

Dear Russ,

Herewith a farewell to Michael Chance, diluted with some ramblings of my own (3 PAGES IN ALL). Antonia and I dallied for two weeks after the conference in Amsterdam, staying partly in a houseboat on one of the canals. A marvellous city. The conference was enjoyable, it was good to meet Leon, Tyge Schelde, Ricarda Mussig, Netty Bouhuys, John Archer, Seymour Itzkoff, John Richer, Glenn Weisfeld, Gail Zivin and others. The papers did not contain enough new material to inspire me to write a report on it for ASCAP, but it was worth going. Now I am busy doing locums to restore the treasury. I am sending off an abstract for the APA meeting in San Fransisco. We have not yet decided where to go for the winter; possibly Australia, possibly India, possibly back to Belize. Antonia's back has recovered and she is hard at her novel again. Re your letter of 7 August, I agree we should both review Paul's book for ASCAP. I agree on the idea of an award; will think about it and discuss it with the Birmingham group. I've asked the World Futures publisher to send you a review copy of Michael's symposium. Thanks for the supply of new stationery. Will write soon about more confidential things.

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Thanks to Michael Chance (ASCAP Sep 92, Vol 5, No 9, p 2-4)

Michael Chance has now completed his year of service as president of IASCAP, and as the new president it falls to my happy lot to propose a vote of thanks to him and wish him well. It was very appropriate that he should have been the first president of a society devoted to across species comparisons and psychopathology. At a time when the other great names in animal behaviour such as R.A.Hinde and S.A.Barnett were expressing pessimism about the value of across species comparisons, Michael was demonstrating several areas in which they were invaluable, not least in the relation between the agonistic mode and psychopathology. It may be difficult for ASCAP readers to remember that twenty years ago it was thought that depressive and anxiety states were related exclusively to attachment behaviour, or rather, the failure of attachment behaviour. It was a matter for speculation how much of psychopathology could be accounted for by the failure of parent-child bonding, how much due to inappropriate pair-bonding or the breakup of pair-bonds by death, how much by failure of affiliative behaviour and how much by mismanagement of reciprocal exchange. All forms of competitive behaviour including agonistic behaviour were simply ignored. Bowlby and Hinde had spoken, and only Michael Chance had the intuition and courage to speak out and demonstrate that the various dysphoric states that constitute the bulk of human psychopathology make much more sense in the context of agonistic behaviour. His concepts of the agonistic and hedonic modes, linked to his concepts of attention structure and reverted escape, have illuminated both animal and human behaviour.

This is not to say that the failure of attachment behaviour is not important in psychopathology. We know clinically that many depressive states follow loss of some sort. But this is proximate causation. Underlying attachment behaviour, at a phylogenetically earlier level of the brain, the mechanisms for agonistic behaviour are "pulling the strings" and give an ultimate explanation for the paradoxical apparent maladaptiveness of depression such as the incapacity, the cognitive distortions and the inhibition of affiliative behaviour. These cannot be given an ultimate explanation in terms of malfunctioning attachment behaviour, because they actually exacerbate any affiliative malfunction that already exists; only in the case of the rejected suitor can some function be seen, in that depression may inhibit what would otherwise be inappropriate courtship behaviour of the type we often read about in the papers, in the form of a rejected suitor getting sent to prison for pestering or harming the person who has rejected him. On the whole, however, depression is maladaptive in cases of attachment malfunction, when usually increased affiliative and other activity is required. Only in the role of the yielding reaction and the inhibition of agonistic behaviour can the strange phenomena of depression be understood in an evolutionary context. Most ASCAP readers will be familiar with Michael Chance's book Fabrics of the Mind, and his previous books are still well worth reading. His latest initiative has been to edit a symposium on the two modes for World Futures: the Journal of General Evolution which is due to appear in the September, 1992, issue; contributors are: Chance, Gilbert, Kemper, Power, Stevens, Wedgwood-Oppenheim, Hold-Cavell and myself. I look forward to reading this symposium and I wish it had been possible to circulate copies to ASCAP readers. Anyone who has difficulty getting access to World Futures can get a copy of the symposium by writing to Gordon and Beach Publishers Inc, Frankford Arsenal Building 110, 5301 Tacovy Street Box 330, Philadelphia, PA 19137 and asking for the symposium edited by Michael Chance in World Futures, Volume 35, numbers 1 to 3, pages 1 to 175.

In my contribution to the symposium I point out how the mode concept is applicable to marital relationships. The way a marriage can switch from the agonic mode to the hedonic and back again is something that is clearly described by novelists but is not conceptualised by social psychologists or marital therapists because, lacking the two mode concept, they could not talk about the pattern even if they could see it. See, for instance, Steve Duck's Human Relationships, 2nd ed (London, Sage Publications, 1992) where on pages 87-101 he discusses what happens when things go wrong in long-term relationships; having no concept of the agonic mode, the nearest he gets is "What happens when disagreements are detected is that people talk them out, so once again in everyday life conversation is an important tool for developing and sustaining relationships" (p87); the only possibility which Duck considers apart from this hedonic resolution by discussion is separation, preceded by a period in which each party runs down the other to other people; there is total agnosia for the agonic mode. In my contribution I mention the novel September by Rosamund Pilcher, and I have just read The Rector's Wife by Joanna Trollope (Bloomsbury Publishing, 1991; Black Swan, 1992, paperback), in which the clerical marriage switches to the agonic mode after the rector's wife takes a job against the rector's wishes - rather unfairly the author sidesteps the resolution of the agonic episode by killing the rector off in an automobile accident (although she is right in emphasising the adverse effect of the agonic mode on attention and concentration) - and also, the novel is an excellent description of a struggle for autonomy and the acquisition of the capacity for saying "no". I think it is true to say that the agonic mode in marriage is currently only described in novels, being too subtle for the laboratory and even for the consulting room. After all, in the nineteenth century novelists were the only psychologists they had, and I do not think they have been entirely replaced.

It is interesting to contrast the agonic mode in humans and in Michael's long-tailed macaques. We know from introspection and the reports of others how it feels to be in an agonic relationship. One feels angry with the other, wants to hurt them and wants to lower their RHP/SAHP/prestige/status. Macaques have little in their behavioural repertoire to express these feelings apart from actual fighting and possibly withholding affiliative behaviour such as grooming. Human beings, on the other hand, have quite an armoury of agonic techniques short of agonistic behaviour. We can, for instance, run the other down to a third party, thus lowering their prestige. We can hurt the other with a variety of techniques, and this is particularly true when the agonic episode occurs in a relationship characterised by affiliation such as a marital relationship. We can withhold love, or make statements denying love, or we can be unfaithful, all actions which appear to be part of affiliative behaviour but are in fact motivated by agonistic behaviour. This is one of the complex interactions between attachment behaviour and agonistic behaviour. So the agonic mode, which is one of orientation towards agonistic behaviour in the absence of overt fighting, is far more complex in humans than in animals and deserves intensive study.

Having said thanks to Michael, who stays on the executive committee of IASCAP in the capacity of past president, it is my pleasure to welcome John Pearce on to the committee in the capacity of vice president. Any ASCAP readers who have not read the book he co-authored with Kalman Glanz, Exiles from Eden should certainly do so as it is full of ideas and represents a pioneering attempt to apply evolutionary biology to psychotherapy. I think he will be a very valuable addition to our committee.

During the year of my presidency I hope to set in motion the arrangements for a meeting of our society, possibly as part of a larger meeting, and if anyone has any ideas on this they would be most welcome. I would particularly like to bring together clinicians who are interested in across-species comparisons and scientists who are actually working with animals.

In the meantime, I would like to ask for the help of ASCAP readers in compiling an anthology of episodes of agonic mode from fiction. If you encounter an episode in which friends, marriage partners or family members switch into the agonic mode, are described in it, or manage to get out of it by reconciliation or other means, please make a note of it and let me know.

Apart from the novels mentioned above, my list so far includes The Forsyte Saga, Trollope's Daniel Deronda, Somerset Maugham's Merrygoround, Albee's Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? and Daphne du Maurier's Jamaica Inn. I suspect there is still a long way to go. END

OF FAX