

Talking, Communicating, and Knowing

Let me share with you two related ideas for the holidays that we may find helpful all year round. They are the concept of *empathy* and the concept of *being bound up in relationship*. Both of these concepts remind us that we have or can develop the capacity *to know about another person* (or any aspect of reality for that matter) by merging and becoming one with or directly sensing and experiencing them. And that this way of knowing complements and puts in balance the logical and scientific ways of knowing an other. Some of us call this opening our hearts, while others suggest that we expand the ways we talk and get to know one another by "saying it" with dance, music or art.

I've included here a previously unpublished academic style review of Heinz Kohut's *How Does Analysis Cure?* which includes Kohut's views on the importance of empathy, concepts of what is normal, and the problem of aggression, as well as an updated edition of the Poem, *Empathy*. This poem, *Empathy*, is one of a series written at the time and inspired by my readings of various psychological, psychoanalytic and spiritual writers.

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How Does Analysis Cure?¹²

Reviewed by Jeff Landau, Ph.D.

This is an unpublished review of Heinz Kohut's, *How Does Analysis Cure?* Kohut, Heinz. 1984. *How Does Analysis Cure?* [Arnold Goldberg, Edit. Paul Stepansky]; University of Chicago Press. It was written in 1988-89, during the period I was a post-doc at the Center For Modern Psychoanalytic Studies. Two additional, earlier psychoanalytic reviews from this period are referenced in the footnotes below.

* * * * *

It's being rumored that there is a new sound in Psychoanalysis, in fact a fresh breeze. And in this case the direction is from Chicago. The excitement, the intense and open dialogue comes from the "Chicago School", and most importantly from the creation of *Self Psychology* by Heinz Kohut. This is the psychoanalytic cultural climate that embraces Kohut's last book "How Does Analysis Cure?"

¹ This is a review of Heinz Kohut's, *How Does Analysis Cure?* Kohut, Heinz. 1984. *How Does Analysis Cure?* [Arnold Goldberg, Edit. Paul Stepansky] University of Chicago Press.

² This is an unpublished manuscript written while I was a post-doc in training in "modern psychoanalysis" at Phyllis Meadow's (Spotnitz) Center For Modern Psychoanalytic Studies. Landau, J.S.: Review. *How Does Analysis Cure?* Kohut, Heinz. 1984. *How Does Analysis Cure?* [Arnold Goldberg, Edit. Paul Stepansky] University of Chicago Press, unpublished, 1989. Two other reviews published during this period are here referenced. Landau, J.S.: Review. *A History of Aggression In Freud*; Stepansky, Paul, E. New York: International Universities Press; *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 1984, 1X, #2, 203-208. Landau, J.S.: Review. *Internal World And External Reality: Object relations Applied*. Otto F. Kernberg. New York: Jason Aronson, 1980; *Modern Psychoanalysis*, 1983, 230-234.

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The book reiterates and clarifies some of the issues raised by the publication of Kohut's previous work, notably "*Restoration of the Self*", and then goes on to significantly clarify the concept of cure in both Psychoanalysis and Self Psychology.

Part 1, Chapter 1, addresses the question of whether it is better to leave some analyses incomplete. Chapter 2 is a reiteration of Kohut's theoretical distinction between a healthy and pathological Oedipus Complex, the latter being a result rather than the Freudian cause of neurosis; while Chapter 3 lays the philosophical groundwork for what is to follow.

Part 2, Chapters 4- 10, is the heart of the matter and is devoted to topics which illuminate the "The Nature of the Psychoanalytic Cure" from the self psychological perspective.

The Development Of The Self

The central idea in all of Kohut's thinking involves the notion of the development of the self as a psychic structure.

"it is the defect in the self that brings about and maintains a patient's self-object (narcissistic) transference, and it is the working through of the transference which via . . . a wholesome psychic activity [thwarted in childhood] lays down the structures needed to fill the defect in the self. . . . the emergence of this process [is] evidence that the treatment situation has reactivated the developmental potential of the defective self" (p. 4).

Considering the possibilities of self development a self may have failed to emerge even in outline form (the psychosis and borderline disorders) or it may vary in the degree to which it is defective and incomplete (the narcissistic personality and behavior disorders) or it may have completed its development and be overwhelmed by pathological oedipal dynamics (the structural-conflict neurosis of classical psychoanalysis).

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Rational For Incomplete Analysis Of Severe Narcissistic Disorders

One criticism of "Restoration Of The Self" was the impression that Kohut was recommending that "some analyses of severe narcissistic personality disorders remain incomplete" (Chapter 3). This criticism actually served as the immediate inducement to write this book (p.42).

Why is this matter so important to Kohut? Once the analyst abandons the Freudian psychosexual sequence, from narcissism to object love, and challenges the universality of castration anxiety as the primary pathogenic condition (Chapter 2), he must address the normative questions of self-development, health, and cure. It is clearly not just some implication of a technical limitation of self-psychology that is of concern here.

In addressing these issues, Kohut first clarifies two conditions in which the activating psychoanalytic matrix will fail.

If during its development in early childhood the self succeeds in disentangling itself from a seriously pathogenic self-object and creates a new pattern for itself via a new developmental route, nearly reaches its goal in this second attempt at taking shape but ultimately fails again, though not by as wide a margin, then given the renewed chance for further self development in adult life made possible by psychoanalysis, the spontaneously unrolling sequence of transferences will ultimately come to rest at the point at which those needs begin to be remobilized that had not been responded to in the child's second and more promising attempt to build up its self.

It is in the analyses of these cases- and of these cases only, I will stress- that the transference, after briefly touching early depressions and rages, will spontaneously move on and settle at a . . . later point in development. . . . I reiterate . . . that experience has taught me that it is an error to attempt to guide the patient to the analysis of archaic traumata. [p.6]

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In the second example in the discussion of the limits of psychoanalysis and self-psychology, Kohut states that in the psychosis including those covertly psychotic personality organizations involving *central hollowness* with a highly developed peripheral layer, the outlines of a self have never emerged.

Here the psychoanalytic situation cannot generate a manageable transference which leads to "the creation, de novo, of a nuclear self" (p. 8).

In principle, in order to lead to cure the psychoanalytic process would have to lead beneath the defensive structures to oscillations between "pre-psychological chaos" and the security of the analyst as a stable yet potential archaic object to merge with.

And although it is theoretically possible that such a situation would bring about the birth of the nuclear self (as in infancy),

"I cannot imagine that an individual would submit himself" (p.8) to the experiences of such a process. For the trip is at the end one that the patient has to make all alone. He would have to survive for long periods of time the protracted experience of pre-psychological chaos, where the empathic bond between the analyst and patient could not follow and yet where the patient would at the same time have to "borrow the analyst's personality organization in order to survive"(p.9).

But more to the point (Chapter 3), "Even if the revival of these structures were feasible . . . no good purpose would be served if we could bring it about." (p. 43).

A New Approach to What Is Normal

And here finally is the heart of the matter, which self-psychology addresses from a coherent, eclectic perspective. .

"Just as a tree will be able to grow around an obstacle so that it can ultimately expose its

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leaves to the life- sustaining rays of the sun, so will the self . . . move forward in another" direction (p. 205).

"Every self . . . consists . . . of compensatory structures. There is not one kind of healthy self- there are many kinds. And there is no single analytic road to cure- there are many." (p. 44)

Many productive people, traumatized in childhood, have found, in varying degrees, new routes to inner completeness.

"The attempt to push such a self in therapy toward areas from which it had already disentangled itself [is] not only doomed to failure, but also betrays a gross misunderstanding of the patient (p. 45) . . ." [and in addition] "puts obstacles in the patients path to recovery." (p. 46)

With these cautionary notes, general discussion of what is normal, and what is cure, and the delimiting clinical parameters which follow, Kohut rounds out his preparation for the subsequent chapters with a comparison of the objective views of 19th century physics to those of the 20th century which show that the observer influences that which is being observed.

Nineteenth century objectivity could still be applied to applied psychoanalysis (psychohistory) but not to clinical psychoanalysis. This, of course, is the philosophical underpinning for a critique of traditional concepts in psychoanalysis such as "analytic neutrality" and "blank screen" as well as for the support of crucial self-psychological concepts such as empathy and emotional understanding.³

³ This shift in understanding of psychoanalytic technique is of course not unique to Kohut's school, but rather it seems an emergent aspect of modern psychoanalysis, especially in terms of its emphasis on the analysis of the *transference- counter-transference relationship*.

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The Psychoanalytic Cure

Part 2 of the book develops the issues of the psychoanalytic cure in detail. Kohut emphatically differentiates his way of thinking about the maturational process from that of object-relations theorists.

Maturation

"Self psychology holds that the self-object relationships form the essence of psychological relationships from birth to death, that a move from dependence (symbiosis) to independence (autonomy) in the psychological sphere is no more possible . . . than a corresponding move from a life dependent on oxygen to a life independent of it in the biological sphere. . . . [Self psychology is concerned with] the changing nature of relationship between the self and its self-objects, but not in the self's relinquishment of objects." (Chapter 4, p. 47).

Narcissism To Object Love

Thus self theorists do not believe, as did Freud, that the maturational sequence in object relations is from narcissism to object love, since they believe that objects have throughout the life span the dual function of replenishing archaic relations as well as provide the target for instinctual aims.

Narcissism has a separate line of development from that of object love (from archaic to mature forms). The "formulation that narcissism is replaced by object love- that narcissism is archaic and object love mature- is in error . . . " (p. 185)

In chapters 5 and 6 Kohut highlights the nature of the psychoanalytic cure. Here self psychology further differentiates itself from psychoanalysis and ego psychology, not in its fundamental application of psychoanalytic technique, but rather in its understanding of the nature of cure and the nuances in therapeutic style (e.g., relaxed but not "nice" and "warm") and clinical intervention (welcoming rather than

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confronting narcissistic demands) that flows from such understanding.

The Nature of Cure

Making The Unconscious Conscious

For self-psychology cure is not in essence either an expansion of consciousness (early Freud) nor an expansion of the functioning of the ego ("Where there was Id there will be ego" - later Freud), as manifest in the patients' ability to "talk about everything".

These traditional observations of change are correlated with cure, but they are not the essence. Many instances could be found where neither of these phenomena occurred but the patient reported an increased sense of well being and an appreciation and experiencing of the pleasures of life; e.g., music, work and love in relationship.

Optimal Analytic Failures

For Kohut the essence of cure is the outcome of repeated occurrences of the all too *human analyst's making repeated mistakes* in conjunction with his commitment to "non-gratification". These repeated "optimal failures" and the corresponding "optimal frustration" experienced by the patient paradoxically elevate the patients self esteem and add an increment to the development, strength and stability of new psychic structures which mimic in their function the constancy and emotional calmness of the analyst (in contrast to the early parenting experience) and which develop as part of the psychoanalytic process.

Introjection

Introjection ("transmuting internalization.") establishes new psychic structures and is, according to Kohut, the

"aim and the result of the cure". These new structures provide for the "opening of a path of empathy between self and self-object This

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new channel of empathy . . . supplants the bondage that had formerly tied the archaic self to the archaic self- object." (p. 66).⁴

Empathy

The Nature of Empathy

The importance of the concept of empathy⁵ in Kohut's work cannot be overstated (Chapter 9). Empathy can be understood as "vicarious introspection".

According to Kohut, one person, with ego remaining operative, can *know* the inner experience of another. Empathy seems the key to it all.

⁴ Spontnitz (1984) implies agreement with this definition of cure in his recent article where he notes that some patients have to be helped to be given "missing feelings" (love) and that this task provides the analyst with the goal for the last stages of the analysis.

⁵ The concept of empathy brings us into the world of the phenomenal, the subjective and inter-subjective and here seems consistent with the trends in modern psychoanalysis, especially in terms of its distinction between objective and subjective counter-transference. It also opens the door to the age-old debate about whether one can *know* another persons experience. Kohut understands that he is stretching the bounds of psychoanalysis. It is but a peek down the block to notice systems outside of or overlapping with psychoanalysis, from the emerging sciences of the inter-subjective to Batesons Ecology of Mind. If empathy as a mental ability allows us to know the experience of an other, then we will want to know Martin Buber's existential theology, which posits the experience of being *bound up with the object* as a fundamental way of knowing reality in contrast to and in balance with the scientific analytic empirical method. We'll find Bateson's distinction between the language of the heart and that of the head and his quote of Isadora Duncan saying that if she could say it she wouldn't have to dance it, especially helpful if we are in a love relationship or if we are involved in or conducting couple's therapy.

How Does Analysis Cure?

1. Empathy is the channel of direct connection between the self and the other (self and self-object);
2. Empathy permits the natural unfolding of the various narcissistic transferences from the analysand (now clarified as mirroring, idealizing, and alter-ego, self-object transferences, Chapter 10)
3. Empathy is the channel by which explanations and descriptions (the basic psychoanalytic unit) can be provided within the context of emotional understanding, which is especially crucial during the pre-psychoanalytic phase of treatment; and
4. Empathy it is the objective method of knowing in psychoanalytic research since it provides for heightened sensitivity and points to theoretical constructs which then direct ones attention to previously ignored configurations, both in the clinical and research setting.

Further, empathic understanding mobilizes self-development within the psychoanalytic matrix and provides the analyst with the capacity for "experience-near" interpretations.

Empathy- Not Confrontation

The self-psychologist would not spend too much time on defense-resistance interpretations (see Chapter 7 for a detailed example), and he would disavow "confrontation".

Life provides all the confrontation that the analysand needs. Most analysands view the analytic confrontation as petty and wrong.

Empathic communication leading to transmuting internalization will generate the formation of new psychic structures and thus new capacities. It is these new capacities

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that will permit the analysand to relate to the natural confrontations in life more successfully.

Kohut provides an example (Chapter 9, p. 178-184) of the importance of empathy in resolving an impasse in treatment. The example is instructive in that it describes a case involving intense aggression in the transference. So much so that even Kohut who thought that he was prepared for the fact that "the analytic honeymoon would not last forever (p.179)" reached a point where "I simply asked myself whether it would not be better to stop the treatment and send the patient to someone else to cool off, as it were"

The report of this case as well as similar cases previously cited is important since self-psychology has been criticized for underplaying the aggressive drive and relegating aggression to a secondary phenomenon. More to the point, it shows how the use of empathy did not interfere and may have in fact facilitated the occurrence of this type of intense aggression in the transference. Finally, it was empathy that moved the analyst away from a distant theoretical- interpretive tone in his communications towards emotional understanding and ultimately towards empathic (emotional) communication. This was crucial in helping the patient who had reached the same point in previous analyses and had terminated in each case.

The Self-Analytic Function

There is one more dimension to the psychoanalytic cure, the self-analytic function (Chapter, 8). Here, the trained analyst who finds himself under stress or who in the clinical situation notices that his relatedness to one or a whole day of patients is off or distorted, talks to himself, analyzes himself. In addition to its many positive aspects, it is, for Kohut, also a sign of an "incomplete" analysis.

Some of the positive aspects of the self-analytic function are related to "addictive" components of the former analytic relationship. Rather than a true self in harmony with itself and choosing to ally with a system, the addictive aspect

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indicates a self that contains remnants of borrowing cohesion from an other.

Nowhere is this more clear than in the "incomplete" training analysis.

"Here we indeed see results that deviate grossly from the analytic ideal." (p. 210) The analysand soon to become analyst, derives defensively needed security against a return to the unstable pre-analytic period by adopting a professional identity which demands morally tinged theoretically held beliefs, and hostility towards those who are different. These analysts "remain in a state of chronic narcissistic rage" (p. 168). They achieve "a state of psychic well-being which, uncomfortably [resembles] the beneficial effects of commitment to religious dogma and to personified symbols of salvation, . . . via the permanent espousal of a set of basic beliefs and an unbroken attachment . . . to an idealized leader figure." (p. 210)

On the other hand, an analyst who is considered to have become "a true master in his field" (p. 170), one whose learning has become integrated with his personality, is more likely to have developed a capacity analogous to parents who encourage their children to go beyond them. These analysts are more likely to provide their analysands with a complete analysis. The yield here is an individual whose psychic mechanisms function "silently", and who has the capacity for decisiveness, openness, and wisdom.

"How Does Analysis Cure" is not a book for the casual reader. It is a scholarly work by the master in the field. If one begins to think critically of particular points in the self-psychology system, for example, the implications for the concept of normal, the problem, use and management of aggression in the transference, or the use of aggression as the vehicle for cure) one can almost immediately hear Kohut's experienced, empathic and informed response or acknowledgement.

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This does not seem the moment to challenge the implication of ultimate hopefulness and idealism in Kohut's message which reminds us that perhaps if we could arrange the world in such a way as to get what we truly need, we would be more loving and caring selves and free of emptiness, guilt, and rage.

Appendix

Empathy⁶

A Poem Inspired By Heinz Kohut

You, seem to have a very long list of complaints about me.

You tell me

I have no feelings

I'm not empathic

That I talk from my head

That I have no feelings you can connect to.

I'm not empathic

You say that I cognitively compare us

like Spock in a Star Trek series,

⁶ This poem, Empathy, is one of a series inspired by my readings of various psychological and psychoanalytic writers as I attempted to simplify complex and esoteric language to everyday relationship problems. Empathy appears in Landau, Jeff (2005) Poems From InnerResources 8 Ideas, in the section, Idea #5, What Is Me And What Is Not Me, The Bridge From Me To You, p 11-113 InnerResources Publications. "The poems under the heading "The Bridge From me To You" are from a series of audio poems I wrote on love and relationships in May of 1998. Each poem makes reference to a psychological, psychoanalytic, existential or spiritual theory. All of the poems, as well as the theorists, point to the possible ways we can get out of our own head and be with others in the real world. Within the framework of the InnerRESOURCES 8 ideas, they are part of the process of discovering "What Is Me And What Is Not Me".

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and ergo conclude
that I have similar experiences to you
and that you and I are one.

And you tell me
that is not how I get to know how it feels
how I come to know
what you've been feeling
not how I become empathic
and connected to you.

I become empathic you tell me
if my life.....
if I would grow up
if my life.....
if my experiences
allowed....

You sound like you just came from
a Heinz Kohut lecture

If my life had allowed my
SELF
as a psychic structure

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to mature

If I...

That ... that

my mind is as yet incomplete

and that I'm missing

this empathic part of the mind

which is as distinct and connected

as the eye is from the brain

That I lack this empathic self

and I'm therefore not able to *tune into* your

experiences and truly understand you

Without the non-rational experience of empathy

You tell me

I cannot be cured.

Cannot truly be connected

and will remain in isolation

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