

Chapter 2

Intimacy, Otherness, and Alienation: The Intertwining of Nature and Consciousness

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Intimacy As Wellspring of Care: Invitation to Inquiry

Our relationship with nature is not personal in the way human friendships and love relationships are, yet it can be profoundly intimate. Many writers on the relationship between humans and nature have talked about the extraordinary intimacy that can be there in that relationship and about the care and concern for nature that spontaneously and naturally arises out of such intimacy (see in this volume, e.g., Chaps. 3, 7, and 8). The connection between intimacy and care is essential and compelling; that it does not seem so to everybody is, I believe, because intimacy as a concept is complex and refers to a variety of experiences ranging on a spectrum from something that is palpably felt throughout one's being as no separation between the partners in the intimacy to something that is felt as a comfort between like-minded people. But it is only when intimacy is felt palpably as no separation that its essential connection with care becomes evident. Thus, a child experiences his finger as inseparable from, or of the "same stuff as," his self, and were he to stick it in a fire he would spontaneously pull it out without conscious thought. Similarly, indigenous peoples who took their natural environment to be their sustaining mother and themselves of the same flesh as her showed the same care and concern for their environment as they did for themselves and their families, presumably without the need to be persuaded by argument or evidence. By contrast, when separation is experienced, such a spontaneous action does not take place even when it may be held as a moral, ethical, or rational ideal. When there is loss of a direct and palpable connection between self and other, neither moral ideals nor rational arguments or scientific evidence have the power to persuade one to care for the other but there remains a fateful gap between how individuals, corporations, and governments may think they "should" act and how they, in fact, act with respect to nature.

The focus of this chapter is on the presence or absence of this gap—on intimacy, or lack thereof, between human consciousness and nature. The "intimacy" to be

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explored here refers to palpable experiences of no separateness. In such experiences, intimacy is that mysterious, delightful, at times dreadful intertwining of two that are of one essence. The mystery is that two enter into intimacy, but in it, there is not-two. Both the delight and the dread have to do with there being in the felt experience now two and now not-two. The premise of the inquiry, I invite my reader to take with me, is that ultimately—ontologically—consciousness and nature really are not two. I believe that they originate from one source and are of one essence, and because of this, intimacy of the deepest kind is possible between them; indeed, such intimacy is, in my understanding, an aspect of what in Zen is sometimes referred to as one's "original face" and in Mahayana Buddhism in general is called "Natural Mind" or "Original Mind."

Unfortunately, such intimacy and intertwining of oneness and twoness would wreak havoc in science as it is conceived by most of its practitioners who start with the assumption of separation of subject and object in their work and who reinforce this assumption by research methodologies designed to safeguard the independence of the observer from the observed. The assumption of separation is also implicit in moral arguments that posit a distinction between "is" and "ought" and distinct imperatives for action arising from each. Because of the deep way in which these assumptions work, contemporary educated, thoughtful folk often find themselves in the curious predicament of being persuaded by evidence and arguments from evolutionary biology and ecological science that they are "part of" nature, yet not feeling a part of nature in their bones and at the basis of their moral compass.

Our senses are what connects us with nature directly, and so naturally (no pun intended) our senses open us to intertwining and intimacy. Ecopsychologists and philosophers have called on us to "come to our senses" (e.g., Abram 2010; Berman 1990) and to an "experiential renewal" (Livingston 2007; Fisher 2010). In this volume, Laura Mitchell calls on us to return to "intersentience—the aspect of our ecological wiring which attunes us to our kinship with all life..." (Chap. 7, p. 109). With passion and eloquence, these and other writers have spoken of an awakening within us, first and foremost, through our senses that would free us from the "urban angst" which Roszak (2001) sees as being deep and pervasive enough to be perpetuated even by the very psychotherapies that seek to alleviate it.

Echoing these writers, I invite my reader to a phenomenological inquiry into our senses as a gateway to a direct connection with nature. I take the meaning of "senses" broadly to include anything that is directly "felt"—thus including not only what we ordinarily identify by our five senses, but also the more subtle, difficult-to-identify nuances of felt sense. The inquiry begins with setting aside the assumption of separateness of subject and object—an assumption Edmund Husserl (2012/1916) called "natural attitude" or "natural standpoint" because the assumption of an "objectively existing" world, i.e., a world that exists apart from consciousness or "subject," seems so natural to us as to be usually accepted without question. The inquiry proceeds to a discovery, within the immediacy of one's consciousness, of connection or, if you will, absence of a gap, with nature. Note that I am not proposing the connection as a starting assumption but rather as something to be discovered by undertaking an inquiry, here and now, into the moment-by-moment flow of your own

consciousness. This discovery can be made any time when you tune into a moment of consciousness in which the observing subject seems to be located “here” and the observed object over “there.” You may then conduct an observational inquiry into this question: Where does “here” end and “there” begin? As you shift attention gradually outward from the “here” towards the “there,” you will discover that there is no line of demarcation, much less a separation or gap between the two, but they blend seamlessly into one. The inquiry that I ask you to undertake for yourself will lay the foundations for a further inquiry into the relationship between human consciousness and nature, which is the concern of this chapter. My approach is phenomenological, though it does not conform to the qualitative research methodology developed by Amadeo Giorgi (1970) as much as it is inspired by William James’ (2008/1902) approach in which direct, introspective observation is primary and description is secondary.

In this context, “intimacy” refers, first and foremost, to the relationship one has with the flow of experience when one is aware of it on a moment-by-moment basis. In this flow, as James pointed out, there are no gaps but between every identifiable moment or feature there is something else (James’ “fringes” of experience). The richness of the flow in such an intimate experience, thus, always exceeds the vocabulary a language provides for its description. I call attention to this at the outset, as it underscores the need to allow one’s purely observational and nonlinguistic experiential capacity to move into terrains uncharted by language—something that challenges the inquirer to tolerate vagueness and indeterminacy where the mind would clamor for clear articulation and conceptual comprehension.

Human Predicament Then and Now: Challenges to Intimacy

Even with the earlier-mentioned caveat, the inquiry may not readily reveal the continuity of self and nature in the immediacy of one’s lived experience. In this section, I will take a brief look at the reasons why. Some of them have to do with how we are “wired” as human species, and some have to do with the elaborations of the structures of consciousness that appear to be unique to our times and can greatly add to the difficulties people, especially in urban settings, have in accessing direct sensory awareness.

I will start with how we are “wired” as a species. The seeming *discontinuity* between self and other is a pervasive feature of human experience—perhaps even a defining feature of our “human predicament.” This predicament has to do with the structure of human consciousness which, given the way our brains have evolved, is predisposed to polarizing into subject and object. The subject end of the pole is where the sense of the innermost “self” resides, while the object end of the pole is where the myriad forms of the “other” meet this self (or one of the myriad forms of the self, as the “multiple selves” view in ascendancy today has it).

The splitting of the polar structure of human consciousness into a separate self and object may be a relatively recent development. Berman (2000) suggests that the start of this development coincided with the emergence of agricultural societies and was greatly accelerated with industrialization. Marshaling vast archeological, anthropological, and historical evidence and argument, Berman makes a persuasive case for a different kind of consciousness being the norm when humans lived close to nature in simple nomadic or hunter-gatherer groups. The subject–object polarity of nomadic consciousness was presumably fluid, now collapsing into a unity of self and nature within an awareness that is alert yet diffuse, and now separating into a self with a more narrowly focused awareness of the other (e.g., a fellow human, prey, or predator). In a fascinating field study, psychologist/anthropologist Robert Wolff (2001) describes just this kind of consciousness among a small group of hunter-gatherers, the Sng’oi people, he encountered in a remote mountainous region of Malaysia.

However, let me now turn to the consciousness and lifestyle that is pervasive in contemporary high-tech urban societies. The complex, reflexive structures and layers of alienation and self-alienation associated with these seem very different from the kind of fluid and diffuse awareness described by Berman and Wolff. Indeed, there is nothing in the lifestyles, educational curricula, or standards for career success promoted in urban societies today that would recognize the existence of, much less value, such awareness. But an understanding, based on experiential inquiry, of the evolutionary vicissitudes whereby one type of consciousness transforms itself into the other may help open up pathways for recovery of a wider and more fluid awareness. In such awareness, the complex structures of consciousness need not disappear or become unavailable, rather, they become transparent.

The complex structures of consciousness evolve in a positive-feedback system in which human consciousness shapes its environment and is, in turn, shaped by the environment. The shaping of organism by environment and vice versa has, of course, always existed and is the basis for evolution and adaptation. What is new in our time is that the feedback system is closing in on itself in ever-tightening loops whereby the environments in which humans live and work are increasingly human created, and these are in turn internalized by humans who grow up in them. For example, the San Francisco skyline in the night, lit up in intricate angular shapes created by lines of dotted or solid neon and LED lights, bears an eerie resemblance to a giant microchip—nothing like what one would encounter in nature but much like the interior of a contemporary human mind.

Nevertheless, the feelings, sensibilities, and the bonds people form with one another tend not to move in straight lines and angles but rather in the rounded shapes of nature. By and large, it does not appear that the social and emotional aspects of human life have fared so well in the mutual mirroring of technology and the human mind. With the unraveling of the traditional structures that bind societies and communities, individual self-experience is becoming increasingly fragmented, and impairment of the capacity to sustain deep connections with others has become one of the most frequent problems encountered in psychotherapy today—if, that is, the therapy endeavors to delve deeper than the surface where the symptoms of anxiety and depression associated with these problems lie.

It appears that the early decades of the twenty-first century are witnessing developments far beyond the self-conscious suffering of *alienation* first described by sociologists studying urban life in the early 1960s. An increasingly common adaptation, which perhaps helps alleviate such self-conscious suffering is a chronic state of distractedness and sensory shutdown to which Berman (2000) refers using the unflattering term “dullardism.” Addressing the sensory shutdown, Pierce (2002, pp. 109–112) cites studies at the University of Tübingen, Germany, which suggest that individuals who were born before 1949 were capable of distinguishing three times as many sounds as people who were born after 1969. A similar drop was also reported in the capacity for distinguishing shades of color. Peirce also quotes research that suggests an increase in the brain’s capacity to tolerate dissonance and noise or store opposing and contradictory information without creating a synthesis. What in some circles is lauded as a shift toward a more inclusive and tolerant “both/and” thinking may, thus, in fact be, in some cases at least, simply a lack of awareness of the dissonance or contradiction. Desensitization or dullardism is an adaptation both in our senses and in our thinking to contemporary urban and suburban life, which itself is an adaptation to, if not an appendage of, a global economic machine cranked up to ever-higher speed by high-tech developments. These developments have transformed the urban and suburban spaces in which people spend their days and nights into human-made enclosures with round-the-clock artificial lighting in which people are more likely to be interacting with information transmitted digitally through computer screens or mobile devices than they are with other humans.

A process that has intensified in our times and creates loops of elaboration and further fragmentation in human consciousness is what I have called “hyper-reflexivity” (Puhakka 1992). It refers to the tendency of consciousness to reflect upon itself and again reflect upon the reflecting self, thus generating an endless hall of mirrors. When hyper-reflexivity is exercised in a high-tech environment of human-made, often intelligent, devices, the hall of mirrors is greatly aggravated by the ever-tightening mutual feedback loop between mind and environment that allows little room for a relationship with a genuine “other.” In such a hall of mirrors, subjects turn-into-objects-turn-into-subjects in a proliferation that has no end point. In contemporary high-tech societies, there is a widespread externalization of this process in the endless generation of new automatized, computing, and robotic devices which, though “objects” in themselves, take on the role of “subject” in interacting with other objects and even human subjects. Parallel to this development is an increased psychological objectification of the human subject through self-reflective loops whereby the self now objectifies itself and becomes “other” to itself, twice removed, even thrice and indefinitely more times removed, from the original “other” that was nature. When the subject then identifies with what it has objectified, confusion about what is subject and what is object reaches a new level, and relating to other people as subjects becomes increasingly difficult. One consequence of this is the trend among children and adults in high-tech communities toward experiencing human-made intelligent devices such as robots as equivalent or even preferable to human subjects as caregivers, companions, or therapists (Healy 1991; Turkle 2012). Another consequence may be the increased objectification of the interiority

of one's own mind, perhaps in extreme cases leading to the erasure of subjectivity altogether. Psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas (1987) has dubbed such an extreme development "normotic illness" (p. 135)—an illness which he characterizes as the polar opposite of "psychotic illness" that could be an emerging phenomenon reflecting the commodified lifestyles of our contemporary world.

Another phenomenon endemic to our digital age, which contributes to the fragmentation of contemporary consciousness and self-experience is the stark absence of transitional, in-between spaces and times in people's lives. Something is either there or not. The "on-off" nature of electronic transactions is mirrored in human interactions: no time to linger, no time to say goodbye. Here is a therapist's description of the end of a psychotherapy session—a delicate moment in an endeavor devoted to healing the ruptures of a psyche:

As the end of the hour approaches, I feel myself preparing for the impending goodbye. The sequence has become familiar and predictable, but it unsettles nonetheless. My patient will not exit through my office door; rather, I press a button on the computer, shutting down a video connection that transports words and images over thousands of miles. Maria's face vanishes in an instant. No bags or jacket are retrieved. No footsteps recede onto the street. The discontinuities of the sequence reverberate. It feels more like a disappearance than a departure. (Harlem 2010, pp. 460–461)

This description of a session that ends in such a sudden yet unavoidable "disappearance" is particularly poignant given that it reverberates with a central theme of Maria's life experience as an exile. Harlem explores exile not only as a migratory experience but also as a dissociative state that occurs when the gaps between appearances cannot be bridged by memory. The person is then exiled from part of herself. Such states of exile are perhaps not so uncommon today but are another expression of the increasingly pervasive fragmentation of human psyche and self-experience.

Having reviewed some of the many ways in which alienation, sensory and emotional shutdown, and fragmentation characterize contemporary consciousness in urban high-tech environments, it is important to acknowledge that the fragmentation and crumbling of structures—both environmental and internal to the psyche—also present unprecedented opportunities for recovering the consciousness that has been enmeshed and lost in those structures. It seems reasonable to assume that our brains, which have not substantially changed in the past ten or twenty thousand years, retain the capacity for the kind of diffuse yet alert attention which in simpler times may have characterized people's relationship with nature. What humans today or in the future will do with this capacity is, of course, up for grabs. But a reminder that it exists and can be reawakened, I think, is timely in the face of the aforementioned developments.

The recent growth of interest in meditative practices among people in many walks of life in the USA and elsewhere adds an interesting footnote—perhaps more than a footnote—to this conversation. While many meditative and other spiritual practices simply offer a reprieve from the stresses of daily life, some, especially in the Zen practice traditions, seem designed to recover and rehabilitate this very capacity for attention that is diffuse or spacious while alert and for a self-other connection with the surrounds that is more fluid, even to the point where the separation between the two is momentarily gone (Puhakka 1998, 2007).

Encounters with Nature: Phenomenological Explorations

Returning now to the inquiry into the relationship between consciousness and nature, I will start with a vignette which may strike the reader as unusual or extreme in some way. My rationale for introducing it here is similar to James's. He believed that the study of the unusual or extreme can provide a magnifying glass that brings to relief essential features of a phenomenon he was studying across varieties of experience and context. Accordingly, the essential features of the experiences to be described may resonate with the reader's own experiences, however different the settings of the experiences may be. The following vignette refers to a personal experience of mine, and the foregoing observation regarding meditation may have a bearing as a contextual factor, as I have engaged in such practice (Zen) for a number of years.

Vignette 1

I had returned to a place in Finland that had been a kind of orienting spot for me throughout my childhood until my late teens when I left the country for the US. The place was where three generations of my family had spent the summer months every year without fail. After moving to the US, I returned as often as I could, always in the summer, always to that place. Visitors to the place often expressed a sense of mysterious power or energy there, and many became friends for life afterwards. The longing I felt for the place when not there had been visceral and disturbing, outrageously primitive like a tug of an umbilical cord.

On this particular day I rowed my boat out on the lake. After a mile or so of rowing I came to the familiar granite cliffs which rose up almost vertically from the shore. As so many times before, the two hawks who made their nest at the top took to flight and noisily let me know this was their domain. I whistled back at them and, ignoring their claim, pulled to the shore. The flat rock I remembered from previous summers was there, a seat inviting me to sit. I accepted the invitation and, with my back to the cliff wall, looking out to the calm water in which small islands seemed to float just above the shimmering surface, I sat to meditate. Within minutes I felt a call from behind. At first I ignored it, but it intensified until I was compelled to turn around and face the cliff wall. The brightness and aliveness of the colors and textures of the myriad lichens and mosses and small bushy plants that were growing on it startled me. The vibrancy kept intensifying and the textures began to reveal detail within detail endlessly. Then the vibrancy turned to movement like breathing, and the movement grabbed hold of my own breathing even as I felt every cell of my body vibrating, ecstatically responding to what now felt like the breathing of the cells of the lichens and the moss and the granite rock itself. Those cells seemed to be speaking directly to the cells of my body, saying without words, "you are ours!" Loudly, wordlessly, I protested. But it seemed my will had no say in this.

For all my love for and comfort with nature, this was profoundly unsettling, and it took some time for me to come to terms with what had happened on that day. Later I thought of our neighbor, also now a summer visitor, on the other side of the straits from our place whom we occasionally visited. He had moved to Argentina as a young man and became a successful industrialist there. But every summer he returned and dragged his reluctant and mystified Argentinian wife along to the cold, rainy summers and rugged, inhospitable surroundings of his ancestral home. On that day my cosmopolitan pride was humbled. I no longer laughed at him nor made excuses for myself.

The sort of powerful connection to a particular land and surrounds evident in this vignette may be unfamiliar to people who grew up in places removed from natural wilderness, such as urban or suburban, even agricultural environments. The evoca-

tive power of a particular place has been acknowledged by ecopsychologists (e.g., Simpson 2002). But Vignette 1 highlights certain essential features of the intimacy of the original self–other encounter between consciousness and nature which is accessible to all people in any natural environment. In other encounters I had with nature later on in environments, were very different from the one in which I grew up, experiences of similar intensity, aliveness, and intimacy spontaneously occurred. In these experiences, the peculiar and unsettling claim of ownership by a particular land was absent, but other features of the experience described earlier were present.

The following condensation describes an experience which occurred frequently while I was driving on coastal Highway 1 North toward San Francisco through a mountainous area of steep shale bluffs called “Devil’s Slide” (appropriately named for the rainy season mud slides which occasionally took part of the highway with them down the mountainside).

Vignette 2

The view from the road to the ocean was spectacular, but my eyes were drawn to the hardy brush and Monterey cypress amidst the multicolored steep shale rock formations which approached and passed by. The extraordinary vibrancy of their colors and textures arrested my gaze, drawing it into their depths. The green colors had infinite variation of shades, and it seemed that each shade gave way to multitudes of others. I now saw that the rocks were similarly shimmering with infinite variations of shades of beige, rusty red and grey. My gaze was drawn deeper into a vibratory movement of texture and color, of textures within textures, of colors within textures within colors that seemed to have no end point but kept revealing ever finer forms and structures, of cells and even perhaps of molecules. But this movement was not happening only “out there;” it was happening as much “in here;” flowing into the interiors of my body as it was flowing out into the interiors of the surrounds I was passing by, until there seemed to be just one continuous, vibratory movement. “Self” was at one end of it and “other” was at the other, but really there was just one movement with no separate entities. The feeling of this movement was of ecstatic aliveness, and it lingered for hours.

In my later reflections, I dubbed this experience “3-D perception” because of the horizontal depth dimension just described. This horizontal depth extending “backward,” so to speak, to the insides of one’s bodily felt experience as much as “forward” into the interiors of the object of perception seems to me to be the essential feature of a self–other boundary that is porous and fluid and allows for an intimate, nourishing exchange. Such an exchange is alive and ecstatic. Because the claim of ownership was absent, I was certain that this kind of experience of horizontal depth was not restricted to the particular surroundings in which I had first taken note of it. Indeed, subsequently I have been aware of it in a variety of natural surroundings.

But does it only happen in natural surroundings? Why not also in artificial or human-made surroundings, such as urban high rises or airplanes? Why not with objects such as painted walls, steel structures, or glass bowls? I invite my reader to inquire into these questions in his or her own experience. When I explored them in human-made surroundings and with manufactured objects, the horizontal depth failed to present itself. For example, when driving along Devil’s Slide, I shifted my gaze from the rocks or the trees to a car in front of me, I saw a flat surface of solid color which did not open up to depths behind it (even with the reflection of the sun light adding variation on the surface). This is not to say others might not see into

depths behind the surfaces of some human-made objects; I certainly would not rule out such a possibility.¹ Yet, I remain convinced that a horizontal depth perception as described in Vignette 2 is much more readily accessible in natural environments than in artificial ones.

There may be a reason why nature is conducive to such horizontal depth perception. The processes of transformation in nature are continuous, so that, as William James noted, between any two things there is always something else. And more important, *within any one thing there is always another*; thus, shades within shades of color, structures within structures of form. By contrast, human-made objects, especially in our contemporary world, tend to be discontinuous, with clearly defined colors and forms. Even when gradients of color and shading and structures within structures are present, these are finite and limited in number. Human-made objects tend not to awaken our perception or sensitivities beyond a certain customary, “two-dimensional” range. They, thus, do not call us out of ourselves into the environment. If anything, the intensity of the impact of bright artificial lights and neon colors and the ever-present hum of machinery and other urban noises tend to have us withdraw self-protectively farther into ourselves or perhaps seek relief from distraction; in short, to escape into “dullardism.”

Nature As Healer: Psychoanalytic Considerations

How does an alienated, fragmented, and confused consciousness have genuine concern for nature—or even for itself? The sad truth which we witness everywhere is, of course, that it does not and cannot—for itself or for anything else. A parent who is lost in the hall of mirrors or consumed by conflicts, fears, and confusion cannot love and care for his or her infant, and just so it does not appear likely that humanity in its alienated state will devote itself to the welfare of nature. I believe that ecopsychologists have it right when they say it is not we who will heal nature but nature will heal us—the premise underlying the various environmental and wilderness therapies which claim considerable success. Yet, in many cases, it may not be so simple; the patient may not be able to avail the healing that nature offers without first reaching into the deeper recesses of his or her individual psyche where experiences of insecurity, alienation, and shutdown have been internalized and crystallized into complexly layered structures during the growing-up years.

Delving into the deep and shadowy recesses of the psyche takes us to psychoanalytic considerations. But first, a caveat is in order: historically, psychoanalytic theories—as most other psychotherapies—have been cut off from the natural

¹ Human art objects may be a case in point, because they can call us out. But do they call us out in the same way or for the same reasons as nature does? I suspect not, but I confess I do not know this with certainty. The subject of art is complex, and what, if anything, it may share with nature in its power to awaken horizontal depth perception and a sense of intimacy with one's surrounds, I will leave for those who are more knowledgeable about the subject than I to ponder.

environment and, thus, have contributed to the legitimation and normalization of the separation of consciousness from nature. However, psychoanalytic theories have a great deal to say about what might be called “vertical depth” of the human psyche, as distinct from the “horizontal depth” of the self–other relationship discussed earlier. The vertical depth in these theories refers to structures and potentials within the psyche that have developed over time. This depth, of course, reflects the developmental course of the complex forms of alienation and fragmentation described earlier and so contains the obstacles that get in the way of intimacy with nature. But within this depth also lie the wellsprings of healing and capacity for intimacy including openings through which nature enters the psyche—openings that may be potential or may be actual but forgotten.

The parallels with nature as “mother” in indigenous mythologies and world-views are compelling and well documented. The mutuality and reciprocity in both kinds of self–other relationships have inspired psychologists and educators to look to nature for support for healthy psychological development (see, e.g., Wohlwill 1983; Katcher 2002). Of particular interest here is a recent unpublished phenomenological study of seven individuals deprived of consistent human nurturing early in life who formed restorative relationships with nature (Michael 2006). The study found that as children the participants were spontaneously drawn to and sought support from nature (when access was there), which provided them with the reciprocity, attunement, and mirroring that was mostly lacking in their lives. These experiences appeared to provide a sense of grounding, of being authentic or real, and may have contributed to the participants’ capacity for care and compassion. Feelings of being “authentic” or “real” or able to care emerge in the context of relationship and thus, underscore the capacity for relatedness as being inseparable from the self-experience of being real or authentic.

But how exactly does nature enter into the psyche to nourish its capacity for relationship? Pondering this question has not been part of psychoanalytic theories even up to the present, and so I am stepping into largely uncharted territory here. I will do it only in a preliminary way, suggesting parallels and some actual shared features, without attempting full articulation (which is beyond the scope of this chapter). I will draw from the object relations psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott who, like other representatives of the British School, saw “ego-relatedness” rather than “self-esteem,” which in the USA is more commonly cited, as being foundational for mental and emotional health. For Winnicott, the role of the mother as the primary caregiver was central for human psychological development.

Winnicott talked about two closely related initial functions the mother or caregiver performs in the early developmental stages of infancy where he saw the human psyche as being in a state of largely unstructured, unformed stream of consciousness (Winnicott 1965). These are *holding* (and closely related *handling*) and *containing* (Davis and Wallbridge 1981). Holding and handling provide the most important interface of infant and environment in the sensations of skin contact between mother and infant, which in the infant’s experience, initially blends and connects more than separates or demarcates a boundary. When holding and handling

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