The Story of Genesis According to Melanie Klein A Session with Martha Harris and Donald Meltzer The story of that theory goes something like this: once upon a time there was a little creature who lived in a world of his own that was extremely comfortable, particularly because he had a very good friend there to whom he was very attached by his navel (טבור) and who seemed to understand him perfectly, and whose name was Placenta. This little world of his own had qualities which suited him in every respect: there was enough room to move around him, there were no sharp or dangerous objects, there was a very pleasant dim light and muffled sounds, a slight taste to the medium and gentle stimulation to the skin. The world was so pleasant that he would never have wanted to leave it, were it not that as time went on it became smaller and smaller, more and more constricting of his movements. And, as it became smaller, he became more and more - 125 - restless, and felt that he had to somehow stretch or enlarge it by exerting the full force of his musculature. Then something terrible happened: the whole thing began to explode in some way. He found himself hurled or dragged or somehow propelled out of this pleasant environment into a most unpleasant one, containing all the qualities that his original home had not had. It was full of sharp sounds, sharp light, sharp objects impinging on his skin; it was cold, and worst of all, his friend Placenta seemed to have been left behind. Naturally he screamed for his friend; and to his amazement, his friend immediately arrived—not by his navel, but somehow came into his mouth and filled up his chest, and he felt much better, for a moment. For a moment he thought he had recovered his first home, and was able to fall happily asleep, but he kept waking up and discovering that it was not so; in fact, each time he woke up he felt more and more miserable. It was true that his friend seemed to have gone somehow inside him; and together they seemed to be able to get back inside their original home. But now, there were other, constant discomforts. At last, to his great relief, his friend came and attached himself to his mouth. He had never really seen his friend clearly before, and was astonished by his beauty—by the whiteness, and the succulent, delicious dark place in the middle of his friend. But he couldn't really understand why his friend didn't just stay in his mouth, the way he used to stay attached to his tummy. And it soon became clear to him that this very succulent dark area that brought the friend to him, could change its aspect and become rather nasty-looking, and then take his friend away from him. Furthermore, he noticed that when this friend was attached to his mouth, another aspect of the friend appeared before his eyes that seemed to consist of two dark places, which were very fascinating, but could also become very frightening at times. He further noticed that by this action of sucking on his friend while he was in his mouth, that brought him great pleasure and relief, the friend also reappeared inside him again, as had happened the first time he had screamed. But it wasn't only the good friend, with the succulent dark place; it was also sometimes the friend with the very frightening dark place; just as the eyes could change too, from being pleasant to being unpleasant. So he found he really had two friends inside, with rather different qualities. - 126 - Things were becoming very complicated. Outside there were good friends and bad friends; inside, too, there were good and bad ones. He felt very confused and insecure, until he decided that really it would be better to try to keep only the good friends inside, and to keep the bad friends outside—which he could do by expelling the bad ones, for example by belching or urinating or defecating. This very clever device, which at first seemed very successful, had rather complicated consequences. When he had the bad friend inside him, it might cause him pain and distress, but at least he knew where it was. But as soon as he pushed it out of his mouth or bottom, it seemed to be everywhere—in every shadow; particularly when the lights went out, it seemed to be all around him. From this dilemma there seemed to be only two avenues of relief: one being that he could get inside this internal good friend and go to sleep, and that was just like being back in the original place; or, when his good friend outside was attached to his mouth, he could feel very safe and very content. Yet these, too, seemed to have their complications. When he went to sleep inside this internal friend, he sometimes had dreams about that terrible event that expelled him; so either he felt imprisoned there, or in danger of being thrown out again, and it could become a nightmare. Also, the friend outside who attached himself to his mouth kept going away, leaving him full of distrust and suspicion. He began to reach the conclusion that this was no longer his friend exclusively, but that it had other friends in the world. Most of all, he noticed that it had a particular friend who in some way bore a distinct resemblance to this dark place in the middle, that looked so succulent when it came, and so threatening and dangerous when it took the breast away. He concluded that his original friend was no longer his possession or part of himself, and that he was alone in the world. But then he discovered a new friend—in fact, a better friend, one who shared the same body with him, and who shared his feelings of resentment and distrust: someone lot cleverer than himself, who seemed to know the explanation for all these changes. This friend, in fact, seemed very independent of mind, and kept telling him that he really didn't need that original friend—who was unfaithful and had attached himself to this other creature. Really he was better off without it. The new friend taught - 127 - him how to put things in his mouth that were just as good as that succulent thing; he helped him to discover other parts of his body that by touching could give him tremendous pleasure. He really seemed to be a marvellous friend. Moreover, he had great power in the world: he knew how to scream and make people obey him. Following this friend really seemed the best solution: to let him scream and discipline that former friend, making him come and feed him whenever he wanted, and be his slave. But somehow this was not satisfactory. He began to notice that being fed by a slave was not the same as being fed by a friend; and that being in a position of great power was not the same as being in the company of good friends. Although he felt very secure, he felt very unhappy. So he decided to sever his connection with this new all-powerful friend, and to discover yet another friend, very much like the first friend—white, smooth, warm, pleasant—with whom he could have a relationship very much like the one his first friend has with the thing constantly referred to as “daddy”. When left alone together, they could cuddle one another in the same way that he imagined this mummy-creature friend and this daddy-creature did when they went away at night. He thought he had indeed found the secret of eternal happiness. But then he began to notice that this also had complications. When he had a lovely time in bed with his new friend, his dreams were not very nice. They were not the nightmares he used to have when he got inside his inside-friend, but they were unpleasant dreams, in which this mummy-friend and daddy-friend seemed unfriendly to him, or damaged in some way, evoking in him new and terrible feelings. He didn't feel as frightened of them as he used to when they were slaves, but—well, really, it made him cry. It made him want to apologize, and promise never to do it again, and other strange feelings. When he was in this weepy state of feeling ashamed, his other know-it-all friend would reappear and tell him that he shouldn't feel that way—they were his enemies and he should hate them, and use every device and trick possible to evade their influence and control. He was very influenced by this clever friend, realizing that he couldn't think as clearly as he did about things, except at one time—and that was when this breastfriend was in his mouth. Then he seemed able to think very clearly, and to realize that here was his true friend, who was doing something for - 128 - him that was quite different from the pleasure he had with his other little white friend. In this way he began to realize something he had never understood before: that this friend, that came with his mouth, like the first friend attached to his tummy, made him grow. It wasn't that this mummyfriend was getting smaller and smaller, as he had originally thought was happening with his first home, but it was he who was growing. He realized that if this process went on, he would some day—perhaps quite soon—be just as big as his mummy-friend and be able to marry her instead of his little friend-wife, and live happily ever after. Of course, it would be necessary for him to get rid of that daddy-person, but he was sure that his knowit-all friend would be able to do that. And then, of course, there was the problem of his little wife-friend, but she could be left to the know-it-all as a reward for getting rid of the daddy. And just as he felt he had it all figured out, so he could live happily ever after, a terrible thing began to happen. This mummyfriend started to visit his mouth less frequently. Instead of putting herself in his mouth, she kept shoving other things in there, which were in some ways quite interesting, but certainly not the same. A terrible realization broke in upon him that it was happening again—just as it had happened with his first home. Now, his first outside friend was going to disintegrate or go away or something bad, and he would live unhappily ever after. He searches in his mind for possible explanations for the incipient defection of this mummy-friend; and he realizes that this is what it is going to be like for the rest of his life. Whenever you had a friend who helped you to grow, you grew in a way that made it impossible for that friend to stay with you. And just now, things were growing in his mouth that were so sharp and so dangerous that his friend didn't dare stay with him any longer. Even so, while he still has his mummy-friend in his mouth, making everything clear to him, it dawns on him that everything is going to be all right after all: he was going to discover new forms of happiness, not just suffer the loss of the old forms of happiness. But when he is alone, this know-it-all friend comes and tells him a different story: it was all a plot, a trick; they were keeping all the good things for themselves, and giving him all the bad stuff. Then, just as he had expected, it began to happen: his mummy-friend did - 129 - not come into his mouth any more at all. He joined up with know-it-all and screamed and yelled and tried to force her back into slavery. But she refused; and he was in despair. Yet when he was with her, and her two eye-nipples were smiling at him, while she was putting this other stuff in his mouth, it seemed all right again. In fact, that other stuff was very nice, and these sharp things in his mouth were very useful. He could see that it was true about the new kind of happiness opening up to him. Yes, it seemed all right. She was quite devoted to him and knew what she was doing, and this daddy-person seemed also to be quite friendly and to take good care of her. Perhaps he could go on like that until he was big enough to keep her in bed with him every night, and live happily ever after. As his trust in her begins to be restored, he finds that even when he is without her, there is another one of her inside him who can be with him and comfort him, and he can get rid of his know-it-all friend who told him they were all his enemies. He seems to be settling down. But then another worrying thing begins to happen. He notices that something is happening to his mummy: her tummy is getting bigger and bigger. It suddenly occurs to him—that must have been his first home! And if so, it must now be somebody else's first home—and that is really the ultimate betrayal. Clearly the only thing to do was to find how to get in there and do away with this rival. He remembered that he had found ways of getting inside his internal mummy; so there must be ways of getting inside the external one also, if he could only find the secret, the key to entry inside mummy's tummy. And his know-it all friend turns up and tells him that he has the key—it is right there between his legs and he need only learn how to insinuate it, to get inside that place and eliminate his rival. This was a terrible shock. He felt as if the goodness and innocence of himself and the whole world had suddenly been shattered. It was not a Garden of Eden where the only trouble was when this know-it-all friend kept turning up. There were bad things everywhere. One had to be constantly on the alert for bad things in oneself and in other people; and life was never going to be blissful. Of course, this is a highly simplified story; but it contains within it the essential elements of the way the early narcissistic union with the mother gives way to differentiation, as Mrs Klein envisaged it, - 130 - and there comes about a splitting between good and bad in the self and objects. Then the realization of bisexuality evolves; and finally, the depressive position arises and puts an end to any dream of living happily ever after. So this story is a model or ideal version of the pattern of development in the first year and a half of life. The implication is that these primordial conflicts and primary movements to resolve them are repeated at every developmental stage in life—every time there is what Bion would call a “catastrophic change”, imposed by either developmental processes or environmental changes. This cycle of conflict, from birth to the birth of the next baby, has to be run through each time, in order to regain a depressive orientation to one's objects and a picture of the world as a place where one may live happily, if not blissfully.