

**A. Kohut's theory of the Self.**

1. Introduction

In his books, Kohut (1971,1977,1984,1985) presents an innovative theory which goes beyond Freud, in the sense that he concentrates on the narcissistic personality disorder. He (1971) characterizes this population, departs from the transference neurosis and focuses on "the fear of the loss of the object which is first in the frequency and importance"(20). Kohut describes other types of transferences with unique characteristics of mental and emotional contacts between patient and therapist.

In his writings, I sensed a chord of apology for detracting from Freud, a surrendering of his efforts to engage the reader's interest in his new ideas. Yet his concept of the bipolar self, the crucial importance of the development of the self through the interaction with the selfobject parental imago, the brilliant descriptions of the transforming self, his differentiation between the various transferences, his didactic remarks on the therapist's role in reconstructing the self, the therapeutic atmosphere and symmetry between therapist and patient, and, above all, his personal openness and sincerity - are all beyond praise.

1a. The Patient with Narcissistic Disorder

The "hero" at the center of Kohut's theory is the patient with the narcissistic disorder. Today, a clinician who sees people searching for relative satisfaction in their lives, is acquainted with this population. People with narcissistic injuries or disorders refer quite often to the expressive therapies where verbal language is secondary. Kohut(1971) sketches the character of the narcissistic patient as one who "will describe subtly experienced, yet pervasive feelings of emptiness and depression, which in contrast to the conditions in the psychosis and borderline states, are alleviated as soon as the narcissistic transference has become established - but which become intensified when the relationship to the analyst is disturbed...he is not fully real,..his emotions are dulled... he is doing his work without zest... seeks routine to carry him along since he appears to be lacking in initiative"(16). In surveying various categories of the narcissistic patient's functioning ego, Kohut describes " in the sexual sphere: perverse fantasies, lack of interest in sex; in the social sphere: work inhibitions, inability to form and maintain significant relationships, delinquent activities; in his manifest personality features: lack of humor, lack of empathy for other people's needs and feelings, lack of sense of proportion, tendency towards attacks of uncontrolled rage, pathological lying"(23).

1b. The Normal Development of a cohesive Self.

In the question - How does a healthy "cohesive" self develop, lies the essence of Kohut's theory. He (1971) presents the normal stages of this sequence and the potential pathologies of the disintegrated self. The keyword in this theory is Selfobject.

Selfobject is the child's perception of the parent's psychological role, in the process of furnishing his fundamental psychological conditions (not physical but mental) with which the child can nurture an adequate self. In the very beginning of this delicate natural process, vitally important things happen. In Kohut's words: "the equilibrium of primary narcissism is disturbed by the unavoidable shortcomings of maternal care, but the child replaces the previous perfection by establishing a grandiose and exhibitionistic image of the self: the grandiose self, and by giving over the previous perfection to an admired omnipotent (transitional) self-object: the idealized parent imago" (25).

Kohut assumes that these mental processes are imprints of life: "if the child suffers the traumatic loss of the idealized object, then optimal idealization does not take place. The child does not acquire the needed internal structure, his psyche remains fixated on an archaic self-object, and the personality will throughout life be dependent on certain objects in what seems to be an intense form of object hunger" (45).

Yet we must not expect the process to be perfect, on the contrary, Kohut formulates that "the most important aspect of the earliest mother-infant relationship is the principle of optimal frustration. Tolerable disappointments in the pre-existing primary narcissitic equilibrium lead to the establishment of internal structures which provide the ability for self-soothing and the acquisition of basic tension tolerance in the narcissistic realm" (64).

We find in this theory an immense emphasis on the environment's role in the maturational process of the self.

Kohut (1977) believes the baby is, "from the beginning, fused via mutual empathy with an environment that does experience him as already possessing a self - an environment that not only anticipates the later separate self-awareness of the child, but already, by the very form and content of its expectations, begins to channel it into specific directions. At the moment when the mother sees her baby for the first time and is also in contact with him (through tactile, olfactory, and proprioceptive channels as she feeds, carries, bathes him), a process that lays down a person's self has its virtual beginning - it continues throughout childhood and to a lesser extent later in life" (99).

Considering the Oedipal phase, Kohut states that "the presence of a firm self is a precondition for the experience of the Oedipus complex" (227). He claims that "if a child enters the oedipal phase with a firm, cohesive, continuous self, he will then experience assertive-possessive, affectionate-sexual desires for the heterogenital parent and assertive, self-confident, competitive feelings vis-a-vis the parent of the same sex. We must immediately add, however, that it would be psychologically misleading to consider the child's oedipal experiences in isolation. As was true with

regard to earlier phases of development, the child's experiences during the oedipal phase become understandable only when they are considered within the matrix of the empathic, partially empathic, or unempathic responses from the side of the self-object aspects of his environment" (230).

Empathy, therefore, is another crucial concept in Kohut's theory. Kohut maintains that "the optimal parent is not the genius whose self is absorbed by his creative activities and whose self extensions relate only to his work and to those people who can be experienced by him as aspects of his work. Optimal parents - again I should rather say: optimally failing parents - are people who, despite their stimulation by and competition with the rising generation, are also sufficiently as transient participants in the ongoing stream of life, to be able to experience the growth of the next generation with unforced nondefensive joy" (237). In his third book, Kohut (1984) includes a concise summary of the stages of the development of the cohesive self: "First, a basic intuneness must exist between the self and its selfobjects. Second, selfobject failures (e.g., responses based on faulty empathy) of a nontraumatic degree must occur. We refer to the results of such failures on the part of the selfobjects of childhood as 'optimal frustrations'.

This two-step sequence of psychological events in early life, occurring in countless repetitions, has two important consequences: (1) it brings about via a process to which I have given the name "transmuting internalization" (Kohut 1971, pp. 49-50), and (2) it prepares the soil for gradual shift from the self relying for its nutriment on archaic modes of contact in the narcissistic sphere to its ability to be sustained most of the time by the empathic resonance that emanates from the selfobjects of adult life" (70). This means that while in the beginning, the normal and natural process is characterised by merger of the Self with the mirroring selfobject, or with the idealized or twinship selfobject, later on, through a mature process of internalization, the ego conserves the feelings and contents of the internalized selfobject, and functions as an inner source of support to the Self.

#### 1c. Pathology and Treatment

Let us consider now the inferred pathology which might derive from such a delicate process. Kohut (1984) maintains that "Self psychology is now attempting to demonstrate, that all forms of psychopathology are based either on defects in the structure of the self, on distortions of the self, or on weakness of the self. It is trying to show, furthermore, that all these flaws in the self are due to disturbances of self-selfobject relationships in childhood" (53).

Kohut (1977) sees two ways of coping with narcissistic injuries according to the source of the pathology. When the source is primary, and happened during the structure of the self, then a "structure defensive" appears, and its role is "to cover over the primary defect in the self" (3). When the source is secondary, Kohut calls it "structure formation" and it is presented as "structure compensatory" bringing about a "functional

rehabilitation of the self by making up for the weakness in one pole of the self through the strengthening of the other pole" (3). This means we shall witness an exaggeration, or inflated grandiose exhibitionistic behaviour which hides the undeveloped values and ideals of the personality. Or vice versa, an over preoccupation with values and ideals at the expense of a balanced exhibitionistic personality. Failure in the functioning of selfobject is a critical factor in the explaining of pathology. Kohut (1977) emotionally says that "behind the dreadful genital of the woman lies the cold, unresponding, nonmirroring face of a mother (or of a psychotic father who has usurped the mother's self-object functions) who is unable to provide life-sustaining acceptance for her child because she is depressed or latently schizophrenic or afflicted with some other distortion of her personality" (189). In his opinion, the pathological process starts "when the child's search for the idealized omnipotent self-object with whose power he wants to merge fails, owing to either its weakness or its refusal to permit a merger with its greatness and power, then again, the child's healthy and happy wide-eyed admiration will cease, the broad psychological configuration will break up, and isolated sexualized voyeuristic perversion may arise in consequence of the breakup of those broad psychological configurations of healthy assertiveness, vis-a-vis the mirroring self-object and of healthy admiration for the idealized self-object, to which - protractedly, traumatically, phase-inappropriately - the self-object did not respond" (172). Parallel to the development of his theory about the self, Kohut created a therapeutic ideology and principles in order to help the patient reconstruct the self. He was a practitioner with a definite strategy. Already in his first book, Kohut (1971) says: "If the repeated interpretations of the meaning of separations from the analyst on the level of the idealizing narcissistic libido are not given mechanically, but with correct empathy for the analysand's feelings, then there will gradually emerge a host of meaningful memories which concern the dynamic prototypes of the present experience. Here, as in the analogous phases of the working-through process in the mirror transference, new memories will emerge, and memories that have always been conscious will become intelligible in the light of the present transference experiences" (98). Optimal frustration is essential according to Kohut (1984), and the therapist must always remember his drawbacks since "however correct an analyst's theories are, and however open-minded he is in applying them, he cannot avoid erring many times in his understanding of the analysand and in the explanations he offers to him.

In order to be capable of cure by psychoanalysis therefore, the analysand must be able to mobilize in the psychoanalytic situation the maturation-directed needs for structure building via transmuting internalization of the revived selfobjects of childhood" (71). Kohut (1984) believed in a structured therapy which has an end, and he dared to deal with the termination of therapy. He claimed that "cure resides in a patient's newly acquired ability to identify and seek out appropriate selfobjects - both mirroring and idealizable - as they present themselves in his realistic surroundings and to be sustained by them" (77).

Although he (1977) was against " the goal of the analyst to provide an extra measure of love and kindness to his patients" (261), he (1984) was

also against "confrontations, to which analysts expose their analysands," because they "not only are often trite, superfluous, and experienced as patronizing by the patient, but also may repeat the essential trauma of childhood in a way that is especially harmful to the progress of the analysis. Confrontations should be used sparingly. They may shock the patient and momentarily enhance the analyst's self-esteem when he sees the patient taken by surprise, but they provide nothing that is not already provided by the realities of adult life. It is not the task of the analyst to educate the patient via confrontations but, via the consistent interpretation of the selfobject transferences, to cure the defect in his self" (173).

I shall now present basic concepts in Kohut's theory.

## 2a. Nuclear Self

In "Self Psychology and the Humanities" Kohut (1985) postulates "that the nuclear self occupies the most central position in the personality and that other selves occupy positions which are more peripheral or more superficial in relation to the central one and, by implication at least, are less genuine" (26).

Discussing the definition of the self, he considers the self "as a potentially observable content of the mind. If we choose this approach we will recognize the simultaneous existence of different and even contradictory selves in the same person, of selves with various degrees of stability and of various degrees of importance. There are conscious, preconscious, and unconscious selves; and we may discover in some of our patients incompatible selves, side by side, in the same psychic agency. Among these selves, however, there exists one which is most centrally located in the psyche, one which is experienced by the individual as the basic one, and which is most resistant to change. I like to call this self the nuclear self. It is composed of derivatives of the grandiose self (of the central self-assertive goals, purposes and ambitions) and of derivatives of the idealized parent imago (i.e., of the central idealized values). The nuclear self is thus that unconscious, preconscious and conscious sector in id, ego and superego which contains not only the individual's most enduring values and ideals but also his most deeply anchored goals, purposes and ambitions (10).

It is important to note that, according to Kohut, (1985), "some of the qualities of a previous nuclear self may still live on within the present one" (28).

Kohut (1977) describes the process in which the self is created: "during early psychic development a process takes place in which some archaic mental contents that had been experienced as belonging to the self become obliterated or are assigned to the area of the nonself, while others are retained within the self or are added to it. As a result of this process a core self - the "nuclear self" - is established. This structure is the basis for our sense of being an independent center of initiative and perception, integrated with our most central ambitions and ideals and with our experience that our body and mind form a unit in space and continuum in time. This cohesive and enduring psychic configuration forms the central sector of the personality" (177).

The dynamics of the nuclear self function as a source of motivation. Kohut (1985) states that "the nuclear self strives to fulfill itself. It moves, from the time of its consolidation, toward the realization of its ambitions and ideals, which are the ultimate descendents of the child's grandiosity and exhibitionism and of his strivings to emerge with an idealized selfobject. And if an individual succeeds in realizing the aims of his nuclear self, he can die without regret." (49).

## 2b. The Bipolar Self

In "How does analysis cure", Kohut (1984) maintains that we should "conceive the self as consisting of three major constituents (the pole of ambitions, the pole of ideals, and the intermediate area of talents and skills). We subdivide the selfobject transferences into three groups: (1) those in which the damaged pole of ambitions attempts to elicit the confirming-approving responses of the selfobject (mirror transference); (2) those in which the damaged pole of ideals searches for a selfobject that will accept its idealization (idealizing transference); and (3) those in which the damaged intermediate area of talents and skills seeks a selfobject that will make itself available for the reassuring experience of essential likeness (twinship or alter ego transference)" (192).

## 2b. The grandiose exhibitionistic self

This dimension of the self forms one pole in the bipolar self, that is opposite the other pole of the idealized parent imago. Kohut (1971) sees "the grandiose and exhibitionistic structure as counterpart of the idealized parent imago" (26).

According to Kohut (1971) the terms grandiose and exhibitionistic selves refer to a broad spectrum of phenomena" (25).

While discussing the forms of narcissism, Kohut (1985) claims that the grandiose self grows inevitably "after psychological separation has taken place and the child needs the gleam in the mother's eye in order to maintain the narcissistic libidinal suffusion which now concerns the leading functions and activities of the various maturational phases...

The exhibitionism of the child must gradually become desexualized and subordinated to his goal-directed activities, a task which is achieved best through gradual frustrations accompanied by loving support" (106). Kohut postulates two forms of grandiosity: In a positive transformation he (1971) talks about an infantile grandiosity that "gradually built into the ambitions and purposes of the personality and lends not only vigor to a person's mature strivings but also a sustaining positive feeling of the right to success. The archaic exhibitionistic libido withdraws from the infantile aims of direct satisfaction, and infuses instead the reality-adapted and socially meaningful activities of the adult personality" (299).

In the negative grandiosity he talks about "Pseudologia", the psychological origin of lies, and recommends to the therapist ways of understanding and relating to it in a therapeutic context:

"With regard to the content of the lies, the propensity toward pseudologia can be subdivided as follows: (a) it may be due to the pressure of the grandiose self, in which case the lies ascribe some great achievements to the self of the liar; or (b) it may be due to the pressure of the need for an idealized object, in which case the lies ascribe some great achievements, great monetary or intellectual possessions, or high social status to another person who occupies a position of leadership (is a parental figure)

vis-a'-vis the patient. The analyst who has become experienced in the treatment of narcissistic personality disorders will be able to predict with a good deal of accuracy the way by which the transformation of the pathological material will take place.

The educative approach and a critical attitude are not favorable. On the contrary, the analyst should welcome the fact of the patient's temporary straddling between half-joking lies and half-lying jokes as a sign of progress on the road toward the ego's mastery of the pressure which is exerted on it by unmodified grandiose fantasies concerning the self or by fantasies concerning an omnipotent archaic object"(111).

Kohut says that "If the analyst truly comprehends the phase-appropriateness of the demands of the grandiose self and if he grasps the fact that for a long time it is erroneous to emphasize to the patient that his demands are unrealistic but that, on the contrary, he must demonstrate to the patient that they are appropriate within the context of the total early phase that is being revived in the transference and that they have to be expressed, then the patient will gradually reveal the urges and fantasies of the grandiose self and the slow process is thus initiated which leads - by almost imperceptible steps, and often without any specific explanations from the side of the analyst - to the integration of the grandiose self into the structure of the reality ego and to an adaptively useful transformation of its energies"(176).

## 2b. Idealized self

Hardly separated from the grandiose self, the idealized self is, according to Kohut, (1971) "one of the two roads of the development of narcissism"(40). Developmentally it starts "when an idealized nuclear superego has been securely established".

In adult life the idealized self serves, according to Kohut, (1985) as "our ideals which are our internal leaders; we love them and are longing to reach them. Ideals are capable of absorbing a great deal of transformed narcissistic libido and thus of diminishing narcissistic tensions and narcissistic vulnerability.(105)

Kohut (1971) expresses the romantic side of the idealized self by saying that "if the idealizing tensions of the lover become so great that they cannot be absorbed by the object cathexes, they may escape as if through a safety valve to feed the sprout of creative activity- even though an adequate poetic talent is surely not at the disposal of every amorous would-be poet"(76).

In therapy, an idealized self creates idealizing transference. Kohut (1971) invests a lot of thinking around this essential state:" The

idealizing transference refers generally to that specific point of the development of the idealized parent imago- from the earliest, archaic stage, just before the consolidation of its final reinternalization- at which the normal development in the realm of the idealized object had been severely disrupted or interrupted"(53).

## 2c. Mirroring Transference

Kohut makes a distinction between three types of transferences:

Merger, Twinship and Mirroring.

In the merger transference, the patient perceives the therapist in a "primary identity", in the twinship he/she perceives the therapist in "a likeness" (similarity) manner. These are two primary and immature stages of relationships, and Kohut (1971) describes this phenomenon as if "one is in general not specifically aware of one's body and mind, but takes their presence and functioning for granted, so also with the patient's perception of the analyst in the merger transference. It is in general only when a disturbance in one's bodily and mental functioning occurs (or, by analogy, when the analyst in the merger transference goes away or is unempathic) that one becomes angrily aware of the fact that something which should function without question is refusing to do so" (271).

Kohut (1971) claims that "the mirroring transference is the therapeutic reinstatement of that normal phase of the development of the grandiose self in which the gleam in the mother's eye, which mirrors the child's exhibitionistic display, and other forms of maternal participation in and response to the child's narcissistic-exhibitionistic enjoyment confirm the child's self-esteem and, by a gradually increasing selectivity of these responses, begin to channel it into realistic directions.

As was the mother during that stage of development, so is now the analyst an object which is important only insofar as it is invited to participate in the child's narcissistic pleasure and thus to confirm it"(116).

It is important to stress that mirroring according to Kohut (1971) can be achieved through glance, touch and attention:

"The most significant relevant basic interactions between mother and child lie usually in the visual area: the child's bodily display is responded to by the gleam in the mother's eye...

If the mother, however, recoils from the child's body (or cannot tolerate lending her own body to the child for his narcissistic enjoyment through the extension of his narcissistic cathexes to include the mother's body), then the visual interactions become hyper-catheted and, by looking at the mother and by being looked at by her, the child attempts not only to obtain the narcissistic gratifications that are in tune with the visual sensory modality but also strives to substitute for the failures that had occurred in the realm of physical (oral and tactile) contact or closeness"(117). Kohut later adds:" The auditory modality may, on the other hand, take over for the visual one when there is a defect in the visual area. Such an instructive variant is unmistakably demonstrated in a movie of blind children in the nursery, made by Burlingham and Robertson (1966). It contains the touching scene in which a blind girl responds with

undisguised narcissistic delight when she suddenly recognizes that it is her own musical performance that is played back to her via a tape recorder.

Here the tape recorder fulfills the function of a mirror. We may thus conclude that the mother's exultant response to the total child (calling him by name as she enjoys his presence and activity) supports, at the appropriate phase, the development from autoerotism to narcissism - from the stage of the fragmented self (the stage of self nuclei) to the stage of the cohesive self" (118). We should therefore remember that for Kohut, in mirror transference in the narrower sense of the term, "the analyst is the well-delimited target of the patient's demands that he will reflect, echo, approve, and admire his exhibitionism and greatness" (147).

## 2d. Self Object

Kohut (1971) relates to "a developmental phase in which the child attempts to save the original narcissism by giving it over to a narcissistically experienced omnipotent and perfect self-object" (105). The child perceives the parent imago as a selfobject in order to create a cohesive self. "Under favorable circumstances the child gradually faces the realistic limitations of the idealized self-object, gives up the idealizations, makes transmuting reinternalizations" (105) and internalizes the sense of the selfobject.

As Kohut (1984) puts it later on: "The -'You'- plays great role in supporting the cohesion, strength, and harmony of the self, that is, to the experience of the "You" as "selfobject". "You" is the target of our desire and love and the target of our anger and aggression when it blocks the way to the object we desire and love." (52).

Kohut knew this dyad of the " self-selfobject relationship forms the essence of psychological life from birth to death" (47). Orenstein (1991) enumerates the vital functions of the Selfobject: " (1) It refers to the quality of the experience the self has of the other and, as a consequence, to the quality of experience the self has of itself; (2) the selfobject concept refers to the phase-appropriate needs of the self from the other, needs that are conceived of here, as the specific emotional nutrients for the

development of the nuclear self and beyond (the oedipal selfobjects; adolescent selfobjects; mature selfobjects, and the like); and (3) it calls attention to the fact that in psychoanalysis we always have to view the object from the emotional position or vantage point of the self" (24). Orenstein (1991) emphasises that "self psychology focuses on subjective experience, which includes the experiencing of the other as a selfobject" (28). He states that selfobject is not an object, rather it is the use of the other, perceived as an inner image, for the sake of personal growth.

He claimed that Kohut spoke of two kinds of selfobject experiences: Those of structure building and those of structure maintaining. He (Kohut) defined the selfobject at various times as intrapsychically structured

experiences, whose function it is to build up the nuclear self; or as the intrapsychically structured experiences, whose function it is to maintain the strength, cohesion, harmony and vitality of a reasonably well structuralized self throughout life.

Bacal and Newman (1990) display the connection between Selfobject and phantasy. "Selfobject experience constitutes a tacit, but potentially fruitful, acknowledgement of the contribution of phantasy to that experience... all selfobjects are to some extent "phantasy" selfobjects. The term phantasy selfobject is worthwhile retaining, we believe, to designate one end of a continuum where the experience of selfobject relationship is minimally influenced by actual experiences of caretakers, but predominantly determined by the elaboration of phantasy" (254).

Kohut himself and others consider the boundary of the Selfobject concept to be flexible.

In *Restoration of the Self*, Kohut (1977) writes; "It does seem that (for me) a large part of the self-object is the written word... [that] I have developed a certain skill in finding something in literature that will say something to me in time of need... I have been able in this way to get some access to the guiding hand of a great number of the world's better fathers, by way of their written word..." (21).

He later on considers the issue of selfobject surrogates and illustrates it in a clinical vignette: "he used to simultaneously touch certain soft self object surrogates (the silky rim of a blanket) and stroke his own skin (the lobe of his ear) and hair, this creating a psychological situation of merger with nonhuman self object that he totally controlled, and thereby depriving himself of the opportunity to experience the structure-building optimal failures of a human self-object" (56).

In his third book, Kohut (1984) considers the environment a selfobject. "In order to enable the dying person to retain a modicum of the cohesion, firmness, and harmony of the self, his surroundings must not withdraw their selfobject functions at the last moment of his conscious participation in the world." (18)

Further evidence indicating that Kohut accepted other exterior stimuli as Selfobjects, is revealed in his writings about "substitute selfobjects".

"A person's greater freedom to create substitute selfobjects via visual imagery when external reality is devoid of tangible selfobjects must be counted among newly acquired assets" (76).

Finally, I think Kulka's (1991) definition of selfobject is a summary of the development of this central concept: "What, in fact, is the psychic situation of being a selfobject? To become a selfobject, you agree to give your self "up" for the sake of the "selfhood" of another that is embodied in you - to be for him his self outside of himself, so that he may observe his selfhood in you, recognize himself in you, internalize his self through you. He thus becomes a unique self, not by a process of identification in the accepted sense of the term, as occurs between two selves who constitute objects for one another, but through processes of becoming, that are very far from being clearly and fully formulated, even in self psychology. The experiential significance of this situation for the analyst is one of great loneliness, at times a complete abrogation of sources of narcissistic satisfaction, a virtual giving up of one's own

psychic place - a kind of acceptance of "being erased", which is not identical to being nothing, or nothingness. On the contrary, this is a situation that demands a most intensive psychic presence, having complex characteristics of passive activity and the dissolution of boundaries between self and other without breaking a single boundary"(181).

## 2e. Empathy

This concept underwent a process of evolution in Kohut's writings. In his first book Kohut (1971) saw empathy as a vital tool for the therapist in order to obtain psychological data about the patient. Kohut writes:" Empathy is a mode of cognition which is specifically attuned to the perception of complex psychological configurations...Empathy is restricted to being a tool for the gathering of psychological data; it does not by itself bring about their explanation. It is a mode of observation" (300).

But this stern attitude does not last very long, as, towards the end of the same book, he adds a typical reserved remark stating that:" it is one of the specific contributions of psychoanalysis to have transformed the intuitive empathy of artists and poets into the observational tool of a trained scientific investigator" (303).

Later, in his third book, Kohut (1984), expands the above definition and declares: "The best definition of empathy is that it is the capacity to think and feel oneself into the inner life of another person. It is our lifelong ability to experience what another person experiences, though usually, and appropriately, to an attenuated degree. Under normal circumstances, this ability will change in specific ways along an individually variable but, on the whole, predictable developmental road. At the beginning of life, the baby's empathic perception of his surroundings seems to be tantamount to total suffusion with the emotional state of the other.

The baby is anxious and the mother experiences a taste of the baby's anxiety; she picks up the baby and holds it close. As a result of this sequence, the baby feels simultaneously understood and calmed because the mother has experienced as an empathic signal not the baby's total anxiety but only a diminished version of it" (82).

Kohut believed the technique of empathy to be the core of psychotherapy. He viewed it as an essential skill that any therapist must acquire first and foremost, to obtain psychological data about the patient, and, later on, in order to relate to him appropriately.

Empathy, says Kohut (1985) "must thus often be achieved speedily before nonempathic modes of observation are interposed. It should be able to evade interference and to complete a rapid scrutiny before other modes of observation can assert their ascendancy" (116).

Since empathy is in the nature of the mother-child early relationship, it has a healing-therapeutic potential. As Kohut (1984) puts it:"takes the place of the formerly repressed or split-off archaic narcissistic relationship; it supplants the bondage that had formerly tied the archaic self to the archaic selfobject"(66).

The empathic therapist needs to move in and out of his intellectual framework. "By listening open-mindedly, I mean that he must resist the

temptation to squeeze his understanding of the patient into the rigid mold of whatever theoretical preconceptions

he may hold, be they Kleinian, Rankian, Jungian, Adlerian, classical-analytic, or, yes, self psychological, until he has more accurately grasped the essence of the patient`s need and can convey his understanding to the patient via a more correct interpretation."(67).

The final goal of analysis, according to Kohut (1984), is to enable the patients "who had originally been restricted to archaic modes of self-selfobject relationships because the development in childhood", to internalize an ability to use empathy in their relations outside therapy , "evoke the empathic resonance of mature selfobjects and to be sustained by them"(66).

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## **B. Stern's theory of the Self.**

### **1. Introduction.**

Stern's theory of the self is based on the assumption of the Unity of the Senses. He argues that " philosophy, psychology, and art have a long history of designating shape, time, and intensity to be amodal qualities of experience (in psychological terms) or primary qualities of experience (in philosophical terms).

Aristotle first postulated a doctrine of sensory correspondence, or doctrine of the unity of the senses. His sixth sense, the common sense, was the sense that could apperceive the qualities of sensation that are primary (that is, amodal) in that they do not belong exclusively to any one sense alone, as color belongs to vision, but are shared by all the senses.

Psychologists were probably first drawn to the issue of the unity of the senses by the phenomenon of synesthesia, in which stimulation in a single sense evokes sensations that belong to a different modality"(154).

Stern published his ideas about the pre-verbal self against the theoretical background of Mahler's theory (1975) regarding the "Psychological Birth of the Human Infant". This theory, dealing with developmental subphases beginning with "the normal autistic phase", continuing with "the beginning of the symbiotic phase" etc., were generally accepted. He also had to cope with the pillars of Kohut's theory concerning the archaic self.

It must have required much intellectual integrity and courage for Stern (1985) to follow the findings of his research and arrive at the conclusion that " there is no symbiotic-like phase. In fact the subjective experiences of union with another can occur only after a sense of a core self and a core other exists" (10).

His basic assumption is "that some senses of the self do exist long prior to self-awareness and language. These include the senses of agency, of physical cohesion, of continuity in time, of having intentions in mind, and other such experiences... If we assume (he claims) that some preverbal senses of the self start to form at birth (if not before), while others require the maturation of later-appearing capacities before they can emerge, then we are freed from the partially semantic task of choosing criteria to decide when a sense of self really begins"(6).

Stern talks about "a sense of the self which is not a cognitive construct"(71). It begins with the sense of a core self, which forms the foundation of all the more elaborate senses of the self that come later. Stern first described seven senses of the self: the sense of agency, the sense of physical cohesion, the sense of continuity, the sense of affectivity, the sense of a subjective self that can achieve intersubjectivity with another, the sense of creating organization and the sense of transmitting meaning"(7).

In constructing a developmental path for the sense of the self, Stern describes four stages, each one defining a different domain of self-experience and social relatedness. "These senses of self are not viewed as successive phases that replace one another. **Once formed, each sense of self remains fully functioning and active throughout life. All continue to grow and coexist"**(11).

In each domain, he formulates crucial concepts, which I intend to explain in detail:

First, the sense of an **emergent self**, developing between the time of birth and the age of two months. Here he uses the concepts of **Amodal Perception and Vitality Affects**.

Second, the sense of a **core self**, which forms between the ages of two and six months. Here he uses the concepts of **Episode, Representations of Interactions that have been Generalized (RIG) and Evoked Companion**.

Third, the sense of a **subjective self**, which forms between seven to fifteen months. Here he uses the concepts of **Intentional Communication and Affect Attunement**.

Fourth, the sense of a **verbal self**. Later on, instead of the verbal self, Stern presents another, fourth sense of self called: The Narrative self, which, according to Zeanah and Stern (1989), constitutes the "new domain of experience that constructs a story from a variety of elements drawn from other senses of the self. Although it is not yet clear why or how children begin to construct an autobiographical history, it is clear that this history becomes the life story that adult patients initially present to a therapist".

Since, in my thesis, I am concerned with the nonverbal modes of affective communication (which I believe to be the essence of Intermodal Expressive Therapy), a domain to which Stern devotes his book, I shall not relate further to the narrative self issue.

## 2. I shall now present **Basic Concepts in Stern's Theory**:

We should note that the concepts in each phase are derived from, and connected to each other.

### **Stage One: The Emergent Self.**

#### **2a. Amodal Perception**

In clarifying his ideas about the emergent self, Stern argues that there are "three processes involved in forming a sense of an emergent self and other: amodal perception, physiognomic perception, and the perception of corresponding vitality affects"(60).

Stern maintains that it is necessary to formulate new concepts as "many qualities of feeling that occur do not fit into our existing lexicon or taxonomy of affects. These elusive qualities are better captured by dynamic, kinetic terms, such as "surging," "fading away," "fleeting," "explosive," "crescendo," "decrescendo," "bursting," "drawn out," and so on.

According to Stern, the baby is born with an innate capacity for perceiving the world in wholistic intermodal sensational form. He states that "Infants thus appear to have an innate general capacity, which can be called **amodal perception**, to take information received in one sensory modality and somehow translate it into another sensory modality. We do not know how they accomplish this task.

The information is probably not experienced as belonging to any particular sensory mode.

More likely it transcends mode or channel and exists in some unknown supra-modal form. It is not, then, a simple issue of a direct translation across modalities. Rather, it involves an encoding into a still mysterious amodal representation, which can then be recognized in any of the sensory modes.

**Infants appear to experience a world of perceptual unity, in which they can perceive amodal qualities in any modality from any form of human expressive behavior, represent these qualities abstractly, and then transpose them to other modalities.**

Stern emphasises the important factors of resemblance and correspondance in the Amodal Perception function. He claims that "at a preverbal level the experience of finding a cross-modal match (especially the first time) would feel like a correspondence or imbuing of present experience with something prior or familiar. Present experience would feel related in some way to experience from elsewhere. This primitive form of a deja vu event is quite different from the process of making associational linkages" (54).

## **2b. Vitality Affects.**

The Amodal Perception capacity serves the baby's need to communicate affectively at a stage where verbal language has not yet been developed. Stern maintains that " Vitality affects occur both in the presence of and in the absence of categorical affects.

Affect acts as the supra-modal currency into which stimulation in any modality can be translated.

This is a kind of amodal perception too, since an affect experience is not bound to any one modality of perception" (55).

A beautiful example of the way vitality affects operate, is given by Stern, demonstrating how this capacity functions in adults' spiritual life: "Abstract dance and music are examples par excellence of the expressiveness of vitality affects. Dance reveals to the viewer-listener multiple vitality affects and their variations, without resorting to plot or categorical affect signals from which the vitality affects can be derived. The choreographer is most often trying to express a way of feeling, not a specific content of feeling. This example is particularly instructive because the infant, when viewing parental behavior that has no intrinsic expressiveness, may be in the same position as the viewer of abstract dance, or the listener to music. The manner of performance of parent's act expresses a vitality affect, whether or not the act is some categorical affect" (56)

**Stage two: The Core Self** (Self versus Other).

**2c. Episode.**

In discussing the Core Self (the second developmental stage of the self), Stern explains that it results from the integration of four basic self-experiences into a social subjective perspective. The four self-experiences are: Self agency, coherence, affectivity and history. They all become integrated in one organizing subjective perspective through immediate reconstitution in memory.

Stern points at the basic memorial unit which is the episode.

"A small but coherent chunk of lived experiences. The exact dimensions of an episode cannot be specified here; they represent an ongoing problem in the field. There is agreement, however, that an episode is made of smaller elements or attributes. But in general the episode stands as a whole."

As an illustration of his observations, Stern describes "the generalized breast-mild episode" which, in his view, "is not in itself a specific memory any more; it is an abstraction of many specific memories, all inevitably slightly different, that produces one generalized memory structure." (95).

He maintains that "the generalized episode is not a specific memory. It does not describe an event that actually ever happened exactly that way. It contains multiple specific memories, but as a structure it is closer to an abstract representation, as that term is used clinically. It is a structure about the likely course of events, based on average experiences" (97).

**2d. Representation of Interactions that have been Generalized (RIG).**

Stern explains that the "lived episodes immediately become the specific episodes for memory, and with repetition they become generalized episodes. They are generalized episodes of interactive experience that are mentally represented - that is: **representation of interactions that have been generalized, of RIGs**".

He formulates that " A RIG is something that has never happened before exactly that way, yet it takes into account nothing that did not actually happen once. The experience of being with a self-regulating other gradually forms RIGs. And these memories are retrievable whenever one of the attributes of the RIG is present" (110).

So the procedure is as follows: "When an infant has a certain feeling, that feeling will call to mind the RIG of which the feeling is an attribute. Attributes are thus recall cues to reactivate the lived experience. And whenever a RIG is activated, it packs some of the wallop of the originally lived experience in the form of an active memory" (111).

Speaking about Representations of Interactions, we must look carefully at the role of the "other" in the interaction, for Stern claims that "the other is a self-regulating other for the infant.

This is true even if the self-regulating other is fantasied rather than actual. (The experience of hugging demands a partner even in fantasy, or else it can only be performed but not fully experienced. This applies to hugging pillows as well as people. The issue is not whether the pillow hugs back, only that the pillow be physically present or the sensation of it be imagined. In this sense there is no such thing as half a hug or half a kiss)" (102).

Stern adds that "in imitative interactions, the behavior of the other may be isomorphic (similarly contoured as far as intensity and vitality affects are concerned) and is often simultaneous or even synchronous with the behavior of the infant. One might expect that these experiences are the ones that come closest to the notions of merging or of dissolution of self/other boundaries, at least on perceptual grounds (Stern 1980).

Moments of self/other

similarity tend to occur at times of high arousal and retain throughout life their ability to establish a strong feeling of connectedness, similarity, or intimacy, for good or ill. Lovers assume similar postures and tend to move toward and away from one another roughly simultaneously, as in a courting dance"(107).

## **2e. Evoked Companion.**

The "other", then has several roles in relation to the core-self: a self regulator, a supplier for strong feelings of connectedness and intimacy. But Stern specifies an extra crucial role for the "other". He argues that it is an Evoked Companion for the "young self".

"I will call an **evoked companion** " states Stern, "to the retrieval cue which evokes from the RIG an activated memory"(112). He then explains: "The evoked companion is an experience of being with, or in the presence of, a self-regulating other, which may occur in or out of awareness. The companion is evoked from the RIG not as the recall of an actual past happening, but as an active exemplar of such happenings. It is not a companion in the sense of a comrade but in the sense of a particular instance of one who accompanies another. They are a record of the past informing the present. The infant will use the companion evoked from the peek-a-boo RIG as a standard against which to check whether the current episode is something significantly changed, to be marked as a special variation, or an entirely new type of self-regulating-other-experience. In this way evoked companions help to evaluate expectations and perform a stabilizing and regulating function for self-experience"(116).

## **Stage three: The Subjective Self.**

### **2f. Intentional Communication**

In this phase, Stern addresses the differentiation and analysis of "intersubjective relatedness". The focus here is on the fact that "infants at this point in development are still preverbal. The subjective experiences that they can share must be of a kind that do not require translation into language. Three mental states that are of great relevance to the interpersonal world and yet do not require language come to mind. These are sharing joint attention, sharing intentions, and sharing affective states" (128).

Based on Bates's (1979) definition, Stern quotes: " International communication is signaling behavior in which the sender is aware, a priori, of the effect that the signal will have on his listener, and he persists in that behavior until the effect is obtained or failure is clearly indicated. The behavioral evidence that permits us to infer the presence of communicative intentions includes (a) alternations in eye gaze contact between the goal and the intended listeners, (b) augmentations, additions, and substitution of signals until the goal has been obtained, and (c) changes in the form of the signal toward abbreviated and/or exaggerated patterns that are appropriate only for achieving a communicative goal (p.36).

Stern develops Bates's idea and arrives at his definition of the Affect Attunement.

### **2g. Affect Attunement.**

In formulating the concept of affect attunement, Stern tries to answer the following question: " What are the acts and processes that let other people know that you are feeling something very like what they are feeling? How can you get "inside of" other people`s subjective experience and then let them know that you have arrived there, without using words? After all, the infants we are talking about are only between nine and fifteen months old" (138). It was clear to Stern that "for there to be an intersubjective exchange about affect, strict imitation alone won`t do" (39)!

He first demonstrates how affective attunement functions, by adopting Papousek's explanation (1981) in his article "Musical elements in the infant's vocalization: Their significance for communication, cognition and creativity". Stern writes: " What is striking in these descriptions is that the mother is almost always working within the same modality as the infant. And in the leadings, followings, highlightings, and elaborations that make up her turn in the dialogue, she is generally performing close or loose imitations of the infant`s immediate behavior. If the infant vocalizes, the mother vocalizes back. Similarly, if the infant makes a face, the mother makes a face. However, the dialogue does not remain a stereotypic boring sequence of repeats, back and forth, because the mother is constantly introducing modifying imitations (Kaye 1979; Uzgiris 1984) or providing a theme-and-variation format with slight changes in her contribution at each

dialogic turn; for example, her vocalization may be slightly different each time. She begins to expand her behavior beyond true imitation into a new category of behavior we will call **affect attunement**" (140).

Stern maintains that "Attunements have the following characteristics, which makes them ideal for accomplishing the intersubjective sharing of affect:

1. They give the impression that a kind of imitation has occurred. There is not faithful rendering of the infant's overt behavior, but some form of matching is going on.

2. **The matching is largely cross-modal.** That is, the channel or modality of expression used by the mother to match the infant's behavior is different from the channel or modality used by the infant.

3. What is being matched is not the other person's behavior per se, but rather some aspect of the behavior that reflects the person's feeling state. The ultimate reference for the match appears to be the feeling state inferred or directly apprehended, not the external behavioral event. Thus the match appears to occur between the expressions of inner state. These expressions can differ in mode or form, but they are to some extent interchangeable as manifestations of a single, recognizable internal state. We appear to be dealing with behavior as expression rather than as sign or symbol, and the vehicles of transfer are metaphor and analogue (141).

Affect attunement, then, is the performance of behaviors that express the quality of feeling of a shared affect state without

imitating the exact behavioral expression of the inner state. If we could demonstrate subjective affect-sharing only with true imitations, we would be limited to flurries of rampant imitation. Our affectively responsive behavior would look ludicrous, maybe even robot-like" (141).

Since affect attunement is an integration of perceptual and motivational/emotional processes, it is crucial to understand the perceptual components involved.

According to Stern, "there are some qualities or properties that are held in common by most or all of the modalities of perception. These include intensity, shape, time, motion, and number. Such qualities of perception can be abstracted by any sensory mode from the invariant properties of the stimulus world and then translated into other modalities of perception. From what has gone before, it is clear that **infants can perceive the world amodally from early on and that they get better at it during maturation.** The ability to perform audio-visual cross-modal matches of the absolute **level of intensity** appears to be a very early capacity. **Intensity level, timing and transfer of the shape of a static object from the tactile mode to the visual mode,** may be the perceptual qualities that the infant is best able to represent modally, and at the earliest points in development" (152).

The findings of Stern's research (148) validate these capacities. He stresses that "most attunements occurred across sensory modes".

In 39 percent of the instances of attunement, **the mothers used entirely different modalities from those used by the infant (cross-modal attunement).**

In 48 percent of the cases, **the mothers used some modalities that were the same as those used by the infant (intramodal attunement) and some that**

were different. Thus 87 percent of the time, the mothers` attunements were partially, if not wholly, cross-modal.

Intensity matches were the most common, followed by timing matches and last by shape matches.

The largest single reason that mothers gave (or that we inferred) for performing an attunement was "to be with" the infant, "to share," "to participate in," "to join in." We have called this function: **interpersonal communion**.

In purposeful misattunement, the mother "intentionally" over- or under-matched the infant`s intensity, timing, or behavioral shape. The purpose of these misattunements was usually to increase or decrease the baby`s level of activity of affect. Such purposeful misattunements were called **tuning**.

Thus the attunement process itself occurs largely unawares. Most often after the mother has made such an attunement, the infant acts as if nothing special has happened. The infant`s activity continues uninterrupted, and we are left with no evidence, only speculation, that the fact of attunement has "gotten in," taken hold, and had some psychic consequence.

It is clear that interpersonal communion, as created by attunement, will play an important role in the infant`s coming to recognize that internal feeling states are forms of human experience that are shareable with other humans".

## **C. The Self according to Christopher Bollas**

### 1. Introduction

Following Winnicott, Bollas (1987, 1989, 1992) investigates and profoundly expands the world of the Self. By presenting solid background in psychoanalytic literature in a language of practical virtuosity, he creates original concepts for specific aspects of the Self. Bollas lends these greater dimension and brings new horizons to the study of the Self.

The central core of Bollas's conception, is that the Self creatively and consistently attempts to bring itself into being, to realize itself through objects.

His three books have left me with the impression that Bollas is engaged in bridging between the Self as an object (along Winnicottian lines), and the self as an Archetype (following Jung and the post Jungian conceptions). The more Bollas, in his unique way, understands the Self, the more he (1992) begins to use concepts such as "destiny", and relate to the unconscious, not only as a storage for repressed contents (73), but as a "Genera" - a dynamic, vivid, creative asset, which dwells in the unconscious in an effort to manifest itself. Bollas (1992) states "that the self does not evolve unconsciously; rather, the self is unconsciousness, a particular inner presence, reliably vectored by the forms "it" uses to find expression.

I believe each of us at birth is equipped with a unique idiom of psychic organization that constitutes the core of our self" (51). Following the analysis of a mental process, Bollas reaches the original conclusion (1992) that " To create a day's residue, the person projects a part of himself into the object, thus psychically signifying it. This gives the object meaning, converting it into a tool for possible thought: the thinking that is special to the dream state. To do this, however, the subject must "lose himself" in moments of experience when he projects meaning into objects, a type of erotic action that must be unconscious and one in which the person is not being, as it were, thoughtful" (23).

In the "Arena of the Self", Bollas creates a drama with three principal actors: The subject (me and you), object 1 (External object) and object 2 (Inner object). The dynamics among the three, bring forth new and original concepts concerning the self.

Bollas (1992) opens up a comprehensive discussion on what he refers to as 'object':

"Objects can be said to have a lexical function when we employ them to "speak" our idiom through the "syntax of self experience." The mnemonic object is a particular form of subjective object that contains a projectively identified self experience, and when we use it, something of that self state stored in it will arise.

The object world is, therefore, an extraordinary lexicon for the individual who speaks the self's aesthetic through his precise choices and particular uses of its constituents.

Each thing in the lexicon of objects has a potentially different evocative effect by virtue of its specific form which partly structures the subject's inner experience and constitutes the eros of form in being" (22). He specifies: " Objects can stimulate us in at least six ways: Sensationally, Structurally, Conceptually, Symbolically, Mnemically and Projectively.

Inevitably the decision as to an object's use rests with the unconscious aims of a person. However, once I use the object - it will then evoke its print in me according to all six evocative orders acting in a play of inner states.

Objects, like words, are there for us to express ourselves. We have before us an infinite number of things, which we may use in our own unique way to meet and to express the self that we are. Object selection is expression" (36).

2. I shall now present the following concepts:

2a. Transformational Object.

Coming from an object relations theory, Bollas develops a new paradoxical vision of the mother's role in facilitating the baby's growing self. In essence, the idea is that the mother is not solely a target that can be reached by a fantasised transitional object (Winnicott's concept), but a transformational object, a means.

In his (1987) words: " The mother is less significant and identifiable as an object, than as a process that is identified with cumulative internal and external transformations. I wish to identify the infant's first subjective experience of the object as a transformational object.

With the infant's creation of the transitional object, the transformational process is displaced from the mother-environment (where it originated) into countless subjective-objects, so that the transitional phase is heir to the transformational period, as the infant evolves from experience of the process to articulation of the experience" (15).

"Transformational object seeking is an endless memorial search for something in the future that resides in the past. I believe that if we investigate many types of object relating, we will discover that the subject is seeking the transformational object and aspiring to be matched in symbiotic harmony within an aesthetic frame that promises to metamorphose the self" (40).

Experiencing the mother as a transformational object, brings Bollas (1987) to the notion that "the mother's idiom of care, and the infant's experience of this handling, is one of the first, if not the earliest human aesthetic" (31).

2b. Aesthetic Moment (the spirit of the object)

Bollas (1987) states: "In my view, the aesthetic moment is an evocative resurrection of an early ego condition, often brought on by a sudden and uncanny rapport with an object, a moment when the subject is captured in an intense illusion of being selected by the environment for some deeply reverential experience. This holding experience sponsors a psycho-somatic memory of the holding environment. It is a pre verbal, essentially pre representational registration of the mother's presence " (39).

Bollas's (1987) investigation of the phenomenon of the "aesthetic moment", contributes enormously to the understanding of the pleasure and healing functions of arts:

"The aesthetic moment is a caesura in time when the subject feels held in symmetry and solitude by the spirit of the object. `What would characterize experience as aesthetic rather than either cognitive or moral,` writes Murray Krieger (1976), `would be its self sufficiency, its capacity to trap us within self, to keep us from moving beyond it to further knowledge or to practical effort.

Why does the aesthetic moment evoke in us a deep conviction that we have been in rapport with a sacred object? What is the

foundation for this belief? It occurs, in part, because we experience this uncanny moment as an event that is partially sponsored by the object. Further, we cannot calculate when we will have an aesthetic experience. It is almost inevitably a surprise. This surprise, complemented by an experience of fusion with the object (icon, poem, musical sound, landscape, etc.), of feeling held by the object`s spirit, sponsors a deep conviction that such an occasion must surely be selected for us. The object is `the hand of fate.` And in our induction by the object we are suddenly captured in an embrace that is an experience of being rather than mind, rooted in the total involvement of the self rather than objectified via representational or abstract thought.

Time seems suspended. As the aesthetic moment constitutes a deep rapport between subject and object, it provides the person with a generative illusion of fitting with an object.

A form of *deja vu*, it is an existential memory: a non representational recollection conveyed through a sense of the uncanny. Such moments feel familiar, sacred, reverential, but are fundamentally outside cognitive coherence. They are registered through an experience in being, rather than mind, because they express that part of us where the experience of rapport with the other was the essence of life before words existed. The aesthetic moment constitutes part of the unthought known.

The aesthetic experience is an existential recollection of the time when communicating took place primarily through this illusion of deep rapport of subject and object.

Being-with, as a form of dialogue, enabled the baby`s adequate

processing of his existence prior to his ability to process it through thought.

It is the most profound occasion when the nature of the self is formed and transformed by the environment. The uncanny pleasure of being held by a poem, a composition, a painting, or, for that matter, any object, rests on those moments when the infant`s internal world is partly given form by the mother, since he cannot shape them or link them together without her coverage" (33).

## 2c. Unthought Known

When language is not available, yet affect already exists, the infant develops through fantasy an Unthought Known. Bollas (1987) wrote that "Unthought known is Winnicott's theory of the true self and Freud's ideas of the primary repressed unconscious" (278). This concept is developed and verified by Bollas in his three books. He (1987) first claims that "This is a form of knowledge that has not been dreamed or imagined because it is not yet mentally realized. In part it corresponds to the primary repressed unconscious. It has not become known via dreams or fantasy, and yet it may permeate a person's being, and is articulated through assumptions about the nature of being and relating. I think all children store the quality of an experience that is beyond comprehension, and hold to it in the form of the self-in relation-to object state, because events beyond comprehension are disturbing and yet seem life defining" (246).

The experience is processed through fantasy, and Bollas argues that "phantasy is the first representative of the unthought known in mental life. It is a way of thinking that which is there. In other terms, it is an expression of the idiom of the infant's being and is the first mental act in the gradual and complex development of an 'internal' world" (279). Later (1992) he summarizes: " I knew something, but I did not have the means of thinking what I knew. I term such knowledge the unthought known" (20).

Character and Destiny Drive.

## 2d. Character.

The real challenge in life, to "become a character", is often blocked by a threatening environment.

Bollas usually uses this term in the sense of a process: Being a character.

He (1992) maintains: " To be a character, to release one's idiom into lived experience, requires a certain risk, as the subject will not know his outcome. Indeed, to be a character is to be released into being, not as a knowable entity per se, but as an idiom of expression explicating a human form" (54). Previously he (1987) argued that "A person's character is observable in the way the person uses others as his objects (ordinary transferences) and how he relates to the way he handles himself as an object. This use of the other and the self as objects is obviously a process, so we may say that character is a process" (60).

## 2e. Destiny Drive.

What seems to motivate or push human beings into becoming a character, is, according to Bollas, (1989) the Destiny Drive.

He differentiates between Fate and Destiny. His understanding of destiny's role in human function is similar, in my opinion, to Jung's concept of Individuation led by the Self.

Bollas believes that: "destiny becomes a more positive concept depicting that course that is a potential in one's life. One can fulfil one's destiny if one is fortunate, if one is determined, if one is aggressive enough. Possibly the idea of fate derives from agrarian culture where people are dependent on the seasons and the weather for their nurturance, thus giving man a sense that his life is very much up to the elements. If this is true, then destiny as a positive factor may be linked with the rise of middle class as individuals who, through vision and labour, are able to take some control of their lives and chart their future."

"A sense of destiny", Bollas explains, "would be a feeling that the person is fulfilling some of the terms of his inner idiom through familial, social, cultural and intellectual objects.

I believe that this sense of destiny is the natural course of the true self through the many types of object relations and that the destiny emerges out of the infants experience of the mother's facilitation of true self movement" (34).

Consequently, Bollas adds, "a sense of destiny is a different state, when the person feels he is moving in a personality progression that gives him a sense of steering his course.

How amusing it is to see the fixed mosaic of one's little destiny being filled out by tiny blocks of events - the enchainment of minute consequences with the illusion of choice weathering it all" (41).

## 2f. Evocation

The challenge of "becoming a character" can be achieved according to Bollas (1987) only under optimal conditions.

He maintains that "this aspect of mental life activates when tranquility is achieved. Reception of news from within (in a form of a dream, phantasy, or inspired self observation for instance) arrive through evocation, a mental action characterized by relaxed, not a vigilant state of mind. The evocative mental process occurs when the mind is receptive and at rest" (240). Much earlier Bollas already argues:

"Indeed I believe that much of the time a patient's passivity, wordlessness, or expectation that the analyst knows what to do, is not a resistance to any particular conscious or preconscious thought, but a recollection of the early, pre-verbal world of the infant being with mother" (26).

He uses other concepts to support his idea about benevolent conditions for the emergence of the self, and he (1989) calls them 'essential aloneness', 'unknown', 'topographic return', and 'moods'.

## 2f.' Essential Aloneness

Speaking about Essential Aloneness, Bollas reminds us that "in long evolution of the fetus, from its pre-organic history to its birth, and then in the dramatically progressive evolution of the infant, in those first two years prior to speech, the human being lives in a profoundly dependent life, at first literally inside the mother, then inside the postnatal inner relation - and all of this lived before speech.

In our true self, [ he states], we are essentially alone, the absolute core of one's being is a wordless, imageless solitude. Only by living from this authorizing idiom do we know something of that person sample that we are. The darkened screen is as much a part of our life as is the play of image across its illuminated surface"(22).

#### 2f. '' Unknown

Bollas (1989) claims that "Unknowing is essential to the creation and (internal) maintenance of the interior analytic screen. In my view [he writes] this establishes something of an essential dialectic, one that I think is at the heart of creativity in living, a dialectic between knowing (organizing, seeing, cohering) and unknowing (loosening, not perceiving)"(63).

#### 2f. ''' Topographic Return.

When a human being is facing a stimulus, either a verbal one or an object, if favorable conditions are available, he will respond with "topographical return". Bollas (1989) formulates this as "a kind of an insight which moves "from the analyst's comment to a preconscious holding area (an inner mental space) where it evokes instinctual representations, unconscious affects, and unconscious memories, and then returns to consciousness after such inner work has occurred"(96).

#### 2f. '''' Moods

In an article (1984) about the conservative process and later in his first book, Bollas (1987) postulated that "Moods are ordinary psychic phenomenon which serve important unconscious functions. Like the dream, a mood has a kind of necessary autistic structure: people who are in a mood, like persons who are asleep, are inside a special state where a temporal element is at play. They will emerge, like the dreamer, after the spell is over. Some moods, particularly those that are a part of a person's character, are occasions for the expression of a conservative object, as a conservative object is that internal self state that has been preserved intact during childhood often upon some breakdown between the child in relation to his parents. When a person goes into` a mood he becomes that child self who was refused expression in relation to his parents for one reason or another.

Who is it that emerges from within the mood? In what way may we be able to learn something of the person's relation to himself as an object through mood experience?

The child self is still present in the person's total self functioning, but it appears to be an oddity relative to the person's more usual self"(211).

Bollas claims that "some analysands feel that their moods are the most important authentic memories of their childhood, often because through moodfulness the person feels in contact with a true self experience"(210).

## 2g. Conservative Object

Somewhere in childhood, a child witnesses a scene or experiences a vague event. According to Bollas (1987), if the child cannot process what he had seen, he associates the scene with an object. The object receives a specific significance and thereafter in life will serve as a conservative object.

Bollas (1992) writes: "I nominated an object - a swing - to conserve some aspects of this self state". Then, later in life "I had not expected to see this object; it appeared by chance. When this happens to us it is as if we are inside a dream: things play us, our state of mind the outcome of events"(21).

As Bollas (1987) defines it, "a conservative object is a being state preserved intact within a person's internal world: it is not intended to change, and acts as a mnemonic container of a particular self state conserved because it is linked to the child self's continuing negotiation with some aspect of the early parental environment.

A child may be having quite a profound self experience without being able to link this being state with any one external object;

Such self states are nonetheless untranslatable into that symbolic order characteristic of object representation: they yield, instead, identify senses, and they therefore conserve the child's sense of being, rather than his understanding of such being, through fantasy or object representation.

The sense of being will be stored, however, as an `object` in the internal world, but it will be a conservative object: the experience is stored, rather than representations of the experience"(209).

Conservative object has enormous therapeutic potential, in that "the child's breakdown is preserved in the conservative object, and because some moods represent a fault in the parent's transformational object functioning"(211).

## Self as an Object

Bollas (1987) claims that "people bear memories of being the mother's and father's object in ego structure, and in the course of a person's object relations he re-presents various positions in the historical theatre of lived experiences between elements of mother, father and his infant-child self. One idiom of representation is the person's relation to the self as an object, an object relation where the individual may objectify, imagine,

analyse and manage the self through identification with primary others who have been involved in that very task. In a sense, ego structure is a form of deep memory, as this structure is derived from experiences between the baby and the mother"(50).

## 2h. Genera

With this concept, Bollas connects with Jung's conception of the personal and collective unconscious. For Jung insisted that the unconscious contains archetypes and serves not only as a storage for repressed contents, but is a creative source with a wholistic Self at its core. Bollas claims that "Genera refers to a particular type of psychic organization of lived experience that will result in creative new envisionings of life, either in psychoanalysis or in other walks of life" (68).

From a developmental angle "Genera are, first inherited proto-nucleations of any child's idiom, so that if he is free to elaborate himself, then life will be punctuated by inspired moments of self realization, deriving from the instinct to elaborate the self, which I have termed a destiny drive. If we look upon infants as embryonic characters, and early childhood as a form of germinal settlement (which includes parental unconscious contributions), then subsequently the child and adult will be elaborating different areas of the self at different times, with differing paces of articulation, under differing circumstances" (70).

Bollas illustrates the idea of genera in the area of music; "It could be that an idea will come to mind immediately, but more likely the symphonic idea will derive from intensive unconscious play work until something announces itself. A psychic nucleus derives from the many moments of distinct consideration brought to bear on the task. Such a generative structure will now sponsor many new ideas that ultimately will constitute the symphony, eventually achieving a semi-autonomous status, and in the process changing the composer's conscious intentions, and possibly altering his way of composing future works. Ordinarily, then, genera are produced after a period of play work and, once established, transform the subject's outlook on life, generate new questions and new works, and contribute to the formation of new genera" (76).

Bollas draws a comparison between repression and genera: "In many respects the theory of genera is inspired by the theory of repression. At the heart of the matter is my view that there is a collecting psychic gravity to unconscious clusters of ideas that are organized, dynamic, and representationally effective in consciousness. But the theory of repression points only to the banishment of the unwanted and I am convinced that the other types of ideas are invited into the unconscious. To complement the theory of repression, we need a theory of reception which designates some ideas as the received rather than the repressed, although both the repressed and the received need the protective barrier provided by the anticathexes of preconsciousness" (73). Bollas (1992) proposes Steps in the Formation of Genera:

1. "The conception of an inner space devoted to the formation of a generative psychic structure is likely to be the outcome of an unconscious protean moment, when lived experience evokes intense psychic interest that constellates initially around the evoked ideas, feelings, and self states and gels into a form of unconscious desire for "its" evolution.
2. The nascent unconscious ideas, feelings, or self states constitute a psychic gravity that draws to it relevant data.

3. The unconscious collection of hundreds of links to the psychic complex gives rise to inner senses of generative chaos.
4. Chaos is tolerated, indeed facilitated, as the subject knows it is essential to the process of discovering new concepts about living.
5. Gradually chaos yields to a preformative sense of emergent nucleation. It is important to stress that this is only a sense, but it does reflect a process of structural cohesion.
6. Suddenly the person discovers a fundamentally new perspective that generates many derivatives. This new vision is not the general, but it is the first manifestation of its presence in consciousness and it will sponsor many new ways of seeing oneself, others and one's work.
7. This moment will often be felt as revelatory and though it is a special experience, it is not an occasion for a new theory of the sacred, but it does describe those seminal visions created by unconscious processes pushed by the life instincts and is an erotics in form " (88).