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Grażyna LUBOWICKA*

Women’s autonomy – the relationship with the mother in the view of Donald W. Winnicott and Luce Irigaray

Autonomia kobiety – relacja z matką w ujęciu Donalda W. Winnicotta i Luce Irigaray

Abstract

Introduction. The subject of this article is an analysis of the thoughts of Donald W. Winnicott and Luce Irigaray and the problem of autonomy, the question of how it is constructed from early childhood to adulthood. Both of these theories are related to Freud’s concept of psychoanalysis, which shows the stages of child development and emphasises the importance of childhood experiences on the development of the person and his or her autonomy, with particular emphasis on the importance of parents, the family, the mother, and the father. For all these theories, autonomy is underpinned by two stages: the close dependence of the child on the mother and the break with her, the separation, which allows the child to define his or her own identity, to individualise.

Aim. In analysing the development of the child and in the process of building autonomy,

* e-mail: grazyna.lubowicka@uwr.edu.pl

University of Wrocław, Faculty of Historical and Pedagogical Sciences, Institute of Pedagogy, Dawida 1, 54-238 Wrocław, Poland

Uniwersytet Wrocławski, Wydział Nauk Historycznych i Pedagogicznych, Instytut Pedagogiki, Dawida 1, 54-238 Wrocław, Polska

ORCID: 0000-0001-5988-112X

the aim of the article is to bring out the importance of the mother in both these stages: the symbiotic community and close interdependence with the child, and in the process of separation, the break with her, which are the conditions for autonomy.

Methods and materials. Critical subject literature review.

Results and conclusion. In describing the role of the mother arising from an analysis of Donald W. Winnicott's and Luce Irigaray's concepts, I mark their distancing from the assumptions of Freudian psychoanalysis and the cultural stereotypes associated with the image of the mother, the woman, while at the same time bringing out their closeness and similarity in that the relationship between mother and child is based on love. The mother, therefore, introduces autonomy and culture in the fullest way, providing basic experiences in the child's development, from symbiotic dependence through separation: love, trust, self-confidence, respect for separateness, which characterises basic relationships with relatives and in society.

Keywords: autonomy, mother, love, dependence, separation.

Abstrakt

Wprowadzenie. Przedmiotem artykułu jest analiza myśli Donalda W. Winnicotta i Luce Irigaray oraz problem autonomii – pytanie o sposób jej budowania od wczesnego dzieciństwa po dorosłość. Obie te teorie odniesiono do koncepcji psychoanalizy Z. Freuda, który ukazywał etapy rozwoju dziecka i podkreślał wagę doświadczeń z dzieciństwa na rozwój osoby i jej autonomii ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem znaczenia rodziców, rodziny, matki i ojca. We wszystkich tych teoriach podłożem autonomii są dwa etapy: ścisłej zależności dziecka od matki oraz zerwania z nią, separacji, co pozwala na samodzielne określanie własnej tożsamości i na indywidualizację.

Cel. Celem artykułu, poprzez analizę rozwoju dziecka i procesu budowania autonomii, było wydobywanie znaczenia matki na dwóch etapach: wspólnoty symbiotycznej i ścisłej współzależności z dzieckiem oraz w procesie separacji i zerwania z matką, co jest warunkiem uzyskania autonomii.

Metody i materiały. Przegląd i krytyczna analiza literatury przedmiotu.

Wyniki i wnioski. W opisie roli matki na bazie analizy koncepcji Donalda W. Winnicotta i Luce Irigaray zaznaczam ich oddalenie się od założeń freudowskiej psychoanalizy oraz kulturowych stereotypów związanych z obrazem matki i kobiety, a zarazem wydobywam ich bliskość i podobieństwo w tym, że relacja matki i dziecka oparta jest na miłości. Matka zatem w najpełniejszy sposób wprowadza w autonomię i w kulturę, dostarcza dziecku, od symbiotycznej zależności po separację, podstawowe doświadczenia: miłości, zaufania, wiary w siebie, szacunku dla odrębności, co charakteryzuje podstawowe relacje z bliskimi i w społeczeństwie.

Słowa kluczowe: autonomia, matka, miłość, zależność, separacja.

An important moment in the child's development, from a close bond with and dependence on the mother or parents to the transition to adulthood, is the child's acquisition of autonomy and therefore the construction of his or her identity and individualisation. The process of the child gaining autonomy has several important and characteristic stages: from close dependence in the mother-infant relationship, through partial independence in early childhood with the discovery of one's own individuality and identity, to the building of autonomy in late childhood and on entering adulthood, when the child begins to perceive himself against the background of the external world – cultural and social. In analysing the process of child development, I will focus particular attention on the role of the mother in the successive stages of the quest for autonomy.

Among the many theories of the development of the child and his or her self (identity), the starting point for the analysis of the autonomy process is the current of psychoanalysis and the currents that are its continuations, and among these I will discuss Donald Winnicott's concept in detail. This concept remains within psychoanalysis, is based on its assumptions, and therefore takes into account the identity of the person and defines it as the self. Furthermore, the approach of D. Winnicott's theory of object relations emphasises relationality, intersubjectivity, and relationships with loved ones in the process of identity formation. All these concepts, both Sigmund Freud's classical psychoanalysis and its various continuations and variants, are united by the recognition of the importance of early childhood experiences and the influence of the parent/guardian in the relationship with the child for the child's later maturity and the functioning of the adult self structure.

Based on D. Winnicott's concept of child development, I posed the problem of autonomy and the importance of the relationship with the mother, and in particular how the child moves from unity and close dependence on the mother to a gradual separation that begins the process of autonomy. However, as it is not difficult to see, in their analyses of the mother's role in the process of individualisation and autonomy of the child and then of the adult, D. Winnicott and especially Z. Freud, do not transcend traditional ways of thinking and remain in a patriarchal culture, as representatives of feminism would put it, in a world that is subject to unmasking and criticism by almost every feminist current:

Patriarchy is the power of the fathers: a familial-social, ideological, political system in which men, using force, direct pressure or through ritual, tradition, law, language, customs, etiquette, education and division of labour, decide what role women should or should not play; a system in which women are everywhere subordinated to men (Rich, 2000, p. 102).

In analysing the role of parents, caregivers or significant relatives in the development of autonomous identity, I would like to focus my attention on the role of the mother. This problem was conceptualised by D. Winnicott, emphasising particularly close dependence, love

and care in very early childhood and the bond of love in the subsequent process of separation and autonomy. The concept of D. Winnicott and his depiction of the mother-child relationship will then be confronted with contemporary feminist thought, and in particular with the depiction of the mother-daughter relationship presented by Luce Irigaray, whose theory is also – like that of D. Winnicott’s theory – a critique and modification of psychoanalysis. L. Irigaray’s treatment of the mother-child relationship is, like that of D. Winnicott’s, is relational and takes into account the identity and autonomy of the self in the relationship and, notably, she proposes a different solution to the Oedipus complex from Z. Freud’s conception, an interpretation that derives directly from feminist assumptions.

Both D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray highlight particularly important moments in the relationship between mother and child in the acquisition of autonomy – their mutual dependence and their subsequent separation. The fundamental issue will therefore be the role of the mother and the relationship in the formation of autonomy both during the stage of close bonding with the child and the stage of separation. The aforementioned researchers emphasise the mother’s role in the child’s development, particularly because of the relationship of love and the resulting care and nurturing. Dependency and separation in these two authors are described at different stages of development. D. Winnicott analyses early childhood, L. Irigaray takes up the stage described by Freudian psychoanalysis as Oedipal and then the stage of entering adulthood. D. Winnicott believes that autonomy is led to the building of a loving relationship with the mother while maintaining mutual independence. Also L. Irigaray emphasises that separation is the basis for a new mother-child relationship based on autonomy and togetherness. I will therefore outline the way autonomy is pursued in the concept of D. Winnicott and I will show the change in perspective on the mother-child relationship that L. Irigaray’s feminist theory proposes in the context of psychoanalytic theory. This feminist perspective takes into account how the child shapes her autonomy in the current culture, and more specifically, how the girl/daughter/woman shapes and can shape it. Based on L. Irigaray’s feminist perspective, I will primarily consider the mother-daughter relationship and the way in which a woman achieves autonomy, and then compare her solutions with D. Winnicott’s.

It is worth asking what the new feminist framing changes and demonstrates, and how it emphasises the particular manner and specific conditions of individualisation and autonomy of the girl/woman. This is important because the importance of the mother-daughter relationship, as Adrienne Rich (2000) states, “[...] has been downplayed or trivialised in the annals of patriarchy. [...] This cathexis that exists in the relationship between mother and daughter – important, distorted, abused – is a great unwritten story” (p. 311).

The problem of the child’s acquisition of autonomy situates both of these concepts on a common ground, that of Z. Freud’s theory of psychoanalysis, which focuses attention on developmental stages. The approach of D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray share a common ground, which is the psychoanalytic approaches, assuming object relations theory. The feminist perspective and in it the mother-daughter relationship will be confronted based

on two works by L. Irigaray: *And One Will Not Move Without the Other* and *Body-to-Body with the Mother*. The specificity of female autonomy and individuation that the feminist perspective introduces is interesting insofar as, as A. Rich (2000) argues:

Women are and have been both mothers and daughters, but have written very little on the subject. The vast majority of visual and literary images of motherhood reach us filtered through the collective or individual male consciousness. [...] We need to know what is worth salvaging from this cluster of images and thoughts if we are to better understand an idea so central to history, an opportunity that was taken away from mothers themselves in order to empower fathers (p. 108).

I will therefore present the process of identity formation and autonomy from the development of the infant and child's relationship with the mother through to adulthood as conceptualised by D. Winnicott, and then I will complement it with a description of the mother-daughter relationship according to L. Irigaray's assumptions about later stages of development. In view of L. Irigaray's proposal and her critique of psychoanalytic theory, it is, therefore, possible to ask whether it is legitimate to use the feminine point of view emphasised by feminism and whether bringing the mother-daughter relationship to the foreground allows us to see a particular way in which a woman achieves autonomy. It is also worth considering what the specificity of a woman's autonomy in a still patriarchal culture is.

Psychoanalysis: the break with the mother and the entry of the father

Since the common source of the concepts of both D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray is the psychoanalysis of Z. Freud – these concepts take into account the stages of child development described by him and experience based on the discharge of instinctual energy, i.e., the fulfilment of needs – I will first briefly outline the stages of child development outlined by psychoanalysis.

Psychoanalysis pays particular attention to the specificity of child development and the childhood period and its importance for the future adult psyche, in which the theories of Z. Freud: development, the transformation of the libido, as well as the resolution of the Oedipus complex. Among the heirs of Z. Freud, i.e., the authors of the various concepts of neo-psychoanalysis, there is also D. Winnicott, who in his theory of object relations addresses the problem of the relationship between the child and the caregiver/parent and its interactions and significance for the functioning of the structure of the adult self. D. Winnicott addresses the problem of the active role in the psyche of objects internalised in childhood (the adult in the relationship with the child constitutes such an object forming "self").

Z. Freud, in relation to the development of the human personality, presents the development of the self in psychosexual terms, passing through specific stages: oral, anal, oedipal, latency and genital. The names of most of these stages of development refer to the area of the body that is the primary source of gratification during a given period, due to the instinctive energy (drives), the so-called libido, that is moving at that time. This energy is sexual in nature and signifies a pleasurable physical experience. The sequence of its movement from one area of the body to another is orderly, but it is the level of maturity of a particular sphere that determines when a change will occur and the requirements of the next stage will be triggered. Each of these raises problems that must be overcome so that the development of the self can proceed properly.

In the first stage – the oral stage – which covers the period from birth to 12–18 months of age, the structure of the “self” is dominated by the sphere of the *id*, guided by the pleasure principle, while libidinal energy is concentrated around the mouth, which is an important source of gratification. The important activity at this time is sucking (passive, receptive phase) and biting (active, aggressive phase). This phase is addressed and analysed in detail in the neopsychoanalytic theory of D. Winnicott. For L. Irigay, on the other hand, the most relevant stage of child development for considering female autonomy is the oedipal phase.

In the Oedipal (phallic) stage, which lasts from the age of 3 to 5–6 years, the genital areas are the source of gratification for the child, and libidinal energy (drives) is concentrated in the genitals and feelings, which are already sexual. Important for the structure of the self is the Oedipus complex in boys and the Electra complex in girls, i.e., the sexual interest in the parent of the opposite sex. The positive solution to this complex in Z. Freud's view is that the child identifies with the parent of the same sex and consequently assimilates for life the gender role and the moral and social standards represented by the parents. In Z. Freud's conception, this is both a process of the formation of the *superego*, or conscience and the generational transmission of a system of values and beliefs. Through identification with a parent of the same sex, the child adopts into his or her own self the self of another person, whom he or she recognises as a model, assimilates his or her norms and attitudes as he or she enters the social world. According to Z. Freud, the Oedipus complex for the male child consists of a process during which a boy who feels a strong sexual desire for his mother gradually learns how to separate and differentiate himself from her, so that he identifies as a man with his own father instead of seeing him as a rival, and finally reaches the stage where his erotic instincts can be satisfied by a woman other than his mother. Z. Freud believed that the mother's infantile sexual desire causes the boy to feel anxious that his jealous father will punish him with (symbolic) castration. The positive solution to the Oedipus complex, then, is for the boy to abandon his relationship with his mother and to identify with his father, whose superiority and authority he recognises, and consequently to accept his father as his *superego*, to embrace his father's right. The starting point of psychoanalysis, then, is the acquisition of autonomy through the rupture of the relationship with the mother and its

replacement by the father together with the law (understanding of culture) that he represents. In Z. Freud's dominant conviction is that the relationship between mother and child is, from its nature, regressive, and unproductive, and that its continuation makes the child regressive, and removes the chance for autonomy, while the break with the mother and the relationship with the father introduces the child to the culture, to the symbolic order, and instils typically masculine behaviour in the boy: "Through the resolution of the Oedipus complex, the boy finds his way into the masculine world, the world of patriarchal law and order" (Rich, 2000, p. 275). The boy separates and differentiates himself from his mother and consequently internalises the culture and values of the patriarchy, because, as Z. Freud strongly emphasised, the mother cannot represent culture.

Similarly, in the dissolution of the Elektra complex in the girl (which psychoanalysis, and more specifically C. G. Jung, developed) there is a strong interest in her father. The daughter changes her object of interest from her mother to her father and, at the same time, begins to distinguish herself, to set herself apart and to mark her individuality. The father becomes a role model and the only man for his daughter, the girl needs closeness to her father, wants to play with him, imitates him. She begins to see her mother as a partner, a competitor and a threat to her relationship with her father, hence the desire to reject her and hostility.

In the case of both the Oedipus and the Electra complex, a separation takes place, that is, a move away from a close relationship with the mother through the introduction of the father's law, which is intended to serve as a break with the pre-oedipal period of primary undifferentiation with the mother in favour of exclusionary differentiation: "What is necessary, therefore, is the advent of Oedipus, and with it the father's law, leading to the cutting and establishment of a state of separation through an 'inherently' necessary, coercive oedipalisation that would protect against falling into the regions of the boundless matrix" (Shed, 2017, p. 359).

Mother and child – love from dependence to autonomy

Neopsychoanalytic object theories address Z. Freud's traditional theory of drives in different ways: some in opposition, others, as D. Winnicott, seek harmony with it. For him, the mother-child relationship and the associated affects, drives and instincts become central to the development of identity. It is worth considering how he addresses the problem of the child's autonomy in the transition from a close bond with the mother to separation. Based on the psychoanalytic object theory of D. Winnicott's psychoanalytic object theory, I will analyse how a person's autonomy and at the same time his or her identity ("self," "I"), which is the condition for being independent in adulthood, are formed. At the same time, I will emphasise the role of the mother in this process.

Autonomy is, in D. Winnicott important for a person because it is the basis for free judgement concerning one's own identity, self-direction, assertiveness, self-respect and thus

the realisation of one's own possibilities. The prerequisite for autonomy, on the other hand, is self-confidence, which can be extended to self-confidence and trust in a loved one, confidence in one's own abilities and achievements, self-esteem and dignity. This kind of relationship to oneself can be described as positive self-esteem or positive self-empowerment, which is a necessary condition for self-realisation, inner and outer freedom in the process of expressing and realising life goals, and is consequently the basis for a successful life. Autonomy consequently guarantees the perception of oneself as an individualised being and identification with one's goals and dreams in the process of presenting and realising life goals, and consequently is the basis for a successful life.

In the context of the psychoanalytic theory of object reference, the child's maturation process is shown as a certain task. The innate predisposition for development requires conditions from the environment, the family.

The transition from a primal state to a state in which objective perception is possible is not solely a matter of an innate or hereditary growth process; it additionally requires a certain environmental minimum. This transition takes place in the broad context of an individual's transition from dependence to independence (Winnicott, 2011, p. 19).

D. Winnicott describes in detail this relationship, which results in the child gaining autonomy in the early stages of life. Autonomy in this process is possible on the basis of a symbiotic unity in which the mother and the infant remain. It is important to consider what this unity consists of, what the mother's role is in it and how the process of separation and, at the same time, the learning of autonomy on its basis takes place.

Fundamental to autonomy is the parent-child relationship, and above all the mother-child relationship from early infancy, when the mother is guided by care and love. The mother is, in the terms of D. Winnicott's term for a "good mother," that is, anyone who bases the bond with the infant on feelings of care and love, which allows her to read the child's needs correctly and promptly and respond to them. However, the woman, by virtue of a biological predisposition, is in the best position to respond to the infant's needs, particularly those of satisfying hunger (breastfeeding). The mother does this in a natural way because the bond of love with the child is expressed as care and therefore a desire to meet its needs immediately. As D. Winnicott (1993) points out, "[...] a mother's love [...] is expressed in terms of physical care" (p. 187).

In the first stage of the child's life, which can be called the preoedipal phase and which lasts from the time immediately after birth for 5–6 months, the young child is completely dependent on the mother. This relationship of primary intersubjectivity, which is characterised by the absence of a boundary between self and other, can be described in D. Winnicott's terms as absolute dependence, symbiotic unity, and symbiotic community. On the one hand, this is due to the mother's direct satisfaction of the infant's needs, to the infant's inability

to distinguish itself from its environment, and on the other hand, the mother strongly identifies with the infant's needs, in fact, she co-sensitizes them. The mother therefore

[...] by giving expression to his love through physical care and the provision of physical satisfaction, he allows his psyche to begin to live in the child's body. Through her caring skills, she expresses her feelings for the child and creates an image of herself as a person that the developing human being can see (Winnicott, 1993, p. 187).

The basis of the infant's experience is the bodily experiences, the needs, which are the result of desires (drives, libido) and accompanied by images, and fantasies. Satisfying the infant's needs and desires, mainly those related to food, makes the mother – her face, body, touch and breastfeeding – the whole world available to the infant. The infant's bodily needs become part of the love between them. Love allows the mother “[...] to accommodate these needs almost exactly” (Winnicott, 1993, p. 46). The mother thus allows him the kind of contact that he happens to desire. These are at the same time contacts with the other person, the infant responds to them and also gives something of himself, which creates a wealth of experiences based on love.

The experience of symbiotic unity involves the transition from ideas and fantasies about needs and object to their fulfilment. This is linked to the fact that, for the infant, there is no boundary between the outer world and the inner world. Crucial here is the relationship described by D. Winnicott between the infant's imaginings and fantasies, its needs (desires, instincts) and their immediate satisfaction through the mother's response to them (from satisfaction comes satisfaction). This is evident in the breastfeeding situation, which D. Winnicott describes in detail. Contact with the mother precedes the idea of milk or the breast. The infant feels the need (urge) and then, thanks to the mother's response, “[...] will find the breast when it desires it” (Winnicott, 1993, p. 49) and at the same time release itself from the tension resulting from the urge. The infant desires it, seeks it, and thus “[...] will create in imagination exactly what exists in reality” (Winnicott, 1993, p. 91). The infant thus creates in its imagination the necessary object to satisfy its needs. With almost 100 per cent adaptation to the infant's needs, the mother creates for the infant the illusion that her breast is part of him, from which his illusion of omnipotence arises: “The infant perceives the breast only insofar as it can create it in a given place and moment” (Winnicott, 2011, p. 35). The breast remains, as it were, under the infant's magical control.

For him, this first object was really created in his imagination. It was the beginning of the infant's creation of the world, and we must acknowledge that indeed every infant creates the world anew. The world as it is irrelevant to the new human being unless he both creates and discovers it (Winnicott, 1993, p. 173).

Drawing on parts of the maternal body (breast, touch) “[...] provides, as it were, a ‘blueprint’ for all experiences in which the urge is brought to bear” (Winnicott, 1993, p 55). This reinforces and builds up the experience of the self and thus forms the basis for the formation of autonomy and for the later development of transitional objects and experiences. However, it is the mother who provides the child with the conditions for experiencing the illusion and then for making the child’s experiences real.

Ultimately, the mother’s task is to gradually make the infant’s experience more realistic, but this is only possible if she has been able to give him enough opportunities to experience illusions beforehand. Gradual realisation allows the infant to cope with frustrations. However, the consequence of these repeated experiences is that the child’s psyche develops trust in the mother and in himself. The relationship with the person one loves is that of inspiring trust, of being available, even if she is absent for a short while. The bond between infant and mother is based on trust.

Initially, mother and child remain in a state of symbiotic unity, and then have to learn how to separate from each other and become independent beings. In this twofold relationship with the mother, the infant can become an independent entity, but can also learn to understand and accept the separateness of the mother or the other person and learn to experience unity with the other person in the form of mutual closeness. The satisfaction of the infant’s bodily needs in the relationship with the mother is based on the bond of love between them, the consequence of which is its sense of trust, of self-confidence. This is because on the basis of the emotional bond and thanks to the love received from the parents, the child learns to understand itself as an independent subject. The gradual separation and, at the same time, emancipation of both child and mother goes through a phase of play and manipulation of transitional objects, disappointments and frustrations about incomplete or delayed fulfilment of needs, to the establishment of a new relationship with the mother, also based on autonomy.

The mother’s independence is achieved when she is less bodily bound to the infant and can therefore undertake social activities and thus leave the infant alone for longer and longer periods of time. The mother no longer has to provide for all the child’s needs, especially as these can be provided by others. At the same time, the child, as a result of intellectual development, acquires the cognitive ability to separate his or her self from the environment, and begins to understand that his or her needs may not be met immediately or indirectly. The child in this situation learns to endure the mother’s short absence. The child’s sense of independence, control and omnipotence also begins to be reinforced through play, especially the manipulation of objects. He or she begins to enter a world in which other autonomous persons and things independent of him or her exist alongside him or her.

The next step in the child’s independence is to create transitional objects and play with them, that is, concrete objects that are the child’s “first property,” but they are recognised no longer as part of the “self” but also not as part of external reality. The transitional object

functions as a fantasised relationship that is not questioned by the mother or by the child, it represents the source of future illusion and creates an intermediate space between inner and outer reality, which will then become the illusory space of play. “The object represents the child’s transition from a state of fusion with the mother to a state of remaining in relationship with the mother as something external and separate” (Winnicott, 2011, p. 38). The transitional object is created by the infant with the help and tacit consent of the mother in the second half of the first year of life. The infant’s relationship with the transitional object repeats the relationship with the mother and, in fact, during play and in its inner world, the infant expresses its own drives and needs. The essence of the play relationship is the same magic that is based on trust that real objects are subject to control, “It is the uncertainty of the magic itself that arises in an intimate relationship based on trust. For a relationship to inspire trust, it must be based on the mother’s love, her love and her hate” (Winnicott, 2011, p. 75).

The next step in the child’s independence is to create transitional objects and play with them. Such objects are recognised by the child no longer as part of the self, but also not as part of external reality. The transitional object plays a central role in the imagined relationship, in the space of play, which is also sustained by the mother. It creates an intermediate space between external and internal reality. “The object represents the child’s transition from a state of fusion with the mother to a state of remaining in relationship with the mother as something external and separate” (Winnicott, 2011, p. 38). The child’s relationship with the transitional object replicates the relationship with the mother and thus in the inner world, during play, the child expresses its own drives and needs. This play relationship expresses the same magic that already took place in the original relationship with the mother and which is based on the trust that real objects are subject to its control. “It is the uncertainty of the very magic that is created in an intimate relationship based on trust. For the relationship to inspire trust, it must be based on the mother’s love, her love and her hate” (Winnicott, 2011, p. 75). During this phase of relative dependence, which is formed at around 6 months of age, bonds with the mother, parents and loved ones are re-created on the basis of love. The child expects expressions of love from the mother as a person existing independently of him. The mother learns to accept the child’s independence, also his disobedience, she sets limits to his aspirations, she also feels dependent on his affections, she needs them, but there is no longer a symbiotic bond in this relationship. On the basis of the certainty of the mother’s existence, who can be relied upon even if she is not present at the time, the child gradually develops the capacity for solitude and independence. Only then can he or she give in to inner impulses, open up to play and new experiences without fear of abandonment. This phase of relative dependence involves building a balance between independence and symbiosis, which is conditioned by confidence in the permanence of the support of maternal love. The child gains confidence that even when the loved one’s attention is diverted to something else, even when she is not around, will continue to give them love. In turn, this confidence is the other side of trusting that the person will always meet the child’s needs. The basis of this confidence is the belief

that these needs will be met because they are of special value to her. Consequently, a child's self-confidence is created, which is the basis for his or her positive self-reference. At the same time, the child learns that the mother is an independent person in the experience of separation. A relative relationship is created between mother and child, which forms the basis and transition to a mature form of love understood as being oneself in someone else. In this relationship, as in love, the capacity for solitude is created, and at the same time the capacity for closeness and bonding with the loved person. Thanks to the love shown, the loved person is able, in a turn of self-reference, to open up to himself and become an independent subject with whom one can experience unity in the form of mutual closeness. When such love is sustained, the child is able to develop trust in himself, which he then transfers to trust relating to the fulfilment of his needs.

The relationship of love between mother and child becomes the basis for understanding love in the close relationships that follow in adulthood. Love is a consequence of the transition from absolute dependence in the relationship with the mother, characteristic of the earliest period of the child's life, to an invisible bond between loving persons in a tangle of absence and presence. Axel Honneth (2012) interprets this transition as follows: "Only a ruptured symbiosis allows for that productive balance between closeness and distance to emerge between two people, which, according to Winnicott, is part of the structure of mature love relationships formed by getting rid of mutual illusions" (p. 102). The relationship between mother and child thus becomes a model of a relationship that is repeated in adulthood, in bonds of love for which the basis is a bond of affection and mutual trust.

In D. Winnicott, the relationship with the mother is fundamental to relationships in adulthood, in which the individual maintains autonomy and at the same time respects and recognises the autonomy of loved ones. He does not take up Z. Freud's critique, but there remains a conviction of the important role of the father who, by helping the mother, enters the infant's life and takes over the feelings that the child has hitherto acquired towards certain character traits of the mother. As D. Winnicott (1993) points out, "The father is needed to give moral support to the mother, to be the buttress of her authority, the person who symbolises the law and order that the mother instils in her children" (p. 17). However, the child can identify not only with the father but with both parents and take on moral and cultural role models from them. Another stage is also important in the development of the child, which Z. Freud calls oedipal. The child then learns to realise his or her desires and needs through culture and society, which is linked to separation, the child's separation from the mother. At this stage, however, the paths of D. Winnicott and psychoanalysis with the approach of L. Irigaray, who, together with a critique of Z. Freud, introduces feminist postulates, the most important of which will concern the way in which a woman's autonomy and individualisation is achieved and the importance of the mother in her relationship with her daughter.

Negate the father's right

Luce Irigaray, like D. Winnicott, captures the subject, which is the person/child, but of a particular gender (son or daughter) in relation to the parent, and in particular to the mother. The problem common to both these authors is the question of how the child acquires autonomy in the relationship with the parent and then in social relationships. A problem specific to L. Irigaray is the question of how the woman/girl/daughter acquires autonomy, i.e., how she becomes independent from the violence of patriarchal culture, and what is the role of the mother in this process. For the author, women's individualisation or autonomy is synonymous with the possibility of independence from patriarchal culture.

L. Irigaray focuses on the role of the mother in child development. She builds on psychoanalytic theory and critiques and modifies it from the perspective of feminist theory. She would agree with D. Winnicott about the mother's role in the earliest period of the child's development, in which the mother is guided by love and care to meet the child's needs and contribute to the child's identity, sense of agency, omnipotence, trust and, consequently, autonomy. However, the divergence begins where she considers the stage of gaining autonomy through the resolution of the Oedipus complex and the entry into adulthood, i.e., the construction of identity and autonomy (individualisation) in a situation of cultural conditioning and social demands. In these divergences, the originality of the feminist perspective on the problem of autonomy and individualisation concerning women in particular can be seen in L. Irigaray's solution.

Thus, against the background of D. Winnicott's analyses and the common source for both concepts, namely psychoanalysis, it is possible to return, in terms of the philosophy of L. Irigaray to the question of the importance of the mother for the autonomy and individuation of the child, and more specifically for the daughter who becomes a woman. The acquisition of autonomy requires, also according to L. Irigaray, separation from the mother. D. Winnicott describes separation and the establishment of a relationship with the mother while maintaining mutual autonomy, i.e. a relationship of love, whereas for L. Irigaray, separation from the mother leads to the establishment of a relationship with the mother as a woman, which leads to mutual independence and closeness and communication creating a common language and a common culture. According to L. Irigaray, it is difficult to achieve full female autonomy in a patriarchal culture and therefore, in line with feminist demands, it requires a fundamental reconstruction. In either case, in the process of the child's development, the bond with the mother is necessary for autonomy, as well as the need to break it and establish a different, new relationship with her, which D. Winnicott defines as the love of two independent persons, while L. Irigaray defines it as a relationship between woman and woman.

L. Irigaray belongs to the current of second-wave feminism, which determines her way of addressing the problem of female (daughter) autonomy, as well as the relationship between

mother and daughter, as she focuses on issues not of equality but of the distinctiveness of women in a patriarchal culture. Her interests include both philosophy and psychoanalysis, which she studied at the school of Jacques Lacan. She subsequently made a critique of it and a break with it. In addition, her interests include the field of literary and myth studies and psycholinguistics. As a feminist theorist, she focuses on the analysis and critique of patriarchy and its way of thinking and on the extraction and expression of the separateness, independence of the woman (mother, daughter), extracting her from the bonds of patriarchal symbolism and representation. From her earliest texts, especially the 1974 *Speculum of the Other Woman*, she focuses on a critique of the repressive nature of the patriarchal order and the logic belonging to it of producing representation, symbolism and meaning, from which the feminine is removed. The symbolic order produced by patriarchy is ostensibly, in her view, characterised by gender neutrality. In the system of universal conceptuality, the disembodied and genderless generality of patriarchy (of philosophical discourse and cultural discourses), the feminine and the feminine is omitted, for which there is “[...] no other place but that which is traditionally reserved for all that is repressed, suppressed, censored” (Irigaray, 2010, p. 57). L. Irigaray’s aspiration, then, is to bring out the repressed female subject or the voice of women unmediated by masculine imagery. Reaching out to, as Olga Cielemeńska (2012) points out, “[...] the repressed female experience reveals it as autonomous from the masculine and insulates it from the hegemony of the patriarchal logic that produces subjects and senses” (p. 75).

As a representative of second-wave feminism, L. Irigaray rejects the demands of equality feminism and demands the total autonomy of women, as O. Cielemeńska (2012) points out: “Women must find their own hitherto suppressed otherness and strive to articulate it, not to forget their difference on the way to equating themselves with men and speaking in a language invented by them” (p. 76). For the woman is condemned to reproduce and duplicate forms and shapes already constituted by the patriarchal order. If she does not develop her own ways of expressing herself and her world, i.e. not mediated by the masculine-centric pattern,

[...] she is in danger of using or reproducing that which the man has already given form to, especially that which he has given to herself [...]. The woman loses herself in what is already formed, in the morphology that the man reflects for her. The latter appears as an enigma that the woman takes as her own, but it does not work that way (Irigaray, 1994, p. 12).

Femininity should become synonymous with difference without the domination of one sex over the other, which, according to L. Irigaray, a specifically feminine individualisation can lead to, provided it becomes possible in the current culture.

As a continuator (and critic) of psychoanalysis, L. Irigaray also reckons with the patriarchal and male-centric thinking of Z. Freud, especially with interpretations of the Oedipal phase

in child development. The positive resolution of the Oedipus complex and the attainment of autonomy requires, in psychoanalytic terms, the separation of the child from the mother, resulting in the construction of one's own identity – masculinity or femininity – in the context of a given culture, in which the father becomes the guide. The encroachment of the father figure replaces the bond with the mother, at the same time pushing away the danger caused by the close dependence on the mother, her excessive influence, the absorption of the child by her. L. Irigaray attempts to reconstruct the Oedipus complex in order to valorise the feminine and bring to the fore the special and positive significance of the mother.

The starting point and assumption of psychoanalysis is to capture the primary bond with the mother (pre-Oedipal), in the oral stage of child development, which D. Winnicott described as a symbiotic unity, in a very radical way. What is situated on the maternal side functions, on the grounds of this theory, as a “deep night of indistinguishability” (Deleuze, Guattari, 2017, p. 92), a “primitive cave or uterus” that is “imaged as a dangerous fault line, chaos, an empty vessel” (Irigaray, 2002, p. 242), and which is far from capturing the relationship with the mother as a bond of love, as a creative basis for the further development of the child's psyche? L. Irigaray points out that in this negative view of symbiotic unity, the woman as mother and the child's bond with her is reduced to an undifferentiated state of nature, outside of culture, in which remaining threatens the child's further development because of its over-dependence on the mother. The relationship with the mother is a maddening desire, because it creates in the most literal sense a “black land.” It remains in the shadow of our culture, it is its night and its hell (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 8). The mother guided by love, affection and care in Z. Freud's writings appears only as a reproducer and protector, not as a full person, for she has no access to power, law and language.

Thus, if we can compare how the close relationship with the mother is broken in the concept of D. Winnicott, in the psychoanalysis of Z. Freud's conception and that of L. Irigaray, we will notice that D. Winnicott sees in this path to autonomy and separation the cooperation of mother and child, whereas Z. Freud sees only the father figure. The thesis of Z. Freud's thesis is that only the father figure breaks the close relationship between mother and child and thus enables the child to enter the symbolic order and individualise in social relations. The father enters between the mother and the child, but this entry is exclusionary for the child, it diverts the value of the relationship with the mother: “but the exclusivity of his right excludes this first body, first home, first love. He sacrifices them to make them matter for the empire of his language” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 13). The father with his law, his prohibition, his command, and his name takes the place of the mother who must be abandoned. “The social order, our culture, psychoanalysis itself want this: the mother must remain forbidden, excluded. The father forbids body-to-body with the mother” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 13).

This dissociation from the mother represents the (undifferentiated) source in which Z. psychoanalysis is entangled. Freud, this striving to erase origins as uncreative and harmful is accompanied by images of the mother enclosed in nature, and her bond with the child, based

on emotions and instincts, remains outside language. The image of the mother as nurturer and reproducer locks the woman into a limited function; she does not appear as a separate, full-fledged person: “Have fathers ever been required to stop being men? Citizens? We do not have to give up being women in order to be mothers” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 18). According to L. Irigaray, the images of psychoanalysis derive from the perspective and logic of the “same” that it adopts, for which the other (the woman, the mother) appears as an undifferentiated and individuated mother/matrix/mother. The tradition of psychoanalysis expresses, as L. Irigaray argues, the assumptions of a patriarchal culture in which the feminine, that is, that which is different from and irreducible to the representation of masculinity, is not included in the order of the masculine logos and therefore remains ‘elsewhere,’ outside culture, language.

L. Irigaray proposes another solution to the Oedipus complex, in which the child does not abandon the bond with the mother in favour of the authority of the father, and in which it will be possible to rebuild the mother-daughter relationship. For in this mother-daughter relationship, it is a matter of freeing femininity (and the image of the mother) from the images associated with the Oedipus complex, in which she functions exclusively as a synonym for maternity, care, nature, the body, the womb, the nurturer:

Gone again. Again likened to food. Again we have disappeared in this eating of each other. I barely feel you and direct you – you run away and turn into a feeder. You want to fill my mouth and belly again and again. To make yourself full of abundance from your mouth and belly. So that nothing else passes between us except blood, milk, honey and meat (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 109).

She is not a full person, so she cannot introduce autonomy and culture. The mother can therefore bestow on the child what she possesses, namely care and affection, for she has no access to power, law or language, as L. Irigaray expresses in the metaphor of maternal care as food that closes the mouth, clogs and suffocates the daughter:

You guard me, you constantly notice me. You desire to constantly keep an eye on me, to protect me if something happens. You are afraid that nothing will happen to me. Are you afraid that something might happen to me? But what could be worse than me lying like this day and night? Grown up now and still in the cradle. Still dependent on someone to carry me, to feed me (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 107).

The mother overfeeds her daughter with care/food, thus causing her to sink into maternal overprotection, or leaving her insecure, confused, and insatiable, which in L. Irigaray’s (2000b) metaphors is expressed as icing, imprisonment, paralysis: “With your milk, my

mother, you gave me ice” (p. 112). The daughter remains “[...] trapped in our sealed confinement” (p. 113), unable to emerge from “her illness” (p. 109).

The daughter turns away from her mother, who does not allow her to be completely separate, wants to constantly guard her, feed her, look after her. Because, however, separation must happen:

No one in whom you can recall a dream of yourself. The house, the garden, all places are devoid of you. You search everywhere in vain. There is nothing in front of your eyes, under your hands, or your skin, that would remind you of yourself. What would allow you to see yourself in another you? What would enable you to empty yourself even further into my body, to maintain the memory of you? To nourish the semblance of yourself. No, my mother, I have left (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 111).

The condition for separation is that the daughter turns away from her mother, facilitated by either her father or a male lover: “I turn my back on my father. I leave you for someone who seems more alive to me than you. For someone who does not prepare anything for me to eat. [...] I follow him with my gaze, I listen to what he says, I try to follow him...” (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 109). As a result, a daughter who turns away from her mother will reproduce the male pattern: “I will go outside of us. I will go to another house. I will live my life, my story” (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 109). The alternative is to remain and function in a state of dissipation and disintegration. The former results, for the woman, in gaining a false identity mediated by male projections and phantasms, a false individuation and therefore a lack of autonomy, while the latter results in a regression to being part of a non-owning dream, a sickness.

In the context of individuation, of fundamental importance for the woman/daughter is her relationship with her mother. On the one hand, in order to be able to become a woman, a woman has to dissociate herself from her own maternal/natural attributes ascribed to her, “[...] to speak out against the reduction of themselves and the mother to an undifferentiated nature” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 28), to refuse to reduce the woman to her maternal function. For full autonomy, for being a full subject, there must be a break with the mother/female/nurturer. However, in L. Irigaray’s view, the individualisation and full autonomy of the woman requires the establishment of a new relationship with the mother – a woman-to-woman relationship. The break with the nurturing mother thus becomes possible not so much through the encroachment of the father figure, but through her simultaneous being a woman separate from the daughter. The daughter, too, through the abandonment of the shelter provided by her mother, is able to see her as a separate woman. In this way, the mother establishes with her daughter a subject-subject relationship not mediated by the male-father. It is a mother-daughter relationship and, at the same time, a woman-woman relationship:

Do I no longer have my/your lips? And this body open to what we will never finish

giving to each other? To ourselves to speak. We can plunge into this veil of silence to be reborn. We can feel ourselves in it anew, to become women and mothers still and still (Irigaray, 2000b, p. 113).

Only such a renewal of the mother-daughter relationship makes it possible to attempt to negate the father figure in the oedipal process and in socialisation. At the same time, in this relationship, mother and daughter remain separate and close to each other, communicate with each other, form a community, and establish a relationship of love between them.

For L. Irigaray, the strategy for bringing out the feminine is to rebuild the relationship between women, a task that must begin with the reconstruction of the relationship between mother and daughter. The feminine is freed from melting into the role of the mother and requires seeing the woman in the mother, “[...] the mother in every woman and the woman in every mother” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 17). In an interview, L. Irigaray emphasises that it is not a matter of freeing oneself from the mother, but of ‘freeing oneself with the mother’ from the authority of paternal authority. In this way, a mother-daughter and, at the same time, a woman-woman relationship is formed, they shape new figures of femininity and ways of speaking, their own ways of shaping themselves and their world, unmediated by a male-centric order. The mother-woman, in a living bond with her daughter, becomes capable of transmitting not only nourishment but also language to her child, whereupon she begins the circulation of words, ways of speaking, the construction of meaning, language outside the male order, and thus initiates the emergence of a feminine community, a feminine culture, feminine social relations. Femininity must speak with its own voice, “[...] not allow its desire to be annihilated by the law of the father” (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 19). She needs to express her positive otherness defined in her own terms, to break the terror of “same.”

We must also find, find, invent words, sentences that speak of a relationship most archaic and most present with the mother’s body, with our body; sentences that explain the bond between her body and ours and the bodies of our daughters. We need to discover a language that does not take the place of the body in the body, as paternal language seeks to do, but accompanies this body - with words that do not cross out corporeality, but speak corporeally (Irigaray, 2000a, p. 19).

For the feminine experience is autonomous from the masculine, it produces meanings differently, it is a different kind of individuation. L. Irigaray refers to this mode of self-expression and culture-making, this language of the feminine imaginary sphere, as *parler femme*. It is a recovered territory concerning women and femininity that contains imaginaries, meanings and ways of valorising specific to women rather than to patriarchal culture. This as yet unknown way of being a woman will come to express the specificity of her sexuality, the feminine imaginarium, feminine culture, genealogy and sexuality. It is impos-

sible to determine, according to L. Irigaray, what it will be, it becomes possible in the act of speaking as a woman. To speak as a woman is to appear as a gendered subject and to express oneself according to the specificity of one's sexuality. This distinct female culture can be the beginning of the demolition of the existing culture. According to L. Irigaray, only autonomy in and through women's culture can lead to full autonomy, for it is independent of paternalistic patterns.

Female individuation

The next step in a woman's acquisition of autonomy is the formation of identity through socialisation, which L. Irigaray defines as individualisation in the context of a given culture and society. Individualisation according to Irigaray should lead to autonomy, but how to maintain autonomy in a still patriarchal society? L. Irigaray addresses the problem of constructing a distinct feminine culture on the basis of the language of femininity, *parler femme*, and recognises that a woman's full autonomy requires her own way of constructing an identity, independent of a patriarchal culture. Thus, individualisation in this apparently neutral culture should take into account, in L. Irigaray's terms, two distinct human subjects, female and male, who must define their identities differently. Thus, the condition for a woman's autonomy is the development of a culture of what is feminine, which consists of language, images, and relationships.

In his article "Without a culture of difference, there is no democracy," L. Irigaray places an equal sign between female autonomy and the process of *individuation* (the becoming of the individual) and individualisation, concepts that derive from Gilbert Simondon's work *L'individuation psychique et collective*. Individuation is the process that distinguishes being, in this case the identity of the person, from the totality shaped by the environment, in this case the rules of social life. According to G. Simondon, individuation refers to the action by which an individual goes through a process of differentiation from the environment, in particular shaping himself in a social context, in social relations. According to L. Irigaray, individuation is a universal process that makes the subject (male, female) transcendent to its environment. Thus, she proposes to include in this process also sexuality and, more precisely, sexual identity (*sexuate identity*) in sexual relations (*sexuate relations*), which also occur as certain social relations and concern the basic structure of our identity (Irigaray, Szopa, Lebek, 2019). Thus, both personal and socio-political relations should effectively express the individuation of men and women, and this will only be possible if women are recognised as subjects different from men.

According to L. Irigaray, the political culture of Europe, especially democracy and capitalism, has never served the feminine. From ancient Greece onwards, European culture was based on the separation of from nature (and from the mother identified with nature) through

the construction of language, theory and society, by shaping concepts that were apparently neutral, but that gave privileges to men, to their gendered bodies: “The established culture is a culture of control over matter, over what is sensual, through its construction and logic, which are primarily mental. *Logos* can be said to be the technique that Greek man defined and used to appropriate the world” (Irigaray et al., 2019, p. 22). *Logos* and knowledge emerged as apparent neutrality that gradually destroyed women’s individuation, while “[...] man sought to define himself by appropriating the pre-existing natural world” (Irigaray et al., 2019, p. 23). Particularly devaluing to women is patriarchal capitalism, through which men have established their own forms based on competition between those who are the same, and introducing for women the exploitation of reproductive and care work in the home.

Autonomy should therefore be based on “fully human,” i.e., gender-determined, individuation, on the right to be a person, to one’s own identity, so that persons can be who they are: men or women, not neutral, undifferentiated individuals. This process cannot be reduced to the entry of women as full subjects into a culture constructed to meet the demands of individuation of what is masculine. Individuation in the realm of the feminine must begin with what is given by nature and with the cultivation of this realm. In particular, it must take into account all aspects of feminine identity in its complexity and discover a way to cultivate them. In this way, the possibilities for the autonomous individuation of women and men will gradually increase in a patriarchal culture.

The mother-woman introduces the culture

The subject of the analysis of the thoughts of D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray and their comparison was the problem of autonomy, the question of how it is constructed from early childhood to adulthood. Both of these theories derive from Z. Freud’s concept of psychoanalysis, which shows the stages of child development and emphasises the importance of childhood experiences on the development of the person and his or her autonomy, with particular emphasis on the importance of parents, the family, the mother and the father. For all these theories, autonomy is underpinned by two stages: the close dependence of the child on the mother and the break with her, the separation, which allows the child to define his or her own identity and to individualise. The premise of this comparison of the solutions of Z. Freud, D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray was the feminist thesis adopted by the latter author that psychoanalysis represents thinking in terms of the dominant patriarchal culture, thinking in terms and logics of “the same.” The expression of this thinking was a reductionist image of the mother and, at the same time, of the woman, whose love, in Z. Freud’s terms, is expressed through natural, instinctive behaviour. The mother, therefore, does not go beyond “nature,” her love is expressed as care and concern. She is only the nurturing mother, and therefore the relationship with

the mother, the dependence of the child and the mother represents the formative stage of the child's experience prior to its introduction into culture. The mother, and at the same time the woman, as Z. Freud argued, cannot introduce the child into culture because she does not function as a full person, she does not represent culture and language in her instinctual relations and therefore cannot transmit them. The autonomy of the child therefore requires a break with the mother and the passage of the child under the authority of the father.

Unlike Z. Freud, both D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray outline a different picture of the mother, her role and meaning. The mother, in D. Winnicott is guided by love, out of which arise care, nurturing, empathy, meeting the needs of the child, but the mother's love is also the basis of autonomy in the process of the child breaking the close dependence on her. The child's experience of a loving relationship, which teaches trust in self and in the other, becomes the basis for building a relationship with the mother, and then with other close people, based on love, that is, on autonomy and closeness, in which the autonomy of two separate beings is respected. This love between close people can also be transferred to social relationships, in which each person's autonomy and mutual respect are important. The woman in the concept of D. Winnicott can therefore guide the child to autonomy and teach the construction of independent individuality. D. Winnicott, although immersed in a patriarchal culture, in describing the love relationship between mother and child gets rid of the stereotypes that reduce the woman to "nature."

L. Irigaray, on the other hand, further adds the aspect of autonomy, which was not present in the theories of psychoanalysis and neo-psychoanalysis due to the fact that it is the result of feminist demands, more specifically second-wave feminism. L. Irigaray and second-wave feminists draw attention to the specificity of women's individualisation. Individuation requires being present in a culture and in social interactions that are not gender-neutral, but conditioned by distinct sexual identities, masculinity and femininity, i.e., a feminine culture.

The importance of the mother-female is thus fully underlined by the new relationship established between mother and daughter after the separation and after the symbiotic relationship between them has emerged. In this relationship, the mother is able to offer an introduction to culture and a critical interpretation of it through the creation of a female culture and community. The mother brings the daughter into the culture because she is fully a person, a woman. This relationship between mother and daughter requires independence and closeness at the same time. This closeness is based on the exchange of words, on communication, and on close bonds of love. This understanding of the relationship, of closeness and respect for selfhood, and therefore separation, closeness and exchange also characterise the relationship of love in the terms of D. Winnicott.

The role of the mother derived from an analysis of the concepts of D. Winnicott and L. Irigaray consists in the fact that she introduces autonomy and culture in the fullest way, she provides the child with basic experiences, from symbiotic dependence through

separation: love, trust, self-confidence, respect for separateness, which characterises the basic relationships with relatives and in society. L. Irigaray, on the other hand, complements D. Winnicott and shows that the mother-woman in the individuation of the woman-daughter allows for a fuller autonomy by introducing elements of femininity into her individuation and into her culture and teaching them to her.

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