The biological birth of the human infant and the psychological birth of the individual are not coincident in time. The former is a dramatic, observable, and well-circumscribed event; the latter a slowly unfolding intrapsychic process.

For the more or less normal adult, the experience of himself as both fully "in," and fully separate from, the "world out there" is taken for granted as a given of life. Consciousness of self and absorption without awareness of self are two polarities between which he moves with varying ease and with varying degrees of alternation or simultaneity. But this, too, is the result of a slowly unfolding process.

We refer to the psychological birth of the individual as the separation-individuation process: 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. Like any intrapsychic process, this one reverberates throughout the life cycle. It is never finished; it remains always active; new phases of the life cycle see new derivatives of the earliest processes still at work. But the principal psychological achievements of this process take place in the period from about the fourth or fifth month to the thirtieth or thirty-sixth month, a period we refer to as the separation-individuation phase.

The normal separation-individuation process, following upon a developmentally normal symbiotic period, involves the child's achievement of separate functioning in the presence of, and with the emotional availability of the mother (Mahler, 1963); the child is continually confronted with minimal threats of object loss (which every step of the maturational process seems to entail). In contrast to situations of traumatic separation,
however, this normal separation-individuation process takes place in the setting of a developmental readiness for, and pleasure in, independent functioning.

Separation and individuation are conceived of as two complementary developments: separation consists of the child's emergence from a symbiotic fusion with the mother (Mahler, 1952), 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 in one or the other. Thus, premature locomotor development, enabling a child to separate physically from the mother, may lead to premature awareness of separateness before internal regulatory mechanisms (cf. Schur, 1966), a component of individuation, provide the means to cope with this awareness. Contrariwise, an omnipresent infantilizing mother who interferes with the child's innate striving for individuation, usually with the autonomous locomotor function of his ego, may retard the development of the child's full awareness of self-other differentiation, despite the progressive or even precocious development of his cognitive, perceptual, and affective functions.

From the observable and inferred beginnings of the infant's primitive cognitive-affective state, with unawareness of self-other differentiation, a major organization of intrapsychic and behavioral life develops around issues of separation and individuation, an organization that we recognize by terming the subsequent period the separation-individuation phase. In Part II we will describe the steps in this process (the subphases), beginning with the earliest signs of differentiation, proceeding through the period of the infant's absorption in his own autonomous functioning to the near exclusion of mother, then through the all-important period of rapprochement in which the child, precisely because of his more clearly perceived state of separateness from mother, is prompted to redirect his main attention back to mother, and finally to a feeling of a primitive sense of self, of entity and individual identity, and to steps toward constancy of the libidinal object and of the self.

We wish to emphasize our focus on early childhood. We do not mean to imply, as is sometimes loosely done, that every new separation or step toward a revised or expanded feeling of self at any age is part of the separation-individuation process. That would seem to us to dilute the concept and erroneously to direct it away from that early intrapsychic achievement of a sense of separateness that we see as its core. An old, partially unresolved sense of self-identity and of body boundaries, or old conflicts over separation and separateness, can be reactivated (or can
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remain peripherally or even centrally active) at any and all stages of life; but it is the original infantile process, not the new eliciting events or situations, to which we shall address ourselves.

In terms of its place in the larger body of psychoanalytic theory, we consider our work to bear especially on two main issues: adaptation and object relationship.

Adaptation

It was rather late in the developmental history of psychoanalysis that Hartmann (1939) began to bring a perspective on adaptation into psychoanalytic theory. Perhaps that is because, in the clinical psychoanalysis of adults, so much seems to stem from within the patient—from his long-standing character traits and dominating fantasies. But in work with infants and children, adaptation impresses itself forcibly on the observer. From the beginning the child molds and unfolds in the matrix of the mother-infant dual unit. Whatever adaptations the mother may make to the child, and whether she is sensitive and empathic or not, it is our strong conviction that the child’s fresh and pliable adaptive capacity, and his need for adaptation (in order to gain satisfaction), is far greater than that of the mother, whose personality, with all its patterns of character and defense, is firmly and often rigidly set (Mahler, 1963). The infant takes shape in harmony and counterpoint to the mother’s ways and style—whether she herself provides a healthy or a pathological object for such adaptation. Metapsychologically, the focus of the dynamic point of view—the conflict between impulse and defense—is far less important in the earliest months of life than it will come to be later on, when structuralization of the personality will render intra- and intersystemic conflicts of paramount importance. Tension, traumatic anxiety, biological hunger, ego apparatus, and homeostasis are near-biological concepts that are relevant in the earliest months and are the precursors, respectively, of anxiety with psychic content, signal anxiety, oral or other drives, ego functions, and internal regulatory mechanisms (defense and character traits). The adaptive point of view is most relevant in early infancy—the infant being born into the very crest of the adaptational demands upon him. Fortunately, these demands are met by the infant’s ability, in the pliability and unformedness of his personality, to be shaped by, and to shape himself to, his environment. The child’s facility for conforming to the shape of his environment is already present in early infancy.
Object Relationship

We feel that our contribution has a special place in the psychoanalytic study of the history of object relationship. Early psychoanalytic writings showed that the development of object relationship was dependent upon the drives (Freud, 1905; Abraham, 1921, 1924; Fenichel, 1945). Concepts such as narcissism (primary and secondary), ambivalence, sadomasochism, oral or anal character, and the oedipal triangle relate simultaneously to problems of drive and of object relationship (cf. also Mahler, 1960). Our contribution should be seen as supplemental to this in showing the growth of object relationship from narcissism in parallel with the early life history of the ego, set in the context of concurrent libidinal development. The cognitive-affective achievement of an awareness of separateness as a precondition of true object relationship, the role of the ego apparatuses (for example, motility, memory, perception) and of more complex ego functions (such as reality testing) in fostering such awareness are at the center of our work. We try to show how object relationship develops from infantile symbiotic or primary narcissism and alters parallel with the achievement of separation and individuation, and how, in turn, ego functioning and secondary narcissism grow in the matrix of the narcissistic and, later, the object relationship to mother.

In terms of its relationship to clinical psychopathological phenomena, we consider our work to bear on what Anna Freud (1965b) has called developmental disturbances, which the developmental flux of energy (E. Kris, 1955) may even out during later development, or which, in certain instances, may be precursors of infantile neurosis or middle range pathology. In rare cases, in which the subphase development was severely disordered or unsuccessful, we found, as did others such as Frijling-Schreuder (1969), Kernberg (1967), and G. and R. Blanck (1974), that borderline phenomena or borderline states, and even psychosis, may result.

This volume, in contradistinction to the volume on infantile psychosis (Mahler 1968b), deals predominantly with average development and makes contributions to the understanding of, at most, middle-range pathology.

In the study of infantile psychoses, both in the predominantly autistic (Kanner, 1949) and in the predominantly symbiotic syndromes (Mahler, 1952; cf. also Mahler, Furer, and Settlage, 1959), children were observed who seemed either unable to enter or ever to leave the delusional twilight state of a mother-infant symbiotic common orbit (Mahler and
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Furer, 1960; cf. Mahler, 1968b). These are children who may never show responsivity to, or the capacity of adapting to, stimuli emanating from the mothering person, that is to say, children who cannot utilize a "mothering principle" (Mahler and Furer, 1966). Or, on the other hand, they may show panic at any perception of actual separateness. Even the exercise of autonomous functions (for example, mobility or speech) may be renounced or distorted to preserve the delusion of the unconditionally omnipotent symbiotic unity (cf. Ferenczi, 1913).

In either event, these children are deficient in the capacity to use the mother as a beacon of orientation in the world of reality (Mahler, 1968b). The result is that the infant personality fails to organize itself around the relationship to the mother as an external love object. The ego apparatuses, which usually grow in the matrix of the "ordinary devoted" mothering relationship (see Winnicott, 1962) fail to thrive; or, in Glover’s terms (1956), the ego nuclei do not integrate, but secondarily fall apart. The child with predominantly autistic defenses seems to treat the “mother in the flesh” (Bowlby, Robertson, and Rosenbluth, 1952) as nonexistent; only if his autistic shell is threatened by penetration from human intrusion does he react with rage and/or panic. On the other hand, the child with a predominantly symbiotic organization seems to treat the mother as if she were part of the self, that is, as not separate from the self but rather fused with it (Mahler, 1968b). These latter children are unable to integrate an image of mother as a distinct and whole external object; instead, they maintain the split between the good and the bad part-objects and alternate between wanting to incorporate the good or expel the bad. In consequence of one or the other of these solutions, adaptation to the outside world (most specifically represented in a developing object relationship to mother [or father]) and individuation leading to the child’s unique personality do not unfold evenly from an early stage onward. Thus, essential human characteristics get blunted and distorted in their rudimentary stage or fall apart later on.

The study of the normal symbiotic period, and of normal separation and individuation, helps make the developmental failures of psychotic children more comprehensible.

Some Definitions

We have found, in discussions and presentations over the years, that three of our basic concepts are misunderstood often enough to warrant clarification. First, we use the term separation or separateness to refer to
the *intrapsychic* achievement of a sense of separateness from mother and, through that, from the world at large. (This very sense of separateness is what the psychotic child is unable to achieve.) This sense of separateness gradually leads to clear intrapsychic representations of the self as distinguished from the representations of the object world (Jacobson, 1964). Naturally, in the normal course of developmental events, real physical separations (routine or otherwise) from mother are important contributors to the child’s sense of being a separate person—but it is the sense of being a separate individual, and not the fact of being physically separated from someone, that we will be discussing. (Indeed, in certain aberrant conditions, the physical fact of separation can lead to ever more panic-stricken disavowal of the fact of separateness and to the delusion of symbiotic union.)

Second, we use the term *symbiosis* (Mahler and Furer, 1966), similarly, to refer to an intrapsychic rather than a behavioral condition; it is thus an inferred state. We do not refer, for example, to clinging behavior, but rather to a feature of primitive cognitive-affective life wherein the differentiation between self and mother has not taken place, or where regression to that self-object undifferentiated state (which characterized the symbiotic phase) has occurred. Indeed this does not necessarily require the physical presence of the mother, but it may be based on primitive images of oneness and/or scotomatization or disavowal of contradictory perceptions (see also Mahler, 1960).

Third, Mahler (1958a and b) has earlier referred to infantile autism and symbiotic psychosis as two extreme disturbances of identity. We use the term *identity* to refer to the earliest awareness of a sense of being, of entity—a feeling that includes in part, we believe, a cathexis of the body with libidoal energy. It is not a sense of *who I am* but *that I am*; as such, this is the earliest step in the process of the unfolding of individuality.

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**Symbiotic Psychosis and Normal Separation-Individuation: A Review**

Historically, the senior author’s observations of normal development and of the mother-infant dyad gradually led to the study of pathological phenomena, including child psychosis. Of course, the turn from problems of normal development was never complete. Although the immediate predecessor of the current work was the study of symbiotic psychosis of
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by childhood, we would, at this time, like to show the ways in which this study led naturally to our reconsideration of normal development.

I. The Hypothesis of a Normal Separation-Individuation Phase

In our previous research on the natural history of symbiotic childishness (with Furber), we reached rock bottom when we tried to understand why those child patients were unable to develop beyond a (distorted) symbiotic phase, why they even had to reach back into bizarre a-maintaining mechanisms of a secondary autistic nature (Mahler and Ungerer, 1960; Mahler, 1968b). To understand this, we felt we had to know more about the steps that lead to normal individuation and, in particular, more about coencesthetic, preverbal, and early boundary-forming periences which prevail in the first two years of life.

We began to ask various questions. What was “the ordinary way” of coming a separate individual that these psychotic children could not achieve? What was the “hatching process” like in the normal infant? How did we understand in detail the ways in which the mother—as catalyst, activator, or organizer—contributed to these processes? How did the vast majority of infants manage to achieve the second, seemingly very gradual, psychic birth experience, which, beginning during the symbiotic phase, gives way to the events of the separation-individuation process? And what, on the contrary, were the genetic and structural features that prevented the prepsychotic child from achieving this second birth experience, is hatching from the symbiotic mother-infant “common boundary”?

By 1955 (Mahler and Gidolner), we began to be able to articulate a conception of a normal separation-individuation phase.

Let us, for the sake of brevity, call [this] period . . . the separation-individuation phase of personality development. It is our contention that this separation-individuation phase is a crucial one in regard to the ego and development of object relationships. It is also our contention that the characteristic fear of this period is separation anxiety. This separation anxiety is not synonymous with the fear of annihilation through abandonment. It is anxiety which is less abruptly overwhelming than the anxiety of the previous phase. It is, however, more complex, and later we hope to elaborate this complexity. For we need to study the strong impetus which drives toward separation, coupled with the fear of separation, if we hope to understand the severe psychopathology of childhood which ever so often

1 We know now that the drive is not toward separation per se, but the innate need is the drive toward individuation, which cannot be achieved without autonomous separation.
begins or reveals itself insidiously or acutely from the second part of the second year onward.

This separation-individuation phase is a kind of second birth experience which one of us described as "hatching from the symbiotic mother-child common membrane." This hatching is just as inevitable as is biological birth (Mahler and Golliner, 1955, p. 196).

Furthermore:

For purposes of understanding our points, we propose focusing on the position of defense of the eighteen- to thirty-six-month infant, to defend his own evolving, enjoyable, and jealously guarded self-image from infringement by mother and other important figures. This is a clinically important and conspicuous phenomenon during the separation-individuation phase. As Anna Freud [1951b] has pointed out, at the age of two and three a quasi-normal negativistic phase of the toddler can be observed. It is the accompanying behavioral reaction marking the process of disengagement from the mother-child symbiosis. The less satisfactory or more parasitic the symbiotic phase has been, the more prominent and exaggerated will be this negativistic reaction. The fear of reengulfment threatens a recently and barely started individual differentiation which must be defended. Beyond the fifteen- to eighteen-month mark, the primary stage of unity and identity with mother ceases to be constructive for the evolution of an ego and an object world (Mahler and Golliner, 1955, p. 200).

Today, we would date the onset of separation-individuation much earlier, and we can add considerably to those early formulations.

On the Hypothesis of Anxiety Attendant upon the Awareness of Separateness

It was hypothesized (Mahler, 1952) that in certain toddlers the maturation of locomotor and other autonomous ego functions takes place concomitantly with a lag in emotional readiness to function separately from the mother and produces organic panic, the mental content of which is not readily discernible because the child (still in the preverbal stage) cannot communicate (cf. also Harrison, 1971). This panic never consolidates into an appropriate signal anxiety, but retains the character of acute or insidious organic distress, with the child's concomitant inability to utilize the "other" as external organizer or auxiliary ego. This further arrests structuralization of the ego. The very fact that the more or less built-in maturation proceeds while psychological development does not renders the rudimentary ego extremely brittle. Dedifferentiation and fragmentation may result, and the well-known clinical picture of infantile psychosis then ensues (Mahler, 1960).

See Hartmann, Kris, and Loewenstein (1946) for a discussion of maturation and development.
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This view of intrapsychic events remains, of course, a hypothesis—especially in light of the preverbal nature of the phenomena which it is meant to explain. However, it seems to fit very well the observable clinical data—which are not hypothetical but descriptive—regarding loss of already achieved autonomous functions and a halt to subsequent development. This fragmentation may occur any time from the end of the first and in the course of the second year of life. It may follow a painful and unexpected trauma but often follows upon a seemingly minor event, such as a brief separation or a minor loss. Those observations ultimately led us to study the toned-down “panics” in the normal infant and toddler during separation-individuation and the way in which the mother and child, as a unit and as individuals, coped with them. Our increasing knowledge of the developmental tasks that confront the normal infant and later the normal toddler during the separation-individuation phase, and the trials and difficulties and momentary regressions seen in the behavior of these children, provide the basis for formulating our theoretical framework for understanding benign and transient disturbances, and neurotic ones, as well as the rare occurrences of more severe and lasting reactions shown by symbiotic psychotic children at an early or later age.

On the Hypothesis of the Development of a Sense of Identity

A third hypothesis (Mahler, 1958a and b) states that normal separation-individuation is the first crucial prerequisite for the development and maintenance of the “sense of identity.” Concern with the problem of identity arose from observing a puzzling clinical phenomenon, namely, that the psychotic child never attains a feeling of wholeness, of individual entity, let alone “a sense of human identity.” Autistic and symbiotic infantile psychoses were seen as two extreme disturbances of the sense of “identity” (Mahler, 1958a): it was clear that in those rare conditions something had gone basically astray at the very root, that is, in the very earliest interactions within the mother-infant unit. Briefly, one could summarize the central hypothesis as follows: whereas in primary autism there is a deanimated, frozen wall between the subject and the human object, in symbiotic psychosis there is fusion, melting, and lack of differentiation between the self and the nonself—a complete blurring of boundaries. This hypothesis ultimately led us to the study of the normal formation of separate entity and identity (cf. Mahler, 1960).
On the Catalyzing Function of Normal Mothering

A fourth hypothesis grew from an impressive and characteristic observation that the symbiotic psychotic children were unable to use the mother as a real external object as a basis for developing a stable sense of separateness from, and relatedness to, the world of reality. Work with normal mother-child pairs developed our interest in the modalities of contact between mother and infant at differing stages of the separation-individuation process: in the modalities by which contact was maintained even while symbiosis waned; and in the specific role of the mother in facilitating not only the separateness of the child but also the specific patterning of his individuating personality by complementarity, contrast, identification, or disidentification (Greenson, 1968).

Thus, the central ideas of the work with symbiotic psychotic children grew and transformed smoothly and with continuity into the organizing ideas of the work with normal mother-infant pairs. So too did our more formal efforts at research, as we shall now describe.

In the late 1950s at the Masters Children’s Center in New York City, Furuer and Mahler had started a systematic study of “The Natural History of Symbiotic Child Psychosis.” It was a therapeutic action research in which we used the so-called tripartite design (child, mother, and therapist) first applied by Dr. Paula Elksisch (1953). We attempted to establish what the late Augusta Alpert (1959) would have called a corrective symbiotic relationship between mother and child, with the therapist acting as a bridge between them. Concurrently with the above project, the pilot phase of an observational study of normal mother-child pairs was begun. The latter was a bifocal observational study (that is, with focus on mother and child) of more or less randomly selected mother-infant pairs; in which the mother-child units were compared with one another and with themselves over time. These studies of symbiotic infantile psychosis and of normal mother-infant pairs ran parallel for about 4 years and have continued separately for another 7 years.

The studies of average mother-infant pairs continued on a larger scale and more systematically from 1963 on. The questions to which we

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4 It continued as a follow-up study by Dr. J. B. McDevitt, Anni Bergman, and associates under the auspices of the board of the Masters Children’s Center until December 31, 1974. It is now sponsored by the Margaret S. Mahler Research
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originally addressed ourselves were oriented to two main hypotheses: (1) that there exists a normal and universal intrapsychic separation-individuation process which is preceded by a normal symbiotic phase; and (2) that in certain predisposed but extremely rare cases the maturational spurt of locomotion and other autonomous ego functions, when coupled with a concomitant lag in emotional readiness for functioning separately from mother, gives rise to organismic panic. It is this panic that causes ego fragmentation and thus results in the clinical picture of symbiotic infantile psychosis (Mahler, 1960). We have since learned that there are innumerable degrees and forms of partial failure of the separation-individuation process.

The method of study of the normal separation-individuation process approximated the method used in the study of "The Natural History of Symbiotic Child Psychosis" (the tripartite design) and was characterized by the continual presence of the mother, by a physical setup specifically designed for, and uniquely suited to, observation of the infant's readiness for active experimentation at separation and return, and by the opportunity to observe the infant's reaction to passive separation experiences.

The work on the normal separation-individuation phase has had in turn considerable feedback to the earlier work on symbiotic child psychosis. Not only has our description of the subphases in the development of separation-individuation made it possible for us to anticipate and conceptualize some of the progressive changes seen in the symbiotic psychotic child during the course of his intensive therapy (cf. Bergman, 1971; Furer, 1971; Kupferman, 1971), but our very formulations (given in part above) about the symbiotic psychotic child bear the mark of our later understanding of the separation-individuation process (Mahler and Furer, 1972; Mahler, 1969b, 1971).

A Preliminary Note on Observation and Inference

The question of the kind of inferences that can be drawn from direct observation of the preverbal period is a most controversial one. The problem is complicated by the fact that not only is the infant preverbal, but that the verbal means of the observer-conceptualizer lend themselves
only very poorly to the translation of such material. The problems of psychoanalytic reconstruction here find their parallel in the problem of psychoanalytic construction—the construction of a picture of the inner life of the preverbal child, a task in which coesthetic empathy, we believe, plays a central role. Although we cannot ultimately prove the correctness of such constructions, we nonetheless believe that they can be useful, and we are committed to attempting their formulation.

Analysts have taken positions that vary along a broad spectrum regarding efforts to understand the preverbal period. At one extreme stand those who believe in innate complex oedipal fantasies—those who, like Melanie Klein and her followers, impute to earliest extrauterine human mental life a quasi-phylogenetic memory, an inborn symbolic process (Mahler, 1969; Furer, quoted by Glenn, 1966). At the other end of the spectrum stand those Freudian analysts who look with favor on stringent verbal and reconstructive evidence—organized on the basis of Freud's metapsychological constructs—yet who seem to accord preverbal material little right to serve as the basis for even the most cautious and tentative extension of our main body of hypotheses. They demand that these hypotheses also be supported by reconstruction—that is to say, by clinical and, of course, predominantly verbal material. We believe that there is a broad middle ground among analysts who, with caution, are ready to explore the contributions to theory that can come from inferences regarding the preverbal period (Mahler, 1971).

Generally, in making inferences regarding the preverbal period from clinical psychoanalytic data, analytic theorists are asserting their right always to ask "Why?" "How did it come about?" and to answer by tracing earlier and earlier verbalizable memories, and ultimately to connect these memories to preverbal (but manifestly observable) phenomena of infancy that are isomorphic with the verbalizable clinical phenomena; for example, Freud's (1900, p. 271) comments on dreams of flying and the infant's experience of being swooped up by adults (cf. also Anthony, 1961). That is, we study phenomena of the preverbal period that appear (from the outside) to be the kinds of experience that match up with what patients are only later able to report during analysis, in their verbalizable recollections, that is, free associations, without at that point being aware of their origins.

As in clinical psychoanalysis, our method of working was from beginning to end characterized by "free-floating attention" in order to take in the usual and the expectable, but more particularly the unexpected, surprising, and unusual behaviors and transactional sequences. As the psychoanalytic instrument, especially the car (see Isakower, 1939), functions
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during analysis, so, in psychoanalytic infant observation, the psychoanalytic eye lets itself be led wherever the actual phenomenological sequences lead (cf. A. Freud, 1951b).

But beyond these general modes of psychoanalytically derived observations, the observer of the child in the preverbal period has a special observational opportunity: the opportunity to observe the body in movement. To explain one of our major bases for making inferences from non-verbal behavior, let us briefly refer to the significance of the kinesthetic function and the function of motility in the growing child. As set forth in a number of papers in the 1940s (Mahler, 1944; Mahler, Luke, and Daltroff, 1945; Mahler and Gross, 1945; Mahler, 1949a), the observation of motor, kinesthetic, and gestural (affectomotor) phenomena of the entire body can have great value. It permits one to infer what is going on inside the child; that is to say, the motor phenomena are correlated with intrapsychic events. This is particularly true in the first years of life.

Why is this so? Because the motor and kinesthetic pathways are the principal expressive, defensive, and discharge pathways available to the infant (long before verbal communication takes their place). We can make inferences from them to inner states because they are the end products of inner states. One cannot be certain of the inner state, but, in the effort to infer it, multiple, repeated, and consensually validated observations and inferences offer some safeguard against total error. Furthermore, in the preverbal period, by definition, speech has not yet assumed the major expressive function it will later serve, thus leaving the task of communication predominantly to the mimetic, the motor, and the gestural spheres. And finally, in the very young child, changes like modulation, inhibition, stylization, and defensive distortion of bodily expression have not yet been learned.

The young child's rich and expressive affectomotor (gestural) behavior of his entire body, as well as the back-and-forth movement of approach and appeal behaviors and distancing behaviors between infant and mother—their frequency, amplitude, timing, and intensity—served as important guidelines, furnishing many clues to phenomena we encounter through verbal communication at later ages. We watched the infant's expressive motility as it progressed beyond immediate discharge of instinctual drive, by way of the detour functions provided by the primitive ego's abilities

5 Kestenberg's important work bears witness to how much we may learn from movement patterns of mother and infant (1965a, 1965b, 1967a, and 1971). Unfortunately, it was beyond the scope of our research methodology to create a general guideline by which the motor, especially the expressional or affectomotor, phenomena could be more specifically and teachably used as referents to intrapsychic processes. Hopefully, future researchers will undertake such a project.
to delay, to learn, and to anticipate. We observed and assessed the infant's autonomous and conflict-free motor functioning, with special regard to progressive steps in his separation-individuation process. In short, the observation of motor-gestural behaviors gave us important clues to intrapsychic events, and the substantive formulations to which we shall soon turn have been influenced by such observations (see Homburger, 1923; Mahler, 1944; Mahler, Luke, and Daltroff, 1945).

Instead of entering further into the general controversy regarding observation of preverbal infants and the legitimacy of inferences about the evolution of intrapsychic phenomena, we would like to present the history, methods, and tentative results of one such effort.