

The couple and its instincts

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Abstract

This paper deals with the anatomy of the couple system and the instinctual drivers that facilitate its emergence. This third entity that is generated is governed by prototypical experiences in development and the structural and content issues of these experiences, in particular, the role of the death instinct. How mental contents can be exchanged in the couple system is explored, based on the unique exchange that occurs in the mother-infant dyad. This projected content in the couple raises the issue of defence and its corollary, what is defended against, and argues that couples often share the same injury but defend against this in diverse ways. It is this diversity of defence that leads to couple conflict and the possibility of couple dissolution.