

NARCISSISM AND THE SELF: PSYCHOANALYTIC CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract: This article addresses the relation of narcissism to the concept of the self. Based on the concept of the self-as-person, distinction is drawn between the self as a substantial, relatively autonomous source of agency and of both conscious and unconscious mentation and action on one hand and the self as the object of narcissistic investment on the other. The argument presumes abandonment of both the concept of narcissism as libidinal drive cathexis of the self (the most common understanding of narcissism among analysts) and the converse proposition defining the self as derived from and reflecting narcissistic origins. It is proposed that development of self structure arises on the basis of other than narcissistic considerations, but once established it can become the object of narcissistic investment. As such the self cannot be reduced to or defined in terms of narcissistic derivation. Implications for the understanding of self-esteem are explored and clinical implications suggested.

THE PROBLEM

Concepts of the self in psychoanalysis have undergone significant development in recent years. The concept of narcissism, based on Freud's first formulations, has been closely associated with the concept of the self, both in the sense that the self is regarded as the object of narcissistic cathexis and in the sense that the self itself was thought to arise out of infantile narcissistic drive derivation, as the result of structuralizing processes converting primary narcissism into secondary narcissistic formations. For the most part, the prevailing concept of narcissism remains tied to Freud's original formulation, as a form of libidinal cathexis of the self, and the dominant view of the origins of the self is likewise still closely related to a supposed narcissistic derivation. Consequently, the self remains both the object of libidinal investment, and conversely, it is correspondingly defined as the structuralized derivative of such investment.

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These long-held theoretical linkages between narcissism and the concept of the self have given rise to some troublesome questions. In the course of the uncertain and at times turbulent evolution of thinking about the self, this adherence to the original Freudian formulations, particularly to the drive-based, libidinal theory of narcissism, and its outmoded connections with emerging concepts of the self, may have become something of an obstacle to resolution of some of the more perplexing aspects of the self concept. One assessment of predominant theories of the self is that they have been caught in a conceptual cul-de-sac created in part by the mandatory linkage between self and narcissism. In terms of the classic view of narcissism as drive, narcissistic cathexes are directed to self-representations. I have argued that the dominant view of the self, formulated in terms of self-representations, does not adequately address the operational nature and functional capacity of the self (Meissner, 1996a).

My purpose in this communication is to make a simple clarification that seems to me, on a number of counts, to be required in the current debate on an emerging psychology of the self. My discussion is intended to be tentative and exploratory, suggesting an alternative possible view of the nature of the self and its relation to narcissistic dynamics. The major point of the argument is that the psychology of the self should not be assumed to be synonymous with the economics of narcissism. It is possible, in the current status of evolving psychoanalytic theory, to regard the psychology of the self as in itself an appropriate and important realm of clinical and theoretical discourse that has relevance beyond the domain of narcissistic concerns and is, in fact, independent of that domain. My objective, therefore, in the present article is to suggest an understanding of narcissism in terms that are integrable with the theory of the self-as-person as presented in previous formulations (Meissner, 2001). My reflections will begin with a brief critical résumé of the traditional theory. I will then comment on the putative relations between narcissism and the self in both healthy and pathological forms of expression, particularly in relation to self-esteem regulation. I will finish with some further comments on the clinical aspects of these considerations.

THE CONCEPT OF NARCISSISM

FREUD

Freud's first formal thoughts about narcissism came in relation to homosexuality (1910), although he had actually floated the idea previously in discussions in the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society meetings in

1909 (Gay, 1988; Nunberg & Federn, 1967). He described it as a situation in which an object like oneself was taken as love object. In his subsequent discussion of the Schreber case (1911), he envisioned it as an intermediate stage between autoeroticism (loving one's own body) and object love (loving another person). Then in "Totem and Taboo" (1913), it becomes the libidinal complement to the egotism of the self-preservative drive. But the first systematic crystallization came in his paper "On Narcissism" (1914). The protean manifestations of narcissism included psychotic withdrawal and megalomania (à la Schreber), conditions he referred to as narcissistic neuroses, omnipotence of thoughts characteristic of children and primitives, withdrawal of libido in organic illness, sleep and dreaming, hypochondria, and the vicissitudes of narcissistic as opposed to anaclitic object-choice. He regarded these all as forms of recentering of libidinal drive investment in the self rather than in outside objects.

In this model, narcissistic investment in the self was accomplished by withdrawing libidinal cathexis from objects and reinvesting it in the self. The transformation and interplay of object and narcissistic libido was expressed in his analogy of the amoeba, putting forth and withdrawing its pseudopods. The model envisioned a quantity of libido distributed either externally or internally, and, in closed system fashion, the more of one the less of the other. Thus the more one became libidinally invested in outside objects, the more depleted was the quantity of libido invested in the self and *vice versa*. On these terms, libido could be sent out from the central reservoir, attached to objects, and then withdrawn again and focused on the self-ego; thus object-libido can be converted to ego-libido and back again. This was exemplified in the concept of the purified pleasure ego, described in "Instincts and Their Vicissitudes" (1915), in which the beginnings of secondary narcissism are implemented by retaining positive libido within the self as containing all that is good and pleasurable and projecting the bad and unpleasurable to the outside. Presumably by this stage of development the polarity of self-other has been established.

POST-FREUD

Following from Freud's (1914) analysis, narcissism has acquired a diversity of meanings. The task of assessing subsequent developments in the theory of narcissism has been simplified by recent extensive reviews of the subject by Pulver and by Moore. Pulver (1970) traced the historical evolution of the concept of narcissism, particularly emphasizing

ing the extension of the term to include almost any form of psychological interest attached to the self. He pointed out that it has been used clinically to denote sexual perversion and genetically to denote a stage of development with particular characteristics. In reference to object relationships it has been used to denote both a type of object choice and a mode of relating to the environment. And finally it has been used to denote various aspects of clinical states of self-esteem. As he pointed out, the result has been considerable theoretical confusion, usually emerging from a failure to differentiate the various forms of narcissism. He accordingly distinguished several subtypes—a developmental stage, a form of object choice, a mode of relating, and a self-referential attitude. The implications and consequences of each subtype are different, some connoting opposition to object love, some not only compatible with but reinforcing and supportive of object love.

Moore (1975) in turn covered much of the same ground, but ended by recommending retention of the term “narcissism” as a type of nuclear concept providing an organizing matrix for theoretical construction covering the wide variety of forms. In this sense the concept would transcend attempts to narrow its definition; thus efforts to restrict or differentiate it, he thought, would lose something in the process. These two accounts form variants of the lumping-splitting strategies that express themselves in terms of differentiation (splitting) of the concept on one side and retention of the global concept (lumping) on the other.

PRIMARY NARCISSISM

Returning to Freud’s original view, he envisioned an undifferentiated reservoir of psychic energy which he called “primary narcissism” (1914), defined as “an original libidinal cathexis of the ego, from which some is later given off to objects, but which fundamentally persists and is related to the object-cathexes much as the body of an amoeba is related to the pseudopodia which it puts out” (p. 75). By implication, infantile narcissism implies an ideal of self-perfection in which the infant takes himself as his¹ own ideal (pp. 93-94). Freud referred this cathexis to the ego, reflecting his ambiguous use of the concepts of ego and self and the indeterminateness of his theory at the time; later thinkers would clarify this usage by connecting narcissism more explicitly to the self (see below).

This basic concept of primary narcissism has undergirded all subsequent analytic thinking about narcissism, particularly in relation to concepts of the developmental process, conceived in terms of the emergence

of psychic structure out of an undifferentiated narcissistic matrix (Mahler, Pine, & Bergman, 1975), and has even played a role in self psychology in which self structures are presumed to differentiate out of archaic narcissism (Kohut, 1971). Some analysts retain the original Freudian view of primary narcissism as a primitive and undifferentiated energetic reservoir, but some also envision it in more psychological terms as the first and most primitive psychic state of the infant. Levin (1969), for example, following Kohut (1966), stated, "Primary narcissism 'comprehends the assertion that the baby originally experiences the mother and her ministrations not as a you and its actions but within a view of the world in which the I-you differentiation has not yet been established'" (p. 42).² It remains to be seen what kind of psychological state there can be in the absence of a self and an object. On this issue, Rangell (1982) also pointed out that there can be no narcissistic cathexis of the self where there is as yet no self.³

In pondering what meaning the concept of an early state of primary narcissism can possibly have, it might be interpreted to refer to a state of objectless self-absorption and organismic containment, without any subjective awareness of or any sense of need for or dependence on outside objects. If one can consider such an objectless state, it can at best have only limited application—even if as a possible intrauterine state, it would be rapidly eroded as the neonate becomes increasingly object-related and object-responsive. As self-structures gradually form, they can and inevitably do become narcissistically invested. But the question remains what this means. Freud translated it into terms of libidinal cathexis, in accord with his developing drive theory, but if we prescind from the drive theory it opens the way to other understandings of the role of narcissistic investment in relation to the self. What is evident phenomenologically and clinically is the motivational aspect of self-investments; the appeal to drive derivation and primary narcissism can be considered as a hypothetical construction that has no evidential base and would thereby seem to be superfluous. It can be readily understood as reflecting Freud's need to substantiate his theory of narcissism in terms acceptable to and consistent with current scientific thinking about drive forces. I have discussed the grounds for abandonment of Freud's economic-energetic drive theory and its replacement by a theory of motivation elsewhere (Meissner, 1995a, 1995b, 1995c; 1999a, 1999b).⁴ In this sense, motives are experiential and real; drives are not.

Freud envisioned the infant's emergence from this narcissistic cocoon as mediated by autoeroticism, referring to libidinal investment in relationship to the subject's own body or its parts. The difference between the two is fundamental. For primary narcissism, there is no differentia-

tion of self and object and no quality of object-involvement, even of the infant's own body, in the original libidinal state. Focusing of narcissistic interest in the body as such is at first more a matter of the integration of body parts into a coherent scheme identifiable as my body as a function of the progressive formation of the body image, and later on can take the form of concerns related to form, function, attractiveness, beauty, health, fitness, etc. In the view of the self-as-person, insofar as the body is synonymous with the person (Meissner, 1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c) narcissistic investment of this sort would seem to derive from and extend infantile autoeroticism. In Freudian terms, however, autoeroticism is more an intermediate stage that progresses to secondary narcissistic investment in the self, rather than restrictively to the subject's body or its parts. These self-investments in my view are directly interpretable in motivational terms.

One possible conclusion is that the concept of primary narcissism is fraught with difficulties, not the least being whether any such entity or process ever exists. There is no evidence to demonstrate it, only its postulation as a component of the instinctual drive theory, that is, as the originative reservoir of psychic energy out of which all subsequent libidinal, energetic, and other drive expressions are derived. In addition, primary narcissism provided the developmental matrix out of which any form of psychic structure was thought to be formed, since in Freud's view what was there at the beginning was nothing more than pure undifferentiated energy, and only gradually by modification of this energetic fundament were the structures of the psychic apparatus increasingly differentiated as the result of interaction with reality. This entire system of hydraulics is suspect and has in large measure been found wanting and does not measure up to standards of scientific acceptability.⁵ The inherent ambiguities and internal contradictions of the concept of primary narcissism and the outmoded model of psychic organization and developmental progression it implies have led me to conclude that analytic theorizing about the self would be far better off without the concept of primary narcissism.

SECONDARY NARCISSISM AND THE SELF

The effort in this article is directed to refocusing the relation between narcissism as a motivational component and the self as an operational concept synonymous with the human person. My purpose is to make a simple clarification that seems to me, on a number of counts, to be required in the current debate on an emerging psychology of the self,

namely that the psychology of the self should not be taken as synonymous with or reduced to the dynamics of narcissism.⁶ I would suggest that the psychology of the self is an appropriate realm of clinical and theoretical discourse that has relevance beyond the domain of narcissistic concerns and is, in fact, independent of that domain. This in no way prevents the self from functioning as the primary object of narcissistic motivational investment (Meissner, in press d). Perhaps some brief historical exegesis may be helpful at this point.

In the undifferentiated developmental id-ego matrix, prior to self-object differentiation, there is as yet no self to which libido can attach. This objection was directed against the traditional view of primary narcissism as libidinal cathexis of the self, and within that framework seems valid. Attempts to translate primary narcissism into experiential terms run afoul of the basic difficulty that we have no way of knowing what the quality of mental processes in the infant brain might be, so that attributions of narcissistic forms of thought or self-appraisal are based on no more than pure conjecture and even adultomorphic projection. However, at some point in its intrauterine career the infant establishes a capacity to function as a source of agency, that is at that point at which it begins to acquire capacities and potentials for action, at first in physiological or motoric terms in which organ systems begin to operate separately and independently of the maternal organism.⁷ At this inchoate level, there is no question of narcissistic motivation (as in self-preservation) since the actions in question are not as yet human actions, i.e. they are not actions of a human subject, but rather are acts of the human organism. Such actions are analogous to the eye-blink in adults—a reflex action that is caused but not necessarily motivated. Such actions, however, can be conceived of as having a built-in purpose exclusive of motivational considerations: e.g., the beating of the fetal heart serves to convey oxygen and other nutrients to the rest of the embryo in support of growth and metabolism, just as the blink reflex can be thought to have the function of protecting and lubricating the surface of the eye.

Narcissism in this classic context serves restrictively as the primary energetic reservoir out of which nascent psychic structure is thought to develop. If there are objectives associated with these processes, they are built into the very nature of the developmental process and are concerned with integration, preservation, survival, and development of the body self (Meissner, 1997a) and synonymously of the evolving self-as-agent (Meissner, 1993).⁸ These objectives at this primitive stage can have no relation to the infant's subjectivity before the rudimentary capacity for consciousness in the infant *in utero* develops. Thus organization and activation of physiological processes in the developing

organism, specifically in the laying down and activation of brain systems, antedate the emergence of mentation, conscious or unconscious.⁹ Consequently, the organization of developmental processes follows the genetically determined sequencing laid out in the genetic code and associated embryogenic processes. The forming of the self-as-agent at this early stage is a matter of the forming and functional integration of body and brain structures and patterns of activation and their functional integration with other bodily processes.

There is nothing in this account to substantiate the existence of or any derivation of self capacities out of any narcissistic matrix. The self is in essence a body self (Meissner, 1997a, 1998a, 1998b, 1998c), the development of which is determined by genetic and embryonic influences which have nothing to do with narcissism. I would conclude that this simple and basic fact of the matter should strike a decisive blow at the root of the linkage of self and narcissism in analytic thinking. The self develops not in isolation from narcissistic determinants, understood as motivational and libidinal investments of self-structures once formed, but the self develops separately from them.

SUBSEQUENT THEORY

Freud's original formulation cast narcissistic libido as the libidinal investment in the ego or self. His use of the term "ego" was dictated by the current state of his theory, which had no other focus of internal reference, and was meant only to distinguish the object of inner libidinal investment from the representations of external reality. The important breakthrough and the point of impulse for an emerging psychology of the self came with Hartmann's refocusing of the problem of narcissism. On the basis of a more articulated and evolved concept of ego and the corresponding developments in ego psychology, Hartmann (1950) observed that the proper correspondence of terms was between self and object on the one hand, and between ego and other substructures of the personality, namely, id and superego, on the other. Thus, he proposed, ego and self could be understood in different frames of reference. The corresponding term to object cathexis was not ego cathexis, but self cathexis. Narcissism could then be considered as operating in all of the psychic systems, but in each of these it was appropriately set in opposition to object cathexis. Consequently, the revised meaning of narcissism was libidinal cathexis not of the ego, but of the self, or specifically self-representations.¹⁰ In any case, narcissism in Hartmann's view remained

a form of drive-derived libidinal cathexis still derivative from primary narcissism, and the self was cast solely in representational terms.

The importance of Hartmann's clarification was that it disentangled narcissistic issues as such from the psychology of the ego by relating them more specifically to the self now understood in the form of self representations. However, in so doing, it established an explicit connection between the psychology of the self and narcissism. That connection has been tacitly assumed and has remained unquestioned in the subsequent discussions of the psychoanalytic notion of the self. I would argue that Hartmann's formulation of narcissism can be readily reinterpreted as a form of motivational investment in the self-as-object. But further difficulties arise with the converse of Hartmann's proposition, namely that the self is defined as equivalent to the object of narcissistic cathexis, so that anything that which serves as object of narcissistic investment can be regarded as self.¹¹ I have argued that this proposition is both fallacious and misleading (Meissner, 1981b). My impression is that analytic thinking about the self has progressed to a point at which disengagement from the entanglements of narcissism are advisable.

This line of thinking about the role of the self in the structural theory, following Hartmann's lead (Meissner, 1986c), was diverted by the contributions of Heinz Kohut (1971, 1977) pointing the progressive thinking about the self in a quite different direction. Kohut's work has provided a substantial and important contribution to development of one form of self psychology in contemporary psychoanalysis and in the process departed radically from the structural understanding of the self. However, in one respect Kohut's thinking about a self psychology seems to have embraced both Hartmann's redefinition of narcissism and its converse. For Kohut, narcissism is, in effect, the equivalent of the cathexis of the self and is defined in those terms. More to the point, Kohut's understanding of the development of the self is conversely cast in terms of the economics of narcissism.¹² The self is carved out of archaic primary narcissism in the form of nuclear narcissistic structures, which, on the most primitive level, are differentiated into the grandiose self and the idealized parental imago. Further, the course of narcissistic development, postulated as a separate line of development,¹³ is itself traced in terms of the vicissitudes of selfobject relations which are transformed into functioning aspects of a more integrated and cohesive sense of self by way of transmuting internalizations.

The synonymy of narcissism and the self is reflected in the somewhat awkward "selfobject" usage. Any object which is invested with narcissistic cathexis and in which the relationship has a narcissistic

quality thus becomes a selfobject.¹⁴ The formulation offers difficulty not only because of the inherent problems in conceptualizing the nature of a selfobject, but also because it presumes that the basis of such relationships is inherently narcissistic and consequently leaves little room for the operation of other dynamic or structural factors in the shaping of such object relationships. I would argue that the concept of the self would have been better served if the narcissistic investment in objects were conceived in motivational terms, that is in terms specifying the importance, dependence, need for, and otherwise self-sustaining properties of the given object relationship for the well-being, self-esteem, and self-sustaining or preservative impact on the subject. This would allow the other to be narcissistically invested and important while preserving the independence and separateness of the object and allowing theoretical room for the existing and functioning of the self of the subject in developmental, structural, and functional terms independently of narcissistic considerations or derivations.

In extending his theory, Kohut (1977) distinguished the psychology of the self in a broad sense from the psychology of the self in a narrow sense. The former is a psychology "that puts the self in the center, examines its genesis and development and its constituents, in health and in disease" (p. xv). In the narrow approach, however, the self is seen, not unlike Hartmann's concept of the self, merely as a content of the mental apparatus. From my previous comments, it should be clear that this narrow sense of the psychology of the self is not at all what I am considering in this discussion. But also, clearly, the concept of a psychology of the self under discussion here also differs from Kohut's view of the self in the broad sense.¹⁵ Kohut's self is essentially experiential rather than structural. His descriptions of the self in quasi-structural terms are loosely cast and rely on a metaphorical and secondary sense of structure as equivalent to meaning or content rather than structure as a substantive component of self-organization, so that an effective basis for agency and substantive autonomy are lacking.¹⁶ Paradoxically, Kohut's translation of his psychology of the self into the excessively constricting and limiting terms of the dynamics and genetics of narcissism makes his own psychology of the self excessively narrow rather than broad. It is this needless constriction, so deeply embedded in our psychoanalytic tradition and, as it seems to me, derived from a basic misconception or even a logical fallacy that I would hope might be corrected by a more elaborate and independently conceived psychology of the self.

DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS

From the perspective of the self as synonymous with the person, I would propose that the development and organization of the self is independent from the issues of narcissistic motivation. This deviates from more traditional psychoanalytic views. Nonetheless, even if the course of the genesis of the self is independent of narcissism, the self and its component aspects become primary objects of narcissistic motivational investment. I would prefer in this respect to maintain a distinction between narcissism as a motivational investment in developmental processes and in patterns of functional activation of the self as opposed to the concept of narcissism as an undifferentiated energetic source out of which self-structures develop. Structural components of the self-system emerge as a function of both genetically programmed maturational factors in interaction with environmental influences that result in formation of the body self as synonymous with the self-as-agent (Meissner, in press a, b, c). Thus, developmentally autonomous ego functions (as aspects of the self functioning in its ego capacity) are not constructed out of narcissistic energetic materials, but emerge as structural formations deriving from the organization of brain structures and the functional integration of patterns of neuronal activation that have nothing to do with an archaic reservoir of primary narcissism. But, once formed, these structures and functions can and do become subject to narcissistic motives.¹⁷

By the same token, the implementation of the notion of narcissism to describe a developmental stage carries the implication of certain qualities of developmental experience that have their roots in identifiable narcissistic dynamics, particularly issues of infantile omnipotence, grandiosity, and the need for idealized objects. As Pulver (1970) was careful to point out, in regarding early infantile manifestations as narcissistic, there is an assumption that the shifts in narcissistic cathexis are, in fact, causes of or explanations for the forms of infantile behavior and their derivatives. Infantile omnipotence from this point of view might just as well be ascribed to the immaturity of the infant's perceptual apparatus and the inability to distinguish between inner and outer realms of experience as to questions of narcissistic cathexis or derivation. In any case, I would emphasize that these phenomena (infantile omnipotence, grandiosity, etc.) can also be seen as reflections of motivational issues, and are not in themselves expressive of developmental factors. Given the organization of self-components at this level of infantile development,

they become invested with related narcissistic motives for preserving an idealized and pleasurable self-image in the face of the inroads of reality and the reality principle. That the immaturity of self-functions at this level should contribute to emerging patterns of infantile motivation should not be surprising.

Certainly, the questions raised deserve careful study to determine the extent to which such observable infant behaviors reflect degrees of cognitive incapacity or inadequate development of other ego functions, as opposed to supposed hypothetical narcissistic vicissitudes. In any case, I would suggest that the important parameters of psychological development have to do with the separation, organization, and individuation of an authentic sense of self. In more specifically structural terms, this process can be addressed from the standpoint of the differentiation and integration of a self-system, or a self-organization, in relation to the emerging organization of functional capacities as aspects of self-functioning. The self-system has a developmental history that, in addition to maturational considerations, is related to and affected by the developmental course of other aspects of psychic integration, including motivational patterns, object relations, ego functions and capacities, superego integration, forms of internalization, etc.¹⁸ The developmental processes described by Mahler et al. (1975) and Stern (1985) and a host of other students of the developmental process articulate the diverse and complex factors contributing to development of the self that have little or nothing to do with narcissism.¹⁹ I would argue that narcissistic motives enter the picture only secondarily in the wake of developmental achievements as aspects of the self-system become organized and functional.

Although intimately connected with and reflective of the developmental patterns in these various areas, the development of the self-system has its own independent characteristics which can be separately traced, involve different sets of important developmental concerns and issues, and cannot be reductively accounted for along any of these other lines. Important junctures in this developmental program would occur at the point of self-object differentiation and in the process of separation and individuation (Mahler et al., 1975) or emergence of self in interpersonal terms (Stern, 1985). These junctures would involve critical aspects of the consolidation of identifications and sexual identity in the oedipal period and would also find important expressions and reworkings in phases of later latency and adolescent development. Moreover, from the point of view being proposed here, the organization and development of the self would not be equivalent to or synonymous with the vicissitudes of narcissistic development.

Similar comments can be addressed to Lichtenstein's (1964) insightful notion of the emergence of a primary identity in connection with important maternal mirroring experiences, an emphasis that was echoed in both Winnicott and Kohut. Clearly such experiences do not take place in exclusion from important narcissistic dynamics, and in fact Lichtenstein makes the case rather well that such connections are operative. My concern, however, is that the significant contributing factors may well be more than or other than narcissistic. In other words, there are important dimensions of the early mother-child interaction that have to do with the earliest strata of the formation of the self which can be more clearly and aptly formulated in terms of the emerging self and its psychology rather than in terms of identifiable narcissistic issues. Issues more directly related to development of the self are operative in parallel with and in mutual interaction with narcissistic dynamics, but cannot be reduced to them.

The psychology of the self in its current state of theoretical uncertainty is in no position to address such issues definitively, but the perspective I am proposing here may lead to further questions in these important areas having to do with development, object involvement, and the understanding of crucial forms of internalization (Meissner, 1981a). My argument is that, even in these early contexts of mother-child interaction involving formation of primary identity, there are inchoate and nascent dimensions of the emerging sense of self and its relationships with objects that cannot be simply ascribed to narcissistic or object libidinal dimensions. This opens the way to further investigation of the manner in which narcissistic object investments, narcissistic self-investments, and object instinctual motivational investments (both libidinal and aggressive) play an interacting role in the emergence and consolidation of the self-system.²⁰

EGO-IDEAL

Many aspects of narcissistic development had been adumbrated to an extent in Freud's notion of the ego-ideal. In "On Narcissism," Freud (1957c/1914) explained repression by appeal to the ego ideal—"We can say that the one man has set up an ideal in himself by which he measures his actual ego, while the other has no such ideal. For the ego the formation of an ideal would be the conditioning factor of repression" (pp. 93-94). The ego-ideal was in Freud's view heir to the original infantile self-love the child's ego had enjoyed. The original infantile self-love was in Freud's view embodied in the primary narcissistic matrix,

so that development of a structural derivative like the ego-ideal had to come out of that primal matrix in order to remain consistent with the developmental model hypothesizing the formation of structures out of energy. The success of the struggle for identity depended in part on satisfactory transfer of this original narcissism into a self-sufficient ego and its ideal (Murray, 1964). The residues of infantile narcissism are therefore distilled into the ideal, which thus comes to possess every perfection that is of value (Milrod, 1990; Steingart, 1969).

The ego-ideal thus becomes a repository for secondary narcissism and the inheritor of primary narcissism. Freud (1914) explained:

This ideal ego is now the target of the self-love which was enjoyed in childhood by the actual ego. The subject's narcissism makes its appearance displaced on to this new ideal ego, which, like the infantile ego, finds itself possessed of every perfection that is of value. As always where the libido is concerned, man has here again shown himself incapable of giving up a satisfaction he had once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo the narcissistic perfection of his childhood; and when, as he grows up, he is disturbed by the admonitions of others and by the awakening of his own critical judgment, so that he can no longer retain that perfection, he seeks to recover it in the new form of an ego ideal. What he projects before him as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal. (p. 94)

This formulation was certainly one of Freud's fundamental contributions to understanding the development and functioning of the human personality. He later (1933) would distinguish it more clearly from superego and reformulate their relation (Steingart, 1969). The importance of this transformation cannot be overestimated. Murray (1964) commented: "This transformation and socialization of narcissism would then consist in directing it toward an aim other than the egoistic pre-genital one, in deflecting its expression and satisfaction to the area of idealistic, personal, and social values, and in striving to create realistically a world appropriate and suitable for such a highly regarded ego to live in" (p. 501). The mature ego-ideal is a significant factor in maintaining psychic integrity and mature balance between the expression of libidinal impulses and legitimate restraints fundamental to the sense of identity. Sandler, Holder, and Meers (1963) and Holder (1982) added a further refinement; they noted the shifting use of Freud's references to "ego" and "self," and distinguished between an "ideal self" and a later "ego-ideal." The ideal self would correspond to the self-I-would-like-to-be,²¹ while the later formed ego-ideal corresponded in more ethical terms to the self-I-ought-to-be.

Recovery of lost infantile narcissism thus served as the basis for constitution of an ego-ideal in adult life. Loss of infantile narcissism, when in Freud's terms the child was his own ideal, results from disruption of the sense of primary fusion between child and mother. This disruption forces the child to begin to recognize existence of the "not-me" world. But the desire to reexperience and regain the sense of fusion with the mother, with its implications of omnipotence and total satisfaction, continues to have residues. Subsequently, incestuous wishes emerging during the oedipal period and directed, for example, by the male child toward the mother ride on an underlying current of narcissistic motivations. The corresponding wish of the male child to become like the father also reflects an incestuous current in that, to the extent that the child becomes like the father, the mother can be attained as a libidinal object and the desired reunion achieved through an incestuous genital relationship.

I would submit that this entire process is impregnated with motives of self-preservation and self-enhancement from beginning to end. My focus here, however, is not so much on the narcissistic motives involved, but on development of the structural component of the superego designated as "ego-ideal." The mature ego-ideal is a significant factor in maintaining psychic integrity and mature balance between the expression of libidinal motives and legitimate restraints fundamental to the sense of identity.²² The ego-ideal serves as a kind of internalized standard by which the ego measures itself and which sets the norms of personal idealized perfection toward which the ego constantly strives. Freud called it a precipitate of the old idea of the parents, the powerful and omniscient beings of the child's early experience, and it undoubtedly reflects the child's admiring attitude toward them—Kohut's (1971) "idealized parental imago."

The ideal arises by way of internalization, both introjective and identificatory, in Freud's terms redirecting the child's object-directed love for the parents back again to himself and focusing it in the internalized ideal he sets up in his own ego. I would argue that the narcissistic complement is secondary to the primary structuralization. The process of internalization is motivated throughout by narcissistic concerns, but the processes of internalization, by which self-structure is established, are independent of and without derivation from narcissistic sources, even as it may be simultaneously motivated by narcissistic themes and purposes. The processes of self-development, in this view, are distinct from the related and undoubtedly important components of narcissistic motivation that secondarily modify them. The motivation, it should be remembered, is not the source of causality but only serves to elicit the relevant causal action from the source of agency. In the construc-

tion I am proposing, the agency involved in such internalization is the self-as-agent; the narcissistic motives, for example of wishing to be like the admired parent, or to gain love, admiration, and approval from the parent, provide reasons why the process takes place but they do not make it happen. The agency of the self must be called into play resulting in the patterns of internalization, but that agency is not in itself narcissistic. The motive serves to draw, attract, elicit, stimulate the self into action to bring about the desired result; it does not bring about the desired effect of itself but only by drawing the agent into action of some sort.

Internalizations are responses on the part of the self to provoking narcissistic and other libidinal motives, and in the course of structure formation become invested with narcissistic motivation. Motivation, it should be emphasized, rather than a source of action or causality, is concerned with motives corresponding to certain needs. A motivational theory of narcissism would therefore be concerned with narcissistic needs and narcissistic motives. Internalizing processes can serve such narcissistic needs and motives, but need not be reduced to them. Other motives may come to bear in promoting the internalizing process.

While derived originally from parental imagos, there is an accretion of other identifications and idealized elements that enlarge and modify the ego-ideal as it evolves (Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1975/1985). The ego-ideal embraces new images of self-regard and competence as development proceeds—some from internalizations from later objects, teachers, coaches, heroes of adventure and romance, sports and movie stars, even attractive and admired peers. The illusion of perfection is progressively challenged and confronted, but can find support and confirmation in parental approval and endorsement of the child's enlarging capacities. Praise and approval for learning to dress oneself, for example, provides a degree of narcissistic confirmation and enhances the child's self-evaluation and sense of competent self (Benjamin, 1988).

We can conclude, on these terms, that the self requires a fundament of narcissistic motivations both for normal development and for normal functioning (Grunberger, 1971/1979). Narcissism embraces a spectrum of motivational states serving as normal complements of mature functioning. Narcissism provides the self-sustaining and enhancing components of comfort, gratification, self-regard, self-confidence, peace of mind, inner tranquility, self-respect, balance, in addition to those specified by Kohut (1966) as mature transformations of narcissism—creativity, empathy, the capacity to contemplate one's own impermanence and death, sense of humor, and wisdom. Enjoyment of simple pleasures, whether in the satisfaction of basic needs like hunger, a good pipe, good music, gratifying sexual relations, or whatever, carries a component of

narcissistic gratification. Over and above its pathological expressions, narcissism must be considered as a natural resource rooted in basic inclinations which can be diverted to serve and support man's best interests. It is worth noting that these so-called narcissistic transformations are in effect expressions of the personal autonomy and maturity of the self that are developed on other than narcissistic grounds, but are sustained and promoted by narcissistic motives. Thus, for example, empathy is less the product of narcissistic transformation than an expression of a capacity for other relatedness and attunement based on other than narcissistic elements, but which provides a sense of self-enhancement and gratification when it operates successfully in personal relations.

Further vicissitudes of narcissism in the course of development are complex and often quite perplexing. On one hand, we have to reckon with the relation between narcissism and the ego-ideal, the inheritor of infantile narcissism. This formula in a revised theory takes on a different meaning than that provided by Freud. For Freud, it connoted the transformation of the original infantile primary narcissism as the source of libidinal drive potentials. In a revised perspective, inheritance of infantile narcissism can mean the perseverance or reactivation of narcissistic motives presumed to have been active in the infantile stage. In the formation of the ego ideal these motives can be transformed into more realistic and adaptive forms that better serve the adaptive and self-sustaining needs of the self, or they can remain fixed at an infantile level. On the other hand, there is the complex relationship between the ego-ideal and the superego. Some would argue that they involve separate sets of functions (Lampl-deGroot, 1962; Novey, 1955/1959; Piers & Singer, 1953; Reich, 1953), others that they serve an integrated function. The prevailing view would see them as integrated into the overall organization of superego functioning. I would tend to think that both ego ideal and superego functions can be attended by forms of narcissistic gratification. Superego participation in beneficial judgments of conscience would be a case in point.²³

THE VICISSITUDES OF NARCISSISM

DIFFERENTIATION OF SELF AND NARCISSISM

In the discussion that follows, I have in mind propositions that various aspects of the psychology of the self (a) can be dissociated from the concerns and vicissitudes of narcissism, and consequently (b) can provide an area of separate and distinguishable conceptualization in

psychoanalytic theory. The argument does not, cannot, present a *fait accompli*. It is more a series of tentative propositions, suggestions, hypotheses, for further exploration. I will focus on self-esteem regulation in which issues of self-organization and functioning come into conjunction with narcissistic motivational issues. Self-esteem is not the only area of conflation of matters of self-organization and functioning with overlapping narcissistic motives, but it provides a serviceable template for considering other such areas of integration.

Comparable areas might include formation and implementation of values and ideals, the narcissistic components of certain types of object relations and object choice, perversions, as well as affective states of envy, jealousy, and shame. In each area, the focus on self may or may not take shape as a separate line of conceptualization, or may do so in varying degrees in different contexts. In individual cases, one would expect a confluence, an overlapping, a form of complementarity of perspectives that is altogether familiar in analytic understanding. Thus, a separate consideration of issues related to the development of the self, as discussed previously, may focus on aspects of the developmental process separate from narcissistic considerations, insofar as self development takes place within a matrix of developmental influences involving dynamic considerations, structure formation (in ego and superego), object relations, defenses, conflicts—the entire panoply of psychoanalytic determinants (Meissner, in press a, b, c). I would also suggest that separation of narcissistic from self issues may have therapeutic implications as well.

My understanding of narcissism takes Hartmann's (1950) clarification of narcissism as a libidinal investment in the self as a point of departure. Hartmann's usage has often been misinterpreted to imply that whatever is involved in the self was to be regarded as narcissistic, an approach adopted almost without exception among analytic theorists and elaborated further in the work of Kohut (1971, 1977). But I would maintain, *e contra*, that not everything involved in or related to the self can be or need be regarded as narcissistic; nonetheless, it remains true that whatever is included in the organization of the self may become the object of narcissistic motivational investment, as Hartmann postulated (Meissner, 1986b). Moreover, narcissistic investment need not involve only the self, but may include other nonself objects as well, as Freud (1914) had originally indicated. As Joffe and Sandler (1967) concluded in sorting out the conceptual difficulties regarding narcissism, narcissistic disorders can involve enduring affective cathexes²⁴ attached either to self- or object-representations. The self-representation can become the object of love or hate. Like external objects, the self may be ambivalently loved and hated, along with related extensions of self in

the individual's life experience—loved ones, children, friends, anyone associated in any meaningful way with the subject.

But in this discussion, narcissism is not cast simply in terms of its investment in self-representations (the common psychoanalytic usage following Hartmann, Jacobson, Sandler, etc.). The self can be regarded more in structural terms (Meissner, 2000b), particularly insofar as the structural component is required to complement and complete any representational understanding and includes the entire person, body and mind included. In other words, in my view, the self-representation cannot stand alone, but merely represents and reflects something preceding it in the structural realm (Meissner, 1993, 1994, 1996a). The self-representation is essentially a form of self-representing, that is, one of the ways in which the self is able to know itself as an object. Consequently, narcissistic introjects as components of the self-as-object do not refer simply to representational phenomena, as would be the case for self-images and self-representations, but are intended to connote structural formations within the subject's internal world that may in turn find cognitive expression in self-representings.

The manifestations of secondary narcissistic investment can take healthy or pathological forms, as is evident in the case of self-esteem regulation. We tend to think of narcissism primarily in terms of its aberrations, as Kohut (1966, 1971) pointed out, rather than in terms of its healthier diffusion into all aspects of human activity and life. Federn (1952) provided a classic treatment of this question, summarizing characteristics that distinguish healthy from pathological narcissism. First of all, even in terms of the classic drive theory, healthy narcissism does not interfere with or replace libido directed to objects. Where narcissism begins to substitute, by way of fantasy or otherwise, for investment in real objects or the capacity for investment in objects, the result begins to look pathological. In normal narcissism, ego boundaries and stability remain intact as aspects of the structural integrity of the self. Both of these aspects may enjoy a degree of reinforcement of ego structures by narcissistic investment in self-organization, but this contribution to self-coherence is in the form of motivational sustenance of structures previously constituted on independent terms. Preservation or reinforcement of self-coherence may thus serve as important contributing factors to maintenance of self-esteem. In normal narcissism, the level of satisfaction resulting from narcissistic self-investment is moderate, not excessive. Further, satisfaction derived from conscious and unconscious libidinal fantasies depends in part on the capacity to achieve real libidinal fulfillment through real object relations. Real satisfaction predominates, whereas in pathological narcissism satisfaction of narcissistic fantasy takes priority. In addition, fantasy material

of normal narcissism is more reality oriented, less infantile, and much less a vehicle for perverse infantile sexual desires.

SELF-ESTEEM REGULATION

In the light of these discriminations, I would suggest that self-esteem regulation is a function of both narcissistic investment in the self as well as of the integrity and harmonious well-functioning of self-structures as such. Narcissism is one of the major contributing factors in self-esteem regulation, reflected in judgments of personal value, self-worth, and self-respect. Such judgments are often expressed pathologically in relatively global terms of superiority or inferiority, but actually self-evaluations can focus more realistically on differing aspects of self-functioning and relatedness (Brissett, 1972). For example, I may see myself as rather indifferent as a teacher, but in the area of my clinical practice very competent. Or my self-assessment in any given area may vary from time to time depending on the level of my performance and the quality of external feedback I get from those around me. An important point regarding self-esteem is that it is based on my personal evaluative judgments of my self-worth reflecting the way in which I know and evaluate myself in any given area of performance or personal qualities or capacities. This locates self-esteem as related to the vicissitudes of my self-as-object, that is my assessment of myself as known by me and as reflecting my personal self-judgment. This process takes place between the self-as-subject, as the source of knowing and judging functions, and the self-as-object, serving as the object of that knowing and judging.²⁵

Pulver (1970) had particularly scored the usage of narcissism in relation to self-esteem as confusing and misleading, concluding that using the concept of narcissism to designate libidinal investment of the self was essentially incompatible with its use as equivalent to self-esteem. The problem in his view arose from the conflicting views of the defensive role of self-regard as manifested in feelings of superiority and megalomania, generally accepted as pathological, and the more realistic and nondefensive self-esteem characteristic of healthy and adaptive personality functioning. Both of these aspects have been regarded as forms of self-esteem regulation and attributed to the vicissitudes of narcissism. The use of the notions of good and bad narcissism was a temporary expedient reflecting underlying value judgments, but did not provide a real basis for understanding. Pulver pointed out that the translation of these terms into structural concepts provided a way of un-

derstanding good, healthy narcissism as a form of self-esteem based on pleasurable self-images, and bad narcissism in the form of excessively high self-regard based on a defense against underlying unpleasurable images. Judgments of self-esteem can be influenced by the balance of negative or devaluing comments of others versus positive and admiring input, reflecting the openness of the self to social influences and the impact they can have in shaping first the self-as-object and second the self-as-social (Brissett, 1972; Meissner, 1996a, 2003b).²⁶ Needless to say, evaluation of oneself is open to the distortive and self-deceptive influence of motivation to see oneself as one might wish to be rather than as one is, to emphasize the self-confirming and positive elements in one's self-evaluation and/or external feedback and to minimize or ignore the self-diminishing and negative elements (Gergen, 1971).

From the perspective of an understanding of the self independently of narcissistic vicissitudes, it can readily be seen that self-esteem in a healthy and adaptive sense may reflect, in addition to narcissistic dynamics, the structurally harmonious integration of the self-system along with adaptive, effective, productive, and integrated organization of its functional subsystems. Demos (1983) pointed in this direction in her comment that

If the self is understood as an organizing structure, then it also probably consists of a combination of affective and cognitive components that have been formed on the basis of at least the three following aspects of experience: judgments of one's competence versus incompetence; trust in one's inner states versus mistrust; and judgments of one's relatedness to others versus one's isolation. . . . To the extent that the self is experienced as relatively competent, trustworthy, and related, positive self-esteem can be maintained. (pp. 47-48)

On these terms, self-esteem would rest on the structural integrity and functional competence of the self, independently of any narcissistic investment.²⁷ If and when these components of the self are in place, healthy self-investment is possible. If they are not, any narcissistic investment is bound to undergo pathological deviation, one option being self-devaluation leading to diminished self-esteem and depression. By the same token, the individual whose pathological self-regard expresses itself in forms of superiority and grandiosity can be said to lack such an integrated and well-functioning self-system and to be forced to replace it by forms of pathological narcissistic investment that fall into these patterns of defensively motivated extremes.

In this sense, the achievement of authentic self-esteem can be understood in part as a function of the healthy construction of the self

beyond considerations of narcissistic motivation, that is, as related to the organization and functioning of the self as a separately conceived system independent of narcissistic contributions to it. But, of course, the developmental and adaptive attainment of such a well-functioning, integrated, mature, and healthy self-organization would immediately and automatically become invested with some degree of narcissistic motivation and gratification. At the same time, we can appreciate that narcissistic investments do not function in isolation from aspects of the organization and functioning of the self-system. When the self-system is reasonably well-organized and adaptively functioning, the narcissistic investments tend to be correspondingly well-modulated and do not give rise to pathological distortions. It is only when failures and defects in the self-system are operative that the pathological vicissitudes of narcissism hold sway. Nonetheless, the narcissistic dynamics and the organization and functioning of the self-system operate in this sense as separate and independent systems, each with its own proper set of issues, dynamics, concerns, and intelligibilities.

THERAPEUTIC IMPLICATIONS

The above considerations may suggest some clinical reflections. In previously discussing aspects of clinical applications of the theory of the self-as-person, I have focused on the role of the self-as-agent in the analytic process (Meissner, 1993), and on the function of the self-as-object as the central medium of therapeutic action, particularly in reference to transference and countertransference interactions (Meissner, 1994) and as expressed in self-representations (Meissner, 1996a). The further implications of the engagement of the self-as-subject (Meissner, 1999c, d) in the analytic process concluded that the analytic dialogue can be conceived as a conversation between subjects. On the subjective level the dialogue is conscious and more-or-less deliberate, but concurrently on other unconscious and nondeliberate levels reflects the ongoing unconscious operation of the self-as-agent as locus and source of the unconscious processes operative in both participants.

For the sake of clarity, it may be useful to emphasize that these various aspects of the self-organization, as they become engaged in the analytic process, are ways of conceptualizing and categorizing perspectives of the complex functioning of one and the same self. For example, the self-as-agent is the same self as the self-as-subject, but as agent, that is considered as the source of all activity of the self, it can be distinguished from the self-as-subject, considered as source of all *conscious* activity of the self. In the transference, then, the self-as-agent is engaged insofar as

actions of the self are involved and some part of the mental processes involved are unconscious; and the self-as-subject is involved insofar as the processes are in any degree conscious. Thus, any activity of the self-as-subject is synonymously activity of the self-as-agent, but not all activities of the self-as-agent qualify as actions of the self-as-subject since some of these actions are unconscious. By implication the total self (i.e., total person) is involved in the transference interaction, and that on the part of both participants. Subjectivity within the dialogue is private and privileged, and can only be understood when and as communicated; this simple fact carries with it profound implications for understanding the central interpersonal connotations and their implications in the process, as in transference-countertransference interactions, empathy, projection-and-introjection, and so on. These implications have specific reverberations in all sectors of the analytic relationship, transference-countertransference, alliance and the real relation (Meissner, 1996b, 2000a).

My emphasis here falls on the significant role of the self in relation to narcissistic conflicts and fixations. In dealing with narcissistic issues with the patient, the inquiry centers on the role of narcissism as motivation rather than as an expression of infantile drive dynamics. These motives may have an infantile quality, reflecting vicissitudes from one or other developmental level, or they may have evolved to a more adult and sublimated level. I suggest that there is more to be gained by focusing on narcissistic motivation than by appeals to narcissism as a drive-related libidinal state, precisely in that a motivational focus brings to a head immediately and directly issues of the patient's role in the pathologic expression and raises the question of his or her role and responsibility in relation to it. This motivational focusing is not in any sense confrontational, and is preferably not such. But the motivational perspective implicitly draws attention to the need for the patient to recognize and acknowledge the motives as his own and to take possession of them as such, along with their consequences and implications. For many patients, this progression is complicated by a variety of resistances and reluctances to staking or accepting any such claim. This is familiar territory in any and all analyses. All analysts would recognize that these insights cannot be gained without sensitive empathic attunement to the narcissistic vulnerability and needs of the patient, along with all the other components of the therapeutic alliance, especially the active and collaborative engagement of the patient in the exploratory and interpretive aspects of the process.

One patient of this sort, whom I have discussed at greater length elsewhere (Meissner, 1985), was a young man in his early twenties, who at the time of his analysis had graduated from medical school and was

still in internal medicine residency training. His neurotic burden centered around his narcissistic entitlement. His prevailing attitude was that he was entitled to recognition, acknowledgement, an easy life and generous loving attention and consideration from anyone with whom he had any involvement. Life, love, and work should be easy, non-demanding, and convenient. Any least demand, any infringement on his personal time, any requirement for extra energy or work, particularly if they were response to the need, demand, or service of someone else, were reacted to as if insufferable outrages that were met with resentment, righteous protests of unfairness and violations of his sense of privilege and specialness. If a patient spiked a fever requiring extra lab work, or if a patient were to be admitted shortly before the end of his shift in the hospital, or if his girlfriend asked him a favor, and later after they married if she insisted that he help with household tasks, and even later that he help in taking care of the baby—all were occasions for outraged protests and bitter resentment. He protested angrily that they were *her* dishes, *her* garbage, *her* baby, and *not* his. He should not be asked to do any more than he was already doing.

In discussing this material, I would like to keep the focus on the discrimination and differentiation between the patient's narcissistic investments on one hand and his underlying self-image (an aspect of his self-as-object) on the other, and on the ways in which they fed on each other to produce this narcissistically pathological picture. This patient's rampant entitlement was the source of great dissatisfaction and unhappiness in his life. His insistence on not having to do any more than his share, of having his needs and wishes always take precedence over the needs and wishes of others, met with little sympathy among his co-workers, but most especially from his wife who had little patience with his unwillingness to help with household tasks and his general selfishness and entitlement. Clinically this narcissistic picture is readily understandable in terms of narcissistic dynamics, and the analytic task inevitably called for processing of his narcissistic wishes and desires and exploration of their sources and determinants. But I am suggesting also a further dimension that has more to do directly with his sense of self. The pattern is familiar enough as a variant of the "exceptions" theme. The basic proposition on which the whole narcissistic construction was based was a view of himself as victimized and made defective by an unkind cut of fate, and consequently that he was entitled to have these injuries and deprivations made up to him in some fashion. He looked to others around him to strike this bargain, but without success.

In his case, the cruel blows of the gods came first in the sudden death of his father from a massive coronary when he was 10, thus depriving him of the benefits of a supportive relation with a loving father

and consequently loss of some important character-forming identifications; the second blow came in the form of a severe streptococcal infection that left him with chronic glomerulonephritis and threatened to shorten his life expectancy; and the third blow derived from his intense and ambivalent struggles with a depressed, demanding, and intrusive mother. The underlying conviction of being the possessor of a damaged self undergirded his narcissistic needs and demands. My point here is that one dimension of the patient's pathology could be approached in terms of the basic narcissistic motives it involved, but that there was more to the story.

Beyond the narcissistic conflicts and injuries, which were considerable enough, there was the issue of his damaged body, which related more directly to his sense of self. To this aspect of his difficulties, his needs to excel, to outdo and outperform any and everyone, to take on any task, any burden, to prove that he was not an impaired and defective specimen. The added problem, of course, was that when he had taken on the added responsibilities, he could then feel overburdened and taken advantage of, and react with resentment and renewed entitlement to have things on his own privileged and special terms.

The point is not profound, but it does speak to the issue of the separability of narcissistic and self issues. In this sense, I would suggest that it is possible to think in terms of self-disorders that have a pathogenic role quite separately from the narcissistic disorders, even though in many cases, as in this patient, they overlap and intermingle in often complex ways. But it may be that effective therapy with such patients means that both aspects have to be addressed and worked on; to try to accomplish an effective therapeutic outcome by dealing with one aspect to the exclusion of the other would be less than successful.

Another area of interest in which these issues can operate is related to the much maligned concept of penis envy. Freud (1916) concluded that such feelings of deprivation and resentful entitlement were often bound in with penis envy in certain female patients (see also Jacobson, 1959). But if we were to allow ourselves to consider only the genital implications and relation to castration concerns, now fallen into significant disfavor, we would miss some of the essential narcissistic dimensions of this basic envy state.²⁸ These feelings also can play a role in the transference. This was particularly true in one of my female patients whose narcissism was quite strongly fixated at an infantile level. At the birth of her two-years-younger brother, she felt herself deprived and cheated, particularly since she felt she was no longer the center of her parents' affection and attention, and she was forced to take a second place to her brother. The narcissistic loss and resulting envy drove her to focus all her resentment on her brother's penis—the only obvious

difference between herself and him upon which she could attach her attempts to understand why he had become more important than herself. Penis envy became a pervasive aspect of her neurotic adjustment and led to highly competitive and compensatory narcissistic strivings. When her efforts did not measure up to the level of her aspirations, she inevitably felt herself to be a failure, and plunged once again into the depressive trough. Her state of mind was overshadowed by the overwhelming conviction that anyone who did not have a penis was not worth anything and could never be in a position to achieve anything significant in life. Again the issue was not simply that she had been deprived of that all important organ that would have made her the equal of or even superior to her brother, but lacking a penis meant that she was imperfect and defective—in other words the defect was not in lacking a penis but was in her self; lacking a penis was the final proof of her inadequacy, of being unworthy to receive that gift of the gods. It was her self that was defective, and lack of a penis was only proof of that conclusion.

In the transference, she conveyed the conviction that she could only improve her situation by depending on me and keeping in my good favor. This was a direct reflection of her childhood conviction that the only way she could maintain any importance or any value in her parents' eyes was by a continual attempt to please her father and keep in his good favor. Pleasing her mother was not very helpful since mother herself was unimportant—she did not have a penis. Only late in the analysis was this patient able to express and work through some of her intense envious feelings of me. She saw me as a strong, capable, helping person, and came to feel she could rely on and trust me. But beyond this capacity for trust and her therapeutic compliance, there was the conviction that she had to depend on, please, and comply with my wishes, since it was only by her clinging to a powerful penis-bearing object that she could have any hope of gaining strength for herself and stabilizing her sense of self-worth. Embedded in this was a deep and abiding sense of envy. The envy was focused on the issue of penis-power, but at a deeper primitive level cloaked the primitive oral rage at having been deprived of the pleasures of mother's breast and the accompanying infantile attention and adulation by the birth of her brother. Cases of this sort allow us to conjecture that, in at least some instances of clinically evident shame, envy and/or jealousy, the narcissistic dynamics operate at a more superficial level and ride on an underlying stratum of convictions of defective or inadequate self-organization and integration.

From one point of view, the dynamics of her envy were paramount in setting the analytic agenda. But the further issue of her sense of herself as imperfect and defective also called for therapeutic attention. Conse-

quently, there were levels in the analytic processing. One level was the exploring, understanding, and interpreting of the narcissistic underpinnings of her envy. The focus on her envy of her brother, for example, as motivated and as related to her need to salvage some self-esteem and to be recognized and admired as he was, brought home the realization that the envy was her doing and that it called for understanding of what it meant and what was behind it. This played a major role in the progression of the analysis.

I am urging a further point, however, namely that we can think of her predicament as pertaining to another level of pathologic fixation related more directly to her sense of self, over, above, and in addition to the narcissistic issues that also pervaded her consciousness and self-evaluation. In this sense, her depression was based not only on the fact that she had been deprived and cheated of the valued penis and what it connoted for her, but that her mother had not thought her worthy of having such a prize, and that by implication she was herself worthless, inadequate, inferior, and defective, qualities that were in her mind's eye embedded in her sense of self as an aspect of her self-as-object. My sense is that these were separate issues that, in both of these patients, spoke to the separability and independence of self-related issues and narcissistic issues. I would hope that the above considerations of both the relation between narcissistic motivation and the organization and functioning of the self on one hand, and the independent connotations and implications reflecting the divergence of their respective meanings and functions would offer some improved basis for understanding and working with these phenomena.

ENDNOTES

1. On occasion throughout the article the gender neutral pronouns (in English, masculine in form, e.g., man, he, him, his) will be used referring to both genders. Distinction from masculine references can be judged by context.

2. See also Tähkä's (1988) formulation of primary narcissism as that form of self-esteem related to primary self-experience.

3. Cavell (1993) added: "Furthermore, there is a decisive argument against it [primary narcissism]: to say that the infant takes himself as his own ideal, that he thinks of himself as perfect, is necessarily to attribute to him a concept of 'self'; it posits just the cognitively sophisticated duality between thinker and object which primary narcissism is said to precede" (p. 212).

4. In this connection, my colleagues and I have proposed a modification of the theory of aggression along similar lines, substituting for the view of aggression as drive a view of aggression in motivational terms (Rizzuto, Meissner, & Buie, 2004). Previous formulations of this revised theory of aggression can be found in Buie, Meissner,

Rizzuto, and Sashin (1983), Meissner, Rizzuto, Sashin, and Buie (1987), Meissner (1991), Rizzuto, Sashin, Buie, and Meissner (1993), and Buie, Meissner, and Rizzuto (1996).

5. The arguments and conclusions regarding inadequacies of the energetic model and its related instinctual drive theory and their problematic scientific status are basic presuppositions to the argument of this article. I have reviewed and summarized the relevant viewpoints and conclusions at length in Meissner (1995a, 1995b, 1995c).

6. Congruent with my orientation, Leavy (1996) commented: "If we put aside the concept of narcissistic libido as a theoretical fiction, the organizing principle among them [various uses and forms of narcissism] is *self*, and it is in a fuller appreciation of the concept of self that I see a way to emerge from the confusions of narcissism" (p. 416).

7. The question of the capacity of the self for action is critical. The self of classical theory is a representation, and has no inherent capacity for action. Representations represent; they do not act—that is, they are formations in the order of cognition or intentionality and have no function in the order of execution. Thus, the self has no capacity for action; the sources of action in the classical theory are id, ego, and superego. In the view of self-as-person, agency is attributed to the self and the tripartite entities are correspondingly regarded as substructural components of the self (Meissner, 2000b). Thus it is the person who acts by reason of ego or other functional modalities. Ego-actions are thus not actions of the ego as such, but of the self acting in its ego-modality. Accordingly, I (the person) judge, not my ego; and my judging has all the characteristics of an ego-function.

8. I would caution that the self-as-agent is not a new or different agent in the self, but simply represents the inherent capacity of the organism to act. The capacity of the self for action is progressively diversified and differentiated into the rich panoply of organic physical and physiological systems on one hand and into the diversity and complexity of psychic systems on the other, some of which become categorized in terms of id-functions, ego-functions, and superego-functions in addition to other forms of psychic agency.

9. There is no question that mentation does develop in the infant mind *in utero*, as demonstrated in forms of learning, especially forms of stimulus-response learning and conditioning, but there is still a question at what point such mentation can be regarded as conscious.

10. Tähkä (1988) concluded in this respect that, were the drive theory to be dropped, Hartmann's formulation of narcissism in terms of libidinal cathexis of the self would no longer be useful. Narcissism had, therefore, to be referred to a self-loving function of the self. Therefore, he argued, "Primary narcissism would thus represent the original omnipotence of the self, while secondary narcissism would refer to the nature and degree of the self-valuating and self-estimating functions. Primary narcissism would then refer to the self-esteem that emerges with and largely equals the primary self-experience, while secondary narcissism would refer to all self-estimation acquired through internalization" (p. 126). I would also note that without the drive theory as substratum, these functions of narcissism would only make sense if understood in motivational terms.

11. This underscores the ambiguity of the selfobject in kohutian self psychology—the object, insofar as it is invested with narcissistic cathexis, is translated into a "self"-object. Whether the selfobject involves an implicit merger between self and object, as part of a presumably psychotic process, remains unclear.

12. Spruiell (1981) had previously noted the equation of concepts of narcissism and the self in Kohut. It should be clear that the basic argument of this article is on these terms diametrically opposed to the suppositions underlying kohutian self psychology.

13. I would suggest that the linkages between narcissism and the self in Kohut's theory may force the conclusion that the development of the self is also in some sense independent.

14. I read this formula as a compromise with Hartmann's narcissistic equation. The equation would go as follows: If the self is the object of narcissistic cathexis, whatever is narcissistically cathected must be the self or some extension of it. Thus, a narcissistically cathected object, even though it be distinct from the self, becomes a "selfobject."

15. Elsewhere (Meissner, 2004) I have tried to delimit the differences between my view of the self-as-person from the self psychology view of the self as an experiential center of self-meaning.

16. I have discussed the exigency for a structural view of the self and its relation to issues of autonomy and agency in Meissner (2000b); the various uses of the structural model as referring to meaning or content vs. structure as such are discussed in Meissner (2000c).

17. I would add that putting the development of the self in these terms focuses on the initial emergence of functions and capacities of the nascent psychic self. As these capacities are formed and begin to function, other modifications of the self come into play that further enrich and complexify the organization and integration of the self and shape the further course of development, as, for example, processes of internalization arising even in the earliest stages of postnatal experience (Meissner, 1986a). The same considerations would apply to the acquisition of language as contributing to the growth and shaping of the self (Meissner, 2008; in press, e, f).

18. Issues related to development of the self are too complex and important to attempt to deal with in this context. I have undertaken a more detailed discussion of these parameters of self development elsewhere (Meissner, in press a, b, c). My focus here is on the single point that self development is in many respects independent of narcissistic origins and determinants.

19. Further results of ongoing developmental research can be found in Beebe and Lachmann (1988), Blatt and Blass (1990), Emde (1983), Gergely (2000), Gergely and Watson (1996), and Tähkä (1988)—to mention only a few of many important developmental researchers contributing to the understanding of the origins of the self.

20. See the discussion of the role of aggression as motivation in development in Rizzuto, Meissner, and Buie (2004).

21. Similar formulations can be found in Nunberg's (1955) ideal ego. See the development of this concept in Steiner (1999). Milrod (1982, 1990) also described something similar in terms of a "wished for self-image," which he regarded as a form of ego-ideal precursor. He associated the ego-ideal itself more closely with moral and ethical values. See also my discussion of ego-ideal and values in Meissner (2003a).

22. In this connection, it might be more clarifying if our conception of the self were to be discriminated from the notion of "identity" and their integration and relation better conceived. A useful beginning in this direction was provided by Abend (1974). However, his account does not address the crucial issue of the integration or discrimination of either "self" or "identity" in terms of narcissistic determinants. Moreover, his definition of self was cast in hartmannian terms as a "mental construct composed of self-representation" (p. 615). I would find this formulation more applicable to the concept of identity than to that of the self. I have expressed my objections to this representational view of the self elsewhere (Meissner, 1972, 1981a, 1996a). My own analysis of the concept of identity, following Erikson (1968), focuses it in relation to the self-as-object as embodying the sense of self, both as known internally by the self as having certain personal characteristics or a "personality" and as known and characterized by others (Meissner, 2001, 2003b).

23. For a discussion of superego involvement in judgments of conscience, positive and negative, antecedent and consequent, see Meissner (2003a).

24. Use of the term "cathexis" in these discussions resonates with and is conceptually tied to the drive theory; if we replace the drive theory and its associated concept of primary narcissism, I would suggest that the analogous term in a motivational sense would be "investment." The latter term implies no connection with drive or energy theory. Thus loving and hating would be affective states related to libidinal or other motivational investments.

25. In this regard Alexander and Friedman (1980) had also noted the need to distinguish self-as-structure from the self-representation—as structure the self is the knowing subject and as self-representation of object of knowing. Jacobson (1964), following Hartmann's lead, focused self-esteem on the self-representation, not however in reference to harmony or disharmony with the ego-ideal, but with a wishful concept of the self, analogous I would think to the ideal self of Sandler et al. (1963).

26. Such narcissistic enhancement coming from the estimation of others has also been described as "relational narcissism" (Panel, 1998).

27. Cotton (1989) has provided a detailed developmental schema for the development of self-esteem which interweaves components of self, competence, and other evaluation.

28. It would not seem necessary to remind readers that penis envy is not gender specific, but both males and females can become victims of it. The young doctor, cited in the first case above, expressed conflicts over penis envy as part of his narcissistic affliction: one of the salient elements in the sense of narcissistic depletion and lack that lay behind his entitlement had to do with the size and inadequacy of his penis which became a symbol of his inferiority and inadequacy, not only in comparison with his father's larger penis in developmental terms but also in comparison with contemporary male peers and agemates. In both sexes, genital inferiority becomes translated into self-inferiority.

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