

## Review Essay: *Narcissism and the Interpersonal Self*

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Interpersonal approaches to the concept of a core self are explored in a review of *Narcissism and the Interpersonal Self* (John Fiscalini and Alan Grey, Editors). The role of self as system and self as identity—both the interpersonal, adaptive self and the personal, core self—is used to understand the evolution of the Interpersonal School and its varied approaches to narcissism. A formulation integrating subjectively and objectively based models is proposed whereby the “core” self may be understood as the totality and integrity between internal, personal self and reflected, interpersonal self. Narcissism involves an alienation of the reflected self from the inner self, which leads to a particular set of dynamics to regulate self-esteem.

With interest in the self and narcissism in particular seen as the central elusive problem in modern psychoanalysis, *Narcissism and the Interpersonal Self* is a timely, important contribution to the development of psychoanalytic theory and practice. The increasing tendency toward pluralism and integration of relational and classical theory gives this unique collection of Interpersonalist essays added significance. The editors, John Fiscalini and Alan Grey of the William Alanson White Institute, skillfully bring together a representation of the range of interpersonal approaches, including such leaders in the field as Benjamin Wolstein, Edgar Levenson, Leston Havens, and Leon Salzman. Through the subject of narcissism, the book provides cohesion to the diversity of interpersonal perspectives as well as a bridge between interpersonalism and other schools of psychoanalysis.

*Narcissism and the Interpersonal Self* is the first collection of original essays devoted to the self from an interpersonal framework. The essays vary in theoretical and clinical emphasis with minor differentiation between the

topics of self and narcissism. The editors have grouped the essays into four sections: historical overview, theoretical perspectives on self and narcissism, clinical narcissism, and treatment issues. In keeping with its self-proclaimed pioneer image, these independent thinkers differ as much as they concur on many of their ideas. As a result, the articles appear to have been rather arbitrarily organized. The introductory chapters by Grey and Fiscalini help guide the reader to the important philosophical, metapsychological, and clinical issues surrounding the understanding of self and narcissism. Grey formulates the of features distinguishing the various psychoanalytic models and Fiscalini categorizes the different models within the Interpersonal school.

This review explores the precise nature of the distortion of self and disturbance in self-experience that constitutes what is generally considered to fall in the rubric of narcissism. Concise articulation of narcissistic experience and conceptual clarification of narcissistic phenomena must begin with articulation and clarification of the self on which any compelling theory of narcissism must rest. Unfortunately, discussion of self and narcissism are not formally separated in this book, which contributes to the conceptual vagueness from which this topic suffers in the field. However, what makes this original collection of essays significant for psychoanalysis is its refreshingly honest scrutiny of the concepts of self, which are the very foundation of the Interpersonal School as a distinct movement within the field. Using the book as a framework, it is important to attempt to separate the issues pertaining to the self as a theoretical construct from those bearing specifically on narcissism. Further, the problems of self in narcissism are examined through an exploration of the concept of the inner, central self.

As Fiscalini and Grey note in the Introduction, "narcissism as a psychoanalytic investigation inevitably leads to a study of the self" (p. 1). A clear understanding of narcissism eludes us without precisely understanding who and what in us is the "self." As the various writers, each of whom are singular in their theoretical approach yet all sharing the interpersonal tradition, struggle to even define what they mean by narcissism, they inherently struggle with the idea of how one can understand unique individuality and their position on the concept of a core, inner self on which much of current psychoanalytic theory is based. The heart of the human condition and what is thought to separate man and woman from the other species is the singular ability to be simultaneously the subject and object of observation and experience. Thus, the early chapters on the self bear significance on two levels. First, the questions addressed on the nature and functioning of self are pertinent to specifying what is pathological in the self that makes an individual narcissistic. In so doing, the writers illustrate the issues in psychoanalysis that originally gave rise to Interpersonalism out of a psychoanalytic tradition that had been heretofore based on the libido model and conceptualization of man as fundamentally a biological being rather than a social

being—a self. Although the theorists for the most part restrict their speculations to the level of psychoanalytic theory, broad-reaching philosophical questions also emerge on the nature of man and existence of self.

The opening theoretical section posits a number of key questions. Is the self an actual intrapsychic structure, an experiential phenomenon, or merely a set of processes with subjective self an epiphenomenal reflection of the interpersonal, interactional self? To what degree does the individual's ability to observe one's own self determine the existence of this inner core self? If there is an inner personal self, what is its relation to the outer, interpersonal self? Is it organized into a fixed and relatively stable organization or is it a fluid structure of multiple dimensions that evolves over a lifetime? These questions may be essentially framed in the following way. Whether inherent or socially constructed, is the self in essence based within the individual and expressed outwardly, or is the self that rests within us merely the composite of external interactions that have become internalized? This internal–external distinction corresponds to the distinction between the personal and interpersonal self, the subjective versus the objective self.

As the authors struggle to define the nature of self and address the underlying question of the presence of a core or superordinate self, the reader becomes aware of two opposing positions within the Interpersonal School. At one end, there is a strictly interactional or objective paradigm and a strictly experiential or subjective paradigm at the other end, with blends of both characterizing many interpersonally based perspectives. The strictly interactional perspective is based on adherence to Sullivan's original operationalist model defining self singularly in terms of the interpersonal self, composed of reflected appraisals of others. This is exemplified most clearly in the volume by the contributions of Grey and Levenson.

The contrasting interpersonal position maintains the centrality of the inner or personal subjective self. They are represented in this volume by Wolstein's psychic center of self in first person experiential analysis and Condrau's phenomenology of self. With the seminal interpersonal theories of Horney and Fromm as a groundwork, many interpersonal theorists have attempted to integrate and analyze the relationship between the inner and outer self and to conceptualize many neuroses, in particular narcissism, as a dysfunction or failure to integrate the personal and interpersonal self. This position is represented in the collection by the contributions of Bacciagaluppi on Fromm, Fiscalini, and Havens among others. Despite this difference in how the self is understood, the Interpersonalists agree on the requisite methods on which to base their definitions of *self* and *narcissism*, namely the insistence on technical rigor and reject unqualified, uncritical acceptance of ill-defined and unverifiable concepts. On the presumption that all reality is relative and subjective, they restrict clinical and metapsychological formulations to what is observable (i.e., what can be consensually validated).

## OBJECTIVE MODELS OF SELF

The interactional paradigm is crystallized by Grey in two chapters entitled, "A Spectrum of Psychoanalytic Self Theories" and "The Interpersonal Self Updated." Although Grey acknowledges the "circuit of continuous exchange between the subjective 'inner' world and 'external' behavioral interactions of oneself with others" (p. 147), he adheres to a strict operationalist perspective, relegating what cannot be consensually observed and thereby validated to that which is beyond the purview of psychoanalysis. The sense of central self is an epiphenomenal reflection of outer experience. Although the individual may act on the environment, he or she is continually reacting to the environment. There is no central or transcendent core self posited in the Sullivanian self of reflected appraisals. He critiques classical theory with its plethora of terminology of self as an elaborate construction to accommodate the basic libido model that reduces the agentic function of the interpersonal self emphasized in Interpersonal theory. Thus, Grey's Sullivanian self involves a continuously changing organization rather than identity per se, without continuity experientially or behaviorally.

Levenson's essay, "Character, Personality and the Politics of Change," expresses his version of the Sullivanian position on the internal versus external self. As I understand Levenson, the inner subjective self, or personified self in Sullivanian terms, is the self of awareness. He claims it is "the top of the iceberg" (p. 131) ... that part of the personality that one can grasp and consciously formulate" (p. 133). The remainder of the self system is outside consciousness and functions as a set of monitoring and regulating processes that function to "blur or dissociate threatening knowledge through censorship maneuvers called 'security operations'" (p. 149). Similar to the traditional psychoanalytic thinking, awareness is controlled by anxiety, but the basis of anxiety in Sullivanian terms is strictly interpersonal as opposed to an essentially intrapsychic foundation, as in libido or object relations theory.

According to this position, the self is formed and continually reformed as a function of reflected appraisals. The Sullivanian self is seen more as an organizing process involving issues of agency and self-regulation rather than based on issues of identity per se. While Grey acknowledges "the interplay between social transactional and subjective experience" (p. 41), the emphasis is on the "social origins of selfhood" (p. 41) and sharply contrasts with notions of self that center on an elemental core or true self—something akin to core identity. Distinguishing the interpersonal self and the true self is significant not only for the relevance in psychoanalytic theories of self but also because this issue is at the heart of the controversy surrounding a clear definition and understanding of narcissism among Interpersonalists and perhaps among psychoanalysts at large, which will be elaborated on later.

Both Grey and Levenson repudiate the concept of a core or true self that has been espoused as a central concept in mainstream psychoanalysis and in

certain Interpersonal theories. Only what is observable and consensually verifiable is deemed important. Levenson challenges the “stoniness of character” (p. 132) implied in much of psychoanalytic thought and emphasizes the “elasticity” (p. 133) of human nature. He dismisses “the concept of inherent uniqueness . . . a core” as merely “a cherished contemporary conceit” (p. 133). Grey, on the other hand, attempts to expand and reinterpret the Sullivanian interpersonal self to include uniqueness and personal individuality. Although Sullivan’s essay on the “Illusion of Personal Individuality” has been often cited as evidence of his dismissal of the singularity of the self, Grey emphasizes Sullivan’s (1964) appreciation of “how strikingly novel” (p. 214) subjective experience is. This seems to be a rather sparse acknowledgement of the richness of individuality and importance of a sense of unique self.

Sullivan has been interpreted by critics, within the Interpersonal School as well as by other psychoanalytic models, as limited and restricted in his model of self based solely on environmental determinants of affirmation and anxiety. Grey argues that post-Sullivanian models, such as that of Thompson, include aspects of self that are developed without concern for external approval or disapproval. As the various writers attempt to struggle with the notion of a core, personal self, it is apparent that the strict Sullivanian position boxes the self into a conceptual corner, making it difficult to find a place for notions of uniqueness and sense of core self.

The most compelling rationale for the eschewal of the concept of unique core self emerging from the various authors’ explications of the Interpersonal model is the attention given to avoiding reification in defining the self. The concern with reification, in fact, has been an early defining feature of the Interpersonal movement and continues to demarcate Interpersonal thought from other contemporary post-Freudian models, including self psychology and the object relations perspectives. Interpersonalists have rejected the notion of an encapsulated, fixed, internal structure or substructure that controls the individual from within like *minihomunculi*. Besides lacking consensual verifiability, it implies an image of the individual as passive, not responsible—a victim of his or her past, with limited range of agency, which defies the notion of self-determination and potentiality that is central to the Interpersonal position.

In his essay “An Interpersonal Approach to Idealization in the Narcissistic Personality,” Ortmeyer proposes his theory of pluralism that, along with the contributions of Levenson and Grey, develops a theoretical position which involves a concept of fluid, multiple selves. This concept of self allows for an elasticity and potentiality of individuality that may get lost in notions of a fixed, enduring structure of self. Indeed, Grey’s major argument to the notion of a core or true self seems to be based on the idea that a core true self requires reification, static fixedness—“they all believe in the existence of a ‘real’ self, an inner core that allegedly arises in a spontaneous and unexplained way very early in life, enduring inwardly afterward” (p. 42). He

makes a compelling argument that the subjective sense of inner continuity does not correspond to evidence that the self evolves over time and criticizes theorists who posit a core or true self. The obvious counter to this argument is the concept of inner or core self that is by nature everchanging, and that this central self is interactive and influenced by the outer, interpersonal self but transcends or exists apart from this adaptive social self.

In attempting to liberate psychoanalysis from restrictive theoretical and clinical implications of structural theory, the thrust of much of Interpersonal thought has been to emphasize the areas of divergence with other psychoanalytic schools. For Sullivanian-based theorists, this has often involved limiting the self to the outer, interpersonal self. Despite the discomfort of many Interpersonalists with emphasizing or even acknowledging areas of significant convergence between the Interpersonal School and other theories in psychoanalysis, other Interpersonalists clearly adhere to the idea of core self. Seminal and current Interpersonal theories of self with more of a phenomenologic thrust conceptualize the self in terms of inner resources involving spontaneity, authenticity, continuity, and other aspects of subjective uniqueness, in addition to its agentic function.

#### SUBJECTIVE MODELS OF SELF

Long before Kohut's theory of narcissism, Horney (1950) postulated a "real self" as "the original force toward individual growth and fulfillment" (p. 158). Similarly, Fromm was cited by several of the contributors for his belief in man possessing a "core" personality. These concepts of self bear obvious similarity to the Winnicottian true self and Kohutian undamaged self. In "Fromm's Views on Narcissism and the Self," Bacciagaluppi sets out to dispel "the narcissism of minor differences" (Werman, 1988, p. 188) in psychoanalysis by emphasizing the convergence among Kohut, the British School and Fromm in a humanistic conception of whole healthy self. Bacciagaluppi, as well as Grey and Fiscalini, points out that the British Object Relations theory of true self (Guntrip, 1969; Winnicott, 1960) was predated by the American school's theory of neurosis as self-alienation (Fromm, 1968; Horney, 1950). For Fromm (1968), "I am 'I' only to the extent . . . to which I have achieved an integration between my appearance . . . and the core of my personality" (p. 87). *Neurosis* is defined as a loss of "originality and spontaneity" involving "weakening of the self and the substitution of a pseudo self . . . the experience of self as the sum total of others expectations" (Fromm, 1947, p. 161). Here again is the idea that the heart of selfhood lies internally—a spontaneous unique and agentic force. As Bacciagaluppi points out, Fromm's productive character bears a strong resemblance to Kohut's (1977) "creative-productive-active self," which functions as an independent center of initiative.

Wolstein's first-person singular self is the most developed theory of inner personal self in the contemporary Interpersonal movement. In the chapter entitled "The Lost Uniqueness of Kohut's Self Psychology," Wolstein discusses his concept of psychic center. In counterpoint to the Sullivanian position, Wolstein argues that a "comprehensive definition of the self" requires an inclusion of the "private individual side" (p. 117). Wolstein's thoughts of the self provide a refreshing twist in that he calls both self psychology and Sullivanian model to task. He turns the whole assumption of difference between self psychology and Interpersonalism on its head by showing how both Sullivan and Kohut "deprived the interpersonal self of uniqueness and individuality" (p. 110) by disallowing subjectivity and direct experiential observation, thereby restricting their focus to the interpersonally observed self of reflected appraisals.

Wolstein points out the inherent contradiction in prescriptive empathy as formulated by Kohut; genuine, spontaneous empathy by definition cannot be dictated. He acknowledges the validity of the Sullivanian position that "the private aspects of experience are not readily stated in the public domain with an assured degree of consensual power" (p. 119). However, he cogently reasons for inclusion of the subjective experiential in formulating a concept of self in terms of unique individuality. Reintroducing the inner world heretofore excluded in Interpersonal theory by the Sullivanian emphasis on the interactional world, Wolstein applies and extends the Sullivanian principle of operationalism to subjectivity, whereby consensual reality is established through mutual exploration of direct experience of self and other.

Wolstein's theory of the personal self highlights the basic distinction between exploring and understanding the self from a subjective versus objective standpoint. Wolstein falls squarely on the side of those Interpersonalists, like Fromm and Horney before him, who believe in a personal core self. He describes the "psychic center that moves itself outward from within, striving for completion" (p. 126). However, this "inner voice," as I understand it, is not a fixed, reified entity. Rather, the personal self and sense of uniqueness is the experience of individuality that *emerges* in the "passage of unconscious to conscious psychic experience undergone in the first person, singular and active" (p. 124). Wolstein further defines *narcissism* as the disturbance in whole self involving overdevelopment of the adapted, interpersonal self whereby the narcissist's experience is so focused on the other that firsthand experience of one's self is lost. The concept of the emergent self defined as active immediate and unique experience integrates the Sullivanian emphasis on the organizing and agentic functions of self with the more traditional understanding of self in terms of subjectivity and identity (i.e. a real, true, or authentic self).

Between the radical personal perspective of Wolstein and the radical interpersonal perspective of the Sullivanians lie the many Interpersonal writers (represented in this collection by Fiscalini, Ortmeyer, and Havens

among others) whose notions of self and narcissism involve pluralistic perspectives and various integrations of the subjective and objective models of self. Their theories of narcissism involve the Interpersonal emphasis on an individual's behavior and interactional patterns in connection to the personal self, variously conceptualized in terms of the whole self, disavowed aspects of self, and the real or transcendent self. In fact, to some Interpersonalists, the relation of the personal self to the interpersonal self is at the heart of narcissistic distortion. Their notions of narcissism hinge on the way they conceptualize the nature of self.

### INTERPERSONAL APPROACH TO NARCISSISM

The number of thorny theoretical issues associated with any serious study of the subject of narcissism merit fuller discussion than can be addressed in this review. Suffice to say, these are well articulated in the chapters of the book preceding the clinical section as well as in Fiscalini and Grey's commentaries. Examining the diversity of perspectives in the clinically focused articles of this collection from the viewpoint of their position on the centrality of the personal self hopefully provides meaningful coherence to a disparate group of essays. The role of a central, personal self has been variously described in interpersonal thought as the singular self (Havens), whole self (Fiscalini), real self (Fromm), authentic self (Condrau), or core self (Wolstein).

One group tends to retain the Sullivanian objective focus on the behavioral patterns and quality of interpersonal relations (i.e., the interpersonal, outer self). Another group places emphasis on the experiential level (i.e., on the inner self), whereas still others attempt to integrate the particulars of narcissistic dynamics and the interpersonal self with the personal, core self. Grappling with the question of the clinical utility and conceptual validity of thinking in terms of a central self seems to be a central unspoken controversy underlying the more open controversy surrounding narcissism within the Interpersonal School and confronting Interpersonalism as a distinct, logically consistent theory and technique.

Overarching the position on the existence and relevance of the inner, personal self is a glaring discomfort with risking theoretical or technical rigidity, absolutism, and reification, which presents a dilemma for the issue of diagnosis raised in any study of narcissism. Despite the diversity of perspectives on the understanding of self and its vicissitudes in narcissism, the Interpersonalists represented in this volume certainly concur on thinking of narcissism as a descriptive term referring to a particular mode of relating and self organization, particularly the regulation of self-esteem. It is defined through the particular sociocultural context and individualized set of conditions. Further, it is understood that such determinations are always relativistic and subjectively based (i.e., by how it is experienced by self and other



rather than as an objective reality with presumed psychic entities within the person).

Hirsch's article, "The Ubiquity and Relativity of Narcissism," cogently argues the essential Interpersonal position that there is no absolute characteristic or person that is narcissistic. Similarly, in "The Concept of Narcissistic Interactions," Havens refutes the need for diagnostic classification—a position shared by many Interpersonalists.

I propose that we . . . describe narcissistic *interactions* and postpone judgments about one another, as separate selves . . . [since] most human beings are very sensitive both to others' and to their own opinions of themselves and are deeply reactive and interactive . . . in one sense . . . narcissistic. (p. 192)

#### OBJECTIVE MODELS OF SELF IN NARCISSISM

One subgroup of Interpersonal essays involves a focus on the interpersonal self and relations with others. The articles maintain the relativistic, perspectivist position of Interpersonalism and attempt to elaborate a definition of narcissism while cautiously trying to avoid traditional diagnosis. Although Fiscalini argues the Interpersonal philosophy that "narcissistic dynamics . . . characterize all patients to some degree or another" (p. 329), he acknowledges that these trends "may be predominant or more severe in . . . those whom we tend to call narcissistic personality disorders" (p. 329). In a chapter reviewing the history of narcissism in Interpersonal thought, Fiscalini also presents his own theory with the caution that not everyone's narcissist is the same. He postulates a "core narcissistic constellation" inclusive of certain dynamics, such as grandiosity, self-centeredness, self-esteem, vulnerability, inaccessibility, attitudes of entitlement, and power orientation.

Salzman's chapter entitled "Narcissism and Obsessionalism" is devoted to describing what makes a narcissistic style unique from other forms of neurosis. Unlike many of his Interpersonal colleagues, he is comfortable utilizing classification schema, though they are primarily descriptive rather than explanatory concepts with limited etiological implication. Comparing narcissism to obsessionalism, he points out that although grandiosity and controllingness are characteristic of both obsessional and narcissistic styles, they are experienced differently and serve a different function in each mode. He suggests that for the obsessional, grandiosity primarily stems from insecurity about the world, whereas for the narcissist, the primary anxiety involves insecurity about self, not the world. Thus, for the narcissist, the need to control others is secondary to the grandiosity that is based on an underlying insecurity about the self.

In "Love and Sexuality in Narcissistic Personalities," Schimel describes the narcissistic personality in terms of overt self love, which masks an underlying inability to love oneself. Quoting Fromm, he claims that "selfish

persons are incapable of loving others, but they are not capable of loving themselves either" (see Fromm, 1956, p. 67). Schimel highlights the difficulties in intimacy which the narcissistic individual suffers.

In "An Interpersonal Approach to Idealization in the Narcissistic Personality," Ortmeyer addresses the idealization of self and others characteristic of a narcissistic mode of relating. He reminds the reader, reiterating the other contributing Interpersonalists in the volume, that all theory must be understood as "represent[at]ions of reality that reflect the assumptions and interests of the theorists" (p. 211). Ortmeyer attempts to distinguish between healthy and pathological idealization by focusing on the degree of flexibility and openness to selective attention. This group of Interpersonalists articulate the distinctive properties of narcissism in terms of modes of relatedness, self organization, and how the individual is experienced by others. However, another group of Interpersonal theorists and practitioners in this collection represent the subjective model with its focus on existential, experiential properties of narcissism. They conceptualize narcissistic disturbance in terms of authenticity and therefore the central self, either implicitly or explicitly.

#### SUBJECTIVE MODELS OF SELF IN NARCISSISM

In "The Relation of Monologue and Dialogue to Narcissistic States and Its Implications for Psychoanalytic Therapy," Feiner conceptualizes narcissism in existential terms, essentially equating narcissism with unauthentic relatedness as defined by Buber (1957) in terms of the existential dialectic of "setting at a distance" and "entering in relation." He describes narcissistic states involving a "monologic" mode of consciousness and relatedness where the individual is "impervious" to the other and unable to relate in authentic "dialogue" with a separate other by accepting optimum distance and connection between self and other. Condrau's article "The Dasein-analytic-Phenomenological Approach to Narcissism" is also a discussion of narcissism in terms of the relation of true self to a particular way of relating. He describes narcissistic modes of relating in terms of grandiosity and feelings of inferiority when faced with authenticity of being and limitations of self and other.

In Havens' integrated interactional and experiential model, he conceptualizes narcissism as a distortion or alienation from the inner, core self with excessive focus on the reflected, interpersonally formed self. He retains the essential field theory perspective, "no one-person observations exist . . . all statements of narcissists are really statements about the observers of narcissists" (p. 190). In addition, Havens posits a core existential self, "singular existence of our own" (quoting Craig, 1988), a sense of specialness and uniqueness with humility or what he terms "lightness" of self, an appreciation of our personal limitations in that one's singularity exists as part of something larger.

According to Havens, the self is not a fixed entity, of structure or experience. Persons with narcissistic difficulties are attempting to find, fix, or "anchor the self" in external images, products. He raises the possibility that although a need for external validation is a normal part of development, he suggests that once a coherent self is developed, an individual should be able to let go and not be "weighed down" by a continued orientation of entitlement, ownership, and resultant exploitation characteristic of a narcissistic relation to others. To summarize the various Interpersonal approaches, the concept of narcissism is treated similarly to other psychoanalytic approaches in that it is variously understood as certain patterns of behavior, types of self experience, characterologic and universal.

#### AN INTEGRATIONIST INTERPERSONAL FORMULATION OF NARCISSISM

The question then arises as how and when we can judge a phenomenon or individual as narcissistic, and further, as pathological. The specificity problem in narcissism is complicated by the fact that the term *narcissism* has historically suffered terminologic slippage and overinclusiveness in that *narcissism* has been used in psychoanalysis as well as in the broader culture to refer to the idea of self love per se, with both healthy and pathological connotations. Several of the authors allude to a distinction between healthy and pathological narcissism and the notion of excessive or insufficient self-esteem or love as pathognomonic of narcissism. Fiscalini, for example, postulates an "'archaic' narcissism" distinct from "defensive characterologic narcissism."

First, to avoid terminologic and conceptual confusion, the term *narcissism* would best be reserved for its pathological connotation, consonant with its most common colloquial meaning. In this restricted usage, normal narcissism is a contradiction in terms. This would retain the essential idea of narcissism as involving a fragility of self-esteem. To the extent that everyone's self-esteem can be vulnerable, all individuals can be defensively narcissistic. Second, I suggest that notions of absolute amount of self-esteem be eliminated from the concept of narcissistic disturbance. Rather, I suggest that the hallmark of narcissism involves a particular method of regulating a fragile self-esteem system and connecting the inner or central self with the interpersonal self.

Concepts of elemental self love or normal narcissism, harkening back to Freud's original postulation of "primary narcissism," can be understood as attempts to find a place in psychoanalytic thinking for the sense of connection and separation between different parts of the self and the ability to accept all dimensions of self. Freud's notion of primary narcissism has been roundly rejected by psychology at large and by psychoanalysis because the original formulation is based on unsubstantiated presumptions of unrelated-

ness at birth. However, perhaps what is most significant about Freud's primary narcissism is the implication of an elemental or core self that forms the basis for the capacity for relatedness from birth, the coexistence and development of a multidimensional personal and interpersonal self.

After reviewing the various attempts to articulate the nature of the self and narcissism, I suggest that the concept of narcissism can be restricted to a universally existent set of dynamics referring to particular methods of self-esteem regulation (involving the inner, personal self) which surface under conditions threatening self-esteem (involving the external, interpersonal self). Further, as a defensive characterologic mode of relating, narcissistic persons share certain qualities in how they feel about themselves and others. These qualities, from grandiosity and detachment to overreactivity and oversensitivity, such as shown in the multiple forms of mirror transference, are organized around the defensive need for the other's unquestioning acceptance and approval. The symptoms of overvaluation of self, grandiosity, perfectionism, even in its self-devalued manifestations, such as certain masochistic patterns and preoccupation with inadequacy, involve an inability to accept certain parts of the self. The development of narcissistic trends appears to be based on a history where the individual's self evolves in the context of a particular set of interpersonal interactions. As is suggested in Fiscalini's essay and as is implied in many of the essays in this collection, this narcissistic posture may be understood to develop in an interpersonal environment in which the child has not been fully recognized, in which the child's unique individuality, including what is exceptional, what is normative or mediocre, has not been either recognized or accepted by significant others in the child's life. This concept of a whole self or totality of self seems to this reviewer to resonate with the theme of a central, core, or true self which is separate from but related to the interpersonally patterned, socially adaptive self.

Fiscalini, in his overview article, "Interpersonal Relations and the Problem of Narcissism," elaborates three types of parent-child scenarios. In each of these scenarios the "actuality" of the child is unrecognized or rejected by the parent because of the parent's needs. These may involve premature disillusionment or "protracted illusionment" of a child's naive and overinflated sense of self and self-esteem, thus obstructing a child's realistic assessment and acceptance of limitations of self and other. Another variation involves a developmental pattern of parents selectively overvaluing certain qualities in the child, which may be real or imagined by the parent but ignoring or devaluing the rest of the child's person. This fosters the construction of a false, or what Wolstein refers to as "over-adapted" interpersonal self, and sense of one's inner, real, or authentic self being unimportant or devalued.

Akin to the experiential perspective of Fiscalini and Wolstein, in "Patterns of Narcissism in Japan," Tatara describes parent-child dynamics in Japan similar to the "shamed" and "spoiled" constellation of narcissism

Fiscalini identifies in American culture. Tatara states that the prevailing tutumu custom in which the child is “treated as a treasure” lends itself to a core self of omnipotence. Narcissistic problems emerge when tutumu is further aggravated by a family situation in which maternal needs and frustrations lead the mother to overvalue the child and look to the child to meet her own needs, typically in the form of achievement.

Thus, we may understand narcissistic reactions such as extreme rage and sensitivity to injury as defensive expressions of fear that certain parts of one’s self are not being seen, or if seen, they are not or would not be accepted. Perhaps while expressing the feeling of not being fully recognized and accepted, the outrageousness of the narcissist’s behavior and the degree of reactivity the narcissistic individual typically engenders in the other, including the analyst, also represents a distorted attempt to be seen (i.e., an attempt to seek full self-recognition). Although the individual may be seeking full and authentic relation, visibility and acceptance of both internal personal and external interpersonal parts of self which have been ignored, repudiated or devalued by significant others, paradoxically, narcissistic modes of relating engender further alienation of the other.

The sense of specialness and uniqueness associated with narcissism disallows acknowledgment of self-limitation, recognition, and acceptance of certain parts of self by the individual as well as by others. When confronted with these disavowed parts of self—as when another individual relates to the entirety of the individual including devalued, disowned aspects and not only to those ‘special’ narcissistically invested components—the individual is vulnerable to further dissociation of unacceptable parts of self, an increased sense of alienation, and finally diminishment in self-esteem.

## CONCLUSION

Finally, I briefly discuss treatment. If the essence of the problem in narcissism rests with a truncation of the individual’s whole self, then, from an Interpersonal point of view and as Fiscalini and Grey concur, “no special technique” is required. It follows from Interpersonal theory that all treatment is individualized: Each patient–therapist dyad and analytic process is the unique creation of two distinct selves responding to each other in the moment seeking full recognition of all dimensions of self.

Although the role of repetition is accorded significance in what is understood as the inevitability of “transformation” of the analytic relationship, it is a fundamental principle of Interpersonal clinical theory that consciousness and working through of mutual responsiveness invariably leads to new experience, giving patient and therapist the opportunity to directly experience the self and other. *Narcissism and the Interpersonal Self* offers informative anecdotal material and clinically pertinent technical information on working with narcissistic issues (which can not be fully elaborated in this

review). The underlying message throughout the book is that we all struggle with narcissistic issues. Even individuals with marked narcissistic trends should be seen and related to not in terms of their diagnostic classification but in terms of their unique needs and issues, their conscious and unconscious. To the Interpersonalist community, the following question is posed. Has the dispute about the existence of a true, core self confounded our understanding of the self, narcissism, and other disorders of self? Further, has this controversy muddied the waters of developing an interpersonal theory with internal consistency and clear distinction from other psychoanalytic schools? Although Interpersonalists differ in understanding the dynamics of narcissistic phenomena, there seems an agreement that narcissism involves an experience and fear of having certain parts of the self not related to or unaccepted. This translates into a variation of the idea of alienation of one's outer interpersonal or adaptive self from one's inner, real, or personal central self. Perhaps the essence of *true self* resides in the experience of one's *totality* of self, evanescent in structure but critical experientially—a constellation including inherent aspects of self and continuously evolving aspects of self, the special, unremarkable, visible and invisible to others, those recognized and unrecognized by the world.

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