

INTERNALIZATION PROCESSES – DEALING WITH SEPARATION AND LOSS

Riitta Tähkä (Helsinki)

I approach the theme from two points of view – I speak first from a developmental perspective and then some thoughts about mourning process.

Internalization transfers and transforms external aspects of object relationships into internal ones. Like Freud (1923) says in his famous statement: “the character of the ego is a precipitate of abandoned object-cathexes”. Processes of internalization are motivated by and emerge as the self’s protection of its existence through increasingly advanced ways to ensure the object’s availability in the individual’s world of experience. Identification is an essential form of internalization processes specifically building up the representational structures of the personality.

Identification is a bond to the object, a way of preserving the object; at the same time it leads towards separation, differentiation, autonomy, accepting loss. Identification is an integrative process always implying separation, tolerating and overcoming it – if this is not the case, various kinds of problematic or pathological outcomes will ensue.

Separation-differentiation process is the precondition enabling the experience of being a subject. Proceeding internalization enables an increasing experience of separateness, of being an individual subject. It means an awareness of the independent world outside one’s control consisting specifically of the important people, on whom we are dependent and an increasing responsibility for the regulation and creation of our subjective experiential world.

Psychoanalysis has to do with working with the obstacles hindering the analysand from living his life as fully and profoundly as a subject – as the person he or she is or could be, as described by Ogden (1999). As fundamental preconditions for becoming a subject separation and identification are dealing with crucial questions in psychoanalysis.

SEPARATENESS – A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE

Toward the first differentiation

Freud’s concept “primary identification” corresponds in Winnicott’s terms internalization of the “environment mother” (infant-mother unit) experienced as a vital bodily aliveness of being,

existing. This builds up the basic texture creating a mental space, a scene for psychic experience, in which the representation processes of the child can be started. The reality of separation is not yet present; instead the “holding” created by the mother, is protecting the child and postponing the experience of separation, until the child is ready for it. This protected space enables an experience of existing saturated by pleasure, building a solid base for being a self. A premature experience of separateness and a concomitant traumatic helplessness following a break down of holding is a catastrophic threat to the shaping core of the child’s self experience. Separateness then means a disruption, an annihilation of his being and existing. It leads to rigid, primitive defences, closing up in a fatal way the connection with the object world, alienating from the emotional core of the self and endangering the development of the meaningfulness of the self. Instead of object connectedness the child is left on his own with a compensating omnipotence (Winnicott 1965, Modell 1993). This will stop and distort the representational process of the self. In psychotic states the basic structures of psychic vitality and the representational basis of the self are broken down. As stated by Rechartd (1994), the experience of the mutual other, the self and the ability to symbolize “seem to form a kind of triunity of psychic vitality” (p. 224).

In the setting of this early oneness the development of the child’s mind goes toward separateness present as potential from the beginning on. Separateness exists in the mind of the mother while she is identifying with and interpreting the needs of the child. All relating of the mother is in her mind directed toward the child both as a present and as a future subject. Although the mother is protecting the child from the experience of separation, it still is present as an unarticulated frame for the experience of the oneness of the mother-child unit.

I want to stress how far-reaching identification on the part of the mother is the precondition for the beginning psychic existence of the human being and for the gradual building up of a subjective psychic reality based on it. It’s a unity which is almost as total as one mind. And yet, it includes a seed of separateness, it is at the same time one, and yet not one.

Internalization of the experience of this early interaction creates for the child a basic space of psychic experiencing. (Ogden 1986) It includes a basic trust on existence and on the presence of the object. The experience of existing, then being a subject, and, further, the creation of one’s own subjective world, to be born, they all demand a feeling of continuity, based on a reliably continuing presence of either a real or an inner object. Thus, it could be said that the basis of separateness is an

unquestionable connectedness, in a way, being one, now as an internalized oneness always present as included in the psychic experience of existing.

Essential for the growing separateness is the gradual giving up of the illusion of oneness-connection. For this to come true frustrations in tolerable limits and in the context of good connectedness are needed. Too abrupt disillusionment leads to resorting and clinging to omnipotence.

Of course the gratifying care of the mother is not and cannot be completely perfect even in the beginning. The gradually gathering and enriching representations and memory traces of gratification start to assist the child in waiting for gratification and are, thus, the first primitive psychic means to cope with frustration and separation.

The first important step in the development of separateness is the first *differentiation*, the first major integration, in which the now sufficiently gathered representations differentiate into the self and into the object world outside. The subject is born (V. Tähkä 1993). There is me and the object. Both the subject- as well as the object images are still largely bodily experiences (“body self”, “body object”) and the separateness of the object still quite relative; the object is owned, belonging to the self, still to a great amount covered by illusions; it is a creation of the needs of the child, a subjective object. For this early self, protecting and preserving the representation of the “good object” becomes an existential necessity.

Protecting the first differentiation

This early differentiated self experience is still very vulnerable and readily destroyed by frustrations, that is, if it is threatened by the loss of the object. Separation can hardly be tolerated without arousing separation-annihilation anxiety. The overwhelming frustration-aggression, still lacking useful representations, easily destroys the differentiation. To protect the self experience and the image of the good object needed for its maintenance, the establishment of *introjects* of two kinds of object representations, the “all-good” and the “all-bad”, make it possible to ensure the psychic presence of a gratifying object even when the real mother is absent or frustrating. An *introject*, or an experience of the object’s inner presence, is an object representation which is not melded into the self representation as identifications, but is experienced in the subject’s inner world as separate “psychic presence”. It is the first image of the object that is experienced independent of the object’s actual presence brought about by *introjection* and it represents the first primitive way of

thinking of the object. Introjects can only be controlled magically in a passive experience. With the image of the “all-bad” object, manipulated with projection, frustration has become mentally represented in a decisively better way. The primitive defences, introjection and projection, assisted by split and denial (all isolating the self from the threatening bad) are wanted, until the proceeding internalization process creates prerequisites for the next integrative step.

Functional object relatedness

Empathic understanding conveyed by the mother now becomes the important connection, the medium of “sameness”. Empathy now provides an experience, in which the other is felt to be present with me and for me, in a feeling-connection close to me, although separate. The mother’s empathy is safeguarding the connection when, the child, at the same time, is threatened by a growing awareness of separateness and loneliness. The empathy of the mother also contributes to the child’s ability to experience and express his feelings and helps decisively in the development of the language and the use of symbols. The desires and feelings experienced as one’s own and their becoming validated in an empathic connection with the object as well as their verbal communication organize the self as an agent of the experience. The increasing separateness means that the communication is now in a crucial way more necessary. As long as the object is functional, a subjective object, it is expected self-evidently to know the arising needs and to gratify them immediately. Then there is no need to create symbols to express them. (Winnicott 1965, V. Tähkä 1993).

The terms *functional object* and *functional object relatedness* (V. Tähkä 1993) are used here to refer to the prevailing object relationship between the basic differentiation and object constancy as well as to its persisting manifestations in “normal” and pathological object relationships. In the functional phase of relatedness the early self experiences the object, its gratifying, soothing, mirroring functions as its self-evident possession, not belonging to a self-determined somebody beyond the immediate control and possession of the self. It is not until the object can be experienced as having an inner world of its own as a result of the establishment of self and object constancy that the object world ceases to belong experientially exclusively to the self. The functional object *is* the function she is performing and its affective colour thus oscillates between “all-good” and “all-bad”. The functional object is needed as a substitute for the lacking structures of the future self (ego). The not yet internalized functions of the object continue to represent the dynamic core of the object relation, until the processes of functionally selective identification

(during the period of the separation-identification) are sufficiently completed to allow experiences of object and self constancy to emerge as a new level of experiential differentiation and integration.

Functional identifications; Internalizations toward the individual self (self constancy)

Identification is by far the most important process in the structuralization of personality. The identifications building up the basic ego structure differ from the identifications occurring in the oedipal period. Changing the essentially introjective-projective and functional experience into that of self and object constancy takes place through a multitude of identifications with introjects and with the external object's observed functions.

These contents being internalized as ingredients of one's own psyche basically build the representational experiential world. This means identifying with the ingredients of the interaction representing regulatory functions and structures, conveyed through the empathic understanding of the mother. The internalization of the interactional elements around every need (containing the need directed to the object and the object answering to it) means bit-by-bit giving up the functional object, on whom the self experience has been dependent and becoming replaced by psychic functions and structures of one's own. The step of identification presupposes an ability to tolerate a small amount of separation anxiety.

Veikko Tähkä (1984a, 1993) calls the identifications preceding and leading to experiences of individual identity and individual objects (self and object constancy) *functionally selective* as compared with the *judgmentally selective* oedipal identifications. The former bring new *functions* into the self while the latter add mainly *characteristics* to the self based on interaction with individual objects.

Identification always strives to preserve the bond to the object, to restore and hold on some ideal state of the self dependent on or experienced with the object. The functional identifications mean a decisive step toward a more active control of the self in its striving for gratification as well as in dealing with frustration and, at the same time, a step towards giving up the object. Separation anxiety, still predominating over the stage of functional relatedness is to be struggled with and decisively overcome through a gradual assimilation of the object's functions in a process of bit-by-bit identifications with them. In our clinical work, regarding the patients with an insufficient development of this process, the separation anxiety is the central obstacle, often making the change process difficult.

According to Veikko Tähkä (1984a, 1993) there seems to be four basic prerequisites necessary for the initiation and continuation of the functionally selective identifications.

1. The interaction (mother-child, patient-analyst) must be safe enough. A partial loss of the functional object and a corresponding frustrated self representation have to be tolerated to some extent before the lost function can be replaced by a new function of the self. Safe means a good connection of empathic sharing and a good-enough presence of the functional object, providing a sufficient variety of anxiety-ameliorating (good) introjects.
2. The interaction must provide functional introjects becoming idealized as drive-controlling structures which help the self to wait and postpone gratification. The following bit-by-bit identifications build the basic tension-regulating and self-soothing functions of the self (ego).
3. The frustrations that initiate the identification with a particular function of the object should be in tolerable limits instead of leading to overwhelming dedifferentiation anxiety or devastating shame.
4. An adequately approving mirroring from the object is needed to encourage the final identification and to furnish the new function with a lasting value for the self.

The individual self and the individual object (self and object constancy)

The process culminates – again as a jump like step – into the second great integration, the *individuation*, with the result of the experiential world forming into an *individual subject* having his own inner reality, and, on the other hand, into an awareness of other people as *individual subjects* having their own inner world (V. Tähkä 1993). This crucial landmark in the development of separation-individuation contributes to a total qualitative change of the whole experiential world. The essential precondition for separateness between individuals is that the object relation, vital for preserving the self experience, is internalized as a structure of the mind. The object relation is built as if brick-by-brick into the structure of the self (ego). This process safeguards the fundamental inner connection to the object and the self experience is not any more threatened by annihilation anxiety. Individuation changes in a crucial way the possibility to deal with the loss of the object and forms thus a basic precondition for all mourning processes.

These prerequisites appear also to be equally necessary in the treatment of patients with borderline pathology (with their functional and primitively ambivalent relationships of projective-introjective or schizo-paranoid experiential worlds) before belated processes of functionally selective

identifications, essential in their treatment, will become possible (Tähkä 1984a, 1993). Essential are the internalizations of tension-regulating and self-soothing functions.

To be able, step-by-step, to give up the functional object through internalization, it is necessary that the good experiences are dominating. Too much frustration makes the inner introjects persecutory and one cannot risk the loneliness of separateness. The separation anxiety is then too great. The object experienced as individual, and thus separate, means a crucial giving up the illusion of the omnipotent control of the object, and a transfer from an owned object world into that shared with others. Without sheltering illusions and a possibility to safely abandon them, the self, to preserve itself, has to maintain an experience of the object totally belonging to itself. The birth of the individual self also marks a crucial differentiation in experiencing the inner and outer realities. Also the others are subjects in their individual world of experience, to which the contact has to be sought in a new way. Emotional dimensions of a new kind are opened, on the whole, new means to deal with frustration and aggression safeguarding the good experience. Differently from introjects, the individual object can be freely thought, fantasized and missed in one's mind. Having reached this phase, it is possible, later in life, to deal with the loss of an important object by mourning.

This step towards separation and differentiation means a crucial entering into the world of the mind, out of the more concrete experiencing. Until this it has been imperative to preserve either the physical or the introjective presence of the object. The connection with a separate object is now basically maintained based on the means of the mind. The whole ground of experiencing is now the subjective world of one's own. On the one hand, this brings forth a vitalizing experience of becoming oneself; it opens up a new free space that can be freely chosen. On the other, while it offers a possibility to a new shared connection, it brings with it also a new awareness of the solitude where everybody as a subject exists. When the separation-annihilation anxiety is great, this loneliness, the fact that the connection to the object and the whole subjective existence would be based on one's mind and on the contents created in one's mind, thoughts, images and meanings, feels terrifying. It's like stepping into a bottomless void or like one analysand of mine repeatedly said: could something that is only in my mind be real, it's too vague, unreal, real is only what I can perceive concretely or experience with another.

The individual subject is also now capable of self reflection, able to differentiate between the symbol (image, thought), the symbolized object (what is thought about) and the interpreting subject (the thinker who is thinking his own thoughts and interpreting his own symbols) (1986). Then it is

possible, as an interpreting subject, to think about the symbol or the meaning one has given to a certain thing. The subject, as an interpreter of symbols, is born. From this on, all is – in principle – creating of subjective meanings. Citing Ogden, here begins "the space in which we are alive as human beings" (p. 213).

Insufficient separatedness

The potential space, where phantasy is creating reality and the other way round, and where the tie of empathy is connecting separateness and non-separateness present simultaneously, is normally characteristic of the still functional relationship of an unindividuated child (V. Tähkä 1993, R. Tähkä 2005). It's different when this development ends up with an impasse, like in the functional world of a borderline patient where experiencing the self is without alternatives and the potential space collapses from the anxiety caused by separation. There a desperate attempt to control the object concretely is replacing creative imagination.

As emphasized by Veikko Tähkä, understanding must also correspond to the existig level of separateness in the patient's experiential world. The less structured the patient's experiential world is, the more intensive presence in and closeness to the patient's world are required if the experience of connection and being understood is to be made possible. The change in psychoanalysis occurs in the dimension of the potential space where both separateness and non-separateness are present simultaneously (R. Tähkä 2005).

Borderline and psychotic patients do not yet have the prerequisites for experiencing the kind of separateness that is included in a subjective responsibility of their experiential world. The incomplete separation-individuation also carries a deficiency in symbolizing and subjective meanings. The experiences, thus, do not for them mean anything they have created or chosen, it's just an event of reality, reasulting from the actions of the outside world. They are just what they are, without a symbolic level (Segal's "symbolic equation", 1957). If the experiential world of this kind is approached presupposing that the patient can start to investigate and reflect upon his inner reality, the patient is left without a genuine mutuality, without connection and understanding.

Empathic description

The classical interpretation implies interpreting and understanding, of course, in an empathic way, the unconscious, past-determined meanings of an individuated experiential world. The separation of the individual worlds is thus included. This opens up the possibility to see oneself increasingly as

the subject creating one's meanings. The individuated self has, in principle, this ability to see himself as a subjective agent, although it often, at first, is concealed by the transference experiencing. To the functional world of a borderline patient the understanding connection is created in *empathic description* (V. Tähkä 1993), catching and sharing the patient's subjective experiencing of the moment and expressing it in verbal symbols. A child or a patient, still experiencing according to functional relatedness, should not be confronted too abruptly that he has his own, separate mind where he is experiencing and thinking – he should have time to find it himself (Winnicott 1971, Ogden 1986). Empathic description provides an experience of, as it were, a shared, common experience; it is not explicitly provided by a separate other, but neither does it contain the removal of separateness, as one's self-evident possession of the object, which is what the transference means of borderline patients aim at, trying to protect him against the intolerable threat of the separation-annihilation anxiety. The relationship thus created with the analyst as a new developmental object who, while sharing the patient's experiential world, thinks and talks about it in the language of representations, symbols and metaphors, enables change in the patient's representational world. Empathic description thus provides both the representational contents to be identified with as well as the important experience of connection motivating internalization. The classic, genetic interpretation is essentially an attempt to reunite warded-off, dissociated structures, while empathic description is specifically designed to lead to the formation of new structures. Empathic description does not explicitly point out the patient's responsibility for his subjective experience (that this is *his* feeling); yet this understanding increasingly becomes part of his mind and mental structures experienced as one's own enabling gradual integration into an individual subject.

Empathic description thus always implies separateness, although not being it explicitly. Responding with empathic description also transfers the concreteness of transference wishes to the transitional area and toward inner subjective experiencing (R. Tähkä 2011).

Sharing one's experiential world with the new developmental object is a crucially important experience. It creates the sense of connection, although, at the same time, implying separateness. For the analyst, it is important to sort out, when the aim is just to own the other or something belonging to the other. Instead of sharing, the patient can strive for sameness and search for support to his fantasies as a reality, thus denying separations and differences. In this kind of interaction the creation of novel psychic representations and surrendering into a genuine mutual relationship are

lacking. Also the analyst can unconsciously tend to bind the patient with himself with a tie of permanent identification.

Toward autonomy

From this basic achievement of separation-individuation with the individual subjective worlds the way goes towards reaching *autonomy* through the radical separation-identification and integration processes in adolescence. This, of course, is preceded by the important identification processes of the oedipal phase redefining the self experience. I bypass, just shortly mentioning, these familiar events. In the oedipal phase, the individuated self experience and especially the sexual identity get strengthened. The sexual wishes directed to the primary objects, still coloured by omnipotence, are preliminarily dealt with and they are, thus, transferred to a greater degree to be the responsibility of one self. The differentiation between the inner and outer reality is clarified. As part of this is the forming of the superego from the parent-introjects; the superego is now (thus, with less dependence on the objects) safeguarding the self against the forbidden, repressed impulses and regulating the self experience. Before the birth of the subject (self and object constancy) proper the separation means a threat of a total loss of the self experience; after this, it's more about the loss of the narcissistic value of the self, in different degrees, even of a collapse, often caused by shame, when confronted by being an outsider in the primal scene setting (Ikonen & Rechartt 1994). The central danger is the loss of the object's love. In other words, the good enough self experience is not, any more, in a total way endangered.

In the adolescence crisis the *autonomous value structures* are built (V. Tähkä 1993). This third essential separation-integration phase enables a sufficient personal autonomy. Then the value, meanings and goals of the self are decisively defined by one's own inner ideals and are not any more dependent on the primary objects or their representants. Again, this implies internalization processes definitely changing the representational world. As you know, this means a relative giving up the primary objects both as the objects of the oedipal love as the paragons, to which the self image and the self esteem have been tied. Partly based on elements from these relations, partly on new traits found and taken in from the outside world, are built the new structures defining and guiding the self: the self (ego) ideal with its superego aspects and the object ideal (guiding the search of a love object). Then one is not bound to other people with expectations that would be defining the self experience. A relatively good autonomy means an internally independent individual, whose self image, thoughts and aims are not dependent on others, who is committed himself to his own values, but permits to the others an equal freedom to have their values. This kind

of autonomy is not so usual nor an easy achievement. The separation process of adolescence is like a rehearsal of mourning processes later in life. – Of course, all this has to do with very important identifications and integrations. Although I am dealing with it so shortly, I am aware of this, perhaps, being something especially pertinent and actual for you here just leaving your “parents”, heading for your own way.

Separation-integration processes self-evidently continue throughout life. The human being has, again and again, to deal with the question of separation and the limits of his being in charge of life. How to cope with the limits of all good one would like to have, the most absolute limit being set by death. How to be able to accept being aware of this, and yet, at the same time, preserving and, still again, safeguarding the good inside and even a possibility to consolidate it? To accept that the world out there is not mine, but myself I can own and embrace.

DEALING WITH OBJECT LOSS

As is well known, separation and identification are essential in the fates of loss and death. The loss of an important object regularly initiates various inner attempts to resist the reality of the loss either by denying it, replacing the object with a new one, or by trying to preserve it through various forms of internalization. The end result depends on the nature of the relationship to the lost object, as well as on the forms of internalization or other devices that have been used. Since Freud's *Mourning and Melancholia* (1917) mourning and depression have been presented as two major alternatives of trying to cope with the loss of important objects. The more the object is needed for the maintenance of self experience, the more difficult it is to deal with the loss and the greater is the likelihood of various pathological alternatives instead of a more normal mourning process.

An introject is experienced as having an independent existence of its own and its behavior cannot be consciously controlled by the subject. Whether experienced as protective or threatening, an introject is always experienced as an object, preserved in the inner world, with whom the interaction goes on. It is being experienced as being inside, without however, being part of the self.

When an object loss occurs, the lost object tends, for a shorter or longer time, to be experienced as an introject. This represents an attempt to protect the self from the experience of a total object loss by preserving the object in the inner world until the working through of the loss gradually makes it superfluous (Abraham 1924, Fenichel 1945).

Depressive solution

As long as the integration of self and object constancy has not been established and the object still represents vitally important parts of the personality, the object cannot be relinquished by any working through processes such as mourning proper. Then it is not possible to experience and represent the separation and the loss as psychic reality. This would threaten the self with an intolerable annihilation anxiety. The relationship to the functional object is always ambivalent. One ultimate solution can then be resorting to a *depressive solution* (V. Tähkä 1994), the dynamic basis in serious depression, in which identification, as an attempt to maintain the connection to the object, is manifested in its pathological form. The depressive solution means trying to keep up the inner image of the lost good object, which is necessary for the maintenance of the self experience, by identifying with the hateful aspects of the lost object (the bad object), now greatly strengthened by the untolerated loss with accompanying aggression.¹ This turns the self image fully bad and makes it very difficult to get an interaction with a new developmental (libidinal) object started. This interaction would be necessary to enable the development of good internalizations needed to make possible dealing with the loss in a more successful way than with depression. In depression the reality of the loss is never accepted and represented as a psychic reality. Instead of gradual identifications, takes place a total identification with the image of the bad, hateful object, as a desperate attempt to cling to the image of the good object, which is all the time fading. The utmost prize for the self is its becoming totally bad, worthless, the target of all aggression and sadism, leading to annihilation of the libidinal self.

This total identification with the image of the bad object is often experienced as a concrete, many times almost hallucinatory presence of the introject of the object in the self. It's like another person who had taken the self under its tyrannical power and possession. This shows in an illuminating way the scene of the depressive solution. My seriously depressed patients have regularly described a terrifying experience of this kind. One of my patients (her depression following her mother's death) told, how she, while she was putting on a nightgown, suddenly felt – as a completely concrete reality – that it is Mother here putting on the nightgown, Mother is getting ready to go to bed. Such an experience is always shocking and terrifying, because there is no place anymore for the existence of the self and there is nothing one can do about it. All the chances of one's life seem to be lost. The dream of my patient is again pertinent. As always in her dreams her mother had

¹ Freud described this as an identification with the whole object representation. Tähkä wants to specify that the target of the identification is the image of the object experienced as bad – to preserve the image of the necessary good object.

again become younger, was vital and well-dressed. She, my patient, had booked a table in a restaurant and was going to eat with the mother. She should only first go home to change her clothes, because she only had a bathrobe and the slippers on. When she came into the hall of an apartment house, where her home should be, she was met by a doorman who said that there is no such home, has never existed.

This is a desperate situation, where holding to the object and preventing separation for the self costs the price of living. To free oneself from this sadistic tie is as intolerable as letting go of the object.

In dealing with object loss, two main types of process may be distinguished which are usually simultaneously present. The first amounts to dealing with the object loss proper and has to do with the lost object as a whole and individual person. The other involves methods and attempts to cope with the loss of the aspects of the object that have represented lacking parts of the subject's personality, and their loss thus means a corresponding loss of his potential self. Different kinds of internalization processes are needed (V. Tähkä 1984b, 1993).

Mourning and remembrance formation

The first reaction to the loss of an important object will also usually be *formation of an introject*. The process traditionally called mourning work is essentially represented by various kinds of interaction and negotiation with this inner representative of the lost object. During this process, the introject will increasingly fade away and finally disappear, corresponding to its replacement by other forms of internalization and substitutive object relationships. This is often seen most clearly in the subject's dreams, in which the lost object normally gradually loses its vitality and often finally appears as dying and dead (Volkan 1981, Tähkä 1984b).

In mourning, the subject has, with painful affects of grief and yearning, to face the reality of the loss – in case of the death of the object, the absolute finality of the death: this will never be again.

Veikko Tähkä (1984b, 1993) has described a form of internalization dealing with the loss of an important object. He sees it as the last phase of separation-internalization processes, the central position of which, in dealing with an object loss, is well known but its importance, as a developmentally higher form of internalization, has perhaps not been sufficiently recognized. It means releasing, giving up, through mourning, the ties and the shared meaningful experiences with this important person as never any more existing in reality. In this process which he calls

remembrance formation, the nature of the object representation alters; an object belonging to the present and to the outside world changes into one belonging to the past and to the realm of memories, the representation of an external and living object becomes a *remembrance* of the object, the representation of a past object.

This process does not mean the creation of an internal object experienced as having an independent, autonomous existence as is the case in introjection. Neither does it mean the absorption of the object's properties into the self representation in the form of identification. Instead, it represents an entirely different form of internalization: building and integrating the representation of the lost object into a remembrance of him. Once the object's remembrance has been established, it can be freely recalled and thought about and dismissed from the mind on the subject's own terms. Remembrance formation enables the mourner to see the lost person in a new way as separate, fully differentiated, whole and real, while, at the same time, he can also see more clearly himself, his own needs and wishes which have been colouring the relationship with the lost object, and integrate them into his self experience. In contrast to fantasy objects possessing various wish-fulfilling functions, the object's remembrance includes the awareness that nothing more can be expected from it and, therefore, in its fully established form it has the chance for becoming the most realistic of all existing object representations. Remembrance formation thus implies the greatest separation in relation to the object; one can see and understand the real other, but also oneself in a more realistic way. As a subjective experience it's like a new illumination of the image of the object as he or she was and also of the history of the life together. This can lead to a change and a new integration of one's inner world.

The typical danger mobilized, the loss of the object's love, has to be sufficiently mastered before this part of the working through can be completed. And of course there are the many other well-known difficulties disturbing the mourning process, like aggressive feelings, guilt etc.

Remembrance formation, thus, does not primarily have to do with identifications with the traits and characteristics of the lost person. Yet, identifications are often also an important part of the mourning process, contributing to preserving the good experiences with the object, additionally enriching the personality of the mourner.

The object image, now living only in memories, can retain various amounts of affective cathexis. Kernberg (2010) describes how an intense dialogue, and even a relentless presence of the lost one

can continue in the mind of a person who has lost an important object like a spouse. Kernberg wants to revise the conception of mourning process; "...perhaps mourning processes do not simply end, but, rather, evolve into more lasting or permanent aspects of psychic structure..." (p. 601). This does not mean a failed or stagnated mourning process, but, mourning process evolving into significant characterological changes, especially restructuring of the superego and maintaining an internalized relationship to the dead person. Kernberg observed, how painful longing and missing the life together and regret over human failures in loving relating were the more intensive, the more loving and satisfactory the relationship had been. It was different with persons with chronically ambivalent relationships. These feelings led to a need of genuine reparative endeavors for lost opportunities. This came out of love and regret, not from idealization and guilt stemming from ambivalence and repressed aggression. The reparation could, for example, take the form of identifying with what was precious for the deceased wanting to promote and maintain it. This identification with the admired and missed traits of the lost person, seemed to be a source of consolation and strength enriching the life and personality of the mourner. Kernberg wants to stress this combination "of the – well-known – identification with a lost object in the sense of a modification of the self-representation... and the persistence of an internal object relation with the lost person." (p. 607) He calls the persistence of the internalized relation between self and other "a *stable psychological structure* (italics mine) "...to refer to the permanence and functional quality of this mental dyadic relation between self and object representation." (p. 607) There is a full illumination of the value of the relationship with the lost object. The permanence of this internal relation is paired with an awareness of the absolute finality of the loss in real life. The mourning process does not need to come to end; at any point of the remaining life it may reemerge. Of course, mourning processes can go very differently, with unhappy results.

Summarizing

Introjection, identification, and remembrance formation thus seem to represent the principal ways of resisting object loss and coping with it during different stages of personality development and object relatedness. Introjection creates an illusion of the object's *presence* when it still is a prerequisite for the subjective psychological existence. Identification for its part replaces aspects of the object with structures of the self, enabling the emergence of an individual object image that can be freely thought and fantasized, and whose *absence* thus can be actively mastered and tolerated. An finally, remembrance formation becomes possible when objects do not any more represent primary developmental objects, whose final *loss* therefore can be endured and whose image be stored as the representation of a past object. (Tähkä 1993)

Thus, the three forms of internalization seem to represent a developmental succession of methods for the mastery of the experiential absence and finally loss of the image of the external object. While the loss of the object in the beginning means an experiential death for the self, the advancing processes and results of internalization will thus gradually make object loss possible for the self to survive and conquer.

Normal mourning enhances the capacity for loving (Tähkä 1984b, 1993; Kernberg 2010). Loss is an essential constituent of human life that has to be continually dealt with, in order to retain living as meaningful experience. Modifying one's world of representations is dependent on a retained openness to new experiences with external objects. When this is not possible, the mind will close itself, lose its capacity for renewal, and will only be capable of repetition. (Tähkä 1993)

(Riga, February 2014)

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