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Ch. 3 raises & answers the question: (p. 25)

Why is the world so terrible for the human animal?

Why do people have such trouble  
digging up the resources to face that terror  
openly and bravely?

In answering the problem,

Becker tries to recast some of Freud's  
literalisms about infantile sexuality  
into a more existential perspective.

1. The key to this recasting or transformation  
is the judgment that, contrary to Freud,  
the real problem is not sexuality as such,  
but the problem posed by the duality  
of body and self. Which one am I?

If I say "body," then

a) I can't escape the terror of  
accident & death

\* b) I deny so many other aspects which  
seem to give me my identity.

If I say "self," then

a) I can't account for <sup>and deny</sup> the role that sexual  
differentiation plays in determining what I am

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and b) I am evading the issue of the <sup>even if -- from this spiritualistic</sup> <sup>poor, degrading --</sup> measurable <sup>bodily</sup> aspects of my identity: my sexual drives and feelings, my body's ~~just~~ purely excretory functions, etc.

There simply is no straightforward solution to the question -- I am both,  
and the two, says Becker, can never  
be reconciled seamlessly.

I am a mind that reaches out to the stars & to infinity  
and down to sub-atomic particles,  
a symbol-creating  
& symbol-manipulating self.

And I am a heart-pumping, breath-gasping body  
that aches & bleeds & will die & decay.

p. 26: "Man is literally split in two:

he has an awareness of his own splendid uniqueness  
in that he sticks out of nature w. a towering majesty,  
and yet he goes back into the ground a few feet in  
order blindly & dumbly to rot & disappear forever.

It is a terrifying dilemma to be in & to have to live with."

The situation, B. says, is impossible,

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and "everything that man does  
in his symbolic world

is an attempt to deny & overcome  
his grotesque fate" --

all our social pretenses, our cultural creations, character traits,  
our ambitions, our systems of heroics --  
ways in which we drive ourselves to forget our basic condition.

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2. If this is the problem, there is there any point at all to Freud's theories about infant sexuality?

Behind Freud's wrong-headed expression about the child, say B.,

there are penetrating insights into our situation which must be recast, reformulated, transformed,

if they are to receive appropriate expression. (Personally, I think the point is that the child tries to make the body who he is - and he can't - so that up all emerge from childhood up the scars of our failure. Freudian lg, as B. does, is very misleading!)

a. first, the child experiences the problem

of the human condition from the very beginning. Even the child's life is

and so Freud is quite correct

in locating our problems w. our lives in infancy.

an attempt to deal with it. 36: "The child's major task is a flight from helplessness and obliteration."

→ P. 28, read.

c. Second, The child first tries to deal w. the situation by making the body his causa-reei and this is the meaning of Freud's discoveries.

project, his place of absolute power & control,

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Then what Freud called the Oedipus complex  
and interpreted as the male child's  
desire to possess the mother sexually and  
his repressed aggression toward the father  
who is stronger than he and will  
castrate him in an open fight

-- this is reinterpreted

as the child's dilemma of whether  
he will control his own destiny or not,  
the child's flight from helplessness, passivity,  
contingency, vulnerability,

by attempting to fortify himself  
against this vulnerability,

by beginning his own causa-sui project thru the  
body.  
The first way the child controls his destiny  
are thru his body:

he controls the mother by his cries,  
and he controls the body itself by toilet-training himself.

c. Thirdly, however, the child discovers that <sup>he</sup> cannot create himself  
by using the body as the very base of operations. It won't do  
as a vehicle.

The discovery of sexual differentiation,  
the discovery of the differences between the ~~masculine~~  
male & female body,

is one confusion <sup>wh.</sup> makes the child of either sex uncomfortable & confused,  
not sexually, as Freud would put it,  
but because of the sense of arbitrariness of it all. Why?

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At first, the male child will try, acc. to B., <sup>Freud</sup>  
(and here I think he's as far-fetched as ~~Freud~~)  
to defy his mother by concentrating on his own  
supposed superiority to her  
because of the difference between his body and hers,  
and the girl child will also recoil in horror  
from the mother's <sup>sex</sup> for the same reason --  
but the real reason is not, as Freud would have it,  
the presence or absence of the male sexual organ,  
but the threat of the mother to the causa sui project.

She is the one on whom the child is dependent,  
and dependency means I am not  
controlling my own destiny.

Furthermore, in her sheer feminine physicalness,  
her tie to the earth,  
her secret bodily processes that bind her to  
nature,

And she seems to be precisely not free, she seems  
determined and vulnerable, she exudes <sup>vulnerability</sup> via the <sup>body</sup>.  
And she threatens the male child with the loss of his own  
vitality, since her physical difference  
seems to him to represent <sup>a</sup> vulnerability to wh. he too  
She reminds the girl child of her own vulnerability <sup>might be</sup> susceptible.  
for the same reason,  
giving rise to what Freud  
called (but for the <sup>→ "castration complex"</sup>  
wrong reasons)  
"penis-envy."

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The point of these two supposed childhood reactions is not what Freud thought it was, i.e. sexual, but the twofold threat of vulnerability and arbitrariness contained in the difference between the sexes.

Becker puts it on p. 41:

"The child comes upon a world

in which he could just as well have been born male or female, even dog, cat, or fish--

for all that it seems to matter as regards power & control, capacity to withstand pain, annihilation, and death.

The horror of sexual differentiation is a horror of 'biological fact' . . . .

It is a fall out of illusion [i.e., the early childhood illusion of using the body for one's control] into sobering reality.

It is a horror of assuming an immense new burden, the burden of the meaning of life and the body, of the fatality of one's incompleteness, his helplessness, his finitude."

cf. also p. 42: the failure of the causa sui project

d. The surrender of the body - sexual character of the causa sui project, the acceptance of the society's mores regarding the body, the emergence into reality,

creates what we call "character." Result of moving the focus fr. mother to father, p. 40. Joining the world of "the fathers"



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~~The dilemma begins w. the child:~~

~~p. 28 (read)~~

~~The child emerges from this dilemma~~

~~w. what we call "character" --~~

But character is, <sup>really only</sup> a face, a mask that hides  
his own inner defeat,

his realization that he can't handle it,  
"To grow up at all is to conceal can't get it together.

the mass of internal scar tissue

that throbs in our dreams." (29)

The child has learned to repress

because he must do so in order to live.

He has learned to deny the truth

about his life in one way or another,  
because to do otherwise, to face it,

would be to <sup>go</sup> ~~grow~~ mad:

yet for each of us our character,

our own way of being repressed, our own  
character,

is our own secret madness,

our own way of being mad.

Each of us has his own style of madness,

but mad we all are indeed.

(M.B.-

~~The quality for Becker & body & self. & Self-symbol-creating.~~  
Discussion needed

143, Mar. 19, 19<sup>9</sup> e. And this "madness" of character leads to a reinterpretation of one further char. fr. Freud:

~~3. 32. Psychoanalysis Revisited~~ B. takes several psycho-analytic

a. Anality. For Freud.

Some people develop a character called "anal."

The anal character is the one that compulsively demands neatness,

order,

predictability, punctuality,

responsibility, cleanliness, control, discipline.

This character arises as a result of early

childhood experiences,

in wh. one is made <sup>or taught</sup> to be ashamed

of the natural functions of the body in eliminating waste materials.

Freud's explanation stops there.

W/ the perspective of existentialism,

what <sup>Fr.</sup> we call the anal character

is simply one form

of protesting agst.,

denying,

death,

of denying that the body has any ascendancy over,

or can threaten, the self.

In this sense, we are all basically "anal" - -

~~concepts & reinterprets in an existentialist vein.~~

W/ the deal of this class is to deal with the concept of "character".

what we are used to calling "character"

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i. e., we all fabricate our protest agst  
the degrading nature of reality,  
we all attempt to forget what pathetic creatures we are,  
we all try to escape from the sheer physicalness  
that excreting waste

shows us we all participate in.  
What bothers all of us is life as it is,  
the existential paradox  
of a symbol-creating mind  
in an animal body  
that will die.