

**Time, Co-Created Space, and the Interpretive Process in Psychoanalysis:
A Self Psychological Perspective**

By

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It is an honor for me to be here today and I thank you for your invitation to present my work. The conference topic “Time in Psychoanalysis: Time and Psychoanalysis” is challenging and, for a while, I wondered how I would address it. After several attempts, I finally decided that my contribution would be maximized if I spoke from the perspective of my special interest, Kohut’s psychology of the self.

Because the self psychological perspective is relatively new to Turkey I will underscore some of its core ideas I wish to demonstrate that while Kohut’s psychology of the self understands the contents of the unconscious differently, it is similar to other psychoanalytic theories in that it too conceives of an analytic cure through an interpretive process. To accomplish my task I will first review elements of the interpretive process that are common to all psychoanalytic theories as well as address the unique relationship of the interpretive process to time. I then will present one session from an ongoing analysis and follow that presentation with a discussion of the elements of Kohut’s psychology of the self that have informed this treatment. Finally, I will address some broad issues concerning time in relation to the self.

Time, as a subject, has caught the attention of many thinkers across the ages. Ancient Greece expressed a sense of time as the source of inevitable destruction through its myth of Cronos, the god who ate his children. Saint Augustine, born in 354 A.D., wrote about time as an aspect of human experience when he said:

“It is in you, my mind, that I measure time... As things pass by, they leave an impression on you...It is this impression which I measure. Therefore this itself is time or else I do not measure time at all.” (“Confessions” (11.14),)

Shakespeare unites his psychologist’s eye with his artist’s pen in “*As You Like It*,” to give us this brief but poignant study of human time. He writes:

'tis but an hour since it was nine,
And after one hour more 'twill be eleven,
And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe,
And from hour to hour we rot and rot,
And thereby hangs a tale.

As psychoanalysts we have spent our professional lives searching for ways to unpack that tale. Freud, through his remarkable ability to conceptualize an absence of time in relation to unconscious experience, articulated that quality of mind when he wrote:

“the processes of the system Ucs are timeless; i.e. they are not ordered temporally, are not altered by the passage of time; they have no reference to time at all. Reference to time is bound up, once again, with the work of the system Cs.” “The Unconscious,” (SE 14, 1915, p 187).

The timelessness of the unconscious creates a useful therapeutic opportunity in that timelessness is what makes it possible for the therapeutic revival of forgotten or unknown elements of the “tale” to come alive with a feeling of immediacy. For example, we have all had the clinical experience of sitting with a person suffering from an aborted mourning reaction and found that when they eventually engaged their grief the mourning experience was as fresh as though their loss had occurred yesterday. This sense of immediacy is possible precisely because there is no time, no sense of past, in the unconscious.

We analysts turn the timeless quality of the unconscious to our therapeutic advantage by employing an interpretive process that encourages re-mobilization, in the present, of unconscious issues that have their origins in the past. The interpretive process occupies a unique position in all of human endeavors for it metaphorically bends sequential time, folding past into the present.

The interpretative process is interesting in its own right and merits a few minutes for examination. Initially, Freud’s “analyses” required only the time it took for a stroll in the park. Eventually Freud extended the time required for an analysis to be between 6 months and a year. This initially short duration for an

analysis reflected a particular quality of Freud's theory of neurosis and its subsequent cure. Freud's theory of neurosis was based upon the idea that noxious drive derivatives, buried within the System Unconscious, were the ultimate cause of psychic disequilibrium. Freud's method of cure was to make these unconscious elements conscious and ultimately enable the forces of the ego to contain, master and control them. During the early psychoanalytic era, interpretations were the verbal entities designed to undo defenses and bring the contents of the unconscious into awareness. Within that early context, making the unconscious conscious was essentially a cognitive enterprise. Freud's theory held that once forces of repression were undone, mastery would quickly follow, which explains Freud's assumption that an analysis would not be a lengthy procedure. In practice, however, analyses took longer and longer. In time, the scope of psychoanalysis widened to include people who had suffered the effects of developmental arrests as well as those who suffered from the effects of conflict over the derivatives of unconscious drive elements.

As the scope of treatment widened, psychoanalytic theory and technique evolved in a direction that fostered the re-emergence of arrested developmental states. With this movement, psychoanalysis evolved from a cognitive experience that found cure in knowledge to an experience that found cure in the revival of archaic affective experience. Where once interpretations were conceived as singular arrows of analytic brilliance, designed to hit their interpretive mark and bring the unconscious elements into awareness, one began to think of interpretations as complex elements within an interpretive process.

The interpretive process occurs over a period of time and consists of a series of micro-phases, the first of which is a phase of understanding. During the understanding phase the analyst conveys his or her empathically informed understanding of the patient's current affective experiences to the patient. Later, after the analyst has communicated that understanding over a period of time and has grasped the subtle intricacies that reveal information about that particular affect state's historical origins, the analyst is in a position to then add the second element of the interpretive process, the phase of explanation. This explanatory

phase introduces a genetic component to what was previously only an articulation and understanding of the current affective experience. In this explanatory phase the analyst deepens the understanding of the articulated affect state by placing that then current affective experience within a historical context. The explanatory phase places the current emotional state within the context of the original, often painful or disruptive, interactions with significant people early in life. One must take care when adding the genetic component because it contains a cognitive element that, if the patient is not ready to receive it, will be experienced by the patient as the analyst's attempt to gain some distance from the patient's troublesome affects. It is for this reason that the understanding phase can be prolonged in the treatment of some very traumatized people.

One cannot speak of the interpretive process without acknowledging that analyst and patient continuously react to conscious and unconscious elements of the other with their own transference responses. This interaction creates the analytic space that eventually becomes the site of analytic activity as well as an essential source of data upon which the incremental statements of the interpretative process are built.

The contemporary analyst who conceives of a co-created analytic space is not the same analyst as the analyst of Freud's day. The analyst of Freud's day, and even of later years, followed the then prevailing scientific view that assumed an object could be studied in a so-called pure state without being influenced by the investigator. The core assumption of this view was that adherence to a "clean" model led to the discovery of uncontaminated truth. This positivist model reigned within medical science for years and many medically trained psychoanalysts carried the ideal of an uncontaminated field into their psychoanalytic work. Recent advances in philosophy, science, and the philosophy of science have educated us to the fact that the investigator inevitably affects his or her subject and that the creation of the so-called sterile field is not possible, especially in psychoanalysis. When one grasps and applies this idea to the clinical situation, one's practice is never the same.

Freud's positivist analytic position assumes a stance in which the analyst-investigator stands above and outside the analytic scene and makes observations by simply listening to the patient's associations. From this position Freud's analytic task was to articulate the observed associative patterns according to theoretical configurations and present these formulations to the patient in the form of curative interpretations.

The contemporary analyst, aware of the implications of the co-created analytic space, assumes a different clinical position. The contemporary analyst, of course, follows the patient's associations. In addition, however, he or she also pays close attention to the co-created space formed by the intersection of their two personalities. The co-created analytic space becomes the stage upon which one's internal life is enacted. The lived experience of the analytic dyad informs the interpretive process and through its vitality provides both patient and analyst with a sense of conviction that the story currently enacted between them is a close reflection of the story originally written.

As I said earlier, the interpretive process has a special relationship to time. Through the interpretive process time is metaphorically folded back upon itself. This happens when the dormant unconscious past is revitalized in the present transference experience. The folding of time upon itself through an interpretive process holds true for all successful analyses regardless of theoretic persuasion. Self psychology is no different in this regard from drive-defense psychology, object relations theory, or any other analytic theory. This sameness is possible because all psychoanalytic theories, self psychology included, assert the influence of a **dynamic unconscious** upon human feelings, thought and behavior. Elements of an archaic unconscious come alive during an analysis. I am sure that up to this point many of you have found similarities between my comments and whatever theories you hold.

The major difference between Kohut's psychology of the self and other analytic theories is to be found in Kohut's concept of the **contents** of the unconscious. These ideas are intricately intertwined with Kohut's thoughts about the self. Therefore, in an effort to clinically demonstrate the nature of Kohut's

thinking regarding the contents of the unconscious I will present some of my own clinical material and will follow that with a broader discussion of how issues of narcissism relate to Kohut's concept of the contents of the unconscious.

In what you are about to hear, many of you will undoubtedly formulate the dynamics according to the drive-defense theories that guide your listening. In the session I will present you will hear of an idealization that you might understand as a defensive structure designed to protect my patient from his oedipal wish to outdo and unseat me. . From this theoretical perspective it is also possible to hear the internal terror that brought this man to treatment as an expression of a superego reprimand. My formulation of what happened in this session is different and I will elaborate upon it after I have presented the material.

CLINICAL PRESENTATION

IDENTIFICATION: Tom is a 60 year old executive who I see in an analysis that meets 3 times per week and utilizes the couch and free association.

CHIEF COMPLAINT: Tom came to treatment complaining that it felt as though he lived his life in a prison. He was so terrified of a scolding reprimand by any of his various bosses over the years that he protected himself by attempting to be perfect in whatever work he did. This meant that to keep himself safe Tom was continually preoccupied with thoughts about how best to do his work. This preoccupation was not for the sake of perfection but rather for the sake of safety. He constantly worried about his bosses' business needs and became expert in anticipating their requests. The result of these heroic efforts was that Tom is a superb worker, well compensated for what he had done, but his work tragically has consumed his mind and intrudes upon the rest of his life.

The irony is that Tom is a major executive in international company that does business around the world. He is responsible for several thousand people who work under him yet, in spite his high level of function, Tom lives in mortal fear of the dreaded reprimand. Despite his high profile, success, and excellence, Tom tends to function in the background. He organizes complex business

meetings and writes speeches for others but hides in the shadows by not claiming credit for all he has done. Tom came to treatment because his continual preoccupation and fear which made him feel that much of his life has been wasted.

CHILDHOOD HX: Tom describes himself as having been a very good child. Bright, a good student, well behaved and well-mannered Tom, nevertheless, despised his extremely weak and passive father. According to Tom, his father was never able to assert himself nor make a clear and definitive statement about anything. Tom recalls no positive experiences with his father.

Tom's mother was murdered when Tom was 15 years old. She was murdered by a border, to whom the family had rented an extra room in an effort to supplement the family income. At the man's trial he told the story that Tom's mother had found some magazines of naked women in his room and, out of fear that he would have a bad influence on Tom, scolded him severely and told him to leave their home immediately. He left in a rage but returned later to strangle her with her stockings.

Tom loved his mother and only had wonderful memories of her. He recalled her delightful playfulness and had no recall of anything negative about her. He did have one screen memory however. Tom recalls his mother giving him a bath when he was 4 or 5. He recalls being playful with her and the playfulness turned into exuberance on his part. She tried to calm him but was unable to do so. He became increasingly excited and she told him to stop or she would leave. Tom could not stop himself so his mother walked out of the house. Tom recalls climbing out of tub and screaming to her not to leave him but she had already left. He stood crying on the porch until finally she returned

Session

Background: In yesterday's session Tom had been upset. The strength he had begun to feel at work with his boss John and at home with his wife Mary seemed to have evaporated. He suddenly was not feeling well. Coincidentally, we also were unable to meet for nearly one week because of some work related meetings that Tom had to attend. (*I immediately associated to Tom's*

emotionally absent father immediately and to the restitution one experiences when connected with an idealized object.)

Tom: I got an email message from my sister about some reminiscences she had. One was about a neighborhood walk with my father that has stayed with her as an adult. I never had that with my father. **SILENCE** This worries me. Coming here. I shouldn't be dependent on this. It will end. Something is wrong with me that I have to come here. It's all in the way you look at it. **SILENCE** I'm thinking of the book review that was in the newspaper recently. It was about Kohut's biography. Kohut had a significant influence on psychoanalysis. In the reception room here at the Institute there are all those pictures of Freud on the wall. Kohut's influence hasn't changed that. How influential can he be not to destroy Freud's effect? Why isn't his picture there?

Allen: It is. It's around the corner. It's hard for some people to make room for new heroes. But what was the bridge between what you said about the uneasy feeling over the special need you have for me and the thought about Freud and Kohut?

Tom: Two things. **1.** It's a way to change the subject. I don't have to talk about hard things. **2.** I have a curiosity about you personally and an intellectual curiosity as well. The more personal thought is, "who are you? How do you fit? What do you believe?" You wrote your book. It's a way for me to ask about you. **PAUSE** The former, it's uncomfortable for me to recognize that it's important for me to be here. Being here calms me. It helps put things in perspective. I missed Thursday's session and had to wait from Wednesday until Tuesday to come back. Waiting has an effect on me. I was a little at sea. I'm convinced that's true. The opposite always happens. When I do see you I'm stronger and more confident handling what's out there. When I don't come I'm more likely to run into trouble. I'm less confident. I don't understand it though. It makes me feel uncomfortable. I should be able to do things for myself. **PAUSE** I'm on my own. I shouldn't need help. Needing help makes me weak. It goes back to the old question of what's your role in all of this. In the beginning of our work I asked nothing of you. It was all me. Earlier in our work you even spoke of a sense in

me of a profound aloneness. “By yourself,” you said. I always felt I had to do it on my own. In school I asked help from neither my teachers nor my colleagues. Work is the same. I don’t ask anybody else. I just do it myself. So recognizing that it is important to me to talk to you troubles me. What if I got hooked? Do I need this my whole life? Why can’t I do it myself? Wed until Tues. I need help. I must be weak.

Allen: What you felt in your absence from me from Wed to Tues is a snapshot of what you lived as a kid. It was the experience of not having a strong father available to you, whose strength you could borrow and then feel strong in yourself. You had no one to turn to, you had only yourself and, in your aloneness, you made a virtue out of what was a necessity.

The need for the strength of a strong man is healthy for a boy but with no one available to you had no choice but to push that need aside. You’ve carried this need throughout your life and now it’s come alive here, between us – as it needs to, but now, when you feel the need for my strength you also feel shame.

Tom: *Becomes red faced and quiet tears roll down his cheeks.*

Every time we talk about my father it makes me sad. So sad. I think about how much I wanted one. I have a picture of a little boy holding his father’s hand, taking a walk, feeling proud. **Cries** That never happened. **SILENCE** Maybe I am ashamed that I want to talk to you. That makes me a little boy, not an adult. I’m not a child. **SILENCE** It makes me wonder what kind of father I’ve been to my children. I think I have been OK.

Allen: That’s an important thought but I think it takes you away from the humiliating feeling you had of wanting me for a father, of wanting to hold my hand and be proud of me.

Tom: Well -- that’s right. That worries me. You wrote a book about Kohut. Why isn’t his picture up there. I’m proud that you did that.

Allen: You’d like us to be recognized.

Tom: Yes. I don’t like this other book (Strozier). I don’t like that it was published.

Allen: Because?

Tom: It detracts from you. Somebody else wrote about him. I want you to be the only one. I want the world to be Kohut, not Freud. (*Aware of the implications of what he is saying*) But how can you be my father. I'm older than you?

Allen: The boy inside is timeless.

Tom: Will I ever get rid of it?

Allen: It will grow, yes.

Tom: You are someone. I like that.

Summary of Session

There is much that can be said about this material from a self psychological perspective. In the brief time I have available to me, I will address two transferences that are being enacted in this analysis, although only one transference is evident during this session. The first transference is not evident in this material but has been present at other times. This is the transference Tom experienced with me when he felt a need to be a so-called good analytic patient and give me good analytic material in order to retain my love for him. This repetitive traumatic transference originates with Tom's demanding, potentially scolding mother. I believe this transference is the source of Tom's terrors at work.

The other transference is currently in the foreground and is very much in evidence in this session. This transference is an expression of Tom's primary, non-defensive, unconscious search for an object whom he can idealize and with whom he can merge. Early in our work Tom was furious with his father for father's ineptness and lack of strength. That rage eventually gave way to an underlying sadness and mourning over not having had such an idealizable object in his life. The transference that has been mobilized and demonstrated in this session reveals the revival of Tom's boyhood wish for a merger with an omnipotent object and the simultaneous shame that Tom, as an adult, feels over that childhood need and wish.

As I have said, my thoughts about the issues emerging in this treatment are informed by Kohut's psychology of the self. In order to deepen my discussion of that understanding I must address the self as Kohut understood it. This is a complicated task, however, because Kohut refrained from defining the self. He did this because, like all psychoanalytic concepts, the self cannot be known directly; it can only be inferred. One cannot observe a self, one can only observe **manifestations** of a self. Kohut cogently writes about this:

"Let me ... refer to a feature of the present work that might appear to some as a serious defect. My investigation contains hundreds of pages of dealing with the psychology of the self – yet it never assigns an inflexible meaning to the term self, it never explains how the essence of the self should be defined. But I admit this without contrition or shame. The self, whether conceived within the framework of the psychology of the self in the narrow sense of the term ... or... in the broad sense of the term, is not knowable in its essence. We cannot, by introspection and empathy, penetrate to the self per se; only its...manifestations are open to us. Demands for an exact definition of the nature of the self disregard the fact that "the self" is not a concept of an abstract science, but a generalization from empirical data. We can collect data in which the set of... inner experiences...is gradually established, we can demonstrate constituents that make up the self – and explain their genesis. We can distinguish between various self types. We can do all that, but we still will not know the essence of the self as differentiated from its manifestations."
Restoration of the Self, (1977)

Nevertheless, in an essay written for some close colleagues and later published in Paul Ornstein's Search for the Self (1990), Kohut did point to some definitions of the self that can be found scattered through his writings. For Kohut, the self could be conceived on two levels: one level he called:

"the self in the narrow sense," the other level he called the "self in the broad sense."

Kohut first spoke about the self in a 1966 paper entitled "Forms and Transformations of Narcissism." In this paper Kohut outlined his then novel idea that narcissism has its own line of development. Kohut's idea, that narcissism followed its own maturational course, differed from Freud's idea that in

development primary narcissism eventually was relinquished in favor of object love.

We need to remember that Freud's object-libidinal line of development moved from primary narcissism, through homosexual and heterosexual stages to finally culminate in object love. Kohut asserted that the developmental ideal of the relinquishment of narcissism in favor of object love actually expressed a Western morality that had infiltrated analytic theorizing. He felt that the preference of object love - or altruism - over narcissism - or self-interest - actually expressed a morality contained within Western religion. This mode of thinking was theology rather than psychology.

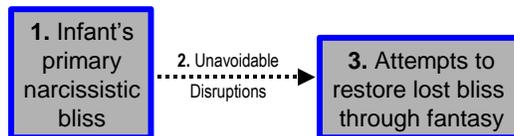
Reconstructed from his work with adult analysands Kohut hypothesized that narcissism is not relinquished but, instead, has its own line of development in which there is movement from archaic forms of narcissism to developmentally higher forms of narcissism. Kohut conceived of narcissism's developmental line as an addition to Freud's object-libidinal line.

Since a given theory's concepts of therapeutic action are inseparable from that theory's ideas about the contents of the Unconscious and their role in the creation of illness it will be useful to briefly review Kohut's theory. Similarly, to understand Kohut's idea of "the self in the narrow sense" one needs to know the nature of these unconscious archaic forms of narcissism since they ultimately give metaphoric shape and form to any particular self. With these thoughts in mind, I have provided some drawings to simplify this pursuit.

As I noted, like Freud, Kohut took primary narcissism as his starting point in delineating his ideas about development. Instead of narcissism morphing into object love, however, Kohut suggests that narcissism matures as it follows its own developmental course.

I have represented this course of development in the figures below. It begins when the infant's original state of bliss **(1)** has suffered the inevitable disruptions **(2)** that occur when the caretaker neither feeds the hungry child nor changes the wet child in a timely way. Once upset, the infant attempts to restore the disrupted blissful state through non-verbal fantasy **(3)**.

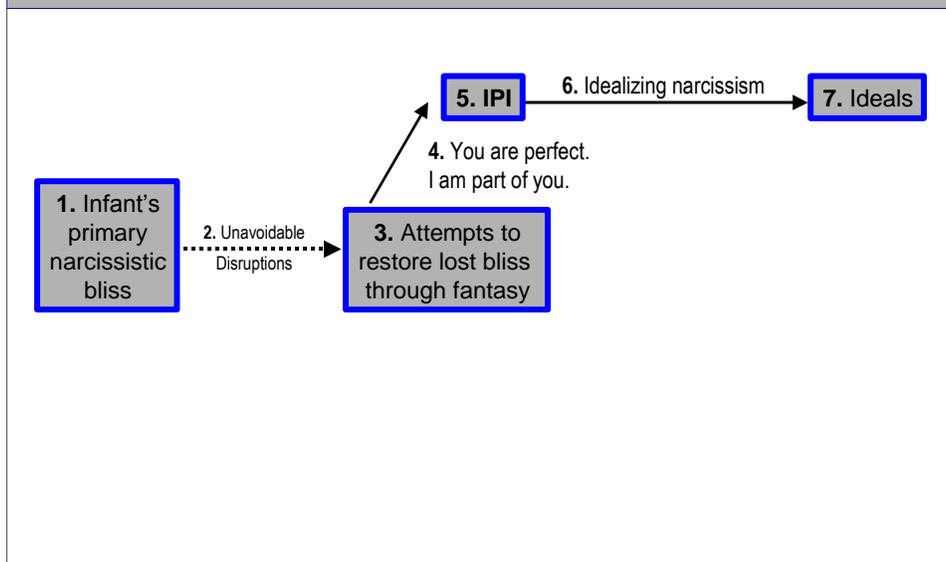
Developmental Line of Narcissism



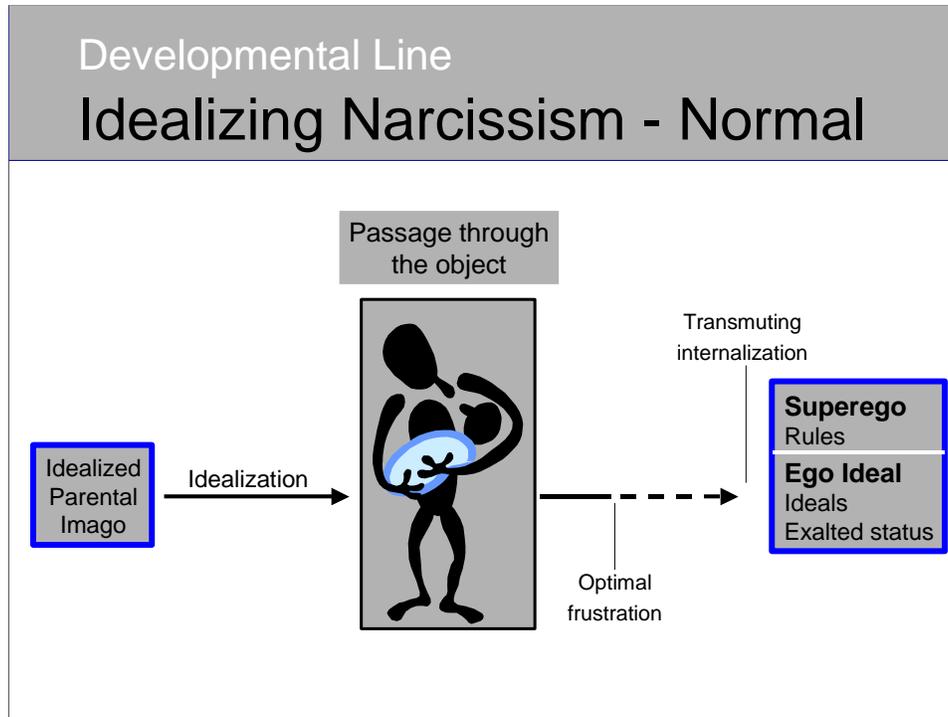
The infant has only two possibilities available in its restitutive effort: one possibility deals with the world “outside” the child while the other deals with the world “inside” the child. These two restitutive possibilities are responsible for narcissism’s bifurcated development, each line of the bifurcation having its own developmental story.

Considering the restitutive line that involves the world outside the child, Kohut suggested that the disrupted infant creates a fantasy of a perfect other and seeks to merge with the strength, calm, and vitality of this fantasied omnipotent object. The feeling state of this fantasy is “You are perfect and I am part of you” **(4)**. Merger and union with this idealized object re-establishes the disrupted sense of wholeness and bliss. Kohut describes the unconscious structure that consists of the fantasy of an idealizable object that restores wholeness through merger and calls it the Idealized Parental Imago **(5)** portrayed in this figure by its initials, IPI.

Developmental Line of Narcissism



This search for an omnipotent object develops into a line of idealizing narcissism **(6)** that moves from the initial need for merger with an idealized object through intermediate stages and culminates in the ultimate establishment of guiding ideals **(7)**. Due to space limitations I will only be able to present pictorial representations of these intermediate stages, beginning with the normal development in the line of idealizing narcissism.

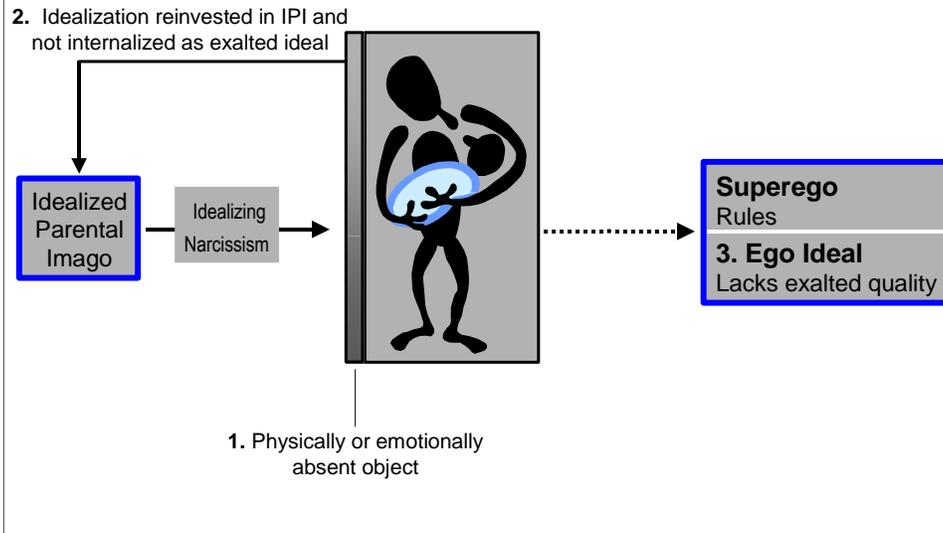


Briefly expressed in experience-near terms, this development moves from the infant's experience of being lifted up by the arms of an awesome, idealized object to the internalization of idealized attributes of that object due to optimal frustrations followed by transmuting internalizations. The culminating experience is of feeling uplifted by one's own ideals that serve as a guide throughout one's life.

When, as portrayed in the next figure, the child is deprived of an idealizable object **(1)** as was Tom, his development within the idealizing sector of his personality will be arrested. The idealizing narcissism will not flow to the ego ideal portion of the superego but will be reinvested in the configuration of the Idealized Parental Imago **(2)**. The ideals will be deprived of their eventual exalted status **(3)** and the child and later adult, suffering the absence of an idealized object, will mourn the absence of that object and will be left with an unending search for an omnipotent object. The specific deformation of the personality and the nature of the deficits that arise from this traumatic deprivation will be a function of when, in the child's development, the arrest occurred.

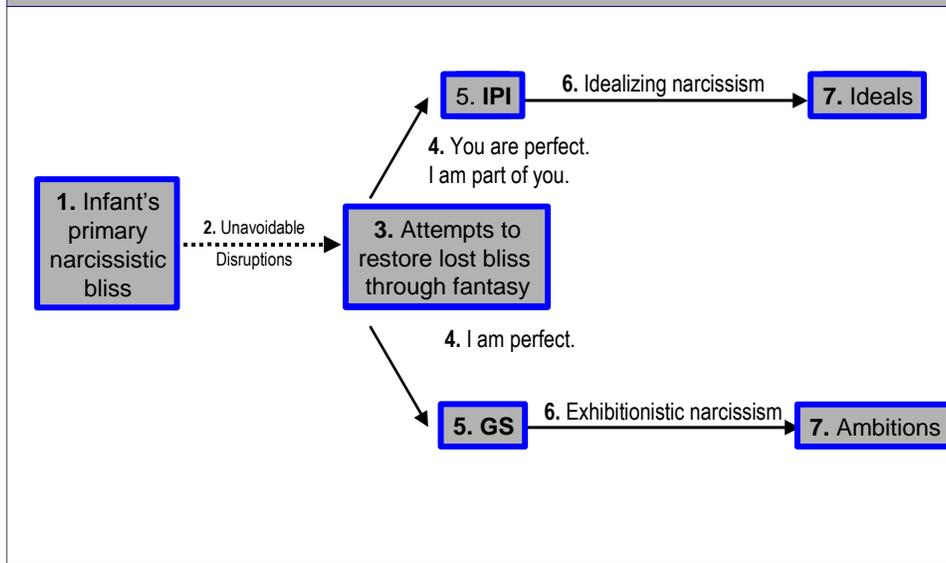
Developmental Line

Idealizing Narcissism - Disturbed



Returning to the other line of the bifurcated narcissism I will focus, in the next figure, on the restitutive attempt that concerns the world inside the infant. In this developmental line the infant creates the fantasy of itself as perfect, the feeling state of which simply is “I am perfect” **(4)**. This fantasy and its associated feeling state is expressed in the unconscious configuration that Kohut called the Grandiose Self, represented in this slide by its initials GS **(5)**.

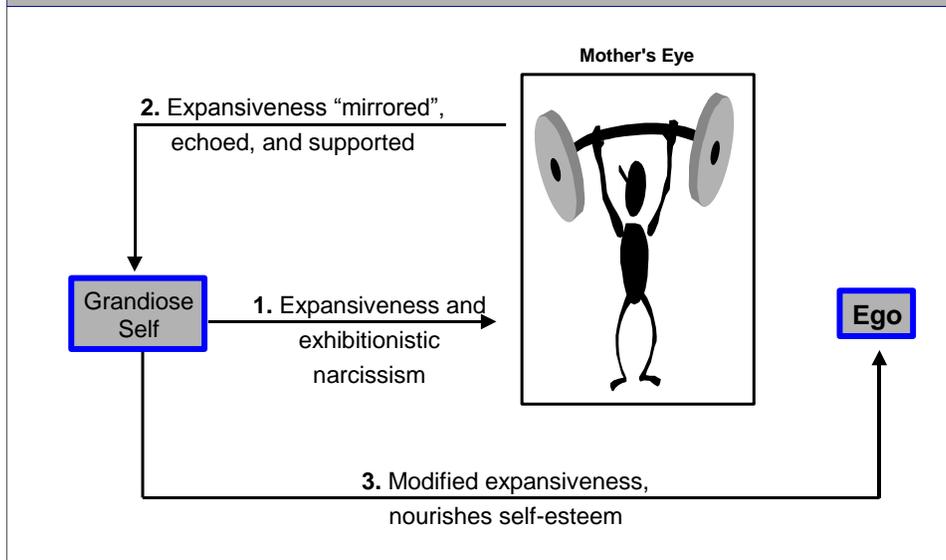
Developmental Line of Narcissism



This narcissistic structure gives birth to the line of expansive-exhibitionistic narcissism **(6)** that follows a course in which the grandiosity of the young child, expressed most clearly by the 2 year old who asserts that he or she can do any and everything, becomes modified through appropriate parental response and eventuates in the formation of comfortable ambition **(7)**.

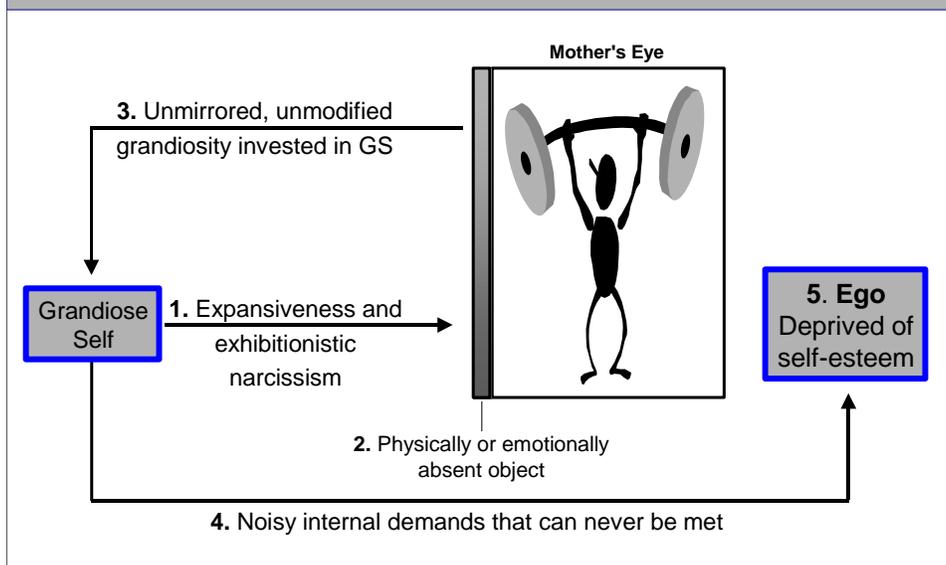
A closer look at the process in the next figure, reveals that the expansiveness gradually becomes modified through parental participation **(1,2)**. The modified grandiosity enhances self-esteem as it flows to the ego, eventuating in the development of healthy pride in oneself and in one's accomplishments **(3)**.

Developmental Line Exhibitionistic Narcissism - Normal



When appropriate affirmation of the child's expansiveness and exhibitionism is missing (**2 below**), the grandiosity does not modify (**3**) and the child and later adult, is left with the noisy, insatiable need for affirmation throughout life (**4**), while the diminished ego suffers feelings of worthless emptiness (**5**).

Developmental Line Exhibitionistic Narcissism - Disturbed



In summary, the unconscious fantasy of and search for an idealized object plus the unconscious fantasy of omnipotence, taken together with a person's skills and talents form Kohut's "self in the narrow sense."

For Kohut, these unconscious archaic forms of narcissism are retained unconsciously as structures or unconscious configurations and they become motivating contents of the unconscious. When mature, they are responsible for the strength of the healthy self. When arrested in their development they are responsible for the weakened aspects of the self that bring a person to treatment in their search for help. From the perspective of Kohut's psychology of the self then, these archaic forms of narcissism are the unconscious elements that are remobilized and expressed in the narcissistic transferences during an analytic treatment. In relation to time, these unconscious archaic narcissistic structures are the stunted elements of the past that are folded upon the present.

Added to the narcissistic transferences, and also enacted on the co-created analytic stage, are the repetitive traumatic transferences that arise from disruptive interactions with the caretakers of childhood. As I said, for example, the traumatic transference is an expression of Tom's experience with his mother and has been expressed in the transference with his bosses and sometimes with me.

As you can readily see, one major difference between Kohut and Freud lies in Freud's idea that the contents of the unconscious derive from innate givens. For Freud, the environment has little to do with what develops. Kohut's differing idea attends to the notion that the child and its environment interact profoundly and affect each other in major ways.

It is a less complicated matter to talk about time in relation to Kohut's notion of the "self in the broad sense." For Kohut, the "self in the broad sense" is the experience of "I." An essential element of the experience of "I" is related to the sense of continuity of the self over time. The sense of continuity is the sense of being the same person over the years, despite the changes that occur in one's bodies, one's minds, one's surroundings, and even one's personality. Despite these physical and even emotional changes there is, and here I quote Kohut, an

“abiding sense of sameness within a framework of reality that imposes upon us the limits of time, change and ultimately transience.” (Restoration of the Self pp 180-181).

I will speak personally to provide an example that, I am certain, will be familiar to many of you. I most recently discovered the sense of sameness in my self, despite changes in my physical and emotional being, when I reached my 60th birthday. My feeling at that time was, “How could this have happened? The numbers are right. They add up correctly. My knees tell me that the number is right, my graying beard tells me the number is right, but the feeling of my self says this can’t be so. How did this happen? Sixty is supposed to be old, yet I don’t feel old. In fact, I don’t feel much different from when I was 26, and in some ways even from when I was 16.” The sense of our essential sameness, despite the movement of time across the years, is the sense of continuity within the self.

Finally, I will comment about the self in relation to the inevitable passage of time. Probably the greatest psychological challenge to the “self in the broadest sense” comes with the issue of the self’s transience. Meeting this challenge represents the self’s most profound psychological achievement. The challenge, of course, is the ability to know, and accept with equanimity and without denial, that Cronos does devour us, that time does pass and that death is inevitable. The capacity to accept one’s transience is the self’s ultimate developmental accomplishment. The psychological achievement that makes it possible to accept one’s transience with calm and grace is based upon the transformation of the same archaic expansive-exhibitionistic narcissism that, when unmodified, gives birth to fantasies of omnipotence and grandiosity. Maturation of this archaic form of narcissism, on the other hand, enables one to comfortably acknowledge the ultimate helplessness that comes with time’s passage.

These are my thoughts about time and the self. I hope that I have piqued your curiosity and perhaps have stimulated some to explore these ideas. Thank you.