Current Psychoanalytic Theories of the Self

View and Re-view

W. W. Meissner

Way Beyond Freud

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ABSTRACT

Theories of the self and its role in psychoanalysis are in a state of uncertain and ambiguous flux. In an effort to gain greater comprehensiveness and compatibility with analytic needs, I present a synthetic account of the concept of the self-as-person and indicate its relevance to the analytic process. The self-as-person is consistent with or comparable to some recent accounts of the self, but stands in contradistinction to a variety of other extant approaches to the self, including the concept of the self as representation prevailing in the generally accepted structural theory, the concept of the self in self psychology, and that prevailing in intersubjective and relational approaches. These formulations are found wanting on the basis of providing an incomplete account of the functioning and organization of the self or as rendering an insufficient account of the role of the self in the analytic process.

INTRODUCTION

Recent years have seen an upsurge in thinking about the role of self in

psychoanalysis. But we have yet to arrive at any consensus regarding either meaning of the self as a theoretical construct or the role of the self in the analytic process (Green, 2000; Tyson, 1989). Rudiments of an understanding of the self had emerged prior to the introduction of self psychology,[1] beginning with Hartmann's (1950) formulations regarding the distinction of self and ego. My review (Meissner, 1986a) of that literature left me dissatisfied with its ambiguities and limitations.

Subsequently I undertook a theoretical construction of the self concept that I hoped would more adequately encompass data relevant to functioning of the self and measure up to the demands of analytic understanding. This resulted in a series of studies of various aspects of the self as a functional psychic system. My purpose in the present essay is to draw together elements of my understanding of the self into a coherent account, analyze aspects of this understanding distinguishing it from other contemporary views, and suggest some implications for the analytic process.

THE SELF AS PERSON

The self I am proposing is synonymous with the human person—no aspect of the human person is excluded from this conceptualization of the self (Meissner, 2001).[2] It is the human person, therefore, whether as analyst or analysand, who participates in the analytic process. Specifically, the person

embraces both mental acts and capacities, and physical and bodily functions.[3] The human person is thus embodied and bodily functions are integral aspects of the functioning of the self. The body-self, constituting all aspects of the physical body and its functioning, is an integral constituent of the self-as-person (Meissner, 1997, 1998a,b,c).[4] The person in addition has an identity whose expression is heterogeneous and diversified in various contexts of action, reaction and interaction, but withal the person retains a certain consistency and unity that identifies him and allows us to recognize him as this individual person (Erikson, 1959; Mischel & Mischel (1977); Wallerstein & Goldberger, 1998).[5] Building on Erikson's psychosocial view of identity, Lichtenstein (1977) appealed to an "identity theme" to express the sameness, individuality, consistency and style, that is self-constancy (Meissner, 1986b), inherent in any one personality despite the variations and changes of context and circumstance. Despite variations in expression and context, the person remains consistently one and undivided (Meissner 1993, 1996a, 2001) and not multiple (Bromberg, 1996; Davies, 1996; Mitchell 1993, 1997, 1998).[6]

The self as a functional system can be analyzed in terms of its component aspects. The self is the source of its own agency, however conceived, whether active or passive, voluntary or involuntary, conscious or unconscious.[7] All bodily functions—beating of the heart, respiration, digestion, elimination, muscular movement, etc.—are actions of the self-as-agent. By implication some of the actions of the self are conscious and some

unconscious; unconscious actions are not attributable to any set of independent agencies operating within the self, as are the drives or unconscious structural derivatives as classically conceived, but unconscious actions, including unconscious mentation, motivation and affects, are actions of the self (Meissner, 1993).[8] Actions that reach the level of conscious awareness are also actions of the self, now qualified as subjective—they are actions of the self both as-agent (as acting) and as-subject (as knowing) (Meissner, 1999a,b). When unconscious content or mental activity becomes conscious in the course of analysis, activity of the self-as-agent becomes available to the self-as-subject. The self-as-subject is the self-as-agent acting consciously and is thus the originative source of conscious acts, whether mental or physical.[9] It is synonymously the subjective source of all conscious activity but cannot itself be known objectively, but only subjectively as the active source of action—as such the self-as-subject knows but is not known (Meissner, 1999a,b).

This last point is further illuminated by the contrast between the self-as-subject and the self-as-object (Meissner, 1996a). The self can serve as an object to itself. As embodied, I am an object to the observation of others around me. They can observe my body, my movements, my behavior, and the ways in which I express myself physically—including my speech and other channels of self-expression. But I am also an external object to myself, when I look in the mirror or more immediately when I look at my body. When I

examine the palm of my hand, I am experiencing myself as an object, even if it is only part of my body-self I am attending to. Mentally I can also observe myself introspectively, that is I can make some aspect of my inner mental life an object of attention and scrutiny.[10] This process is mediated by my self-representation(s) or self-image(s), that is forms of my self-knowing. This form of self-knowing or awareness of myself as object is contrasted with my awareness of myself as subject.[11] I am aware of myself simultaneously in the act of knowing as the subjective knower—so that I am at once knowing and known; as subject I am the knower, and as object I am known.

In the course of the analytic process, we facilitate the process by which the subject-knower in the patient comes to know himself objectively more fully and profoundly. By implication, however, the knower himself is never known as an object, but only as the subject of action. To whatever extent action of the self is known objectively, it is no longer subjective since it is known by the subject which itself eludes objectification. In addition, my self-conscious awareness of myself as acting, experiencing, feeling, thinking subject is the primary basis of my sense of myself as unique, continually existing, and the identical individual from moment to moment of my existence.[12] As Modell (1992) put it, "There is a core of the self that remains the same over time; this is not to claim an absolute sameness but a recognizable sameness, an ability to recover one's identity despite whatever happens to oneself' (p. 1). This subjective experience of my self-sameness,

together with the continuity and coherence of memory systems, serves to support my sense that I am the same person at this moment as I was when having breakfast, that I am the same person when I awoke this morning as I was when I went to sleep the night before, etc. The self-as-object, however, known and reflected in a variety of self-representings, is open to a variety of experiential modifications and thematic contextualizations that advocates of the self as multiple usually have in mind.[13] The variance in identity themes does not obliterate the inherent unity of the self-as-agent-and-as-subject.

The unity-multiplicity debate in modern times can be traced back to Locke and Hume, Locke holding to the permanence and continuity of personal identity as against Hume's view of the self as discontinuous and no more than a disconnected succession of states of consciousness (Alford, 1991; Viney, 1969). The paradox of self as enduring through the flux of conscious change puzzled William James (1890/1950) as well. Smith (1969) distinguished a more or less stable and consistent self-concept from transitory self-percepts developed in the course of transactions with the environment. Or as Mischel (1977) put it,

> Since we can say of someone that his personality at work is very different from what it is at home, there is a sense of "self" in which the style in which a social role is performed can be called a "presentation of self'. But there is another and quite different sense of "self" in which we say that someone's personality shines through, or is expressed in, everything he does—in the different roles he performs and the way he performs them, as well as in the way he engages in those interpersonal relations that are not

social roles, (pp. 25-26)

Horowitz & Zilberg (1983) pointed out that multiplicity is usually described in terms of self-images and self-representations, but they then confused the issue by assigning diversity to the self-as-subject rather than to the self-as-object: “Because subjective experiences may be organized by multiple self concepts, the ‘I’ of one state of mind is not necessarily the same as the T’ of a person’s next state of mind” (p. 285). But “subjective experiences” here are the experiences of the self-as-subject in knowing the self-as-object introspectively, not in experiencing itself as subject. The multiplicity is in the object of the experience and not in the subject.[14]

This composite of self as agent, subject, and object has certain inherent qualities that distinguish it from other views of the self. This self is first of all synonymous with the real human person; I am real, existing, acting, thinking, feeling, etc. This view of the self thereby contradicts views of the self as unreal, illusory, or as some form of fantasy.[15] This self also possesses an inherent unity such that there is only one self in the human person that can be viewed from these various perspectives but remains one in its internal constitution. This self can experience various states of emotional arousal, failures of memory, various states of consciousness, even states of radical dissociation or depersonalization, without foregoing its inherent unity or losing its identity. It thereby stands in opposition to views of the self as

multiple or somehow internally divided or fragmented.[16] Analyses of the self as internally multiple or divided, as far as I can see, have in mind the self-as-object but seem to accept that aspect of the self as the whole of the self, leaving the unifying aspects of the self-as-agent and as-subject aside (Meissner, 1996a).[17]

The further question concerns the relationship between self-as-structural and as supraordinate[18]—supraordinate as a higher level of organization within which component psychic substructures (id, ego, and superego) carry out their appropriate functions.[19] The self can be regarded as supraordinate on the following terms: (1) The self-as-agent is the sole source of agency in the person, the structural entities (ego, superego, id) acting as component subsystems. (2) The self provides a point of focus for formulating complex integrations of processes involving combinations of functions of the respective psychic entities. This would have specific reference to such complex activities as affects, in which all of the psyche systems seem to be represented, complex superego-ego integrations reflected in such formations as value systems, and other complex interactions of psyche systems involving fantasy production, motive-motor integrations, cognitive-affective integrations, etc. (3) As supraordinate the self provides a more specific and less ambiguous frame of reference for articulation of self-object interrelationships and interactions, including complex areas of object-relations and internalizations. (4) The self-concept provides a locus in the

theory for articulating experience of a personal self, whether grasped introspectively and reflexively or experienced as the originating source of personal activity.

Some self theorists follow Kohut in dispensing with economic and dynamic principles as central to analytic understanding, but I would insist on preservation of traditional dynamic perspectives with some modifications. The significant difference introduced by the self-as-person is that there is only one agency in the self, that of the self-as-agent, so that the drives are no longer considered as quasi-autonomous causal entities, but instead take the form of instinctual motivations reflecting libidinal, aggressive and/or narcissistic motivational states.[20] In this view, the person in analysis is the ultimately (if not immediately) responsible agent of all his actions, conscious or unconscious, including wishes, fantasies, dreams, associations, etc.

The self is the relatively integral source of its own action and the more or less autonomous subject of its thinking and feeling experience. Formulation of these aspects of the self's functioning is best accommodated by a structural theory of the self, that is according to the structural principles familiar to psychoanalytic classical theory (Meissner, 2000f, g). This raises specific questions relevant to the status of the self in relation to the structural entities of the classic tripartite model of the mind. I have argued that ego, id, and superego are constituents of the self, conceived as component

subsystems: thus ego-functions are synonymously functions of the self acting in its ego-modality, superego-functions are synonymously functions of the self acting in its superego-modality, and id-functions are synonymously functions of the self acting in its id-modality (Meissner, 2000e). On these terms, for example, the language of ego-functions familiar to classical analysts expresses synonymously actions of the self, but the agency proper to those actions is not in the ego but in the self. There is only one agent in the self. It is fair to say in this sense that the ego does not exist as such, but is only a theoretical construct for categorizing and expressing certain functions of the self.

But this self is not an isolated, solipsistic entity floating in a vacuum of time and space. From the beginning of its existence, even before emergence of an identifiable subject, it is related to, involved with, and dependent on its environment, both physical and interpersonal. The fetus in the womb interacts with the mother's body and is in some degree reactive to physical stimuli. The transition of birth exposes the infant to a different external environment with which he must interact: he must be able to breathe, suck, and react to the complex impact of external stimuli. He must learn to adapt to a world of objects around him, the most important of which are human. From the moment of birth, if not before, he is caught up in complex relationships with caretakers, maternal or otherwise. His subsequent development is elaborated in and through his continuing interactions with these others, for

good or ill.[21] In the context of these relationships, he becomes a human person; particularly from an analytic perspective he internalizes qualities derived from these relationships and these internalizations go a long way in shaping the nature and quality of his personality and psychic structure (Meissner, 1981a, 2001). The self, then, is relational in the sense that it is capable of relating to the world around it and especially is involved in complex relations and interactions with other selves constituting its social environment. Object relationships on these terms take place between the self and other persons, not between self and object representations (Meissner, 1979). These relationships are instrumental in shaping the development of the self and of influencing and modifying its structure and functioning in a continuing way throughout the life cycle (Meissner, 2000c). Analysis is uniquely invested in studying and working therapeutically with the complex ways in which analyst and patient relate to and interact with each other as whole persons in the analytic process (Meissner, 1996b, 2000a,b,d, 2003).

DIFFERENTIATING FEATURES OF THE SELF

This view of the self differs significantly from other current approaches to the self.[22] I will limit my considerations to some analytic views of the self and their differences.

Self as representational. The substantiality and concrete existence of the

self-as-person excludes nothing proper to the human person from its scope. The self is a bodily presence, physical as well as mental, thus opposing views of the self as nonexistent or merely phenomenal or as an illusion without substantive and independent existence.[23] The first of such views is the more or less standard view of the self as defined in terms of phenomenal self-representations. This view, confronting the ambiguities of “ego” and “Ich" in Freud's usage (McIntosh, 1986; Ticho, 1982),[24] derives from Hartmann (1950) and later Sandler and Rosenblatt (1962) and Jacobson (1964), and has become the standard analytic view of the self in the structural model (Boesky, 1983; Eisnitz, 1981). The self-representation referred to the self as synonymous with the total person particularly in contexts of object-relationship, but created first an ambiguity between connotations of the self as referring to the total person and the role of the self as an ego subfunction, and second a contradiction in attributing agency to a representation.[25] As inherently representational it could not act. The difficulty is that I am not a representation but a person (Meissner, 2001). This has not prevented generations of analysts from trying to attribute structural and action potential to the self-representation in bald-faced contradiction (Meissner, 1993, 1996a). I would insist that it is a person who engages in the analytic process and not a representation.

The tripartite structural model increasingly ran afoul of the need to explain more complex and higher-order integrative functions, particularly

those that could not be adequately attributed to separate entities or their combination (Meissner, 1986a, 2000e). As a result, the self-representation gradually acquired structural characteristics transforming it into a structural entity variously conceived as related to the tripartite entities, whether subordinately or supraordinately (Kemberg, 1976, 1982; Rothstein, 1983, 1991). These approaches inevitably encountered the inherent contradiction of a representational configuration serving structural functions and the persistent fallacy of regarding hypothetical constructs as exercising independent causality.[26] But the self-representation is itself an action, a self-representing, of a subject-agent who does the representing (i.e., the self-as-agent or subject). Representations are in effect cognitive actions by which I am able to know myself and the world around me. Actions do not act, they *are* acts. Representations do not act; they represent. Actions are actions only of the self, specifically as agent. If we were to ask, who does the representing, it cannot be the representing itself, but must be some other agency that performs the action of representing.

Since the function of self-representations is to represent and not to act, what do they represent? They are cognitive acts by which the self represents itself to itself; they are consequently representings of the self-as-object[27] (as knowable) and not of self as either subject or agent, since neither of these can be represented. They are thereby involved in any form of introspection and form the basis of predication about the self. When I say anything about myself

I am speaking of the self-as-object. When the patient, directly or indirectly, conveys some self-understanding or self-feeling, he is addressing his sense of himself as object. Internalization, whether of an introjective or identificatory nature (Meissner, 1971, 1972, 1981a) applies primarily to the self-as-object and only secondarily involves self-as-agent or subject.[28] This structural self is capable of acting on and relating to other selves; the self-representation serves in this context of object-relatedness only to express my perception or understanding of myself as I interact with, relate to, and am responded to by others in my experience. In other words, object relations are an integral aspect of the function and capacity of the self and not of self-representations. It is not my self-representation that relates to another person, but me, my self; I do not relate to the object-representation of the other but to that other himself (Meissner, 1979).

Winnicott's false vs. true self. Winnicott's (1960/1965a) distinction between a true self, consisting of a core sense of authentic subjectivity expressing genuine desires and affects, and a false self, based on compliance and imitation for adapting to external demands and impingements, thereby protecting and concealing the true self from manipulation, exploitation or control, is quite familiar.[29] The false self configuration can vary from extreme schizoid isolation to more moderate and relatively adaptive forms of social compliance. If this polarization can be described as a splitting, the splitting takes place more or less vertically within the self-as-agent and as-

subject since any action, whether in virtue of the true or false self, is still action of the self and can involve a degree of subjective awareness (Downey, 1989).

The primary difference between them lies mainly in the self-as-object, insofar as the self as presented externally—and often to a degree as identified internally—functions defensively to protect the inner self or not. The implications of the false self alignment for the relation between the self-as-subject and/or as-object for the functioning of the self-as-relational, and even further as social, deserve further exploration.[30] Clearly there is no contradiction between Winnicott's usage and the self-as-person. At one point, he wrote, "For me the self, which is not the ego, is the person who is me. who is only me, who has a totality based on the operation of the maturational process. At the same time the self has parts, and in fact is constituted of these parts" (cited in Gaddini, 1986, p. 177, and in Schacht, 1988, p. 516). There is also no difficulty in envisioning the true or authentic self as an idealized goal of the analytic process (Havens, 1986; Meissner, 1983, 2003; Schou. 2000).

Self psychology. The self-as-person, then, also diverges from accounts of the self as merely phenomenological or experiential as in Kohut's (1971, 1977) account of the self.[31] His notion of the self is somewhat obscure and ambiguous, particularly in relation to more traditional structural entities, since it is "based entirely on the patient's subjective experience" (Modell,

1993, p. 13).[32] The patient in a narcissistic transference experiences the analyst as an extension or part of himself, and not as another person in a separate body. Focussing on the phenomenology of the self, Kohut brushed aside other sources of evidence regarding the self (Meissner, 1989,1991).[33] He distinguishes between the self as experience-near and the structural entities as experience-distant, implying that the self-organization is cast at a different level of psychic integration than the structural entities.[34] Emphasis falls on the first-person quality of self-experience as personal and quasi-solipsistic. accenting the uniqueness and innemess of the experience (Sass, 1988). As Alford (1991) observed: "The tendency [in self psychology] is to deny the otherness of the other, to achieve autonomy only by absorbing the other. Transmuting internalization becomes transmuting absorption, and what is supposed to be a statement of maturity is actually the quintessential narcissistic fantasy: the entire world as selfobject—as extension of oneself' (p. 29).[35] Beginning with his stipulation of the roots of psychoanalytic understanding in introspection and empathy (1959, 1971),[36] Kohut (1977) characterized the self as "the basis of our sense of being an independent center of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with our experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and a continuum in time" (p. 177). But that self is "not knowable in its essence. We cannot, by introspection and empathy, penetrate to the self per se: only its introspectively and empathically perceived manifestations are

open to us" (p. 311). So far so good, but if we settle for this description we could apply it only to the self-as-object. whether of oneself by introspection or of others by empathy. The self-as-agent and as-subject are left behind.

Nonetheless, the self is accounted a source of initiative and action but paradoxically is not granted the capacity for agency.[37] In somewhat paradoxical fashion, Kohut (1971) states:

> The self, however, emerges in the psychoanalytic situation and is conceptualized, in the mode of a comparatively low-level, i.e., comparatively experience-near, psychoanalytic abstraction, as a content of the mental apparatus. While it is thus not an agency of the mind, it is a structure within the mind . . . To be more specific, various—and frequently inconsistent—self representations are present not only in the id, the ego, and the superego, but also within a single agency of the mind. There may, for example, exist contradictory conscious and pre-conscious self representations—e.g., of grandiosity and inferiority, side by side, occupying either delimited loci within the realm of the ego or sectorial positions of that realm of the psyche in which id and ego form a continuum. The self then, quite analogous to the representations of objects, is a content of the mental apparatus but is not one of the constituents, i.e., not one of the agencies of the mind. (p. xv)

The relevance of this description to the self-as-object, particularly with respect to the narcissistic introjective configurations (grandiosity and inferiority) (Meissner, 1981a, 1994), to the detriment of any other aspect of the self seems clear. Kohut does not escape the contradictions of the content vs. structure dichotomy—representations cannot act, mental content cannot serve as a center of initiative. The concept of self in this usage is thus

experiential, as is the concept of selfobject, which Kohut describes as experience of objects "not separate and independent from the self" (1971, p. 3) or as part of the self (Galatzer-Levy & Cohler, 1993; Kohut & Wolf, 1978; Wolf, I979).[38] What is known is only experience, known either introspectively or empathically (Lichtenberg & Wolf, 1997). Others have also emphasized the phenomenology of the self, either making it more or less synonymous with identity as a mental construct with shifting content (Abend, 1974) or a fantasy system (Grossman, 1982), concepts that may find application restrictively to self-representations, but deprive the self of its substantive and substantial reality and its capacity for agency. Modell (1992) criticized these approaches, particularly self-psychology, in their objectifying of the self to the neglect of the unique core subjectivity; thus Kohut he thought focused on the social self, embedded in self-selfobject relations, and disregarded the private and incommunicable subject.[39]

Kohut specifies that the self can be known only introspectively, but as the object of introspection what is known is the self-as-object (Meissner, 1996a). But is it true that we only know the self by introspection? I have argued that I also am aware of myself as a center of initiative and agency (Meissner, 1993) and as subject of my conscious activity (Meissner, 1999a). But the self-as-subject is not known by introspection since it does the introspecting, that is, the self-as-subject cannot be the object of introspection since it is the subject. But the self-as-subject is known by concurrent

experience in the very performance of its action. I am aware of myself as acting and as the initiating source of action in all of my conscious actions. But also some of my actions are unconscious and as such fall within the purview of the self-as-agent but not as subject (Meissner, 1993). My experience may be cast in varying degrees of activity-passivity, as in certain relatively passive affective states, reflecting the degree to which my action derives from the self-as-agent and is experienced or defensively disowned by the self-as-subject as other. Further, if the self is only experiential, it cannot serve as source of action and causality. The fact of action and causality implies a substantive and structural self, aspects of the self that go beyond mere experience.

Kohut's (1977) later work distinguishes his psychology of the self in a broad sense from a previous narrow usage. The latter is no more than a content of the mental apparatus, in the form of mental representations within id, ego, and superego (Kohut, 1971; Wallerstein, 1981). The broader perspective "puts the self in the center, examines its genesis and development and its constituents, in health and disease" (Kohut, 1977, p. xv). This broader self forms a "supraordinate unified and coherent constellation, with drives and defenses (the classic ingredients of psychic functioning) subsumed as constituents of this self. This is the view of what is called the bipolar self, with, in its maturation, the crystallization of normally self-assertive ambitions as one pole and attained ideals and values as the other" (Wallerstein, 1981, p. 379). But Bacal and Newman (1990) take Kohut to task for neglecting the

influence of unconscious drives and fantasies (a la Klein) in selfobject experience. Gedo's subsequent attempt to define the self in terms of a similar hierarchy of motives, goals and values is cast in a framework of developmental modes (Gedo, 1979; Gedo & Goldberg, 1973) that extends the Kohutian scheme but the account of the self remains tied to the bipolar model.[40]

Theoretically, Kohut's self remains excessively tied to narcissistic concerns; I would argue that, granted the importance of narcissistic investments in the self, the concept of the self is neither limited to the vicissitudes of narcissism nor adequately defined in narcissistic terms (Meissner, 1981b, 1986a).[41] The account in terms of aims and goals is only partial and derivative: partial in that it substitutes a limited subset of self functions for the total self, and derivative in that other developmental, dynamic and structural events are implicit in the patterning of ambitions and ideals. While the hierarchical organization of ambitions and ideals may play an important role in our understanding of self-as-object, it by no means exhausts its intelligibility, even for limited psychoanalytic purposes.

The intersubjective and relational self. The theory of the self-as-person also takes issue with another approach to understanding of the self that seems to be open to considerable misunderstanding. The concept of the self as intersubjective has undergone a diffusion of meanings, some of which are

congruent with an understanding of the self-as-subject, some of which are not.[42] These views resonate with postmodern conceptions of knowledge as effected by social construction so that any concept of a unified self or identity is no more than a transient version in constant flux and open to continuous revision.[43] The self as an entity existing beyond experience and linguistic symbolization cannot be substantiated, and thus can have no essential or unitary core (Elliott & Spezzano, 1996; Jacques, 1991; Leary, 1994)[44] The concept of intersubjectivity among analysts seemingly evolved out of vicissitudes of subjectivity in reference to countertransference, abetted by an intersubjective interpretation of projective identification (Steiner, 1996), that term having expanded its reference from the original engagement of the analyst's unconscious in the analytic process to the whole range of his personality and analytic activity. Another source seems to have been Kohut's self-selfobject relationship (Goldberg, 1998; Kemberg, 1999; Lichtenberg & Wolf, 1997; Teicholz, 1999), involving a degree of symbiotic fusion and lack of differentiation between self and object. Such a self is not contained by the integument of the person, but for Kohut the borders between self and nonself were fluid and highly permeable.[45] Along similar lines, Ogden (1994, 1996), for example, bases his "analytic third" on intersubjective interactions between analyst's and analysand's subjectivities—a dialectic of interpenetrating subjectivities, not I would note an engagement between separate subjects, but as reflecting a single intersubjective totality.[46] The

direct communication between subjectivities specified in the intersubjective perspective is not possible in my world. From the perspective of the self-as-person, "intersubjective" refers to a relation or interaction between at least two persons each of whom is individually a subject. We cannot mean a relation or interaction between their respective subjectivities, pace those who would argue for a "subject relations theory" (Bollas, 1989).[47]

The self-as-subject remains subjective and can never be anything but subjective; that is, the subject as such is never known objectively even by the subject, but is experienced subjectively only by the subject. As such it is a private and incommunicable component of my mental existence.[48] As May (1953) put it, "I can never know exactly how you see yourself and you can never know exactly how I relate to myself. This is the inner sanctum where each man must stand alone" (p. 82). To others around me I can only be known as an object since those others have no access to my subjectivity. They not only cannot know my subjectivity, they cannot even know my consciousness —neither the inner world of my self-experience (self-as-object) nor my objective nonself thought content. They have no access to my objective consciousness except by way of my communication of it. Any sense of myself as subject must be inferred from objective data. In these terms, then, what does it mean to say that I know the other not merely as object, but as subject? Since I have no access to his subjectivity, I must intend an inferential process. At one level, I am able to observe his behavior—how he speaks, acts, looks,

etc.—and conclude that such behavior must reflect the existence of a subjective source. Part of my reasoning may relate to my own subjectivity in that I infer internal mental processes in that other similar to those I experience in my own subjectivity. I presume a commonality of experience to all human beings, and insofar as I can satisfy myself that the other is also human I conclude to a degree of mental similarity. If my behavior reflects my self-conscious subjectivity, then his must too.

The same question arises regarding any "subject relations theory" (Bollas, 1989; Kennedy, 1998) or references to "intersubjective relatedness." The term "intersubjective" is used widely and loosely in analysis and among some philosophers, most notably social action theorists. For Schutz (1973), for example, the common sense world of everyday experience presumes a context of intersubjective interaction, "the world is from the outset not the private world of the single individual but an intersubjective world common to all of us" (pp. 208-209); thus as a natural attitude, intersubjectivity is assumed as a given (Gavin, 1981). The compounding of these views with a concept of the self as constituted by its relations (Curtis, 1991; Levenson, 1983, 1991; Mitchell. 1988, 1993) tends to undermine subjectivity and self-other differentiation.[49] As Gergen (1991) commented, "We may be entering a new era of self-conception. In this era the self is redefined as no longer an essence in itself, but relational. In the postmodern world, selves may become the manifestations of relationship, thus placing relationships in the central

position occupied by the individual self' (pp. 146-147). We even find some analysts, in the wake of Lacan,[50] writing: "Because the unconscious is an intersubjective phenomenon, it necessarily follows that its study has to be considered in the light of intersubjectivity . . . The structures of the unconscious refer to that dialectical relationship between self and other, whereby self is of necessity constituted by the other" (Rendon, 1979, pp. 348-349). In my view, the proper term in this context is "interpersonal" rather than "intersubjective," "object related" rather than "subject related." The term "intersubjective" is often used to denominate a pattern of interaction or interrelation between two persons—a very different matter than interaction or interrelation between two subjectivities. My self-as-subject does engage in interpersonal dialogue, but the dialogue is with another object who is also a subject; as object he is known by me, including his objectified external verbal and nonverbal expressions, but as subject he is the one who speaks or acts and is known to me only through his objectification. In other words, object relations take place between subjects, but between subjects known to each other as independent objects, not as subjects.[51]

The matter is complicated by attempts to redefine concepts like transference in intersubjective terms—the transference then becomes not the product of the patient's unconscious mental activity but is co-constructed intersubjectively (Bachant & Adler, 1997). To that extent, transference cannot be viewed as manifesting aspects of the patient's self-as-object, but reflects a

dissolution of boundaries and a mingling of self-and-other. Mitchell (1997) expresses this idea in terms of "dedifferentiation in which the boundaries around the self-experience of the two participants become permeable" (p. 151). On these terms, the genesis of the transference in the patient's previous history becomes secondary if not irrelevant. The present constructive interaction in which the experience of analyst and analysand of each other are continually created is privileged over past experience in favor of a constantly unfolding present (Leary, 1994). In consequence, transference and countertransference are intermingled and undifferentiated. Discrimination of one from the other is no longer possible.

The problem to my understanding is a failure to distinguish relational interaction and communication from intersubjective conflation[52]—if the patient's transference is open to relational influences from the analyst, it is not thereby co-constructed by both but only by the patient. The analyst is better advised to pay attention to the patient as author of the transference; his concurrent attention to his own internal processes supplements his experience of his relation to the patient as reflective of the patient's effect on him in the course of interaction. As Jacobs (1997) notes, the effort to focus excessively on one's own subjective experience can introduce certain distortions in data from the patient. If Jacobs speaks a truth in saying that "the inner experience of the analyst, properly used, opens a pathway to understanding the ways in which unconscious processes are transmitted to

the mind of another person" (p. 1057), the statement cannot be taken without qualification and due respect for what is communicated and how—and an understanding of how the analyst's experience in relation with his patient is associated with and reflective of the interactional patterns connecting them. [53]

An important component of such observational data are feelings. But again I have no subjective access to the other's feelings. What I do have is a set of observational data that resonate with my own affective experience—tone of voice, gestures, posture, tears, smiles, facial expressions, etc.—and may in the moment of communication of feelings arouse in me a set of affective resonances that provide another set of data from which I can conclude something about the subjective experience of the other. But if there is no objective, even bodily, expression of any of this, I have no way of knowing anything about it. These implications have even greater relevance in relation to unconscious processes. Not even the subject is aware of his own unconscious mentation or processing. The unconscious is only potentially subjective, and only to the extent that it becomes known as such does it merit being called subjective.

Beyond these considerations, psychoanalysis presumes continuity and preservation of self-identity from developmental past to analytic present, from session to session, from moment to moment of the analytic interaction.

Otherwise notions like transference or any inference of developmental influences in personality organization and functioning are impossible. The patient's history becomes irrelevant, and any assumptions of transferal of therapeutic effects or cumulative modification of the patient's self-understanding and/or character structure are brought into question. Mitchell (1997) aptly poses the issue: "If self-organization is contextual, how can what is authentically me be distinguished from you? And how can I determine which of the variable 'me's' that emerge in different interactive contexts is the true or authentic me?" (p. 21). What guarantees do we have that the patient's "me" of yesterday is the same "me" as of today?

CONCLUSION

I have tried to present a compressed but comprehensive theory of the self that encompasses the total reality of the human person in terms that are congruent with the dimensions of psychoanalytic understanding and praxis. This theory of the self-as-person, as I call it, can be differentiated from alternative analytic perspectives of the self either on grounds that those alternate views define the self in terms of one or other aspect of self functioning or expression, thus truncating the comprehensiveness of the understanding of the human person, or on the grounds that the account of the person does not adequately represent the participation of either analyst or analysand in the analytic process.

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Notes

[1] Beginnings of a psychology of the self can also be found earlier in Horney with many resemblances to Kohut (van den Daele, 1981). Variations and vicissitudes of the self-concept in alternate analytic schools were traced by Ticho (1982).

[2] Guntrip (1969, 1973), for one, had bemoaned lack of a personal self in psychoanalysis. The self-as-person reflects a more or less consensus view; as Mischel (1977) put it, "There is one point on which philosophers and psychologists, or at least those who contribute to this volume, can easily agree: the self is not some entity other than the person" (p. 3).

[3] I am not inclined to view mind-body-self integration in dualistic terms, but have yet to come to any closure on this issue which is more specifically philosophical, although it has many ramifications for analytic theory.

[4] This view of the self parts company with anti-essentialist versions of the self, such as, for example, Schafer's (1983) view of the self as a form of narrative construction—another form of linguistic translation of the self.

[5] Ricoeur (1992) drew a distinction between identity *(ipse)* and sameness *{idem),* the former

characterizing selfhood as one-and-the-same and the latter characterizing identity as continuous in time. Identity of the self has sameness *(idem)* as when we say the tender shoot and the tree have the same identity of structure; but the sameness implied in staying true to my promises has a different connotation—no matter how I change I remain faithful to my promises, reflecting a sense of identity *(ipseity)* different from the sense of identity implied in sameness of structure.

[6] Curiously, the Shanes (1998) would like to have it both ways—the self as unified when it seems useful, and as multiple when that serves better. This seems to ignore the reality of the person as one and suggests a Humpty-Dumpty approach to theory, i.e., the self is whatever I wish it to be. A similar uncertainty and ambiguity was expressed by Holland (1998). A curious twist to this problem is the confusion of the concept of a unitary self with a fictive concept of a normative or prescriptive version of the self (Flax, 1993). However, unity of the self residing in the self-as-agent and/or subject does not exclude a degree of diversity and freedom to adapt and change in the self-as-object.

[7] See Alston (1977). A psychoanalytic view of the self differs from phenomenological approaches by including unconscious sources of action and motivation rather than locating the source of causal agency entirely within the phenomenal field of conscious experience. The problem was reflected in Nietzsche's (1886/ 1973) comment: "What gives me the right to speak of an T,' and even of an T as cause, and finally of an 'I' as cause of thought? . . . A thought comes when 'it' wants, not when 'I' want" (pp. 28-29). See the reservations and qualifications of the phenomenological approach in Smith (1969).

[8] Fast (1998) proposed a view of the self as action or better acting. For her, "thinking, feeling, and acting are not what our self does, but what our self is" (p. 6). The metaphysics of acting without an actor escapes me. Substitution of "selving" for the self-as-agent does not escape this difficulty. There is a conceptual difficulty lurking behind much analytic thinking about the self which was cryptically tagged by Brenner (2000): many "seem to want to separate what a person thinks and says from the rest of the individual, as though mental functioning were not part of the chemical structural entity called a person" (p. 603). Benjamin (1995) also concedes that even if the self turns out to be multiple, psychoanalysis still needs to conceive or imagine a subject who owns a history and acts.

[9] Some authors, Tahka (1988) for example, restrict the self to "subjective self experience" (p. 107) which does not honor the unconscious as part of the self since the unconscious is not experienced.

[10] In this sense, attributes by which I characterize myself objectively as this person belong to the self-as-object, including introjective configurations, ego-ideal, grandiose self, and even Steiner's (1999) "heroic self."

[11] Some analysts prefer to see the subject, rather than a self-as-agent, as source of action as well as both conscious and unconscious mentation; see for example Benjamin (1988, 1998) and Kennedy (1998, 2000). Their subject seems to be equivalent to my self, including the self-as-object. As far as I can see, the elusive and ambiguous quality Kennedy (1998) esteems in his subject is adequately embraced by the combined perspective of the self-as-agent and as-subject and as-object.

[12] This aspect of self-reflective awareness is rejected by anti-essentialist and postmodern critics as illusory. Variations in vantage points, experiences, or reflecting narrative social constructions are said to indicate multiple selves rather than one self having varying experiences and reacting to varying relational contexts. These views equivalently dispense with the self as a center of subjectivity.

[13] See Sandler's (1986) appeal to "shapes" of self-representations to explain multiple self-images.

[14] This fragmenting and multiplying of the self seems to be an inescapable consequence of postmodern analyses, despite the objections of Elliott and Spezzano (1996) who protest that the postmodern self is decentered and not fragmented. Freud's decentering portrayed the self as no longer master in its own house, but not as thereby fragmented. That is his conscious ego (i.e., a function of the self-as-subject) was not in control of all of the agency of the self (i.e. the self-as-agent) some part of which is unconscious. If there is fragmentation it is in the self-as-object, or in some combination of subject and object as in multiple personality (Meissner, 1996a), not in the self-as-agent. Rorty (1986) takes Freud's discussion of decentering as though "some other person is behaving as if he or she were in charge" (p. 5), but clearly multiple psychic entities in the Freudian metapsychology are not persons. Kennedy (2000) comments that "Without decentering there would be no unconscious" (p. 882), but it seems more accurate to say that without the unconscious there would be no decentering—but this would require acknowledge ment of a core self (at least as-agent) which Kennedy disallows, "the subject has no central self' (p. 882).

[15] As far as I can see, the view of the self as illusory results from a restrictive focus on the self-as-

object which is the only aspect of the self that can be objectively known—or as Elliott and Spezzano (1996) put it, "Psychical life is portrayed as a nonlinearmovement of fantasies, containers, introjects, representational wrappings, semiotic sensations, envelopes, and memories" (p. 80), components which, whether metaphorically or not. reflect aspects of the self-as-object. Since the self-as-subject cannot be known as object, it is presumed to be an illusion or without knowable reality. Some absorb the self into the ego (Spruiell, 1981). so that what acts is the ego and the self as "I" becomes an illusory abstraction. This reverses the situation in which the self-as-person is the real agent and the ego a theoretically constructed substructure of the self. For a discussion of phenomenological philosophical currents underlying evacuation or dilution of the self-concept, see Chessick (1992).

[16] Schafer (1992) bases his view of the multiplicity of the self on self-deception, implying one self deceiving another. This would seem to deny any capacity for conflict or defense to a unified self. See Goldberg's (1991) comments on the unity vs. diversity tension. Leary (1994) addressed the postmodern fragmentation and multiplication of the self in terms of the evacuation of the significance of personal history in analysis, doing away with self as a center of subjectivity, and ignoring the fact that the self is embodied. I am in sympathy with Alford (1991) who writes: "It is important to draw the right lesson from these considerations, lest we end up like Lacan, concluding that because wholeness is a myth, so too is the self. Indeed, beyond analyzing the concept of the self held by various authors, this has been my primary concern: to challenge the all-or-nothing perspective on the self, a perspective that appears in several guises" (p. 186).

[17] The problem of unity-in-multiplicity in the self comes into play in anthropology too. The Spindlers (1992), for example, distinguish the enduring self from the situated self—the former connoting the personal continuity and persistent identity of the self and the latter the contextual variability of the self interacting with the physical and social world.

[18] See Ornstein (1981), Horowitz and Zilberg (1983) and Wallerstein (1983) on this point. Kohut's (1977) later version of the bipolar self is described as "supraordinate," with drives and defenses of the classic theory as constituents. The contradiction in ascribing drive- and defense-related actions to a self devoid of the capacity for agency remains.

[19] The question of the relation between the self conceived as the whole person and its relation to psychic structures was addressed by Lichtenstein (1965) in trying to resolve ambiguities in Hartmann's formulation. See my further discussion in Meissner (2000f, g). Richards

(1982) took Klein, Gedo and Kohut to task for replacing diverse functions of the mental apparatus with a supraordinate self in some form, implying that global explanations in terms of the whole person would transcend detailed accounting of details of motive and defense. In distinction from these other positions, the unity and supraordinate position of the self-as-person does not contradict multiplicity and conflict between or within constituents of the self (Steingart, 1969; Schafer, 1979) nor does explication in terms of the self replace explanations in terms of its constituent parts—the functioning of the self operating as ego can be in conflict with the self operating as id, but the agency of both is the agency of the self. There is also no reason why intrasystemic conflicts, say between aspects of ego-functioning, cannot persist in one self-as-agent. The analytic task is to help the patient understand that one aspect of himself is in conflict with another. The self does not replace ego, superego and id; rather the ego *is* the self operating in its ego mode, superego *is* the self operating in its superego mode, and id *is* self operating in its id mode.

[20] Consequently, instead of viewing the drives as causal principles of unconscious action, they become motivational principles guiding and directing the causal efficiency of the self-as-agent. See my review and analysis of these metapsychological principles in Meissner (1993, 1995a, b, c, 1999a, b). For a further application of these principles with respect to aggression, see Rizzuto et al. (1993).

[21] Some authors seem to write as though the self-as-subject were somehow incompatible with a view of the self-as-related. Rubin (1997), for example, contrasts "self-centered subjectivity" with "nonself-centered subjectivity" as though the former somehow contradicts the latter. The difference lies in the focus of intentionality, not in any contradiction in the self.

[22] I would hope that any obscurities or densities in the above formulations could be relieved by reference to the published articles. Readers can then better make up their own minds as to the advantages or disadvantages of my position. Rather than persuading the reader to the advantages of my view of the self, I would hope to enter it in the lists of contending versions, illumine as best I can the crucial distinguishing features, and suggest some of the implications for the analytic process, and leave it to the reader to judge.

[23] Bollas (1987) commented: "There is no unified mental phenomenon that we can term self, although I shall use this term as if it were a unity; it is true to say that all of us live within the realm of illusion and within this realm the concept of the self has a particularly relevant meaning" (p. 9). Gargiulo (1997), in turn, concludes "that the self does not exist

in itself. The 'I' is a cultural-imaginative construct" (p. 3). See also Bromberg (1994,1996) and Knoblauch (1997). In addition, I would note that representational theorists assume that including bodily representations in the self-representation accounts for the self as bodily. Steiner (1999) makes this point in regard to Klein and Kernberg. Obviously, the body image or bodily representation is not the same as the body.

[24] Freud left us an ego as part of his systemic metapsychology, but did not hesitate to unabashedly personalize the ego when it suited him. Rather than seeing Freud's usage as ambiguous, some prefer to see it as advantageous, e.g. Spruiell (1981). I would see it as advantageous only in the absence of an adequate theory of the self. Spruiell's "self' turns out to be an abstraction or fantasy, reducible to activity of the ego.

[25] This difficulty was also noted and commented on by Boesky (1983).

[26] Schafer (1968) drew attention to this difficulty, objecting that such crossing of conceptual lines only confused meaning of the terms—"if all representations are structures, of what use is the term *structure*?" (p. 61)—and increased the risks of reification and theoretical redundancy—representations and structures end up doing the same job and the self becomes a multiplicity of minds and the person fragmented into multiple component selves. Also the term *self-representation* is misleading in connoting a substantive (noun) that too readily lends itself to predication (e.g. as if the self-representation could be a subject of action, as in Rothstein's [1983; Panel, 1989J self-representation-as-agent). See also my critique in Meissner (2000e).

[27] McIntosh (1986) underlines the role of the self-representation as intentional object of self-knowing. I am arguing that the self-as-known intrapsychically is the self-as-object and the medium of such knowing is the self-representing—the selfrepresentation is not what is known but how it is known.

[28] I have elsewhere (Meissner, 1978, 1981a, 1996a) described introjective configurations as structural components contributing to the organization of the self-as-object. These configurations are known in virtue of their reflection in self-representings and are in many respects comparable to Bollas' (1989) "alternative objects" or what Sutherland (1983) referred to as "subselves."

[29] See also Winnicott (c. 1950/1989) and further Auerbach (1991) and Schacht (1988) for

discussion of the development of the true self and its involvement in intercorporeal, intersubjective and intrasubjective fields of symbolic dialogue and meaning. Havens (1986) also discussed some of the clinical complexities pertaining to this distinction. Also Modell (1992, 1993) regards the true self and his private self as synonymous, reflecting Winnicott's (1963/1965b) view that "Although healthy persons communicate and enjoy communicating, the other fact is equally true, that *each individual is an isolate, permanently noncommunicating, permanently unknown, in fact unfound"* (p. 187, italics in original). The analogy with the self-as-subject is clear.

[30] I had previously hinted at these connections in reference to Winnicott's (1969/ 1971) concept of use of the object (Meissner, 2000c,d), but the exploration of the self-as-social is still in process.

[31] ,This would apply to phenomenal accounts of the self following Kohut's lead, e.g. Lichtenberg (1975). See also Chessick's (1998) reservations on Lichtenberg's later experiential and intersubjective perspective on the self.

[32] In Kohut's (1977) and intersubjectivist usages, the self is identified with the personal "I"—that is with the self-as-subject, but this self is defined in terms of relations with selfobjects, i.e., objectively, and leaves no room for actions and/or functions of the self that are unconscious, i.e., not experienced. See Barnett (1980) for a similar view of the self as defined in terms of subjective experience.

[33] Not without qualifications. Arguing for empathy and introspection as defining the field of analytic observation, he comments that they "are not the only ingredients of psychoanalytic observation. In psychoanalysis, as in all other psychological observation, introspection and empathy, the essential constituents of observation, are often linked and amalgamated with other methods of observation" (Kohut, 1959, p. 463). However, these other methods never seem to play much of a role.

[34] See, however, Schafer's (1991) and Chessick's (1988) reservations on the experience-near vs. experience-distant distinction in Kohut, especially in regard to the later bipolar self.

[35] Lacan reverses this absorption. His Other is like a selfobject, but, rather than gaining support for the self by transmuting internalization, part of the self becomes alienated in the Other (similar to projective identification) never to be retrieved (Alford, 1991).

[36] The implications of the methodological shift to empathy and introspection as the basis for analytic exploration are traced by Balter and Spencer (1991).

[37] Chessick (1988) drew attention to this ambiguity in Kohut's rendition of the self. Galatzer-Levy and Cohler (1993), despite their commitment to self psychology, also recognize this difficulty. See also Tyson (1991).

[38] See also Coen (1981) on the lack of differentiation between self and selfobject experience, thus equating selfobjects with preoedipal objects, and Omstein (1978), according to whom the selfobject relationship is characterized by "the lack of differentiation, or only partial differentiation of self from object" (p. 62). For Goldberg (1996) "there is a self composed of and/or constituted by selfobjects" (p. 192). Hirsch (1999) commented on the retreat from an object-relations theory to a one-person isolation of the self. Later developments extended the selfobject to include any object of dependence (Baker & Baker, 1987) or almost anything the self can be related to or connected with—see Galatzer-Levy and Cohler (1993) and Goldberg's (1998) reservations. The diversity of self-selfobject relations, in which the self is identified with its multiple and changing selfobjects, introduces an inherent multiplicity to the self concept, as Grotstein (1983) noted. Pizer (1998), for example, views the individual as selecting one among available multiple selves suitable for engagement in the current intersubjective space. In the treatment situation, we are left with the multiple selves of the analyst interacting with the multiple selves of the patient—or conversely, the patient can be interacting with his selfobject, a part of himself, rather than with the person of the analyst, so that even if we count two bodies in the room, there may be only one self. Clearly the Kohutian self is not confined to bodily limits (Levine, 1985).

[39] And Gedo (1992) adds: "Kohut strongly overstated the nature of the need for selfobjects (and, as an inevitable consequence, he overlooked the crucial importance of autonomous competence)" (p. 19).

[40] Segel (1981), in opposing Kohut's dichotomizing self and structure, argued for their integration—an approach similar to my view of the self-as-person. But such integration is only possible with a concept of self that is consistent with structural integration—the self of self psychology, as far as I can see, is not.

[41] Tahkii (1988) also noted the ambiguity of investing narcissistic cathexis, as an investment in the

self, in object representations as in the concept of selfobject.

[42] The ambiguities are alive and well in the next generation of self psychologists. By concentrating on the subjective experience of the selfobject, has Kohut blurred the distinction between the object as real and the object as experienced (Bacal, 1990; Bacal & Newman, 1990)? Or has the self become composed of its relations with objects, a view tending toward the intersubjective paradigm (Goldberg, 1990; Kirshner, 1999; Shane & Shane, 1993)? Certainly, Stolorow and Atwood (1984) have no hesitation in declaring "the basic units of analysis for our investigations of personality are *structures of experience—the* distinctive configurations of the experience of self and object that shape and organize a person's subjective world. These psychological structures are not to be viewed simply as "internalizations" or mental replicas of interpersonal events. Nor should they be regarded as having an objective existence in physical space or somewhere in a "mental apparatus" (pp. 97-98, italics in original). Besides the confusion between and substitution of structure for representational content (Meissner, 2000f), this phenomenological perspective does not allow for the continuity, persistence, or agency of the self.

[43] Or as Sass (1992) put it, "There is a fragmentation from within that effaces reality and renders the self a mere occasion for the swarming of independent subjective events—sensations, perceptions, memories, and the like. The overwhelming vividness, diversity, and independence of this experiential swarm fragment the self, obliterating its distinctive features—the sense of unity and control" (p. 31). See the extended reflection on postmodern views of the self and their limitations in Schrag (1997). Benjamin (1995) also complains that excesses in the deconstruction of feminine identity have led to abandonment of unitary self and subjectivity required by analysis. See also Robbins (1996) for a similar critique.

[44] Jacques (1991) refers to the "illusion of subjectivity . . . whose purpose," he says, "in its most philosophical form, is to turn the individual into a subject of knowledge or action, to constitute the subject-self into a *form of being.* An illusion that allows persons to appear to themselves with a feeling of autonomy and permanence, with memories, qualities, and their own baggage of guilt" (p. 163, italics in original).

[45] Trop (1995) discussed similarities and differences between self psychology and intersubjective theory.

[46] Similar views have been advanced by other intersubjective theorists; see for example Atwood and Stolorow (1984), Benjamin (1988), Gargiulo (1997), Hoffman (1996), Orange (1995), Renik (1998), and Stolorow and Atwood (1984, 1997).

[47] For Bollas (1987), "The person's self *is* the history of many internal relations" (p. 9, my emphasis), rather than the self *having* a history of such relations.

[48] The emphasis in this view of subjectivity resonates with Modell's (1993) advocacy of the "private self" and its prerogatives. I would also concur with his rejection of Hartmann's objectivizing representational self and Kohut's phenomenologically subjective self, both inadequate for understanding the self-as-person. See also Spruiell (1981) on this score.

[49] Mitchell (1993) tries to weave a middle course combining intrapsychic and interpersonal perspectives of both one-body and two-body approaches, as does Benjamin (1988, 1995). However, it is one thing to shift perspectives in relation to the therapeutic context and another to try to shift or combine perspectives theoretically. The self-as-person lends itself to both pragmatic perspectives, but theoretically it cannot be both an autonomous center of causality and subjectivity and at the same time defined in terms of its external relations. As Robbins (1996) comments, "Pragmatically useful as this hybridized form of thinking may sometimes be, it must be seen for what it is, a form of applied science or technology that overlooks crucial conceptual and organizational distinctions among theoretical models" (p. 47). By the same token, I would take issue with Macmurray's (1957/ 1968) view of the private, autonomous and subjective self as egocentric, solipsistic and fictive, and his argument that the self is defined as inherently relational. Leary (1994) has underlined the similarity of the self defined by its relations with others with borderline or narcissistic pathology. "This sort of self," she comments, "for the analytic clinician, far from being liberated, is instead enslaved" (p. 454). To which Elliott and Spezzano (1996) add, "the fragmentation idealized in the post-modernity discourse is really multiple personality disorder and schizophrenia; flux threatens the self, subjectivity and identity" (p. 62).

[50] Lacan's contribution to the interpretation of intersubjectivity is discussed by Loewenstein (1994) and Meissner (1999b).

[51] It is interesting to note that a similar shift, parallel to that in psychoanalysis, from more or less objective observation to an interest in subjectivity and the relational interaction between

observer and observed, has arisen in anthropology, especially in the context of ethnographic field studies. See the discussion of this phenomenon in Nash and Wintrob (1972).

[52] Similar relational concerns have been applied to feminine subjectivity and gender identity. See Chodorow's (1996) discussion. Again the need for relatedness gets confused with relatedness as foundational for the self.

[53] After formulating these ideas, I came across an old German proverb that seemed apt:

"Rechne fleissig, rechne gut,
rechne nur auf dich;

Denn wer auf andere rechnet,
der verrechnen tut sich."

A free rendering might go: "Interpret diligently and well, but only with regard to yourself; for anyone who tries to interpret another, may only interpret falsely."

About the Author

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