and in the usual hypnotic condition (BIII). However, this Miss Beauchamp (BIII) did not have the same knowledge that Miss Beauchamp had while in the waking state. For example, BIII could not speak French or write shorthand while BI could. BIII had a great dislike for BI and portrayed herself in a completely opposite manner. She frequently told lies and smoked cigarettes much to the chagrin of the prim and proper BI. BIII would also cause BI to have negative hallucinations, that is to be unable to see objects in front of her.

During the time that BIII manifested herself, Miss Beauchamp frequently had to rub her eyes because of the strong sensation present in them. During the presence of the sensation BIII was attempting to gain autonomy, but she could only become autonomous if she could get Miss Beauchamp to open her eyes. At one point she was able to do this outside the session, and the subliminal BIII dissociation became an autonomous person~~a~~ality by the name of Sally. In contrast to the depressed Miss Beauchamp, Sally was a joyful and exuberant young girl who took great delight in smoking, lying, and running about the town. At times Sally would alternate with BI and at other times would exist as a co-consciousness. Sally had awareness of everything that happened to BI, but BI had no awareness of what occurred in Sally's life. Furthermore, Sally had anesthesia to external stimulation and also was not affected by the

physical health of BI. Sally also never slept, had no sense of time, and stated that she know all the dreams of Miss Beauchamp whether or not Miss Beauchamp remembered the dreams.

Miss Beauchamp's (BI) reaction to Sally was one of not knowing that she existed except through her acts, which Miss Beauchamp felt to be extremely destructive. Miss Beauchamp described the state as a feeling in which she was possessed by demons. As Miss Beauchamp and Dr. Prince attempted to make Sally go away, her tricks became more and more destructive. For example, Sally would go into the woods and find spiders and snakes and wrap them up as presents for Miss Beauchamp. Miss Beauchamp would react with terror and pain. When she would kill the spiders and snakes, Sally would write her letters telling her that there would be even more spiders and snakes.

On one particular occasion during a home visit by Dr. Prince when Miss Beauchamp was particularly depressed, he attempted to hypnotize her, and she reacted quite negatively stating that she would not be hypnotized by anyone but Dr. Prince. She did not recognize him and called by by the name of "Jones". Furthermore, she indicated that he had come through a window and that they were in a hospital. To determine if yet another personality had appeared, Dr. Prince tested her reaction to cutaneous sensation and found no anesthesia to be present, which was different from Sally's anesthesia to cutaneous sensation. She was given a French book and in contrast to Miss Beauchamp was unable to read it.

After this evening this new personality (BIV) appeared

at Miss Beauchamp's therapy session. BIV appeared as extremely self-confident and arrogant and pretended to know all about the lives of the other personalities, but in actuality knew nothing about BI and BII. Similarly BI did not know about this personality as she had not known about Sally. Sally (BIII) knew what this new personality (BIV) did, but did not know her thoughts as she did the thoughts of BI.

The relationship between Sally and this new personality, whom Sally called the "Idiot," was extremely antagonistic in that both were determined to take over the personality. As the antagonism became extreme Miss Beauchamp attempted suicide by turning on the gas in her apartment, at which point Sally became the dominant personality and turned off the gas.

During this time it became unclear who was the real Miss Beauchamp. Prince began to feel that BIV rather than BI, who had come into treatment, was the original self. It became evident that BI had come into existence several years earlier when Miss Beauchamp was working in a hospital. One evening she was talking with a friend in an upper story room of the hospital. A storm was going on outside and flashes of lightning periodically made the outside objects visible. Suddenly Miss Beauchamp looked out the window and saw the face of William Jones, a man who had been her close friend since childhood. At first she felt that she was having hallucinations, but then realized that Jones was outside on a ladder. It was at this point that the neurasthenic condition had come into existence. It became clear that BIV was the original Miss Beauchamp, and that she had experienced amnesia from this



incident in the hospital until the incident when she thought that Prince was Jones at the hospital.

As therapy progressed and BIV was hypnotized, it was found that she was different from BII (BI hypnotized) in that she became a combination of BI and BIV rather than merely a hypnotized IV. She was no longer hostile and arrogant but was friendly and self-confident. Prince now began to doubt that BIV was the real self, and started to feel that the combination of BI and BIV was the true self. After this speculation he began to attempt integration of these two parts through hypnosis. It was considered that Sally was not a real personality, but was merely a subliminal character.

As Sally felt her death drawing near she became particularly antagonistic to BIV. During this time Sally wrote her autobiography. She indicated that she had been in existence when Miss Beauchamp had learned to walk. This was the first time that she had had separate thoughts from Miss Beauchamp. After this time she was with Miss Beauchamp throughout her childhood and into adulthood when she became a separate personality.

Sally and BIV began to battle each other extensively as Sally felt herself pushed out of existence. This was exacerbated by BIV telling Sally that she was going to take over the personality and was going to kill Sally. At one point Sally had Miss Beauchamp hallucinate her foot on the other side of the room. This hallucinated foot had been cut off and appeared to be extremely bloody. When Miss Beauchamp



attempted to touch the foot she was able to feel as well as see blood.

Prince kept attempting to integrate BI and BIV, but was not able to hypnotize BIV as a result of an agreement that she had made with Sally. After the early antagonism which had resulted in Sally's production of the foot hallucination, BIV had decided to take over the personality along with Sally and to do away with BI. After this plan was discovered, Prince was able to continue integrating the two personalities. As the integration occurred Sally could only be brought back through hypnosis and ceased to be an autonomous personality. With integration Miss Beauchamp became BI and BIV, and her neurasthenic condition disappeared. This new personality had a greater maturity than BI, BIV, or Sally. Miss Beauchamp was now self-confident and friendly and was neither extremely submissive nor arrogant and hostile.

MULTIPLE PERSONALITY AS A PREOEDIPAL CONDITION

Now that a specific case of multiple personality has been presented, psychodynamic conceptualization will be considered. As indicated previously, multiple personality is classified as a form of dissociative hysteria. Since, historically, consideration of hysteria by Freud resulted in the postulation of the Oedipus complex, most clinicians and investigators have been primarily concerned with Oedipal material.

Some case studies of multiple personality, however, have indicated the importance of preOedipal development. For example, Miss Beauchamp's arrogance and suspiciousness (BIV), difficulty in impulse control (Sally), and the polarization of the good and bad or evil and pure point to the importance of considering development at the preOedipal as well as at the Oedipal level. In some cases schizophrenic or borderline functioning has been found to be present in one or more of the personalities. Gruenewald (1971) reports a patient in which the dissociated personality was psychotic. In another case Gruenewald (1976) indicates split-consciousness which served as a defense against overt psychosis. As progression of the difficulty occurred the split-consciousness decompensated into psychotic behavior. Issues worked through in therapy centered around separation and identity. Geleerd, Hacker, and Rapaport

(1945) report on a diagnosed hysteric who went into a fugue state and then decompensated into an overt schizophrenic. Similarly Peck (1922) discusses a case of multiple personality in which symptoms of both hysteria and dementia praecox were evident. Gruenewald (1977) reports a patient with multiple personalities who was diagnosed as borderline and whose material concerned the search for the primitive good mother. Not only is multiple personality connected with schizophrenic and borderline conditions, but obsessive material can be evident as well. Erickson and Kubie (1939) report a case of obsessive phobia which decompensated into multiple personalities during hypnotic suggestion.

As a result of the frequent schizophrenic and borderline conditions being evident in many cases in which multiple personality is diagnosed, conceptualization of preOedipal conflict and object relations theory has begun to occur. Gruenewald (1976, 1977) feels that multiple personality should be considered as a narcissistic disorder rather than as a form of hysteria, and, thus, should occupy a place between neurosis and psychosis. Similarly, Geleerd, Hacker, Rapaport (1945) indicate that fugue states should be considered to occupy a position between psychosis and neurosis. Fairbairn (1952) states that multiple personalities are basically schizoid characters.

Other writers have gone even further and have indicated the close relationship between the hysterias in general and preOedipal conditions. Klein (1946) indicates her agreement with Fairbairn that hysteria and schizophrenia are closely

connected. Fairbairn (1952) postulates that hysterics can be explained not in terms of the Oedipus complex, but in terms of ambivalence in the oral stage. One parent becomes the accepted object and the other parent becomes the rejected object. In other words, "love" in the Oedipal period is basically the same as "love" in the oral period in that in both stages there is separation between the accepted and rejected or good and bad objects. The differences are that in hysteria the feelings are transferred from the breast to the penis, and the accepted and rejected objects are split specifically on the basis of sex. Similarly, Guntrip (1969) indicates that hysterics are basically defenses against the early schizoid states. In the hysteric as well as the schizoid there is fear of loss of the ego.

EGO SPLITTING

If one considers hysteria in general and multiple personality in particular as being related to early preOedipal states, one question that becomes evident is how are the specific defenses in the two conditions related to each other. The most obvious and manifest defense in multiple personality is the dissociation of the ego into separate personalities. In other words, the ego appears to split into separate autonomous egos. Geleerd, Hacker, Rapaport (1945) and Fairbairn (1952) discuss splitting and repression of the ego in multiple personality. Guntrip (1969) sees hysterical dissociation as ego splitting.

The basic question then becomes what is meant by splitting. Gruenewald (1977) attempts to delineate splitting in multiple personality by indicating that it is not qualitatively different from splitting in preOedipal conditions. She states that both horizontal and vertical splits, as defined by Kohut (1971, 1977) occur. The horizontal splits occur between the ego that is connected with reality and the parts of the ego that are connected with narcissistic wishes. In contrast, vertical splits exist as a result of contradictory aspects of the personality. Similarly Erickson and Kubie (1939) discuss a type of "vertical" and "horizontal" splitting when they speak of repression which can be repression downwards or repression which takes place as vertical splitting of the personality.

Such delineations help somewhat to clarify the nature of splitting, but do not thoroughly address how this process occurs or the components necessary for the condition. For example, can one say that splitting in the schizoid condition is the same as splitting in multiple personality? As indicated above, Gruenewald indicates that there is no qualitative difference in the conditions of splitting. Similarly Fairbairn (1952) reports that multiple personality is not qualitatively different from splitting, but is rather extreme splitting. One complicating factor which needs to be addressed and which Kohut (1971, 1977) discussed in his concepts of vertical and horizontal splitting is the relationship of repression to splitting. In other words, how do the Oedipal and preOedipal components come together?

A CASE OF MULTIPLE PERSONALITY MANIFESTING PREOEDIPAL EGO

FUNCTIONING

In an attempt to consider these aspects on a concrete level before proceeding to abstraction, it is important to look at a specific case presented by Berman (1973). Berman's conceptualization was based on ego splitting in a young woman which occurred along the lines of Fairbairn's postulated libidinal and anti-libidinal ego splits.

Diana was a twenty year old black woman who was one of seven children. She was seen by her family as having been a stubborn child who had a particularly close relationship with her father. Her father was described as being seductive and sexual in his behavior to her. When drunk the father would beat everyone in the family with the exception of Diana. In contrast to the family's perception of the father in his relation to Diana, Diana perceived her mother as being cold and rejecting.

When Diana was thirteen her father died of cancer. She was not able to accept his death and left home for three days, but could not remember where she had been upon her return. After this she frequently had periods of amnesia. At fourteen she became pregnant, but had no memory of how this came about. During adolescence she had a number of homosexual and heterosexual experiences. The homosexual experiences seemed to be

much more ego syntonic in that during these experiences Diana was able to reach orgasm.

At the age of eighteen Diana heard voices of a woman who called herself "Julie." Julie indicated that she had come into existence just before the death of Diana's father. In contrast to Diana, Julie preferred heterosexual to homosexual experiences and became a prostitute.

In the sessions Diana talked in a little girl voice and showed an extensive range of affect. In contrast Julie was arrogant and hostile. The kinesics of Diana and Julie were analyzed by Dr. Albert Scheflen. Diana's movements conveyed a timid and helpless little girl. Julie's movements were sexually provocative and assertive.

Psychological tests were given to each personality, and the results consistently supported the clinical observations. Diana had basically unresolved Oedipal material. She tended to search for gratification from her father and to be in a competitive struggle with her mother.

As therapy progressed transference reactions tended to occur along both Oedipal and preOedipal lines. Diana told her therapist that she was in love with him and that she wanted to live with him and be his little girl. After this she periodically called the therapist's wife and stated that she was going to kill her. During this time the therapist added the diagnosis of "transference psychosis." Diana began to feel that people were poisoning her food. She also felt that her father had been killed because he had been injected with cancer.

Psychological testing during this time revealed that Diana felt deprived by her mother. Drawings became quite regressive, and feelings of helplessness were extensive.

Berman conceptualized Diana's difficulty as unresolved oral frustration, and hypothesized that ego splitting had occurred long before the manifest ego split took place that had resulted in the two autonomous personalities. Diana's autonomous egos were seen in terms of the libidinal and anti-libidinal conceptualizations of Fairbairn. Julie's hatred of Diana's dependency and her hostility and arrogance tended to point to her being a representation of the anti-libidinal ego. In contrast Diana's dependency and oral greed fitted clearly with the libidinal ego. These early part-egos and the good and bad objects connected with them continued into the Oedipal situation in the sense that the father was seen as all good, and the mother was seen as all bad. In other words, the Oedipal and preOedipal developmental levels were closely interconnected, and unresolved preOedipal material extended into the Oedipus complex.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SPLITTING AND REPRESSION

The relationship between the Oedipal and the preOedipal is difficult to ascertain. The most important complicating variables are the similarities and differences between the concepts of splitting and repression. Originally in psychoanalytic theory, repression was conceptualized as a process in which drives were made unconscious (Freud, 1915/1957). Fairbairn (1952) postulated that drives could not exist aside from internalized objects and the part-egos intertwined with these objects. Thus, repression became ego splitting and was classified as a schizoid process. Depending on whether or not one is talking about repression of drives or internalized objects and egos, the meaning of repression can be somewhat different, and comparison between the two systems becomes difficult. Basic questions concerning the repressing agent or whether or not intrapsychic structures can repress other intrapsychic structures become important. Such question, however, are a topic of concern within themselves and will not be addressed in this paper. Nevertheless, one needs to be aware that these issues exist when considering the relationship between repression and splitting.

In psychoanalytic drive theory, repression was the primary construct used to differentiate the hysterics and the narcissistic disorders. Freud (1914/1957, 1915-1917/1963) stated

stated that withdrawal of libido from the object into the ego was similar to, but somewhat different from repression in the hysterias. The particular differences were unclear to Freud and were not completely worked out by him during his life.

The major differences between the hysterias and narcissistic disorders seems to be the "depth" of "repression." In the narcissistic disorders "deep" repression of unconscious material is not seen to the same degree as is evident in the hysterias. Thus, to group schizoid type splitting or repression with repression of drive at the Oedipal level is to ignore the extent to which the repressed, whether or not it is impulse or ego, is unconscious.

Multiple personality does not fit exclusively with schizoid ego splitting or Oedipal repression. As discussed previously a type of "horizontal" and "vertical" repression (Erickson and Kubie, 1939; Gruenewald, 1977; Kohut, 1971, 1977) takes place. Splitting of the ego into contradictory ego states fits clearly with Fairbairn's postulated schizoid repression. On the other hand, the inability of one personality to know the existence of the other or others fits more with the classical "deep" Oedipal repression.

A way of getting around these apparent contradictions is to employ both object relations and classical Freudian theory, as does Kernberg (1975) in his theoretical system. One could postulate that in earlier states of development the schizoid mechanisms described by Fairbairn (1952) are in operation. Thus, ego splitting in contrast to repression of drive is more important. At higher developmental stages the more "mature" types

of drive repression occur. Multiple personality could be seen to occupy a stage between these two developmental positions in that ego splitting as well as repression as used in the Freudian sense are evident. In other words, part-egos are still in existence, but the higher developmental defense of repression is present as well. Green (1977) supports this notion of differences in splitting as a function of developmental level by indicating that splitting is different in psychosis, depression, and borderline states. Thus, a particular defense cannot be examined apart from the development of the ego.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OEDIPAL AND PREOEDIPAL IN MULTIPLE
PERSONALITY

Aside from the relationship between splitting and repression, multiple personality raises important issues to be considered in the comparison of Oedipal and preOedipal developmental levels. In both multiple personality and other pre-Oedipal developmental states there is the split of the good and bad objects. The difference between multiple personality and hysteria in general in contrast to the earlier schizoid states is that in the hysterias the objects are split specifically on the basis of sex. The mother is seen as all bad, while the father is seen as all good. In the earlier schizoid states splitting does not occur on the basis of sex, but rather the mother is split into the good or bad mother or her mother's breast is split into the good and bad breast. In multiple personality, hysteria in general, and schizoid conditions the depressive position has not been reached since the integration of the good and bad objects has not taken place. Kernberg's (1975, 1977) continuum in the classification of borderline disorders clarifies the relationship of the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal extensively in that both the similarities and differences between the hysterias and schizoid conditions are recognized. By grouping the hysterias and the schizoid conditions as borderline states, Kernberg points to the

importance of considering preOedipal ego defense. Specification of developmental levels in the borderline states, however, indicates the importance in making distinctions. Thus, when multiple personality is considered, it can more easily be seen as a borderline between the Oedipal and preOedipal.

SUMMARY

Multiple personality is a dissociative hysterical condition in which there are two or more autonomous personalities. Historically multiple personality has been viewed as an Oedipal conflict. Case studies, however, indicate the importance of preOedipal dynamic issues as well. Both splitting and Oedipal repression seem to be the basic defense mechanisms. The depressive position, integration of good and bad objects, has not been reached. Objects are split specifically on the basis of sex in that the mother is seen as all bad, while the father is seen as all good. Multiple personality can be considered to occupy a position between Oedipal and preOedipal development.

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