



# EXPLORING YOUR FULL SEXUAL POTENTIAL, PART 25: THE SUBJECT-OBJECT RELATION

Many men who have same-sex attractions are searching for something that remains elusive. This is very frustrating. It can be quite helpful to understand the relation between being a person as a Subject or seeing oneself and other men as an Object. In this article, we will explain the relation between these two from a child-developmental viewpoint. It is called Subject/Object psychology. We will show how infant mental growth takes place and how this leads to a distinct awareness of the self and others.



## 1. The symbiotic phase

Several phases in the development of a child have been distinguished over the years. When a child is born, he perceives himself to be a part of the mother. He always was a part of her. We call this the primordial female identification.

It was [described](#) in detail by the child psychiatrist Margaret Mahler in her book *'The Psychological Birth of the Human Infant: Symbiosis and Individuation'* (1975).



Starting at the age of four or five months, he becomes aware of the fact that the mother and he are two separate individuals. This phase is called the individuation phase. He can move, crawl and act independently of her, so he learns.

The final stage of this process, according to Mahler's model, begins around the age of 2 years. In our adult eyes, the baby will then have a sense of personal identity and will hold a stable and reassuring mental representation of the mother or other caregiver, even when she is not present.

## 2. The challenge for boys

In his book *'Shame and Attachment Loss'*, Dr. Joseph Nicolosi Sr. draws attention to the fact that male infants have a typical challenge in coming to terms with the fact that there are two essentially different parents to identify with. The difference is their gender.

The historically first identification, which was always there, is the identification with the female mother figure. Later, however, the male child must learn to let go of this identification and start identifying with the father or father figure, someone who is notably different.



*Dr. Joseph Nicolosi*

Nicolosi says:

*"During the boy's earliest years of life, he is confronted with two important developmental challenges: the separation-individuation phase, in which his autonomous self is developed, and the gender-identity phase of masculine identification.*

*As has been well established (Greenson, 1968; Horner, 1991; Coates, 1990; Fast, 1984; Tabin, 1985), these two phases occur at about the same time, at about a year-and-a-half to three years old. The child's sense of gender awareness is a crucial aspect of his identity formation. It is through gender that he grows to understand who he is in relation to other people. By understanding his place within the natural dichotomy of male-female, he is able to create an organized view of himself in the world (Tabin, 1985; 1988)."*

The child becomes aware of the fact that people exist in two forms: there are females who are people like Mother, and males who are people like Father.

Here is an overview of these stages:

### Stage of Symbiosis

1. *pregnancy*: mother and child are literally one, and the fetus was at first an egg-cel of the mother, which after fertilization, grew inside her as part of her

2. *childbirth*: the child is suddenly thrown out of the womb, but still perceives his mother physically and mentally as ME.

### Stage of Individuation

3. *individuation phase*: the child becomes aware of this physical separateness from the mother, but he is still mentally MOTHER=female=ME=the Self=Subject.

4. *differentiation phase*: the child becomes aware that there are people outside of Mother and ME. These people are Objects out there. They are Object=not-ME=not-the-Self=not-Subject.

So, as far as self-awareness is concerned, we can say at this stage:

The small infant feels to be Mother/female/Me/Self/Subject.

Others are Not-Mother/Not-Me/Not-Self/Not-Subject/they are Object

### Stage of Gender Awareness

5. *sexual differentiation phase*: the child becomes aware that there are different caregivers: Males and Females, some people like Mother and others like Father. Occasionally, little children even explicitly call all females Mama, and all males, Dada, at least for some weeks. They are aware of the difference.

All females now are like Mother, and therefore ME/Subject/Self;

All males are now Objects/not-Mother/not-ME/not-Self/not-Subject.

### Stage of Masculine Identification

6. Under the influence of genes, the boy slowly lets go of his identification with his mother. This is called dis-identification. At the same time

7. the boy slowly but surely identifies with the father or father figure. A strong sense of natural masculinity emerges, and he feels or knows he is male, a boy.



Nicolosi goes on to say,

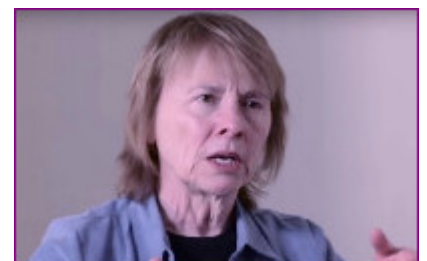
*“Structurally, we might say that for the boy, masculinity is to the autonomous self what a steel beam is to an edifice. More than a mere “cultural or social construct,” gender is biologically based and is most readily actualized in a securely individuating self. Gender identity supports personal identity; in turn, personal identity is the basis on which gender is constructed. Because each developmental task supports the other, failure in one area threatens success in the other.*

*Especially for the boy, awakened maleness acts in the service of his newly developing autonomous self. The drive toward masculine identification supports his ongoing and vital task of separation from the mother. Irene Fast (1984) summarizes the process: “For boys, separation-individuation and gender differentiation issues inter-penetrate in a particular way: regressive temptations to merge with the mother threaten gender identity”*

In men who sexualize their same-sex attractions, the masculine identification phase takes place, but it is not yet fully completed compared to men who do not sexualize SSA's. In order to understand homosexuality, we need to take a close look and try to recognize what it does to our current life. It is all about the Subject/Object relation, a key concept.

### 3. The Influence of Childhood Experiences

The Subject/Object relation is a remnant of the past, but for the eye of the keen observer, it is reflected in daily speech. In activist circles, however, it is “*not done*” to look back at the past of people who experience SSA's. Over the years, activists who have radicalized, say they do not agree with the needless attention for the influence of one's childhood experiences. Let bygones be bygones. There is nothing like a new start in life, so they assert.



Camilla Paglia, PhD

But there is growing resistance to radical activism, and moderate activists are raising their

voices. One of them, university professor [Camilla Paglia](#), of Philadelphia, who is a lesbian feminist, denounces the current trends in psychology, which she says are being destroyed by politics.

Radical left-wing students are demanding that she be ousted and replaced by a colored left-wing transgender, even though Paglia is left-wing. On [TheBlaze.com](#), we read,

*“In this age of adults charged with running college campuses actually bowing in terror to every woke demand of leftist students, it was only a matter of time before the youngins at University of the Arts in Philadelphia would go after Camille Paglia, a world-renowned, outspoken feminist, and professor at the school.”*

On the website [Voice Of The Voiceless](#), we read her expressing this opinion:



Camilla Paglia, PhD

*“Every single gay person I know has some sort of drama going on, back in childhood. Something was happening that we’re not allowed to ask about anymore. Every single gay man I know had a particular pattern where for whatever reason, he was closer to his mother than to his father, and there was some sort of distance between the mother and the father, so that she looked to her son as her real equal or friend, as the real companion of her soul. Sometimes these women were discreet and dignified. Other times, they were very theatrical and in a sense they drafted their son into their own drama.*

*But now, you are not allowed to ask any questions about the childhood of gay people anymore. It’s called ‘homophobic’. The entire psychology establishment has shut itself down. And also, Freud was kicked out by early feminism in the late 60s and early 70s. It’s all gone, that entire discourse is gone. Everything is political now.*

*At school, kids are taught: ‘every single thing in the human person has been formed by some external force upon us; we are oppressed, it’s being inscribed on us’. But it’s really sick. It’s a sick and stupid way of looking at human psychology.”*

#### 4. Analyzing sentences

Let us do some detailed thinking and analyze the way in which past manners of thought from our childhood years are still echoing in our daily speech and thought.

A man who struggles with SSA's may find himself at any moment saying:

*"I feel like a nobody. I wish I could feel like a real somebody, a great guy, somebody who is noteworthy".*

The whole problem of the Subject/Object relation is hidden in this very sentence. Let us pull the words apart, and see what they can reveal to us.

- *"I feel like a nobody"*. You can change this into:

- *"I feel I am a nobody"*. This means:

- *"I feel I am no body"*. This means:

- *"I am not a body"*. This means:

- *"I am not living in my body. My body is not me. My body is a Not-Me. My body is an Object"*.

It is as if you are saying,

*"So, I live up here in my mind, and down there is that body, something I possess, not something that I am. It is a male body, sure, but that male body is a Not-Me. Therefore, I am busy in my mind up here, and down there, there is that body that I can look at. That body is an object, it is male, and up here in my mind I am the Self, but down there in that body, I do not dwell. My body is Not-Me, it is male. My mind is Self, my body is Not-Self. I am up here, I am not down there."*

Does this mean you are crazy? No, it means that you are mentally still halfway passing between phase 5 and 7, as mentioned above. You are on your way to healthy maleness, but you have not managed yet to make that final click. You have not yet fully dis-identified from the original identification with The Female that you had from birth.

Males and maleness are still something far away, out there. They are Object. Men and maleness are objects on the horizon, and although your genes push you into their direction, you have not yet made them ME. Or, as we described in our booklet on 'No More Squaw Camp' (download [here](#)), you are still in Squaw Camp yearning to join the warriors on horseback.

They are out on the prairies fending for themselves (and for you and the squaws); they are objects that you look at, but you do not yet feel yourself to be one of them. They are Object, they are not Subject.

And the Mother and Sisters/girlfriends at Squaw Camp are not distant Objects, but all ME's, just like you. You (still) identify with them; everyone in Squaw Camp is a ME/Subject/Self.

A male body does not belong in Squaw Camp, so a male body (=your body) is not welcome here. You perceive your male body as a Not-Me, and you are thereby in grave conflict with it.

This conflict, then, is the essence to understanding and overcoming same-sex attractions.

### 5. Growing into male identification

It is the task of every boy to grow into his male identification and to do that, he needs to lose his identification with his mother or mother-figure at the same time. He finds himself doing both moves or transitions, as they are called.



These moves are not primarily caused by society, as gay-lib and feminists insist, but they are caused by the male genes as they pave the way to create a human being. And we, as a species, are genetically driven to be social species, not a collection of individuals who are merely the victim of one or other social structure. If you grow up marooned with barely five other people, for example, on an almost deserted island in the Pacific or live at a sparsely populated oasis in a desert, does this mean you are not distinguishable as a male for lack of thousands of role models?

Professor Paglia explains it well when she denounces (see above) the mantras of feminism and gay-lib:

*“(The idea that) every single thing in the human person has been formed by some external force upon us ... is a sick and stupid way of looking at human psychology”.*

When the toddler lets go of his primary female identification and when he acquires a healthy male identification, this strengthens his sense of self. Slowly, he learns or finds out that he can master his environment and ultimately the world. He feels he is somebody.

Let us analyze that phrase:

*"I feel I am somebody"*. You can change this into:

*"I am some body"*. This means:

*"I am a body. My body is ME. My body is male and it is ME."*

The child does not say: *"I HAVE some body"*, but *"I AM some body"*.

He lives in his body, his body is ME. It is not something that he HAS or owns, it is not an object down there, with 'ME' being up here in my head. No, his body is ME (too). He is head and body, not a head looking down at a male body as though it were some object.

So, the essence of achieving true maleness is to transition from HAVING a body (which is a form of estrangement) to BEING that body as an integral part of me.

## 6. Estrangement

The estrangement is caused by the division which occurs between the head (up here) and the body (down there). When a person is in a state of estrangement, he feels that his body is an object, and then he can have all sorts of opinions about that object in the same way that he has all sorts of opinions about other objects. And those opinions of a person who experiences SSA's, are almost always negative opinions.

Whereas someone who IS his body, does not have opinions about himself as though he were an object because he IS that body, that is to say: there is no division between ME up here and ME down there. He is saying 'I AM this body, I am somebody'. The body is not Object, it has become Subject, ME, the Self. And that feels good.

## 7. Dealing with others

If a person expresses negative opinions on the body of someone who is not estranged, but who lives in his body, his reaction to the negative comment will be: *"Well, that is just who I am, dude. Take it or leave it"*. Or as Frank Sinatra sings: *"If you don't happen to like it, pass me by"*. This is a natural state of confidence and trust.

The person does not have negative opinions about his body because, for him, it is not an object. It is ME. And I am okay. *"I am not up for debate, as though we are at some auction"*. He can attend any auction, but he is never up for the highest bidder. He buys at the auction, but he is not for sale at the auction.



An individual, however, who is in a state of estrangement, already has his doubts and negative opinions about his body, this object, and if someone else makes negative remarks about his body, this reinforces the negative opinions which torture his mind. The other person is not torturing him, the torture was already there. It is as if someone pats you on the back when you have a sunburn. The pain is not really caused by the pat on the back, even if it feels that way. It is the sunburn which is the problem, and that sunburn was already there.

### 8. Vulnerability

This leads to a problem: an individual who is in a state of estrangement is therefore very vulnerable to negative remarks and criticism. And he will easily react as if someone is whipping his back. But the remarks were not lashes coming from the other person, the problem was the sunburn. And if he does not realize how severe his sunburn is, he will keep on blaming other people for the pain they are giving him. It feels as though they are doing it to him, he feels easily bullied by others with their remarks. His reaction is an over-reaction, but he is not aware of it. He locates the problem in the other guy.

As an adult, he will generalize this feeling and expand it to all others (unless he has had therapy), and he will state that the collective of other guys (society) is the problem. He knows for sure. And so we see an individual emerging who is constantly afraid of what society may do to him. Other guys (society) have hurt him so often (reinforced his negative feelings about himself, the sunburn, which he already had); they are sure to do it again. The activist is born.

### 9. Overcoming estrangement

Estrangement is merely a temporary mental issue. It always withers away once you realize that you are actually perceiving other men not as subjects (as "equal-to-me") but as objects that you can have all sorts of opinions about.

Geoffrey wrote to me about his feelings on this issue:

*"I am beginning to understand what you mean by Subject-Object. I do it all the time with men. Deep down you're objectifying that which you crave, further pushing away that which you long for, by giving them all the big "fuck you". I find myself doing it without thinking. I find myself doing it in casual conversation with other guys when I think I'm connecting but really I'm looking for an escape and am being superficial."*

Not only is a person objectifying other men, he is also objectifying his own person and turning it into an object that you can have opinions about. He is giving himself the big "fuck you" (to quote Geoffrey's language).

The extent to which you objectify other men is equal to the extent you objectify yourself and to which you turn yourself into a mere object. When this insight sinks in, the realization may come to mind that you are not a victim of others or of society but that your mind-frame is playing tricks on you.

Geoffrey went on to say,

*“Lately, I’ve been struggling with hopelessness and feeling like a victim. A victim of this thing called life that has been cast upon me and the shitty deck of cards I feel like I’ve been dealt. I’ve struggled with bouncing back and forth between making the effort to sustain changes in my life with solidifying my identity as a man and the confidence that goes with that, to sitting around hanging my head in shame at myself and hugging my crushed, wounded spirit that seems to consume me at times.”*

## 10. Conclusion

Once a person starts living IN his body, that is to say, starts BEING his body instead of HAVING a body and having opinions about it, then he will become somebody and will stop feeling like a nobody, like a shitty deck of cards. Then the Subject/Object dilemma, the estrangement, will be tackled and ultimately will be resolved. You are not shitty, you are one and only.

There will never be someone like you. You are great. Every man does well to never forget that.

To be continued.

[Previous part](#)

Job Berendsen, MD.

[Home](#)