

On Being the Parent of a Two Year Old

If we are interested in how a two year old thinks and how he feels we have no trouble in finding hundreds of references in magazines and books. But if we want to find out how it feels to be the parent of a two year old, we find that the experts have not been at all accommodating. Until very recently specialists in the field of child development were not much interested in the effects of children upon their parents or in the way in which parents reacted to stages in their children's development. In the research field we are beginning to acquire much more knowledge about the responses of normal parents to phases of child development and some of our thinking about parent-child relationships is certain to be revised.

When the child moves from infancy and the condition of complete dependency on his parents to the second and third years with increasing independence in his actions, his parents have to shift gears, psychologically speaking. Our love for the infant is in part a response to his helplessness, his complete dependency upon us. In this love we are hardly aware of his separateness as another being, for his dependency makes him almost a part of ourselves. When the child begins to achieve motor independence at the end of the first year and as we see the first signs of an emerging personality we feel the loss of this early love if we are honest with ourselves. There are new pleasures ahead of us, and qualitatively richer experiences in this love of parents for the child, but we ourselves have to give up a kind of satisfaction which could only be obtained with the young and helpless infant. Many parents, quite unconsciously, strive to maintain the conditions of the old love, the old harmony of the infant-parent relationship, and naturally find themselves in a struggle against the current of the child's development.

Now the truth of the matter is that this toddler is not yet independent, is still, practically speaking helpless. He is still largely without judgment and if we allow him to pursue his "independence" to the degree he wishes he will not only endanger himself but he will make family living unbearable. The parent, therefore, is required to exercise his best judgment about how much freedom and how much restriction this small child should have. But in order to exercise good judgment the wise parent needs to be aware of his own feelings. If the parent finds it painful to give up the baby for the small person who is capable of independent acts, then his judgment and his handling of the child's emerging independence may be impaired. Then many small and inconsequential acts of independence in the toddler take on exaggerated meaning to his mother and father. The food fads of this age, the fussiness about being dressed, and dozens of other manifestations of "independence" can become a challenge to the parent who is unfamiliar with and a little dismayed by independence. And, of course, this obstinacy of the toddler is a great nuisance and a trial to all parents, but if we are not afraid of this behavior, if we do not feel that our love for the child or his love for us is threatened by such behavior, we can handle it with the best of our judgment.

The second and third year bring forth more trials in our love for the child. At the end of a toddler's day, his mother feels drained. It would be hard to say how much of this exhaustion comes from the physical labor of running alongside a small-sized express train for twelve hours, and how much is the mental exhaustion which the toddler produces in the adult. The child has strong drives, and very little ability to control them. For many months during this period his mother has the job of restricting and controlling unacceptable behavior because this young ego has not yet acquired the means for control.

Now, living with a creature of impulse, like the two year old, is disturbing in a way to the adult ego. By the time this two year old has taken his place in our lives, we have devoted twenty or more years to the work of successfully controlling our own impulses. In order to achieve this control in the course of our own development we had to develop attitudes of criticism, strong dislike or even abhorrence of certain impulses or tendencies within ourselves. The two year old, with his uninhibited impulses, is, at certain times, the personification of all the vices we have rooted out of our own personality. "Selfishness", "Greed", "Vanity", "Age", "Hate", and a vast number of evils can be found in their natural and pure states in the personality of this small child. But not just anybody's two year old, our child. We know better than to react with moral repugnance to these traits in our children, and the enlightened parent is not horrified by their manifestations, but my guess is that a good part of the mental fatigue which the two year old produces in us comes from coping with his impulsivity and our own unconscious reactions to it.

Then, too, although we know that this impulsive two year old is on his way to developing controls (the book said so...) we can't really believe it. "He knows it's wrong; you can see by the look on his face, and he does it anyway!" "We've said 'no' a hundred times a day for two months and still..."

Hopes for a brilliant future dim when the future winner of the Nobel prize for science reveals, at two and a half years, his greater aptitude for the vocation of petty crime. (He, himself, wants to be a truck driver anyway.) The parental day-dream of a dignified old couple seated in a hall in Copenhagen, (eyes brimming, as the 1991 recipient of the award concludes his speech of acceptance) now dissolves into another picture. It is a newspaper photograph of a shabby, prematurely gray couple seated in the courtroom with bowed heads while a youth with a cynical smile

on his face hears the jury's verdict of "guilty". "He Wasn't Really a Bad Boy," Father Tells Reporters.

At this age parents can detect resemblances between their plump and rosy toddler and any number of skeletons (in the family closet, of course.) The traits of devastating charm and diabolical cunning which this two year old combines are disturbing reminders of the relative whose brilliant career in finance was brought to a close by suspicious agents of the government. (Could it be that there is something to this heredity business?) And just look at the way he purses his mouth when he's stubborn! If that isn't Aunt Jane to a T. And he's never even seen her! His willfulness and determination remind his mother of her own brother at the same age. His argumentiveness is a trait which his father has privately detested in his father-in-law. (The same set look in the jaw, too.)

And worst of all, are the skeletons in our own closet. His cheerful denial of responsibility or guilt for his misdeeds brings back a disturbing memory in his mother of a little girl and her mother, of a broken vase and an accusation, a denial and a punishment, never to be forgotten. And without realizing it one day, the mother who was the little girl, stands over her two year old son with the fragments of an ugly ash-tray in her hands and cries accusations at the startled child, banishes him for his crime and his refusal to admit it, and then alone with the pieces of this worthless object she cries with shame for what she has done with her own child and shame for the twenty year old crime, the shame she had not admitted and had not remembered.

The behavior of the small child, the child between infancy and the dawn of conscience, is disturbing to us in two ways. It is a real and present disturbance, a nuisance

and a trial, and it is also a disturbance of our own unremembered past. This period of our own childhood is not remembered. At best we can recapture a few fragments, a few pictures. So we do not remember that at two we were stubborn, defiant, we lied, we had aggressive feelings toward our parents, we committed a host of misdeeds, we enjoyed dirtiness and naughtiness and we were without shame. We do not remember these things, but when we are confronted with a small child who does these things, he represents for us those tendencies, those impulses and wishes which we had long ago banished from memory, and we find ourselves reacting with feelings which surprise us. In this way we find ourselves saying, "I don't know why I reacted the way I did when he did that." In the story of the mother and the broken ash-tray, the memory of the childhood incident survived but the feelings attached to the childhood event were not experienced by the mother until her small son repeated the act in another way.

We are interested in something else in the story of the mother and the broken ash-tray. She found herself behaving toward her son in the same way that her mother had behaved toward her. How often do we find ourselves repeating the behavior of our parents toward us in our own behavior toward a child. "I promised myself," said a mother, "that I would never strike my child, because I remembered how I felt when my mother did this to me. And here I am doing the same thing to my child and hating myself for it!" When the parent is confronted with a piece of behavior in his child which is identical with a childhood problem of his own, he may be surprised to find himself behaving exactly as his own parent would have behaved in the same circumstances, in spite of his own judgment and different principles of child rearing. How does this happen?

In order to conquer our own naughty or unacceptable impulses in childhood we had to take over the attitude of our parents toward them. We built these attitudes into our own consciences. In this way these attitudes become part of our own character, too. Now some of these attitudes toward our own impulses in childhood were finally adopted after much struggle and conflict and we may find that these same impulses give us occasional trouble later on in life. When our own children produce similar problems, we may find that the old conflict is revived within us; it is like re-experiencing the old and forgotten struggle in our own childhood, and quite unconsciously we seek the solution to the conflict within us and to the conflict which our child produces, by adopting the attitude of our own parents, which is exactly the way in which we resolved the original conflict in our own childhood.

So we find that the most enlightened and conscientious parent will discover attitudes in himself which surprise him, which are not compatible with his reasoned view of the situation. I do not think that a parent needs to feel ashamed of or frightened by such a discovery and in most cases we don't regard such reactions as neurotic or pathological. Even clinical workers with children, who need to be specially free of their own childhood involvements, will discover and honestly admit to themselves reactions to certain types of child behavior. But in such instances the clinical worker must not only recognize such reactions in himself but deal with them so that they do not interfere with his work and his helpfulness to a child.

Parents, too, can often modify their reactions to a child's behavior by recognizing that a certain reaction acquires its strength through a personal association and not primarily from the child's act in itself. This is not to say that a parent

should go about in a state of extreme self-consciousness, examining his motives, weighing his words and taking careful pause before each parental act! This would be deadly! Parenthood would become an ordeal and the child would suffer from such self-conscious and inhibited parental behavior. Instead, we should say, that a parent should feel free to respond to his child as a human being, that he must show criticism and disapproval for certain acts in order that his child learn self-control, but in doing this the parent might keep in mind a useful rule: if the parent finds himself consistently over-reacting to a certain type of behavior, that is responding with very strong and powerful feelings which do not belong to the objective situation, then it may be a good thing to examine his own feelings, at least to recognize them as highly personal reactions, in order that such feelings can be kept in their proper place and not interfere with his good judgment in the work of helping a child overcome unacceptable behavior.

We have seen how the two year old's behavior can be a disturbance to the parental conscience, at times, and how this can revive our own childhood struggles in the acquisition of conscience. But now let's look at another side of the picture. We may see some parents, often those who were strictly reared themselves, who find themselves siding with their own children against authority. We may find them unusually tolerant of aggressive and destructive behavior in their children, but even at the limits of their tolerance, quite unable to employ parental authority to restrict a child. Sometimes when these parents speak of their children we have the impression that they enjoy the license which they have given their children, and even get some satisfaction from the bad behavior of their children, out of seeing the child triumph over his parents.

On the face of it this is puzzling behavior on the part of parents. It is hard to understand how a parent might find satisfaction in being undone by his own child. But when we examine this problem we will usually see how this parental attitude has its roots in the childhood conflict of these parents, too. Here again the naughty child represents one's self as a child, and his defiance is like one's own defiance in the struggle with parents. But, whereas the first group of parents we have described resolved the childhood conflict by taking over the parental attitude toward naughtiness, opposed their own bad impulses, the second group of parents retained the pleasure in rebellion and defiance, if only in fantasy, and when, as parents, they experienced the defiance and aggression of their own children it was experienced as if it were their own forbidden behavior and in this way, enjoyed. Their own childhood day-dream, "when I grow up and have children I'll let them do what they want!" is curiously realized in the situation which is provided in their own families. And because hatred of parental authority was so painfully part of their own up-bringing they cannot bring themselves to employ parental authority with their own children. Such parents find that they hate themselves when they deny or restrict their children, just as they hated their own parents in such moments.

The parent who identifies with his child's naughtiness and rebelliousness is often not aware that his inability to restrict his child will have an unfavorable effect upon the child's development and, in extreme cases, produce serious defects of character. Our inconsistent professional advice to parents in the past two decades has often appeared to support the parents who gave license to "free-expression" in their children. The parent who was in conflict about his own attitudes toward authority and his own role as parent could not become aware of his own attitudes

when his society aided his confusion with conflicting theories about the nature of parental authority.

In order to come to terms with his feelings about the exercise of parental authority, this parent needs to recognize a personal problem, just as the parent who over-reacts on the conscience side needs to recognize his personal involvement. The parent who finds himself guilty and embarrassed by the need to restrict his child's behavior will be just as strongly motivated to overcome this difficulty when he recognizes that his attitude may stand in the way of his child's healthy development. He can find that his hatred of authority had its roots in personal feelings and was a reaction, perhaps, to the unjust authority which his own parents had employed. He may come to recognize the futility of carrying over a conflict from his own childhood into the lives of his children. He may discover in himself a capacity for exercising authority of a different kind from that which he resented in his own parents, and substitute a reasonable and just authority for the unjust authority which caused him such personal suffering. And if he is able to do this he can even have his old day-dream of triumphing over his own parents, for this is indeed a victory, the victory of a mature person over childhood conflicts, the battle won at last by throwing aside the childish weapons of resentment and hate and substituting wisdom and self-knowledge in the understandable striving to surpass one's own parents.

For parenthood is not only a time when one's own childhood conflicts are re-aroused. It can also be a time when childhood conflicts are resolved. The experience of being a parent can also strengthen the positive feelings toward one's own parents. The trials of parenthood now experienced personally deepen the understanding of one's

own parents. Knowledge of one's own imperfections as a parent soften the criticism of childhood. Many parents now discover a new and deeper understanding of themselves and their relationships to their own parents, and a compassion for their own parents which comes out of identification with the parental role. The satisfactions in marriage and parenthood cause the old injuries and hurts of childhood to recede and become unimportant. Parenthood can truly be a process of healing and mending, a maturing of the personality.

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we are hardly aware of his separateness as another being, for his dependency makes him almost a part of ourselves. When the child begins to achieve motor independence--~~he~~ at the end of the first year and as we see the first signs of an ^{emerging} ~~merging~~ personality we feel the loss of this early love if we are honest with ourselves. There are new pleasures ahead of us, new-experiences--~~in~~ and qualitatively richer experiences in this love of parents for the child, but we ~~ourselves~~ have to give ~~up~~ up a kind of satisfaction ~~which~~ could only be obtained with the young and helpless infant. Many parents, quite unconsciously, ~~strive-to-~~ ~~struggle~~ strive to maintain the conditions of the old love, the old harmony of the infant-parent relationship, and naturally find themselves in a struggle against the current of the child's development. ~~But-can-we-allow~~ ⁴ Now the truth of the matter is that this toddler is not yet independent, is still, practically speaking helpless. He is still largely without judgement and if we allow him to pursue his ~~independence~~ "independence" to the degree he wishes he will not only endanger himself but he ~~makes-family-~~ will make family living unbearable. ~~The~~ parent, therefore, is required to exercise ^{his} ~~the~~ best judgement about how much freedom and how much restriction this small child should have. But in order to exercise good judgment the wise parent needs to be aware of his own feelings. If the parent finds it painful to give up the baby for the small person who is capable of independent acts, then his judgement, ^{and} ~~his~~ handling of the child's emerging independence, ^{may} ~~will~~ be impaired. ~~by-his-own-uncertainty~~ Many small acts of the second and third year child

Then many small and inconsequential acts of independence in the toddler take on exaggerated meanings. ^{to the parent. his mother or father} ~~The obstinacy of the~~
~~toddler-willfulness-of-the-toddler-on-matters-of-feed,-dressing-~~
The food fads of this age, the fussiness about being dressed, and dozens of other manifestations of "independence" can become a challenge to the parent who is ^{unfamiliar with} afraid of his child's emerging independence, ^{& a little dismayed by} of this new personality. And, of course, these-
~~thin-~~ this obstinacy of the toddler is a great nuisance and a trial to all parents, but if we are not afraid of this behavior, if we do not feel that our love for the child or his love for us is threatened by such behavior, we can handle it with good-
the best of our judgment. ^e ~~if,-on-the-other-hand,-we-take-it-up--~~
~~as-a-challenge-~~

The second and third year bring forth more trials in our love for the child. At the end of a ~~day-with-~~ toddler's day, ~~a-mother-~~
^{drained.}
~~experiences~~ his mother feels quite-inert. It would be hard to say how much of this exhaustion comes from the physical ~~labor-~~
labor of ~~keeping-up~~ running alongside a small-sized express train for twelve hours, and how much is the mental exhaustion which the toddler produces in the adult. ^{He} ~~He~~ has strong drives, ~~strong impulses~~ and ~~no~~ very little ability to control them. For many months during this period his mother has ~~to~~ the job of restricting and controlling unacceptable behavior because this young ego has not yet acquired the means for control. Now, living with a creature of impulse, like the two year old, is disturbing in a way to the adult ego. By the time this two year old has taken his place in our lives, we have devoted ~~twenty-to~~ twenty or more

years to the work of successfully controlling our own impulses. In order to achieve this control in the course of our ^{own} development we had to develop attitudes of criticism, strong dislike or even abhorrence ^{OF} ~~to~~ certain ~~tendencies~~- impulses or tendencies within ourselves. The two year old, ~~is~~ with his uninhibited impulses, ^{at certain times} is, ~~in-a-way~~, the personification of all the vices we have ~~rooted~~ rooted out of our own personality. "Selfishness", "Greed", "Vanity", "Agg"Hate" and a ~~number~~ vast number of evils can be found in their natural and pure states in the personality of this small child. But not just anybody's two year old, our child. We know better than to react with ~~strong~~- moral repugnance to these traits in our child, ^{well} and the enlightened parent is not horrified by their manifestations, but my guess is that a good part of the mental fatigue which the two year old produces in us comes from coping with his impulsivity and our own unconscious reactions to it.

He gives us some bad times during this period, the period between infancy and the dawn of conscience. There are times when we feel ill-rewarded for the care and the love which has been lavished on him. ~~It-is-difficult-to-explain-how-a-child-who~~ "He-knows-He is so different these days from anything we had imagined in his infant days, that we must even confess to occasional disappointment.

Then, too, although we know that this impulsive two year old is on his way to developing controls (the book said so...) we can't really believe it. "He knows it's wrong; you can see by the look on his face, and he does it anyway!" "We've said "no" a hundred times a day for two months and still..."

Hopes for a brilliant future dim when the future winner of the Nobel prize for science reveals, at two and a half years, his greater aptitude for the vocation of petty crime. (He, himself, ~~wants~~ to be a truck driver anyway.) The parental day-dream of a dignified old couple seated in ~~the-audience~~ a hall in Copenhagen, (eyes brimming, as the 1991 recipient of the award concludes his speech of acceptance) now dissolves into another picture. It is a newspaper photograph of a shabby, prematurely gray couple seated in the courtroom with bowed heads while a youth with a cynical smile ~~on~~ ^{PN} his face hears the jury's verdict of "guilty".

"He Wasn't Really a Bad Boy," Father Tells Reporters.

At this age parents can detect resemblances between their plump and rosy toddler and any number of skeletons (in the family closet, of course.) The traits of devastating charm and diabolical cunning which this two year old combines, are disturbing reminders of the relative whose brilliant career in finance was brought to a close by suspicious agents of the government. (Could it be that there is something to this heredity business?) And just look at the way he purses his mouth



at the way he purses his mouth when he's stubborn! If that isn't Aung Jane to a T. And he's never even seen her! His wilfullness and determination remind his mother of her own brother at the same age. His argumentativeness is a trait which his father has privately detested in his father-in-law. (The same set look in the jaw, too.) And worst of all, are the skeletons in our own closet. His cheerful denial of responsibility or guilt for his misdeeds brings back a disturbing memory in his mother, of a little girl and her mother, of a broken vase and an accusation, a denial and a punishment, never to be forgotten. And without realizing it one day, the mother who was the little girl, stands over her two year old son with the fragments of an ugly ash-tray in her hands and cries accusations at the startled child, banishes him for his crime and his refusal to admit it, and then alone with the pieces of this worthless object she cries with shame for what she has done with her own child and for shame for the twenty year old crime, the shame she had not admitted and the shame she had not remembered.

✓ ~~The-small-child-of-this-age-~~

The behavior of the small child, the child between infancy and the dawn of conscience, is disturbing to us in two ways. It is a ^{and present} real/disturbance, a nuisance ^{P.S.} and a trial, and it is also a disturbance of our own unremembered past. This period of our own ^{hood} child is not remembered. At best we can recapture a few fragments, a few pictures. ~~This period of childhood is largely repressed.~~ So we do not remember that at two we were stubborn, defiant, we lied,

we had aggressive feelings toward our parents, ~~we-were-shameless-~~
we committed a host of misdeeds, we ~~were-~~ enjoyed dirtiness and
naughtiness and we were without shame. We do not remember these
things, but when we are confronted with a small child who does
these things, he represents for us those tendencies, those wishes-
impulses and wishes which we had long ago banished from memory,
and we find ~~emotional-reactions-with~~ ourselves reacting with
feelings which surprise us, for ^{usually} ~~we still~~ do not remember the
~~event or events in early childhood which caused these feelings,~~
~~but the behavior of the child revivies-~~ revives the feelings/ without
~~reviving the memory.~~ In this way we find ourselves saying, "I don't
know why I reacted the way I did when he did that." In the story
of the mother and the broken ash-tray, the memory of the childhood
incident survived but the feelings attached to the ^{childhood} event were not
experienced by the mother until her small son repeated the act
in another way.

We are interested in something else in the story of the mother and
the broken ash-tray. She found herself behaving ^{that} toward her son
in the same way ~~as~~ her mother had behaved toward her. How often
do we find ourselves repeating the behavior of our parents toward
us in our own behavior toward a child. "I promised myself," said
a mother, "that I would never strike my child, because I remembered
how I felt when my mother did this to me. And here I am doing ~~it~~
the same thing to my child and hating myself for it!" Quite
~~unconsciously,~~ When the parent is confronted with the ~~impulsive-~~
a piece of behavior in his child which is identical with a ^{childhood} problem
~~of his own he may find himself, -like adapting against his better~~

of his own, he may be surprised to find himself behaving exactly as his own parent would have behaved in the same circumstances, in spite of his own judgment and different principles of child rearing. How does this happen? ^{P. 6} In order to conquer our own naughty or unacceptable impulses in childhood we had to take over the attitude of our parents toward them. We built these attitudes into our own consciences. In this way these attitudes become part of our own character, too. ~~In-the-course-of-years-many-of-these-attitudes-become~~ Now ~~the-large-number-of-these~~ Now some of these attitudes, ~~toward-~~ toward our own impulses in childhood were finally adopted after much struggle and conflict and we may find that ~~they~~ these same impulses give us occasional trouble later on in life. ~~When~~ ~~Then-the-eh-~~ our own children ~~repeat~~ produce similar problems, we may find that the old conflict is revived within us; it is like re-experiencing the old and forgotten ~~conflict~~ struggle in our own childhood, and quite unconsciously we seek the solution to the conflict within us and ^{to} the conflict which our child produces, by adopting the attitude of our own parents, which is exactly the way in which we resolved the original conflict in our own childhood.

So we find that the most enlightened and conscientious parent will discover ~~surprising-things-about-the-origins-of-his~~ attitudes in himself which surprise him, which are not compatible with his reasoned view of the situation. I do not ~~feel-~~ think that a parent needs to feel ashamed ^{OF} or frightened by such a discovery and in most cases we don't regard such reactions as neurotic or pathological. Even clinical workers with children, who need to be specially free of their own childhood involvements, will discover and honestly admit to themselves reactions to certain types of child behavior. The

✓ But in such instances the clinical worker must not only recognize such reactions in himself but deal with them so that they do not interfere with his work and his helpfulness to a child. Parents, too, can often modify their reactions to a child's behavior by recognizing that a certain reaction acquires its strength through a personal association and not ~~be~~ primarily from the child's act in itself. This is not to say that a parent ²⁷ should go about his- in a state of extreme self-consciousness, examining his motives, weighing his words and ~~p~~aking careful pause before each parental act! This would ~~lead-to-such-paralysis-of-parental-functions-~~ be deadly! Parenthood would become an ordeal and the child would suffer from such self-conscious and inhibited parental behavior. ~~What-I-do-mean-~~ Instead, we should say, that a parent should feel free to respond to his child as a human being, that he must show criticism and disapproval for certain acts in order that his child learn self-control, but in doing this the parent might keep in mind a useful rule: if the parent finds himself consistently over-reacting to a certain type of behavior, that is responding with very strong and powerful feelings which do not belong to the objective situation, then it may be a good thing to examine ~~one's~~ ^{at least} ~~his~~ own feelings, /to recognize them as highly personal reactions, in order that such feelings can be kept in their proper place and not interfere with ~~our~~ ^{one's} good judgment in the work of helping a child overcome unacceptable behavior.

~~We have described one side of the picture~~

~~We~~ have seen how the two year old's behavior can be a disturbance to ~~our-own-conscience-~~ the parental conscience, at times, ~~let's~~ look-at-quite-another-side-of-the-picture- and how this can ~~lead~~

revive our own childhood struggles in the acquisition of conscience. But ~~Ne~~ now let's look at another side of the picture. We may ^{see} find some parents, often those who were strictly reared themselves, who find themselves siding with their own children against authority. We may find them unusually tolerant of aggressive and destructive behavior in their children, but even at the limits of their tolerance, quite unable to employ parental authority to restrict a child. Sometimes when these parents speak of their children we have the impression that they enjoy the ~~freedom~~- license which they have given their children, and even get some satisfaction from the bad behavior of their children, out of seeing the child triumph over his parents.

P. 8
On the face of it this is puzzling behavior on the part of parents. It is hard to understand how a parent might find satisfaction in being undone by his own children. But when we ~~understand-such-parents~~ examine this problem we will usually see how this parental attitude has its roots in the childhood conflict of these parents, too. Here again the naughty child represents ones self as a child, and his defiance is like one's own defiance in the struggle with parents. But, whereas the first group of parents we have described ~~surrendered~~- resolved the childhood conflict by taking over the parental attitude toward naughtiness, opposed their own bad impulses, the second group of parents ~~apparently--retained-the~~ retained the pleasure in rebellion and defiance, if only in fantasy, and when, as parents, they experienced the defiance and aggression of ~~their~~ own children it was experienced as if it were their own forbidden behavior and in this way, enjoyed. Their own childhood

day-dream, "When I grow up and have children I'll let them do what they want!" is ~~given-~~ curiously realized in the situation which is provided in their own families. And because hatred of parental authority was so painfully part of their own up-bringing they cannot bring themselves to employ parental authority with their own children. Such parents find that they hate themselves when they deny or restrict their children, just as they hated their own parents in such moments.

The parent who identifies with his child's naughtiness and rebelliousness ~~if~~ is often not aware that ~~the-consequences-~~ his inability to restrict his child ~~and-employ-parental-authority-in-~~ will have an unfavorable effect upon the child's development and, in extreme cases, produce serious defects of character. Our inconsistent professional advice to parents in the past two decades has often ~~supported-this-parent,-or~~ appeared to support the parents who ~~allowed-and-encouraged-~~ gave license to "free-expression" in their children. Many parents honestly believed that the freedom they were granting their children could prevent neurosis, that the discharge of "bad feelings" would have a cathartic effect, which suggests a kinship between this theory and historically older theories pertaining to the exorcism of evil spirits. It would be a fascinating exercise to discover how this idea became popular in our American culture during a certain period, because there is no scientific basis for this theory at all! It has been ~~wrongly~~ attributed to psychoanalysis

Walter

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children. The parent who was in conflict about his own attitudes toward authority and his own role as parent could not become aware of his own attitudes ^{P. 9} when his society aided his confusion with conflicting theories about the nature of parental authority. ^{II} In order to come to terms with his feelings about the exercise of parental authority, ~~this~~ parents need to recognize ~~this~~ as a personal problem, just as the parent who over-reacts on the conscience side needs to recognize his personal involvement. The parent who finds himself guilty and embarrassed by the exercise need to restrict his child's behavior will be just as strongly motivated to overcome this difficulty when he recognizes that his attitude may stand in the way of his child's healthy development. He can find that his hatred of authority had its roots in personal feelings and ^{was a} ~~were~~ reactions, perhaps, to the unjust authority which his own parents had employed. He may come to recognize the futility of carrying over a conflict from his own childhood into the lives of his children. He may discover in himself a capacity for exercising ^S authority of a different kind from that which he resented in his own parents, ~~a-reasonable-and-just-authority~~ and substitute a reasonable and just authority for the unjust authority which caused him such personal suffering. And if he is able to do this he can even have his old day-dream of triumphing over his own parents, for this is indeed a ~~victory~~ victory, the victory of a mature man and woman ^{person} over childhood conflicts, the ~~the-winning-of-an-old-battle-by-abandonment-of-childish-weapons~~ ^{-war-} ~~throwing-aside-the~~ of-resentment-and-hate-and-substituting-wisdom the battle won at last by throwing aside the childish weapons of resentment and hate and substituting wisdom and self-knowledge in the ^{understandable} striving to

surpass one's own parents.

For

But parenthood is not only a time when one's own childhood conflicts are re-aroused. It can also be a time when childhood conflicts are resolved. The experience of being a parent can also ~~create~~ ~~bring-about-a-state~~ strengthen the positive feelings toward one's own parents. The ~~same~~ trials of parenthood now experienced personally deepen the understanding of one's ^{own} parents. Knowledge of one's own imperfections as a parent soften the criticism of ~~ea~~-childhood. Many parents ^{now} discover a new and deeper understanding of themselves and their relationships to their own parents, ^{and} a compassion for ~~the~~ their own parents which comes out of identification with the parental role, ~~-and-satisfactions-in-marriage-and-parenthood-when~~ the satisfactions in marriage and parenthood cause the old injuries and hurts of childhood to recede and become unimportant. Parenthood can truly be a process of healing and mending, a maturing of the personality.

We cannot leave this subject without touching on a related topic, one that evolved curiously out of ~~psychiatric~~ the spread of psychiatric knowledge in the past half-century. I cannot find a name for this phenomenon; let's call it "Childhood as Destiny". It is the belief that the experiences of childhood determine one's fate, ~~and-justify~~ commit the personality to ~~a-course-of-action-~~ rigid patterns of behavior and, ~~as-causative-factors~~ as antecedents of character can be used to justify ~~the-behavior~~ and to excuse all manner of prejudices, quirks, personal failings and lapses of judgment or morality in the adult. In modern novels we are asked to excuse crime, violence, vice, weakness, inconstancy