

Chapter 16 Self and Relationship: Kohut, Loewald, and the Postmoderns

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Psychoanalytic History: Backwards and Forward

Postmodern thought has taught us to approach the history of ideas with a heightened awareness of cultural relativity, the subjectivity of the historian, and the nonlinearity of progress. From the concept of nonlinearity, it is not a huge leap to begin playing with ideas about the reversibility of time, so when I was asked to look at Kohut and Loewald in a historical context, I decided to flash *forward* rather than backward in history, to take a measure of their contributions. My plan is to discuss selected ideas of Kohut and Loewald, in relation to the writings of a small number of contemporary psychoanalysts, whom I have designated as the postmoderns.

As far as I know, there is no group of psychoanalysts who identify themselves specifically as postmodern (see Protter, 1996). Nevertheless, there are certain characteristics of contemporary life that have been labeled postmodern and that are thought to have had a profound impact on individual experience, affecting even the sense of selfhood on a global scale (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996). Describing this phenomenon, Anthony Elliott and Charles Spezzano point to the "compression of space, the mutation of time, and cataclysmic forms of change" as characteristics of postmodern life, which contribute to a widespread "sense of fragmentation and dislocation" (p. 59).

These authors seem to be describing, almost as a new *norm*, what Kohut would have understood as a breakdown of the self, caused by a

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failure of the self-selfobject matrix. If we were to translate Elliott and Spezzano's observations into the language of self psychology, they would seem to be saying that the destructive aspects of postmodern life are so powerful that they shatter the protective shield of selfobject relationships within the nuclear family or perhaps render most parents unable to function as selfobjects for their children. This claim, for such a transformation of personal experience, threatens the deconstruction of all previous psychoanalytic concepts and makes us self-conscious about using our old language in familiar ways.

Somehow, in spite of these challenges, the writings of both Heinz Kohut and Hans Loewald have continued to command broad interest. Loewald was a profoundly innovative commentator on human development and on the psychoanalytic process. But he seemed to be of two minds about his own innovations. Throughout his career, he repeatedly went out on exhilarating theoretical or technical limbs, only to follow these moves with a seeming retreat to more traditional positions. He continued to use the language of classical metapsychology, but consistently infused it with new meaning, often turning Freudian ideas inside-out, without ever announcing that he was doing so.

As early as 1960, for instance, Loewald had subtly shifted Freud's concept of "neutrality" to his own concept of positive neutrality. In Loewald's elaboration of what he meant by positive neutrality, he included the analyst's love for the individual and for individual development. In the same article, Loewald also suggested that the analyst should make himself available to the patient as a new object, that the analyst should help the patient negotiate reality by articulating his own perception of the patient's significant objects, or that the analyst should hold up for the patient an image of what the patient might become through the analysis. Loewald never explicitly resolved the tensions between these radical ideas and the more traditional elements in his own theorizing. The contrasting elements remain unintegrated in his writings as a whole, making it possible for both traditionalists and postmoderns to pick and choose at will, while ignoring the strongly opposing currents in the larger body of his work. It may be this very failure to integrate his own contradictory ideas that allowed Loewald not only to remain, but to be revered, within the mainstream of American psychoanalysis.

In contrast to Loewald's more preservational approach to classical ideas, Kohut went out on a limb and kept on going, inventing a brand new language for his revolutionary theory. Kohut developed a highly organized system of thought, which included a new and overarching psychic structure and a new psychoanalytic phenomenology. He identified a

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new class of transferences, offered a new narrative of individual development, and suggested a new mode of observation. It was therefore Kohut, of the two men, who attracted an organized group of colleagues during his lifetime, arriving at a new depth of psychology that ultimately broke with central tenets of classical psychoanalytic theory. For these and other reasons, Kohut's work, far more than Loewald's, has been the subject of extensive and passionate criticism.

Common Themes in Kohut and Loewald's Work

Although not without questions about each other's work, Kohut and Loewald made reference to each other's ideas with respect and appreciation (Kohut, 1971, 1978; Loewald, 1973). In 1973, Loewald wrote a favorable review of Kohut's book *The Analysis of the Self*. In that monograph, Kohut had begun to create a new language in which to think about many of the ideas that Loewald himself had expressed in his much earlier article on the therapeutic action of psychoanalysis. In common, the two men recognized a similarity of processes, between primary development and later change through psychoanalytic treatment. Both analysts saw internalization processes at the center of psychic development. Both emphasized the importance of the actual functioning of the external object and the quality of the primary relationship for individual growth and change.

Kohut and Loewald further departed from Freudian theory in their shared recognition of certain basic, developmental, and psychological needs, which were not derivatives of instinctual life (Teicholz, 1996). These needs had to be met either in the primary relationships of childhood or in the psychoanalytic situation in order for normal development or curative processes to occur (see also Winnicott, 1958). Both men argued for an experiential and relational curative effect in treatment, beyond the insight that evolves through the interpretive process (Kohut, 1971, 1977, 1984; Loewald, 1960, 1973). Today, many of these ideas have been seamlessly absorbed into the communal analytic mind. But in the 1960s and 1970s, they constituted near-heresy in mainstream American psychoanalysis.

Kohut and Loewald as Early Forecasters of the Postmodern

It seems as if there was barely a moment in history between the time when Kohut and Loewald were hailed as too revolutionary and the present

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time, when their work is often seen as outdated, under the glare of an unflattering postmodern spotlight. Yet both Kohut and Loewald still inspire loyalty and generativity in a multitude of psychoanalytic followers. One way of understanding this phenomenon is in the recognition that the writings of Kohut and Loewald might represent a way station, between the essentialist, positivist, objectivist, or deterministic theories that preceded them and the relational-perspectivist (Aron, 1991), social-constructionist (Hoffman, 1992), or postmodern-historicist (Protter, 1996) theories that proliferate today. I would propose that these newer theories not only followed upon Kohut and Loewald's work, but that Kohut and Loewald themselves forecast and paved the way for them.

Of course, there were many ways in which Kohut and Loewald were distinctly not postmodern. For instance, they were deterministic in that they both posited a cause and effect relationship between early experience and later psychopathology. They were positivist, or essentialist, in that they proposed universals of human development and experience, such as Kohut's concept of universal selfobject needs or Loewald's recognition of universal, oedipal conflict. Although they both made dramatic departures from Freud's instinct theory, they were nevertheless positivist in that they each offered in its place

an idiosyncratic, but highly articulated, theory of intrapsychic, structural development.

At the same time, however, Kohut and Loewald were both very nearly postmodern in the emphasis that they placed on relational factors and on the phenomenological or experiential in their theories. Furthermore, there are passages in their writings that sound eerily similar in their perspectivist outlook to the most postmodern of contemporary analysts. For example, in 1979, Loewald wrote the following: "Objectivity, rationality, and reality ... are not what we thought them to be, not absolute states of mind or world that would be independent of ... the generative process-structures of mind" (p. 773). He went on to say: "Objective reality ... appears to be more circumscribed ... than we assumed, analogous to Newtonian physics" (p. 774).

Not just Loewald, but also Kohut, noted the impact on psychoanalysis brought about by the shift in physics from Newtonian to quantum theory (see also Mayer, 1995). As early as 1977, Kohut drew our attention to the "fundamental claim of modern physics that the means of observation and the target of observation constitute a unit that ... is in principle indivisible" (p. 31). He went on to link the revolution in physics to his own revolution, saying that in psychoanalysis, "The presence of an empathic ... observer defines ... the psychological field" (p. 32). Kohut (1982) thus wrote of "a scientific objectivity which includes the subjective,"

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and he acknowledged the unknowability of objective reality (p. 400). In spite of these comments, postmodern analysts do not usually credit Kohut and Loewald as originators of their own focus on the subjectivity of the analyst and the indissoluble intersubjectivity of the analytic situation.

Kohut (1980) also forecast the postmodern emphasis on the perspectivist nature of theory when he wrote: "We, too, are children of our time, just as Breuer and Freud were children of theirs. Thus our sensitivity to certain aspects of the human condition that are characteristic of our era is sharpened and we respond to them" (p. 518). What are the "aspects of the human condition ... characteristic of our era," to which the sensitivities of the postmoderns seem now to be sharpened?

What Characterizes the Postmodern?

One notable trend in postmodern thought is the insistence on a historicist view (Eagle, 1987; Protter, 1996), which sees in any theoretical emphasis a reflection of its own time and place and a reaction to some previous swing of the theoretical pendulum. Also prominent in contemporary psychoanalytic literature is a relational-perspectivist (Aron, 1991), or social-constructivist (Hoffman, 1992), view of reality. The relational-perspectivist view emphasizes that *my* reality and *yours* are equally valid and that they mutually influence each other. The social-constructivist view says that there is *no* reality between us that you and I did not construct together and that any meaning assigned to that reality must result from a collaborative effort.

This insistence on a plurality of perspectives and on a social construction of reality invalidates Freud's model of the analyst, unilaterally making interpretations of the patient's material. It also leads to a refusal of common ground rules and to a rejection of universals (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996). There is in postmodern thought a suspicious attitude toward any "grand narrative" (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996, p. 57), regardless of content. This means that Kohut's (1982) offering of the story of Odysseus and Telemachus as a paradigm for human development is just as unacceptable as Freud's earlier offering of the Oedipus myth. The postmodern sensibility seems to be enamored of style and surface (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996), decrying the impossibility of achieving deeper meanings. Gone is the search for hidden motivation, making Kohut's concept of disavowed grandiosity as outdated as Freud's concept of repressed sexuality. Postmodern thought further emphasizes the multidirectional, the random, and the

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chaotic nature of events (Elliott and Spezzano, 1996), including the events of individual psychic development.

With a diminishing faith in the possibility for order and predictability, there is a general weakening of interest in metapsychology; theories of intrapsychic structure, therefore, take a back seat to more purely clinical theories (see Klein [1975] and Schafer [1976] for precursors of this trend). This shift goes hand in hand with a trend toward understanding both development and psychoanalysis in more purely relational terms (Mitchell, 1988). Within the relational viewpoint, there is an emphasis on the present rather than on the past, with almost exclusive attention paid to the here and now of relationship between patient and analyst. This emphasis serves to diminish even further the role that the analyst's interpretation is understood to play in the therapeutic action (Russell, personal communication, 1990, 1996; Mitchell, 1996). Also within the relational viewpoint, there is an emphasis on subjectivity (Aron, 1992; Renick, 1993), as opposed to objectivity, and on the intersubjective field between two persons (Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987), as opposed to the earlier focus on the inner experience of just one party to the analytic dyad.

The current emphasis on the intersubjective, along with an increasing awareness of the unknowability of either outer or inner realities, tends to put patient and analyst, as well as transference and countertransference, on an even plane. Each is seen to contribute importantly to the analytic experience of the other (McLaughlin, 1981). The analyst is no longer seen as observing and interpreting from outside the psychodynamic or interpersonal field. Patient and analyst are equally qualified to interpret each other's communications (Hoffman, 1983). Together, they construct a shared reality (Hoffman, 1992), and consensually, they create its meaning. The analyst's loss of a claim to knowledge and authority leads to a love affair with ambiguity, dialectic, and paradox: an attempt, perhaps, to make a virtue, or an aesthetic, out of the increasing recognition of complexities in the analytic situation and out of the sometimes bewildering aspects of postmodern life.

The postmodern embrace of ambiguity and paradox also leads to a step back from logic and reason. Kohut (1977, 1982, 1984) and Loewald (1960, 1975) were quite postmodern in their attempts to highlight the value of the irrational, placing clear limitations on the importance that Freud had earlier given to reason and insight in psychoanalytic cure. But at its radical edge, postmodern thought goes farther than just valuing the irrational: it sometimes casts doubt on the possibility for finding any order or meaning in human experience, cutting to the theoretical core of psychoanalysis.

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Isolated aspects of postmodern thought have been around in various forms throughout this century, in the theories of Ferenczi, Sullivan, Fromm, Winnicott, Kohut, Loewald, Merton Gill, Schafer, and others. But at this moment in history, all the elements seem to have amassed to create a qualitatively new sensibility. This sensibility responds to earlier psychoanalytic theories in ways that seem to reflect the impact of postmodern life on the contemporary psyche, producing a particular critique, especially of Kohut's work.

Kohut and Loewald's Ideas and the Postmodern Response

I will now discuss the postmodern response to selected ideas found in the work of Kohut and Loewald.

Kohut's Nuclear Plan for the Self

In Kohut's self psychology, we have a narrative of individual development unfolding in accordance with a nuclear plan for the self, which is laid down in infancy and early childhood. Kohut's emphasis was on the uniqueness and individuality of the bipolar self, made up of ambitions and goals at one pole and of ideals at the other. The bipolar self was forged through the interaction between the child with his inborn talents and temperament and the self object milieu in which they were selectively responded to. In health, the individual would find creative ways to express her talents and individuality, to achieve her goals, and to relate to others, all in accordance with this nuclear plan for the self. From the postmodern viewpoint, the very concept of a nuclear plan for the self, with a planful unfolding, is perceived as an implausibility. We have noted earlier that a primary sensitivity of the postmodern mind is to the randomness and chaos of events, including events related to the development of the human psyche. The question remains whether planfulness and chaos can co-exist in our understanding of self-development.

Qualities of the Self: Coherence and Continuity

Closely allied to the idea of a nuclear plan for the self are Kohut's concepts of self-coherence and continuity and their centrality for optimal functioning in love and work and for a sense of well-being. Kohut's concept of self-coherence

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comes under postmodern attack because of a contemporary emphasis on experiences of fragmentation and because of an insistence on a multiplicity of selves. In postmodern discourse, the unified self is criticized as a theoretical reification, as an unattainable fantasy, or as a dysfunctional rigidity. In this critique, it goes unacknowledged that Kohut's healthy self constituted a rich and multifaceted integration of myriad aspects of experience. Similarly, self psychology's emphasis on the sense of continuity is questioned because of the postmodern focus on the discontinuities, rather than on the continuities, in human experience and development. Of course, Kohut did not deny discontinuities in human experience: he simply focused on the importance of a sense of continuity for optimal functioning and well-being. On the topics of coherence and continuity, Winnicott's (1945) ideas about normal experiences of

integration and disintegration might serve as a further bridge in the dialogue between self psychologists and the postmoderns.

Instincts and Affects

Kohut, Loewald, and the postmoderns all seem to have in common a departure from Freud's drive discharge theory. But both Kohut and Loewald maintained a subsidiary role for the instincts in the development of the self. Although in Kohut's view, the healthy self included and was vitalized by well-integrated aggressive and sexual instincts or motivations, these motivations were seen as being subordinate to and in the service of the development, maintenance, and enhancement of the self. Only as a product of the pathological breakdown of the self do drives appear in the form of unintegrated lust and aggression. In Kohut's (1977) theory, the ambitions, goals, and ideals that constituted the self were seen not as derivatives of instinctual life but as products of the child's inborn talents and potentialities interacting with the responsiveness of primary caretakers in childhood.

In his own way, Loewald (1960) also shifted the role of instincts from the raw, primary motivators that they were in classical theory to an inborn potential requiring organization through caretaking interactions with the actual primary objects of infancy (see also a similar idea expressed by Winnicott (1960)). Thus, although Loewald did not invent a new *language*, he did describe a *process* that closely paralleled Kohut's later selfobject concept, in which early caretaking functions and responsiveness of the primary objects contributed to the organization and structuring of the psyche. Both men insisted that the instincts could become vitalizing aspects

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of an authentic self, only when adequately responded to by the primary caretakers, and neither saw instincts as the exclusive or primary driving force of psychic life and development (Loewald, 1960, 1979; Kohut, 1977, 1982, 1984). For Kohut, the primary motivator was the drive for a coherent self.

Among contemporary psychoanalysts, Slavin and Kriegman (1992) line up partially with Kohut and Loewald, by seeing instincts as contributing to the vitality of the self; they see even an expanded role for instincts, in the enhancement of survival and the propulsion of individuality. But for the most part, postmodern analysts seem simply to have dropped the term *instinct* from their vocabulary, with Mitchell (1988), Aron (1991, 1992), and Renik (1993) offering relational motivation in its place, or Greenberg (1991, 1996) proposing such motivations as safety and effacement as alternatives to Freud's sex and aggression.

The infant research literature has added dimension to the debate by generally replacing instincts with affects as the most basic and primary unit of human experience (Stern, 1985; Demos and Kaplan, 1987; Demos, 1988; Lichtenberg, 1989; Emde, 1991). This emphasis on the centrality of affects in development lends support for Kohut's (1984) insistence that the analyst's affective responsiveness is at the heart of what is curative in psychoanalytic treatment. The parent's or analyst's affective responsiveness mirrors and facilitates development, differentiation, and elaboration of the child's own affective experience (Teicholz, 1996). It is also thought to enhance the spontaneous thrust of development (Stolorow et al., 1987) and its related accretion of function (Terman, 1980). However, outside of the evolutionary biology, self-psychological, infant observation, and of course, Kleinian literatures, neither instinct nor affect receives much current attention. In the postmodern focus on relationship and surface, the search for inner meaning or deep motivation is dropped.

Conflict: Intrapsychic, Interpersonal, and Intergenerational

Examining the concept of conflict, we see crucial differences among the theories of Kohut, Loewald, and the postmoderns. For Freud, instincts universally led to intrapsychic conflict among the tripartite structures of the mind. For Kohut, instincts did not lead directly to conflict; rather, environmental failures in selfobject responsiveness resulted in self-deficit for the developing individual, which in turn rendered instincts overwhelming and conflict unmanageable. Wolf (1988) elaborated on Kohut's view

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of conflict, recognizing it as occurring universally between the need for distinct selfhood and the need for intimate selfobject connection. But in Wolf's view, such conflict became problematic *only* in the face of inadequate selfobject responsiveness to the individual's "need to be a distinct self" (p. 169). Thus self psychology made a shift from Freud's purely intrapsychic view of conflict to a more interpersonal understanding of its ubiquity.

Today's debates about conflict have shifted even more definitively from the intrapsychic to the interpersonal field. Examining our psychoanalytic concepts from the perspective of evolutionary biology, Slavin and Kriegman (1992) recognize relational conflict as ubiquitous, based on the fact that, even between parent and child, only a part of the gene pool is shared. In all relationships, therefore, there will always be some areas of clashing self-interests, presenting conflicts that must be negotiated. One of the major points of difference between Kohut and Loewald is on this very question: the degree of harmony or conflict between the generations. Slavin and Kriegman's (1992) observations would seem to offer more support for the conclusions reached by Loewald on this subject than for those reached by Kohut.

In 1979, Loewald wrote a strong, passionate statement concerning the inevitability of intergenerational conflict. Loewald subtly recast Freud's oedipal crisis, no longer positing sexual/aggressive rivalry as its leading edge but, rather, emphasizing the need for the developing individual to wrest authority from the parental generation in order to achieve an autonomous self. Loewald's emphasis on *self* was similar to Kohut's, but in contrast to Kohut, Loewald saw it as inevitable that each child would experience his achievement of "self" as equivalent to the destruction of his parents' authority, thereby *psychologically* committing an act of parricide. Loewald concluded that the outcome of this process would have to be diminishing for either parent or offspring. He held out only the slimmest hope for a result that could include mutual respect between equals.

Meanwhile, 3 years later, Kohut (1982) wrote an equally strong argument for the possibility of intergenerational harmony, rather than strife. Without making reference to Loewald's 1979 article, Kohut nevertheless seemed to be responding to its message. Kohut wrote as follows:

Healthy man experiences, and with deepest joy, the next generation as an extension of his own self. It is the primacy of the support for the succeeding generation, therefore, which is normal and human, and not intergenerational strife and mutual wishes to kill and destroy. ... It is only when the self of the parent is not a normal healthy self, ... that it will react with competitiveness

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and seductiveness rather than with pride and affection. And it is in response to such a flawed parental self ... that the newly constituted ... self of the child disintegrates and ... the break-up products of hostility and lust of the Oedipus complex make their appearance [p. 404].

Kohut thus tells us that the way to avoid the psychological experience of parricide between parent and developing child is through the parent's narcissistic investment in, or joyful identification with, the separating/individuating child or young adult. Both can then share in the exhilaration of the offspring's newfound autonomy, with the enhancement of both and the diminishment of neither.

It seems that it was largely Kohut's selfobject concept that enabled him to hold such an optimistic view of relations across the generations. In his view, the parent mirrored the child's incremental moves toward separateness and autonomy until the child was able to achieve a robust selfhood of his own. From that point on, the selfobject dimensions of the parent/offspring relationship would become increasingly reciprocal (Kohut, 1977), making possible a mutually supported autonomy within a sustained relational connection until death. Would postmodern analysts even want to join this debate between Kohut and Loewald, concerning the possibility for intergenerational harmony or the inevitability of intergenerational conflict? Or would they dismiss it as smacking too much of "universals" and "grand narrative," no matter which side one might take in the debate?

Construction of the Self: The Selfobject Concept

Kohut's selfobject concept was at the heart of his theory and has, perhaps more than any other tenet of self psychology, been misunderstood. The unhyphenated, compound noun denotes a process of self-development in which equal weight is given to the inseparable contributions of self and object. Thus Kohut's selfobject concept anticipated the current preoccupation with issues of subjectivity and objectivity. Although the term *selfobject* was Kohut's own, both Kohut (1971, 1977, 1982, 1984) and Loewald (1960, 1962, 1979) believed that the analyst was able to function psychologically for the patient in ways that the patient could not function for himself. Thus, while using different language, Loewald (1973) seemed wholeheartedly to embrace Kohut's (1971) concept.

Even more explicitly than Kohut, Loewald (1960) spelled out a cluster of personal qualities that must reside in the analyst to facilitate the therapeutic action. Loewald also articulated a process by which the analyst's higher level of ego functioning could be internalized by the patient through the

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quality of their interactions. Loewald emphasized that, in these interactions, the patient became the center of the analyst's sustained, focused attention, an experience that, in his view, contributed to the formation of self-structure in the patient (Loewald, 1960). Thus, both Kohut and Loewald were concerned

with the patient's accretion of psychological function and structure through relational interactions, and Kohut gave to these interactions the label of selfobject relationships. Kohut's concept of selfobject, and Loewald's (1973) embrace of it, for the most part strike the postmoderns as unidirectional, one-sided, and hierarchical; if they address it at all, it is to reject it.

Over his lifetime, Kohut identified four specific selfobject functions required for the structuring of the self. The first of these was the experience of omnipotent merger in the first year of life (Kohut, 1977), a concept that has been more fully elaborated by Winnicott (1960) than it was by Kohut himself. More fully addressed by Kohut (1984) were the later selfobject experiences of twinship, mirroring, and idealization. Although the entire selfobject concept is problematic for the postmoderns, its hierarchical nature is nowhere so glaring for its critics as in Kohut's theory of idealization. A brief comparison of how Kohut and the postmoderns respond to idealization in the transference will reveal just how significant the theoretical differences can be for the patient's experience in treatment.

Idealization

For Kohut, the ideals constitute one pole of the bipolar self-structure. In normal development, childhood idealization of parental figures is transformed into an internalized set of values and ideals that guide and enhance the individual's life choices. This is a spontaneous transformation that takes place in infinitesimal increments, as long as the parents' inevitable weaknesses and limitations are perceived by the child in a gradual and stage-appropriate manner, rather than through some catastrophic hurt or disappointment. Kohut believed that deficits, in the idealizing sector of the self, could be redressed through a reinstatement of the idealization process in the analytic relationship. Kohut's view of idealization in treatment, therefore, was that it was an *expectable transference paradigm* that could be used to enhance the patient's development. The analyst was urged to behave in ways that would not interfere with the patient's idealization. Particularly, Kohut recommended that the analyst make no explicit observation or interpretation of the patient's idealizing transference early in the treatment but, instead, allow it fully to blossom.

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In marked contrast to Kohut, Renik, among contemporary analysts, insists that idealization is to be avoided in the analytic situation (1993). For Renik, the patient's idealization is incompatible with the postmodern insistence on egalitarianism in the analytic relationship. With the postmodern shedding of intrapsychic theory, there is no conceptual framework for understanding the patient's transient use of the analyst in the service of further psychic development. Thus, in postmodern discourse, idealization is seen at face value, as an end in itself, and as something that diminishes the patient in relation to the analyst. The analyst is encouraged to behave in particular ways that will be likely to discourage the patient's idealization, such as the analyst's revealing aspects of his personal experience, explaining his thought processes, or repeatedly pointing out to the patient her idealizing tendencies in the transference (Renik, 1993).

Intersubjectivity

Renik's disapproval of idealization in the analytic setting seems to be based in part on his *misunderstanding* of the self object concept as unidirectional and hierarchical. But as early as 1987, Stolorow et al. had anticipated this misreading of self psychology and had set out to prevent it by emphasizing self psychology's reciprocal and egalitarian features. They depicted the analytic situation as an interpersonal and specifically intersubjective field, in which both parties make a contribution to what evolves between them. As one expression of this intersubjectivity, the analyst would acknowledge his contribution to ruptures in the bond between patient and analyst. Kohut believed that every disruption could be traced back to something the analyst had said or failed to say, which the patient had felt as hurtful; and therefore, the analyst's acknowledgement of his own contribution to the patient's distress often expressed a deeper empathy with the patient's unarticulated experience of that rupture. This circumscribed use of the analyst's subjectivity tended to open the door for the patient's further self-expression, especially concerning the failings of the analyst. Thus self psychology managed to include the analyst's subjectivity in the intersubjective field, while still maintaining the analyst's empathy and responsiveness to the patient at the center of therapeutic action.

The Analyst's Subjectivity

But somehow, from Stolorow's original emphasis on *intersubjectivity* has now come an almost exclusive emphasis on the *subjectivity* of the psychoanalyst,

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crescendoing until it seems to become a focus of attention for its own sake. Three contemporary analysts tend in this direction, with voices that are both original and distinctive from one another. They are Aron (1992), Renik (1993), and Hoffman (1994), and I shall use them as representatives of what I am calling the postmodern view. These analysts rightly contend that the analyst's subjectivity makes an essential contribution to the psychoanalytic situation, but they go on to argue that the analyst must not only be *aware* of his subjectivity; he must also be *open* about it with the patient. Self psychology agrees that the analyst's subjectivity must be openly acknowledged when it has disruptively intruded into the patient's experience. But postmodern analysts see a role for the analyst's subjectivity that is far broader than the analyst's acknowledgement of his contribution to specific ruptures in the analytic relationship. They seem to have moved from self psychology's recommendation of a simple acknowledgement for a specific purpose to an almost single-minded focus on the analyst's self-expression, self-revelation, authenticity, and spontaneity.

The contemporary interest in spontaneity and play in the analytic situation is important and pays explicit tribute to Winnicott's work (1958, 1960). But in their emphasis on spontaneity, the postmoderns seem to have lost Winnicott's central emphasis on the analyst's affective attunement with the patient. Thus, many of the contemporary analysts advocating authentic engagement seem to suggest that such engagement is mutually exclusive of the analyst's empathy and affective responsiveness. It is not immediately apparent why empathy seems so often to be contrasted with spontaneity and authenticity, since empathy, by definition, involves an authentic affective connection between two people. What does seem clear is that in their writings, Kohut and Loewald put their emphasis on the *patient's* experience and subjectivity, whereas Aron, Hoffman, and Renik now seem to be placing their emphasis on the *analyst's* experience and subjectivity.

In the historical context, we surmise that Kohut and Loewald emphasized relationship and phenomenology in reaction to what they felt was an intrapsychic, mechanistic, and energetic bias in classical theory. We can likewise surmise that Aron, Hoffman, and Renik are now reacting to what feels to them like an undue amount of attention paid to the patient's experience and subjectivity in Kohut and Loewald's work, without enough acknowledgement that there are two whole persons and two subjectivities in the analytic dyad. It seems that Stolorow et al.'s concept of intersubjectivity (1987, 1992) was an intermediary position between Kohut's almost exclusive emphasis on the patient's self and the current wave of interest in the self experience, or subjectivity, of the analyst.

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Both Kohut and Loewald recognized the analyst's subjectivity but believed that the analyst's self-analysis should take place *outside* of the patient's analytic hour. The postmoderns, on the other hand, argue that the analyst can no more keep aspects of his experience out of the consulting room than can the patient and that, further, the patient might well benefit from an exposure to the analyst's thought processes (Aron, 1992; Renik, 1993) or to his personal experience (Renik, 1993). Directly or indirectly, they take issue with Kohut's (1984) and Loewald's (1960) insistence that the psychoanalyst is there primarily for the patient and has a responsibility to put aside his own needs and interests for the sake of the patient's treatment, not unlike the way good parents do for the sake of their children's development (Loewald, 1979). Mitchell (1988), for instance, warns against the developmental tilt in some analytic theorizing, which in his view, makes too much out of the parallels between primary development in childhood and adult development through authentic engagement in the analytic relationship.

There are, however, a handful of contemporary analysts who join this debate on the side of Kohut and Loewald. One of these is Joyce Slochower (1996), who insists that some patients need to have their own subjectivity massively supported before they can tolerate hearing anything about the analyst's experience of the relationship. Slochower (1996), like Kohut and Loewald, makes it clear that putting aside the analyst's subjectivity is a stance taken transiently in the service of functional and structural development for the patient, but her arguments are rejected by many contemporary analysts (Renik, 1993; Bass, 1996; Symington, 1996). Those who reject it ask: Can the analyst ever "know" what the patient needs? Can the analyst set aside her own needs without those needs rearing their ugly heads in some unintended and destructive manner? The postmoderns tend to see Kohut and Loewald's emphasis on selfobject need and provision as paternalistic. Thus, although both Loewald and Kohut saw themselves as offering an alternative to Freudian interpretive authority, they are now sometimes seen by others as having given up interpretive authority, only to have replaced it with patronizing provision.

The focal question raised by these contrasts among Kohut, Loewald, and the postmoderns might be posed as follows: As analysts, how can we fully acknowledge and use our essential subjectivity in our work, while at the same time, keeping our responsibility to help our patient at the forefront of the

analytic exchange? This question has been latent since Freud's time, bursting forth early in the history of psychoanalysis in the conflict between Freud and Ferenczi. It is currently being debated under the guise of discussions concerning the relative importance of empathy, interpretation, and authentic engagement in the analytic exchange.

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Some Further Thoughts on Empathy, Interpretation, and Authenticity

In the analytic relationship, Freud emphasized interpretation, Kohut emphasized empathy, and the postmoderns emphasize authentic engagement. It turns out that these three modes of intervention are not as distinct from one another as we initially might have thought. In Kohut's theory of the self, empathy was both a mode of observation (1982) and the medium through which the mirroring selfobject function might be provided in psychoanalytic treatment (1984). There is debate even *within* self psychology regarding whether empathy can contribute directly to psychic change. But even when empathy is not given a direct role in cure, the analyst's empathy is seen as facilitating the patient's self-acceptance, thereby making greater self-exploration possible. This self-exploration can lead the patient to increased self-knowledge and integration, even without specific interpreting activity on the part of the analyst (Teicholz, 1995).

When interpretations are offered in self psychology, the emphasis on the analyst's affective resonance and on his maintaining a position from within the patient's cognitive/affective framework makes it possible for interpretations to become part of an overall relational process in which the patient feels deeply accepted and understood. Since the empathic interpretation, with the analyst's understanding and acceptance, constitutes a functional equivalent of mirroring, Kohut has managed to place the selfobject dimensions of interpretation at the center of its efficacy. Thus, self psychology's view of interpretation takes on a very different coloration from that of interpretation in classical treatment. Yet, in both self psychology and classical analysis, the interpretive process has the goal of enabling the patient to include in his self-organization previously disavowed or repressed aspects of experience. This common endpoint of expanded self-understanding and integration should enhance the possibilities for mutual acceptance between practitioners of the two paradigms, in spite of their dramatically different content and methodology. Nevertheless, classical theorists continue to find fault with self psychology for having raised empathy and affective responsiveness to a level of importance that rivals interpretation and insight in the conceptualization of therapeutic effectiveness.

Among postmodern analysts, there is a cacophony of voices raised on the theme of empathy and interpretation. Some of these voices join Kohut in giving interpretation a less prominent role in cure (Russell, personal communication, 1990, 1996; Renik, 1993; Mitchell, 1996), while others move from the devaluation of interpretation to question the role of empathy

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as well (Renik, 1993; Hoffman, 1996). Those who question the role of empathy argue that the analyst's subjectivity makes it impossible for her to achieve a position from within the patient's vantage point. Renik (1993) is one who takes this view, going so far as to suggest that the analyst who believes she has put aside her subjectivity to achieve empathic immersion in her patient's experience is simply self-deceived. In Renik's view of analytic process, interpretation fares no better than empathy. Renik accepts the classical view that interpretation is an objective formulation, but he goes on to say that the achievement of analytic objectivity is both impossible and useless! Renik ignores Kohut's thesis that the interpretive process, from the position of vicarious introspection on the part of the analyst, is a subjective and not an objective undertaking. Having rejected both empathy and interpretation in the psychoanalytic exchange, Renik (1993) moves to advocate the analyst's authentic engagement as a primary vehicle for therapeutic action.

While agreeing with Renik that there is a role for the analyst's authenticity in the analytic relationship, Aron (1992) clearly departs from Renik concerning the role of interpretation in psychoanalysis. Whereas Renik actually *defines* interpretation by its objectivity and therefore rejects it, Aron's view is that interpretation is necessarily subjective and can therefore continue to play an important role in the analytic process. Aron's formulation is entirely compatible with the self-psychological understanding of interpretation: since Kohut saw empathy as a form of vicarious introspection, the analyst's empathy for the patient would always include the introspectively gained subjectivity of the analyst. And since for Kohut, empathy was an integral part of the interpretive process, the interpretation itself would have to reflect that aspect of the analyst's subjectivity that he had accessed through his vicarious introspection. For Kohut, the basis of that subjectivity was the analyst's own affect, which he was to include in his responsiveness to the patient's communications. Aron seems, at least partially, to recognize this aspect of Kohut's thinking, whereas Renik does not.

In their enthusiasm for the authentic expression of the analyst's subjectivity, Aron (1992), Renik (1993), and Hoffman (1994) argue that the analyst's affective transparency is inevitable and therefore better allowed and acknowledged, rather than suppressed or hidden. Aron and Hoffman do warn, however, against the danger that too much of the analyst's expressed subjectivity might intrude into the patient's psychic space or that the primacy of the exploration of the patient's experience might get lost. Nevertheless, in the writings of all of these contemporary authors, the focus on the authentic expression of the analyst's subjectivity has the

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ultimate effect of diminishing the role played by empathy in their view of the analytic process.

In devaluing the role of empathy, postmodern analysts have effected a subtle shift in the conceptualization of analytic process, introducing new concepts that, in general, highlight the differences and the distance between patient and analyst, rather than the identification between them or the possibilities for merger fantasy. These new concepts include Bollas's (1989) dialectics of difference, Russell's (personal communication, 1990) negotiation of affect, Pizer's (1992) negotiation of paradox, and Slavin and Kriegman's (1992) negotiation of conflict. In all of these views, authentic engagement between patient and analyst, the analyst's spontaneity and self-expression, or the need for negotiation of difference and conflict, are seen as necessarily limiting the role that empathy can or should play in the psychoanalytic treatment situation.

Countertransference: A Convergence of Meanings?

Although there are marked differences among the various schools of thought concerning empathy, interpretation, and authenticity in the analytic process, on other issues there is more of a blurring of differences. Such blurring is evident in the transference/countertransference debate. Kohut and Loewald both held a view of countertransference that very closely anticipated the postmodern view. Kohut and Loewald, as well as the postmoderns, saw countertransference as a co-determinant of transference, each influencing the other (Kohut, 1984; Loewald, 1986). Differences now focus on the optimal use of countertransference, Kohut and Loewald being more likely to use it as a silent guide to their interventions; while the postmoderns tend to argue for its full disclosure to the patient.

The recognition of mutual influence in the analytic situation renders issues of transference and countertransference nearly inseparable. In this context, Kohut's emphasis on the *patient's* selfobject transferences might seem to fly in the face of his own acknowledgement of transference/countertransference reciprocity. Similarly, Loewald's concept of the analyst's higher level of ego functioning might seem to contradict his own more egalitarian view of the transference/countertransference. Although these juxtapositions suggest internal inconsistencies within Kohut and Loewald's thinking, these apparent incompatibilities may be resolved by certain findings of those currently doing infant research (Stechler and Kaplan, 1980; Stern, 1985; Demos and Kaplan, 1987; Lichtenberg, 1989; Lachmann and Beebe, 1992).

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Infant Observation and Mutuality

Increasingly, those doing infant observation research insist on a mutuality of influence in the interactions between mother and infant (Beebe and Lachmann, 1988). Extrapolated to the psychoanalytic situation, the concept of mutual influence can help the patient by erasing false hierarchies and by identifying the analyst as someone who will share responsibility for what happens in the analytic exchange (Loewald, 1979; Teicholz, 1995). At the same time, the concept of mutual influence may add to the patient's burden because an analyst could use the concept to conclude that, if patient and analyst are truly equal partners to the endeavor, with mutual influence on each other, then why should the analyst feel responsible to protect and provide for the patient in any privileged way? Thus, the concept of mutual influence, like all theoretical developments, can become a double-edged sword, solving one set of problems even as it creates new ones to be solved.

If we look at the infant-mother relationship, the problems in the theory of mutual influence are plainly visible. The normal mother comes to her interactions with her infant in possession of a self already formed or structured, whereas the infant has only a rudimentary self-structure in place. Thus, although each member in the mother-infant dyad clearly affects the mood and response of the other in the exchange between them, it is only the infant whose primary structuring of the self will be impacted by these exchanges. Because of this differential in the mother-child relationship, there is no contest between the far-reaching consequences of the mother's influence on the baby's primary development, as compared with the baby's influence on the mother, whose basic development has already taken place.

Kohut and Loewald surely had this kind of asymmetry in mind, in their insistence upon the selfobject model of development and of therapeutic action. I would like to give to this naturally occurring, mother-child asymmetry the label of *normative inequality*. In normative inequality, of course, the infant or patient is not inferior to the mother or analyst and should clearly have equal rights in their interchange; to this extent these relationships are mutual and egalitarian. But these relationships have an asymmetrical element as well, deriving from the fact that infant and patient are developmentally vulnerable in ways that the mother and analyst are not. Kohut and Loewald, for this reason, insist that it is the responsibility of the mother and the analyst to provide protection and to be available to be used psychically for the performance of selfobject functions, while the child or patient has no such reciprocal responsibility. Among

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contemporary analysts, Aron (1992) has recognized the coexistence of mutual and asymmetric aspects of the analytic relationship but seems less concerned with issues of responsibility.

Self and Relationship: Kohut and Loewald

We've identified many differences in how self and relationship are construed among Kohut, Loewald, and the postmoderns. Both Kohut and Loewald emphasized qualities of self that must be achieved before mature and mutually satisfying relationships could be established and enjoyed. Their treatments were therefore designed to contribute to such self-development. The healthy self, for both Loewald and Kohut, was a self able to integrate and express a wide range of instinct and affect. In Kohut's view, as the treatment furthered the development of the patient's self, the patient moved toward an increased capacity to seek or create needed selfobject experiences in relationships and activities outside of the treatment situation. These relationships importantly required two partners who could resonate with much or most of each other's multifaceted self-experience, experience that would include the sexual, the affectionate, the ambitious, and the idealizing aspects of self and other.

For Loewald (1960), also, the capacity for satisfying relationships was one of the central goals of psychoanalytic treatment. He wrote that the analyst must offer himself to the patient as a potential new object, even though the patient would inevitably require the treatment in order to be able to experience the analyst as in any way different from the old objects (see also Greenberg, 1986). Loewald (1980) stated that it was only through the interpretive process that a satisfying relationship could become a possibility for the patient. In his view, the interpretations pared away the patient's distortions, leaving a viable relatedness in their place. But even as he outlined this role for interpretation, Loewald seemed to be putting greater weight on the personal and interpersonal qualities of the analyst and on the ways in which the analyst interacted with the patient, than on the interpretive process per se. At times, therefore, Loewald seemed to be demoting interpretation to just one of many different kinds of facilitating interactions that could contribute to cure. *The facilitating interactions, or the relationship, seemed to become the fulcrum of the psychoanalytic situation and of cure.*

Although both Kohut and Loewald recognized the necessity of self-development for mature relationships, Kohut articulated the concept of self more than any other psychoanalytic contributor, and Kohut alone

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gave theoretical status to personal ambitions and goals. Loewald, on the other hand, seemed perhaps to place greater emphasis than did Kohut on the salience of relationships for their own sakes, beyond their role in structure and maintenance of the self. But David Terman (1980) suggested that "the mutual exchange of self-sustenance ... is the goal of most intimate relationships," and reminded us that object love, or relationship, arises out of the same conditions that facilitate self formation (p. 357). Thus, in self psychology, at least, where there is no self outside of the self-selfobject matrix, the importance of self and relationship cannot be evaluated separately. Very close to self psychology on this point, Loewald in a thousand eloquent ways told us that the *self* is structured directly on the basis of the early interactions between the developing child and his external objects. For both Kohut and Loewald, then, *relationships* are exactly and totally the stuff that the *self* is made of, and, in psychoanalytic treatment, the stuff that cure is made of, as well.

To summarize: Kohut, Loewald, and the postmoderns all place the patient-analyst relationship at the center of their discourse. But in some versions of contemporary psychoanalysis, the authentic engagement in the here and now of the analytic encounter becomes almost an end in itself, while theories recede concerning what this relationship is for and how, through its negotiation, therapeutic change is able to come about. The postmoderns seem not to acknowledge, with Kohut and Loewald, that the treatment is required in order for the patient to be able to engage in authentic relating. Thus, one might say that for Kohut and Loewald, authenticity and spontaneity of self were to be the goals of treatment, from which full relationships would follow, whereas for the postmoderns authenticity and spontaneity of relationship were expected to be both the end and the means of the treatment. For the postmoderns, the subjectivity of the analyst plays a central role, and the self of the patient seems almost to disappear.

Kohut's Followers: Recent Innovations

Innovative and creative followers of Kohut have amended, fleshed out, and added to his self psychology, emphasizing optimal responsiveness, rather than optimal frustration, and the direct provision of selfobject function through empathic understanding and affective responsiveness (Stolorow et al., 1987; Bacal, 1988; Ornstein, 1988; Teicholz, 1996). Fosshage (1995) has urged us to move back and forth between listening from within and outside of the patient's vantage point. Stolorow et al. (1987) have

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recommended that we understand the patient's experience as oscillating in a figure-ground pattern between conflictual themes and selfobject need. They have also prepared us to find not a bipolar or tripolar self, but a self with *multiple* "poles," or facets, as we broaden and deepen our empathic skills and remain open to what we see and hear from our patients. Lichtenberg (1989) has identified a broadened array of motivations to include Freud's instincts, as well as Kohut's selfobject needs and beyond. All of these recommendations are in keeping with Demos's (1989) suggestion that even in the face of postmodern complexity, we can continue our search for lawfulness (p. 288).

Dialogue and Dialectic

And how does the postmodern sensibility help us to sustain the relevance of Kohut and Loewald's work as the world changes around and within us? Many contemporary theorists, and perhaps most eloquently among them Irwin Hoffman (1994), make a plea for maintaining a dialectic between pairs of psychoanalytic concepts previously seen as dichotomous. Thus the postmodern critique of self psychology, for instance, that it places too much emphasis on planfulness, coherence and universally unfolding selfobject needs, loses its power when we identify within Kohut's work itself a recognition of multiplicity, multi-facetedness and richness of the self. Loewald's simultaneous emphasis on psychic differentiation and integration serves the same function in his theory and suggests that both Kohut and Loewald were aware of the plurality, as well as of the unity, of self experience. The concept of the dialectic permits us to hold the many concepts once thought of as opposites in our minds and in our hearts as we recognize the multiple layers and facets of our own and our patients' experience, and accept the inevitability, even in health, of both intrapsychic and interpersonal conflict. We do this while we are either working toward resolution of that conflict, or struggling to accept the unresolvability of much that disturbs us on our ever-shrinking planet and expanding universe.

Relationship leads to self and self makes relationship possible. Or to be more precise: Selfobject relationship leads to self, and self makes possible relationship in which there is negotiation of difference and authentic engagement. In some form or other all these different kinds of relating go on, simultaneously and interactively from birth to death. In psychoanalytic treatment, we may at times focus on one aspect of relating to the exclusion of others, even as the others continue to go on, outside of our focal lens.

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