

out an afterlife, he reflected for
th God there, rather than there
ating: "I guess I choose to be
be lonely to be there in heaven
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9

God, My Enemy

When Bernadine Fisher was asked to draw a picture of God as she felt God to be she drew what is shown here (fig. 6) in a light yellow color, and wrote her explanation below it: "A bright, clean, warm feeling."

In presenting Bernadine Fisher I will attempt to demonstrate the following, using the schema proposed for all cases.

1. In relation to her belief in God she belongs to category four: those who struggle with a demanding, harsh God they would like to get rid of if they were not convinced of his existence and power.

2. In connection with the developmental level of the representation, she presents an interesting problem because she is capable of shifting levels by focusing on only one aspect of the representation. When she is able to make full use of her representational potential, the representation belongs to the phase in which full separation from the object has been achieved under severely pathological conditions. For her, validation (Sander, 1975) as a valued daughter has never occurred. From another descriptive point of view (Edgumbe and Burgner, 1972, p. 309) her case shows a constant relationship to a specific object.

In psychoanalytic terms the representation belongs to the anal sadistic phase with its sadomasochistic involvement with the object (Fenichel, 1945, pp. 66-68). An abnormal relation with the maternal object has contributed to the prevalence of this type of representation. In terms of narcissistic development, her case belongs to a late period of recognition in which one's own worth as a total historical person needs to be confirmed by the parental object.¹ To

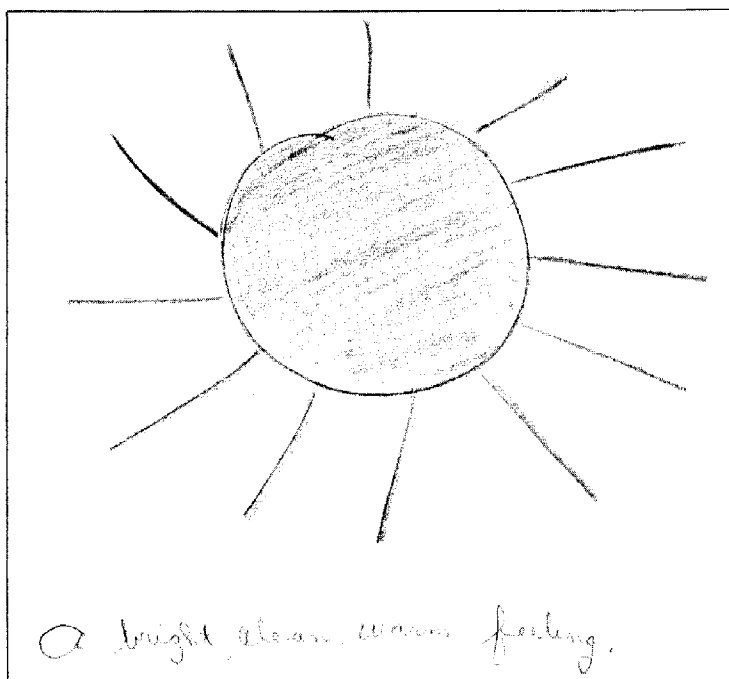


Fig. 6

compensate for the narcissistic injury suffered in this respect Bernadine Fisher elaborated an ideal self as the perfect daughter (Sandler, Holder, and Meers, 1963). Her failure to achieve her ideal and obtain recognition kept her life in a constant state of turmoil. It also kept her enraged and deeply ashamed of herself (Kohut, 1966, pp. 255-56).

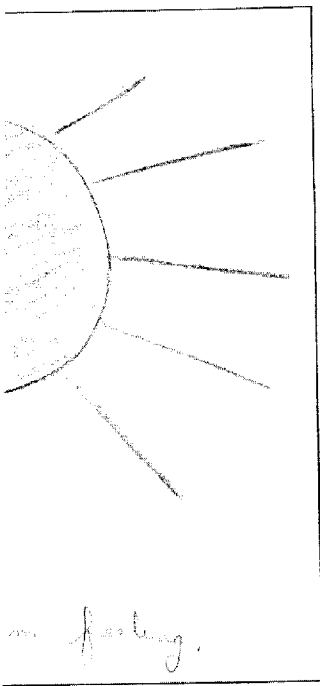
3. Her God representation draws its prevailing characteristics from the maternal representation. The father and the paternal grandmother also seem to have contributed to it, however, as well as the representation of the family as a unit. Bernadine's serious difficulty in dealing with ambivalent feelings and issues prevented her from integrating all those aspects into a more cohesive representation. Various aspects of that poorly synthesized representation come to her conscious or preconscious attention at different moments according to her own state of idealization, hope, dejection, or narcissistic rage. In that kaleidoscopic picture the maternal imago, or at least prevailing components of the maternal representation, are always lurking in the background. Developmentally, the maternal representations available for this use vary from early states of bodily satisfaction to well-structured representations in the phallic stage of development. None belongs to the oedipal mother. In this respect the God representation, like the maternal or any other, is at the service of a dyadic relationship.

4. As for elaboration and transrepresentations into a God representation of objects has not reached permits any further use. The distadult she is are constantly in such objects that her representations opposing aspects nor lend them (Lichtenberg and Slap, 1973).² The others from her family were used God representation. Most of the transrepresentation is used. In Bernadine Fisher's representation is at all different from the representation one has the impression that God is her representations. At other moments have been elaborated slightly and is not then, the prevailing representation is sensorimotor, visual elements, including the represented being. Although she is at the characteristics of an existing human person is ever present.

5. The defenses chiefly used are projection, displacement, partial identification, representation,³ and self-devaluation, maintaining a sado-masochistic stance there is somebody who could give her such a bad person. But she refuses to want to face the possibility that her discovery that there is nobody capable.

6. The most prevalent use of displacement to the cosmic sphere remains unchanged in its pathetic world in its consequences and additions.

7. The cumulative traumas (Kament were the following: (1) a severely isolated, teen-age parental couple, (2) sadomasochistic, rejecting, passive-dependent, clinging, child reared from drug addiction and was socially deprived background, with multiproblem family (Bandler, 1959) development of a child whose psychical life. She became a borderline character with profound worthlessness, constantly



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4. As for elaboration and transformation of the maternal and other representations into a God representation, none have taken place. Her representation of objects has not reached a level of integration and synthesis which permits any further use. The disturbed and neglected child she was and the adult she is are constantly in such profound and multiple conflict with her objects that her representations could neither reach any synthesis of their opposing aspects nor lend themselves to any other use or transformation (Lichtenberg and Slap, 1973).² Therefore either the maternal representation or others from her family were used alternately or simultaneously to form her God representation. Most of the time only one aspect of the maternal representation is used. In Bernadine Fisher's case I doubt that the God representation is at all different from the representation of primary objects. At moments one has the impression that God is only an extrinsic word she applies to her representations. At other moments the God representation seems to have been elaborated slightly and is not quite identical to the others. In summary, then, the prevailing representations are preconceptual, composed mostly of sensorimotor, visual elements, including intense feelings attributed to the represented being. Although she is able to represent God as having most of the characteristics of an existing human being, no full representation of a complex human person is ever present.

5. The defenses chiefly used in dealing with the God representation are projection, displacement, partial idealization, partial use of one aspect of the representation,³ and self-devaluation. All these defenses are at the service of maintaining a sado-masochistic status quo which protects her secret hope that there is somebody who could give her love and recognition if she were not such a bad person. But she refuses to change, perhaps because she does not want to face the possibility that being good might bring about the terrible discovery that there is nobody capable of giving anything.

6. The most prevalent use of the God representation is as an object for displacement to the cosmic sphere of her painful domestic drama. The drama remains unchanged in its pathetic simplicity, however, echoing to the after-world in its consequences and adding to her already intense distress.

7. The cumulative traumas (Kahn, 1963) which so affected her development were the following: (1) a severely pathological, infantile, depressive, isolated, teen-age parental couple, (2) early childhood rejections by her parents, (3) a sadomasochistic, rejecting, phobic, borderline mother, (4) a passive-dependent, clinging, childish, emotionally hungry father who suffered from drug addiction and was a powerful rival for maternal care, (5) a socially deprived background, with the family and social dynamics of the multiproblem family (Bandler, 1967). All these factors contributed to the development of a child whose psychic pathology and symptoms started with her life. She became a borderline child, and an adult deeply convinced of her profound worthlessness, constantly searching for a maternal object who could

give her some sense of worth. Her mother and her God are incapable of fulfilling that need. Her therapists, at best, can temporarily alleviate her depression, acting out, and sadomasochistic entanglements.

8. In relation to official religion, the God offered by the Roman Catholic church was denied existence by her parents. The paternal grandmother was a believer and offered the children a "good" God. The teachings of the church and actual, positive experience with caring, religious people barely touched her God representation. One may say, however, that God's goodness did impress her (even when part of it originates in her own defensive idealization) because as himself, her God is basically an appealing person with whom she cannot have a harmonious relation.

9. As for her need for a God, there is only the ever-present frustration of not deserving him. The only thing that could relieve her pain and guilt would be for God to cease to exist. He does not. He remains an eternal, painful reminder of her unredeemable badness.

10. In APA terms Bernadine Fisher is a passive-aggressive personality, who would generally be diagnosed as suffering from a severe borderline character disorder (Kernberg, 1967, 1975; Robbins, 1976) originating in insufficiently good mothering from the earliest days of her development. Even with intensive help and multiagency involvement she and her children will perpetuate the difficulties of the multiproblem family unit. Her search for mothering cannot be satisfied. At best it can be ameliorated and controlled between periods of severe acting out of conflicts with her mother, therapist, husband, and children. All fail to help her achieve a feeling of being worthwhile.⁴ God fails the task as miserably as all the others.

THE STORY OF BERNADINE FISHER

The admission of Bernadine Fisher, a twenty-seven-year old married woman, to a psychiatric unit was a predictable event. She is the oldest among seven children of an Irish working-class, multiproblem family that for years had resorted to various welfare and psychiatric services to keep only a precarious emotional balance. She had been hospitalized four years earlier after a series of gynecological problems related to her second pregnancy, and she reacted to these with depression, anxiety, low back pain, and finally a suicidal gesture. After discharge she was seen regularly by a woman therapist for three and one-half years on a once-a-week basis. Her therapist summed up the work of that period, saying that they had talked extensively about the patient's dependency and anger toward her mother, ambivalence and rage toward her children, intense feelings of inadequacy, worthlessness, and guilt, her marriage difficulties, and her intense jealousy of her siblings as she attempted to prevail in her mother's affection. The therapist warned: "She has formed a trusting relationship, but I would predict that her ambivalence toward her mother will also be directed toward our relationship, and I would be wary of her attempts

to extract from the situation what warning was given to the new father. The transition took place without incident at her highest capacity, taking care of seeing her therapist regularly in sessions. Four events suddenly changed the situation: (1) Her husband quit his job and began a new one; (2) He left the neighborhood. (3) Her sister decided to give her a wedding; jealous of her mother never giving her a daughter had to be evaluated by several subjects in school in spite of her high ability. (4) She began discussing Bernadine's future with her therapist. In several events she missed several appointments. Her therapist would follow her course if she wanted to come they could stop. (5) Her inability to function. Finally she decided it would bring her to the hospital at a moment that she and I met.

Bernadine Fisher's parents were class teen-agers, who at the age of 17 eloped and get married against the wishes of that her daughter was pregnant. Her mother refused to see her again. The search of a life elsewhere and the beginning of a new life began. They called her mother but her husband drove all the way home to see her in a hospital to face childbirth. During the delivery, and through the story of her labor and postpartum she had suffered and how she had swollen breasts were pumped by her mother. The child was healthy, but from the beginning and demanding baby," or even more.

Four months later the mother of the second child the family returned to a lasting relation with the husband. Bernadine was months old and already having problems with her breath (and being treated by her mother with a water faucet), banging her head on the wall. The pediatrician referred mother's remarks, whatever they were, so she could have further contact. At the age of two

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to extract from the situation what she feels she missed in her childhood." That warning was given to the new female therapist who was replacing her. The transition took place without much turmoil and the patient seemed to be at her highest capacity, taking care of her home, working part time, and seeing her therapist regularly in spite of the constant turmoil in her household. Four events suddenly changed that brief period of relative peace. (1) Her husband quit his job and began a frantic search for another. (2) Her best friend left the neighborhood. (3) Her sister became engaged and the mother promised to give her a wedding; jealousy and rage overcame Bernadine, remembering that her mother never gave *her* a wedding. (4) Finally, her oldest daughter had to be evaluated psychiatrically because she was failing all subjects in school in spite of her high intelligence. The patient and the therapist began discussing Bernadine's fitness as a mother. In the context of these four events she missed several appointments, believing that if others deserted her, her therapist would follow course. The therapist suggested that if she did not want to come they could stop. She responded with depression, withdrawal, and inability to function. Finally she took a mild drug overdose, knowing that it would bring her to the hospital where her therapist worked. It was at that moment that she and I met.

Bernadine Fisher's parents were two depressed, lonely, angry, working-class teen-agers, who at the age of eighteen decided to have a child and then elope and get married against their parents' wishes. When the mother learned that her daughter was pregnant out of wedlock, she became indignant and refused to see her again. The eloping couple then left their home town in search of a life elsewhere and they were still on the road when the labor pains began. They called her mother but she refused any help. The frightened young husband drove all the way home to have his mother with him, leaving his wife in a hospital to face childbearing alone. The young woman was terrified during the delivery, and throughout the patient's childhood she repeated the story of her labor and postpartum pain again and again, insisting on how much she had suffered and how she did not breastfeed the child, although her swollen breasts were pumped by machine regardless of how much they bled. The child was healthy, but from day one she was described as a "pretty bad and demanding baby," or even a "terrible baby."

Four months later the mother conceived again. Immediately after delivery of the second child the family returned to their home town and reestablished a lasting relation with the husband's parents. Bernadine was fourteen or fifteen months old and already having psychogenic symptoms. She was holding her breath (and being treated by having her head held under the running cold-water faucet), banging her head on the sidewalk, and having temper tantrums. The pediatrician referred mother and child to a psychiatrist. The psychiatrist's remarks, whatever they were, so infuriated the mother that she refused any further contact. At the age of two Bernadine had a tonsillectomy. A small but

had a kitten that was her very own. Back of the car, and in closing the car door, instantly. The father and Bernadine parked it in the yard. Her memory of the kitten was vivid. One wonders what transitional object had on her and her father and object relations. By this point Bernadine reconciled with her daughter. The child the following year the grandmother later that she had died.

of the childhood illnesses, which culminated in meningitis. She collapsed on the street and her hospitalization was traumatic. She was very dependent on her mother who had their mothers with them. Her father came to see her and that she cried because of the angry at the time of discharge because of the crib toys with her. Once again her mother interrupted.

as a fire in the house and her baby in the flaming curtains falling on him and the five children every other year and the mother and father quarreled continually, and Bernadine, though never very hard. At that time Bernadine had lots of temper tantrums, cried a lot. As for her developing body, she was very ugly.

became close to her paternal grandmother and who had taken care of her as a toddler. Bernadine felt that her mother had lots of presents, and always seemed to her that she resented her daughter-in-law's seriousness she would comment to Bernadine when she would stay home and care for her mother. Bernadine always felt her grandmother was loved that she did not love her. She was almost as weak and childish as Bernadine's dependence in eloping, they became dependent on their mother as soon as they returned to their father from childhood and suffered from Bernadine's happiness all his life. He had been an alcoholic and with some help, he finally managed to get off the amphetamines and tranquilizers. He was dependent on their bad behavior, would beat

the children. His depression could not tolerate crying. If Bernadine cried, the father would beat her until she stopped. He seemed to have the power of evoking maximum frustration in the children. He would, for example, refuse absolutely to let them go to some place of amusement. Then at last he would concede, just when it was too late to make arrangements to go. He was employed most of the time but provided only meager support for the family: his income had to be supplemented by his wife's. He had no friends, hobbies, or emotional investments other than his work and his family. He was constantly ridden by fear of being abandoned and was especially terrified of being committed to a mental hospital. Both parents used this possibility as a threat to Bernadine, telling her that if she continued to misbehave she would end up in a mental institution. This was probably one of her father's ways of winning her alliance in his unceasing competition for her mother. Bernadine illustrated his ability to impose on her, saying, "The most important person in my family was my father because he had to do everything his way and everything he liked to do . . . He never let any of us be happy; he always seemed to want to ruin everything happy that was going to happen."

The therapist who saw him last stated that he was "incapable of enjoying himself or facing any problems, living in a constant state of anxiety." He was unwilling or unable, the therapist said, to do anything for himself or the family.

Bernadine's mother was also a lifelong psychiatric patient, afflicted with severe phobias and anxieties and as frustrated in her dependency needs as her husband. She denied the existence of problems, refusing to admit that her husband was alcoholic or that her children had needs and problems of their own. She placed adult responsibilities on the children, assuming that they had the ability to do what she expected. If they failed, she would berate them and confuse them with contradictory behavior. An everyday example was her frequent complaint that Bernadine did not help with the household chores. When the girl asked her what she could do, the mother would say, "Never mind. It's too late now."

The mother's envy of her children is apparent from a later episode. When Bernadine graduated from high school, her father gave her a watch. Her mother looked at it and said that she had always wanted a watch and had never had one. Bernadine offered hers to her mother. She rejected it saying, "It's too late now. It would not have any meaning."

The mother made Bernadine her confidante. Mother and daughter would talk about all the other members of the family and their problems; yet her listening brought her no other privileges or special status.

In Bernadine's moments of crisis the mother would become very involved, predicting destruction while protesting her wish to help. The patient's first therapist said that the mother was available to Bernadine only in times of crisis.

Another critical level of involvement between mother and daughter kept them arguing with each other and loving and hating each other forever. Her mother said openly that if Bernadine would only change her behavior along lines suggested by her, the family situation would improve and all problems would disappear. Bernadine dreaded these exchanges and felt guilty each time she said no to her mother's demands.

In their marriage the parental couple behaved like two small children in desperate need of a maternal figure, and alternately accepting and rejecting it. They were unable to separate themselves from their elders, their extended family, or each other. The life style of this family is best described by Louise Bandler (1967) who, talking about multiproblem families, says:

The parents have grown up with few of the learning experiences that foster maturity. They have had inadequate models for identification and marked learning deficits. They have had few, if any, experiences of a tender loving relationship with adults. They have known only inconsistencies in these relationships. They bring to their current family life, as if packaged from the past for distribution and perpetuation, all the same deprivations, dangers springing from uncontrolled impulses, excesses leading to aggressive acts and asocial acting out, inconsistencies of every sort, and a general passivity toward actively changing things.

It is clear that in our group we are dealing with families of children. When one examines the needs and patterns of adaptation of the parents and the children, one is startled by the similarity of their behavior and methods of coping. Except for differences in size they could all be siblings. There is marked rivalry between parents and children. Parents seek to satisfy their own needs even when those of their children are pressing and urgent. Their management of child care is as unpredictable as their own impulsive acting out. There are few routines. Food and sleep follow no pattern. Training is inconsistent and dependent on what adult is around at a given moment. Development of the child proceeds or fails to proceed with little recognition or knowledge by the mothers of age-appropriate response or behavior.

Love, which springs from understanding, and comfort, which follows on the heels of perception of stress or pain, are minimal in the parents' relationship to their children. Their responses, which are sharply mobilized by their action orientation, contribute toward making family relationships inflexible, hostile, and unyielding.

And yet, when the responses and attitudes of the mothers are examined more closely and over a period of time, it is clear that their behavior is not as stereotyped and one-sided as it appears at first. There are moments when their feelings about themselves are softer and they are less filled with distrust and confusion about themselves. At these times their motherliness, which has been obscured by clouds, peeps out with momentary brightness and warmth.

Psychologically it would appear that although the parents are so infantile, primitive, and disorganized that they seem no more advanced than

their children, they have acted covering every phase of development of their children, their husband between them and their child adulthood. That is, they have tokens of adult functioning.

In their relationship to the competing siblings. In their marked aggression toward psychotic disturbances where mothers are able to obtain direct competition toward the child.

Initially, the only form of narcissistic extension of their

In Bernadine's case the entire coming and going, demanding leaving. Children, siblings, and relatives—all of them came and for maternal figures who would arguments, accusations, open curses, and evil wishes were an late example was the mother's periodic inpatient, her children would the hospital. In Bernadine's family developmental life was described crises."

Neither of the parents believe Catholic upbringing. But they receive the sacraments. Bernadine with them, but it was to no avail grandmother was a religious person the time. She always had the rosary about the church and how good.

School brought new miseries to new neighborhood and she did not her experiences as "terrible."

I was always in trouble. Every stolen a couple of things in the accused me of stealing. Anytime they could pin it on me they did. My life from six to eleven was just miserable. I was in trouble other day. I cried all the time teachers. I hated everybody at

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their children, they have achieved some islands of intact ego functioning covering every phase of development. The mothers can give limited care to their children, their husbands, and their households. The real difference between them and their children is that they have developed fragments of adulthood. That is, they have what might be referred to as vestiges or tokens of adult functioning . . .

In their relationship to their children they are highly competitive, like competing siblings. In their competition for need satisfaction, they show marked aggression toward the children. However, unlike neurotic or psychotic disturbances where needs are not reality-determined, when the mothers are able to obtain direct satisfaction, some of the aggression and competition toward the children tends to disappear.

Initially, the only form of love these parents are able to show is a narcissistic extension of their personality (pp. 249-52).

In Bernadine's case the entire extended family participated in this life style, coming and going, demanding care, taking it, searching for it, and then leaving. Children, siblings, parents, aunts and uncles, neighbors and relatives—all of them came and went, imposing similar demands, searching for maternal figures who would help, guide, soothe, comfort. In this context, arguments, accusations, open rivalry, endless verbal and physical fights, curses, and evil wishes were unrestrictedly voiced by children and adults. A late example was the mother's prophecy that if Bernadine became a psychiatric inpatient, her children would be kidnaped and murdered while she was in the hospital. In Bernadine's family all the children had problems, and their developmental life was described by one of the social workers as "a series of crises."

Neither of the parents believed in God, notwithstanding their Irish Roman Catholic upbringing. But they insisted that the children go to church and receive the sacraments. Bernadine would beg her parents to come to church with them, but it was to no avail. They never set foot there. The paternal grandmother was a religious person. Bernadine said of her: "She prayed all the time. She always had the rosary in her hands. She was always telling us about the church and how good it was."

School brought new miseries to Bernadine. The family had just moved to a new neighborhood and she did not know any of her classmates. She described her experiences as "terrible."

I was always in trouble. Everybody hated me. I was a terrible child. I had stolen a couple of things in the first grade and from that day on everybody accused me of stealing. Anything that happened in the whole school, if they could pin it on me they did, and sometimes I remember not doing it. My life from six to eleven was terrible. That was the worst part of my life. I was just miserable. I was in trouble at the school. I was in trouble every other day. I cried all the time. I hated myself. I hated my family, my teachers. I hated everybody and everything and I was just miserable.

Her bad feelings about herself appeared the day she had to go to confession for the first time on the eve of her First Communion. She was tremendously frightened about her own badness and convinced that she would not be given absolution. She went to the church but could not go to the confessional. She lied, saying that she had gone. A nun noticed that she had not, however, and went to see her mother, telling her that the girl had to go to confession. The nun persuaded her and brought her to the priest, who treated her kindly and made her confession "very easy." She was surprised that the priest was not shocked at hearing about her sins.

Throughout this period Bernadine had violent tantrums, destroying her clothes and the furniture in her bedroom, and pulling out her hair. She brooded about suicide and made several minor attempts that went unnoticed. The idea of killing herself colored her thoughts during all her elementary school years. In the taped questionnaire she listed her mother as the most loved, most hated, and most needed person from ages six to twelve. At eleven she had her first menstrual period. It was Thanksgiving Day and the usual crowd was in the house. The mother announced the event publicly, and Bernadine was deeply embarrassed. She had bad, crampy periods from then on.

Her stealing increased and she was referred to a psychiatrist in the local mental health clinic. She became very much attached to him, and her grades, her behavior, and her subjective experience began to improve. At that time she also made her first lasting friendship with a girl classmate.

Bernadine's treatment was terminated abruptly because regulations of the clinic required that her parents participate in the program. They saw the social worker once and refused to return, saying that it was their daughter and not they who needed help. Following the termination of her brief treatment, her grades dropped again and she became boisterous with her classmates and regained some of her bad reputation. But she stopped stealing, kept a close relationship with her girl friend, and was friendlier with her classmates.

The improvement showed in her experience of Confirmation. For the first time she had a good experience:

I had my Confirmation and I felt good about it. I belonged to church things. I liked church and the feeling when I went to church . . . I felt happy, good . . . I had no real bad feelings.⁵ I liked belonging to the church, a team, the Little Children of Mary.

Yet she did not feel close to God: "I never felt I deserve God to love me . . . I used to pray for him to make me good . . . if anybody could, he could."

When she was twelve or thirteen, her mother told her that she had been conceived out of wedlock and recounted the story of their elopement and marriage. The mother said she had had to get married because of her pregnancy, and that this was a mistake. She implied that she was telling her this

in case Bernadine became pregnant to marry and repeat her mistake. The mother blamed and accused both parents of not looking out for Bernadine's badness to her being responsible for endless discussions and bitter arguments with her. Her social life improved. She lived outside the house, but "miserably" until she pushed her to marry a boy friend's father when she was seventeen, but she dropped him.

She graduated from high school and being "happy" with them. Bernadine felt that even when she did very well, she was not a good father." She described her predicament:

They thought I was terrible. I didn't know how to have any. They did not understand me outside the house, but in the house.

At that point her first and only boyfriend was dismissed and she missed her friend and considered the situation a failure. Soon afterward she met her husband, a Jewish, four years her senior, and a social worker as "a dutiful son" who was passive-dependent, emotionally dependent, and a direct and undisguised replica of her parents. Her parents forbade her to see him, and she had to place a restraining order on him. She married him in the church. They eloped and ran away from the church. Then, as the mother said, she was "in trouble" about it, and the old relations were broken.

She became pregnant and it was a difficult pregnancy and had to be hospitalized. She was delivered by a Caesarean section. In spite of the hospitalization, months later—exactly as her mother had predicted—she brought her to the psychiatric unit with more children. Defying all medical advice, she wanted to have a third child that she could have a normal child (she had a heart defect). The pregnancy was difficult and she experienced her first and last en-

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about it. I belonged to church things.
I went to church . . . I felt happy,
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. . . if anybody could, he could."

mother told her that she had been
l the story of their elopement and
o get married because of her preg-
mplied that she was telling her this

in case Bernadine became pregnant. She wanted her to know she did not have to marry and repeat her mistake. The girl reacted with intense disillusionment, and accused both parents of not loving her. She began to relate her feeling of badness to her being responsible for the marriage. From that moment on, endless discussions and bitter arguments followed about why they had had her. Her social life improved. She had friends, went out, and felt happy outside the house, but "miserable" at home. She dated a bit. Her parents pushed her to marry a boy friend she did not like, even though she was barely seventeen, but she dropped him.

She graduated from high school, got a job, and continued having friends and being "happy" with them. But at home things were as bad as ever. She felt that even when she did very well, she was "never good enough for my father." She described her predicament:

They thought I was terrible. I wanted more freedom and they didn't want me to have any. They did not want me to have any friends. I was happy outside the house, but in the house I was miserable.

At that point her first and only close girl friend moved to another city. She missed her friend and considered the separation "the first big loss I ever had." Soon afterward she met her husband-to-be and decided to marry him. He was Jewish, four years her senior, and a college graduate. He was described by the social worker as "a dutiful son trying to please his parents, . . . markedly passive-dependent, emotionally constricted, . . . hard-working person." From the time the patient met her husband to the present her life has been a direct and undisguised replica, chapter by chapter, of her mother's. Her parents forbade her to see him, and threatened to have her locked up and to place a restraining order on him. Her father refused to give his permission for the marriage. They eloped and returned in a brief time to be married legally and in the church. Then, as the grandparents had done, everybody forgot about it, and the old relations were reestablished.

She became pregnant and it was "horrible." She was sick most of the time and had to be hospitalized. She was seriously ill with toxemia and had to have a Caesarean section. In spite of the ordeal, she became pregnant again three months later—exactly as her mother had done. It was that pregnancy that brought her to the psychiatric unit the first time. She was determined to have more children. Defying all medical and psychiatric advice, she became pregnant a third time. She wanted to have another baby to prove to everybody that she could have a normal child (the second child was born with a minor heart defect). The pregnancy was more normal, and during delivery she experienced her first and last encounter with God. In her words:

I thought I was going to die and I was going to heaven: I wanted to see my husband before I went. That was the only time I ever felt I had any encounter with God. I was not afraid at all.

That pregnancy occurred in the context of her paternal grandmother's death. She knew her grandmother was dying when she conceived the child. She described her experience:

My grandmother died; . . . she was my mother because my mother worked. I was very upset and I hurt, but she had been sick for two years in a hospital and I prepared myself for it, but I am still upset. I wake up crying and thinking about her. When I see somebody who looks like her I get a funny feeling that I want to cry and I have mixed feelings about it. Sometimes I hated her, sometimes I loved her.

The third child seems to have been a planned substitute for her grandmother.

At home, her situation was deteriorating, going from crisis to crisis. She was always afraid (like her father) of being abandoned by her husband. She constantly quarreled with him and nagged him. Her children had behavioral problems. She had a fourth child and the doctor succeeded in imposing a tubal ligation upon her to protect her health. She had wanted more children, and she reacted with more depression. Then her husband's mother died, depriving him of his main source of emotional support, and Bernadine of the considerable mothering she had extracted from her mother-in-law.

Finally, her daughter reproduced one of Bernadine's childhood symptoms. She was failing in school and running frantically from one member of the family to another asking them if they loved her. Bernadine was enraged with her children at that point. Sometimes the therapist worried that she would harm them physically or neglect them beyond tolerance. It was in the context of this progressive deterioration and the events mentioned earlier that Bernadine took a mild overdose and returned as an inpatient.

With intense support and family work she regained some equilibrium. But it was obvious to all involved that this woman would never find psychic balance and that she would spend the rest of her life searching for the mothering approval and recognition she had never had. Her nurses summarize her conflict by saying that she presented herself as "a confused, anxious helpless girl who is ruled by her mother." They thought that the only way out of her life predicament was for her "to recognize herself as a person and cut the umbilical cord without feeling she is killing her mother."

BERNADINE FISHER'S GOD REPRESENTATION AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE IN HER PSYCHIC EQUILIBRIUM

In analyzing Bernadine Fisher's composite God representation I have found it to originate mainly, though not exclusively, in her interactions with her mother and the parental couple. Her grandmother seems to have provided an independent source for a God image⁶ and her father for a Devil representation. Table 4 provides the data necessary to follow my argument.

Table 4. Sources of I

God

- "I do not pray, because I feel that God does not listen to me if I don't follow his rules."
- "If I am in distress I do not resort to prayer because he doesn't listen."
- "If I am happy, I do not thank God because he doesn't listen."
- "Prayer is not important to me because God doesn't listen."
- "I do not feel close to God because I don't believe he can help me in any way."
- "If I were to describe God according to my experience with him I would say that it is unfair, because he doesn't listen to my sides."
- "I never felt I deserved God to love me."
- "I don't think I ever felt close to God because I couldn't do the things expected of me."
- "In my way of feeling, for me to fully please God I would have to be another person because I don't please him."
- "If I receive an absolute proof that God does not exist, I will be happy, because I don't feel guilty."
- "For me, my love for God is important because I need him to give me the strength."
- "What I like the most about God is his strength there because of his strength."
- "Emotionally, I would like to have the strength that God had, because I need it."

Table 4. Sources of Bernadine Fisher's God Representation

GOD	PARENTS / FAMILY
• "I do not pray, because I feel that God will not listen to me if I don't follow his rules."	• "The member of my family I felt the most distant from was . . . my whole family, because they never listened to what I felt or wanted, just what they felt and wanted."
• "If I am in distress I do not resort to God because he doesn't listen."	• <i>Social worker's note:</i> "Being herself meant risking an argument with either her father or mother. She could not risk being an individual whenever opportunity presented itself."
• "If I am happy, I do not thank God because he doesn't listen."	• "In my family we were not close at all because my father and mother weren't home and us children were always trying to get that attention."
• "Prayer is not important to me because [God] doesn't listen."	
• "I do not feel close to God because I do not believe he can help me in any way."	
• "If I were to describe God according to my my experience with him I would say that he is unfair, because he doesn't listen to both sides."	
"I never felt I deserved God to love me."	"I wanted my family to love and accept me and think the things I did were right."
"I don't think I ever felt close to God. I couldn't do the things expected of me."	"[I want] my mother and father to be proud of me and to really be proud that they had me."
	"Every time I got upset I would yell at my father, that they didn't love me."
"In my way of feeling, for me to fully please God I would have to be another person, because I don't please him."	"I could never please my parents. I was so concerned about pleasing them that I made myself miserable."
"If I receive an absolute proof that God does not exist, I will be happy, because I won't feel guilty."	"If I could change my past I would like to change my parents and my religion, because they make me feel <i>guilty</i> ." [The patient's emphasis.]
	MOTHER
• "For me, my love for God is important because I need him to give me the strength."	• "If I could change myself I would like to be like my mother because I thought she was very strong when I was little."
• "What I like the most about God is his being there because of his strength."	• "The member of my family whom I admire the most is my Mother because she always [was] so strong, and always seemed to overcome anything."
• "Emotionally, I would like to have the strength that God had, because I need it."	

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GOD

"For me, the love of God towards me is important because I don't want to die thinking he hates me."

"I never felt I deserved God to love me."

"I consider God as my enemy because he doesn't think much of me."

"I don't think I ever felt close to God. I couldn't do the things expected of me."

"In my way of feeling, for me to fully please God I would have to be another person, because I don't please him."

"The feeling I get from my relationship with God is one of displeasing him because I don't live according to his rules."

"What I dislike the most about religion is its rules in order for God to love you, because some of his rules are stupid."

"[Sometimes] I have felt I hated God because he has so many rules to follow if I want to love him."

"The love of God towards me is important because I don't want to die thinking he hates me."

"I feel that what God expects from me is to obey his rules and live by them because we have to in order to be good."

"I think that God sees me as a person he has lost because I won't change my ideas to his."

MOTHER

"The member of the family whom I loved the most was my mother. I loved her this much because she was my mother and I wanted her to like me."

[Ideal mother] "A mother who wanted me, who stayed home and took care of me and was happy and liked me."

Social worker's note: "If her mother loved her, the grandmother stated—which the patient took to mean if she personally were really worth loving—she [mother] would have stayed home."

Social worker's note: "The patient's guilt relates to the patient's failure to live up to what she felt was the mother's expectations and wishes."

"The patient wanted her mother to say to her that she was worth having."

Resident's note: "The patient recalls the mother saying, 'Why don't you help with the house? Why do you have to be told? You should see it on your own.' But the patient could not, so she asked the mother what to do to help, but the mother said: 'Never mind. Too late now.' The patient felt confused, angry, inadequate."

Resident's formulation: "Her whole life has been an attempt to get what she never got as a child from her mother and the innumerable mother transferences that she projects all around her, as if getting it now would magically undo the past and allow her to feel worthwhile."

Social worker's note: "Many of her difficulties come out of her submission and lack of independence in relationships . . . and are related to a lifelong pattern of submission to her mother. Mrs. Fisher's guilt was related to her failure to live up to what she felt was the mother's expectations and wishes."

GOD

"I don't want to feel he punishes because he has plenty of reason to punish."

"I don't want to feel he punishes because he would punish me for the way I am."

"What I like the most about God is his love for me."

"I believe in a personal God because I can still communicate sometimes and feel his love when I am alone."

DEVIL

"I think that [the Devil] wants us to be happy because then we can't be happy."

Maternal
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The maternal elements alternate with the paternal consciousness have their source:

1. Total body sensations involving the body.
2. An idealized, strong mother image.
3. An idealized, fantasized girl image and appreciating her.
4. A devalued self-image based on (a) failure to love; and (b) failure to be a perfect daughter.

I turn from the maternal component to the paternal component of the parental couple. Afterward I will turn to the God representation.

MOTHER

number of the family whom I loved the most as my mother. I loved her this much because she was my mother and I wanted her to die."

mother] "A mother who wanted me, stayed home and took care of me and was loved and liked me."

worker's note: "If her mother loved me, the grandmother stated—which the patient took to mean if she personally were really loving—she [mother] would have stayed home."

worker's note: "The patient's guilt regarding the patient's failure to live up to what she felt was the mother's expectations and demands."

The patient wanted her mother to say to her that she was worth having."

patient's note: "The patient recalls the mother saying, 'Why don't you help with the house? Why do you have to be told? You should see it on your own.' But the patient did not, so she asked the mother what to do to help, but the mother said: 'Never mind. Too busy now.' The patient felt confused, angry, and inadequate."

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GOD

"I don't want to feel he punishes me, because he has plenty of reason to punish me."

"I don't want to feel he punishes people, because he would punish me for the way I feel."

"What I like the most about God is his being there."

"I believe in a personal God because I can still communicate sometimes and feel close when I am alone."

DEVIL

"I think that [the Devil] wants us to be bad, because then we can't be happy."

FATHER

"The disciplinarian in my family was my father, because my mother and grandmother told him what we did and he punished us."

GRANDMOTHER

"The person in my family I felt the closest to was my grandmother, because she was always there and gave me a lot of presents. And she always seemed to think I was special."

FATHER / SELF

"The member of my family whom I despise the most is my father, because he never let any of us be happy, he always seemed to want to ruin anything happy that was going to happen."

"I feel we are our own devils."

"Emotionally I resemble my father because I am always upset like he was and demanding people's attention."

Maternal Component of the God Representations

The maternal elements alternately used to bring the God representation to consciousness have their sources in the following experiences.

1. Total body sensations involving several sensory modalities.
2. An idealized, strong mother.
3. An idealized, fantasized good mother—capable of giving love to her and appreciating her.
4. A devalued self-image based on (a) unawareness of her mother's inability to love; and (b) failure to satisfy the ideal self demands that she be the perfect daughter.

I turn from the maternal component now to analyze the contributions of the parental couple. Afterward I will come back to a discussion of the maternal component of the God representation.

*Parental and Family Components of the
Representation*

The component elements seem to relate to experiences that Winnicott would list along the lines of true self–false self. They bring into sharp focus the polarity “me–them,” based on inability to feel that communication of inner experience, be it feelings or wishes, can be heard or understood by parents or God. The person (even little person) one senses one is has to remain incommunicado. For purposes of survival the individual takes the alternative route of submitting to the rules of the stronger and needed object. The price paid for this reluctant submission is high, because the object cannot be totally devalued without experiencing intense despair. Thus, hope remains that the other person is *capable* of listening, loving, and so on. The explanation given for her not being heard or helped is then that she does not deserve it, because she is incapable of doing what is right—or, more basically, because she is the wrong person. The chief predicament in her defensive efforts to maintain a precarious equilibrium is simply this: she is not who she should be. Obviously, what is at work is her inability to realize that her parents are in fact *incapable* of coming out of themselves and providing her with the listening, approval, and recognition she wants now and wanted in her early childhood. That possibility has never occurred to her. She sincerely believes that her parents *could* do all those things if she deserved them.

Similarly, God seems capable of listening, helping, loving, being close, and giving strength and happiness—but not to Bernadine.

God’s capacity to listen is demonstrated in the statement that God is “unfair because he doesn’t listen to both sides.”

God’s refusal to listen singles out Bernadine: “I do not pray because I feel God will not listen to me if I don’t follow his rules.”

God’s capacity to help and give strength is illustrated in her “love for God” which she feels is “important” to her “because I need him to give me strength.”

God’s capacity to love is dramatically obvious in the statement, “For me, the love of God towards me is important because I don’t want to die thinking he hates me.”

God’s capacity to be close appears in the statement, “I think that God is closest to those who love him because they are good.”

However appealing God may be to her, she and her God have reached a final antagonistic position, on account of her own problems: “What I resent the most about God is that I can’t live the way he wants me to.” “I don’t think I ever felt close to God. I couldn’t do the things expected of me.” “I think that in general as a person I have dissatisfied God because I don’t live the kind of life he feels people should.”

In spite of this situation, God’s wishes are still good-natured: “I think that God wants me to be good because it will make me happier.”

God is also benign. There is on Bernadine’s side: “I feel I think you have to fear him,

The good disposition God is acceptable: “I don’t want to have reasons to punish me; . . . he

The end result of that process is progressive statements: “I don’t think much of me.” “I think that won’t change my ideas to him

The final irreducible existence: Bernadine Fisher is clear when she says she can be another person, because

She wishes that if it were possible to disappear from her life.⁷ Guilt is present in these parallel statements: “I won’t change my religion and parents will not receive absolute proof that I won’t feel guilty.”

The question emerges of how many of the elements that define a woman is capable only of containing a nurturing object. The answer is a symbiotic unit, almost in a state of being overwhelmed by the children). Bernadine consulted in the study—the father, the patient’s therapist

The following statements illustrate the relation to each other and to the

“The children either play a movie, or stayed in our room in the bedroom or bathroom

“My family was divided between father and my brothers and

“In my family the children

Bernadine Fisher perceives her mother: “He never let me do it.”

If the God representation is an internalized image of hated herself, feeling that she resembles her father because she resembles people’s attention”).

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God is also benign. There is no need to be frightened of him. The problem is on Bernadine's side: "I feel that the fear of God is important because I don't think you have to fear him, you have to fear yourself."

The good disposition God has toward her is of no avail because she is not acceptable: "I don't want to feel he punishes me, because he has plenty of reasons to punish me; . . . he would punish me for the way I feel."

The end result of that predicament is painfully illustrated in the following progressive statements: "I consider God as my enemy because he doesn't think much of me." "I think that God sees me as a person he has lost because I won't change my ideas to his."

The final irreducible existential antagonism between God and Bernadine Fisher is clear when she says that "for me to fully please God I would have to be another person, because I don't please him."

She wishes that if it were possible, God and her parents would both disappear from her life.⁷ Guilt is her common experience with them both, as shown in these parallel statements: "If I could change my past, I would like to change my religion and parents, because they make me feel *guilty*." "If I receive absolute proof that God does not exist, I will be happy, because I won't feel guilty."

The question emerges of why the parental couple became the source of many of the elements that form the God representation when obviously this woman is capable only of dyadic relations and is constantly searching for a nurturing object. The answer seems to lie in the fact that the parents formed a symbiotic unit, almost in opposition to the children (both parents felt overwhelmed by the children). The evidence for this comes from all sources consulted in the study—the parents' therapist, the social worker who saw the father, the patient's therapist, and the patient herself.

The following statements illustrate Bernadine's view of her parents in relation to each other and to their children:

"The children either played together inside or outside or we went to a movie, or stayed in our room together. My mother and father were always in the bedroom or bathroom together."

"My family was divided into groups. The groups were my mother and father and my brothers and sisters."

"In my family the children were considered as problems."

Bernadine Fisher perceived her father as her most difficult rival in access to her mother: "He never let me talk to my mother and never liked anything I did."

If the God representation is examined more closely, however, the prevailing maternal components emerge from it. Bernadine idealized her mother and hated herself, feeling that she was more like her father ("Emotionally, I resemble my father because I am always upset as he was and demanding people's attention").

In her idealization she wanted to be like her mother, whose strength she admired. Strength is what she feels she needs most from God; that is her reason for loving him. But her mother not only failed to admire her in return but constantly criticized her, accusing her and her siblings of being the cause of her many problems and threatening to abandon them. The patient bore the extra burden of feeling that because she was conceived out of wedlock she was the cause of all the problems that followed in her parents' marriage. Her mother made her a confidante in connection with family problems but refused to acknowledge that the girl meant anything to her or that it was worthwhile to have her. Meanwhile Bernadine has devoted her entire life to obtaining a positive answer to the question of why she was born. She has identified with her mother ("If I could change myself I would like to be like my mother"), tried to be the perfect daughter and failed ("If I described myself as I feel I actually am, I would say I am . . . a terrible daughter because I can't help more as a child"). The grandmother confirmed—in Bernadine's understanding of what she said—that if she had been a worthwhile child, really worth loving, her mother would have stayed home caring for her. Her mother not only refused to say she was worth having but constantly showed dissatisfaction with her, missing no occasion to point out her daughter's defects and announcing the ominous consequences of her badness, for example, that all of the patient's children would be murdered. Gruesome as this picture is, it did not undo Bernadine Fisher's need to believe that her mother was capable of loving. That aspect of her representation of her mother, together with her (obviously erroneous) belief in her mother's strength, constitute the idealized good mother she so desperately needed, and which she used in forming her God representation.

The massive effort to save the goodness of the object blinded her capacity to see herself separately from her mother's evaluation of her. As a result she became convinced that she was a terrible daughter, of mother and God alike. The description is more striking because she sees herself as a good person in other roles: "If I describe myself as I feel I actually am, I would say I am a good mother and wife, a good friend and sister but a terrible daughter because I can't help more as a child." "I think that God sees me as a person he has lost because I won't change my ideas to his."

The Grandmother Representation as a Transient God Image

Bernadine Fisher's best childhood experiences were with her paternal grandmother, who was more emotionally reliable and who conveyed some sense of affection for her. She felt closer to her grandmother than to anyone else in the family. Her fleeting capacity to communicate with a "personal" God seems to have its roots in her relation to the grandmother who accepted her as a real child. It is interesting to see that she can communicate with her God only

when she is alone—when the pre- interfere with her special relation v keep that "personal" image of he sustain herself. It is only on rare occ time, the representation of God he have been able to make any connec- tradictory representations.

The other contradictory aspect, source of the image, is her being " who was—in Bernadine's view—a children, never available. I will cc with a nonfrightening God, after t context of her grandmother's death this aspect of the representation.

God, a Sun Which F Warr.

In view of all this one may well be felt him to be—in the form of a sun subjective experience of warmth, c could there be for such an unexpect

There is insufficient evidence to r it represents a wishful, fantasized, s the problems presented by the experi- tations:

1. The sun is not a person, a real
2. Not being a person but a thing shines over good people or t badness may be bypassed by feelings experienced in brigh physical experience of well-bi- bolic God.⁸
3. The symbol permits a quasi-s- duce a subjective feeling of an- ness and her unsatisfied longi- asked to do so)—longings that her childhood.
4. The symbol also deprives the capacity to give love, making conflicts and wishes for it.⁹
5. Finally, the symbol provides e on the skin, physically and th- ness, brightness)—all very m physical closeness so importa

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when she is alone—when the presence of her mother and father does not interfere with her special relation with her grandmother. But she is unable to keep that "personal" image of her God in the focus of her mind, and so sustain herself. It is only on rare occasions that she can resort to it. Most of the time, the representation of God her "enemy" prevails. She never seems to have been able to make any connection or synthesis between these two contradictory representations.

The other contradictory aspect, which confirms the grandmother as the source of the image, is her being "always there" in contrast with the mother who was—in Bernadine's view—always with the father and never with the children, never available. I will comment on this later. Her only encounter with a nonfrightening God, after the delivery of her third child and in the context of her grandmother's death, seems to lend some indirect support to this aspect of the representation.

God, a Sun Which Provides "a Bright, Clean, Warm Feeling"

In view of all this one may well be amazed that Bernadine drew God—as she felt him to be—in the form of a sun emanating rays that provided her with the subjective experience of warmth, cleanliness, and brightness. What sources could there be for such an unexpected picture?

There is insufficient evidence to reach a final conclusion, but I propose that it represents a wishful, fantasized, symbolic representation which obviates all the problems presented by the experiential sources of her other God representations:

1. The sun is not a person, a real object whose rejection may bring despair.
2. Not being a person but a thing, the sun does not discriminate whether it shines over good people or bad people. Her subjective experience of badness may be bypassed by this light-giving but blind God. Bodily feelings experienced in bright sunlight may have provided her with a physical experience of well-being which she could use to create a symbolic God.⁸
3. The symbol permits a quasi-symbiotic experience: the sun's rays produce a subjective feeling of an ego-syntonic quality bypassing her badness and her unsatisfied longings (the sun gives warmth without being asked to do so)—longings that were so shamefully denied satisfaction in her childhood.
4. The symbol also deprives the object of its most appealing traits, the capacity to give love, making it more neutral and tolerable by removing conflicts and wishes for it.⁹
5. Finally, the symbol provides an imaginary experience of being touched on the skin, physically and therefore psychologically (warmth, cleanliness, brightness)—all very much in tune with the dyadic longings for physical closeness so important to this patient.

If these hypotheses are correct, we may conclude that the sun symbol is a highly elaborated transformation of infantile wishes for the holding, good mother Bernadine never had. From this point of view it is adaptive. From another point of view it is defensive, because it is based on the denial of, and concomitant compensation for, an overwhelmingly bad experience with her mother.

There is a second possibility, and that is that some of her experiences with her grandmother have permitted the creation of the symbol. Against this interpretation is the fact that she could have used her grandmother's representation for a personal experience with God, not at the level of bodily feeling but at the much more mature level of "communication."

The Devil Representation

Bernadine Fisher's case seems to fit both Freud's earlier conceptualization of the Devil as unacceptable, and hence repressed, aspects of ourselves, and his later conceptualization as bad aspects of the paternal representation. Bernadine is convinced that "we are our own devils" and denies the existence of a real Devil. Nevertheless, she attributes to him the wish that we be bad and unhappy. Both statements seem to find their source in her paternal representation of a man who could not tolerate any happiness and her identification with him as the aggressive and the despised rival for maternal attention.

Her identification with her father is obvious: "Physically I resemble my father because my features are like his and my eyes and hair are the same color." "Emotionally I resemble my father because I am always upset like he was and demanding people's attention."

This self-perception as a devil, based on her subjective experience of badness in identification with her despised father, may have found a new confirmation in the church's teachings about the Devil, which, in a concrete mind like hers, may have enhanced her inimical experience with God.

CHARACTERISTICS AND ORIGINS OF BERNADINE FISHER'S GOD REPRESENTATION

The Location of God

Bernadine Fisher's God, whether a person or a thing (a sun), is an entity totally outside her. God's center of volition and interest is wholly independent of her. The difference between God and herself is so striking and disproportionate that there is nothing of God, nothing godlike, inside her. God has strength, she lacks it; God has rules, she has to obey them; God has the upper hand, she must submit. Their relation is one of tyranny and obedience. Thus they show themselves to be two completely different beings, at most only tangentially in contact with each other. Bernadine has no ability to influence God. She gives no indication of feeling that any of her actions could ever change the stubborn approach God has to everything. At best, she could, if

she wanted to, fulfill his demand to improve their poor relationship external to her and completely irrevocable.

God, in his turn, may have two (1) he may warm her (like the sun) and she will feel happier. The latter, however, if she were to submit she would have to be another person who could not be more antagonistic and more

Type of C

God is obviously a full person, with definite intentions and wishes in relation to her. He is a remote, benign entity with characteristics of the real sun in the sky. The representation includes characteristics of a complete representation, consistency of well-defined traits. But the behavior, the unbending qualities of the God representation is based on people whom she perceived as the "wrong person."¹⁰

The facts indicate that she achieves her goals and is emotionally satisfied (Fraiberg, 1969; Egan, 1969). Her object constancy is its negative traits are harsh and demanding, in spite of her attachment to it is negative (antagonistic). She presents a person who is strong, wise, and person capable of loving, listening, and understanding—as himself—God is a most appealing representation of the representation of idealization, because in growing up with her God (with the possible exception of her God) she had trouble with most of the other

In conclusion, then, the prevailing characteristics of her experiences with God are the most intolerable aspects: to listen, to love, or to be strong.

The other representations, the God representation, the sun or the Devil, are intellectual and emotional object constancy. She has at least three different representations of God from the other. She uses each independently and she can occasionally communicate with

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she wanted to, fulfill his demands, showing that whatever bending is needed to improve their poor relationship must be done by her, because God is totally external to her and completely immune to her influence—in short, unchangeable.

God, in his turn, may have two benign (though indirect) influences on her: (1) he may warm her (like the sun); (2) after submitting to him she will feel happier. The latter, however, is an impossibility, because for her to submit she would have to be another person. God and Bernadine Fisher could not be more antagonistic and more distant from each other.

Type of God Representation

God is obviously a full person, who undoubtedly exists and who has clearly defined intentions and wishes in relation to Bernadine. Simultaneously, he is a remote, benign entity with characteristics and effects identical to those of the real sun in the sky. The representation of God in each instance is realistic and includes characteristics any of us may observe in a person or a thing. It is a complete representation, consistent and unified in a comprehensive personality of well-defined traits. But the fixity of its traits, the stubbornness of its behavior, the unbending qualities of its demands, indicate that Bernadine's God representation is based on exchanges with very difficult objects, real people whom she perceived as seeing her as she feels she is, hopelessly bad, the "wrong person."¹⁰

The facts indicate that she achieved object constancy—both intellectually and emotionally (Fraiberg, 1969; Beres, 1968, p. 507). The problem with her object constancy is its negative traits at both levels: the object represented is harsh and demanding, in spite of wanting her to be "happy," and the libidinal attachment to it is negative (antagonism). The representation itself, however, presents a person who is strong, wishes her to be good and therefore happy. A person capable of loving, listening, helping, being emotionally close—that is, as himself—God is a most appealing person. One may well reason that such characteristics of the representations of God must be the result of defensive idealization, because in growing up Bernadine was not exposed to people like her God (with the possible exception of her grandmother). As a matter of fact she had trouble with most of the adults she met.

In conclusion, then, the prevailing God representation seems to combine elaborations of her experiences with primary objects and defensive idealization of the most intolerable aspects in their personalities—their inability to listen, to love, or to be strong.

The other representations, the God with whom she occasionally communicates in private, the sun or the Devil, share the same characteristics of intellectual and emotional object constancy. It is striking, however, that she has at least three different representations that she calls God, each totally separate from the other. She uses each independently, according to need. When alone, she can occasionally communicate with one. Sometimes she feels at a distance

the warmth of another, the sun God. Most of the time, however, she is involved in a furious adversary relationship with still another, the hostile tyrant God. She has never connected these three representations, perhaps never even become aware that she has them. With the borderline personality she has, it may seem that she splits her object representations. This is not the place to provide arguments for a theoretical controversy,¹¹ but I prefer to suggest that the opposite is true: that she has never synthesized either her object representations or her self-representations obtained from defensive and adaptive relations—real or fantasized—to relevant objects. God is one example of that general process.

Developmentally, then, from the point of view of representational and libidinal constancy, her prevalent representational level belongs to approximately ages three to four. There is asynchrony in her development, however, in that her representations portray only dyadic attachment and love, without the slightest indication of oedipal experiences.

The explanatory hypothesis I propose for both abnormalities, the lack of synthesis in her God representations and the absence of oedipal traits in them, is that two factors during her development, an intense deprivation of maternal care and jealous competition with father and siblings for mothering, created a state of deep frustration, experienced by her as a consequence of being a very bad child. In her need to find some equilibrium she idealized her mother, attributing strength and love to her and explaining the mother's failure to display these traits toward her as the consequence of her own bad character. If she could only be the perfect daughter, she fantasized, her mother would love her. But she could not. In reality, it was the mother who failed to provide good mothering—not at the level of physical care, which she did offer her children, but at the level of making them feel appreciated and valuable: instead, she constantly accused them of interfering with her life. Bernadine's paternal grandmother confirmed repeatedly that the mother worked because she did not love her children.

In summary, the patient never found her value as a daughter confirmed, and she could not integrate this experience with some physical feeling of well-being she must have experienced (which permitted her to use the sun symbol for God) or with the good, special relation she had with her grandmother (which lent itself to the God she uses in moments of solitude). The overwhelming experience with her mother and the parental couple prevailed, its traumatic effect preventing her from synthesizing her varied God representations.

Elaboration of the God Representations

Bernadine Fisher's psychic life has remained as it was when she was a small child: she has continued searching for the approval of the dyadic object. Even now she wants her mother (and the parental couple) to acknowledge and love

her as a daughter. She is adamant that wish. In classical psychoanalytic state of development wherein the child is but as the product of her parents.

She is there and cannot relinquish sooner or later is pushed into her conditions and given the same treatment. She was asked to state her most intense wish to twenty-one, "I wanted my things I did were right," and finally "I need my mother and father to be with me." "I had me."

God, as a representation, has not responded to her question. And until Bernadine to be not herself, but

This indicates the total lack of synthesis, as well as of the other traits of the question, no more convoluted psychodynamics with her primary objects. An alternative name God, and from God or grandmother, could be used to describe her experience. A similar lack of elaboration in her representation she evokes to conflict and undisguised displacement. Conflict. She never acknowledges fear of the child, "I was always frightened | seem to be at the service of preserving the illusory hope that has cosmic consequences and commitment for her. Her domestic mothering beyond the boundaries of death.

She will be relieved—"happy God does not exist, because the final option comes, she says, "I don't want to end." One can see to be guilty forever after death. "I love me." She prayed for him to be good [make her good], he could not. She is lost because I won't change my mind in the eternal absence of love in the present. She wants no union with God: "I don't want to be with him but I think it means I will have to be part of him." One may reflect

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her as a daughter. She is adamant about it. Her entire life is concentrated on that wish. In classical psychoanalytic terms, one may say she is fixated in that state of development wherein the child wants to be valued not only as herself but as the product of her parents.

She is there and cannot relinquish her wish. Any person who relates to her sooner or later is pushed into her mother's role and is asked the same questions and given the same treatment. The clearest evidence emerged when she was asked to state her most intensely felt need. She said that from ages fifteen to twenty-one, "I wanted my family to love and accept me and think the things I did were right," and from the age of twenty-one to the present, "I need my mother and father to be proud of me and to really be proud that they had me."

God, as a representation, has had no better luck with her. He too must respond to her question. And until now he has failed in his answer. He wants Bernadine to be not herself, but another person.

This indicates the total lack of elaboration of the prevailing God representation, as well as of the other two. No emotional variations, no intellectual question, no more convoluted psychic maneuvers have been used. Her experiences with her primary objects have, at some given moment, received the alternative name God, and from that moment God or mother, God or parents, God or grandmother, could be used as substitutes for each other in her psychic experience. A similar lack of elaboration is present in the concomitant self-representation she evokes to deal with God. This is what one calls direct and undisguised displacement. God is also an object for displacement of fear. She never acknowledges fear of her mother. But she is able to say that as a child, "I was always frightened [of God]." Both idealization and displacement seem to be at the service of protecting the idealized image of the mother, preserving the illusory hope that she can one day love her. That displacement has cosmic consequences and creates an existential tragedy of final entrapment for her. Her domestic misery reaches eternal dimensions which go beyond the boundaries of death.

She will be relieved—"happy," she said—if there is an absolute proof that God does not exist, because then she will not "feel guilty." But when the final option comes, she says, "I wish to be with God after death because I don't want to end." One can see that the eternal predicament for her would be to be guilty forever after death. She said: "I never felt that I deserved God to love me." She prayed for him to make her good, believing that "if anybody could [make her good], he could." However God sees her as "a person he has lost because I won't change my ideas to his." Thus she is destined to a life of eternal absence of love in the presence of a God who knows how to love.¹² She wants no union with God: "I don't know what it means to be united to God but I think it means I will have to be part of him and I don't feel I want to be part of him." One may reflect whether this is a defensive reaction against

fusion or the terror of closeness with an antagonistic object. Whatever the explanation, the fact is that she sees her afterlife with God as a replica of her present relation with her mother: eternal survival in the painful knowledge that one is neither loved nor lovable. The sun God brings the question of her capacity to elaborate and transform her object representation into an impersonal symbol. The naïveté of her drawing, the simplicity of her wording, and the bodily experience it conveys, indicate that she is dealing with a direct symbol based on primary process associations which have not undergone secondary elaboration. Thus, developmentally, it is closer to pregenital elaboration than to post-oedipal or adolescent symbolization.

Bernadine Fisher's God, the God of Her Church, and Her Parents' Lack of Belief

Bernadine and her siblings were raised by parents who had lost faith in the God of their Roman Catholic religion. The paternal grandmother was a devout believer, insisting that God and the church were very good. The parents adamantly refused to go to church in spite of Bernadine's supplications that they accompany her and the other children. The parents refused but forced the children to go anyway. The mother used to relate all bad things to God,¹³ and the patient felt that her mother's description of God as the cause of thunder, lightning, and earthquakes inspired great fear in her. She admitted, "I guess I was always frightened of God, he was always there, he knew everything I did." She never felt close to him as a child. The intensity of her fear is best demonstrated in the episode of her First Communion, when she avoided confession because she believed the priest would be so shocked by her badness that he would not give her absolution. But when forced to see the priest, his kindness and good-natured approach made no impact on her. She remained terrified and could use neither her grandmother's nor the church's kindlier description of God to correct her terrified feelings about him.

The fact that her parents did not believe while her grandmother did brings up the question of whether a child needs parental permission to have a relationship with God. Perhaps she could not use the teachings of her grandmother overtly and therefore kept two parallel images of God: one from her parents, the other from her grandmother. The second was more benign. If this is the case it will explain two facts: (1) her difficulty in synthesizing these two images, and (2) her having to be alone to communicate with God, that is, without her parents' knowledge.¹⁴

The teachings of the church never touched the patient. Her emotions were too fixed on her longings for her to use any sublimation or intellectual elaboration, or even to absent herself from her needs long enough to consider what the church had to offer.

As we have seen, her learning about the church's conception of the Devil may have confirmed her belief in the unbridgeable gap between herself and

God. She did not elaborate the even compare her own notions she denies belief in the actual Devil because I feel we are our Devil in herself is specifically a think that [the Devil] wants us

Once more she illustrates the disbelief in an actual Devil.] between mother and child, father want people to be happy), in the God and the Devil without ever to bring together Freud's two representations. On the one hand the frustrating father; on the other badness. That sense of badness father as "upset," "demanding denial of actual belief in the Devil father's frustrating aspects and how make the Devil psychologically nothing to be projected onto oneself.

In her case the total acceptance keep the hope that there is love God. She is not getting it because world has something to give. He empty, indifferent to cries of en

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God. She did not elaborate the representation of the Devil intellectually or even compare her own notions with the notions of the church. Nevertheless, she denies belief in the actual existence of the Devil: "I do not believe in the Devil because I feel we are our own devils." The antagonistic action of the Devil in herself is specifically against God's wishes that she "be happy." "I think that [the Devil] wants us to be bad because then we can't be happy."

Once more she illustrates the direct and undisguised psychic source of her disbelief in an actual Devil. The domestic drama of antagonistic relation between mother and child, father and child (like the Devil, father does not want people to be happy), in identification with him, is restated in terms of God and the Devil without even minimal change. Her case, however, seems to bring together Freud's two theories about the psychic sources of the devil representation. On the one hand, the Devil draws some characteristics from the frustrating father; on the other hand it emerges from the patient's sense of badness. That sense of badness seems to precede her identification with her father as "upset," "demanding," and not letting people "be happy." The denial of actual belief in the Devil may be related to her identification with her father's frustrating aspects and her total acceptance of her badness. Both facts make the Devil psychologically unnecessary as an existing being. There is nothing to be projected onto mythological reality. All badness belongs to oneself.

In her case the total acceptance of her badness is a defensive maneuver to keep the hope that there is love available in the universe, in her mother and God. She is not getting it because she is bad. Hope remains, however, that the world has something to give. Her defense denies that her parents' home was empty, indifferent to cries of emotional hunger.