The Second Subphase:
Practicing

The Early Practicing Period

The differentiation subphase is overlapped by the practicing period. In the course of processing our data we found it useful to think of the practicing period in two parts: (1) the early practicing phase, ushered in by the infant's earliest ability to move away physically from mother by crawling, paddling, climbing, and righting himself—yet still holding on; and (2) the practicing period proper, phenomenologically characterized by free, upright locomotion.

At least three interrelated, yet discriminable, developments contribute to the child's first steps toward awareness of separateness and toward individuation. These are the rapid body differentiation from the mother; the establishment of a specific bond with her; and the growth and functioning of the autonomous ego apparatuses in close proximity to the mother.

These developments seem to pave the way for the infant's interest in the mother to spill over (much more definitely than hitherto) onto inanimate objects, at first those provided by her—a blanket, a diaper, a toy which she offers, or the bottle with which she parts from him at night. The infant explores these objects visually with his eyes and investigates their taste, texture, and smell with his contact perceptual organs, particularly the mouth and the hands. One or the other of these objects may become a transitional object. Moreover, whatever the sequence in which these functions develop during the differentiation subphase, it is charac-
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teristic of this early practicing stage that, while there is interest and absorption in these activities, interest in the mother definitely seems to take precedence.

The maturation of locomotor and other functions during the early practicing period had the most salutary effect on those children who had an intense but uncomfortable symbiotic relationship. It would seem possible that this was connected at least in part with a simultaneous satisfactory disengagement process in the mothers. Those mothers who had been most anxious because they could not relieve their infant's distress during the symbiotic and differentiation phases were now greatly relieved when their children became less fragile and vulnerable and somewhat more independent. Those mothers and their children had been unable to take undisturbed pleasure in close physical contact, but they were able to enjoy each other now from a somewhat greater distance. These same children became more relaxed and better able to use their mothers to find comfort and safety.

By contrast, another mother-child interaction pattern during the early practicing period was observed in those children who most actively sought physical closeness to mother, children whose mothers had the greatest difficulty in relating to them during the process of active distancing. These mothers liked the closeness of the symbiotic phase but once this phase was over, they would have liked their children to be "grown up" already. Interestingly, these children found it relatively difficult to grow up; they were unable to enjoy the beginning ability to distance and very actively demanded closeness.

Expanding locomotor capacity during the early practicing subphase widens the child's world; not only does he have a more active role in determining closeness and distance to mother, but the modalities that up to now were used to explore the relatively familiar environment suddenly expose him to a wider segment of reality; there is more to see, more to hear, more to touch. How this new world is experienced seems to be subtly related to the mother, who still is the center of the child's universe from which he only gradually moves out into ever-widening circles.

Recently, one of us (A. B.) had the opportunity to observe closely a 7-month-old baby during this period of beginning active locomotor functioning, coinciding with a 2-week separation from his parents, and the subsequent reunion. The baby had been described as particularly easy-going and relaxed. He greeted every new person with curiosity and delight. He thoroughly examined every new person visually and tactilely. During his parents' absence he was left with his grandparents whom he
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knew well. This coincided in time with his rapid change from a babe-in-arms to a separating one. He began to crawl and to pull himself up to a standing position. These new acquisitions of skill, however, brought him pain rather than pleasure. He fell frequently and cried hard after every fall. Nevertheless, he insisted on repeating the painful experience, and this very quiet, easy-going child seemed suddenly quite driven. We see here clearly the powerful momentum of the innate given, the thrust for individuation. He retained his positive relationship to people around him and liked being carried, sung to, and soothed by them. When his mother returned, he at first had a rather severe crisis of reunion, crying unconsolably for quite a while and not allowing her to either feed him or put him to sleep. However, by the next day he was his old smiling and tranquil self. This reaction to brief separations, which is peculiarly specific to mother-infant reunions in the second half of the first year, might be understood metapsychologically in terms of the split that still exists in the internal part-images of the mother. This split is easily activated by such brief absences; the mother of separation must be re-integrated as the "all good" symbiotic mother so as not to hurt or destroy the good object. While the little boy continued practicing his new skills, the driven quality and the frequent falls diminished rapidly. With mother as an anchor, a center to his world, the frustrating part of the new experiences and explorations became once again manageable, and the pleasurable part of exploring predominated. This bit of personal observation fits in well with observations in our study—namely, that early explorations serve the purpose (1) of establishing familiarity with a wider segment of the world and (2) of perceiving, recognizing, and enjoying mother from a greater distance. We found that those children who had the best "distance contact" with their mothers were the ones who would venture farthest away from her. In cases where there was too much conflict about the separating process or too much reluctance to give up closeness, the children showed less pleasure during this period. But simple rules are not applicable in these processes either.

The little boy, for example, whose mother really could accept him only as a symbiotic part of herself and who actively interfered with his attempts to move away, seemed altogether to lose contact with his mother when he was at a distance from her. On the other hand, another child whose mother enjoyed closeness very much was well able to maintain contact with her mother at some distance; in fact she was especially well able during this period to use her mother and was reassured if she could just look at mother or hear her voice. At the same time, this little girl showed rather precociously a general lowering of mood when
her mother was not in the room, that is, when the source for reassurance from a distance was cut off.

We also observed in this early period of practicing that the "would-be fledgling" likes to indulge in his budding relationship with the "other-than-mother" world. For instance, we observed one child at 11 months who, during this phase, had to undergo hospitalization of a week's duration. It seems he was frustrated most by his confinement to a crib, so that he welcomed anyone who took him out of it. When he returned from the hospital, the relationship to his mother had become less exclusive, and he showed no clinging reaction or separation anxiety; now his greatest need in the Center and at home was to be walked, with someone holding his hand. While he continued to prefer that mother do this—with and for him—he would readily accept substitutes.

Margie and Matthew (just 1 week apart in age) had progressed smoothly through the symbiotic phase as well as through the first subphase (differentiation). Both children could "confidently expect" their mothers to relieve their instinctual tensions, to be emotionally available. At 10 months of age, both infants were observed entering the practicing period with great investment of interest in their emerging motor functions and other autonomous functions of the ego. For long periods of time, they happily occupied themselves with exploring the physical environment on their own, showing what Hendrick (1951) has described as pleasure in mastery (Funktionslust of C. Buhler). They returned to their mothers from time to time for emotional refueling. Both mothers accepted the gradual disengagement of their infant-toddlers and fostered their interest in practicing. They were emotionally available, according to the child's needs, and provided the kind of maternal sustenance necessary for optimal unfolding of the autonomous functions of the ego.

Anna's mother, on the other hand, was unable to provide optimal availability, so that her child's capacity for confident expectation was severely taxed. The maturation of Anna's emerging ego functions took place on time, but it was as though her difficult struggle to get the attention she needed from her mother left her with insufficient libidinal energy adequately to cathect the other-than-mother world, her autonomous ego functions, and probably also her own body, with sound (secondary) narcissism. She was therefore unable to devote herself to pleasurable exploration and mastery of her expanding reality. In any event, the child was seen during the first subphase and the early practicing period sitting at her mother's feet, imploring and beseeching her mother with her eyes. The differentiation subphase lasted much
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longer with Anna than with her contemporaries, Margie and Matthew, although her ego functions themselves matured.

Anna's practicing period was characterized by brief, tentative forays on her own, in which she absented herself from her mother's feet only for short periods. The practicing period—the time when toddlers invest so much libido in their own autonomous functions and in their expanding reality testing—was transient and abbreviated in Anna's case and lacked a full-scale emotional development. Its relative absence highlights the central feature of this subphase as we see it: the elated investment in the exercise of the autonomous functions, especially motility, to the near exclusion of apparent interest in the mother at times. It is this, and not the development of motor skills per se, that characterizes the normal practicing subphase.

As the child, through the maturation of his locomotor apparatus, begins to venture farther away from the mother's feet, he is often so absorbed in his own activities that for long periods of time he appears to be oblivious to the mother's presence. However, he returns periodically to the mother, seeming to need her physical proximity from time to time.

The optimal distance in this early practicing subphase would seem to be one that allows the moving, exploring quadruped child freedom and opportunity for exploration at some physical distance from mother. It should be noted, however, that during the entire practicing subphase the mother continues to be needed as a stable point, a "home base" to fulfill the need for refueling through physical contact. We saw 7- to 10-month-olds crawling or rapidly paddling to the mother, righting themselves on her leg, touching her in other ways, or just leaning against her. It is this phenomenon that was termed by Furber "emotional refueling." It is easy to observe how the wilting and fatigued infant "perks up" in the shortest time following such contact; then he quickly goes on with his explorations and once again becomes absorbed in his pleasure in functioning.

The phenomenon of refueling seemed to undergo different stages and had different modalities in each child, modalities which we believe were closely connected with the preferred modality of the mother. One mother, for example, who placed great stakes on independent functioning, was particularly good in maintaining contact with her child by refueling him from a distance. When her children came to her, it was usually for brief periods of physical contact. This mother rarely rose from her chair, where she sat comfortably doing the family mending.
and chatting with the other mothers. She seemed constantly attuned to her small children's needs, even at a distance.

In the case of Jay, a child whose locomotor ability developed very early so that the refueling capacity of mother would have been of special importance, we observed the following: Jay's mother thought that any limit set on Jay would interfere with his budding personality and independence. She watched in terror while Jay got himself into dangerous situations. She could not remain in contact with him by talking to him, as she did not want to interfere with his "independence." Although his mother watched him anxiously from a distance, Jay felt, and in a way actually was, deserted by her, even in her presence. Over and over again he got himself into dangerous situations that he could neither judge nor master; even while he was doing just the ordinary, he was particularly prone to hurting himself. Once he had fallen and was crying, his mother felt free to help him.

Mark was one of those children who had the greatest difficulty establishing workable distance between himself and mother. His mother became ambivalent toward him as soon as Mark ceased to be part of herself, her symbiotic child. At times she seemed to avoid close body contact; at other times she might interrupt Mark in his autonomous activities to pick him up, hug him, and hold him. She did this when she needed it, not when he did. This lack of empathy on mother's part may have been what made it difficult for Mark to function at a distance from her.

During the early practicing subphase, following the initial pull and push away from mother into the outside world, most of the children seemed to go through a brief period of increased separation anxiety. The fact that they were able to move away independently, and yet remain connected with mother—not physically, but through the distance modalities of seeing and hearing—made the successful use of these modalities extraordinarily important for a while. The children did not like to lose sight of mother; they might stare sadly at her empty chair or at the door through which she had left.

The Practicing Subphase Proper

With the spurt in autonomous functions, such as cognition, but especially upright locomotion, the "love affair with the world" (Greenacre, 1957) begins. The toddler takes the greatest step in human individua-
tion. He walks freely with upright posture. Thus, the plane of his vision changes; from an entirely new vantage point he finds unexpected and changing perspectives, pleasures, and frustrations. There is a new visual level that the upright, bipedal position affords.

During these precious 6 to 8 months (from the age of 10 or 12 months to 16 or 18 months), the world is the junior toddler's oyster. Libidinal cathexis shifts substantially into the service of the rapidly growing autonomous ego and its functions, and the child seems intoxicated with his own faculties and with the greatness of his own world. Narcissism is at its peak! The child's first upright independent steps mark the onset of the practicing period par excellence, with substantial widening of his world and of reality testing. Now begins a steadily increasing libidinal investment in practicing motor skills and in exploring the expanding environment, both human and inanimate. The chief characteristic of this practicing period is the child's great narcissistic investment in his own functions, his own body, as well as in the objects and objectives of his expanding "reality." Along with this, we see a relatively great imperviousness to knock and falls and other frustrations, such as a toy being grabbed by another child. Substitute familiar adults within the setup of our nursery are easily accepted (in contrast to what occurs during the next subphase of separation-individuation).

The smoothly separating and individuating toddler finds narcissistic solace for the minimal threats of object loss—which probably each new step of progressive development entails—in his rapidly developing ego functions. The child concentrates on practicing and mastering his own skills and autonomous (independent of other or mother) capacities. He is exhilarated by his own abilities, continually delighted with the discoveries he makes in his expanding world, and quasi-enamored with the world and his own grandeur and omnipotence. We might consider the possibility that the elation of this subphase has to do not only with the exercise of the ego apparatuses, but also with the elated escape from fusion with, from engulfment by, mother. From this point of view we would consider that, just as the infant's peek-a-boo games seem to turn from passive to active, the losing and regaining of the need-gratifying object and then the love object, so too does the toddler's constant running off until he is swooped up by his mother turn from passive to active the fear of being reengulfed by mother. This behavior also reassures him that mother will want to catch him and swoop him up in her arms. We need not assume that such behavior is intended to serve these functions when it first emerges, but only that it produces these effects and can then be intentionally repeated.
The Importance of Free Upright Locomotion: Walking

The importance of walking for the emotional development of the child cannot be overestimated. Walking gives the toddler an enormous increase in reality discovery and testing of the world at his own control and magic mastery. As Greenacre says, it is “also associated with an upsurge of general body exhilaration and sensory responsiveness that accompany the gaining of the upright position and walking” (1968, p. 51).

The boy’s discovery of his penis must be mentioned briefly here, although we will discuss it in more detail in the context of gender identity (see p. 104). The penis usually is discovered a few weeks earlier—an exquisitely sensuous, pleasure-giving organ whose movement is, however, not subject to the ego’s mastery. Having assumed the upright position, the boy may view the penis “from more angles and positions than before, and the increased interest in urination gives it an added stimulation and importance as a body part” (Greenacre, 1968, p. 51).

We found in boys and girls alike that in the very next month following the attainment of active free locomotion, great strides were made toward asserting their individuality. This seems to be the first great step toward identity formation.

The mother’s renunciation of possession of the body of the infant boy and girl alike at this period is mostly quasi-automatic, even though it is sometimes freely verbally expressed as a deplored necessity. Barney’s mother said, “When he runs away from me in the park and I have to carry that heavy little body back home, I tell myself, ‘You better enjoy this—it won’t last long, you won’t be carrying him in your arms much longer.’”

It was E. J. Anthony (1971) who recognized the pertinence of Kierkegaard’s beautifully expressed insights into the human child’s need for his mother’s emotional support at the point when he starts to walk freely. He cites the following passages to illustrate that “the influence of a disturbed and disturbing mother on the individuation of her child is in sharp contrast to that of the ordinary ‘good enough’ mother” (p. 262):

The loving mother teaches her child to walk alone. She is far enough from him so that she cannot actually support him, but she holds out her arms to him. She imitates his movements, and if he totters, she swiftly bends as if to seize him, so that the child might believe that he is not walking alone. . . . And yet, she does more. Her face beckons like a reward, an encouragement. 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
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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, p. 85).

But in the other mother, it is very different:

There is no beckoning encouragement, no blessing at the end of the walk. There is the same wish to teach the child to walk alone, but not as a loving mother does it. For now there is fear that envelops the child. It weighs him down so that he cannot move forward. There is the same wish to lead him to the goal, but the goal becomes suddenly terrifying (Kierkegaard, 1846, p. 85).

Anthony continues in his own words:

The fearfulness, the ambivalence, the unconscious hostility, the need to procrastinate hinder the child from stepping off on his own. With his delicate insight, Kierkegaard crystallizes the moments of development when the toddler feels the pull of separation from his mother and at the same time asserts his individuation. It is a mixed experience of enormous developmental significance, the child demonstrating that he can and cannot do without his mother, and his mother demonstrating that she can and cannot let him walk alone (Anthony, 1971, p. 263).

Speaking about folie à deux situations, Anthony goes on to say: "The psychotic mother fills these moments with apprehension so that the child not only has nowhere to go, but he is afraid to get anywhere."

Quite late in our study, we came to realize that it is the rule rather than the exception that the first unaided steps taken by the infant are in a direction away from the mother or during her absence; this contradicts the popular belief (reflected by Kierkegaard, among other poets) that the first steps are taken toward mother. The significance of this phenomenon bears further study.

Many of the mothers seemed to react to the fact that their infants were moving away by helping them move away, that is, by giving them a gentle or perhaps less gentle push, as the mother bird would encourage the fledgling. Mothers usually became very interested in, but sometimes also critical of, their children's functioning at this point. They began to compare notes, and they showed concern if their child seemed to be behind. Sometimes they would hide their concern in a pointed display of non-concern. In many mothers, concern became especially concentrated in eagerness for their children to walk. Once the child was able to move away some distance, it was as if suddenly the mother began to worry about whether the child would be able to "make it" out there in the world where he would have to fend for himself. Upright free loco-
motion seems to become for many mothers the supreme proof of the fact
that the infant has "made it."

In the course of the practicing period proper, we were impressed by
the tremendously exhilarating, truly dramatic effect that upright loco-
motion had on the general mood of the hitherto also very busy quad-
ruped infant. We became aware of its importance for the achievement of
the "psychological birth experience," the "hatching," through unex-
pected, regularly occurring observations of behavioral sequences, and
by comparing them with Phyllis Greenacre's work (1957) on the child-
hood of the artist. It seemed to us that most practicing toddlers had "a
love affair with the world" as well.

In those cases where the ascendancy of the child's free locomotor
capacity was delayed, the obligatory exhilaration occurred later than
usual. Thus, this phenomenon seemed to be definitely connected with,
and dependent on, the function of free locomotor activity in relation to
the developmental stage of other autonomous partial functions of the
ego.

In summary, walking seems to have great symbolic meaning for both
mother and toddler; 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 mother exudes when she feels that the child is now
able to "make it" out there seems to be an important trigger for the
child's own feeling of 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.

Low-Keyedness

Most children in the practicing subphase proper appeared to have
major periods of exhilaration or at least of relative elation. They were
impervious to knocks and falls and became what we term low-keyed
only when they became aware that mother was absent from the room. At
such times, their gestural and performance motility slowed down, their
interest in their surroundings diminished, and they appeared to be pre-
occupied with inwardly concentrated attention, with what Rubinfine
(1961) called "imaging."

Our inferences about the low-keyed state derive from two recurrent
phenomena: (1) if a person other than mother actively tried to comfort
the child, he lost his emotional balance and burst into tears; and (2)
the child's "toned-down" state visibly terminated at the time of his
reunion with the briefly absent mother, although sometimes not before a

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short crying spell released the accumulated tension. Both these phenomena heightened our awareness that up to that point, the child had been in a special "state of self": this low-keyedness and inferred "imaging\(^2\) of mother is reminiscent of a miniature anacrictic depression. We tend to see in it the child's effort to hold on to a state of mind that Joffe and Sandler (1965) have termed "the ideal state of self," very much akin to that which Kaufman and Rosenblum (1968) have termed "conservation withdrawal" in monkeys.

Some children transiently appeared quite overwhelmed by fear of object loss, so that the "ego-filtered affect of longing\(^*\) was in danger of very abruptly turning into desperate crying. This was the case with Barney during that brief period when his "individuation" had not yet caught up with his maturational spurt of locomotion, serving separation. For a while, he was unable to cope emotionally with the experience of the self-induced separations from mother in space. He was visibly bewildered when he hurt himself and noticed that his mother was not automatically close by.

Our data, in their rich detail, have unmistakably shown regularly occurring combinations of factors from which we conclude that there was a dawning awareness that the symbiotic mothering half of the self was missed. The ensuing behavior of low-keyedness had different shadings in individual children compared with each other and with themselves over time.

We found this longing for the state of well-being and unity or closeness with mother to be peculiarly lacking in children whose symbiotic relationship had been unduly prolonged or had been a disturbed one: for example, in the child who had an exaggeratedly close, parasitic symbiosis with his mother, and in a little girl whose mother-infant relationship was what Robert Fliess (1961) termed asymbiotic. It seemed diminished and irregular in children in whom the symbiotic relationship with mother was marred by the unpredictability and impulsivity of a partly engulfling and partly rejecting mother.

\(^2\) Though different in form, this recapturing of the absent mother in a waking, low-keyed, imaging state has parallels to Lewin's (1946) and Isakower's (1938) discussions of the conjuring up of old "lost worlds" in dreams and the state of falling asleep.
The Third Subphase: Rapprochement

General Considerations

With the acquisition of upright, free locomotion and with the closely following attainment of that stage of cognitive development that Piaget (1936) regards as the beginning of representational intelligence (which will culminate in symbolic play and in speech), the human being has emerged as a separate and autonomous person. These two powerful "organizers" (Spitz, 1965) constitute the midwives of psychological birth. In this final stage of the "hatching" process, the toddler reaches the first level of identity—that of being a separate individual entity (Mahler, 1988).

By the middle of the second year of life, the infant has become a toddler. He now becomes more and more aware, and makes greater and greater use, of his physical separateness. However, side by side with the growth of his cognitive faculties and the increasing differentiation of his emotional life, there is also a noticeable waning of his previous imperviousness to frustration, as well as a diminution of what has been a relative obliviousness to his mother’s presence. Increased separation anxiety can be observed: at first this consists mainly of fear of object loss, which is to be inferred from many of the child’s behaviors. The relative lack of concern about the mother’s presence that was characteristic of the practicing subphase is now replaced by seemingly constant concern with the mother’s whereabouts, as well as by active approach behavior. As the toddler’s awareness of separateness grows—stimulated by his maturationally acquired ability to move away physically from his mother and by his cognitive growth—he seems to have an increased
need, a wish for mother to share with him every one of his new skills and experiences, as well as a great need for the object's love.

As we described in the previous chapter, the need for closeness had been held in abeyance, so to speak, throughout the practicing period. For this reason we have given this subphase the name of rapprochement.

One cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of the emotional availability of the mother during this subphase. "It is the mother's love of the toddler and the acceptance of his ambivalence that enable the toddler to cathect his self-representation with neutralized energy" (Mahler, 1968b). The specific additional importance of the father during this period has also been stressed by Loewald (1951, Greenacre (1966), and Abelín (1971).

The "refueling" type of bodily approach that had characterized the practicing infant is replaced, during the period from 15 to 24 months and beyond, by a deliberate search for, or avoidance of, intimate bodily contact. This is now compounded by interaction of toddler and mother at a much higher level: symbolic language, vocal as well as other types of intercommunication, and play become increasingly prominent (Galenson, 1971).

During the rapprochement subphase, we observed separation reactions in all our children. We ventured the hypothesis that it was among those children whose separation reactions had been characterized by moderate and ego-filtered affects in which the libidinal valence (love instead of aggression) predominated that subsequent development was more likely to be favorable.

**The Shadowing and Darting-Away Patterns**

Two characteristic patterns of the toddler's behavior—the "shadowing" of mother and the darting away from her, with the expectation of being chased and swept into her arms—indicate both his wish for reunion with the love object and his fear of reengulfment by it. One can continually observe in the toddler a "warding-off" pattern directed against impingement upon his recently achieved autonomy. On the other hand, his incipient fear of loss of love represents an element of the conflict on the way to internalization. Some toddlers of rapprochement age already seem to be rather sensitive to disapproval; still, autonomy is defended by the "No," as well as by the increased aggression.

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1 By "shadowing," we mean the child's incessant watching of and following every move of the mother.
and negativism of the anal phase. (One is here reminded of Anna Freud’s classic paper on negativism and emotional surrender, 1951a).

In other words, at the time when the junior toddler of 12 to 15 months has grown into the senior toddler of up to 24 months, a most important emotional turning point has been reached. Now the toddler begins to experience, more or less gradually and more or less keenly, the obstacles that lie in the way of what he evidently anticipated at the height of his “practicing” exhilaration would be his “conquest of the world.” Concomitant with the acquisition of primitive skills and perceptual cognitive faculties, there has been an increasingly clear differentiation, a separation, between the intrapsychic representation of the object and the self-representation. At the very height of mastery, toward the end of the practicing period, it had already begun to dawn on the junior toddler that the world is not his oyster, that he must cope with it more or less “on his own,” very often as a relatively helpless, small, and separate individual, unable to command relief or assistance merely by feeling the need for it, or even by giving voice to that need (Mahler, 1966b).

The quality and measure of the woeing behavior of the toddler toward his mother during this subphase provide important clues to the normality of the individuation process. Fear of losing the love of the object (instead of fear of object loss) becomes increasingly evident.

Incompatibilities and misunderstanding between mother and child can be observed, even in the case of the normal mother and her normal toddler; these are to a great extent rooted in certain contradictions of this subphase. The toddler’s demand for his mother’s constant involvement seems contradictory to the mother: while he is now not as dependent and helpless as he was only a half year before, and seems eager to become less and less so, nevertheless he even more insistently indicates that he expects the mother to share every aspect of his life. During this subphase, some mothers cannot accept the child’s demandingness; others, by contrast, are unable to face the child’s gradual separation—the fact that the child is becoming increasingly independent of, and separate from, her and can no longer be regarded as a part of her (cf. Masterson, 1973; Stoller, 1973).

In this third subphase, that of rapprochement, while individuation proceeds very rapidly and the child exercises it to the limit, he also becomes more and more aware of his separateness and employs all kinds of mechanisms in order to resist and undo his actual separateness from mother. The fact is, however, that no matter how insistently the toddler tries to coerce the mother, she and he can no longer function effectively as a dual unit—that is to say, the child can no longer maintain his
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delusion of parental omnipotence, which he still at times expects will restore the symbiotic status quo.

Verbal communication becomes more and more necessary; gestural coercion on the part of the toddler or mutual preverbal empathy between mother and child will no longer suffice to attain the goal of satisfaction—that of well-being in Joffe and Sandler’s sense (1965). The junior toddler gradually realizes that his love objects (his parents) are separate individuals with their own personal interests. He must gradually and painfully give up the delusion of his own grandeur, often by way of dramatic fights with mother—less so, it seemed to us, with father. This is the crossroads that we term the “rapprochement crisis.”

The Mother’s Attitude in the Toddler’s Rapprochement Period

Depending upon her own adjustment, the mother may react to the child’s demands during this period either with continued emotional availability and playful participation or with a gamut of less desirable attitudes. It is, however, the mother’s continued emotional availability, we have found, that is essential if the child’s autonomous ego is to attain optimal functional capacity, while his reliance on magic omnipotence recedes. If the mother is “quietly available” with a ready supply of object libido, if she shares the toddling adventurer’s exploits, playfully reciprocates, and thus facilitates his salutary attempts at imitation and identification, then internalization of the relationship between mother and toddler is able to progress to the point where, in time, verbal communication takes over, even though vivid gestural behavior—that is, affectomotility—still predominates (Homburger, 1923; Mahler, 1944, 1949a). Predictable emotional involvement on the part of the mother seems to facilitate the rich unfolding of the toddler’s thought processes, reality testing, and coping behavior by the end of the second or the beginning of the third year. On the other hand, as we learned rather late in our study, the emotional growth of the mother in her parenthood, her emotional willingness to let go of the toddler—to give him, as the mother bird does, a gentle push, an encouragement toward independence—is enormously helpful. It may even be a sine qua non of normal (healthy) individuation.

Danger Signals in the Rapprochement Subphase: Increased Separation Anxiety

The toddler’s so-called “shadowing” of the mother (or the opposite “darting away” phenomenon often encountered in the beginning of this
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subphase) seems obligatory to a degree. (Some mothers, by their protracted doting and intrusiveness, rooted in their own anxieties and often in their own symbiotic-parasitic needs, become themselves the “shadowers” of the child.) In normal cases, shadowing by the toddler gives way to some degree of object constancy toward the second half of the third year. However, the less emotionally available the mother is at the time of rapprochement, the more insistently and even desperately does the toddler attempt to woo her. In some cases, this process drains so much of the child’s available developmental energy that, as a result, not enough energy, not enough libido, and not enough constructive (neutralized) aggression are left for the evolution of the many ascending functions of the ego.

The vignettes that follow illustrate not only behavioral patterns peculiar to this subphase, but also behaviors we have come to recognize as danger signals of the rapprochement period.

Barney’s rapprochement needs set in much earlier than usual and manifested themselves with particular poignancy. This could be traced back to his precocious locomotor development during the preceding subphase. He is the same little boy who had a typical, although quite early, “love affair with the world.” During the course of his “practicing,” between 9 and 11 months, he would often fall and hurt himself but would always react with great imperviousness. Gradually, by the end of the eleventh and during the twelfth month, he became quite visibly perplexed to find that his mother was not on hand to rescue him from dangerous situations. From about 11 months on, he began to cry whenever he fell. To the extent that he became cognitively aware of his separateness from mother, his calm acceptance of knocks and falls began to disappear.

During the chronological age of rapprochement, he displayed to an exaggerated degree the opposite of “shadowing.” He would challenge mother by darting away from her, confidently (and correctly) expecting her to run after him and sweep him into her arms, thereby momentarily undoing the physical separateness. The mother made an increasingly frantic response to this dangerous darting behavior, so that for a while she despaired of being able to cope with Barney’s “recklessness.” She would then alternate between restricting Barney and, out of sheer exhaustion, relinquishing her usual alertness to his needs and attunement to his cues. She would either rush to him in every situation, whether or not his expressed need was real, or she would keep away from him when she was really needed. In other words, her immediate availability
became temporarily unpredictable. The disturbance in their relationship during this period was not total, however; it did not lead in Barney either to hostility or to splitting of the object world, nor even to increased ambivalence. There were many positive aspects to Barney’s rapprochement subphase. Frequently he would bring everything within reach to his mother, filling her lap; he would stand quietly near her and do jigsaw puzzles in her lap with her help or look at picture books with her. The relationship between Barney and his mother became more consistently satisfactory with the advent of the fourth subphase (consolidation of individuation and of object constancy), when he became a patient, well-functioning and, within normal limits, more sedentary child.

We viewed Barney’s exaggerated “darting-away” behavior of his rapprochement subphase as a result of precocious maturation of the child’s locomotor function during his practicing subphase. At that time, he had been confronted with the fact of physical separateness from mother before his emotional and intellectual functions had prepared him to cope with it. The developmental track of individuation was lagging behind that of separation. As a result, he could not properly evaluate the potential dangers of his locomotor feats (see Frankl, 1963). A set of overdetermining factors later led to a consolidation of this accident-proneness into a lasting personality trait. The origin of this trait lay demonstrably in a developmental imbalance during the second and third subphase. (The subphases of practicing and rapprochement were rather intermingled in Barney’s case.) One important additional factor contributing to Barney’s “darting-away” was his very early identification with and mirroring of his veritably hero-worshipped father. His children were permitted to watch, to admire and, at times, to participate in their father’s highly risky athletic feats.

A different manifestation of the rapprochement subphase was observed in children whose mothers were unable to adjust to the progressive disengagement and/or the increased demandingness of the growing child. Maternal unavailability made the practicing and exploratory period of such children rather brief and subdued. Never certain of their mother’s availability and thus always preoccupied with it, they found it difficult to invest libido in their surroundings and in their own functioning. After a brief spurt of practicing, they would return to their mother, with ever greater intensity and attempt by all possible means to engage her. From such relatively direct expressions of the need for mother as bringing a book to be read to them or hitting at the books or needlework their mothers were habitually preoccupied with, they turned to more
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desperate measures, such as falling or spilling cookies on the floor and stamping on them in temper tantrums—always with an eye to gaining their mothers' attention, if not involvement.

The very good innate endowment of one of these children helped her in terms of the rapidity of her language development; the usual period of baby talk was almost entirely omitted. This early acquisition of verbal communication may have taken place precisely because her mother could communicate with her better by verbal means than by any other; this mother addressed and even "consulted" her daughter verbally, as if the child were her equal in age.

This child then showed that which we have come to regard as a danger signal in the third subphase. She was overly sensitive in her concern with her mother's whereabouts at all times and tended to "shadow" her whenever her mother moved about or left the room. She displayed marked separation anxiety and could not easily be comforted in her mother's absence. The relationship was at that early stage beset by many precursors of serious developmental conflicts, giving rise to marked ambivalence and the splitting of "good" and "bad" objects and probably also of self-representations. In short, this little girl showed the characteristic disturbances or crises of rapprochement in a highly exaggerated way.

It may be of interest to relate some details of the developmental history of this child in the course of the fateful "second 18-month period of her life."

It had already been observed by us that the play of this little girl had a quality of early reaction-formation. The mother reported that her daughter had shown disgust when she gave her a portion of her older brother's clay to play with, and this had been as early as 18 or 19 months. The child's toilet training started at about 20 months, seemingly without pressure. She was already saying the word "do-do" at that age and at first her mother was quite well attuned to cues from her daughter concerning her toilet needs. She praised her whenever the child produced either urine or feces. From her twentieth month on, she was repeatedly heard saying, "Bye-bye, wee wee," as she pulled the chain to flush the toilet. Soon, however, many observers noted that she was beginning to request bathroom trips whenever she wanted her mother's attention or whenever she wanted to prevent mother from leaving the room for an interview—in any event, more frequently than she could actually have had a bowel or urinary urge.

This little girl was bowel trained by 22 months and at that age was able to go for days without wetting. At the beginning of toilet training (particularly bowel training), we saw that she was willing and able to oblige her mother so that both mother and daughter found in the toileting an emotionally positively charged meeting ground. But within 2 months, toileting had been drawn into the conflictual sphere of this mother-child
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interaction. At around 23 months of age, the toddler used wetting all across the room as a weapon. Her mother was then pregnant and as time went on, her pregnancy caused her to become naturally narcissistically self-absorbed. She had fewer and fewer positive reactions to her daughter's demands to accompany her to the upstairs bathroom at home. In fact, she told us that she asked her then 4-year-old son to substitute for her in taking his sister to the toilet. The boy, we later learned, did not miss the opportunity to display his manly prowess, his penis, to his little sister. Her penis envy thus gained momentum, as did her defiance of mother.

A battle around toilet training ensued between daughter and mother. At around 2 years of age, the child started to use her sphincter control to challenge her mother; severe constipation developed in the wake of her deliberately withholding her feces.

We did not see this little girl for about 3 months (from her twenty-fifth to her twenty-eighth month), during which time a sister was born.

She returned at 29 months of age, following close behind her mother, who was carrying the new baby. The mother looked harried and tired as she entered the room. She complained that her daughter was driving her crazy. The child had indeed been very difficult, whining and demanding, but, in addition, for the past 2 or 3 days had been withholding her feces and had not had a bowel movement. According to her mother, she was in pain most of the time and actually very uncomfortable. The pediatrician, she reported, had assured her that this was a normal occurrence after the birth of a new baby and that she should take it calmly and pay no attention to the toileting at this time. She said with a hopeless gesture, "But I simply can't do it."

We observed this little girl in the toddler's room playing with water. This, however, was not the kind of play that children her age usually enjoy, and it appeared to us to be of a rather "compulsive" nature. She began to scrub a bowl to which flour had stuck and was very determined to scrub it clean, becoming annoyed when she could not do so. She looked up at the observer and said, "Bowl not clean." All this while she seemed most uncomfortable. She obviously needed to defecate and was under continual bowel pressure. Beads of perspiration appeared on her forehead and the color would come and go from her face. Twice she ran to the toilet. She sat on the toilet and urinated; then she got up and became preoccupied with flushing the toilet. She went back to the toddler room and listlessly played with dough, but again, and all during her play, she was in discomfort and kept jiggling and jumping, with the color repeatedly draining from her face. Finally, she jumped up and ran to the toilet, sat down on it, and said to the observer, "Get me a book." Sitting and straining, she looked up at the observer with a rather painful expression on her face and said, "Don't let Mommy in." The observer encouraged her to talk about this some more, and she said, "Mommy hurt me." She then looked at the

2 Here we see the child's utter confusion between externally inflicted pain and pain derived from somatic (inside the body) sources. In her 29-month-old mind the pain seems to come from the "bad" introject; the inner painful sensations are then externalized, attributed to the "bad" mother.
book, at the pictures of baby cats and baby horses. As the observer was showing the pictures of the baby farm animals to her, the child began to look more and more uncomfortable. She looked down at her panties, which had become stained, and asked for clean ones. Finally, in extreme discomfort, she seemed unable to hold back the feces any longer and called out, "Get me my Mommy, get me my Mommy." Her mother came quickly, sat down beside her, and was asked by her daughter to read to her.3

The participant observer watched from the booth and noted that the mother was reading the same book about farm animals that the first observer had read to the child. Pointing to the animals, the toddler was heard to say, "My Poppy has a piggy in his tummy." Her mother looked perplexed and asked, "What?" The child repeated the sentence. The mother seemed distraught, as her daughter was now talking gibberish. She felt the child's forehead to see whether she was feverish, but the toddler smiled, pointed to the book again, and said, "No, it's a baby horse." At this point, with a blissful expression on her face, she defecated. After her bowel movement, she got up from the toilet seat; she seemed relaxed and began playing peek-a-boo with the swinging door, asking the observer to stand behind it.

In this episode, the sequence of behaviors and verbalizations enabled us to draw conclusions, to reconstruct the precursors, as it were, of the development of this little girl's infantile neurosis in statu nascendi. With deficient emotional supplies from mother, neither the libidinal investment in her self-representation nor her excellent development of autonomy had been enough to replace gradually the obligatory early infantile symbiotic omnipotence. The child could not progressively and gradually identify with the "good" mother image; she could not make a soothing, comforting mothering function her own by assimilation (internalization). In spite of her excellent endowment, she was unable to ward off the onslaught of separation anxiety and the collapse of self-esteem. Her anger at mother for not having given her a penis was unmistakable in her verbal material. She coveted those gifts that mother received from father. The child turned in her disappointment to father, and when mother became pregnant, in a perplexed way she obviously equated gifts with baby, with feces, and with a penis. She showed great confusion about the contents of the body; her own pregnancy fantasies were quite evident, but she was unclear as to who had what in his or her belly. She seemed to expect a baby in the belly of her father, as well as in her mother's.

The mother-toddler relationship was such that the child had to defend the good mother against her own destructive rage. This she did by splitting the object world into "good" and "bad" in order to keep good and bad apart. The good was always the absent part-object, never the present object. To clarify this, let us describe another sequence of events and verbalizations in this child's third year. Whenever her mother left, she had temper tantrums and would cling to her beloved and familiar play teacher, but not

3 As soon as the pain gets unbearable, the symbiotic mother is the only one who is invoked to help in the painful delivery of the stool.
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without verbally abusing her while still keeping her arms around her neck. When they read a book together, the child found fault with every picture and every sentence that the playroom teacher offered; she scolded the teacher; everything was the opposite of what the teacher said, and she was “Bad, bad, bad.”

The senior author watched this behavior from the observation booth and ventured quietly into the playroom where she sat at the farthest corner from the little girl and her loved and hated teacher. The toddler immediately caught sight of the “intruder” and angrily ordered her out. She softly interpreted to the child that she understood: the child really wanted no one but her Mommy to come back in through that door and that was why she was very angry. She was also very angry because not Mommy, but the observer, was reading to her. The senior author went on to say that she knew that Mommy would soon come back. With this quasi-interpretation, some libidinal channels seemed to have been tapped; the child put her head on the observer’s shoulder and began to cry softly. Soon, the mother came back. It was most instructive to see, however, that not a flicker of radiance or happiness was noticeable in the daughter at that reunion. Her very first words were, “What did you bring me?” and the whining and discontent started all over again.

For quite a while this little girl did not succeed in attaining a unified object representation or in reconciling the good and bad qualities of the love object. At the same time, the integration of her own self-representation and her self-esteem suffered.

By contrast, what we saw in Barney's case was merely a transient developmental deviation in the form of a rapprochement crisis. In the case described at length above, we observed a symptom-formation, constipation that lasted well into her sixth year, developing on the basis of a rather unsatisfactory mother-child relationship yet activated and, to a great extent, produced by accumulated stress and probably by shock traumata, as well.

Until way beyond the fourth subphase, this little girl’s relationship to her mother remained full of ambivalence. Her school performance was excellent, however. Her social development was good. Our follow-up study will tell us more about the fate of her infantile neurosis.4

A seemingly very harmonious relationship appeared to characterize the mother-child interaction between Matthew and his mother during the entire practicing subphase. The mother was adept at encouraging inde-

4 The follow-up study is being conducted by John B. McDevitt, M.D., with Anni Bergman, Rimmagene Kamaiko, and Laura Salchow, and with the senior author of this book serving as consultant. It is sponsored by the board of the Master’s Children’s Center, and to a limited extent by the M. S. Mahler Research Fund of the Menil Foundation.
pendence and autonomy in her children, while at the same time she seemed libidinally fully available to them; that is, she gauged her response to Matthew with great intuitive understanding of his changing needs. His mother's ability to do this, we believed at that time, would ensure Matthew's smooth progression into the beginnings of the rapprochement subphase. Despite his mother's pregnancy and the arrival of a new sibling when he was 19 months old—a time when the toddler's renewed need for the mother increases in intensity—Matthew seemed to remain self-sufficient. He was able to use other adults as mother substitutes and seemed to have achieved some identification with his mother, as shown by his interest in other babies and in his little brother—an interest in which the aggressive element at first seemed amazingly well controlled. We observed that Matthew also had a good relationship with his father. He seemed able, in sum, to sustain a prolonged interest in the world, even into the rapprochement subphase, while at the same time sharing whatever his mother was ready to share with him. Only toward the end of the rapprochement subphase, when we ordinarily expect rapprochement behavior to give way to libidinal object constancy, did we realize that the task of becoming independent so early and abruptly was apparently too much for Matthew.

During the beginning of the rapprochement subphase, Matthew underwent an emergency hernia operation. (This happened during summer vacation.) Matthew's mother told us that she had to leave Matthew at the hospital, where he was very unhappy. However, he was said to have recovered quickly once he returned home. When he returned to us at the age of 18 months, he showed no signs of undue stress, although we observed that he had adopted a pattern of climbing into precarious positions. Interaction between Matthew and his mother remained pleasurable, even though his mother now had to leave Matthew by himself at our Center, while his older brother started nursery school. The mother was required to function as a "mother attendant" nursery teacher and to take turns with other mothers at the nursery school.

Matthew then started to show some signs of strain. During mother's absence, he needed to be held on the lap of an observer. He tended to become tired more easily, and toward the end of the morning he sometimes regressed to creeping, instead of walking. Only a few months after his baby brother had been born, Matthew showed conspicuous signs of disturbance by his practice of hurting himself almost habitually and by a marked increase in his readiness to cry. He frequently climbed into his mother's lap, which she would allow when the baby was not there. When mother was occupied with the baby, however, Matthew
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turned to other adults. He paid very little attention to the baby. While apparently continuing to be cheerful, there were subtle signs that all was not as well as it might be. As time went on, Matthew became restless and hyperactive, and he fell even more than before. He showed great interest in his mirror image, making faces at himself. (The significance of this last-mentioned behavior is difficult to interpret.)

Matthew’s mother needed to believe that Matthew was becoming more mature and therefore increased her expectation of his becoming more and more independent! In reality, Matthew’s seemingly greater maturity—his mirroring identification with his older siblings, especially those of school age—may have also been a kind of sad resignation with depression; this would have been too painful for the mother to recognize. Another form of attempted adaptation was identification with the rival baby. Matthew showed signs of wanting to be a baby himself; like his baby brother, for instance, he would climb into the playpen. This his mother, however, could not tolerate. Matthew reciprocated by becoming less responsive to his mother’s verbal instructions and began to show some diffuse aggressive activity, such as throwing things or running about aimlessly. Earlier, Matthew had been described as a happy, radiant child. At this time, Matthew still continued to smile, but there was a unanimous impression among the observers that his smile lacked its former radiance. It had become strained, more a grimace than a smile, as though it were in compliance with his mother’s expectations of him, as well as an appeal to the world at large. Also, Matthew did not react, or probably did not permit himself to react, much to his mother’s absences from the room.

At the age of 2, Matthew was sent by his mother to the toddler room without her. In fact, the demands of the rest of the family upon the mother were so great that the baby, who would have been the fourth child in the family to be observed in our study, could not be brought to us regularly by the mother.

The toddler room teacher observed Matthew masturbating in an auto-aggressive way, very often by clutching his penis and pulling up his legs—that is to say, by regressing to autoerotic activity. The playroom observer noted that Matthew’s facial expressions did not change appropriately with changes in his situations and that he was tending to become reckless and hyperactive. Thus, it seems that the accumulation of traumata (shock and stress traumata in Kris’s sense; cf. also Khan,

* Cf. McDevitt’s studies on the mirror image (unpublished).
* Not in the quiet, serene way we have seen in other boys.
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1963) was too much for Matthew. He emerged from the rapprochement subphase with a tendency to find satisfaction in autoerotic and autoaggressive activities, as well as in hyperactivity, and with a kind of blandness in his affective life—all of which on superficial observation seemed to be in compliance with mother's wishes that he be independent and remain her happy little "big" boy.

In Henry's case, his mother's second pregnancy, as well as his weaning, occurred at the height of that stage at which the early practicing subphase overlaps the differentiation subphase. (His mother joined our project when Henry was a little over 9 months old.) At this time, he crawled to her frequently and clamored to be taken onto her lap: he seemed to need contact and steady "refueling" from her. This occurred when he began carefully practicing the preliminaries of upright locomotion short of walking. Henry's wooing approach behavior thus occurred prematurely, before the upright locomotor practicing period. It was closely tied to his mother's conspicuous emotional aloofness during her pregnancy; in this respect, Henry's case is reminiscent of the case of the little girl presented above. At 11 to 13 months, Henry was carrying out motor feats that surpassed those of the other children in his age group and which were admired by everyone, yet merely taken for granted by his mother. After he had finally mastered active upright locomotion by the age of 14 months, his mother ceased altogether to respond to his renewed active wooing. Thereupon Henry proceeded to adopt more and more exaggerated voiceless devices to appeal to her. During the hot summer months, he would perspiringly carry heavy toys in both arms over to his mother, as quasi-offerings, but to no avail. The exaggerated character and repetitiveness of this approach over a period of weeks was obviously symptomatic and overdetermined. In it were incorporated elements of the mother's practice, from the beginning, of substituting toys for her own self. It contained somatopsychic elements of identification with the mother's far advanced gravidity; it also contained elements of compliance with his mother's conscious and unconscious wish that her son be big and strong (he was rather small). Finally, it contained elements of primitive preliminaries of defense, such as identification (mirroring) and projection. All these devices having failed, we saw very early, after a period of severe depression (Mahler, 1961), how this young child gradually resorted to the mechanism of masochistic surrender.

\footnote{In the cramped quarters where the M.'s lived, primal scene exposure seemed to be unavoidable!}
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We have already referred to the phenomenon of "shadowing." In excessive amounts, it is, we believe, one of the danger signals of this subphase, one sign that the child's awareness of separateness is causing great strain: the child attempts to hold on to mother by attempting to respond to every move and every mood, as well as by making insistent demands upon her. In Tommy, the outstanding feature of the individuation process was this phenomenon of "shadowing"—his refusal to let his mother out of his sight. He followed her every move from out of the corner of his eye; he literally dashed in her direction as soon as she walked toward the door, or whenever she made a move. His widely ranging vocal communications were directed exclusively to his mother and gradually developed into predominantly petulant and poorly enunciated verbal communications to her. He was one of those toddlers (like Barney) in whom locomotion had already brought about an awareness of the self as separate from the mother before he was emotionally ready to cope with this awareness. This caused Tommy to throw temper tantrums which lasted much longer than the usual few minutes.

In general, the potential danger signals during this phase include greater than average separation anxiety; more than average shadowing of the mother or continual, impulse-driven "darting away" from the mother, with the aim of provoking her to give chase; and finally, excessive sleep disturbances. (Transient sleep disturbances are a normal characteristic of the second year of life.)

Culling from our data and their processing, we found that we could subdivide rapprochement into three periods: (1) beginning rapprochement; (2) the rapprochement crisis; and (3) individual solutions of this crisis, resulting in patternings and personality characteristics with which the child enters into the fourth subphase of separation-individuation, the consolidation of individuation.

We arrived at these subdivisions through comparing month by month the nine most thoroughly studied children—the last group in our study—with regard to the development of their object relations, their moods, their psychosexual and aggressive trends, as well as their cognitive development. As we describe rapprochement in more detail, we shall be drawing on examples from the detailed studies of these children.
Beginning Rapprochement

At around 15 months, we noticed an important change in the quality of the child's relationship to his mother. During the practicing period as described, mother was the "home base" to which the child returned often in times of need—need for food, need for comforting, or need for "refueling" when tired or bored. But during this period mother did not seem to have been recognized as a separate person in her own right. Somewhere around 15 months, mother was no longer just "home base"; she seemed to be turning into a person with whom the toddler wished to share his ever-widening discoveries of the world. The most important behavioral sign of this new relating was the toddler's continual bringing of things to mother, filling her lap with objects that he had found in his expanding world. They all were interesting to him, but the main emotional investment lay in the child's need to share them with her (see Barney, Henry, and others, pp. 80–88). At the same time, the toddler indicated to mother by words, sounds, or gestures that he wished her to be interested in his "findings" and to participate with him in enjoying them.

Along with the beginning awareness of separateness came the child's realization that mother's wishes seemed to be by no means always identical with his own—or contrariwise, that his own wishes did not always coincide with mother's. This realization greatly challenged the feeling of grandeur and omnipotence of the practicing period, when the little fellow had felt "on top of the world" (Mahler, 1966b). What a blow to the hitherto fully believed omnipotence; what a disturbance to the bliss of dual unity!

Parallel or concomitant with his sensing that mother was a person "out there in the world" with whom he wanted to share his pleasures, we noted that the toddler's elated preoccupation with locomotion and exploration per se was beginning to wane. The source of the child's greatest pleasure shifted from independent locomotion and exploration of the expanding inanimate world to social interaction. Peekaboo games (Kleeman, 1967), as well as games of imitation, became favorite pastimes. Recognition of mother as a separate person in the large world went parallel with awareness of other children's separate existence, their being similar yet different from one's own self. This was evidenced by the fact that children now showed a greater desire to have or to do what another child had or did—that is, a desire for mirroring, for imitating, for identifying to an extent with the other child. They wanted
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the toys or the cup of juice and cookie that were handed to the other child. Along with this important development there appeared specific goal-directed anger, aggression if the desired aim definitely could not be attained. We are not, of course, losing sight of the fact that these developments take place in the midst of the anal phase, with its characteristics of anal acquisitiveness, jealousy, and envy.

The discovery of the anatomical sexual difference during this period will be discussed in a later part of this chapter (see p. 104); suffice it to say here that for girls, the penis seems to become the prototype of a wished for, but unattainable, "possession" of other children. For boys and girls alike, this discovery enhanced a more distinct awareness in the child of his own body and its relation to other persons' bodies. Increasingly, the toddler seemed to experience his body per se as his own possession. No longer did he like it to be "handled." Most noticeably, he resisted being held or held in a passive position while being dressed or diapered. He did not even seem to like to be hugged and kissed, unless he was ready for it. We felt that this claim to the body's autonomy was more accentuated in boys.

Social Expansion and the Importance of the Father Relationship

The child's desire for expanded autonomy not only found expression in negativism toward mother and others, but also led to an active extension of the mother-child world: primarily, to include father. Father, as a love object, from very early on belongs to an entirely different category of love objects from mother. Although he is not fully outside the symbiotic union, neither is he ever fully part of it. The infant, in addition, probably very early perceives a special relationship of the father to the mother, the significance of which, during the separation-individuation phase and in the later preoedipal phase, we are barely beginning to understand (Abelin, 1971; Greenacre, 1966; Mahler, 1967a).

But the rapprochement child develops relationships with others in the environment besides father and mother. In the children in our study we could observe that from about 16-17 months on, they liked to spend increasingly long periods away from their mothers in the toddler room, and that boys and girls alike began to seek out observers, every so often the male observers, and to form quite close attachments to them.4

4This early preference for male observers, when it occurred, seemed to have a gender specific style, which, however, we are not ready to interpret or even analyze with any degree of certainty.
Separation Reactions in the Early Rapprochement Subphase, with Clinical Illustrations

During the early rapprochement subphase, we found a most interesting change in the children's reactions to mother's being in or out of the room. They were all now increasingly aware of mother's absence and wanted to know where mother was (thereby augmenting significantly their own spatial orientation!). On the other hand, however, they were also increasingly able to remain absorbed in their own pursuits and often did not want to be interrupted. They would want to "go see" mother, but not with the intention of staying with her; rather, they would pass by her, veer away, and then return to their own occupations. This veering away seemed to be more prominent in boys than in girls. However, when mother herself was too far away for too long a time, we found different reactions from those of the previous subphases. We have already described the "low-keyedness" that is characteristic of the differentiation and the practicing subphases, as a reaction to mother's absence from the room. Now, during early rapprochement, we seemed to find a different kind of behavior: the mother's absence brought on increased activity and restlessness. It would seem that the equivalent of low-keyedness, at the time of the child's realization of his separateness, is the affect or emotion of sadness (cf. Mahler, 1961). Sadness, however, seems to require a great amount of ego strength to bear (cf. Zetzel, 1949, 1965), an investment that the child at this age seemed unable to muster; hyperactivity or restlessness might thus be seen here as an early defensive activity against awareness of the painful affect of sadness.

As the rapprochement subphase progressed, the children found more active ways of coping with mother's absences: they related to substitute adults, and they engaged in symbolic play (see Galenson 1971). They often invented forms of play that helped them to master the fact of the disappearance and reappearance of things; or their play tended to consist of social interaction. Many forms of their play revealed early identification with mother or father—for example, in the way they held on to dolls and teddy bears. Beginning internalization of the object representation appeared to be taking place. Ball play, for example, seemed to lend itself particularly well both to social interaction and to feelings and fantasies of parting with and reuniting an object (see Freud, 1920). Donna would throw away the ball and then take special pleasure in finding it again; another little girl would lose the ball and then need the observers to retrieve it for her; Wendy, who liked exclusive one-to-
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One relationships with adults, would use the ball to engage an adult observer in play.

For most children, the period of early rapprochement culminated at the age of about 17 or 18 months, in what looked like a temporary consolidation and acceptance of separateness. This went along with great pleasure in sharing possessions and activities with mother or father, as well as increasingly with the now expanding social world that included not only adults but also other children—toddlers their own age, older children, and babies. During the practicing period, the word “bye-bye” had been of great importance; the most important word of this period of early rapprochement was “hi.”

During this 17–18 month age level that served consolidation, we did see, however, important harbingers of the impending struggle with the love object, adumbrated by many behaviors. The most striking of these was the occurrence of temper tantrums in practically all the children. We saw many signs of greater vulnerability, of impotent rage, and of helplessness. There was a recurrence in many children of stranger reactions. As in the earlier stranger reactions (at 7 to 9 months; see pp. 56–58) we could observe a mixture of anxiety, interest, and curiosity. Now there was often a self-conscious turning away from the stranger, as if the stranger at this point constituted a threat to the already toppling delusion or illusion of exclusive union with mother. There seemed to be a threat involved in the very fact that certain people other than mother began to become genuinely important in the child’s life (loyalty conflict), as if that were incompatible with the hitherto exclusive, very special relationship with mother (cause and consequence seemed to be confused, and projective or externalization mechanisms seemed to prevail).

In our sample of the most systematically observed children, there were several in whom the period of the first consolidation of separateness either did not seem to have occurred in the ordinary way or else had been cut short. In each case, this seemed to be connected with difficulties during the earlier subphases of the mother-child relationship. Let us illustrate this with our observations on two of these children.

During the first part of the 17–18 month period, Mark continued to be interested in an increasing variety of people and activities. He was attracted by the toddler room; he was able to leave mother and return to her and generally had a happy relationship with his mother. At about the middle of the 17–18 month period, however, Mark started to become very de-

*Some explanation of the psychodynamics of temper tantrums was offered by the senior author in her “tie” studies (Mahler and Luke, 1946; Mahler, 1949a).
manding. He constantly needed the mother's attention, but he did not seem
to be at all certain what he really wanted from her. He began to show a
pattern of rapid alternation of extreme approach behavior and excessive
aggression or withdrawal from his mother. This "ambitendancy" spread to
other people and other goals as well. For example, Mark would typically
insist on being picked up by his mother but as soon as he was in her arms
he would angrily demand to be let down. He clung to his mother anxiously,
as if he were afraid that she would leave him or would withdraw her love
forever. All this was due, we felt, to an unusual perplexity in both mother
and child concerning the reading of each other's cues—a miscarriage of
"mutual cueing." (This calls to mind the mother's perplexity about cues
from her older child, described by Mahler and Furer, 1963a, pp. 4-5; cf.
also Spitz, 1964, the "derailment of the dialogue.")

Harriet also showed somewhat deviant behavior during this period:
she did not cling to her mother, but rather ignored her; in fact, she paid
much less attention to her during her eighteenth month than during the
previous month. She took little note when her mother left or returned. She
did not show the great pleasure in social give-and-take that was seen in
other children; she seemed, during this month, to have withdrawn into
herself. This little girl was described as being self-contented, but generally
not interested in people. Typically, she would play with toys, dolls, and
teddy bears and babble to herself, giving us the feeling that she was in-
volved in a world of her own, in her own fantasy life. She seemed to
satisfy her need for physical closeness by behavior that was quite peculiar
to her: by using inanimate objects. Also, when in distress, she would lie
flat against the surface of the floor, or on the mattress on the floor, or
would squeeze herself into a narrow space; it was as if she wanted to be
enclosed (held together) in this way, which would afford her some of the
sense of coherence and security that she was missing in the relationship
with her mother.

On Structuralization of the Ego and the Establishment
of a Cohesive Self

We should emphasize that the child's first awareness of separateness
had brought with it pleasurable discoveries of beginning autonomy and
social interaction, expressed in a number of the important words and
gestural communications of that period. One of these was finding that
one could ask to have one's wish fulfilled, through employing the words
and gestures of demand or need. For example, "cookie" was an impor-
tant early word for all children. With the discovery that one could call
mother and command her attention, the words, "Look, Mommy," also
became used very often. Further, there was the discovery that one could
find mother and others, and exclaim one's delight; this was denoted by
the now typically used word, "hi!" Also important at this point was
the discovery that one was praised and admired if one performed motor
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and other feats of skill. It seemed important to the rapprochement toddler that he could provide pleasure to mother; this he expressed, from the very beginning of this period, by bringing toys to her.

The more painful aspects of separateness had barely begun to dawn on the toddler during these months, except in those children in whom various circumstances, in part intrinsic and in part experiential, promoted premature separation crises.

The Rapprochement Crisis:
18–20 to 24 Months and Beyond

Grandeur and Fear of Loss of Love

Around 18 months our toddlers seemed quite eager to exercise their rapidly growing autonomy to the hilt. Increasingly, they chose not to be reminded that at times they could not manage on their own. Conflicts ensued that seemed to hinge upon the desire to be separate, grand, and omnipotent, on the one hand, and to have mother magically fulfill their wishes, without their having to recognize that help was actually coming from the outside, on the other. In more cases than not, the prevalent mood changed to that of general dissatisfaction, insatiability, a proneness to rapid swings of mood and to temper tantrums. The period was thus characterized by the rapidly alternating desire to push mother away and to cling to her—a behavioral sequence that the word "ambitendency" describes most accurately. But already at that age there was often a simultaneous desire in both directions, that is, the characteristic ambivalence of children in the middle of the rapprochement subphase.

It was characteristic of children at this age to use mother as an extension of the self—a process in which they somehow denied the painful awareness of separateness. Typical behavior of this kind was, for example, pulling mother’s hand and using it as a tool to get a desired object or expecting that mother, summoned by some magical gesture alone, rather than with words, would guess and fulfill the toddler’s momentary wish. An unexpected and strange phenomenon appeared, seemingly a forerunner of the projection of one’s negative feelings: this was the child’s sudden anxiety that mother had left, on occasions when she had not even risen from her chair! There occurred, more or less frequently, moments of a strange, seeming “nonrecognition” of mother, after a brief absence on her part.

How were we to understand this tendency suddenly to “lose” the
feeling of the presence of mother, at a time when, with increased separateness, she had become a person in the outside world? Was it regression in the face of too much strain, caused by the need to recognize that one had to function separately? Or was it caused by the conflict between the wish to manage by one’s own self and the wish to partake in mother’s omnipotence? The desire to function by one’s own self may be particularly threatening to the child at the very point in development when one’s own feelings and wishes and those of mother are still poorly differentiated. The wish to be autonomous and separate from mother, to leave her, might also mean emotionally that the mother would wish to leave him (introjective-projective period of Ferenczi, 1913). Conceptualization of these rapprochement phenomena was made even more complicated and puzzling by the fact that this blurred identity of mother in the outside world coincided, quite frequently, with a tendency on the mother’s part to react adversely to her separating, individuating toddler. The mother’s reaction at that time was quite often tinged with feelings of annoyance at the toddler’s insistence on his autonomy, at his wanting, for example, to tie his shoelaces without help, and so on. “You think you can manage on your own? All right, I can leave you to your own devices, see how you fare.” Or, “A moment ago, you did not want to be with me. Well, now I don’t want to be with you” (see Mahler, Pine, and Bergman, 1970, pp. 257–274).

As we mentioned earlier, we found in many toddlers a powerful resurgence of stranger reaction. This was every so often referred to by the observers as “shyness.” The renewed stranger reaction occurred especially toward people in the outside world who at an earlier point in the infant’s life had been regarded as special friends. We quote only one of the typical behaviors from the records of our observations:

Frankie’s relationship to adults other than mother expressed itself in the following behaviors. He would sometimes approach them in a friendly way from a distance; however, as soon as they would approach him, he would flee to his mother. Once he rolled a ball to an observer who used to be his best friend; when she rolled it back to him, however, he ran away to his mother.

Indecision was a typical behavior of this period. Several of the children at this time would stand for many minutes on the threshold of the toddler room, unable to decide whether or not to join the activities inside. Standing on the threshold would seem to be the perfect symbolization of conflicting wishes—the wish to enter the toddler world away from mother and the pull to remain with mother in the infant room. (This is somewhat reminiscent of the doubting and indecision of obsessive-compulsive neurosis.)
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There were some children who could practice their growing autonomy and wish for independence with relatively little apparent conflict. Again an example from our records:

Linda had had an unusually trusting relationship to her mother, and her mother had enjoyed Linda all along. But Linda now protested against being carried upstairs by her mother, something which up to then had delighted her. She now seemed to need less physical contact with mother. She wanted to explore "the world" away from mother and became increasingly involved in social interaction with others. When her mother was out of the room, Linda was able to play for long periods independently. Even if she seemed to miss her mother, she could become so involved in her activities that she would look for her only for a moment and then go on with what she had been doing.

In some cases, on the other hand, where the mother was either dissatisfied with her child, terribly anxious about him, or aloof, normal rapprochement patterns became greatly exaggerated. In the two contrasting behaviors of approach and distancing, this ambivalence conflict had been acted out in either extreme shadowing of mother or darting away from her (in the late practicing and in the early rapprochement subphase), or else it had caused excessive wooing of mother, alternating with extreme negativism.

Widening of the Emotional Range and the Beginning of Empathy

During this period, the range of affects experienced by the toddler seemed to widen and become quite differentiated. In describing the preceding period, we talked about the hyperactivity and restlessness that seemed to be a defense against sadness over loss of the previous symbiotic unity. Now, the need to deal with the affects of sadness and anger, disappointment in mother, or the realization of one's own limited abilities and relative helplessness could be traced in many other different kinds of behaviors. During this period, for example, observations made on many children stated for the first time that they were fighting their tears, attempting to suppress their need to cry.

Teddy's reactions to another child's crying, for example, were interesting to observe. He just could not bear to hear another child cry. This seemed somehow to stimulate his aggressive defensiveness; unprovoked, he would attack other children! His undeniable awareness of separateness and vulnerability seemed, however, to have given rise to a new

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10 Whether this affective reaction could or should be regarded at such an early age as identification with the aggressor or as projective identification we do not know.
capacity for empathy, which was expressed in positive ways as well. Teddy, who often showed this aggressive reaction when he heard another child cry, at other times reacted quite sympathetically to the moods of the other children. For example, he would bring his own bottle to Mark when Mark was crying, or else he would approach Harriet with great sympathy and interest on a day when she was in an obviously low mood.

We saw, at this age, many signs of identification with the attitudes of others, especially those of mother or father. This was on a higher level of real ego identification—not the introjection or mirroring characteristic of earlier periods, such as the period of differentiation, when we saw children take over patterns of their mother's caring for them in their own first steps toward individuation and separateness (Part II, Chapter 3, pp. 50–51). For example, Frankie developed at the rapprochement age a loud and demanding manner, as well as a tendency toward dramatization that was quite reminiscent of his mother's attitude. Another little boy was not only demanding, but also unwilling to share. He was intent on coercing mother into fulfilling his wishes. He was particularly unwilling to relinquish the omnipotence of the symbiotic dual unity; this was reminiscent of his mother's tendency toward a symbiotic-appersonating relationship (Sperling, 1944), which she had pursued way beyond the symbiotic stage with her much older daughter.

Another form of identification as a defense was demonstrated by children who had had to cope with the birth of a sibling during the early rapprochement period, and who now identified with their mother's care and concern for the new baby.

Partial internalization seemed to be one way of coping with, or defending against, the increasing vulnerability that the toddler felt as his awareness of separateness increased. He painfully realized not only that he was at times alone and helpless but also that even his mother could not always restore his sense of well-being, that indeed her interests were separate and distinct from his own, and that the two by no means always coincided. All these feelings were of course aggravated if the birth of a sibling intruded into the hitherto exclusive relationship with mother.

Separation Reactions during the Rapprochement Crisis
(18 to 21 Months)

During the period of the most acute rapprochement crises, all the children were aware of, and at times highly sensitive to, mother's whereabouts when she was absent from the room. On the cognitive side, the ability to realize that mother could be elsewhere and could be found
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(cf. Piaget's "object permanence") was now well established. This knowledge did suffice at times to reassure the toddler when he experienced the emotion of missing his mother. In general, however, the toddler at this age did not like to be passively "left behind." Difficulties with the process of leave-taking itself began to develop, expressed in the reaction of clinging to mother. Usually these reactions were accompanied by a depressive mood and an initial inability, brief or prolonged, to become involved in play.

Often, during these times of intense emotional anguish after being left, the toddler would attach himself closely to one of the observers, wanting to sit on the observer's lap, and occasionally even regressing into sleepy drowsiness. At such times, the observer was clearly neither another love object nor merely some person in the other-than-mother world, but rather a kind of symbiotic mother substitute, an extension of the self. Yet splitting the object world had also begun (see Kernberg, 1967). The "observers" lent themselves particularly well to the child's exercise of this defense, becoming the target of his impotent rage reactions, in order to protect the good mother image from his destructive anger. This was observable particularly in those children who had had a less than optimal relationship with their mothers during the earlier subphases.

Splitting mechanisms (see pp. 82–84; 117) at this time could take various forms. If the observer in mother's absence became the "bad mother," she could not do anything right, and a mood of general crankiness prevailed. The "good mother" was longed for, yet she seemed to exist in fantasy only. When the actual mother returned, she might be greeted with "What did you bring me?" as well as with a spectrum of angry, disappointed, and other negative reactions. Or else the observer, as the substitute mother, might become temporarily the "good symbiotic mother," and the toddler might passively sit on her lap and eat cookies, like a small infant. Yet when the actual mother returns, there might be the impulse to get to her as fast as possible, and at the same time an impulse to avoid her, as if to ward off further disappointment. The toddler might ignore mother upon her return, or go toward her and then veer away, thereafter rejecting mother's overtures. In the latter instances, it would seem that the absent mother had become the "bad" mother and thus was to be avoided. Another variation was that the mother substitute was treated ambivalently as both the "good" and the "bad" mother, like the ambivalently loved mother herself when she was present.

We saw struggles of this kind in many different degrees and variations. One could see with special clarity during this period the roots of
many uniquely human problems and dilemmas—problems that sometimes are never completely resolved during the entire life cycle.

**Transitional Phenomena**

We saw other mechanisms as well for coping with separation during the rapprochement crisis. One little girl who had entered this part of the rapprochement phase later than the other children—probably because her mother managed to fulfill her needs and remain “omnipotent” for such a long time, instead of giving her the gentle push that is needed by the fledgling—transferred the demand for exclusive possession of mother to mother’s chair. When mother left the room, she would at once sit in mother’s chair. If the child did get up from the chair, she would not permit anyone else to sit in it. The word “mine” became important to her at this time; she would not share mother with anyone and could bear mother’s absence only if she maintained exclusive possession of mother’s chair. The chair became for her a kind of organ-object used as a bridge to mother in Kestenberg’s sense (1971).

Other children showed a variety of transitional phenomena that were less clearly related to their mothers. For example, they would consume large quantities of pretzels and cookies, or else insist on carrying their bottles about. Some children could not stand remaining in the playroom without their mothers, but would wander into the room where mothers and children hung up their coats when they arrived at the Center. We became used to regarding the coat room as a “transitional room,” because it was located between the infant room—the world of mother and infant—and the toddler room—the world of toddler autonomy.

This dressing room, in addition, had a floor-to-ceiling window to the outside world; furthermore, as the place where the coats were hung, it represented the room of transition between home and Center.

The reading of storybooks became another transitional activity of particular importance; many toddlers liked to be read to while mother was out of the room. Storybooks would seem to be of a transitional nature, since they satisfied the need for distancing and for exploring the wider world (by way of symbolization and fantasy); on the other hand, the situation served the purpose of closeness, of getting near the person who was reading.

While the toddlers during this period needed to know where mother was, and did not in general like being passively left (as they reacted to the leave-taking by mother), they became increasingly able to leave mother actively and on their own. The toddler room itself took on greater importance: it seemed to become for many toddlers a ref...
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from the conflictual relationship with mother. The children tended to be content there; they became absorbed in play with toys and materials, and with each other. They began to form a relationship with their play teacher, who was “optimally available” to all of them. This relationship was not to a mother substitute, but to a new adult, who could be helpful in promoting the child’s interests in the outside world. In addition, this new adult could offer alternative satisfactions and thus channelize discontent and promote incipient sublimations.

Individual Patterning of Rapprochement: The Optimal Distance

By the age of 21 months, a general diminishing of the rapprochement struggle could be observed. The clamoring for omnipotent control, the extreme periods of separation anxiety, the alternation of demands for closeness and for autonomy—all these subsided, at least for a while, as each child once again seemed to find the optimal distance from mother, the distance at which he could function best. In our setting, this optimal distance was usually represented by the nearby, yet separate, toddler room, which offered stimulation, the opportunity to exercise autonomy, and growing pleasure in social interaction.

The growing individuation that seemed to make possible this ability to function at a greater distance, and without mother’s physical presence, are as follows: (1) The development of language, in terms of naming objects and expressing desires with specific words. The ability to name objects (Katan, 1961) seems to have provided the toddler with a greater sense of ability to control his environment. Use of the personal pronoun “I” also often appeared at this time, as well as the ability to recognize and name familiar people and oneself in photographs; (2) the internalization process, which could be inferred both from acts of identification with the “good,” providing mother and father, and from the internalization of rules and demands (beginnings of superego); and (3) progress in the ability to express wishes and fantasies through symbolic play, as well as the use of play for mastery.

By about the children’s twenty-first month, we made the important observation in our month-by-month comparisons that it was no

11 At the writing of this book, we have not been able to analyze our data sufficiently to be able to determine unequivocally the timing and the contextual factors of the appearance on the nonsyncretic “I.”
longer possible to group the toddlers in accordance with the general criteria hitherto used. The vicissitudes of their individuation process were changing so rapidly that they were no longer mainly phase specific, but individually very distinct, and different from one child to the other. The issue in question was not so much that of realization of separateness, but rather how this realization was affected by, and in turn affected, the mother-child relationship, the father-child relationship (the latter now being clearly different from the former), and the integration of the individual child's total personality. We also observed that there seemed to develop at this time a rather significant difference in the development of the boys as compared with the girls. In our comparatively small sample of cases, the boys, if given a reasonable chance, showed a tendency to disengage themselves from mother and to enjoy their functioning in the widening world (see Greenson, 1968). The girls, on the other hand, seemed to become more engrossed with mother in her presence; they demanded greater closeness and were more persistently enmeshed in the ambivalent aspects of the relationship. This seemed connected with the realization of the sexual difference. Very importantly, the narcissistic hurt experienced by the girls of not having a penis was almost without exception blamed on the mother (see p. 168).

For example, the mother of one little girl felt that her child was becoming more and more demanding and imperious. She would demand whatever it was she wanted and would become quite angry if she could not get it. In the park, mother said, the child would insist that mother swing her interminably. She continued to go to her mother for help in any difficult situation, rather than make any attempt to find her own solutions. Once, following a struggle over mother's absence from the room, she looked at a picture book in which she identified all kinds of pictures, but she would not identify the picture of "the mother" (mechanism of disavowal).

At 22 months, another little girl became much more stubborn and negativistic. She particularly objected to wearing the kind of circlets that her mother picked out for her and had tantrums about having her hair combed. At the same time, she became more clinging to her mother. At the Center, where from a very early age on she had distinguished herself by her dislike of the other children, she became even more of them and expressed intense dislike if anyone tried to "usurp" mother's attention. She found it increasingly difficult to go to the infant room; when her mother finally took her there, the child returned to the infant room, leaving her mother behind. She was not very interested in toys, except as objects for social interaction with mother and
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adults. She often went back to her mother for close contact. We understood this behavior as a displaced competition with her siblings for her mother's exclusive attention, wanting it for herself as the baby daughter. Most of the time, she did not object to her mother leaving the room, but would run to her when the latter returned. On one such occasion, she ran to her with a doll and showed her excitingly just how the doll made "pee-pee."

A third little girl in her twenty-second month showed a wish for closeness to her mother, as well as a need for physical stimulation by her. Mother responded to this by often holding her on her lap, stroking and stimulating her in a rather sensuous way. When mother was not there, the child would stimulate herself by masturbating. She continued to enjoy the play in the toddler room, but went to the infant room more often, obviously because of a greater need to be near mother. Often she approached mother with a peekaboo game, or somehow enticed her mother to chase her. She showed direct jealous reactions to her little sister and even tried to take the bottle away from her. In her twenty-second month, this little girl started to use the word "Mommy" for the first time. Also, she would wake during the night and call out for her mother. She looked for her mother and asked for her when mother was out for an interview. While mother was absent, she seemed to play alternately at being the baby and at being mother to babies. This situation of course was particularly multidetermined, and it could be understood only through our intimate knowledge of the preceding subphase developmental history and through our knowledge of the mother.

The boys, on the other hand, seemed to cope with the sight of the penislessness of the girls in a much less overt way; their apperception became confused with anal concerns, and later on with phallic castration anxieties expressed in the symbolism of their play.

By the children's twenty-third month, it seemed that the ability to cope with separateness, as well as with actual physical separation, was dependent in each case on the history of the mother-child relationship, as well as on its present state; it was certainly much less phase-specific. We found it hard to pinpoint just what it was in the individual cases that produced more anxiety in some and an ability to cope in others. Each child had established by this time his own characteristic ways of coping. When periods of crisis occurred, it was not always easy to see what the crisis was related to. Sometimes, it seemed related to the child's anxiety about his own rapid individuation (every so often this resulted in heightened ambivalence and aggression) or to bodily pressures not unrelated to simultaneous disappointment in mother; at certain
times, the crisis seemed definitely related to bodily pressures (oral, anal, and phallic, that is, zonal) in Greenacre's sense (1945). Sometimes it seemed related to the degree and nature of the mother's availability, sometimes to the mother's own feelings of anxiety as the child started to become more individuated.

In short, this very important "final phase" of rapprochement as intrapsychic development seemed to be the summation of the solution of the many maturational developmental tasks that each individual child had arrived at during the course of his particular subphase development, up to the beginning of the fourth subphase.

The Beginning of Gender Identity

Mothers often commented that the bodies of their girl babies felt different from those of the boys, that the girls were softer and more cuddly. We do not wish to argue whether this feeling of the mothers was culturally determined, or whether it was due to the fact that baby girls actually mould in a more pliable way than do boys; probably both. In any case, the feeling of the mother about her child's body may well have some early patterning influence. On the whole, we did observe boys to be more motor-minded than girls and more stiffly resistant to hugging and kissing, beyond and even during differentiation; we also saw that the boys were interested earlier in moving objects, such as cars and trains.

Whatever sexual differences may have preexisted in the area of innate ego apparatuses and of early ego modes, they certainly were greatly complicated, and generally compounded, by the effects of the child's discovery of the anatomical sexual difference. This occurred sometime during the 16 to 17 month period or even earlier, but more often in the twentieth or twenty-first month.

The boy's discovery of his own penis usually took place much earlier. The sensory-tactile component of this discovery may even date back into the first year of life (see Roiphe and Galenson, 1972, 1973); there is uncertainty as to its emotional impact. Around the twelfth or fourteenth month, however, we have observed that the upright position facilitates the visual and sensory-motor exploration of the penis (p. 177). Possibly in combination with a maturational advance in zonal libidination this led to a greater cathexis of this exquisitely sensuous, pleasure-giving organ.

Incidentally, it is hardly noted in psychoanalytic developmental psychology that the discovery of the penis, and particularly the important experience of its involuntary erection and detumescence, parallel the
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quisition of voluntary free locomotion of the body. Except for Läggren (1968), we did not find any reference to the little boy’s noticing his highly cathected organ, his penis, moving (that is, erecting) on its own. This passive experience is probably very important. It would seem that the little boy becomes aware of the involuntary movement of his penis at the same time that he develops mastery of his own body movement in the erect position (see Mahler, 1968a).

At any rate, the little boy’s exploration of his own penis during the practicing subphase seemed at first an experience of unmitigated pleasure; several mothers reported their boy’s frequent quiet masturbation at home. This differed from our observation later in the separation-individuation phase (at the end of the second and the beginning of the third year) of boys clutching their penises for reassurance.

The girls’ discovery of the penis confronted them with something that they themselves were lacking. This discovery brought on a range of behaviors clearly indicating the girls’ anxiety, anger, and defiance. They wanted to undo the sexual difference. Therefore, it seemed to us that in girls, masturbation took on a desperate and aggression-saturated quality more often than in boys and at an earlier age. We have already mentioned that this discovery coincides with the emergence of the affect of envy (p. 91); in some of our girls, early penis envy may have accounted for the persistent predominance of this affect.

The discovery of the anatomical sexual difference took different forms in different children. One little boy (who talked early) discovered his mother’s navel, and called it her “pee-pee.” Other examples are scattered throughout this book.

The most dramatic (and yet the most typical) reaction to the rather sudden discovery of the anatomical sexual difference was acted out and put into words by Cathy at the tender age of 14 months. This we found to be singularly poignant, because of the circumstances of this little girl’s life at that time. Cathy was then particularly vulnerable because her father was temporarily away. She was an unusually bright, charming, eminently verbal, precocious little girl, who was everybody’s favorite and a great comfort to her mother. The latter took unusual pride in her little girl’s feminine qualities, always dressing her with particular care. She was, so to say, her more beautiful and feminine alter ego. During the father’s absence, the mother took a part-time job, and during that part of the day Cathy was taken care of by the mother of one of the little boys in our study. Cathy, who was precocious in all ways, was already partially toilet trained. One day we noticed that she did not want to sit on the toilet; instead, she started to whine and hold
on to her genital area. The mother had previously told us that on several occasions Cathy had been bathed with her little boy friend. Upon being asked whether Cathy had noticed her little friend’s penis, the mother told us that Cathy had commented that her boy friend had two belly buttons. A period of extreme crankiness ensued, and this hitherto charming little girl became impossible to satisfy in our nursery group. A while later, Cathy started to become not only cranky but aggressive toward the other children. Her particular form of aggression (from which nothing could deter her) was pulling the hair of boys and girls alike. Eventually, the mother told us that because Cathy hated to have her hair washed, she had been taking her into the shower with her to wash her hair. In the shower, Cathy had grabbed at her mother’s pubic hair, obviously searching for the “hidden penis.” Because of Cathy’s verbal precocity we had the opportunity to follow the ups and downs of her attempts to come to terms with the narcissistic injury of not having a penis. This might have hit her so hard because of the absence of the father, and perhaps also because until then she had been such a perfect cherished love object to her mother, to herself, and to everybody else. She had displayed a blooming optimal, even maximal, self-esteem. There was another little girl who was similarly very hard hit by the discovery of the sexual difference. She, too, was very clearly for her mother a perfect child and a completion of her own self (see Stoller, 1973; Galenson and Roiphe, 1971).

In short, we found that the task of becoming a separate individual seemed, at this point, to be generally more difficult for girls than for boys, because the girls, upon the discovery of the sexual difference, tended to turn back to mother, to blame her, to demand from her, to be disappointed in her, and still to be ambivalently tied to her. They demanded from mother that she settle a debt, so to say. As the girl is faced with her own imperfection, she may become imperfect in the unconscious of the mother as well. Boys, on the other hand, seemed to become faced with castration anxiety only later; during the second or third year, they seemed to find it more expedient than girls to function separately; they were better able to turn to the outside world, or to their own bodies, for pleasure and satisfaction; they also turned to father or someone with whom to identify. They seemed somehow to cope with their castration anxiety in a phase of quasi-preoedipal triangulation (Abelin, 1972); in our setup, this could not be easily followed.
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Discussion of the Third Subphase

In our observational study, we saw why the rapprochement crisis occurs, as well as why, in some instances, it may become—and remain—an unresolved intrapsychic conflict. It may set an unfavorable fixation point, thus interfering with later oedipal development; at best, it may add to the difficulty of the resolution of the oedipus complex and lend a peculiar cast to it.

The developmental task at the very height of the separation-individuation struggle during the rapprochement subphase is a tremendous one. Oral, anal, and early genital pressures and conflicts meet and accumulate at this important crossroad in personality development. There is a need to renounce symbiotic omnipotence, and there is also heightened awareness of the body image and pressure in the body, especially at the points of zonal libidinization. Belief in mother’s omnipotence seems to be shaken.

While the fear of object loss and abandonment is partly relieved, at this developmental stage, it is also greatly complicated by the internalization of parental demands; this not only indicates the beginning of super-ego development, but also expresses itself in fear of losing the object’s love! In consequence, we observe an intensified vulnerability on the part of the rapprochement toddler. Fear of loss of the love of the object goes parallel with highly sensitive reactions to approval and disapproval by the parent. There is greater awareness of bodily feelings and pressures, in Greenacre’s sense. These are augmented by awareness of bowel and urinary sensations during the toilet-training period, even in quite normal development. Children often display, in some instances quite dramatically, a reaction to the discovery of the anatomical sex difference.

The persistence and degree of the rapprochement crisis indicate premature internalization of conflicts, developmental disturbances that were precursors of infantile neurosis, but may even decisively stand in the way of the development of infantile neurosis, in the classical sense! As we said before, conflict is at first acted out, that is to say, indicated by coercive behaviors directed toward the mother, designed to force her to function as the child’s omnipotent extension; these alternate with signs of desperate clinging. In other words, in those children with less than optimal development, the ambivalence conflict is discernible during the rapprochement subphase in rapidly alternating clinging and negativistic behaviors. These alternating behaviors are the ingredients of the phenomena we designate as “ambitendency”—that is, as long as the con-
trasting tendencies are not yet fully internalized. This phenomenon may be in some cases a reflection of the fact that the child has split the object world more permanently than is optimal into "good" and "bad." By means of this splitting, the "good" object is defended against the derivatives of the aggressive drive.

These two mechanisms—coercion and splitting of the object world—if excessive, are also characteristic of most cases of adult borderline transference (Mahler, 1971; see also Frijling-Schreuder, 1969). We were able to study the possible antecedents of this in the verbal, primary-process material of a few children at the end of their second year of life and during their third year. These mechanisms, along with the problem of finding what the late Maurice Bouvet (1958) described as the "optimal distance," may prevail as early as in the fourth subphase of separation-individuation, at a time when "libidinal object constancy" should begin to be achieved and separation reactions should be diminishing.

Disturbances during the rapprochement subphase are likely to reappear in much more definite and individually different forms during the final phase of that process in which a unified self-representation should become demarcated from a blended and integrated object representation.

The clinical outcome of these rapprochement crises will be determined by: (1) the development toward libidinal object constancy; (2) the quantity and quality of later disappointments (stress traumata); (3) possible shock traumata; (4) the degree of castration anxiety; (5) the fate of the oedipus complex; and (6) the developmental crises of adolescence—all of which function within the context of the individual's constitutional endowment.