

The Superordinate Self in Psychoanalytic Theory and in the Self Psychologies

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THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS HAVE SEEN the concept of the self replace the concept of identity as the focus of theoretical controversy in psychoanalysis. Even though many of the basic theoretical and clinical issues are the same as they were a decade ago when "identity" was the subject of intense debate, revisionary thrusts forming under the banner of the "self" seem to be stronger than those that adopted the banner of identity. A heightened trend toward polarization exists today; witness Ornstein (in Kohut, 1979), for example, who advocates placing self psychology in opposition to ego psychology. Rothstein (1980) attributes this trend to "narcissistic paradigm overevaluation," a perfectly valid descriptive phrase, but one that fails to explain the polarization that is now taking place.

In considering the controversy about the status of the self in psychoanalytic theory, two broad and antithetical positions can be discerned. The first maintains that contemporary psychoanalytic theory (the theory introduced by Freud and refined by Hartmann, Jacobson, and others) is by no means perfect, but remains the best theory available. Adherents of this position contend that no radical revision of theory is required either to account for new data that relate to the self or to account for specific forms of psychopathology (e.g., the narcissistic personality disorders). In disavowing the need for a new theory from which to survey the clinical terrain, they argue that terms and concepts which are part of the evolutionary growth of psychoanalysis since Freud's death—self-representation, ideal self, wishful self-image, self-feeling, and self-esteem—are entirely adequate to account for the relevant clinical phenomena.

Adherents to the second position, on the other hand, contend that a radical revision of psychoanalytic theory is necessary because traditional theory is deficient, inaccurate, or in some way limited. Psychoanalytic theoreticians who have adopted this position include (1) the late George Klein and his collaborators, who maintain that metapsychology should be eliminated from psychoanalytic theory because it is primarily concerned with energetic considerations and neurobiological concepts that are irrelevant and confusing; (2) John Gedo, who tends to agree with Klein about the inadequacy of traditional metapsychology, but who focuses on specific deficiencies in the psychoanalytic theory of therapy; and (3) Heinz Kohut and his collaborators who, unlike Klein and Gedo, do not quarrel with metapsychology and its energetic metaphors, but embrace the need for a new theory of the mechanisms of therapeutic change in psychoanalysis along with a new conceptualization of psychopathology. The theoretical formulations of all these critics incorporate the use of a superordinate self-concept. Klein's system centers on his elaboration of a "self-schema," Gedo's work revolves around the centrality of his "self-organization," and Kohut's "self psychology" is anchored in the theoretical preeminence of the "nuclear" or "bipolar" self.

Unlike earlier differences in opinion about the concept of identity, indications now exist that the divergent perspectives of the self psychologists and their critics may eventuate in a rift in psychoanalysis rather than eventual integration. Ticho (1982), for example, has elaborated the parallels between Kohut's self psychology and the psychologies of Adler, Jung, Horney, and Sullivan, implying that self psychology is pursuing a direction similar to those taken by these

alternative schools. Still more forcefully, Rangell (1982) argues that an oppositional stance toward self psychology is long overdue. Others, like Wallerstein (Panel, 1981), entertain a more optimistic view about the prospects for eventually integrating the two positions. This optimism stems partly from the fact that a dialogue between opposing theoreticians continues, thus providing some reason to hope for reconciliation.

Ticho's (1982) contribution is relevant to a pattern that reappears throughout the history of psychoanalysis, but which he does not spell out. I am referring to the fact that, despite important changes in the psychoanalytic theory of mental functioning over the past eighty years, such changes have resulted in little revision of the theory of therapy or of basic psychoanalytic technique. Indeed, psychoanalytic technique is noteworthy precisely because it has undergone so few changes during this period. This is not to say that major alterations in technique have not been advanced over the years, but only that proposed modifications have generally been rejected by the mainstream psychoanalytic community. Virtually without exception, the proponents of such modifications (Jung, Adler, Ferenczi, Alexander) have not remained within the mainstream, suggesting that psychoanalysts tolerate greater revision of psychoanalysis as a theory of mental functioning than as a theory of therapy incorporating specific technical procedures. Hartmann, for example, whose stature as the theorist of psychoanalytic ego psychology is uncontested, proposed fairly important changes in the theory of mental functioning without advocating significant alterations in technique. Eissler, on the other hand, did propose the use of parameters as a modification of technique as early as 1953, but he scrupulously insisted that such parameters be analyzed in the course of treatment; his suggestion came at a time when the scope of analysis was dramatically widening. Mahler has also presented significant new formulations while insisting that her findings should not alter psychoanalytic technique with adult patients. Kernberg likewise reserves his proposed technical changes for psychoanalytic therapy while retaining the conventional technique for psychoanalysis proper. Perhaps analysts find it easier to accept technical alterations when they apply to children or psychotics rather than the majority of adult patients who present themselves for psychoanalysis.

"Ich," Ego, and Self

Hartmann (1950) and Strachey (1923) underscored many years ago Freud's failure to distinguish clearly between the ego and the self. Freud's term *Ich* can refer either to the person as a whole or to a particular part of the person's mind, i.e., to a discrete mental system with particular functions. In Freud's writings, *Ich* most frequently has the latter systemic referent and can be profitably translated as ego. In certain cases, however, *Ich* is clearly equated with the subjective person, and it lends itself to translation as self in such circumstances. It should be noted that Freud did refer to early developmental states in which the demarcation of inner and outer, self and object, is not clear; consider his references to the "oceanic feeling" (1930), the "purified pleasure ego" (1915), and early experiential states that may be appropriately labeled "grandiose." Considerable evidence exists, then, that Freud did in fact deal with phenomena that we might presently consider aspects of the self; what is noteworthy is his persistent use of the ambiguous term *Ich* to encompass these dimensions of self-experience. Kernberg (1982) construes the dual referents of the *Ich* as parallel tributaries that jointly enrich Freud's conceptualization. Whereas Strachey felt Freud could have spoken more clearly by using different terms for the self and the ego, Kernberg commends Freud for using a single term to capture both the personal and systemic-organismic aspects of the ego-self. Correspondingly, he faults Strachey for translating *Ich* as ego, a term that sacrifices the personal connotations Freud had in mind. An alternative

explanation of Freud's calculating ambiguity may pertain to his belief that, ultimately, the distinction between the person and the mental apparatus trenched on philosophy, i.e., that it implicated issues that exceeded the explanatory power of psychoanalytic theory (Freud, 1940).

It fell to Hartmann (1950) to propose a terminological clarification that would separate the subjective-personal from the objective-organismic realms. By redefining narcissism as the libidinal cathexis not of ego but of the self, Hartmann necessarily distinguished between an organismic ego and a subjective self. He was explicit about this:

... in using the term narcissism, two different sets of opposites often seem to be fused into one. The one refers to the self (one's own person) in contradistinction to the object, the second to the ego (as a psychic system) in contradistinction to other substructures of personality [p. 127].

Of greater importance than this "energetic" refinement was Hartmann's ensuing suggestion that a new expression, "self-representation," be invoked as the correct opposite of "object representation." In presenting this distinction, Hartmann provided analysis with a new handle with which to specify the contents of the inner experiential world—the "representational world" (Sandler and Rosenblatt, 1962) of wishes, fantasies, identifications, and attitudes. On the basis of these theoretical considerations, Hartmann advanced three separate meanings of Freud's Ich: (1) Ich as ego; (2) Ich as self in the sense of subject as opposed to object of experience (including awareness of one's own body); and (3) Ich as self in the sense of the whole personality, i.e., the individual or person.

The net import of Hartmann's distinctions was a new realization that the concepts of ego and self pertain to different domains. A recent discussion of the self by the philosopher William Alston (1977) is highly relevant to our understanding of the domain of the self. I quote Alston as length because his definition of the self enlarges on the very insight that led Hartmann to differentiate this self from the ego:

I would like to suggest that our commonsense conceptual scheme provides a sound, unconfused way of talking about the self. In our ordinary thought we make no distinction between the self, the person, the man/woman, the human being, etc. In fact, we have an indefinitely large repertoire of devices for referring to what we regard as one and the same entity—Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, the composer of Don Giovanni, the son of Leopold Mozart of Salzburg, my favorite composer, and so on. Furthermore, each of these phrases picks out the man Mozart, the person Mozart, the human being Mozart. It would, of course, be unnatural to speak of the "self Mozart." ... The term "self" (usually in compounds) is used for a person when that person is being spoken of as the object of a self-directed cognition, action, or attitude [pp. 67-68].

Rubinstein (1981) has distilled Alston's position into the following pithy formulation: "The self is the person a person is to himself." Arlow, on the other hand, has put his finger on the disjunction between this "self" and the psychoanalytic "ego" with beguiling simplicity: "The self has been described as residing within the body or, more likely, within the head. The ego, however, resides within textbooks and monographs on psychoanalytic theory" (1980, personal communication).

Hartmann's proposed distinction between the personal and organismic realms, as captured in these formulations, is a necessary one that does full justice to the dual nature of human psychological experience. The distinction remains as important to psychoanalytic work today as it was when Hartmann offered it. The remaining portion of this paper will examine the theories

of George Klein, John Gedo, and Heinz Kohut by way of demonstrating how this distinction has become lost in the new psychologies of the self. Consideration of the "self-" conceptions of these theorists will highlight the fact that the introduction of a superordinate self-construct really offers no theoretical or clinical advantages over traditional psychoanalytic formulations; indeed, such consideration reveals that the new self psychologies are actually regressive in their tendency to gloss over Hartmann's meaningful distinction between the domains of ego and self.

George Klein and the Self-Schema

Klein's revision of psychoanalytic theory proceeds from his dissatisfaction with Freud's neurophysiological and energetic assumptions. Arguing that concepts such as drive, energy, ego, id, and superego all reflect a "natural-science" view of the organism as subject to laws of physics, chemistry, and physiology, Klein proposed supplanting Freud's metapsychology with the construct of the "self-schema." His referent for this construct was the third of Hartmann's three meanings of Ich: the concept of self as person. Klein (1976) defined the self as

... a single apparatus of control which exhibits a variety of dynamic tendencies, the focus of which is either an integration experienced in terms of a sense of continuity, coherence, and integrity, or its impairment, as cleavages of dissonance [p. 8].

Klein's theoretical ambition was to postulate a concept or structure that had both systemic attributes and personal, "human" qualities. The self was presented as simultaneously more personal and less prone to reification or concretization than the ego. The self-schema thereby became Klein's proposed bridge over the divide separating "person" and "organism."

But Klein was far from successful in this respect. As soon as he incorporated into his definition of the self-schema the term "apparatus," he necessarily sacrificed the personal quality with which he sought to infuse his self-concept. When he referred to the developing self as a yardstick against which certain aspects of the personality could be measured, moreover, he came close to the very kind of reification (if not anthropomorphism) he sought to avoid. Klein's theoretical development, in this regard, approximates what Alston (1977) had in mind when he submitted that homunculus-fearing self-theorists who seek to rescue their psychologies from the homunculus fallacies ultimately evoke in their self-concepts the type of real and unitary agent they believe they are attacking.

So what does Klein's self-schema offer us that the ego of traditional theory does not? Was Klein proposing an actual conceptual change or a mere terminological shift? Is the self of the self-schema nothing but an ego in new clothing? Klein maintained that adopting the self-schema as the central theoretical construct would enable analysts to focus on two important aspects of "selfhood"—the need for personal autonomy and the need to be part of a larger social unit. He referred to these trends as "centrifugal" and "centripetal" and asserted that the source of conflict between them was a neglected area of psychoanalysis. In reply, however, one could ask whether a schema that elevates these aspects of personal development to a position of preeminence does not in fact move us away from the principal concerns of psychoanalysis. Analysts would certainly concur that personal autonomy is an important goal for most individuals. But is the aim of psychoanalysis to explore the relation between this goal and the need for social integration, or to help the patient understand the nature of unconscious conflicts that may prevent him from achieving both personal autonomy and social adaptation?

Although Klein did not recommend any significant shift in clinical approach, he did situate his self-schema in "a clinical theory of personal encounter" that is additionally problematic. Klein argued that his "clinical theory" had the self-schema as a central construct but included additional constructs deriving from developmental principles of differentiation, fractionation, and identification. Klein neglected, however, to define these terms in a clinically relevant way. The result, as Frank (1979) comments, is that Klein theorized at "increasingly abstract levels of conceptualization, using increasingly abstract principles of organization regarding the interaction of his primary entities and their derivatives" (p. 192). This propensity for abstractive conceptualization shorn of clinical referents underscores the paradoxical failure of Klein's self-schema to avoid the very pitfalls of metapsychological language that led to his new theory. Klein set out from the observation that psychoanalysis contains within itself two types of theories, a clinical theory and a metapsychological theory. He took as his task the execution of a "theorectomy" that would excise metapsychological theory from analysis and graft in its place an improved clinical theory based on the self-schema. Ultimately, however, Klein ended up with a clinical theory at least as abstract as the metapsychology he criticized and in certain respects just as biological. It is predictable, then, that the self-schema around which the theory revolved should offer very little clinical yield.

John Gedo and the Self-Organization

John Gedo, like George Klein, faults the metapsychological constructs of Freud and Hartmann for being too reductionistic, abstract, impersonal, and prone to reification. He agrees with Klein that traditional metapsychology slights the concept of person as agent, and he also follows Klein in offering the self as the antidote to the impersonal quality of ego-psychological constructs. Gedo's basic paradigm, however, concerns the "epigenesis" of a "self-organization" that he conceptualizes in terms of a hierarchy of values. In according the self a central organizing role in a psychology of personal aims, Gedo leans heavily on Lichtenstein (1977), who postulated "the acquisition of a primary identity that stamps all the individual's actions with their uniqueness, endures through all subsequential developmental vicissitudes and crucially limits his freedom of action" (p. 11). Gedo departs from both Klein and Lichtenstein, however, in his attempt to use the self-organization to bridge the gap between psychoanalytic explanations formulated in terms of hermeneutic-type "meanings" and in terms of natural-scientific-type "causes." Gedo undertakes this piece of mediation by giving biological motivations an important place in his scheme. Thus, the hierarchy of personal aims that are constitutive of the self-organization, for Gedo, includes a category of biological aims and patterns as well as a category of psychological goals and values. It remains unclear, however, what advantage this scheme offers over Hartmann's concept of an ego that includes both constitutional and experiential determinants. Furthermore, Gedo's focus on goals and values is frequently at the expense of a properly psychoanalytic concern with drives (libidinal and aggressive), wishes, and defense.

Gedo's conception of the self-organization posits personal autonomy as the highest aim of the organism. He believes that concepts such as basic core, basic identity, and self-cohesion all relate to a hierarchy of personal goals and values that culminates in autonomy, and he dissociates this conception from theories that dwell on the self as a mental content or a content of thought. Gedo submits that analysts who use the self in this way (e.g., Hartmann, Jacobson, Sandler, Rosenblatt, and others) "explicitly disavow" what he construes as the "cardinal importance" of the self-concept—"the epigenesis of human motivations, i.e., of mental structure itself" (1979, p. 177). But Gedo's apparent equation of the self with development or "epigenesis" makes for

considerable confusion. Most notably, it obscures the fact that the epigenesis of personality is a given. It is self-evident, in other words, that both person and organism develop as a result of the complex interaction between developing biological givens and the environment. Surely, this process is not adequately explicated by affixing to it the noun "self." Arlow (1980, personal communication), commenting on the equation of self with a goal of personal autonomy taken to be the highest aim of the organism, asks how the aims of the organism are in fact established: "Is it a part of a divine scheme, the hand of the Lord moving in biology?"

Gedo's scheme of the self-organization culminates in "a revised theory of psychoanalytic therapy." In brief, Gedo's theory of psychoanalytic therapy attempts to systematize the various interventions appropriate to early modes of psychic organization. Such interventions, which encompass noninterpretive strategies, the use of drugs, and other constraints, accomplish preinterpretive tasks that include "pacification," the fostering of a holding environment (which Gedo terms "the unification of self-organization"), and the "optimal disillusionment" of the patient. This systematization of therapeutic modalities generally coincides with the technical approach advocated by Kohut for the treatment of patients with narcissistic personality disorders. Unlike Kohut, however, Gedo rejects any one-to-one correspondence between nosology and therapeutic modality; he stresses instead that noninterpretive interventions are required in every analysis, inasmuch as patients rarely demonstrate a single mode of psychic organization throughout treatment. In every analysis, he insists, the analysand not only manifests a multiplicity of behaviors based on a variety of illusions, but experiences episodes of overstimulation accompanied by the temporary disruption of a cohesive self.

But Gedo's emphasis on interventions directed toward contentless tension states and functional deficits has the following negative consequence: it shifts analytic focus away from intrapsychic reality to the patient's environment. In fact, this shift in focus typifies all the self psychologies and makes for an interesting paradox. Intending to bring us closer to our patient's experience, the self psychologies really accomplish the very opposite. Thus, Dewald is right on target when he faults Gedo (1979) for:

ascribing to the external objects primary responsibility for the construction and maintenance of the primitive, primary-process fantasy systems which are at the core of most neurotic phenomena. Clinical observation repeatedly documents the importance of unconscious core fantasy systems, the explanations for which are more appropriately ascribed to the child's immature, cognitive and reality-testing capacities, and to the child's tendency to interpret phenomena in accordance with his own intrapsychic organization and limited experiences [Dewald, 1981, p. 189].

Heinz Kohut and the Psychology of the Self

Of all the self psychologies, Kohut's is most clearly presented as a new theory and, due to the breadth of its concern, is the one most likely to threaten the cohesion of the psychoanalytic community. In contributions beginning with *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), Kohut accords the self a superordinate status only approached in the work of Klein and Gedo. In these writings, Kohut expounds a psychology of the self in the "broad" sense which, he believes, can explain human behavior and psychopathology more cogently than classical psychoanalytic theory. The latter, in its purported narrowness, is designated "drive theory" or "conflict theory."

This viewpoint represents a radical departure from the pre-Restoration writings in which Kohut resorted to the language of traditional metapsychology both in his differentiation of object libido

from narcissistic libido and in his rediscovery of the importance of the "actual" neurosis (1971). Furthermore, Kohut originally introduced the self as a construct applicable to only one set of structures within the mental apparatus; this self-construct figures in the psychology of the self in the "narrow" sense. In accord with this early perspective, Kohut argued against the idea of making the self "the basic axiom of a psychoanalytic theory," claiming this strategy would lead to "an abrogation of the importance of the unconscious" (Kohut, 1979, p. 659). By viewing the self as a single content of the mind, Kohut felt we could "recognize the simultaneous existence of contradictory selves ... of different selves of various degrees of stability and of various degrees of importance. There are conscious, preconscious, and unconscious selves, selves in the ego, the id, and the superego; and we may discover in our patients contradictory selves, side by side, in the same psychic agency (p. 660). It was in the context of this entirely operational viewpoint that Kohut first expressed a preference to designate one of these selves the "nuclear self."

Over the next five years, self psychology in the narrow sense was definitively transcended by self psychology in the broad sense. This development followed Kohut's extension of clinical concepts adumbrated in *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) beyond the specifically "narcissistic" psychopathology that had called the concepts into being. The psychology of the self became relevant not only to patients with narcissistic personality disorders, but to patients with perversions, depressive syndromes, and character disorders. As the obverse side of this expansion, the relevance of traditional theory to psychopathology became increasingly remote; by the time Kohut published *The Restoration of the Self* (1977), he believed the patient with neurotic conflicts centering on the oedipal phase of development was a rare bird—an endangered species, as it were. It was the new centrality of the self-concept in a variety of psychopathological conditions that induced Kohut to abandon his earlier positions and to espouse "two approaches: a psychology in which the self is seen as the center of the psychological universe, and a psychology in which the self is seen as a content of a mental apparatus" (1977, p. xv). The promulgation of the psychology of the self in the former "broader" sense embodied Kohut's recognition of "the limits of the applicability of some of the basic analytic formulations" (p. xviii).

The route Kohut has taken since 1972 has been punctuated by a series of sharply dichotomous positions with regard to important clinical and technical issues. Narcissism as a separate and independent line of development was initially part of a dichotomous formulation of narcissistic and object libido. This formulation, in turn, was predicated on the assumption that two kinds of patients present for analysis: patients with narcissistic personality disorders and patients with neurotic disturbances rooted in the Oedipus complex. These two categories of patients were further distinguished by two different types of transference—selfobject and object-libidinal—and the two types of transference yielded two different conceptualizations of the mechanism of therapeutic action in psychoanalysis—transmuting internalization and change through insight. Within this framework, Kohut went on to offer a number of further contrasts: between destructive aggression and nondestructive aggression experienced in response to an attack on the self, between self-objects and oedipal objects, and between nonconflictual, nonwish-fulfilling self-state dreams and conflictual, wish-fulfilling dreams. Kohut's various dichotomies culminated in a grand dichotomy encompassing the human situation writ large; the Guilty Man of traditional psychoanalytic theory was contrasted to the Tragic Man of self psychology. For Tragic Man, drive, conflict, and guilt are all but irrelevant. Unlike Guilty Man plagued by these dimensions of oedipal experience, Tragic Man suffers from developmental defects rooted in his preoedipal failure to receive adequately empathic parenting. From 1977, then, Kohut's belief in

the paramount importance of Tragic Man and his self-psychological problems led him to all but discard a classical drive theory that could only address the problems of increasingly anachronistic Guilty Man.

The outcome of this judgment is the unitary position of the psychology of the self in the broad sense, a position tantamount to "a whole new concept of man." This new concept of man, in turn, is premised on a unidimensional view of human nature and psychopathology in which self-cohesion is the highest aim and loss of self the greatest danger. I am not prepared to argue that Kohut's position in this regard is inherently indefensible; I would argue, however, that it is sufficiently different from the viewpoint of traditional psychoanalytic theory, with its emphasis on infantile sexuality and oedipal conflict, to make the two perspectives irreconcilable.

This judgment can be highlighted by considering the discontinuity between Kohut's formulations and the more revisionist enterprises of Klein and Gedo. Kohut's theory derives from the clinical psychoanalytic situation, from what he terms "the experience-near realm." As a clinician, he observed a spontaneous unfolding of a specifically "selfobject" (initially designated "narcissistic") transference configuration. This discovery led, initially, to a new framework for approaching narcissistic personality disorders, but ultimately to a reconceptualization of both psychopathology per se and the mechanism of action in psychoanalysis. Klein, on the other hand, moved toward a theoretical revision because of his dissatisfaction with the epistemological status of classical psychoanalytic concepts: drive, energy, the structural model, physicalistic metaphors, etc. Gedo shared Klein's dissatisfaction, but was additionally motivated to provide a clinical theory that could do justice to a range of interventions that were implicated in many classically conducted analyses, but never accorded the systematic place within the traditional theory of therapy Gedo felt they deserved.

Kohut's major contribution has been clinical; he has sharpened our sensitivity to our patients' perceptions of what we say and how we say it, as well as our awareness of our patients' narcissistic vulnerabilities. Kohut does not follow the theoretical path of Klein and Gedo, who want to eliminate Freud's metapsychology and replace it with a language of motivations or personal aims. Instead, Kohut retains the metapsychological concept of the libido as a transitional phase in his theory building while effectively disowning the assumptions about psychic development that underlie the metapsychology. Thus, where Klein and Gedo would rid psychoanalysis of metapsychology while retaining what they consider Freud's fundamental principles, including the centrality of conflict and infantile sexuality, Kohut seems willing to retain for the time being the language of metapsychology while relegating conflict in general and infantile sexuality in particular to a position of relative unimportance. Kohut (1977) believes, in short, that the conceptual tools of conflict psychology can reveal but a partial view of man's inner life.

But what are the analytic sacrifices that accompany Kohut's more encompassing view of the psychological field? For Kohut, as for Klein, the self is equivalent to everything that is psychologically meaningful about the person, and it becomes "superordinate" by subsuming everything within its fold that can be characterized as mental. For Kohut, as for Klein and Gedo, the self becomes both driving force and that which is driven. The problems embodied in this theoretical approach have been clearly stated by Palombo (1978). He refers to a

... kind of humanistic holism characterized by the effort to relate even the smallest units of psychic activity to the overall aims and interests of the "whole person." This achievement is of

course the ultimate goal both of therapeutic practice and theoretical understanding. In pursuing this goal prematurely and indiscriminately at all levels of the hierarchic organization of the psychic apparatus, however, we are put in the false position of having to understand the whole person before being able to explain any of the details of his thought and behavior. The investigator who adopts this strategy tends to lose interest in the observation of lower level adaptive functions. He may even come to deny they exist on the ground that adaptation is a function of the whole organism and that "mechanisms" are by definition rigid and inflexible. To follow this course is to lose touch with the means by which adaptation is achieved. The organism, human or otherwise, survives through the incorporation of simple, mechanical performance into increasingly complex patterns of contingent organization [p. 9].

The problem with Kohut's continual stress on contentless mental states, on the self as over- or understimulated, fragmented or cohesive, is that the absence of content, conflict, and unconscious fantasy may be more apparent than real. Similarly, the designations "idealizing transference" and "mirror transference" may only embody manifest contents beneath which a multiplicity of latent meanings can be tapped. This possibility counters the tendency of self psychologists to give these configurations considerable diagnostic weight, to view them as prefigured structures with a predictable pattern of unfolding, and to attribute to them a very specific genetic significance. The hypothesis that parental empathic failure is the central cause of psychopathology is plausible for some, even for many, patients. But validation in a particular case ultimately requires good analytic data. Good analytic data, in turn, derive from a well-conducted analysis—an analysis in which the analyst's preconceived expectations are kept to a minimum and clinical phenomena including the transference are explored in an open-minded way.

SUMMARY

The concept of the self has been used in several attempts to resolve the epistemological problems of what is subjective and what is objective, what is personal and what is organismic. In addition, it has been used to mediate between the hermeneutic and natural-science approaches to psychoanalytic explanation, between the motivational and causal dimensions of our theory and experience. In the case of Kohut, the self was initially invoked to deal with clinical difficulties associated with the analysis of patients with narcissistic personality disorders; more recently, it has become the central article in a "self psychology" that addresses presumed deficiencies in the traditional psychoanalytic picture of psychopathology. But the concept of the self is not suited to be a panacea for resolving theoretical or clinical difficulties. The self as person refers to an entity that is both enduring and changing; it describes continuity in the face of change and change in the face of continuity. Abend (1974) comes closest to capturing this attribute of the self in his image of the tidal beach with a configuration that changes but an essence that remains the same. Eisnitz (1980) evokes something similar in his figure-ground conception of the self-representation. The crux of the matter is that the notion of self-experience includes a variety of phenomena that cannot be contained within a single self-construct—be it normal pathologic, grandiose, or otherwise.

As a result of these considerations, I have argued against the use of the self as a superordinate concept in psychoanalytic theory and have focused on the shortcomings of three self psychologies that use the self in this way. I believe that Klein, Gedo, and Kohut all offer the self as a kind of conceptual tranquilizer for the philosophical, theoretical, and clinical dualities that are inherent in psychoanalytic work. Grossman addressed himself to these dualities as far back

as 1967 and elaborated on the problem with Simon (1969) in a pathbreaking paper on anthropomorphism in psychoanalysis. Grossman and Simon contended that the controversy about anthropomorphism in psychoanalytic theory pertains to the basic confusion in psychology between meaning and causality. They submitted that until this confusion was dispelled and until some superordinate concept was found that could "encompass both kinds of discourse," attempts to transform psychoanalysis into a general psychology would result in failure. In my view, the superordinate schema invoked by Grossman and Simon in 1969 remains to be formulated, the self psychologies of today notwithstanding.

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