Going Away

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This paper examines some of the effects on peoples' personalities and relationships of going away and settling in new places. Mobility has always been an important element in man's adaptive equipment. Modern technology has made travel so much easier that increasingly people spend long periods of their lives far from their birthplaces and often in quite different cultures. Men use their ability to move away—or even to return, to cope with the physical world and to adapt to difficulties in their lives with others. Inevitably such movements change the shape, content and quality of their personalities.

At first after a man has left his home, the old places and people continue to be more active in his mind than the new, often accompanied by intense longings to be reunited with them. But sooner or later he makes friends and becomes involved with the new place. Gradually his interests and preoccupations come to differ from those of the people he left behind. Nevertheless he remains himself—at his mind's core he depends still on the people, experiences and features of his home and of his belonging there, to sustain a secure sense of who and what he is.

After the move, the exile and the people at home continue to develop and change independently, and in time become somewhat disconnected, slightly strange to each other in the same way as happens when a language is transplanted. Such changes occur far less with a place. The hills and countryside and coast remain as before. It is therefore easier for the exile to rely on his memories of place than of people for his emotional sustenance, and as a consequence he becomes more aware of the other-than-human aspects of his earlier world.

Furthermore, going away leads to different consequences for a man's human and non-human experience. He can reproduce the old life with people in the new place, because people do not differ greatly from one to the other. He eventually finds new friends. But places can differ so profoundly that it is no longer possible to have certain sorts of experiences of place at all. Such

deprivations and losses inevitably increase awareness of the non-human world, both the old and the new.

Finally, the exile's memories of home, people and places come into relation with the new. His estimates and understandings of earlier things are inevitably modified by them. It is a continuation of a lifelong process, but now that he is away his developing relationship with his home is entirely an internal process, takes place wholly within the sphere of his imagination and is spurred by his sense of loss.

Going away then is an important act in relation to both people and place but it often results in one's becoming more aware of the country left behind, and subsequent personality development may increase awareness of, and dependence on, the non-human aspects of earlier life for a significant part of one's continuing sense of identity. Exile tends to increase consciousness of relationships with that environment having developed in parallel with those with people, and having been an equally important, though perhaps unrecognized, aspect of experience, from earliest years.

When he was 36, 10 years earlier, X had left A, a small Commonwealth country, and had come to London to further his academic career. Until then he had lived in the town where he was born and educated, in close association with a large well-established gregarious family in which he was an admired only son. His father was a lovable but domineering man who had seemed fearsome to X as a small child, but had later shared many of his interests. Mother was a warm person, but anxious, and submissive to father. X felt he had learned to be mildly apprehensive in

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practical situations and to be dependent on, and wary of, authority figures. In his late 20s he married a wife who was emotionally strong and reliable and they had had two children. Living in a foreign country had brought them closer to each other. Some years later father died suddenly. Mother came to live with them until she too died, several years before the analysis began.

Although he felt permanently settled in Britain, X thought of himself still as an A-er, and much of his imaginative and dream life as well as waking thoughts referred to his home country and people. He thought of present experiences 'reaching him through a thick layer of memories'. He said he lived in London in fact, but in his mind, mostly in A. Nevertheless he considered himself contented, he was reasonably successful in his teaching and had a small income from writing stories which were always set in his home place.

His father's death saddened and upset him very much. He would have travelled home for the funeral but could not afford it. He was surprised by how much he missed him then and was still deeply moved when he thought of him. He had been sad but not as upset when mother died. Since then his feelings about his home country had changed. Although he still felt he belonged there he did not wish to return even to visit. The town where they had lived seemed an empty place with his parents no longer in it. Though his sisters, with whom he corresponded regularly, still lived there, it was the town and surrounding country that drew his thoughts most. His relatives seemed changed and talked of doings with which he had lost touch. He felt much more about the country than when he had lived there and regretted chances he had wasted of knowing it better. He tried to do similar things in the high country here but the places were second best.

It was in his imaginative life, reflected in his writing and in his day and night dreams, that his preoccupations were most obvious. In his analysis he examined in detail memories of the town where he had lived and the beach where his family had a cottage. He was convinced these researches would help him understand better his experience of living. It seemed plain that the feelings he attached to his earlier world had their origins in his family life, in the conflicts and difficulties he had felt there, and that this protracted working over of his memories of places was an integral part of his grieving for the loss of both parents. Although he accepted this, it seemed easier for him to do it this way. We considered the possibility that he had long before acquired the habit of working out his feelings about people in this way, and that there was an advantage for him in being able to think in relation to such concrete objective and graspable things. Besides, he pointed out that though he had lost the places, they existed still in his home country and could be regained if he chose, something he could not do with his parents.

The same tension between love and fear in his feelings about father seemed implicit in his behaviour towards his country, both in that he had left it while still insisting he loved it, and that he had been better able to feel that love once away. Although he had come to love his father before he grew up, his death

had diminished the force of his ambivalence enough to allow a moderate idealization to cover it just as had happened with the country. His fears of authorities came to awareness with other situations and people, but only in dreams could he directly experience the terror that lurked behind the loving.

For instance, he dreamt

> *that father was hugging him, but his gladness turned to panic as he realized that a pressure he felt at his back was a knife that was being forced into his chest .*

He struggled desperately awake.

This scene seemed to take place in the dark back room of the seaside cottage where he had slept as a boy, separated from his parents' bedroom only by a thin partition. Various aspects of his sexual fantasies in relation to both parents are obvious. He was able to connect such a betrayal or punishment with what he feared from his country and countrymen should he dare to expose himself to their criticism through his writing.

He gave various reasons for coming away—that London is a larger and more stimulating place and that there are better opportunities for advancement here, but it emerged that he also hoped to escape from inhibiting and threatening influences that originated in his first relationships, and the particular responses of compliance and non-assertion that he had used to try to solve the problems created by father, as well as his underlying aggressive reaction to him. Throughout

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his life, projection of this aggression had caused mildly irrational persecuted responses at times. Such feelings came to the surface in a dramatic way in a limited series of attacks of uncontrolled anxiety during the course of the analysis. He had had quarrels with authorities at his work, with his wife, and was dissatisfied with his analyst. These reactions seemed to reflect reactivated fears about the loss of his father's support by his death. He had feelings of rage for which he could find no reasonable expression. This period of disturbance was remarkably brief but proved to be a nodal point in his treatment. Afterwards he appeared to have a better control of his aggression and to be more effectively assertive in his relationships and work.

These episodes of anxiety led to an examination of his dependence on people and things. Everything in England seemed foreign, without the warm home

quality that he believed would satisfy and calm him. He began the detailed evocation of those home places that led to an understanding of their function in his life. In particular the beach holidays and all that derived from them had served as an alternative away-from-father world from early childhood, partly because father took some of his holidays elsewhere, partly because everything was freer there. The activities that slowly developed out of that life were a love of energetic sports, of literature and of music. The romanticism in his feelings for the women he had loved also had many connexions with these experiences. The drives towards these activities derived partly from the need to find alternative fields of action in which he could be free of father's influence, but also from the need to express the strong feelings of affection that life with his parents and family otherwise generated.

A secure connexion with mother made these manoeuvres possible both in childhood and adolescence, and the basic reliability of her holding seemed the ultimate source of this quality in the country. In adolescence, father's intellectual and musical interests allowed an apparent reconciliation which continued till his death. Understanding these things led to grieving in which guilt and sadness for having deserted his family and homeland centred on his father's having died without their meeting again. Such feelings and their partial resolution underlay his eventual return home for several months to work in his old university. Examination of his experiences there formed the main part of the last year of his analysis.

CONNEXIONS BETWEEN RELATIONS WITH PEOPLE AND PLACE

The general features of this parallel development have been examined by Searles (1960), and can be summarized as follows:

Intimations of meaningfulness investing self or others with intentions and activities in the self towards others, and vice versa, are generated in early relationships and projected onto the non-human world. Such learning initiates processes of psychological separation in conceptions of the world—separation of self from others, people from things, and self from things. An increasing experience of separation and its consequences is a main element in the maturing of relationships with people and things. An individual's sense of separateness develops in parallel with the increasing complexity of his personality development, as does his sense of individual identity.

The inevitable generation of significant negative as well as positive feelings— the development of feelings of conflict and ambivalence towards human

objects, brings the need to develop capacities to integrate those feelings with each other in order to resolve the tension between them sufficiently to be able to relate effectively with most people and situations. Struggles to achieve these aims—to achieve the translation from schizoid to depressive position (Klein, 1952), are central to development in childhood and adolescence. Throughout this time the world apart from people presents itself as a relatively neutral alternative area of action and reaction where all the problems of the human world can be expressed, experienced and worked on in relative freedom; where the consequences are less than real (in the human sense) where one's childish or adolescent weaknesses or limitations do not matter, and where skills of all kinds can be slowly matured.

Winnicott's (1971) concept of transitional space can be extended to include the whole non-human world (as well as the play aspects of the human world), or that part of it that is

available to the child or adolescent, and activities that are possible within it can be thought of as extensions of the play that begins with first not-me-not-mother objects. Clearly the non-human world can serve this purpose at any stage of a person's development and remains permanently available for 'relief of tension, the fostering of self-realization, increasing feelings of reality, and as a place for experimentation' (Searles, 1960).

Where an individual's maturing is reasonably unfettered, developments in either area will compliment, reinforce and enrich each other. If there are serious difficulties or blocks to development in one area, the other may be turned to as an alternative, allowing some satisfactory life but not the mutual enrichment that is normally possible.

Such opportunities are essential if full development of creative, aesthetic and loving abilities are to be achieved. It is not possible to separate the two (human and non-human) developments. At the very time of adolescence when sexual capacities and the ability to love people are maturing, awareness of the natural world increases, and one begins to love those things in it that were not previously consciously perceived. The complete evolution of these parallel developments is their eventual integration into one coherent whole, where love of things contributes as much to love of people as the reverse. Searles defines a continuing *relatedness* to the non-human environment as the distinguishing characteristic of a mature individual's behaviour. By this he means a proper awareness not only of that environment and of one's connexions with it, but of one's own human separateness and differences from it.

MATURATION IN RELATING

Searles's ideas relate to the maturation of relationships. He maintains that adequate development in each sphere, the human and non-human, are necessary if all the potentialities of a person are to be realized.

The main elements in maturing of relationships, human and non-human, may be summarized:

Separation and differentiation from the objects leading to adequate individuation of the self and independence and inter-dependence of and with them. An increasing capacity to have feelings appropriate to that separation—grievings for loss and sorrow for ambivalence. The ability to have feelings consequent on that separation—individuation; love and concern for the object. An increasing capacity to perceive the objects in relation to the self and the rest of the world; to appreciate their significance in their contexts. Being able to perceive, experience (i.e. relate these perceptions to all one's other perceptions), and appreciate the actual characteristics of the objects. This implies the development of sophistication and discrimination in those perceptions and understandings, and the ability to take pleasure in the objects. Ultimately, the attainment of such a degree of selflessness in relation to the objects that they may be given up as indicating an end of dependence and sufficient internalization to allow dispensing with their concrete external representations.

If the exile has achieved a reasonable independence of his original objects, then his deciding to go away probably indicates a conviction that he cannot develop his relationship with them further or that he does not wish to. However, people who leave often go away with someone or even several people from the old life. In fact this is quite likely if past maturing has been adequate. This will not fundamentally change the psychological circumstances of the going, but makes the change less abrupt. Instead of taking the old relationships in an internalized form, some are taken as real people. They are part of the old real world still available in the new place and can be a source of comfort and reassurance during the time of adaption to the change. But as with the internalized relationships, they will be subject to altering and developing forces. If these transported relationships remain significant they will have incorporated in them the important different elements of the new life, which is the same as occurs with the relationships taken away only in memory. In the latter cases, this modification may be freer because it can take place wholly in the imagination. Going away may actually facilitate the experiencing of one's original objects, human or otherwise, as one's own possessions, and subject to

one's own needs. This illusion (because that is what it is), may be reinforced by one's being the only possessor, the only knower,

in the new place, of the old people and things. William Wordsworth (1798) wrote, 'How oft, in spirit, have I turned to thee, O Sylvan Wye: thou wanderer through the woods ...' and Housman (1896)

> *Into my heart an air that kills*
>
> *From yon far country blows:*
>
> *What are those blue remembered hills,*
>
> *What spires, what farms are those?*

It can be maintained that if one's object relations have developed to a sufficient degree, then the decision to go away is a logical further step in that process; that such maturity allows the attainment of the intentions of the act of leaving; that those intentions are to link oneself (containing the sum of one's original experience, as secure possessions), with the human and non-human elements of a new place, one that is quite apart from the parents' place and from the parents.

Despite all the positive features of such moves it seems likely that there will remain in each one who makes the decision, some awareness of inhibitions deriving from experience with parents and a wish to escape from them. If any positive going away implies the valuing of the objects that are being abandoned, then as well as a gain to be welcomed, leaving brings losses that must be borne. In an important sense, the objects are made as if dead and all the work of grieving first described by Freud (1917) must be done before and after leaving. Like other grieving it is never complete, though eventually it is sufficiently so to allow normal living in which the loss mostly is no longer painful. Nevertheless, however long one is away, from time to time, in response to this or that, the process is revived with sadness, regret and feelings of emptiness, and longing for the earlier place and people.

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EMIGRANTS

Emigrants are noted for their energy and confidence—at least those who left to further their careers. The factors contributing to that greater confidence may be summarized as follows:

Escape from the inhibitions of the parents and their derivatives, that operated at home. For example the difficulty in being effective as a person where one has been a helpless child, and having to contend with memories of that relative insufficiency in other people. Also the unconscious sexual meanings of being potent where one's parents were before. The change of the primary objects to being wholly internal ones, wholly possessable and integratable and with which one can wholly identify. Because one is the only possessor of them one is imbued with the power and excitement of such possession. The rich possibilities of cross-fertilization at abstract or imaginative levels between the original, now wholly internalized objects and the fresh objects of the new world using capacities from the original world with no inhibiting parental presence. One is released to react to the excitement and interest evoked by new people and places, the novelty that stimulates curiosity and the challenges that demand an energetic response. The act of emigration might be understood as having converted the individual's whole world into a play or 'transitional space' (Winnicott, 1971), where the freedom to be himself and to develop is not inhibited by the unconscious elements derived from primary experience or that are associated in his mind with his incompleteness or the years of his childhood. (More simply, emigration is 'playing' at getting away from mother and father, and their derivatives, so that one can more freely be oneself.)

In London, X had felt some loss of inhibition in that he was somewhat more effective in work and had begun to write, but as an attempted solution of his difficulties, going away needed to be reinforced by some resolution of his dependency that derived from the non-recognition of his anger. Although he felt easier in his marriage and work after that, it was in his writing that greater freedom was most apparent. There he felt able to join the personal qualities of his memories of A with the intellectual vigour, sophistication and long literary tradition that exists in England. He combined ideas of his own that were fresh and vigorous with elements that were mature and developed in this culture. He thought that this often happened with creative people.

But on what a delicate tissue of remembered relationships the coherence and effective functioning of the personality depends! The innocent abroad has launched himself with very slender means. If the attitudes he meets in the new place

are merely indifferent then he must, but can, depend upon the warmth of his home objects; but if he is shown hostility then his links with them are severely tested. The indescribably disturbing feelings that can be the result of such

experiences signal shifts at one's very foundations, when the reliability of the object world is threatened. G. M. Hopkins (1883) refers to such:

> *O the mind, mind has mountains: cliff of fall*
>
> *Frightful, sheer, no-man-fathomed. Hold them cheap*
>
> *Man who ne'er hung there.*

If going away 'for good' is a commonplace, so also is coming home after many years. It is not easy to return in such a manner as accurately to reflect the reality of having gone and stayed. There are so many temptations to steer between: to sentimentality—an unreal expectation of reunion with an ideal; to arrogance—to boast of the new place and what one has done there; to regression—so that one becomes a child again. It is a more significant event for him who returns than for those to whom he returns. The returning exile realizes how much he originally denied so that he could leave, and how difficult it was. The pains were covered at the time by the positive energies required to go and establish himself elsewhere. To return inevitably sets the grieving in motion again, the old tensions arising from his ambivalence, the old hurts; his parents dead now, so no reparation possible there; the failures, shames, embarrassments and trivialities of his past that inevitably attach to the place. But to balance these are the delights of remembered places through which lost feelings can be revived and old friends he had forgotten who have not changed so much as to be unrecognisable.

There are so many different ways of returning. James Baxter (1958) the New Zealand poet, 'came to the Rock, asking forgiveness', and joined the miseries of his northern experiences with the homely familiars of his Otago life. In his poem 'The Return' he contrasts losing his way 'up North' with the real losses he can experience at home so that he can be 'delivered from a false season, To the natural Winter of the heart ...' That is if he has to accept the wastage of his life, then it can become real and bearable if felt alongside the loved things of his childhood places. Then he might feel whole again.

> *Delivered from a false season*
>
> *To the natural Winter of the heart*
>
> *One may set foot with the full weight of man*
>
> *Of shell and stone and seabird's skeleton.*

This is a fine statement of the achievement through return, of an integration of the self with the natural world.

William Wordsworth (1798), returning to the Wye Valley after a long absence, was able to achieve a synthesis of his love for the place and his love of a woman. Henceforth the natural world is imbued with his feelings about people.

> *... I have learned to look on nature, not as in the hour*
>
> *of thoughtless youth; but hearing often times*
>
> *the still sad music of humanity,*
>
> *Nor harsh nor grating, though of ample power*
>
> *To chasten and subdue.*

Going away and staying had eventually led to an almost complete separation of X's images and memories of home from their origins. They had become 'pure thought', it seemed to him, and this was the end result of grieving. Returning allowed once again the experiencing of these elements in the external world by their re-projection. The experience of returning was heightened by these projected elements being imbued with the energy of the grieving, i.e. by the complexity of meaning and significance that had come to be attached to them in his thoughts.

A parallel could be perceived between the separation that was acted through by going away and that resulted in the complete internalization of certain object relationships, and the process of making a world of one's own, one's own play area, in the mind.

X had come to a full awareness of his depressive concern for having abandoned his objects, so that returning was a reparative act. These impulses further heightened the intensity of the experience. Reparation consisted of a reunion of himself (and what he felt he contained, now confidently his own), with the representations of the original objects—his remaining family, friends and colleagues, and the place. It was a symbolic restitution of what he had originally taken away but now felt able to relocate with the parents and their derivatives without fear of loss or subversion. It was an act of gratitude that in its integrative quality represented a considerable development in his capacity to love.

If going away for good is a manoeuvre whereby the objects become as if dead to one, then returning is in some way cheating. If a grieving process preceded and followed the departure and has apparently reached some sort of end point of acceptance of the rupture and proper taking up of the new life, what are the implications of a late return? Psychologically, surely, one cannot reverse a death that has been mourned? The objects have been given up, allowed to be dead. Though such a process of grieving can never be complete and will be revived to some extent on returning, the return of someone who has really gone for good must be mostly a new departure, a new start and the making of new relationships. He is now mostly an 'away' person coming to a new place though still in part a home person returning. The two must be combined, but now with the objects and experiences of the distant place to link with the home people and places. However, the fact that the objects have been resurrected from a dead place in one's imagination may explain the intense quality of their perception and that their contemplation is such a moving experience; that they symbolize the resurrection of those one has finally lost, or a sight of them in the underworld. Both emigration and returning are nine-day wonders. The traveller emerges into a new world and all his senses are alive to the experience. In time that sense of heightened living is lost. But before that happens some very intense experiences have been gone through. Such a time has been a period of maximum creative energy. In T. S Eliot's (1948)'Marina' a father is reunited with a long lost daughter.

> *What seas what shores what grey rocks and what*
>
> *islands*
>
> *What water lapping the bow*
>
> *And scent of pine and the wood thrush singing through*
>
> *the fog*
>
> *What images return*
>
> *O my daughter.*

Not only are the freshness and intensity of all sensual and intellectual experiences then responsible for such surges of creative energy, but also the sense of release into a play world of one's own, where one is carrying the strength and presences of the parents but has escaped once again from their controlling and inhibiting influences, as originally occurred when one left home.

Fully developed aesthetic responses which combine formal appreciation of what is beautiful with a realization of the relationship of the loved object to the whole created world must include awareness of one's ambivalence; of one's capacity to harm what one loves and how one has done so. To abandon voluntarily the people and places one loves, so that they become as if dead is surely an act for which there will afterwards be sadness and remorse. The tension between such loving and unloving feelings is a main ingredient of the mature emotional responses to things or people and is especially active on returning.

It is a fundamental feature of the development of one's personality then, gradually to increase the separation of self from objects of all sorts, and movements away from any place where one has settled are important events in that change. But it is also true that the more one separates from the objects of one's feeling the more they can become one's own, incorporated in the self but distinct, able to be perceived and loved for themselves but also more definitely possessions and sources of strength. Again from Eliot's 'Marina':

> *What is this face, less clear and clearer*
>
> *The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—*
>
> *Given or lent? More distant than stars and*
>
> *nearer than the eye ...*

After your parents have died, at times you feel you are your parents. It is the same with one's country, in another country.

There is a vast circular movement to be understood; that after long journeys, voyages of separation, one comes back to the original objects, more individual now in oneself, greatly changed but better able to love what was given in the beginning.

> *We shall not cease from exploration*
>
> *And the end of all our exploring*
>
> *Will be to arrive where we started*
>
> *And know the place for the first time.*
>
> *Through the unknown, remembered gate*
>
> *When the last of earth left to discover*

Is that which was the beginning ...

(Eliot, 1944).

SUMMARY

The psychological effects of moving away and settling in places distant from one's home are

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examined. There are important consequences of one's early object relations becoming as a result wholly internal and imaginative. Also, moving away increases awareness of and dependence on the early non-human environment for a continuing sense of identity.

The development of relationships with this non-human world as discussed by Searles is reviewed and summarized, and their contribution to maturing of personality discussed. The psychological situation of the voluntary emigrant is examined and the reasons for his traditional energy and confidence explored. Finally the implications of returns after long periods away are explored in the light of the understanding that successful emigration must have entailed adequate resolution of grief for loss of early objects. The theoretical material is amplified by a case study.

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