

LITERATURE REVIEW

3. Letting Go: A Human Developmental Perspective

Development, by definition, implies change, but how that change occurs needs to be explored and understood. The traditional approach to development has been to recognise great change from birth to adolescence, stability in adulthood, and deterioration within old age. Stated differently, development may be described as a gradual unfolding, a letting go, a movement of growth and change through time. While childhood is foundational to human development, the life-cycle or life-span perspective recognises the changes that occur during adulthood. Santrock's (1986) description of life-span development could have been written with the concept of letting go in mind. He writes:

It is about the life of every human being. It tells the story of human development from conception to death – from the point in time when life begins until the point in time when it ends, at least life as we know it (Preface, p.xxv).

In being born we let go, in dying we let go, and in the process between, we live the story of our human journey through life which we also eventually have to let go. Before we let go, we are first held and contained; we become attached and then dialectically move on from one level to another, throughout our development. From birth to death, we let go and move on, each on our own particular and personal path in life.

Understanding the psychological process of our human journey through life requires a developmental approach. Knowles (1986) propounds that: "Human psychology cannot be understood unless it is considered within the framework of developmental psychology. The human being always has some relationship to time – to his past, present, and future – and this relationship is central to his existence" (p.8).

Growth and development imply mobility from one level to another. To grow is to move, and to separate: "Individual developmental history is a movement from merger to separateness" (Josselson, 1988, p.91). Psychoanalytic development theory views growth

as a process of separation from dependence to autonomy, and in the mobility of separation through space and time, growth and development unfold. From a Heideggerian (1962) perspective, human development occurs in a spiral manner rather than in a chronological line. In the process of growth and development, as we define a sense of self, we let go, separate and move on.

3.1 Erikson and Development

Recognising the pursuit of selfhood in moving from one level to another, Erik Erikson (1971; 1969) presents us with an inspiring description of human development and provides us with an understanding of man on his journey through life. With his “eight ages of man”, Erikson has modified psychoanalytic theory and shifted the purely biological picture of man to a comprehensive developmental paradigm, creating a valuable momentum for developmental psychology and human mobility. Erikson reframes and expands Freud’s first five stages of psychosexual development, but includes an additional three phases that extend into adulthood. Each phase presents with a central crisis or challenge that has to be mastered before moving on to the following phase. Successful completion of each phase and finding resolution to the challenge is significant, for in the process of moving on, a ‘sense’ of the phase is acquired, in preparation for the following phase. In moving on, the individual prepares for the new challenge of the subsequent phase and the mastery attained with each phase is placed at risk. To master the phase is a resolution of the phase. Erikson identifies the eight ages or phases of man, as follows:

- (1) Basic Trust vs Basic Mistrust
- (2) Autonomy vs Shame /Doubt
- (3) Initiative vs Guilt
- (4) Industry vs Inferiority
- (5) Identity vs Role Confusion
- (6) Intimacy vs Isolation
- (7) Generativity vs Stagnation
- (8) Ego Integrity vs Despair

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Erikson's (1969) use of the term *versus* (vs) reflects the conflict which arises and which is unique to each phase and challenge that has to be resolved. The motion within and between the developmental phases is constant, contributing to the developing and continuously evolving personality. Holding on and letting go are dialectical and consistently present. Human development is a continuous process, with each phase an integral part of the continuum. (Erikson, 1969; Knowles, 1986; Maier, 1969; Santrock, 1986).

Though holding on and letting go appear to be consistently present, only the first two phases appear significant to the present study. The first phase or phase of "Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust" is foundational to the subsequent phase of "Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt", with its developmentally specific dialectical experience of holding on and letting go, as it reveals the initial somatic, interpersonal and psychological experience of letting go. Although holding on and letting go continue to occur developmentally throughout the life cycle, only the first two phases, with their relevant dynamics regarding the phenomenon of letting go, will be discussed.

The first Eriksonian phase is the phase of "Basic Trust vs Basic Mistrust", where the blend of trust and mistrust becomes a critical theme, as the infant attempts to acquire a sense of basic trust, while overcoming a sense of basic mistrust. Meeting the challenge and resolving the conflict of this initial phase becomes a developmental achievement, and is foundational to subsequent phases of development. Physical and psychological experiences influence the nature of the trust or mistrust and determine the ensuing success or failure. As the infant relates (somatically, psychologically and socially) to the world, the relationship of receiving and giving, in relation to the (m)other, becomes pivotal. The challenge is to achieve a sense of basic trust with which to move forward. During the first year of life, where (m)other meets the needs of the infant and where outer predictability concurs with inner reality, the infant begins to trust his body, himself and his environment (Maier, 1969).

Basic trust is the essential link between the infant and the outside world, where holding-on and letting go become possible. Where trust has dominated the infant's early development, the child will willingly face new experiences and be ready to let go and move on. All subsequent development is located in this initial phase of Basic Trust vs. Basic Mistrust

(Erikson, 1971; 1969). Trust provides a foundational basis and climate in which to grow and form relationships.

3.1.1 Erikson and Letting go

The second Eriksonian developmental phase, viz. that of “Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt” depends on the achievement of trust as challenged during the previous phase. The phase of Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt is specifically significant to the phenomenon of letting go Erikson (1971; 1969).

Erikson directly attends to the phenomenon of letting go and discusses it in the context of this phase, where the experience of the lived body gains significance. At this time the infant’s capacity to hold on and let go, with bowel and bladder movements, creates an awareness of a personal ability to control and release. The experience of “holding on” and “letting go” precedes the psychological aspects of development, where, with the rapid advance in muscular maturation and concurrent experience of his body, the child becomes aware of a personal will and ability to hold on and control, or let go and release. Experiencing the lived body makes it possible for the child to act, exist and perceive the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Significantly, the early muscular maturation during this phase introduces the experience of holding and letting go. Erikson (1969) describes these concepts as follows:

Muscular maturation sets the stage for experimentation with two simultaneous sets of social modalities: holding and letting go... . Thus, to hold can become a destructive and cruel restraining, and it can become a pattern of care, to have and to hold. To let go, too, can turn into an inimical letting loose of destructive forces, or it can be relaxed ‘ to let pass’ and ‘ to let be’ (p.243).

An intensely conflicting action is reflected in the patterns of “holding on” and “letting go” where the infant experiences a paradoxical ability and inability to co-ordinate. The required action pattern is rather complicated. The paradox for the young child extends in relation to his world and, although still highly dependent, the child existentially begins to experience a personal and autonomous will. The contradiction and ambiguity of this phase continues, but with it arrives the development of a personal will. The young child retains and discards

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things, becomes attached to, yet rejects, valued objects; may snuggle close to mother and suddenly attempt to push her away. These contradictory modes of behaviour are '*retentive – eliminative*' (Erikson, 1971; p.109).

Although holding on and letting go are paradoxical in meaning, a personal will unfolds. The basic trust in the world and faith in existence developed during the earlier (trust vs mistrust) phase, ideally continues to provide a foundational base. At this time, firmly reassuring parental (environmental/social) control facilitates trust as the young child is protected against his own diffuse understanding of whether to hold on or to let go. A protective environment promotes the trust and encourages autonomy, making it possible for the infant to literally and figuratively stand on his own feet.

3.1.2 Control and Letting go

The dialectical significance of holding on and letting go is reflected in the child's experience of control (holding on) and submission (letting go), these being paradoxically juxtaposed. The lived body experience of holding on and letting go is extended in relation to the world of things and others. Developing a muscular capacity provides a greater ability and awareness of personal control, with an increased power over the environment. Control is a holding on, while letting go is a release or submission. The modalities of retention and elimination become evident in the capacity to extend, grasp, hold on to, discard, push aside, seize things or keep them at a distance. (Erikson, 1969; Knowles, 1986).

With the evolving will, a sense of personal control increases, and yet there is also an awareness of the interpersonal aspects of control regarding parents and their demand for conformity. The contradictory picture of parental (environmental/social) and personal control influences the child's evolving sense of autonomy. In the continued paradox of this period, the parents place limits on the child's behaviour, yet continue to provide his security and comfort. During this second phase, the mutual regulation between the parent and child is greatly challenged. If the child is usurped of all personal control and rendered powerless, then there is a regression to earlier levels of control (e.g. thumb sucking, being doubly demanding), or else a false progression appears. Erikson (1971) points out that: "a sense of self-control without loss of self-esteem is the ontogenetic source of a sense of free will.

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From an unavoidable sense of loss of self-control and of parental overcontrol comes a lasting propensity for doubt and shame” (pp. 109/110). The challenge during this phase is to resolve the conflicting polarity of control, whether to hold on or to let go. The extent to which the conflict is resolved and dealt with, determines the success or failure of this phase. Attaining success is a developmental achievement.

3.1.3 Developmental Achievement

Meeting the challenge (biological, psychological and social) of moving from one developmental phase to another successfully is a developmental achievement that provides developmental continuity. While each developmental challenge may not always be successfully dealt with, adequate resolution of the crisis makes it possible for the individual to move on and retain a sense of continuity with which to move forward. Failure adequately to resolve a crisis during a developmental phase may lead to an attempt, at a later stage, for its resolution. Residual remains of the crisis could be challenged at a later stage and rekindled. The meaning attached to a particular crisis is significant and an essential part of its resolution. Citing an earlier work, Alapack & Alapack (1984, p.46) explicate as follows:

We face certain life issues repeatedly; rarely do we deal with them for once and for all. We return to certain meanings again and again in a spiral fashion. Optimistically we return with the experience under our belt, which we have parlayed into accumulated wisdom. Optimistically we come to a familiar situation with the liberating distance of a retrospective perspective. But often we stumble, as Freud’s concept of repetition compulsion indicates (Alapack, 1976).

If we do not resolve previous significant aspects of our life, we desperately hold on to their earlier meanings, destined to repeat them in order to find resolution and move on. Previously unresolved aspects of one’s life lie dormant, where their meanings can be reactivated later in life. This is Freud’s repetition compulsion, or stated differently, a tendency to repeat with an inability to let go. Similarly, Fairbairn (1943) describes a traumatic experience as the activation of a pre-existing, previously unresolved event in one’s life. Earlier experiences colour our perceptions, and the manner in which we perceive and experience our world creates the reality in which we live. Adequately mastering the challenge of each phase

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makes accessibility to the following phase possible. As we find solutions and move on, the developmental achievements acquired determine personal development and the quality of our lives.

3.2 Heidegger, Levinas, Mahler and Erikson

Martin Heidegger (1962), the German philosopher, brings together existential concerns and the phenomenological method. His analysis of human existence deals with the ontological question of the meaning of Being (*Dasein*). To Heidegger, human existence is a contextual “being in the world”, a concept that undeniably acknowledges existence as relational, where the human individual shapes the world and others, but is in turn shaped by the world and others. Erikson’s (1969) developmental theory recognises man’s contextuality, but expands the psychoanalytic view from the biological and psychological to include social influences. In his work on human development, Richard Knowles (1986) reviews Erikson in the light of Heidegger and includes a comprehensive existential-phenomenological perspective.

Significant to understanding development is Heidegger’s view of existence as temporal and historical. Heidegger’s acceptance of transcendence reflects an openness to what has not occurred, to the unknownness of what one enters, as implied by letting go. In this study of letting go, while Heidegger’s ontology and temporality have to be acknowledged, the work of Levinas cannot be ignored. Emmanuel Levinas (1979) describes truth as moving beyond existence, beyond the ontology of Being, while his profound work *Totality and Infinity* reflects a transcending movement of thinking that moves beyond the realm of Being which is so central to Heidegger’s thought. While acknowledging the significance of Being, the present study also acknowledges an intentionality and willingness to move beyond the centralised paradigm of ontology. The contextuality of letting go has to be recognised.

By embracing the contextuality of human existence, both Erikson (1969) and Mahler (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) substantially extend psychoanalytic theory into a general developmental psychology. Developmental crises are accepted as normative, and the resolution of a crisis is recognised as a developmental achievement. What Erikson describes as the Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt phase, Mahler identifies as Rapprochement or third subphase of Separation-Individuation. Both theorists describe the process of attaining

autonomy during early childhood as intensely paradoxical, recognising the contradictory nature of the infant's early development from infancy through toddlerhood. At this time, the infant's development is conflicting and paradoxical, for while the need for a oneness with (m)other continues, there is the demand to separate and attain autonomy. Erikson and Mahler acknowledge the impact of the somatic, intra-psychic and interpersonal worlds on the infant's life and the significance of experiencing a sense of continuity in defining the self. Mahler (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975) considers the process of continuity as integral to separation-individuation, where she concludes that: "Like any intrapsychic process, this one reverberates throughout the lifecycle. It is never finished; it remains always active; new phases of the life cycle see new derivatives of the earliest processes still at work" (p.3). The ambiguity of this phase continues through life.

3.3 Mahler and Separation-Individuation

Margaret Mahler (1975) considers the "separation-individuation process" as the psychological birth of the individual, where there is

The establishment of a sense of separateness from, and relation to, a world of reality, particularly with regard to the experiences of one's own body and to the principal representative of the world as the infant experiences it, the primary love object (p.3).

The description lays emphasis on the concepts of separation and separateness, where separation occurs in the presence of the (m)other and her emotional availability. In the process of separating, the young child faces increasing physical maturity, with subtle accompanying threats of an expanding space between the self and (m)other. Mahler's developmental separation takes place in the presence of (m)other and contrasts with the traumatic separation of loss that Bowlby (1998) describes as occurring with the absence of the (m)other. Mahler's separation is a normal developmental separation that unfolds in the separation-individuation process towards autonomy. The concepts of 'separate' and 'separateness' indicate the developmental growth and maturity that unfolds as the child lets go of the (m)other in her presence. The concepts of separation and separateness will be discussed under the attachment section later.

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The process of separation is complementary to “the psychological birth of the human infant” or separation-individuation. Mahler’s theory (1975; 1979) remains the prevailing paradigm for developmental psychology today. On separation, Mahler (1975) writes:

Separation consists of the child’s emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother,... and individuation consists of those achievements marking the child’s assumption of his own individual characteristics. These are intertwined but not identical developmental processes; they may proceed divergently, with a developmental lag or precocity to one another (p.4).

In the process of growth development, the human infant develops through the phases of (A) “normal autism” (approximately 0-2 months) and (B) “normal symbiosis” (approximately 2-5 months), and enters the process of (C) “separation individuation”. As a foundational basis to separation-individuation, the forerunners (“normal autism” and “normal symbiosis”) of the separation-individuation process will first be discussed as a preliminary basis to the process of separation-individuation.

3.3.1 Normal Autistic Phase

This phase begins around birth and lasts until about the second month of extrauterine life. This is an undifferentiated phase, where for the infant there is no discernible difference between the self and the environment. Sleep is the neonate’s major activity, so that an active relationship with the world is absent and life is merely centred on continuous attempts to attain homeostasis. There is a lack of awareness of (m)other, for, as described by Mahler (1967), “the infant seems to be in a state of primitive hallucinatory disorientation, in which need satisfaction belongs to its own autistic orbit” (p.77). With no discernible differentiation between inner and outer realities, we find the phase of “absolute primary narcissism” extending to the beginning of the normal symbiotic phase.

3.3.2 Normal Symbiotic Phase

During this phase, the infant is *absolutely* dependent on the symbiotic (m)other, while the (m)other’s need for the infant is *relative*. This is the time of the delusional state of oneness with (m)other, with the experience of a common boundary or primary narcissistic oneness between the infant and (m)other. This is a normal state of emotional and psychic oneness

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with (m)other (Mahler, 1974; 1975). At this time, “the infant’s inner sensations form the core of the self. They seem to remain the central crystallization point of the ‘feeling self’ around which a sense of identity will become established” (Mahler et al., 1975, p.47).

Holding is a major facilitator and container to the symbiotic process and discussed in greater detail below under “Holding”.

3.3.3 Separation-Individuation

Separation-individuation is comprised of four subphases pertinent to the phenomenon of letting go and described as follows:

(1) The first subphase: Differentiation

Growing up is a growing away from the state of symbiosis, where, through the relationship with the caring (m)other, the infant relates to the environment for the first time. At about 5 to 9 months, the (m)other is acutely explored in a tactile and visual manner, whereby the infant becomes aware of a separate other. What the (m)other looks like, feels like and even smells like becomes known to the infant. With early perceptions of the infant’s own body as having (skin) boundary, a sense of self emerges. At this time, the infant uses a “checking-back ” pattern, comparing the (m)other with others, noting her expression and affirming her presence before embarking on a specific action. During this phase, the (m)other gains prominence for the infant and, almost in preparation of her impending absence, she initiates peek-a-boo games. The infant becomes aware of the link with (m)other and, before further entering the environment, maintains and re-establishes that link, assuring the self of the connection (Mahler, 1965; 1975; 1979). A major ontological step is evident with the “hatching” process that occurs at this time, as the world is entered from a bipedal, relating perspective. From a perpendicular viewpoint, the life-world of the infant expands. Wakeful periods are longer, with an increasing awareness of the presence of other environmental aspects besides (m)other. In moving on into the new environment and letting go of the familiar, an awareness of difference (newness) is “checked” against the familiar (trusted) world. While the known and familiar provide comfort with a separation from (m)other, a sensitivity to the unfamiliar appears, together with discomfort. Stranger-anxiety also becomes evident. (Mahler et al., 1975).

(2) The second subphase: The Practising Period

The practising period that occurs at about 9 -16 months is divided into (a) an early period, and (b) a practising period proper.

(a) During the early practising period, the infant begins to crawl, climb and move away from (m)other, yet remains attached by still holding on and requiring support. As the infant's world expands, exploration increases, for there is more to hear, see and touch. Nevertheless, the attachment remains as the infant's world remains closely linked to (m)other. Sight and sound become a metaphorical umbilical cord that connects with (m)other who remains significant. At first, there is a pull away from mother and a push into the outside world. As the infant's relationship to the world expands, a brief period of separation anxiety is noted. (M)other continues to be the centre of the infant's world and only gradually does the infant move out into the expanding world, for fear of losing sight of (m)other. There is a strong need to retain the attachment, as (m)other is periodically returned to for "emotional refuelling" and for the stability of touching "home base". Physical contact rekindles the earlier experience and re-establishes their attachment. Josselson (1992) believes the "refuelling" to be a reminder of the infant's earlier sense of being held. Returning to the (m)other is an attempt to relive the earlier holding experience and sense of oneness with her. Through refuelling, the infant holds on to the earlier reality and oneness experienced with (m)other with fresh attempts to reconnect (Mahler, 1965; 1975). Holding on is an effort to protect the self against abandonment and the fear of isolation. A greater freedom in relation to the (m)other unfolds as the growing infant, now a toddler, plays a more active and determining role in the creation of distance and space between the self and (m)other.

(b) During the practising period proper, the infant's posture phenomenologically characterises the free locomotion. Bursting into his ontological world, the infant breaks through, from a position of 'horizontal' (Jager, 1971) to the vertical position of toddler. The new state of being provides a sense of omnipotence (secondary narcissism), and the toddler seems almost impervious to knocks and falls. There is a sense of empowerment, of being in control and discovering the world and reality as his personal will determines it. Individuality is asserted and the initial step towards identity formation is taken. The newly acquired ability of walking provides a different view and perspective to the world that has a

tremendous impact on emotional development and bears major symbolic significance for the individual. Mahler (1975) writes:

It is as if the walking toddler has proved by his attainment of independent upright locomotion that he has already graduated into the world of independent human beings. The expectation and confidence that the mother exudes when she feels that the child is able to 'make it' out there seems to be an important trigger for the child's safety and perhaps also the initial encouragement for his exchanging some of his magic omnipotence for pleasure in his own autonomy and his developing self-esteem (p.74).

During the time of mastery (of important ego functions) the young child becomes elated with his achievements and a sense of omnipotence unfolds. The delusion of omnipotence evident during the symbiotic phase is repeated on a different level. With the delusion of omnipotence, what was once invested in relation to the mother is now invested in relation to the self. This includes an investment in the body self, personal competencies, as well as in the objects and goals in the expanding horizons. A secondary narcissism emerges, where the infant becomes absorbed in personal pursuits, to the extent of often appearing oblivious of (m)other. This behaviour continues until there is a need to return for "refuelling" in the relationship with (m)other (Mahler,1965). As the child's "love affair with the world" wanes, it is once again refuelled by mother's proximity.

(3) The third subphase: Rapprochement

Rapprochement occurs at about 16-24 months and is divided into three periods: (a) beginning rapprochement; (b) rapprochement crisis; (c) individual patterning of rapprochement. As the toddler's awareness of his separateness grows and the "first level of identity" is established, the elation of the previous subphase begins to subside. Following the absorption in the personal activities of the self, now the mother's every move is watched and followed in the polarised "shadowing" (pull) and "darting away" (push) behaviour, the letting go of, and holding on to (m)other. The push and pull experience of this phase is further evident in the games played. Peek-a-boo games are typical, as are imitational games concerned with relatedness. The (m)other's consistent emotional availability during this subphase is of

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paramount importance, and an awareness of this link facilitates the toddler's acceptance of his own ambivalence regarding the push (let go) and pull (hold) present. The toddler is conflicted, "faced by the necessity of emotional separation from his mother just at a time when he must cope with an expanding outside reality" (Mahler, 1965, p.38).

(a) During the beginning rapprochement period, the perceptive reality is that (m)other is a person in her own right, affirming their separateness. With awareness of the separateness, there is a strong need to share with (m)other and retain a connectedness with her. The toddler attempts to connect (m)other with the outside world and brings objects discovered in his expanding horizons to her. Awareness of this separateness gives rise to a sense of great loss for the toddler, who attempts to rekindle the fusion of earlier times with her through regressive behaviour, but recognition of their separateness remains profound. The otherness of father (or additional significant other) is also recognised at this time, and the presence of the third person facilitates resolution of the symbiotic pull of the dyad. Additional relationships with others besides the parents become possible as the world of relatedness expands (Mahler, 1965, 1975).

(b) During the crisis period of rapprochement, the ultimate realisation unfolds that there is no return to the earlier fusion with (m)other. Awareness of the increased ability to move away from (m)other, creates both pleasure and pain. In an attempt to deny the painful awareness of separateness, the (m)other is used as an extension of the self, with continued efforts to re-engage her in shared activities. In an attempt to relive the earlier experience of oneness, sharing is a significant aspect of the relationship with (m)other. The increasing physical and cognitive capacity of the toddler push toward autonomy and accelerate the opportunity to let go and move away from (m)other. Emotionally, however, there is a pull to enter the expanding environment and share the new horizons and experiences with (m)other. With the push towards autonomy and the pull to retain the relationship with (m)other, conflict arises and the process of letting go seems difficult. The rapprochement crisis challenges the toddler to resolve the push-pull conflict experience, posing a tremendous developmental task. The ambivalence of the push-pull conflict is the oscillation towards and away from (m)other, where the toddler is required to resolve accumulated conflicts, as well as deal with concurrent oral, anal and early genital pressures. On the one hand there is the desire to

remain one with (m)other and, on the other hand, to individuate from her. Pleasure and pain are juxtaposed in the experienced conflict.

Accepting the ambivalence of this critical period makes resolution of this phase possible. Paradoxically, though the toddler may wish to achieve autonomy from (m)other, there is the fear that she may leave him. The toddler's activities and restlessness increase during mother's absence, and separation anxiety is a characteristic fear of this period, but "this separation anxiety is not synonymous with the fear of annihilation through abandonment" (Mahler and Gosliner, 1955, p.196). In the overlap of inner world and outer reality or oneness and separateness, attachments to transitional objects and phenomena (Winnicott) facilitate the process of separation. During the crisis period, a wider and more differentiated range of emotional experiences appear, while a sense of separateness and vulnerability make an empathic capacity possible.

(c) The final or individual patterning period of rapprochement sees the toddler finding individual solutions to the crisis as personal patternings and personality traits emerge. In moving away, the toddler finds an "optimal distance" (Bouvet, 1958) from which to function best away from mother. The optimal distance is the balance of the two polarities and lies in the extent to which the toddler is able to deal with the demand for omnipotent control, separation anxiety and the capacity to tolerate the conflict regarding the desire for closeness (pull) yet need for autonomy (push). In the awareness of separateness, speech and language are important aspects in attaining optimal distance and retaining a connectedness. Significant words and gestures provide the toddler with adequate expression regarding early autonomy and relatedness. The increasing use of speech and language provides resolution for a sense of separateness, while retaining connectedness. The developing language facilitates the increasing individuation with individual differences (Mahler, Pine and Bergman, 1975).

(4) The fourth subphase: Consolidation of individuality and the beginnings of emotional object constancy

This phase occurs at about 24-36 months and differs from the first three phases, since it is open-ended, has no limit and develops through life. At this time, the child's cognitive capacity is established. Cognitive ability (Piaget's object permanence) increases, facilitating

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the process of separation. Mahler and her colleagues prefer using Hartmann's (1952) term of "object constancy" rather than Piaget's (1954) term of "object permanence", reasoning that, what is internalised is more than a mere representation of what is absent, as it incorporates both what is good and bad about the (m)other. A sense of permanence is, however, conveyed when Mahler (1975) declares that:

In the state of object constancy, the love object will not be rejected or exchanged for another if it can no longer provide satisfactions; and in that state, the object is still longed for, and not rejected (hated) as unsatisfactory simply because it is absent (p.110).

The image of (m)other includes emotional connotations or meaning and, in this manner, (m)other is readily available: in the absence of that which is transportable with the self, the image is evoked as memory. Establishing emotional object constancy depends on earlier experiences of trust, as well as on the cognitive capacity for inner representation of the permanent object. As the self finds cognitive links with the (m)other in her absence, a sense of attachment is retained. Complex cognitive functions unfold: verbal ability, fantasy and reality testing improve to provide the child with a greater capacity to move towards greater autonomy (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975; Kramer & Akhtar, 1992; Thunissen, 1998).

Schneider (1992) describes the process as follows:

The establishment of an affective object constancy patterning depends upon the gradual internalisation of a properly and positively cathected inner image of the mother by the child. This constant inner image will enable the child to function separately and independently despite some degree of tension and difficulty. (p.2)

Winnicott's (1951) explication of the transitional objects and phenomena illustrates how the child is able to resolve the polarised conflict of the need to be with (m)other and the accompanying demand to be without her. The value and purpose of transitional objects and phenomena will be discussed later under "Space and Transition".

Though the child may structure an evocative memory of (m)other, the compilation of

memories tends to continue through life. Regarding object constancy in adults, Fleming (1975) cautions us to recognise that established mental representations can be changed over time, as they “do not serve the same dynamic, economic and adaptive purposes when their images are evoked in memory” (p.750). The continuity of the ego’s adaptive capacity does not appear absolute.

3.4 Other Theorists

3.4.1. Infancy and Childhood

Research conducted subsequent to Mahler’s findings challenges her deductions regarding the neonate’s inability to differentiate and define the self. Kroger (1998) points to the studies of Lyons-Ruth (1991) that recognise the neonate as possessing greater cognitive and perceptual capacities than Mahler’s observations imply. Similarly, Daniel Stern (1985) disagrees with Mahler’s view regarding early infant development, and believes that the infant seeks relatedness and desires an “intersubjective union” rather than pursuing intrapsychic autonomy. Stern considers the neonate as already having a sense of self. Stern’s developmental framework includes:

- (a) A sense of emergent self: 0-2 months: different scattered experiences of hearing, perception, smell, taste and an emerging feeling of a bodily wholeness are integrated and organised;
- (b) A sense of core self: 2-7 months: self-agency, self-affectivity, self-coherence and self-history develop;
- (c) A sense of subjective self: 7-15 months: awareness of self with own identity and viewpoint develops;
- (d) A sense of verbal self: 15-18 months: objective view of the self and symbolic representation by language develops.

Stern appears to reverse Mahler’s view of development, believing that a core sense of self must first be developed before the infant is able to connect with others. Though Mahler and Stern consider different viewpoints and aims for development, both theories bear merit and can be considered as contributing to the same continuum.

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Stern views the infant as moving towards connectedness. Mobility, for Stern, is to move from the initial stages (viz. emergent, core, subjective and verbal) of self, to connect with others. Stern's understanding of separation differs to that of Mahler's, reflected in the concepts of 'attunement' and 'mis-attunement' in relation to the other. In defining separateness, Stern believes that the correct amount of mis-attunement is required, whereby the otherness of the parent can be discerned, particularly evident during the first year of life, when a sense of self develops. Mahler (1975) and Stern (1985) employ diverse developmental frameworks with a different developmental aim. Developmentally, where Mahler's theory may consider the infant as moving away from, and letting go of, (m)other, Stern's view would accept the infant as moving away and letting go towards the (m)other. From the perspective of Mahler, letting go may be described as the separation - individuation of the human individual in the quest for autonomy, whereas for Stern letting go is suggested as being the need to relate in the desire for connectedness or core-relatedness.

Thunissen (1998) believes that both the theories of Mahler and Stern can be integrated to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the "child ego state", which is summed up as follows:

- (a) From the beginning a sense of self emerges;
- (b) The infant has the capacity to process and discriminate between experiences;
- (c) Experiences with caretakers are internalised from birth;
- (d) In the interaction between infant and caretaker, development takes place through the clustering of similar experiences;
- (e) The internalised representations are structured into script decisions.

Different theorists view the concept of separation differently. While Mahler's concept of separation is recognised as a gradual developmental process regarding individuation and the intrapsychic process of our psychological birth as humans, attachment theorists (Bowlby and Ainsworth) place emphasis on the psychobiological aspects of separation. Though we find philosophical differences between the theory of separation-individuation and attachment theory, common connections are evident. Both theories accept (m)other as the secure base from which the infant can grow and develop and from which future stability will emerge. While attachment theory accepts (m)other's emotional availability as necessary for play,

exploration and entry into the expanding horizons, Mahler's theory accepts that (m)other's emotional availability and support must be internalised to make separation-individuation possible. Both theories bear merit.

3.4.2 Adolescence

With its pertinence to development and growth, Peter Blos seems to identify similarities to Mahler's separation-individuation theory when identifying adolescence as the "second individuation process". Described by Blos (1967), "Adolescent individuation is the reflection of those structural changes that accompany the emotional disengagement from internalised infantile objects" (p.165). Blos purports that the adolescent attains autonomy and differentiation for those aspects of self that continue to be diffusely attached to the parents. The adolescent procures a distance and difference from the internalised parents as the infantile object ties are transcended. Identity formation assists the individuation process. The dependence-independence of adolescence is reminiscent of the push and pull movements of shadowing and darting away of the rapprochement subphase during early childhood. As described by Josselson (1980): "The adolescent, like the child in the rapprochement subphase, wants his parents there as a home base to return to in times of need" (p.195). Similar to the early rapprochement subphase, the push-pull process during adolescence is painful for both parent and adolescent. The ambivalence over autonomy creates much of the pain for both parent and adolescent, while the paradox and ambiguity of the early separation-individuation phase repeats itself during adolescence. Blos (1967) accepts regression as an essential part of progression and explicates that: "In paradoxical fashion ... progressive development is precluded if regression does take its proper course at the proper time within the sequential pattern of the adolescent process (p.185). According to Blos, regression facilitates maturation, ego differentiation and progressive development. In other words, going back precedes going forward.

3.4.3 Adulthood and the Later Years.

Letting go appears inevitable to human development. Throughout the literature the implication is of a mobility that continues through life. Human development and, more recently, human adult development have received a great deal of attention. Erikson argues

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that development does not cease with childhood and adolescence, as Freud believed, but continues through the life of each individual. In 1978, Daniel Levinson presented his theory on the life cycle, while Edmund Sherman's (1987) work later focused on midlife transitions. Subsequently, Moody and Carroll (1999) describe the stages of spiritual awakening that arise in the quest for spiritual wholeness. Human development in adulthood is part of the journey of life. With his description of "the stages of life", Carl Jung (1972) pioneered the process of development and individuation of self during the adult years.

Prior to Mahler's theory of separation-individuation, Jung (1953; 1972) introduced the concept of individuation regarding adult development. While Mahler considers individuation to be significant to the process of separation during early childhood, Jung has used the term individuation to indicate the psychological developmental process that begins with childhood but gains significance during midlife, when the passion of the earlier years evolves into the call for duty. Jung recognises individuation as the process of self-realisation, an actualisation of the self whereby the individual moves on and develops to become the unique and definite being that he is. In Jung's (1953) own words: "Individuation means becoming a single, homogeneous being, and, in so far as 'individuality' embraces our innermost, last and incompatible uniqueness, it also implies becoming one's own self" (p.171). According to Jung (1972a), to realise a sense of separateness and self, we need to leave the "the magic circle of the mother and family" (p. 168). Individuation is a path rather than a goal, a process that continues, rather than a destination. Individuation is the unfolding of self through life.

Daniel Levinson (1978) and his colleagues employed a developmental approach to their study of adulthood. The study provides a conception of the human life cycle and portrays a more specific picture of early to middle adulthood, with an emphasis on the mid-life transition of males where ageing is substituted for growth. Levinson considers adult development as analogous to seasons or a sequence of alternating structure-building and transitional structure-changing periods within the life cycle. The concept of the individual life structure is foundational to the developmental, periods. Individuation is accepted as part of the process of transitional development, where changes arise in relation to the self and the external world. Attachment-Separateness is identified as a key polarity in the midlife development of men. The integration of polarities or opposing tendencies within the self

provides for individuation, but while “separateness fosters individual growth and creative adaptation’, the challenge is to find the balance between isolation and attachment.

Mahler (1975; 1979) had indicated that although the separation-individuation phase comes to an end during the third year of life, the process “reverberates through the life cycle”. The concept of separation-individuation has prompted much interest, research and debate regarding the process in the adult years. More recently, terms such as the third, fourth and fifth separation-individuation phenomena of adulthood and ageing appear in the literature. Colarusso (1990) notes that John Oldham (1988) was the first to address the term third individuation, defined as occurring during midlife with the death of one’s parents. Colarusso differs from Oldham and believes that the third individuation arises with biological parenthood. Later, Salman Akhtar (1995) uses the term third individuation in the context of immigration and identity. Though not directly identified as letting go, all these theorists recognise the process of separation.

Colarusso (1997) agrees that separation–individuation resonates through life and agrees with Mahler that derivatives of the early processes continue. A point he does emphasise, however, is that adult separation-individuation processes are a continuation, rather than a replication, of the original experience. To support his viewpoint, Colarusso refers to the work of John Munder Ross who believes that the self in relation to the social environment rather than the “core self representation” of the early experience is formalised in adulthood with the attainment of one’s ego identity. As Akhtar and Kramer (1997) indicate, Akhtar (1992, 1995), Colarusso (1990; 1997), Oldham (1988) and Ross (1996) continue to explore separation as it appears in adulthood and the later years. Colarusso (1997) proposes that the fourth individuation occurs during middle adulthood and the fifth individuation with ageing.

Though the work of theorists and writers contribute to our understanding of the separation-individuation process through life, the significance of letting go as it occurs in our lives and its significance to the process of separation is not dealt with. While we separate and individuate through infancy to adulthood, human development is not merely a linear progression that occurs along the developmental continuum, but an emerging process with its own meaning. From being held by a significant (m)other in a blissful state of oneness, in rootedness and stability, we let go and individuate. Being held is a significant start to our lives as humans.

3.5 Holding

Holding precedes attachment and occurs within the context of relatedness. Holding provides us with a sense of relatedness and connectedness that roots us to our existence. Before we let go, we begin our lives in the arms of a caring significant (m)other that holds us. Holding is the first interpersonal experience that conveys the assurance of a basic security, trust and oneness. The consistent behaviour of the significant and caring (m)other ensures a relationship of “basic trust”. Erikson (1971) considers basic trust as “the first and basic wholeness, for it seems to imply that the inside and the outside can be experienced as an interrelated goodness” (p.82). The oneness of the experience reflects a sense of wholeness, centrality and rootedness, contained in being held.

Holding provides security. The infant is first held in the secure enclosures of the womb and, with the impact of birth, is released and moves on. From the secure containment and shelter of the womb, birth is an entry into the emptiness of space, where, in the undefined vacuum, being held restores the experience of containment, rootedness and protection. Holding conveys the presence of human warmth, of the “arms around” (Josselson, 1992) experience; the tending care that contributes to a sense of stability and “continuity of being”. Continued secure holding provides a sense of trust. Paul Greenhalgh (1987) views holding as a container, a mirror and a safety net. Being held provides a sense of togetherness and integration. If we are not held, we fragment. To hold is to “keep fast, grasp ... contain.... remain unbroken” (*Oxford Dictionary*). To hold is to keep whole.

3.5.1 Environment and Containment

As humans, our existence is not separate from the world in which we live. From the outset, as our caring (m)other holds us, we are at one with the environment. Heidegger’s (1962) concept of the contextualised being-in-the-world is never more visibly evident as in the intimate relationship between the young infant and caring (m)other. Winnicott (1986) alerts us to the interrelatedness and indivisibility of the infant and environment, stating that: “In the beginning, the infant is the environment and the environment is the infant” (p.72). The infant is initially at-one with the environment, and at-one with the world. To the

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infant, the environment is the (m)other. Holding is synonymous with the presence of maternal care, provides protection, physical contact and a sense of continuity. While the psyche resides in the soma and is kept intact by the (m)other's holding, a sense of continuity and wholeness begins.

Holding implies restraint, yet creates the environmental conditions necessary for human growth and development. The paradox of life begins as the stasis of holding (oneness) provides a secure base and anchorage that fosters the mobility of growth and development (separateness). Holding contains the paradox of oneness and separateness, a paradox which Kaplan (1979) recognises when she identifies holding as the constancy that “unites the serene harmonies of oneness with the vitality and rhythms of separateness” (p.31). In our dialogue with the world, through holding, the diversity of oneness (permanence) and separateness (change) can coexist, while the ensuing ‘continuity of being’ makes it possible for the infant to deal with the consistently changing demands of growth and development.

A holding environment makes it possible for the infant's innate potential to unfold through time. The (m)other actively adapts, protects and cares for the infant's needs and sense of well being. Winnicott (1960) views holding as the (m)other's primary occupation with the infant's physical and psychological needs, where the infant is protected against unnecessary impingements or environmental disturbances. Winnicott speaks of the “good enough” (m)other who, through her primary preoccupation of holding, accommodates the infant's physical and psychological needs, protecting him against unnecessary “impingements” or environmental disturbances. The “good enough” (m)other provides a maternal environment that is consistently predictable, physical and human, rather than mechanically correct. The quality of holding must be of a relational and human nature rather than of a computerised accuracy, for the infant that is consistently held will begin to trust the world and sense a continuity of being. Human trustworthiness is first encountered in being held, and it is in such a holding and dependable environment that psychological growth can take place.

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The caring environment serves as a container. Holding is reflective of Bion's (1967) concept of "container". Holding as containment conveys a sense of wholeness, where the infant feels at one with the environment, experiencing a sense of continuity. Containment keeps the infant intact and protects what is inside, as the good enough mother provides a containing environment. In her description of the (m)other's holding, Kaplan (1979) writes: "In her ordinary way of holding him, a mother gives her baby the impression of a world that will hold him together and make sense of the unformed excitements and appetites raging inside him" (p.40). This description, much like Winnicott's "holding", is also reminiscent of Bion's concept of "container", with its concept of intactness. The (m)other and infant are the "thinking couple", the concept of container-contained, where projective identifications, aggressive and destructive impulses that threaten the young infant can be regulated (Ashbach & Schermer, 1994; Josselson, 1992). In being held the infant is able to experience a sense of being intact and whole.

3.5.2 Oneness and Omnipotence

Holding facilitates the blending of bodies and psyches, of (m)other and infant, into a blissful state of "oneness". Terms such as "mother-child dyad" (Spitz, 1965), "dual-unit" (Mahler, 1975), "oneness" (Kaplan, 1979) and "unit" (Winnicott, 1960), reflect the merging nature of the mother-infant relationship during the very early phase of the infant's development, where physiological and psychological processes are as yet undifferentiated. In the union, there is a mutual melting of intimacy between (m)other and infant. This is what Mahler views as "normal autism". It is the time of a diffuse inside and outside world, with a lack of awareness of the (m)other in the absence of boundaries. In the climate of intimacy, a reciprocity is created as (m)other and infant find mutual satisfaction in the oneness shared. Spitz (1965) regards this intimacy as a "unified situational experience" of "conesthetic receptivity", while Kaplan (1979) refers to the intimate relationship as "the basic dialogue of human love" that commences with the (m)other's unconditional love, but which is pursued forever after. The desire to regain the early experience of oneness shared with (m)other continues through life. Indeed, as Kaplan expresses it, "all later human love and dialogue is a striving to restore the lost bliss of oneness with our equally intense need for separateness and individual selfhood" (p.27). This is the period of primary narcissism and omnipotence, a time of blissful symbiosis with (m)other (Mahler, 1975).

Acknowledging the omnipotence of this early phase, Winnicott (1951) terms the sense of omnipotence as a normal “illusion”. He writes:

The mother’s adaptation to the infant’s needs when good enough gives the infant the *illusion* that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant’s own capacity to create. In other words, there is an overlap in what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive (p.239).

This illusion of omnipotence is essential for the child’s early sense of well-being and comprises the fundamental basis for the child’s developing self-esteem. The illusion is necessary for the infant to carry itself through, until there is adequate capacity to organise and consolidate feelings of self-worth. Significantly, the infant accepts the sense of well-being and omnipotence as his own creation (Mahler, 1967; Winnicott, 1951; Edward et al., 1992). Sandor Ferenczi (1956) regarded omnipotence as beginning in utero, in the prenatal state of blissful oneness with the holding of the foetus in the womb. The sense of omnipotence is a fulfilment and contentment that exists prior to the presence of any needs and wishes. Ironically, the first wish is to retrieve and return to this earlier state of contentment. The need to extend the experience of wholeness, oneness, rootedness and stability continues through life in the desire to relate and connect, as evidenced in holding.

3.5.3 Types of Holding

3.5.3.1 Symbiotic Holding

Symbiotic holding promotes the illusion that the (m)other is incorporated and integrated with the self. Mahler (1975) describes the (m)other’s holding as “the symbiotic organizer – the midwife of individuation, of psychological birth” (p.47). Winnicott accepts holding as the (m)other’s primary preoccupation in her caring and protection. Clearly, holding provides a significant foundation from which the process of letting go can evolve. Symbiotic holding is the point of anchorage, and from here the infant can grow and develop. It is through being symbiotically held that a sense of self evolves.

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In the context of human relatedness, the symbiotic relationship between the (m)other and infant is essentially asymmetrical: as “the infant’s need for the mother is absolute; the mother’s need for the infant is relative” (Mahler, 1967, p.78). The infant is entirely dependent on the (m)other and the nature of her care. Mahler’s symbiosis is a metaphorical expression of relatedness rather than a symbiosis of biological connotations. Tactile perception is significant, as physical contact is perceived over the entire body and is a binding experience for symbiosis, while symbiotic holding expresses a mutuality between the infant and (m)other (Mahler, 1975; Winnicott, 1990).

Symbiosis, to Mahler (1974), is the state of undifferentiation, a fusion of inner and outer worlds, where, as yet, there is no experience of the “me” and the “not me”. Later, with the early differentiation, the infant will begin to distinguish the “me” from the “not me”. The time of early differentiation, also known as the time of hatching, is where the symbiotic orbit gradually expands. The infant moves away, yet remains connected to (m)other by being aware of her presence through retaining a visual and auditory connection. Wolman’s (1991) description reflects the (m)other’s symbiotic holding with the words: “she holds the infant, not just in her arms, but also in her sight and with her voice and in her mind” (pp.40/41). Even from a distance, (m)other’s holding continues.

3.5.3.2 Extended Holding

As space and distance enter the child’s reality, the “symbiotic-orbit” gradually expands to accommodate the infant’s widening world. From a world of oneness and omnipotence the infant with time, becomes aware of mother as a separate individual (Mahler, 1975). The physical oneness in the womb has been replaced by the psychological oneness shared in the symbiosis, which gradually expands and extends. The infant moves from the stage of primary narcissism to secondary narcissism, shifting from an objectless (primary) omnipotence merger with (m)other to a self-mother (secondary) omnipotence. From the intimate dialogue of oneness, the infant gradually differentiates (Mahler’s “hatching”) and becomes aware of his mother’s presence out there in the world (Edward et al., 1992).

Holding does not remain physical in nature. The initial physical closeness extends to an emotional closeness, for it is rather the meaningful union of mother and infant that

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remains significant. Holding provides more than a physical containment and protection of the infant's body. It protects and contains the body and being of the infant, the psychosoma (Winnicott, 1949) of the infant. Kaplan (1979) succinctly writes: "Holding is everything that happens to an infant which sustains him and produces wholeness and integration. When the environment of the baby fits itself to the baby's inborn energies, gestures and movements, the environment holds the baby" (p.91). Similarly, Erikson (Maier, 1969) describes the mutual exchange between (m)other and infant as the "cradle of faith (which)...permits a mother to respond to the needs and demands of the baby's body and mind in such a way that (the infant) learns once and for all to trust her, to trust himself and to trust the world" (p.37). Holding goes beyond the somatic boundaries, extending into the infant's psyche, as the mother adapts to the subjective world of the infant by providing an adequate environment with a sense of trust, harmony and oneness. The infant has been at one with the various aspects of the (m)other, the movements and smell of her body, the throb of her heartbeat and the tone of her voice. The illusion of oneness is sustained in the (m)other's satisfying presence, as the internalised feeling of oneness goes beyond that of being held and becomes emotional rather than physical in nature. The extended holding provides the 'tether' (Akhtar, 1992), a sense of connection that the infant feels in the meaningful relation with (m)other. As the pain of separateness threatens, the blissful state of oneness continues.

With the unfolding differentiation (Mahler's hatching) and subsequent individuation, the importance of the (m)other's presence and availability during the Rapprochement sub-phase, cannot be underestimated. The (m)other's presence becomes a holding presence that is internalised, making it possible for the infant to move away, often returning to "refuel" (Mahler, 1975). Holding is sustaining, as the infant returns to the (m)other only to move away again. Josselson (1992) believes that in the process of separation-individuation, the infant's refuelling behaviour reflects the infant's attempts to hold itself and reconnect with the "arms-around" experience it had previously enjoyed with (m)other. Though there is the desire to individuate, the need for human connectedness and relatedness continues, as "the child comes to see that the world is bounded rather than infinite: the strong arms make safe limits in space" (p.30). While the sense of being adequately held is internalised, mobility increases, and the infant is able to explore the environment and allow growth and

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development to continue. The good enough (m)other continues to adapt to the child's new levels of maturity, and the experience of holding provides the core framework for psychological growth. The concept of holding extends.

Being adequately held in a blissful state of oneness has to be internalised before a sense of self and a sense of separateness can unfold. Paradoxically, with the powerful desire for oneness, there is an equally powerful force that lures us to move away, to seek distance so that we are able to explore the world beyond the union of the mother-infant relationship: in other words, to become a self (Kaplan, 1979).

3.5.3.3 Mirroring and Holding

Mirroring is another form of holding, comprising the framework for psychological growth. With the mutual intimate moulding between (m)other and infant, mirroring is an essential aspect of symbiosis. Josselson (1992) aptly describes the process when she writes: "In mirroring, someone is so much with us that he or she is practically in us" (p.104). The experience of (m)other inside the infant makes differentiation of the "me" from the "not me" possible. As the (m)other enters the infant's emotional state and makes it her own, mirroring reflects the affinity between the (m)other and infant. Mirroring contains and provides a sense of oneness and wholeness,

The emotional development of the infant begins in the relationship with (m)other. Winnicott (1967) points out that "the precursor of the mirror is the mother's face" (p.26). These words are reminiscent of Lacan's conviction that the "mirror stage" (6-18 months) represents a basic aspect of subjectivity (Evans, 1996). Lacan's mirror stage concurs with Mahler's early (practising) rapprochement subphase (6-18 months). Whether in the eyes of the (m)other, or the initial image viewed in the mirror, a sense of subjectivity emerges. According to Lacan (1988a), the infant guilelessly submits to the image imposed. Rather than acknowledge the authentic self with its sense of fragmentation, the infant submits to and is captured by the image perceived regarding the self. To Lacan (1978; 1988), such perceptions are part of the "imaginary order" and a misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*) of the self. The infant mistakenly assumes the unified image of wholeness to be who he is in reality. Such identification alienates the infant from the truth and from his authenticity. Through holding

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and mirroring, the mother contains, protects and provides the infant with a sense of wholeness, but from a Lacanian perspective, the image reflected lures and traps the infant into a deceptive belief of wholeness. The (visual) image of oneself is particularly significant to each individual's ego-development.

The work of Barclay (1993) appears to fill a gap in the literature regarding the impact of sound and the process of the infant's development during the early rapprochement (Mahler) and mirror phase (Lacan). Barclay focuses on the significance of acoustic phenomena regarding development and the acquisition of language. What he entitles the Echo Phase adds a further dimension to Lacan's theory by acknowledging the impact of language on intersubjective development. Stated briefly, "The echo is a mirror in sound" (p.26). Development of the Echo Phase begins with the breakdown of the infant's symbiotic relationship with (m)other and the loss of the psychological symbiosis. In Lacanian terms, we speak of the individual's submission to the "symbolic order" of language and culture. Barclay postulates that the Echo Phase begins after the third month of life, when "to some extent development depends upon intersubjectivity and concomitant auditory and linguistic phenomena" (p.17). Barclay recognises the significance of acoustic phenomena in development and weaves the visual image with the impact of sound, while acknowledging the centrality of mirroring. Barclay contributes the Echo Phase as an adjunct to Lacan's Mirror Stage. It was Spitz (1965) who briefly noted that at about three months, the infant listens to the production of his own sounds, different to the sounds of his environment. During Mahler's "early practising phase", the infant develops a relationship to auditory (oral and aural) phenomena. To Barclay, this is the beginning of the Echo Phase, which to some extent is indicative of the infant's future subjectivity. Barclay's contribution concurs with Lacan's concept of subjectivity as the infant becomes subject to the already existing "symbolic order" of language. As the child assumes the image as his own, the deception and captation of the mirror image accompanies an emphasis on acoustic phenomena.

Like Lacan, Kohut centres his developmental system on mirroring but, unlike Lacan, who views mirroring as entrapment, Kohut (1971) identifies mirroring as the empathic resonance for survival reflected in the (m)other's validation. Mirroring provides the necessary cohesion for the infant to exist as a self. Adequate holding by the (m)other's empathic response to the

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infant's psychological needs is critical to survival. Kohut considers empathy as akin to the presence of oxygen in the atmosphere, providing "emotional nutrients" in the interpersonal and responsive relationship of the human environment.

When we speak of mirroring, we have to acknowledge its significance to narcissism. Kohut (1988) postulates that narcissism is not necessarily pathological (as perceived by Kernberg and earlier psychoanalytic thinking), but able to follow an independent and potentially healthy line of development. Kohut believes that "defects of the self occur mainly as a result of empathy failures from the side of the self-object – due to narcissistic disturbances of the self-object" (p.87). He coins the term "self-object" to describe the significant (m)other, who is experienced as part of the self and necessary for survival. The self-object is crucial for stability and a healthy sense of self. Indeed, to survive psychologically, the infant has to be born in an empathic-responsive environment. Mirroring (or empathy) is essential to the development of self. Empathic mirroring facilitates the cohesion and development of the self through time and space. As humans we need to be accepted, acknowledged, confirmed and validated.

Mirroring confirms us as humans, acknowledging our personal perceptions and emotions as our inner reality and sense of self is validated. In this confirmation, the presence of the other is imperative, as an empathic response makes it possible for one to feel real and integrated. Buber (1957) accepts such confirmation as human, for "man wishes to be confirmed in his being a man, and wishes to have a presence in the being of the other. The human person needs confirmation, because man as man needs it" (p.104). Josselson (1992) appears to concur regarding the need for human affirmation, described as "the realm of emotional exchange across space, of validation and empathy, of finding ourselves reflected in others and anchoring ourselves in our effects on them" (p.98). The (m)other's reflective response to her infant's needs confirms her acknowledgement, and affirms that the infant's experience has an impact on the outside world as well. The infant's experienced reality is acknowledged, and the emerging self is recognised as having a place in the outside as well.

Mirroring is also the eye-to-eye contact that visually validates the developing self of the infant. Empathy and eye-to-eye contact become the connecting "tether" (Akhtar, 1992) that

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bridges and reduces the increasing space and distance. Visual contact is reciprocal for, as the infant gazes into the mother's eyes, there is the experience of also being looked at, a visual validation and an awareness of having an effect on the other. Similarly, as we look into the eyes of the other, we find who we are and learn about ourselves. How we view and accept ourselves depends largely on how others view and accept us. Throughout our growth and development, we need to feel valued and accepted in the eyes of the other. Between mother and infant there is a visual language. In the words of Levinas (1979), "The eyes do not shine, they speak". The eyes bear meaning, where "meaning is the face of the Other, and all recourse to words takes place already within the primordial face-to-face of language" (p.206). Meaning something to the other is an aspect of our sense of self and our relation to the world.

3.5.3.4 Metaphorical Holding

Physical holding precedes metaphorical holding. As holding extends and development continues, our experience of being empathically held is transferred from the intensely personal and physical to the emotional sphere, to the experience that someone is there. Josselson (1992) speaks of the "thereness", or the awareness of the holding of supportive others in our lives. By acknowledging that someone is there for us, we return to our original holding experience. As the years move on beyond infancy, we continue to need the "thereness" of others who can support us emotionally and prevent us from falling. Our need to be held never ceases, and continues with us through life.

Like the good-enough mother who is there and sustains the infant, the quest is to find and feel comfortable in a "good-enough" environment that will be there for us and will facilitate us through life (Winnicott, 1990). The circle of holding that begins during infancy in the relationship with the (m)other extends and continues to gradually expand and include the function of the family, school, work, institutions, social groups, cultural context and meaning systems. As we continue in our daily lives, we need to feel held and to experience this in the values and beliefs pertaining to the meaning systems that contain us. We may continue to exercise cultural practices passed on to us by significant others and, in repeating the traditions, feel held in the wider pattern created. Our meaning systems make us feel validated and acknowledged, providing us with a sense of self and of affirmation. Our

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beliefs and values as in the institution of marriage, religious and other beliefs, create a safety net that holds and support us.

The holding that begins in the arms of the caring, good enough (m)other, gradually expands to include a “good-enough” environment, family, community and society at large. Indeed, “the family continues this holding and society holds the family” (Winnicott, 1986, p.107). While holding bears an ever-widening interpretation, it can only be done by the right people. Before we can let go, we need to feel held. As we embark on life’s developmental journey, the physical and literal holding is metaphorically transferred to the emotional, social and cultural realm, where “the ‘holding’ of infancy becomes the ‘support’ of later years” (Josselson, 1992, p.31). In the awareness of our separateness as humans, we continue in our desire to restore and revive the blissful state of the oneness experienced in the holding relationship with (m)other, as we seek to attach ourselves to others.

3.6 Attachment / Holding on

Holding precedes holding on, otherwise known as attachment. From being attached we can let go. Holding stabilises and anchors us in the belief that we are not alone, while attachment reassures us of our relationship to others. Though holding is not holding on, both experiences are essential to our humanity. If we are not held, we fragment and fall; if we are not attached, we are lost and alone. Josselson (1992) differentiates the concepts of holding and attachment as follows:

Being held is passive (but) attachment is an active process of clinging to someone (either actually or symbolically) in order to reduce our anxiety. Attachment and the affection that accompanies it is one of the most profound of human experiences...attachment is our sense of emotional belongingness (p.45).

Holding and attachment are closely linked experiences that occur early in our lives. While being held contains us and makes us feel whole, attachment fulfils our emotional need to belong. From the initial oneness experienced in mother’s holding, threads emerge, providing the fundamental fibres for our sense of self and continuity of being. From initially being held

by, and attached to, (m)other we gradually let go, diverge and attach ourselves to others, as we weave our relatedness and interconnectedness to the world.

3.6.1 What is Attachment?

In our daily lives, attachment tends to refer to interpersonal relationships. In developmental psychology, however, attachment pertains to specific relationships that reflect unique characteristics like the “bonding” that develops between infant and (m)other. According to Bowlby (1979; 1997; 1998), the infant and (m)other instinctively prompt each other’s behaviour to form an attachment bond. Attachments are our emotional links to others and evolve into affectional bonds (Ainsworth, 1989).

Bowlby (1979), the pioneer of attachment theory, views attachment as “the propensity of human beings to make affection bonds to particular others...” (p.127). Maintaining a relationship to an accessible and responsive (m)other is essential to survival. The availability of, or proximity to, the significant other has to be attained and retained. Throughout one’s life, in times of pain, illness and distress, this need for proximity increases. Attachment is a means of reducing anxiety (Bowlby, 1998). Attachment is a sense of proximity.

Attachment behaviour is the means of attaining and retaining attachment or connectedness. Early components of attachment behaviour are sucking, clinging and following, and these are considered “executor” behaviour. The “signal” behaviours of crying, calling and smiling elicit care and are extended means of attachments. Both executor and signal behaviours bring the infant and (m)other together in forming their “bond”. Various means, modes and actions maintain contact with the (m)other and are accepted as attachment behaviours (Bowlby, 1979). In our need to retain the attachment, we continue to connect with others in various forms that symbolise contact. In contemporary society, via the telephone, letters, SMS or emails, we keep “in touch”.

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Bowlby (1998) identifies representational models or mental states of mind that each individual creates regarding his world and himself in it. Included in the representational model are the (m)other and other significant attachment figures – who they are, where they may be, and the significance of their expected response. Just as the developing infant and child needs to know of the presence of the (m)other, so, too, as adults we need to know that there is someone “there” for us. Personal experience significantly influences the representational models as relevant meaning is attached to them.

In his work on adult development, Levinson (1978) tends to view attachment as synonymous with attachment behaviour, where attachment is being “engaged, involved, needy, plugged in, seeking and rooted” (p.239). Sherman (1987), however, considers such a description as more relevant to attachment behaviour, where visible methods and modes are used to maintain contact with the attachment figure. Attachment includes its own experiential dimension and interconnected meanings. In his study on midlife transitions, Sherman believes in both cognitive and emotional aspects of the attachment relationship, where the representational model as well as the affective bond is included. Guidano and Liotti’s (1983) definition of attachment is used for its recognition of attachment as “a cognitive structure that is constructed during the course of development, starting from inborn dispositions shaped by experiential data and directing the child’s search for proximity and affective contact” (Sherman, 1987, p.132). The definition aptly acknowledges the experiential aspects regarding attachment.

Bowlby (1979) explicates that attachment behaviour continues throughout one’s life. As he expresses it, attachment behaviour “characterize(s) human beings from the cradle to the grave” (p.129). Similarly, Mahler attests that separation-individuation is a process that continues through life. However, although recognising diverse behaviours along life’s continuum, both theorists concur regarding the initial significant anchorage provided by the caring (m)other – the secure base from which the child can grow, develop and explore his world. Accepting the one theory does not imply a rejection of the other, but is accepted rather as a multifaceted approach to the study of letting go. Both theories can facilitate greater insight into the paradoxical “push-pull” process of life, as we move away, yet move towards others.

Attachment, in its connectedness appears to be an attempt to rekindle the holding experience, an effort to revive the early state of oneness enjoyed with (m)other. Like the toddler who returns during Mahler's practising subphase, to "refuel" only to be off again, we continue to attach and separate in our relatedness. We continue to exercise the "push and pull" of the rapprochement subphase. Mahler (1975) points out that it is during the rapprochement subphase that "we feel the mainspring of man's eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation" (p.130). In our attempt to deal with the ambiguity, we attach yet move on, as we seek to individuate, yet desire to belong. We need the emotional connectedness that attachment brings; we hold on.

3.6.2 Attachment and Development

3.6.2.1 Infancy and Childhood

The physical oneness or "physiological attachment" of the foetus in the womb is replaced by the symbiotic bond with the (m)other. Attachment is rooted in the biological need for protection as proximity and closeness continue through life. Bowlby (1979) proposes that during the first twelve months, the infant builds up the attachment components that are required for bonding. The signal behaviours (smiling, crying) and component responses (clinging, following) create a mutual attachment system to which both infant and mother contribute. Attachment is at its strongest during the child's second and third year.

Expanding on Bowlby's theory, Mary Ainsworth (1973) uses the terms "secure" and "insecure" regarding attachment behaviour. In her studies on children, Ainsworth illustrated that securely attached infants use (m)other as a secure base from which to explore the environment. While maintaining contact (e.g. an occasional glance) with (m)other, her reassuring presence made it possible for the children to move away. On the other hand, infants who were not securely attached, displayed behaviours of avoidance and resistance, with signs of ambivalence and uncertainty. Though the insecurely attached infants did attempt to do without the (m)other in her absence, separation anxiety appeared to increase in unfamiliar situations.

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Santrock (1986) refers to Schaffer and Emerson's longitudinal study that was conducted on infants in 1964. The study revealed that the attachment to (m)other became more focused from six months and remained profoundly so between the ten and eighteen month period. At about seven months, a specific and intense attachment was noted, with a fear of strangers unfolding soon (one-two months) thereafter. The researchers also found that over this period attachments to other significant caregivers appeared to be as intense as the attachment to (m)other.

3.6.2.2 Adolescence

With its apparent emphasis on separation and autonomy, general developmental theory appears to have overlooked the significance of attachments during adolescence. Josselson (1992) argues that from adolescence onwards, individuals become attached interpersonally to other people, as well as to parents. The attachment is usually to people of the same age and of the opposite sex. Kroger (1983) cites the studies of Cooper, Grotevan and Condon (1985) who indicate that adolescent development can incorporate connectedness and individuality. The adolescent will attempt to discover the significance of relationships beyond the family, finding out who is "there" for him and on whom he can rely. Through the attachments formed, peers gain significance, providing the adolescent with a secure base from which to explore the world. While new relationships develop, they do not dissolve earlier ones. As new connections are formed, older and familiar attachments are extended rather than rejected. With the diverse relationships encountered and dealt with, there is an internalised continuity of being. Josselson (1988) maintains that the investment of attachments during adolescence is primarily a concern with experiencing a continuity of self, rather than whether parents approve or disapprove. Much of the pain of adolescents pertains to the unreliability of attachments at this time. Josselson refutes the concept of autonomy and the absence of attachment relationships. Though adolescents may seek new attachments, there needs to be a continued sense of being held by the parents or caring significant others.

According to Josselson (1988), research findings (Frankel & Dullaert, 1977; Hamid & Wylie, 1980; Offer & Offer, 1975) attest that competent, mature and well-adjusted adolescents enjoy a strong attachment and close and loving relationships with their parents. Limited in their understanding of the true reality of the adolescent experience, predetermined questionnaires appear responsible for the oversight of the significance that attachment and connectedness

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hold in the life of the adolescent. Regarding the attachment of adolescents to the people they talk and think about, Josselson refers to the phenomenological study that she conducted in 1977 with Greenberger and Mc Conochie, on boys and girls, that reveals the significance of attachments to adolescents. As Josselson (1988) describes it: “even if it is only to complain about them, the adolescent has her parents with her at all times” (p.95).

In a comprehensive review, Kroger (1998) refers to the findings of other extensive studies (Quintana and Kerr, 1993; Grotevant & Cooper 1985; Papini, Micka & Barnett, 1989; Weinmann & Newcombe, 1990) on adolescents that acknowledge separateness and connectedness as interrelated. Though separate in the quest for autonomy, the adolescent appears to remain connected.

Contemporary writers (Josselson, 1988; Quintana & Kerr, 1993) recognise the biased tendency of present theory regarding adolescent development. The process of separation-individuation is viewed as a linear movement from merger to separateness, where aspects of connectedness are denied. In a critical review of an object relations approach to adolescence Kroger (1998) refers to the research of Grotevant and Cooper (1985, 1986), Papini et al., (1989) and Weinmann and Newcombe (1990) affirming that the studies “have consistently shown adolescents’ needs for both autonomy and connectedness in the changing dynamics of relationships with parents” (p.187). There is an increasing tendency for research to recognise the significant presence of attachment in the life of the adolescent. The observations of Grotevant and Cooper regarding adolescents’ decision-making tasks, and the interaction with parents, reveal that adolescents whose parents acknowledged their individuality and connectedness were more able to resolve their identity crisis. In their study on adolescence, Quintana and Kerr (1993) found depression to be absent in those adolescents whose parents supported their need for mirroring, nurturance and autonomy. However, where such connectedness or attachment was denied, the adolescents were found to be depressed and anxious. Attachment or human connectedness needs to be recognised as integral to development.

3.6.2.3 Adulthood

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The adult, like the child, requires a secure base from which to develop and explore. The secure base provided by a sense of consistency, familiarity, continuity and reliability makes self-development and exploration possible. Being afraid, tired or ill, elicits attempts to regain attachment figures. The secure attachment of adulthood appears to differ to the physical or behavioural attachment of childhood, but is nevertheless present. In the discontinuity and unpredictability of contemporary living, our attachments form continuity. Retaining an inner sense of connectedness is significant. We learn from childhood what procures relationships, and from the secure base provided by our early relationships with (m)other, we continue to seek secure attachments in a human world (Josselson, 1988; 1992).

Personal attachment history influences parenting styles and has significant effects on the following generation. Early attachment experiences influence the later attachments made. Early secure attachment styles tend to continue through adolescence, revealing a positive influence on adjustment and personal autonomy. The framework for our relatedness to others occurs early. Through the representational models of attachment, as described by Bowlby, we attempt to predict and anticipate how others will relate to us. If early attachment experience was secure, we tend to expect consistent, predictable and responsive relationships in our lives. The “representational models” are not internalised, but acquired through interpersonal patterns, and depend on actual experience. Where the representational models respect the child’s need for exploration, the child tends to develop an internal representational model of self as valued and self-reliant (Bowlby, 1979; Goldberg, Muir & Kerr, 1995).

In the process of individual development, attachment is maintained through distant forms of communication. Attachments endure and do not require continued physical interaction, but a mere “keeping in touch”, whether it be through letters, emails or phone calls, as the link through space, by whatever means, is maintained. Though recognising the significance of attachment during infancy and childhood, Bowlby (1979; 1997) considers attachment as neither infantile nor immature, but integral to humanity. The attachment relationship provides a sense of well-being, a feeling that someone is there for us and that we are not alone.

3.6.3 Separation and Separateness

In the context of Mahler's developmental theory, separateness pertains to individuation, but in the context of Bowlby's attachment theory, separation relates to anxiety and loss. While Mahler recognises the concept of gain through the process of separation, Bowlby acknowledges the experience of loss. Both theorists firmly accept the value of the (m)other as a significant foundational basis for development. However, while Mahler views separation as the process of gradually moving away, in the presence of (m)other, Bowlby accepts separation in the context of the (m)other's absence or inaccessibility. Whilst the process of separation-individuation includes the concept of gain in the presence of the (m)other, separation with the absence of the (m)other bears implications of anxiety and danger. Furthermore, with each theory, separation entails a different intentionality. While there is a willingness to separate and individuate, separation anxiety and loss is an unwilling separation. Nevertheless, the different viewpoints of these theories are considered valuable and complementary rather than oppositional. Together, both theories provide a broad perspective to understanding the meaning of separation. A concurring conviction is the value and significance attributed to the (m)other's presence, which cannot be underestimated. It is from the firm base of the (m)other-infant relationship that stable development can unfold.

Undoubtedly the presence or absence of the (m)other remains significant. Winnicott's (1958) paper on "The capacity to be alone" acknowledges the value of mother's presence in the paradox of separateness and aloneness. The awareness of (m)other as an external secure base facilitates the infant's capacity to experience being alone. It is the awareness of the presence of (m)other that makes exploration possible. Winnicott concludes that "the capacity to be alone is a highly sophisticated phenomenon. It is closely related to emotional maturity. Paradoxically, the capacity to be alone is the experience of being alone in the presence of someone" (p. 36). The presence and accessibility of (m)other provides a secure base for the individual. Similarly, Bowlby (1979) describes the child's exploratory behaviour as emerging at a time when the early attachment behaviour to (m)other's ceases, but exploration occurs in her presence nevertheless. Self-reliance develops in the awareness of a "reliance on a parent, who provides the child with a secure base from which to explore" (p.114). (M)other provides a secure base from which exploration can take place, but to which the child can return in moments of fear and tiredness.

Similarly, the same pattern of behaviour is reflected throughout one's life as we move away, create a distance and allow space to come between our loved ones and us. Over time and throughout one's life as distances increase, contact is maintained and we seek, once again, to return to our attachment figures. At first it is (m)other, then one's family of origin, then peers. Later, as adults, the base is the newly created family, friendship and social circle. Attachment continues to provide stability and a foundation from which to grow and develop, even as an adult. Bowlby (1979) affirms this by stating that "anyone who has no such base is rootless and intensely lonely" (p.132).

Holding and attachment are in themselves paradoxical, for we are bound to leave that which holds us and we are destined to lose that to which we are attached. Attachment implies the threat of loss, and though we need to be in touch emotionally, we find strength in our togetherness with others. Loss is an unwilling separation, whereas individuation incorporates the willingness to separate and differentiate, but as the growing toddler becomes aware of his separateness, there is the fear of losing (m)other. During Mahler's (1979) rapprochement period, the toddler is aware that he is destined to move away from (m)other, and this awareness creates a sense of ambiguity with the "pleasure of mastery" and separation anxiety. In order to explore and move into his expanding environment, the toddler needs to know that (m)other is there for him. Similarly, as life progresses, we need to know that we are not alone. Where our attachment ceases to be, we feel lost and experience loss. Though separateness implies a sense of individuation in the presence of (m)other, separation with the absence of (m)other is loss.

3.6.4 Loss

Bowlby (1998, 1979) identifies loss as the unwilling separation from the attachment figure. The desired closeness and accessibility of the attachment figures are primary in the need for protection, and the threat of unwilling separation and loss is potentially traumatic. Following a reasonably stable relationship with (m)other, an unwilling separation bears the sequential phases of protest, despair and denial. While the phase of protest is related to separation anxiety, the phase of despair is related to grief and mourning, and the phase of denial

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(detachment) is related to defence mechanisms, particularly repression. With the trauma of loss that results from separation, attempts are made to restore the earlier state of stability and equilibrium with (m)other. In the words of Bowlby (1979) the “loss of a parent gives rise not only to primary separation anxiety and grief but to processes of mourning in which aggression, the function of which is to achieve reunion, plays a major part” (p.63).

Loss during the early years of life can be catastrophic. In the desire to restore the state of oneness and stability with (m)other, mourning is an appropriate manner of best coping with loss. During 1961, in his initial paper on the “Processes of Mourning”, Bowlby described loss (or sudden separation) as comprising three phases: protest, despair and emotional detachment. About eight years later, however, he acknowledged the mourning process as also including the significant initial phases of numbness and yearning. In a later publication, Bowlby’s (1979) description of the phases of mourning following unexpected loss is as follows:

- (1) Phase of numbness: This phase may last anything from a few hours to a few weeks. There may be outbursts of extreme anger and/or intense distress.
- (2) Phase of yearning and searching: This phase may last for months, even years, and is initially referred to as the “protest phase”. The bereaved individual attempts as far as possible to retrieve the lost person, either through action, thought or feeling, with features of weeping and anger. There may be reproach for desertion, coupled with feelings of ambivalence.
- (3) Phase of despair and disorganisation: Feelings of ambivalence from the previous phase may continue and there is vacillation in action and mood, described as moving “from an immediate expectancy expressed in an angry demand for the person’s return to a despair expressed in subdued pining – or even not expressed at all” (p.49). Hope and despair alternate and continue for an indefinite period.
- (4) Phase of reorganisation and emotional detachment from the lost person: In the awareness of the person’s permanent absence or repeated separations, there is an attempt to reorganise

behaviour.

Bowlby advanced the thesis that separation anxiety, grief and mourning and defence are responses of a single process, and include protest, despair and detachment reflective of that process. Where the period of separation does not continue, attachment is resumed, and once the child is reunited with (m)other, the attachment reveals fresh growth in the form of the child's

insistence on remaining close to her. However, the awareness of a potential repeated loss of the (m)other gives rise to acute anxiety (Bowlby, 1998).

3.6.5 Separation Anxiety

Freud (1968) was the first to recognise separation anxiety and believed in the strong suggestion that “the first anxiety state arose on the occasion of the separation from the mother” (p.331) as part of the birth process. Freud (1971) describes anxiety as “a particular state of expecting danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one” (p.6) and regards it as an instinctual expression of the ego's instinct for self-preservation. Later, Melanie Klein (1946) held that “anxiety arises from the operation of the death instinct within the organism, is felt as fear of annihilation (death) and takes the form of fear of persecution” (p.4). Klein considers the trauma of birth as specific to separation anxiety.

Bowlby's (1979) convictions differ to previous assumptions. He convincingly found abundant evidence to indicate that children, when accompanied by an adult, showed less fear than when on their own. Bowlby revealed that separation anxiety arises in a situation where an attachment figure is absent, and where the situation requires both attachment behaviour and the need to escape. Humans seek to maintain balance and equilibrium between preserving the familiar and reducing stress, in opposition to exploring and reaching out to the new. Unlike Mahler's separation regarding separation-individuation, the unwilling separation from the attachment figure gives rise to separation anxiety. Anxiety erupts as the link with the security base of the attachment figure is threatened, although attempts are made

to reduce the experience of anxiety. The phase of protest is also known as the phase of yearning and searching.

Negative family experiences such as those of parental rejection or repeated threats of abandonment can give rise to excessive separation anxiety. However, where separation anxiety is considerably low or absent, a false impression of maturity can be created. Inge Bretherton (1995) believes that even though a securely attached child protests separation, greater self-reliance is eventually evidenced in the child. This conviction concurs with the findings of Ainsworth (1973) regarding secure and insecure patterns of attachment discussed earlier.

Bowlby (1979) notes that the strangeness of a situation naturally arouses fear and the need for protection. Protection is a significant aspect of the attachment relationship. Following infancy, the initial attachment extends beyond the biological connectedness as a psychological proximity for protection and emotional survival is pursued. The availability of emotional strength and support, rather than a physical capability for protection, is favoured. Anxiety arises in being separate from (m)other. States of discomfort or well-being are experienced in relation to the absence or presence of the (m)other. In unfamiliar situations, the mere presence of a trusted companion with whom there is a secure attachment, greatly reduces fear and anxiety. Bowlby reveals that: “the accessibility of parents and their willingness to respond provides an infant, a child, an adolescent and a young adult with conditions in which he feels secure and with a base from which he feels confident to explore” (p.124). With reference to the availability and reliability of attachment figures, Josselson (1992) speaks of their “thereness” as providing us with strength, and explicates that by their very existence, “attachment figures become wellsprings of confidence” (p.58).

Pine (1971) considers an “anticipatory discomfort” as unfolding during the earlier part of the separation-individuation phase, when and a specific attachment to the (m)other has developed and she begins to leave. As her absence is associated with affective distress, the infant attempts to maintain proximity and keep her close,. While the young child enters his expanding world, a “checking-back” pattern becomes evident, which is a means of retaining

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and reassuring the self of the initial attachment. The “checking-back” pattern is a protection against separation anxiety and reflects normal cognitive and emotional development. Gradually, towards the end of the first year, awareness of a sense of separateness from (m)other gives rise to feelings of anxiety. In Pine’s own words, “stranger anxiety and separation anxiety at this period indicate that the child has developed some concept of a differentiated self, (m)other and ‘other’” (p.117).

A colleague of Mahler’s, Fred Pine (1971), describes the infant’s developmental progression from the initial diffuse unity with (m)other to a differentiated separateness and then to an integrated psychic sense of self. Awareness of a differentiated self gives rise to specific separation anxiety, with the concurrent desire for gratification from (m)other. Though the move, in differentiating the self, is away from (m)other, the need to retain the attachment to (m)other continues. The infant experiences a polarity, for there is neither the capacity actively to avoid the one, nor the capacity to ensure the other. The affect is intense, as the infant can neither guarantee that the longed-for gratification will be met, nor that the separations can be avoided. The point of focal separation and focal gratification is precarious, and the period of separation is inherently unstable. However, as cognitive maturity increases, stability improves, making it possible for pleasant and unpleasant affects to be differentiated and focalised. When the child is able to find a means of attachment, stability ensues and this is an achievement. To quote Pine (1971): “Stability is the achievement ... when a reliable and remembered object relationship serves to replace the earlier symbiosis and to fill the gap of the separateness felt by the child between himself and his mother” (p.122).

Bowlby (1979) always accepted attachment behaviour to be a part of healthy and acceptable aspects of human relatedness, incorporating a natural dependence, and not by any means to be considered regressive or pathological. In this theorist’s own words: “Attachment behaviour (is) a normal and healthy component of man’s instinctive equipment (which) leads us also to regard separation anxiety as the natural and inevitable response whenever an attachment figure is unaccountably missing” (p.87). Similarly, separation anxiety is an instinctive, normal and healthy experience in relation to the environment that contains threatening connotations and meaning. Other researchers and writers (Josselson, 1988;

Quintana & Kerr, 1993; Guisinger & Blatt, 1994) also recognise the significance of interpersonal attachments.

A precarious balance exists between the emotional bond or affective experience of attachment and a sense of separateness, for, although polarised, the experiences are dynamically dialectical. Before attaching ourselves to others, we need to feel held, and through attaching ourselves to others, we seek to retain and relive the experience. With the intrusion of space, we seek to attach ourselves and bridge the gap of isolation as we move through transitional space.

3.7 Transitional Space

In moving on, we enter the space between. From our sense of oneness, we move to separateness. We leave an old familiar world behind and enter an unknown new one. We enter a transition.

3.7.1 Transition

Transition is derived from two Latin words meaning “to go across” or “to pass through”. This includes the concepts of space and time. In his work on transitions, Naomi Golan (1981) defines transition as “a period of moving from one state to another, with an interval of uncertainty and change in between” (p.12). Golan’s definition recognises transition as a time period, a role shift and a turning point that includes aspects of uncertainty and change. Daniel Levinson’s (1978) description of a developmental transition as that which “creates a boundary zone in which a man terminates the outgoing era and initiates the incoming one” (p.19) is spatial. Levinson conceives a transition as a bridge or passage between two stages, involving a change or a shift from one life structure to another. The notion of a boundary is reminiscent of Winnicott’s concept of potential space, the space where internal and external world blend and find meaning.

3.7.2 Space

Donald Winnicott (1951) took a major step in identifying the concept of a boundary, where both reality and illusion coexist, creating the notion of potential space, the point of separation and union that occurs between the self and the object. Winnicott discovered the intermediate area of experience, the space between the subjective and that which is objectively perceived. Winnicott paid attention to the transitional space between external and internal reality, and noted the dynamics of this space. His description of the infant's creation of the transitional object managed to fill the "gap" for psychology and the self in relation to the world.

In letting go, we move from oneness to separateness, as space (and distance) enters the process of separation. According to Ashbach and Shermer (1994): "Separation has to do with the boundary and space between mother and infant. It is a process of mutual distancing and of engagement from symbiotic and transformed psychic reality dependence" (p.96). Though psychologically separate, we reach out and relate to others. We attach ourselves to others, and create an interpersonal network that we believe can hold us as we attempt to overcome the physical and psychological space. In her book on the "Space between", Josselson (1992) writes: "Different ways of interrelating are different methods of transcending the chasm that parts us. The 'between' – the way the space is filled or reverberates – becomes all important" (p.5).

3.7.2.1 Creation of Space

During the early months, with the undifferentiated experience of oneness in the holding of the neonate, the "facilitating environment" contextually and actively accommodates the infant's needs. At first, there is no outside world, for in the vacuum the infant is one with the world. Gradually, as space is created, the infant begins to 'hatch' (Mahler et al., 1975) and differentiate in the break-through. In the process of differentiation, the infant creates the initial hatching or pushing away, and believes that he has created the space between himself and (m)other.

3.7.2.2 Space and Differentiation

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At the peak of the symbiotic relationship with (m)other, the process of differentiation unfolds as the infant begins to differentiate his own body from his (m)other's body. Winnicott (1960) views the initial differentiation experience as commencing where the merging of (m)other and child terminates, and there is a delay in the anticipation of (m)other. When the infant finds that the (m)other's attitude has changed, the process of separation begins. From the initial holding experience with (m)other, the infant moves to the "living with" experience. Nevertheless, the environmental mother continues to be there for him, constantly adapting and readapting to the infant's new level of development. As differentiation increases, the infant no longer appears to expect (m)other's magical omnipotence. Similarly, as space and distance increase, (m)other becomes aware of the infant's new capacity to provide signals that guide her to meet his needs.

3.7.2.3 Space and Distance

At first, with the initial subphase of differentiation (5-9 months) a bodily distance is created. During differentiation, the infant's newly acquired autonomous locomotor achievements, as well as the new relationship to mother, allow for an expansion of space and exploration. The infant breaks away, yet continues to retain a connectedness to (m)other. Mahler (1975) describes this behaviour as follows:

All infants like to venture and stay just a bit of a distance away from the enveloping arms of the mother; as soon as they are motorically able to, they like to slide down from mother's lap, but tend to remain or to crawl back and play as close as possible to mother's feet (p.55).

Later, with the practising phase, the infant's increasing locomotor capacity increases his space and widens his world. The infant more actively determines his closeness or distance to mother, but is also now more equipped and able to explore further. As the infant is suddenly exposed to an extended reality, the initial relatively familiar environment presents new horizons, where

“ there is more to see, more to hear, more to touch” (Mahler et al., 1975, p.66).

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The infant's world expands and the manner in which he experiences this world is subtly coloured by the relationship to (m) other, who nevertheless remains pivotal. A new view of the world and a new view of (m)other reveals itself and, though the infant gradually moves out, he returns to her with some new experience. Paradoxically, there is a need to separate, yet a desire to maintain the connection with (m)other. Bergman (1993) writes: "The expanding space between mother and child which belongs to both, is bridged at first by what happens in that space and later by activities displaced onto objects in the outside world..." (pp.214 /215).

In his pioneering paper on distance in psychoanalysis, Bouvet (1958) defines distance as "the gap which separates the way in which a subject expresses his instinctual drives from how he would express them if the process of "handling" or "managing" (in French: *amenagement*) these expressions did not intervene" (p.211). Though the definition implies intrapsychic aspects, later in the same paper Bouvet recognises the interpersonal aspect of distance. He writes about the "rapprocher", or distance between self and other, that progressively decreases until the space between disappears. The concept of "rapprocher" is reminiscent of, and a precursor to, the work of Margaret Mahler.

Mahler's (1965) rapprochement subphase (third of separation-individuation) recognises both intrapsychic and interpersonal aspects in the process of attaining autonomy. The phase is characterised by the joy of personal competence, but also the anxiety of separation, as the infant is confronted with the awareness of an impending separateness from (m)other. The term rapprochement reflects a juxtaposition of inner and outer. Similarly, the delight of the pursuit of autonomy accompanies the desire for a union with (m)other. The opposing polarities of moving away from, and moving towards, (m)other are paradoxically present. Capturing the contradiction, Mahler (1972 a) writes: "Here in the rapprochement subphase, we feel is the mainspring of man's eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation" (p.130). The young child is challenged to resolve the conflict and find a balance between the two confronting polarities.

Mahler (Mahler, et al., 1975) speaks of the "optimal distance" or position between (m)other and the young child that best allows for individuation. Optimal distance is considered the

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“position between mother and child that best allows the infant to develop those faculties which he needs to grow, that is to individuate” (p.291). For each stage, an optimal distance is arrived at that maintains the balance between the quest for autonomy and the desire to remain connected to (m)other. Optimal distance is attained at a time when the infant has the opportunity to begin moving away from mother and, at some distance, to explore and exercise a degree of autonomy. For each stage of development, an optimal position is reached. At first, during the symbiotic stage, the infant blends with the (m)other’s body; then, during the differentiation subphase, the increasing space created allows for the infant’s exploration of (m)other in a tactile and visual manner. Thereafter, with the practising subphase and the greater distance created, there is the opportunity for exploration. During rapprochement, the toddler seeks to move away, yet desires to return and find (m)other. The infant needs to believe that he determines the distance of separation from (m)other, and that the space and distance created is under his control. The young child retains a connectedness throughout the process of separation, and, though individuation increases, the connectedness is facilitated by (1) language development, as in the use of the personal pronoun and the ability to identify self and others, as well as to find expression; (2) internalisation process, in the identification with the “good” (m)other and father as well as incorporation of their rules and expectations; and (3) the increasing ability to express needs, wishes and fantasies through play where a sense of mastery is also experienced. The interpersonal distance between (m)other and child is eventually internalised to the intrapsychic pattern of individuation, as individual differences arise and a sense of self is defined (Mahler, 1975; 1979).

In moving away from (m)other, the infant continually needs to return to (m)other as home base and to refuel emotionally. This process is particularly evident during the subphase of rapprochement, where we find the paradoxical push – pull experience. Mahler’s intrapsychic perspective of distance “between self and object world” is the oscillation and precarious balance between the fear of merger (push) and the need to achieve a stable sense of self in the desire for a oneness (pull), in the infant’s relation to the (m)other. Akhtar’s (1992) description of optimal distance depicts a precarious balance, regarding space “as a psychic position that permits intimacy without loss of autonomy and separateness without painful aloneness” (p.30).

3.7.3 Illusion and Disillusion

The process of separation is dialectical, including both aspects of illusion and disillusion, oneness and separateness. In the space and distance created, the infant needs to retain a connectedness with (m)other, yet seeks to move away and separate. The intermediate area of potential space of which Winnicott (1951) speaks is the area that provides opportunity for the infant to experience something that is both infant and (m)other, both inside and outside, both subject and object. The relationship to the world is experienced within the self. According to Winnicott, contact between the psyche and the environment is established through the use of illusion. The illusion is that which exists between the infant and the environment. What is perceived in the environment is, at first, experienced subjectively, and then attributed as an object of the environment. In terms of the infant (subject-inside) and the mother's breast (object-outside), the two phenomena relate to each other and in the moment of overlap, the illusion resides. In Winnicott's (1951) own words:

The mother's adaptation to the infant's needs, when good enough, gives the infant the *illusion* that there is an external reality that corresponds to the infant's own capacity to create. In other words, there is an overlap between what the mother supplies and what the child might conceive of Psychologically the infant takes from the breast that is part of the infant, and the mother gives milk to an infant that is part of herself. In psychology the idea of interchange is based on an illusion (p.239).

The illusory experience occurs in the area of inner reality and external world, the third dimension or "intermediate area of experiencing". It is that area to which both inner reality and external life contribute. The unchallenged intermediate area relieves the strain of relating inner and outer reality. It is the area between subject and object, yet also the area of inner reality and external life. It is an area of retreat. Winnicott (1951) writes:

It (the intermediate area of experiencing) is an area which is not challenged, because no claim is made on its behalf except that it shall exist as a resting-place for the individual engaged in the perpetual human task of keeping inner and outer reality separate yet inter-related (p.230).

The intermediate area is both inner and outer, yet neither inner nor outer, and the illusion is created in the potential space that makes it possible for the infant to experience a state of omnipotence and a sense of continuity in time. During the period of omnipotence while (m)other and infant mutually share their experience, the infant is protected from experiencing feelings of destructiveness, and this contributes to a sense of continuity. The illusion created is the basis to future relationships regarding the self, world and other (De Astis, 1997; Winnicott, 1992).

The intermediate area makes it possible for the infant to believe that the lived experience is either his own, or is something that belongs to external reality. Accepting reality is never complete, as reality is diffuse and belongs to both inner and outer worlds. The stability of the illusion and sense of the continuity of being determines the infant's successful acceptance of reality. As the infant gradually moves from the illusion to being deluded, reality is finally accepted and resolution achieved. Though the (m)other provides adequate opportunity for the illusion, her subsequent task, paradoxically, is to provide opportunity for the infant's gradual disillusionment, a necessary process in facilitating separation (Winnicott, 1992).

The evolution from illusion to disillusionment may be considered a movement from a state of dependence to greater independence, or from a state of fusion towards greater separation and individuation (Mahler). According to Winnicott (1951), disillusionment is preliminary to weaning, where weaning is not the mere termination of breast-feeding, but a gradual process of coming to terms with reality and recognising (m)other as being beyond infantile omnipotence and part of the external world. According to André Green (1986), for differentiation to take place, the "subjective object" conceived, essentially precedes perception of the "objective object". In other words, the infant has first to experience the object or other as part of the self, before experiencing it as separate. Such transformation occurs in the potential space or space for creative and cultural experience. Aspects of culture (art, science, religion and others) become the unchallenged intermediate area of experience during the adult years (Winnicott, 1992; 1986).

The transitional position, or intermediate area, is the domain of "objective perception", which makes it possible for the infant to be primarily creative, based on external reality. For

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Winnicott, the process of accepting reality is the process of separating from (m)other. Transitional objects and transitional phenomena fill the space between and facilitate the process of accepting reality. The intermediate area of experience between the “subject” and “object” is where transitional objects and transitional phenomena become evident.

3.7.4 Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena

Transitional objects and phenomena represent the illusion of oneness that the infant creates with the (m)other’s involved presence in her holding and caring. The infant experiences his first possession or transitional object as his own creation. It is the first “not-me” possession. The transitional object is both inside and outside. It is both self and other, but also differentiated. The transitional object facilitates the process of separation from (m)other for the infant.

André Green (1986) writes:

The transitional object, which is neither internal nor external but located in the intermediate area of potential space, comes to life and comes into use ‘in the beginning’ of the separation between mother and baby. The transitional object invokes the idea of transitional space which is extended into the cultural experience of sublimation. (pp.284/285).

The experience of the symbiotic merger replaces the physiological attachment of intrauterine life that is essential to normal foetal and neonatal growth and development. Similarly, the transitional object replaces the symbiosis and the experience of oneness for the infant where, according to Tolpin (1971), the essential bond is “heir to the infant’s original narcissism that is preserved when it is assigned to the idealised parent imago” (p.324). The transitional object provides the bridge between the coming and going, the parting and arriving, from the old to the new. Essentially, the transitional object is used in the infant’s attempt to deal with the inevitable conflict of anxiety (moving into the unknown) and sadness (leaving the merger with (m)other). Early separation evokes anxiety and a depressive effect due to the physical separation and psychological differentiation of self from (m)other. The transitional object

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provides an attachment in the separateness from (m)other, as subjective and objective reality merge. (Attwood & Stolorow, 1984).

Tolpin (1971) considers the transitional object as a transitional form of mental structure that is eventually integrated as part of the child's own psychological structure. By virtue of the infant's mental activities, the child becomes more able to soothe himself and, in a sense, autonomously to recreate the illusion and merger with (m)other as the inanimate object (e.g. bottle, blanket) becomes a treasured "not me" possession. To Tolpin, the transitional object phenomenon is an essential "leap" from maternal regulation to self-regulation, but recognises a further special "leap" from the soothing inanimate object to an eventual personal capacity for self-soothing. Tolpin explicates that "the transitional bond between mother and infant will "pass away" like the transitional object itself – the functions of the self object tie 'go inside' as 'the mysterious knot' of the personality which binds isolated parts into a whole unit" (pp.348/349). Such a step is a 'leap' forward in the infant's psychological structure, promoting resolution and the successful conclusion of the separation-individuation phase of development.

The infant's relationship to the transitional object includes particular qualities, a summary of which is presented as follows:

1. The infant assumes rights over the object...some abrogation of "omnipotence" is a feature from the start.
2. The object is affectionately cuddled, as well as excitedly loved and mutilated.
3. It must never change unless changed by the infant.
4. It must survive instinctual loving, and also hating and...pure aggression.
5. Nevertheless, it must seem to the infant to give warmth, or to move, or to have texture...to show it has vitality or reality of its own.
6. It comes from without...but not so from the point of view of the baby. Neither does it come from within; it is not a hallucination.
7. Its fate is to be gradually allowed to be "decathected"...It is not forgotten and it is not mourned... (Khan, 1992; pp.xix/xx)

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The transitional object is more than the object it is and diverse in its function. The presence of the object in being “there” makes it possible for the child to evolve and develop an inner reality and external world and yet, at the same time, to differentiate it as “not-me”. The significance of the object is its paradox and diversity in meaning. Winnicott purports that the presence of the paradox needs to be maintained rather than resolved. Transitional “objects” extend beyond what is tangible. The presence of language provides a connectedness for the infant, where language is paradoxical and created within the potential space, differentiating and separating, yet uniting in oneness.

The value and significance of sound cannot be overlooked. Barclay (1993) acknowledges Winnicott’s verification of a link for the infant regarding aural and oral phenomena, where the sounds produced either by the environment or by the infant are associated with feeding and general sustenance. Sounds bear meaning for the infant who may wish to retain these. Transitional objects can take various forms. In Barclay’s own words, “when transitional ‘objects’ are heard in the form of tunes, songs, or fragments of tunes, or when they are phrases or words, these objects can be understood as *transitional acoumena*” (p.40). The potential for the unfolding of the acoumena begins during the Echo Phase. Barclay identifies the Echo Phase and includes it as the dimension of sound akin to Lacan’s Mirror Stage (3-18 months). The transitional object, whether tangible or not, is created in the intermediate area or space between the infant and (m)other that serves the illusion of oneness. Speech and language are created in the potential space.

3.7.4.1 Transitional Object and Separateness

While the transitional object serves the illusion of oneness, the borrowed object serves the concept of separateness. Anni Bergman (1993) points to a difference between the borrowed and the given object. Though the infant “creates” the transitional object given by mother, the object borrowed from the world as it is explored, is the object discovered (and created) by the infant. The object is brought to (m)other from the horizons beyond the parameters with (m)other. Bergman explicates as follows:

These (discovered) objects represent both mother and the outside world. Thus, they may serve both as a confirmation of the early ‘we’ and ‘ours’ experience – one moment part of the mother, the next moment part of the self, a self not yet fully experienced as separate – and at the same time are experienced as not-mother, that is part of the world outside (pp. 204/205).

The conflicts related to separation are dealt with by the creative process which includes the creation of the transitional object, as well as the creation of the (m)other as a separate person. The intensity of the illusion colours the pleasure the infant experiences in finding the (m)other each time he returns, and, reassured each time of her presence, believes that he has created her. The infant requires the opportunity to create the (m)other for himself. If elusive, (m)other can be stressful, while the intrusive (m)other can deny the infant the opportunity of creating her for himself. As the infant continues to return with each consecutive widening circle of his world, the mother continues to be pivotal to the infant’s being. Initial explorations tend to include those objects (such as glasses or jewellery) that are part of mother, yet not part of her. With his expanding world and increasing exploration, a special interest regarding inanimate objects develops. Transitional objects play a significant role in facilitating the infant’s separation and exploration of the “space between” (Bergman, 1993).

With the increasing space and distances created during the differentiation and practising (Mahler’s) subphases, the child gradually becomes aware of his separateness. A significant awareness of separateness is achieved as the gap widens between the (m)other and infant during the rapprochement subphase. As objects are removed from the (m)other, the infant symbolically takes her along with him and, in bringing objects to her, he gives himself in return. While separateness is identified and attended to, (m)other is experienced as an extension of, but also as an entity that is separate from, the self. The infant’s behaviour, and his use of transitional objects affirms the inevitable separateness, yet maintains the desired oneness. Once again, the intermediate area with the transitional object provides the solution, yet retains the paradox of the transitional space or gap.

3.7.5 The Gap and Illusion

The gap is the void or absence in the presence. Lacan (1988b) employs the term gap to denote the space or to use his words, “large hole or opening” that evolves “whereby death makes itself felt” (p.210). For Lacan, the gap is essentially the rupture between man and nature, initially evident during the mirror stage, where man becomes alienated from his true self. The gap is the illusion or dual relation between the ego and the reflected image that fills the gap. Lacan (1988b) attends to the specific and special relation that the human being has to his own image, and describes it as “a relation of gap, of alienating tension” (p.323).

Winnicott’s (1951) theory of the transitional object is that in the absence of the mother’s presence, the transitional object creates the illusion of a union with mother. Both Winnicott and Lacan speak of an illusion arising in the space between the self and other. Winnicott’s concept of “illusion” appears akin to Lacan’s notion of “deception” that emerges during the Mirror Phase. For Winnicott, the transitional space (or gap) is filled through the transitional object or sublimated cultural activities of adulthood. For Lacan, the gap is filled via the illusionary realm that captures and entraps the individual, and though the mirror or social image entraps him, it also reflects subjectivity. As discussed, the transitional object facilitates the move from the inner (subjective object) to the outer (objective object) and, through the process, we find the expansion in the space of thought and experience as taking precedence over the “object”. The object facilitates the process of transition and the expansion of self, regarding thought and emotions.

The transitional object is the “not-me” possession. The concept of absence is a crucial inclusion in Winnicott’s (1951) transitional objects theory regarding the “not-me” possessions. André Green (1986) formulates the concept of “negative satisfaction” where paradoxically, in possession of the object, the point is posed that “all I have got is what I have not got” (p.285). It is the space that makes the creation of the object possible, for what the child experiences as being present in reality is actually not. The experience is the retention of what is absent. To Bowlby (1979), absence of the (m)other for the young infant is death of the (m)other to the infant. To Green (1986), in absence or death, “the only thing real is the gap” (p. 291). Green expands upon the concept of absence as follows:

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Absence does not mean loss but potential presence. For absence, paradoxically, may signify either an imaginary presence, or else an unimaginable non-existence. It is absence in this first sense which leads to the capacity to be alone (in the presence of the object) and to the activity of representation and of creating the imaginary: the transitional object constructed within that space of illusion never violated by the question “Was the object created or was it found? (p.293)

Finding and creating the (symbolic) order of language liberates man from the tension and entrapment of the imaginary order of vision. Lacan (1988b) accepts that “there is no absence in the real. There is only absence if you suggest that there may be a presence, there where there isn’t one” (p.313). For Lacan (Evans, 1996), the “symbolic order (of language) is characterised by the fundamental binary opposition between absence and presence”. The word is “a presence made of absence” (Evans, 1996, p. 65). We attempt to fill the void through language. Verbal communication or the symbolic order of language facilitates and resolves entrapment of the visual or imaginary (Wolman 1997; Lacan, 1978). Winnicott’s (1951) intermediate space or area of illusion remains unchallenged in respect of whether it belongs to an “inner” or “outer” (shared) reality. The intense experiences of culture, religion, the arts, creative and scientific work, reflective of that space, constitute a great part of human experience. Transitional space essentially pertains to the presence or absence of the object as it is found or created.

3.7.6 Presence in Absence

Absence and presence are found in the gap. Bowlby (1998) defines the concepts of presence and absence in terms of accessibility, where presence means “ready accessibility”, while absence means inaccessibility. To Bowlby, attachment figures are either accessible (present) or inaccessible (absent), whether temporarily (through separation) or permanently (through loss). The inaccessibility of the attachment figure gives rise to feelings of anxiety. André Green (1986) recognises absence as potential space rather than loss, signifying either an “imaginary presence” or an “unimaginable non-existence”.

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”Object losing” (letting go) and ”object finding” (holding on) processes occur and recur during development in the ego’s attempt to restructure (Blos, 1967). These processes of holding on and letting go are evidenced in games regarding presence and absence. Such games are initiated during the preverbal period, with the impact on visual perception. Freud illustrates such a game by describing his grandchild playing the cotton-reel game. This is perhaps the most famous of all transitional objects recorded in the psychological literature. Freud’s (1971) description reads as follows:

What he did was to hold the reel by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive “o-o-o-o”. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful ‘da’. This then was the complete game – disappearance and return... . It was related to the child’s cultural achievement...”
(p. 9).

Similarly, in the context of absence and presence, Winnicott (1941) describes a spatula game played by an infant he observed. At first, the infant accidentally drops a spatula, restores it and drops it again, but less by mistake than before. With joy, he retrieves it and is delighted at its return. The spatula game (between five and thirteen months) is analogous to Freud’s observation of the *fort-da* (gone-here) cotton-reel game, whereby the infant practises ridding himself of the spatula, which is essentially the (m)other. This is the game of disappearance and return. The child voluntarily throws away or rids himself of the spatula (or reel) and prepares for the absent (m)other. Winnicott provides the following description: “ When the mother goes away, this is not only a loss for him of the external real (m)other, but also a test of the child’s relation to his *inside* mother” (p.68). The (m)other in the external world, and the (m)other of the internal world are closely bound and present in the young child’s mind. Through these games, the young child is able to demonstrate to himself that his internal mother has neither disappeared from his inner world, nor is she destroyed, but continues to be present in the manner in which he knows her. Through such activities, the young child is able to revise his relationship to the world and to himself. In the words of Winnicott (1941): “The child gains reassurance about the fate of his internal mother and about her attitude; a depressed mood which accompanies anxiety about the internal mother is relieved, and happiness regained (pp. 68/69).

Another early game that the young child tends to enjoy playing is the peek-a-boo game, initiated by (m)other and then continued by the little one. The peek-a-boo game usually commences during the first subphase (differentiation) of the individuation process and often becomes a favourite pastime during the early rapprochement period, where the awareness of separateness increases in the presence of interpersonal relationships. The peek-a-boo game enjoyed by (m)other and child is indicative of this movement away from, yet reunion with, (m)other. It is the movement from passive to active, from loss to regaining the preliminary push and pull that Mahler describes as necessary in the process of separation individuation. Ball games facilitate social interaction, yet also help to resolve the fears and feelings of separation or parting as the object (ball) is retrieved and a sense of continuity is retained (Mahler, Pine & Bergman, 1975). The significance of language development during the push-pull process of rapprochement in the separation from (m)other cannot be underestimated. The words “hello” and “bye-bye” are significantly used words during the Practising Period. The words are reflective of the to-and-fro movement of development. It is in games and then in language that we find the child’s first awareness of separateness (*fort*), yet also the realisation of a reunion (*da*) through language. Essentially, language is a presence in absence (Lacan, 1988).

We encounter the experience of absence and presence early in our lives as we attempt to integrate this with our being in the world, initially non-verbally through the imaginary sphere, and later verbally through language. The early peek-a-boo game of infancy often played with (m)other during the early phases of separation-individuation is later replaced with the hide-and-seek game played with peers. Throughout development, attempts are made to resolve the polarity of presence and absence, life and death.

Though the examples cited above depend on visual perception, the visual aspects involved are gradually connoted with verbal expression which eventually replaces what is visually perceived. Pertaining to language and auditory phenomena, Freud’s “fort/da” game with the two sounds “O/A” are a verbal modulation of presence and absence. The O/A sounds are accepted as “a primitive phonemic opposition representing the child’s entry into the symbolic order of language. These sounds reflect the presence and absence of persons and things”

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(Evans, 1996, p.1). For Lacan, as the word fills the void, the word is “a presence made of absence”. Viewed through a Winnicottian lens, we could perhaps say that the word is the transitional object of the original potential space between infant and mother. The presence and absence of words connects, yet separates, us in our relationship to others.

To the young child, the presence and absence of the object, the back-and-forth movement between (m)other and child is echoed in the fort-da experience or the push-and-pull aspects of the to and fro rhythm of development that occurs in the space of transition. The word connects, yet separates. To quote Ruth Josselson (1992): “Relatedness and individuality are not dichotomous. Action takes place only within a relational matrix; the self is realised through others; development concerns both maintaining our ties to others and differentiating from them” (p.15). In “man’s eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation”, there is the fear of object loss, yet desire for union. It is from this precarious balance that autonomy unfolds.

3.8 Autonomy

Developmental psychology appears to have focused on the process of human growth and maturity in terms of the journey from dependence to autonomy. The concept of separation remains dominant in the literature where selfhood, as it pertains to the theory of separation-individuation, is the dominant paradigm. With its emphasis on autonomy and the developmental progress towards the individuation of self, the work of Margaret Mahler holds prominence. In letting go, human development is the mobility of growth and maturity from a state of dependence to independence or merger to separateness, with an evolving and differentiated sense of self.

3.8.1 Autonomy and Independence

The terms dependence, independence and autonomy are predominant in the developmental literature. Fairbairn (1941) views development in terms of object relationships and describes it as “a process whereby infantile dependence upon the object gradually gives place to mature dependence upon the object” (p.34). Acknowledging the significance of relationships, Fairbairn prefers to use the term “mature dependence” rather than independence. Mature dependence is described as involving “a relationship between two independent individuals,

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who are completely differentiated from one another as mutual objects”, while independence is the absolute differentiation of individuals from one another.

Infantile dependence is the primary identification with the object. In the process of development, the primary identification with the original object relationship with (m)other is abandoned and a differentiated object relationship is adopted. The initial stage of infantile dependence or predominantly “taking” (sucking, incorporating) attitude is replaced by a mature dependence or predominantly ‘giving’ attitude. A transition period arises between the immature and mature dependence periods as the maturing infant seeks to abandon the “taking” attitude and gradually adopts the more “giving” attitude of mature dependence. Fairbairn (1994) speaks of the dichotomy of the transition period or stage of quasi-independence where (m)other is accepted and rejected until mature dependence is attained. He recognises the paradox of the transition stage as conflict arises between the urge to progress and the urge to regress. While Winnicott (1951) accepts the paradox present in the transitional space, Fairbairn views the transition to “mature independence” as a basic phobic dependence/independence conflict. Evidence of the significant ambivalence of the developing young child is recognised by both theorists as the significance of relationships continues.

Winnicott (1963b) views maturity as a process that moves through stages “towards independence”, within a social context. From a state of ‘absolute dependence’, the infant moves through relative dependence towards independence. To Winnicott “Independence is never absolute. The healthy individual does not become isolated, but becomes related to the environment in such a way that the individual and the environment can be said to be interdependent” (p.84). In discussing the concept of the healthy individual, Winnicott (1986) believes that there is no such thing as independence and postulates that “it would be unhealthy for an individual to be so withdrawn as to feel independent and invulnerable” adding that, “if such a person is alive, then there is dependence indeed!” (p.21). As discussed earlier, the young infant begins its life in the context of a holding environment, which, if good enough and consistently present, makes personal development possible according to the tendencies inherited. That which unfolds is “ a continuity of existence that becomes a sense of existing, a sense of self, and eventually results in autonomy” (p.28).

Erikson (1971; 1969) recognises autonomy as arriving with the resolution of the Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt phase, when the young child moves from being a receptive, passive infant, controlled by the (m)other and /or parents, towards greater independence and autonomy. For the toddler to develop autonomy, a firmly established sense of trust is necessary. At first, there is a significant awareness of the ability to control bodily functions and later, possibly, aspects of the environment, perhaps even people and events. The maturity experienced initially pertains to muscular co-ordination and verbal abilities, characterised by the ability to hold on and to let go. The highly dependent young child undergoes and experiences changes that influence the relationship with his world, whether he is comfortable with self-expression or controlled and anxious. At this point, the young child will either begin to experience an autonomous will, or be confronted with a propensity for doubt and shame.

Knowles (1986) elaborates on Erikson's theory regarding the central existential aspect of the willing experience during the Autonomy vs Shame and Doubt phase, a phase which is integral to the self. During this time, the young child devotes his energies to exercising personal will and participating as a complete human being, relating to a personal and interpersonal world. It is here that the young child begins literally to take a stand. Where Erikson uses the term "self-control", Knowles prefers to speak of "control", reasoning that the control to the young child extends beyond the self. To support his viewpoint Knowles (1986) writes: "I am most myself, not in a narcissistic way but in a dialogal way, since there is always an object pole to my willing" (p.58). The self can extend beyond the self. Unlike Erikson who considers the experience of personal will as subject to the ego, Knowles accepts personal will as the existential aspect of self that facilitates integration. .

3.8.2 Internalisation, Integration and Individuation

Heinz Hartmann (1958, 1952), an ego psychologist, describes autonomy in terms of ego processes and ego functioning. This theorist extended the Freudian concept of the defensive ego to include non-defensive aspects, considered to be the primary autonomous functions of the ego. As Hartman views it, the autonomous functions of the ego belong to its "conflict

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free” domain, whereby the relation between “adaptation” to outer reality and the state of inner reality becomes accessible, and the integration between inner and outer worlds becomes possible. Memory, cognition, reality testing, locomotor integration and other functions are all considered essential for the development of ego autonomy, yet require that the (m)other be available as the libidinal source for the functions to develop and synthesise to their full potential. Hartmann (1958) speaks of the autonomous ego as conflict-free and able to function independent of id pressure. He views the autonomous ego as distancing itself from the id-ego conflicts. Hartmann’s work forms one of the cardinal hypotheses for the work of Mahler and her colleagues regarding the final (yet open) stage of separation-individuation and the integration of inner and outer worlds

In line with Hartmann’s theory, the concept of establishing affective pattern object constancy is incorporated in the separation–individuation theory during the fourth subphase when greater cognitive maturity emerges. At this time, the young child’s task is to achieve individuality as well as to attain a certain degree of object constancy. Awareness that the (m)other’s relieving activities can be signalled for is “a first great step forward” for the young child’s psyche as the narcissistic perception of the mother continues. During the (differentiation) phase, the functions of the (m)other make it possible for the infant to continue experiencing what she does to relieve anxiety as his own doing. The infant’s gradual internalisation of a properly and positively cathected inner image of the (m)other, establishes a pattern of affective object constancy (Tolpin, 1971).

Object constancy is a significant aspect of normal development that facilitates the intrapsychic structure that supports the ego in its capacity to delay and manage separation anxiety. Fleming (1975) gives an account of object constancy being present when “a mental representation of the need satisfying object has been organized in the mind and can be evoked as a memory in the absence of the object” (p.746). According to Tolpin (1971) and Settlege (1994), such a self-regulatory function provides the structure that enables the child to let go of the parent, made possible through identification and internalisation of that parent.

Despite some degree of difficulty and tension, the constant inner image of the object or (m)other will create the opportunity for the young child to function independently while the

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ego is supported in its regulatory functions. To some extent, internalisation liberates the child for, “as the individual internalises what was external, he simultaneously gains autonomy from it” (Josselson 1980, p.190). As the young child begins to reassure and comfort himself in the manner in which mother used to, anxiety is reduced. By means of internalising (m)other and retaining the image he has of her, the child is initially able to comfort himself as he experiences (m)other as comforting him. The tendency is later to identify with this internalisation and to believe that the comforting is part of the self.

Jacques Lacan (1988) challenges Hartmann’s view that the existence of the autonomous ego or state of integration is conflict free, for, in the duality of the ego in relation to its image, there is conflict. Autonomy, to Lacan, is an illusion whereby the ego accepts the conscious or imaginary realm. The “illusion” becomes apparent in the dual relationship between the ego and specular image during the mirror stage (*stade du miroir*), which represents the basic aspect of the structure of subjectivity that lures the infant into believing that he is as whole and integrated as he is reflected and appears in his own image in the mirror. With the quest to maintain the intersubjective experience of a oneness with (m)other, the image and imaginary realm ‘captures’ the infant during the Mirror Stage and continues to capture, deceive and alienate the individual from himself, thus creating a gap. The deception that originates with the reflection of the Mirror Stage is echoed in the relationship with (m)other and later in the social context. For Lacan (1953),

It is the gap separating man from nature that determines his lack of relationship to nature, and begets his narcissistic shield, with its nacreous covering on which is painted the world from which he is ever cut off but this same structure is also the sight where his own milieu is grafted on to hi, i.e. the society of his fellow men. (p.16).

The mirror image serves as a mirage for the “I”. Visually perceived, the image promises competence, yet also alienates with a continuous sense of discord. Autonomy, to Lacan, is an illusion for what the infant begins to believe is his “I” or “Me”. That which is perceived remains the ego that continues to deceive.

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Similar to Hartman's view is Kohut's (1988) understanding of the formation of a transitional psychic structure that facilitates the formation of a cohesive self. Where Hartman speaks of an ego and ego functions, Kohut speaks of the self and the impact of empathy on development. He describes the empathic merger of the child with the empathic responsive human milieu or self-object. The (m)other empathically serves as the self-object, sustains the child and remedies the arising homeostatic imbalance. The presence of anxiety, distress or imbalance with the child brings about an empathic resonance with the (m)other or self-object. The (m)other communicates this via touch and/or vocal contact or other means and restores a balance for the child. The (m)other's (self-object) feeling states are essentially transmitted to the child, but experienced by the child as if these feeling states of the (m)other were his own. As much as oxygen is vital for life, Kohut accepts empathy as a psychological necessity. While the nuclear self of the young child is consolidated, internalisations are transmuted. Kohut views the relationship we have with others as integral to the self, and does not believe that absolute autonomy for the self is possible. Mahler's concept of symbiosis is similar to Kohut's concept of the self-object merger, with its recognition of interpersonal rather than biological aspects of oneness.

Regarding ego development and autonomy, object relations theory has made it possible for us to understand the processes of internalisation and individuation as being central.

Greenberg and Mitchell (1983) define object relations as residing in the individual's "interactions with external and internal (real and imagined) other people, and to the relationship between...

internal and external object worlds" (pp13-14). Mahler, Pine and Bergman's (1975)

description of separation-individuation is complex regarding ego development, as the ego gradually differentiates itself as separate and unique from (m)other. From experiencing the oneness of symbiosis with (m)other, the child differentiates and develops its own personal perceptions. Mahler accepts separation and individuation as two complementary developments, as the young child separates from its fusion with (m)other and undergoes his psychological birth process, whereby identity begins to evolve in the early unfolding of individuality. In gaining a sense of self and becoming autonomous, individuation entails differentiation.

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In Mahler's final phase of separation-individuation we find autonomy and the evolving structure of the self. The task of the final phase of separation-individuation is the resolution of the rapprochement crisis of essentially being able to separate and individuate from (m)other, yet remain one with her. With the increasing cognitive maturity gained, the child is more able to fantasise, test for reality and verbalise, becoming more equipped to deal with the task of resolving the crisis (Akhtar and Parens, 1991). Verbal ability improves considerably with speech and language, facilitating the integration of inner and outer worlds and resolution of the rapprochement crisis.

3.8.3 Speech and Language

Verbalisation through the use of speech and language is a valuable attainment for the young child as the expression of feelings and wishes are made possible. Such a means of self-expression leads to an increase in the mastery or sense of competency for the ego. Wolman (1997) notes that "verbal communication helps the post rapprochement child catch up from delays in the first three stages of separation-individuation" (p.52). Separation based on verbal rather than imaginary distances is learnt where the use of verbal communications increases the evident differences. In terms of Lacan, the physical conceptual understanding of an optimal distance from (m)other is now also defined symbolically, where the spatial distance between toddler and (m)other is not only the literal distance between them. Furthermore, verbalisation together with an increased cognitive ability, assists the ego in distinguishing between fantasy and reality, thereby providing the ego with fluidity. Katan (1961) attests that:

Verbalization prevents the fixation of a part of the ego at a certain level and keeps open the transition to further development. Thus through verbalization, the ego is able to master its affects and does not have to resort to defences like denial, avoidance, etc., to shut these out (p.188).

Before being able to verbalise, the young child has to be receptive to the sounds or echoes of his world and to acoustical phenomena, aspects of which will later be synthesised into meaningful units. During the eighteen month (rapprochement) period, it is estimated that

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children learn more than 14,000 words or nine new words per day (Rice, 1989). The young child prepares and equips himself to deal with the challenge of autonomy.

Barclay (1993) recognises the significant impact of acoustical phenomena or 'acoumena' in the development of the infant's subjectivity. As the psychological symbiosis begins to dissolve, there is a loss for the infant of the intersubjective oneness that he knew with (m)other. The infant is subjected to the symbolic order and the acquisition of language. Barclay names and includes the Echo Phase as an added dimension to the specular image of Lacan's Mirror Stage, where the young child's sonic relationship to the self, to his parents and to society is set in motion and finds harmony or discord. In Barclay's words: "The Echo Phase is a long musical phrase that obtains meaning around the time of the Mirror Stage (nine months of age, approximately), when the periodicity of social relations begins to hew that music into language" (p.38). Language becomes a significant part in the child's thinking and communication, influencing his relationship to the world and being influenced by it. Language establishes the unique intersubjective relation to the environment, and this is accomplished through the medium of speech. The early verbal echoes to which the infant was receptive gradually attain meaning as the young child begins to express himself and instil personal meaning. To quote Barclay (1993):

Meaning is a primary factor in producing the end of babbling and the inauguration of the infant's slow immersion in an intersubjective dimension. In the normal child, the speech sounds of the surround and their relation to the phonetic sounds the child produces are crucial in that meaning is carried by these sounds and is a consequence of their existence (p.35).

Linguistic relations facilitate the maintenance of the intersubjective relationship. This appears paramount for the young child who attempts to resolve the rapprochement crises, and is also important for the developing individual. That is, while having to move away and individuate from (m)other, the pressing desire is not to lose their primary relationship. Verbal communication makes it possible for the child to articulate his 'lack', loss or absence. Mahler indicates the value of verbal communication in helping to resolve the rapprochement crisis and achieve individuation for the young child. Wolman acknowledges the theory of Lacan in this context and speaks of verbal communication as proving the means of resolving the

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“impasse in the imaginary”. Through the use of language, the child is able to express his inner self to (m)other and attempt to integrate his inner and outer worlds. Mahler and her colleagues purport that the final phase of separation individuation remains open-ended and reverberates through life. Speech and language continue to play a major role in the quest for resolution.

Individuation unfolds with the separation process of the child from the (m)other. In the presence of (m)other the child achieves the ability to separate and function autonomously. The traditional stance regarding human development has been to view it as a process from oneness to separateness. Mahler’s approach begins with a merger and moves to autonomy and separation and individuation. The significant role of the (m)other during early development is gradually replaced by the role of the self and its movement towards greater self-awareness or personal growth. To psychoanalysis, the general developmental assumption is that separation is growth, as the individual moves from merger to separateness, from dependence to autonomy.

3.8.4 Autonomy and Relatedness

By implication, the concept of autonomy implies separateness and the exclusion of relatedness.

Nevertheless, Kohut (1971; 1988) considers others as extensions of the self, and recognises normal development as revealing man’s inseparability from others. He attests that the outcome of development should be recognised as freedom in our relation with others rather than the attainment of autonomy. Hence, he is critical of the work of Mahler, where separation and autonomy from others are considered the ultimate outcome of separation-individuation. Similarly, Masek (1991) firmly believes that our relationship with others is an undivided *Gestalt*. The division encountered is attributed to the dualism of Cartesian thought. In the context of the inseparability of our relationships, the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty recognises the ambiguity in our experience of the other and our co-dependence as humans. Masek (1991, p.43) cites Merleau-Ponty (1968): “We situate ourselves in ourselves *and* in the things, in ourselves *and* in the other, at the point where by a sort of *chiasm*, we become the others and we become the world” (p.160). As cited by Alapack (1984, p.85)

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Kierkegaard's anthropological-epistemological-hermeneutic principle: "*Unum noris omnes* (if you know one, you know all)" also reflects our interrelatedness as humans.

Ruth Josselson (1988) speaks of the embedded self and recognises the interdependence of separation and attachment. In her view, the concept of separation is misunderstood, for she believes that separation modifies rather than destroys relationships. To Josselson, autonomy does not mean the annihilation of relationships, while separation-individuation is recognised as part of a matrix that connects individuals. Where there is the separation and the moving away from someone we also tend to find a revising and preserving of the relationship by the separating individual. According to Josselson: "Attachment is not the opposite of separation-individuation – it is coincident with it" (p.95). By way of illustration, one may look at the late adolescent, who, in forming new relationships, continues to carry through earlier friendships (attachments) rather than destroy them. This attachment behaviour is reminiscent of the young toddler, who continues the relationship with (m)other while forming new attachments. During rapprochement the young toddler leaves (m)other but returns to 'refuel' and re-affirm their relationship before defining himself in the world out there. A continued connection is assured. To quote Josselson (1988):

Rapprochement is a powerful concept of understanding development because it blends with autonomy in the context of relatedness. We become selves within, not in spite of relationships. Rapprochement is about preserving bonds of relationship in the presence of increasing autonomy. This is as true in adolescence as it is in infancy (pp.94/95).

Similarly, Çigdem Kagitçibasi (1996) identifies the general misinterpretation of autonomy regarding its separateness from others regarding separation-individuation. The writer suggests the presence of an 'autonomous-relational self' which she believes is a healthy synthesis of the need for 'agency' (autonomy) and relatedness. Kagitçibasi differentiates between the dimension of agency and the interpersonal dimension, where the dimension of agency comprises the two poles of autonomy and heteronomy, and the interpersonal dimension includes both separateness and relatedness. Autonomy is viewed as belonging to the agency dimension and as being different to separateness which belongs to the

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interpersonal dimension. According to Kagitçibasi, it is possible for autonomy to co-exist with relatedness and provide a balance to the totalised concept of autonomy and human development. Citing one of his earlier works, Kagitçibasi (1996) believes that: “the simultaneous processes of differentiation (from others) and integration (with others) toward a synthesis of these opposing needs points to the possible emergence of the ‘autonomous relational self’” (p.182).

Strong implications suggest that cultural aspects play a role regarding the contingency of autonomy. Certain writers (Guisinger & Blatt, 1994; Kagitçibasi, 1996) recognise the individualistic ethos of Western society and the Cartesian dualistic thought that is reflected in existing developmental theories. We are inextricably enmeshed in the culture we share with others. While we influence the culture that holds us, we are influenced by it. How the term autonomy is construed depends on its cultural context. As Kagitçibasi (1996) notes, research studies conducted with Chinese (Yu & Yan, 1994), Indian (Misra & Agarwal, 1985) and Turkish (Phalet & Claeys, 1993) groups recognise the concept as a ‘social achievement motivation’ referring to a sense of achievement that extends beyond the self rather than an absolute autonomy.

Another example of autonomy in relatedness is the South African concept of “Ubuntu”, a word connoting humanity with the essential meaning of “I can only be me through your eyes”, or “A human being is human because of other people” (*The Economist*, 1995, p.72). It is in a relational context, in the presence of the other, that the self finds definition. Similarly, Emmanuel Levinas (1979) explicates that, as the individual goes beyond himself, what is external becomes internal, for ‘the Other is the center of the self’. In his work on the power of weakness, George Kunz (1998) also rejects the view of the autonomous or egocentric ego. The self is accepted as “having its identity, inspired by others, animated by others, empowered by others” (p.11). The self exists because of the “other”. These concepts and viewpoints are quite different from the notion of an individualistic autonomy, the cherished and valued ideal in traditional psychology.

A less orthodox approach to development would be to consider it as commencing

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with the self that is separate and alone, but which also moves towards attaching, connecting and finding a means of meeting its needs and relating interpersonally. Daniel Stern (1985) disagrees with Mahler's view regarding early infant development and believes that the infant seeks relatedness, desiring an "intersubjective union" rather than seeking to pursue an intrapsychic autonomy. The different perspective adopted by these theorists is significant to the experience of letting go. While Mahler conclusively accepts the infant as moving away from an initial connectedness into separation-individuation, Stern views the infant as moving towards connectedness. Stern approaches development from the perspective of connectedness and describes the development of the self as moving towards an interpersonal relatedness or "intersubjective union". Mobility, for Stern, is viewed from the initial stages (viz. emergent, core, subjective and verbal) of self, to connecting with others. From the perspective of Mahler, letting go may be described as the separation- individuation of the human individual in the quest for autonomy, whereas for Stern letting go is rather the need to relate in a desire for connectedness or core-relatedness. The two theories though different in their aims relating to development, can be considered as part of the same continuum, rather than as being polarised and contradictory. In developing the structural concept of the "child ego state" Thunnissen (1998) makes use of both theories. Though differing in their views of development, the theories of Mahler and Stern can be complementary.

According to Winnicott (1958), achievement of the "I am" is due to the protective environment that the mother provides in her care, preoccupation and identification with the infant. The subsequent achievement of "I am alone" is attributed to the consistency of the reliable (m)other of whom the infant is aware, making it possible for the infant to be alone. Paradoxically, the infant's ability to be alone depends on the basis of the infant's initial ability to be alone in the presence of the other. Similarly, as adults, though often alone, we need to know that someone is 'there' for us. The internalised (m)other provides the initial capacity to be alone.

We return to the work of John Bowlby (1979; 1998) who believes that the term dependency is often misinterpreted. To Bowlby, attachment and human relatedness incorporate a natural dependence and attachment behaviour like separation anxiety is instinctive, normal and healthy. His extensive work on attachment acknowledges the self in relation to others

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together with the human need for relatedness. Bowlby is emphatic that this need for attachment is not a regressive dependency. To relate is a healthy human phenomenon.

Similarly, dissolving the traditional implication of separateness, Bowlby (1998) prefers to speak of self-reliance rather than use the term autonomy. Studies reveal that in the context of a trusting and supportive attachment, stability and self-reliance are possible. Awareness of the availability of the attachment figure offers security and promotes self-reliance, while the accessibility and responsiveness of the attachment figure also facilitates confidence and offers a secure base from which to develop. Our need to remain attached continues, while the security of knowing that a trusted person is there for one is not limited to young children. According to Bowlby, a healthy, self-reliant individual is able to exchange roles as the situation requires it, either providing a secure base for others or personally being provided with a secure base. Self-reliance is foundational to further relationships.

Prolific research abounds regarding separation-individuation during adolescence. Kroger's (1998) review of research conducted reflects a growing trend in revealing adolescents' connectedness to, and autonomy from, parents in the changing dynamics between them. Kroger cites research that includes the work of Quintana and Kerr (1993), Grotevan and Cooper (1985), Papini, Micka and Barnett (1989), Weinmann and Newcombe (1990) in support of this. Increasingly, the inclination is not to consider development as a mere linear process from dependence to independence, but to recognise development as incorporating the process of autonomy and relatedness. In the words of Josselson (1988): "Perhaps development is not a path from dependence to autonomy but amovement to increasing differentiated forms of relating to others. Perhaps autonomy is merely a form of relatedness" (p.100).

Despite the criticism she has received, Mahler (1975) has consistently recognised the alternation of demands for closeness and autonomy. Our quest as individuals is to maintain the optimal distance in the 'eternal struggle against both fusion and isolation' or the 'push and pull' of development. Edward, Ruskin and Tirrini (1992) are supportive of Mahler's theory, which they believe acknowledges autonomy as well as a human need for others. Autonomy need not exclude relatedness and while the autonomy achieved with separation-

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individuation leads to intrapsychic changes, interpersonal aspects continue to remain significant. To cite Mahler (1972 a):

One could regard the entire life cycle as constituting a more or less successful process of distancing from and introjection of the lost symbiotic mother, an eternal longing for the actual or fantasised 'ideal state of self' with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the 'all good' symbiotic mother, who was at one time part of the self in a blissful state of well being (p.130).

Autonomy signifies relatedness. The following excerpt (recognised by E.J. Anthony, cited by Mahler, 1975, p.73) says it all:

Thus, the child walks alone with his eyes fixed on his mother's face; not on the difficulties in his way. He supports himself by the arms that do not hold him and constantly strives towards the refuge in his mother's embrace, little suspecting that in the very same moment that he is emphasizing his need of her, he is proving that he can do without her because he is walking alone. (Kierkegaard, 1846)

The foregoing literature regarding separation and concepts pertaining to what is understood as letting go, provides a basis for the exploration forward. Definitions of the term to "let go" reflect a concept that is multifaceted in meaning, paradoxically linked with separation, holding containment and space, themes dealt with in the preceding literature. However, what the lived meaning of the experience is, remains to be explored and understood. What is implicit about the term needs to be made explicit. By revealing and describing its structure, I will attempt to identify its significance and relevance to psychology, and to developmental psychology in particular. I hope to achieve this aim in the study that follows.