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SEVEN

Reflections on the observation of infants and early sibling relationships

Lisa Miller

Sibling relationships are an integral part of the oedipal configuration. We are used to placing stress on the parental couple, the king and queen who loom large in our emotional development. But the universal question "Who made me?" with all its concomitants—how, where, why?—is swiftly followed by "Who else did they make?" and our relationships with siblings—actual siblings, symbolic siblings, peers of all kinds—are as crucial for our well-being in the world as our relationships with mother and father—although the nature of the parental relationship also influences the nature of the sibling link. In this chapter, I illustrate how detailed observation can illuminate the progress and development of sibling relationships in the conscious and unconscious minds of children.

Infant and young child observation

In chapter 2, Susan Sherwin-White describes how deeply Klein examines the sibling relationships, drawing on her clinical material from the psychoanalysis of children as well as from her analytic work with adults. In work with adults, evidence of infantile phantasies and experience can be drawn not only from reconstructive accounts of patients' childhood, but also from the infantile transference. In her work with children, Klein demonstrates something else of great importance—her

capacity to observe children in unflinching detail. The same capacity for observation was one of Freud's leading characteristics, and from this aspect of his work as well as Klein's work has grown a whole discipline. Infant Observation—pioneered in the child psychotherapy training at the Tavistock Clinic by Esther Bick (A. Briggs, 2002, pp. 1ff.)—and subsequently Young Child Observation (Adamo & Rustin, 2013) have added a new dimension to our knowledge of the emotional development of babies and small children (Miller, Rustin, & Shuttleworth, 1989, chaps. 1 & 2).

Put very briefly, infant observation involves arranging to see a baby in an ordinary family, usually for two years, for one hour at a regularly scheduled time. Each observation is written up and discussed in a small seminar group where observers present their material twice a term. This is a unique and privileged opportunity for which observers are grateful to the families who agree to take part. It is a discipline that enlarges and develops the capacities of the observers and gives them a chance to apprehend the complex and many-layered aspects of emotional development and family relationships.

Similarly, young child observation involves observing a young child (2 to 5 years old), either in the child's home or in a nursery setting. In both these observations and seminars, it is likely that either babies will have older siblings or that young children will have or will be anticipating the arrival of a younger sibling. That is, these observations are likely to yield interesting rewards in the area of sibling matters. Moreover, many observational studies courses are now run internationally, as well as throughout the UK, giving us a wider perspective on children and families from different countries and cultures.

These observational courses provide a foundation for thinking and reflecting that underpins clinical work (Sternberg, 2005). Other seminars in which clinical work is discussed are called Work Discussion Seminars. These follow a similar technique in terms of writing up closely observed material from sessions in detail (M. E. Rustin & Bradley, 2008). The extracts that follow are from infant, young child, and work discussion seminars that took place in geographically widely spaced places, many of them some time ago, and this, as well as disguising the families, who are anonymous, protects their privacy. For the same reasons of confidentiality, the observers cannot be named, but their contribution is gratefully acknowledged.

The concept of the new baby

As we observe babies and young children closely we can see the dawning importance in their minds of the concept of other babies. This concept reaches a critical point in infancy—at the time of weaning—the time Klein (1935, 1940, 1945) pinpoints as the first approach to ambivalence, loss, and the awareness of the parents as a couple. "Weaning" implies the second half of the first year; the actual age of weaning from the breast varies widely, but the growth of a child from being a suckling—someone whose life depends entirely on another person—moves surely towards autonomy with the advent of the urge to bite and chew. As the baby grows from a cradled, lying-down baby to a sitting, crawling, and standing baby, up on its own two feet, it must simultaneously acquire a mind of its own. A sense of self develops—this is me, I am doing this—and simultaneously there dawns the start of the idea that those other people are separate people like me. The irresistible push behind the idea of weaning is physiological: not only is the baby growing up, but also the breast has to be free for another—the next baby who would need it if there were to be one. Even in a culture where breast-feeding is prolonged, where a 2-year-old may feed at the same time as the new baby, it is still clear who needs the breast more and who thus holds the privileged position. The reign of the first is over, for the second baby needs the protected status of the smaller infant.

For the elder child, being dethroned is painful, as letting go of the privileged life of the nursing infant entails a new struggle with reality. I should like to describe a presentation made in a work discussion seminar by a health visitor who was running a mother-and-baby group. These mothers were not in difficulties beyond the average. They came to the group for the reassuring company of mothers of the same age or stage (their own sibling group) just as much as for the experienced wisdom of the health visitor. Three of the mothers present at this informal group were preparing to return to work. All three babies were around nine months to a year old at the time of this meeting.

A mother-and-baby group: Aaron, Molly, and Daniel

The first baby to arrive that morning was Aaron. His mother came in and told the health visitor he was coughing and was not very well. Mother continued saying that he'd be with her parents when she returned to work in a fortnight, but what should she do when

> he was ill? As the health visitor responded to the strength of the mother's anxiety, Aaron clutched and sucked a wooden spoon in one hand and held on to a toy in his other hand. Dribbling and sucking, he offered one to the health visitor, then withdrew it sharply. "Oh Aaron," said the health visitor, "I think I'll sit next to you on the floor, gorgeous!" Slowly he moved himself until his back was resting against her leg. He seemed rather depressed in a situation where both he and his mother were worrying about what they would do without each other. Aaron seemed slightly cheered by the health visitor's welcoming his company, feeling that someone was at his back, literally and metaphorically.

His mother was not expecting a new baby, but she still had new preoccupations in her mind. Aaron seemed to be grappling with a different preoccupation: the notion of giving something up—the absolute infantile conviction of an exclusive relationship. With all babies and children whose mothers return to work, there is the same question in the unconscious mind if not the conscious: what is this that she prefers to me? At an infantile level, the answer is always a person—some daddy of the imagination, some rival brain-child.

> When Molly and Daniel arrived, both mothers noted that the children had not been themselves in different ways. Molly had been awake at night and wouldn't go back to sleep until her father settled her. Daniel had puffy, watery eyes and little expression on his usually lively face, making him look lost and sad. The mothers described their children as being "clingy"; in the group, both children sat near their mothers. Molly searched in a basket and found a yellow piece of plastic toy toast. She put it in her mouth and looked around to where Daniel was quietly eating real toast. She leaned forward and grabbed his toast, making Daniel cry. Molly looked at him for a couple of seconds and then burst into heartbroken wails too. Both mothers responded to their children's distress.
>
> On the floor near Aaron, Molly turned and pushed him over. He fell backwards, bumped his head, and cried out. Molly's mother leapt to pick him up. "Oh Molly!" she said reproachfully.

It seems as if Molly is taken up with the question of the rivals for her mother's love. In the night, she splits up the parental couple; she irritates mother and gets father to herself. In the group, she attacks rival babies wholeheartedly, taking what Daniel has, and then shoving Aaron as if she wanted to get rid of him entirely after feeling dreadful

about seizing Daniel's toast. It is noticeable that she is more at odds with her mother than the little boys are. The boys are desolate in a different way. As the group comes to an end, Daniel's mother looks around for him. He has crawled away and is lying alone on the cold surface of the adjacent kitchen floor.

It is not simply the mothers' impending return to paid employment which is causing these upsets. Although this plays its part, it is only one feature of the universal developmental push to deal with separation and loss. The old order of things is changing. The old baby has to try to prepare for the idea of the new baby, whether or not there is a new one in actuality.

An infant observation: baby Alexandra

These next descriptions are from an infant observation of a 9-month-old child called Alexandra. In the following vignette, Alexandra is in two minds as to whether to be friends with another baby girl, Katy, also 9 months old. The two girls have just come in from a walk with their fathers and are sitting on the floor next to each other:

> Alexandra looks intently at Katy. Then she leans forward, touching Katy gently. She leans back and forward again. She looks round the room, as if to check that everyone can see that Katy is there too. She grins. She looks up at the observer and touches Katy's hair in a pleased kind of way. Alexandra's mum has been talking to the two of them, but then leaves the room. The minute she's gone, Alexandra tries to seize the toy Katy is holding. Then she hits Katy sharply on the head and makes a happy, excited squawking sound. Mother comes back in, sees what is going on, and offers other toys as a distraction, but Alexandra flings them strongly away behind her.

On the one hand, Alexandra finds Katy most interesting. What sort of a presence is this? Is she like me? Indeed, is she me? Perhaps there is a difference? But as soon as Alexandra sees her mother go away, the idea of somebody different, having something she doesn't have, comes into her mind and she grabs Katy's toy. For the time being it seems as if the implied question "Is she me?" has been answered cheerfully—no, she's not, so it doesn't matter if I take her things or hit her. Thus the question "Is she like me?" is evaded for the time being by taking refuge in manic denial. These approaches and re-approaches to the question of concern for another person will be made time and again by all children. We can see that when the time comes for Alexandra

to entertain the idea that Katy feels pain just as she herself does, she will not be so blithe about hitting her. She will feel bad about it—and she will make a corresponding gain and progress into the realm of symbolic thought, where the elementary concept is of one thing being seen in terms of another; something being like something else.

As the weeks go by, Alexandra's all-round development accelerates and she goes from being unfriendly towards her mother and others to being more amenable and interested. Although no new baby is expected, Alexandra has been working through states of mind that prepare her to be more receptive to the demands of real life.

Reflections

Later in development we sometimes see the problem that arises when hostility to a new baby is fixed and implacable. This is because the hostility colours not only the sibling relationship, but also new development in general. Interest in the new, an appetite for getting to know something fresh, is outweighed by a sense that new ideas are unfriendly rivals to old beliefs and must be stifled or thrown out. It is obvious, too, that ambivalence to new babies of the conscious and unconscious imagination affects relationships with other children, who carry the symbolic meaning of siblings.

A second baby

When there is a new baby in the family (and it is not a metaphor or phantasy), this is a process that tests a family's capacity to tackle the new and to say goodbye to the old. It involves mourning the loss of things as they were. For all, a new baby means optimism and hope for the future. Something in everyone welcomes a baby, but there are natural turbulences linked with the assimilation of change. This turbulence appears whether the infant is born first, second, or even later in the family configuration. Here I will concentrate on the phenomena surrounding the birth of a second baby and the dawning implications for the whole family when actual sibling relationships—real-life brothers and sisters—have to be accommodated.

The advent of a first child takes a couple into a new world of adult responsibility. They have to rise to the challenge of a first baby and be able to identify with the infant (consciously and unconsciously) while maintaining their adult perspective. The parents' buried infantile selves are reawakened by contact with the baby's infantile projections. It is

taxing to feel the primitive anxiety broadcast by a baby and to absorb his or her bewilderment, panic, and rage. States of tiredness and worry are the consequence for the parents of a small infant. But when we look after a baby we are depending on something else too—our pleasure in re-experiencing the feeling of being a nicely looked after, well-loved baby, a very special person. The baby's natural infant phantasies are of being the only one, and it is inevitable that parents join to some extent in the splitting and idealization of babyhood. But parents have to face what the baby faces too—the reality of ambivalence. Even "good" babies are not perfect and often feel irritable or unhappy, and even "good-enough" parents can be impatient and cross.

Under-Fives Counselling Service: Tom (3 y.o.) and baby Margaret

Some years ago, a young couple brought their 3-year-old son, Tom, with his new sister Margaret to an Under-Fives Counselling Service. Many of the features of this case have been repeatedly echoed in others. They said they were worried by the violence of Tom's jealousy and by the strength of his tantrums. They described home life as exhausting and themselves as at their wits' end. The parents were graphic in their picture of the pain of sibling rivalry. However, as the session progressed, I was struck that Margaret was fast asleep and Tom was drawing. He showed us his picture of a big round face like a baby's, with an open, screaming mouth. While you could see this simply as a picture of a baby, it also conveyed something deeper about the state of mind of the whole family.

What had prevented this couple from containing the infantile cries originating in the baby that echoed around the family system and brought such discord? It seemed by their account as though they had managed the first baby perfectly. They said he had been so easy; he had gone to parties and slept on strange beds. They'd even put him in a backpack and climbed mountains. Now they were horrified to see their golden boy change like this. Some factor had come into their family life that made it impossible to carry on as before, forcing a breakdown of some former idealization.

> The parents began to tell me how terrible the change was. They couldn't take two children about with the same nonchalance as they used to take one—Tom and Margaret had different and sometimes conflicting needs. They described other problems—their flat was too small, and the father had accepted a challenging new job to

increase their income, which jostled with family responsibilities. Very soon the parents were practically quarrelling with each other in the room. A spirit of rivalry and competition prevailed. Mum reproached the father for not helping her enough: she was feeding the baby, looking after Tom and taking him to playgroup, doing the cooking and cleaning—why couldn't he be more supportive? Dad interrupted her in an injured way, saying he was definitely helping: on top of his job, he was doing the washing, getting up to Tom in the night, and taking turns with the household work.

The overall impression was that there was not enough adult capacity to go round, with each parent feeling they needed more attention and care themselves. It was as if they believed that before Margaret had been born, all three of them had been of one mind, part of a charmed family circle. Now people were displaying minds of their own, minds that clashed and had to be reconciled. The parents took the roles of warring siblings, urgently asking me to contain and resolve their rivalry—a previously insufficiently explored aspect to their partnership. In retrospect, whereas they felt they had been good parents with a wonderful baby, they now no longer felt like an ideal family. They felt and behaved like deprived and quarrelsome children—rivalrous siblings unable to recapture a sense of friendly joint purpose. As the session came to an end, they acknowledged that they were an established family now—you can't go backwards—and some adult thinking began again.

Reflections

Since then, I have often seen how the birth of a second baby in particular, with its challenge of managing two different people at once, stirs up that aspect of the parents' relationship which is based not only on the mother–father link but also on the sibling link, the capacity to get on with peers and work in cooperation with affection. It emphasizes the idea of difference. Is there room in anyone's mind for two babies? These two may be the big and the little, the "good" and the "bad", the boy and the girl, but the concept of a mind where two things can lodge without one being expelled is essential if emotional progress is to be made. Will splitting and idealization continue to hold sway, or will there be movement towards concern for the other, towards responsibility for one's own feelings and actions? Will the conflict between love and hate prove manageable?

Sibling rivalry observed

While observation of an only child gives us a chance to watch the development of both tolerance and resistance to the idea of another arrival on the scene, observation of a second or subsequent baby allows us to see sibling rivalry worked through in action. Frequently this is a matter for the whole family.

In the following observations of a baby girl, we see struggles involving the ambivalence of her 2-year-old brother. The hard work of coping with two children is glimpsed when the baby, Isobel, is 4 weeks old. The mother says she is tired—Isobel doesn't like being on her own and wants to sleep in the bed with them and to sleep on top of mum, just as Jack did when he was a baby.

Infant Observation: Jack (2 y.o.) and baby Isobel

> Mother lovingly touches the baby who is lying in her Moses basket. Jack climbs on a chair and kisses Isobel's foot. He runs out into the garden and mum follows him. Isobel cries and mother comes back, saying, "You need a nappy change, and you too, Jack"—indicating in a very literal way that she has two babies of different ages, neither of whom is capable of cleaning up after themselves. Jack crashes about the kitchen on his toy motorbike. Mum starts pushing him carefully on his bike, carrying Isobel on her shoulder. She seems to be managing both for a brief time. Later, after the nappies have been changed, Isobel is placed on mummy's bed half asleep. Jack comes and puts a teddy on top of her, then he climbs up himself and tries to lie on her too. Mum gently removes him. As the observer leaves, the mother says, "I hope they will like each other. He is much bigger and she is so little. Of course, he loves her very much."

In this observation, Jack is confused about his identity. In a way, he would like to be identified with mummy who touches Isobel affectionately, as he does by kissing her on the foot. Mother then gives him the chance to feel like a loved baby himself, by saying he used to lie on her chest in bed as the new baby does now. Later he puts the teddy on top of Isobel. It cannot be clear to him who is who. Is he lying on Mummy or is somebody else lying on baby? He is muddled.

> Eight weeks later, the baby is in her bouncy chair, looking at her hand and stretching out her feet. Suddenly, Jack appears and shouts, "Isobel, Isobel!" and stands in front of her. His shadow falls on her;

he looks much bigger than she is. He lies almost on top of her and kisses her on the face. Then he stands next to her and shouts, "My sister, my sister." The observer thinks he looks potentially dangerous, but in reality this is not quite the case.

Jack is looking for answers about what it is to be a man and a boy, and how he himself relates to this new thing called a sister. What is a sister? We see here something that I referred to earlier, and that is how the sibling relationship relates to the oedipal couple. Jack is troubled by the shadow of a large daddy which is casting a dark light on his relation with Isobel. In the former extract, we saw him excited, even overly excited, by the idea of a bashing, crashing motorbike. Now something potentially destructive creeps in, but destruction is all mixed up with love. Jack is in a tangle. What is the difference between what mummy and daddy do, and what he and Isobel might do? What is the difference between a hot passionate kiss and a warm affectionate brotherly kiss? And, indeed, the difference between a violent intercourse, dedicated to smashing babies, and a creative one, amazing in its capacity to make a baby appear where none was before? For Jack, as for all little boys, it feels as though he has failed in his wish to make himself the most admired man in his mother's world, and he constantly returns to his omnipotent attempt to be bigger. But he is also engaged with the problem of how to become reconciled with things as they are. His mother says he loves Isobel—and so he does, but he does not only love her. His feelings are mixed.

Conflict between small siblings

In an observation of a mother, her 4-year-old son, Pete, and her 11-month-old daughter, Ann, we see ambivalence unresolved many months following the birth of the new baby. Although the father works long hours, the primary difficulty lies in unconscious and internal troubles rather than in external reality. Pete has been difficult and rivalrous ever since Ann was born, and he is seen in the family as a "jealous boy". Ann, on the other hand, is felt to be sweet and attractive. At the time of this particular observation, mother is worn out by the trouble of looking after the two children, both of whom have upset stomachs. Like Jack and Isobel's mum who had two nappies to change at once, she has two lots of infantile projections of mess to contain.

Throughout the observations we see small shoots of concern emerging in Pete, but they are rarely given much room to flourish. For example, Ann crawls out towards the stairs. "Where's baby going?" says Pete to the observer; and in a moment, "Baby mustn't climb", shaking his head. In this observation, Pete is not feeling well.

Infant Observation: Pete (4 y.o.) and Ann (11 m.o.)

Pete's mother wants him to lie on the sofa. She says Peter can have his dummy if he lies down. He does so and she strokes his head. Within a minute, mother starts to tell the observer how good Ann is with her baby-walker and fetches it. Ann pushes it along and mother cheers, "Hooray!" Pete sits up. His mother tells him to lie down or she won't stroke his back. He sits forward and tries to pull the walker from Ann. "No Pete, that's the baby's walker." Pete persists. "You don't need a walker, you can already walk." Mum tries to take it from him. He is stopping his sister from pushing the musical buttons on the walker, and she is grabbing at it. "Pete, let her have it—you can walk really well." Pete shakes his head and takes the walker for a walk. Mother starts to get cross. "Pete, that's enough. Are you going to lie down?" Pete shakes his head. "Well, give me that dummy." His head shakes again. "Pete, you're going to end up in trouble." He shakes his head and stares straight at her, dummy in mouth. "Give me that dummy now! Are you going to obey me or go on the naughty step?" He continues to stare and shake his head. Mother is by now very cross, on the point of losing her temper. "You're going to end up on the step!" He shakes his head.

Mother is in a spirit of retaliation. She grabs the dummy from his mouth and says, "Well, you're clearly not going to lie down, so I'm having that!" and leaves the room. Pete makes no fuss but walks around with the walker. Ann is sitting on the floor, attentive. Pete pushes the walker recklessly close to the baby. "I saw that, Pete", calls out mother from the kitchen. He picks the walker up and swings it near his sister's head, then puts it down.

While mother is still in the kitchen, Pete goes to Ann and takes away the plastic ball and cup her mother gave her. The ball falls out. It rolls on the floor, and Ann laughs. She crawls after it, but her brother gets there first and puts the ball in the cup. He puts the cup on the chair and moves the chair. She gurgles and giggles, and they

develop a game of tag with Pete leading and Ann following. Finally, she manages to get hold of the chair. Pete pulls it; she drops to her hands and knees, stops and overbalances. She looks surprised but not upset. It seemed as though the beginnings of playing together might be developing, for the children do not look antagonistic but more interested in each other.

Mother comes in and says to Ann, "What are you after? You want Pete's chair? It's just the same with both of you, isn't it?" Then she turns to the observer and says, "They're the same—each one wants what the other has got."

It is uncomfortable to see a template of misunderstanding being pressed down on the children, a narrative that ignores the subtleties of the interchanges. Until now the story has been that Pete is the naughty, troublesome one. This continues, as we see, but the next axiom is that they're both the same and each wants what the other has. There is the possibility that a stamp is being put on the nature of their relationship as grabby and competitive. We have lost the worried little boy who appealed to the observer when the baby seemed about to climb upstairs, and the moment when Ann seemed resilient and capable of hoping for a game. Pete is getting practice in being something of a bully. It is noticeable that his mother facilitates this, treating him as if he were a bad boy and yet issuing empty threats, giving him the experience of being the winner in a pointless struggle that does not make him happy. The message is that power is the key to managing sibling relationships and that the adult world does not have the authority to sort things out fairly and kindly.

But Pete is still in conflict and trying to discern the meaning of what is happening:

When Ann accidentally falls over again, Pete says, "Baby fall over. Sorry." The observer can't help saying, "It's not your fault", to which he responds, "Mummy's fault", and in a moment, "Baby fall over. I fall over. I baby." He is still trying to entertain the idea of vulnerability, his and hers. Then Ann pulls at a book and her mum picks it up and settles with Ann on her lap. Immediately, Pete is beside her, wanting to turn the pages. Mother says, "No, Pete, this is baby's book." Pete shakes his head and says, "I baby."

Here there seems no possibility of reading to them both at once and acknowledging that there are two babies, one big baby and one little baby, and their wants could be similar and dealt with at once.

Reflections

Clinically, we sometimes see families in which one child is said to be difficult and the other to have no problems. If this situation persists too long, these perceptions can become set in their characters. In families such as this, progress can be seen when the idealized child starts to cause some ordinary degree of concern and the denigrated one begins to improve. Ordinarily positions and functions in the family are more labile—children take turns as the one causing trouble, when there are no extremes of polarization, where vulnerability is not too risky, and where there is tolerance for the process of containing and managing pain, negativity, and disagreement.

The growth and development of sibling relations in the family

In any family with two, three, four, or more children at any one time there may be ongoing developmental changes for each child; perhaps complicated negotiations between the children and, alongside this, changing internal adjustments, such as the ones I have described in relation to Alexandra, Margaret, Pete, and Ann.

In the following infant observation, there were three young girls—4-year-old Maria, 2-year-old Francesca, and 11-month-old Pia—each of them facing different challenges simultaneously. Maria had just started school and was having to separate from intimate family life and engage with the outside world, a new environment, new demands, and other children. Pia was just beginning to crawl and was also achieving a different sort of autonomy. Meanwhile, Francesca who was in the process of being toilet-trained, missed her older sister during the day and was jostling with Pia for their mother's attention.

During one observation, Maria is at school and mother is on the phone. Pia unexpectedly hits her head while crawling and dissolves into floods of tears.

She sits back, and for a moment it looks as if she is going to be all right, but then her face crumples and she wails. Mum is heard to say hastily on the phone, "Better go", and she rushes back in and scoops Pia up. Pia nestles into mum's shoulder more frightened than hurt and then refuses to be put down. Each time mother tries, Pia raises her arms and bats them as if trying to bat away unwelcome thoughts, and then she crumples. There is nothing for it but to carry her around.

Here we see Pia fully experiencing being the vulnerable baby, at the mercy of her anxieties, dependent on the actual presence of her mother to protect her from the horrible feeling of being suddenly let down. Mother confides in the observer that she had found Pia's hospital tag from when she was born. It had the wrong number on it! Laughing, she says that for a moment she thought she might have the wrong baby. "Imagine, I did think that!" It seems mother was profoundly in touch with a change in Pia. Pia was feeling as though she were another person. Instead of being the delightful infant enjoying the natural protected status of the youngest, she was now out in the rough world, inwardly feeling let down. It is worth also noticing that when Pia cries, Francesca feels dreadful. As mother holds Pia, she suggests something for Francesca to do. "No", says Francesca, scowling across the room. Soon they are both struggling for a place on Mummy's knee. "Go away, Pia", says Francesca. Suddenly mother has not one, but two children to comfort and reassure.

We can see how Pia is not merely a rival. She is also a reminder to Francesca of Francesca's own vulnerable feelings. The whole question of how to become friends with your siblings is here. There are two processes that go hand in hand. One is the question of the relation to actual children in the external world—how, for example, Francesca gets on with her older and younger sisters links directly with the self she takes to nursery to begin the work of making acquaintances, classmates, and friends. The other question is how this operates within the individual personality. How does the big girl Francesca relate to the baby girl who is also Francesca? If we work on the model that says that in any one person we have the infant we were—the toddler, the child, the adolescent, and the adult—we have to hope that within ourselves these different aspects can coexist in more or less a friendly way and that we have a grip on our less desirable infant aspects, which are not too punitive, not too scornful, not too fierce and rejecting. As the weeks go by, the observer sees all three little girls able to be kind to each other, to comfort each other, to play in different combinations with each other, as well as being competitive and rivalrous.

Conclusion

To establish and defend friendly relations with siblings calls upon reserves of strength to bear anxiety provoked by conflicting emotions—by a sense of being left out, and by the doubt and fear engendered by feeling separate, alone, and rejected. But enjoyment and friendship

are the antidotes to jealous and envious rivalry, for as Klein (1957, p. 189) points out, enjoyment is linked with gratitude; and "gratitude is closely bound up with generosity". If the baby has taken in enough good experiences to stand her in good stead when difficulties arise, she will be in a position to "share her gifts" (p. 189) with others. Good impulses, carried through, help to build the conviction that siblings are potential friends, that mother and father are friends with each other, and that they are united in looking after all the babies they have made or might make. Fortunately, we are not confined to our actual experiences but live a life of the imagination as well. There is food for thought in all kinds of experience; singletons know about siblings; children of lone parents know about parental couples. In the inner world of our dreams, our thoughts, our conscious and unconscious experiences, there are internal figures who exist as surely as figures in the outer world, and these are built up from all kinds of sources.

These rival impulses—to tolerate or to reject something that comes to disturb an idealized state—can be watched fruitfully in the course of observing infants and small children. We see what a struggle it can be to change one's mind, to open it to new possibilities, and yet what rewards are there when the new baby with all its attendant conflicts of emotion can be accommodated. We have an unparalleled chance to see the whole oedipal constellation in the process of development at a very early stage and in families that clearly are well within the bounds of the ordinary. Again, if we refer to the section in chapter 2 that focuses on Klein's patient, Richard, we see demonstrated the whole array of complications that can arise in the course of the oedipal process. It can be hard work to bear feelings of being ousted, the sense that there are couples—mother and baby, or mother and father—that do not include you, and yet how vital it is to tackle the conflicting emotions and find a relation to other children (and eventually schoolmates, colleagues, other people in the world) that is cooperative, friendly, and inclusive.