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## A Theoretical Integration of Robert Kegan's Developmental Psychology and Heinz Kohut's Self Psychology

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A THEORETICAL INTEGRATION OF ROBERT KEGAN'S DEVELOPMENTAL  
PSYCHOLOGY AND HEINZ KOHUT'S SELF PSYCHOLOGY

by

Wilmar VanderPol

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A THEORETICAL INTEGRATION OF ROBERT KEGAN'S DEVELOPMENTAL  
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Wilmar VanderPol, Ed.D.

Western Michigan University, 1990

Theory and research about psychological development tends to be dichotomized into two broad approaches that have never been integrated. The one is Piagetian-based cognitive-developmentalism, and the other is Freudian-based psychoanalytic developmentalism. The first predominates in academic research and application and the second in clinical research and therapy. This dissertation is a theoretical integration of the Piagetian-based theory of Robert Kegan with the Freudian-based theory of Heinz Kohut known as self psychology. A rationale for the integration of these two theories is given, along with an overview of each theory with respect to their developmental aspects. Analysis of their respective basic concepts and constructs is provided, demonstrating differences as well as underlying similarities. These concepts include definitions of the self, Kohut's "selfobject" and Kegan's "culture of embeddedness," and their respective notions of the intrapsychic aspects of the process of psychological growth. A model that integrates the stages on Kegan's developmental helix with Kohut's self-selfobject constellations is offered. It is suggested that the common premise that underlies their views has to do with the bipolarity of each view--that the

unity of the self is composed of the balanced opposites of autonomy versus inclusion.

DEDICATION

To my father, in devoted memory  
And my mother, with love and respect

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Wilmar VanderPol

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## CHAPTER I

### BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

The observation that traditional psychoanalytic developmental theory holds less influence than it once did in the field of psychotherapy theory and practice, and perhaps still less in the more general field of developmental theory, is not likely to evoke strong disagreement. The reasons for this situation are many, including the continuing evolution of psychoanalytic theory itself, the nearly bewildering proliferation of psychological theories, each struggling to claim some turf in the psychological field, and the historically separate development of areas and theories of psychology, even when these theories address the same area of psychology, such as development.

Although psychoanalytic theory now shares the field with many others, no single theory has ever been able to supplant it or rival it with respect to its comprehensive metapsychology, its fundamental simplicity, its power of theoretical explanation for the infinite complexity and variation of human behavior, and its value for the explanation and treatment of a variety of psychological disturbances. Freud's developmental theory, grounded firmly in his biologically based drive theory and in his psychosexual stage theory culminating in the Oedipal complex which produces the tripartite structural ego, has undergone significant change from within the psychoanalytic ranks

(through such theorists as Erik Erikson, Melanie Klein, Heinz Hartmann, Harry Stack Sullivan, and later ego and object relations psychologists), but many of its essential elements have remained the same.

One of the perennial criticisms of psychoanalytic developmental theory is that its psychosexual stage theory, and even its elaborations of later ego development by such theorists as Erikson and Hartmann, grounded as they are in the physiologically based drive theory of Freud, are not based on empirical observations of development, but on clinical evidence, and that evidence derived from memory of infant experience reproduced in regressed states. Furthermore, it is commonly argued that psychoanalytic theory of normal development is derived from and constructed out of pathologically rooted material rather than normal material.

The point is that there has been and there remains a gulf between psychoanalytically based developmental theory and most other developmental theories, especially those coming from general psychology, academic psychology, and empirically based approaches to the study of development. Guntrip (1971) observed, "Psychoanalysis could derive much help, so far as theory formulation is concerned, from general psychology" (p. 13). It could be argued that psychoanalytic theory has made some effort to "assimilate" but not much effort to "accommodate" (to use Piagetian terminology) the scientific findings and the supportive theories of other developmental approaches such as Piaget's cognitive developmental theory. As Kegan (1982) said,

Psychoanalytic theory now has very little life within academic psychology and yet it is the guiding source of practice in most hospitals and clinics. Cognitive-developmentalism has had a robust life in the university and almost no influence whatsoever in the clinic. (p. 14).

This isolation of psychoanalytic theory from other developmental theory and study need not be considered a problem as long as each theory appears to be functioning effectively within its own area. But it would be hard to dispute the claim that clinical psychology, struggling as it is in recent years with increasing numbers of patients whose issues appear to be of a developmental and object-relational nature (Hamilton, 1988; Kernberg, 1984; Kohut, 1971; Masterson, 1985) rather than issues based primarily on intrapsychic drive conflict, could not benefit from some closer interaction with the rich and abundant material, as well as the theoretical insight from cognitive-developmental and other normal developmental infant research.

The problem is that traditional psychoanalytic developmental theory, valuable as it once was for its explanatory power and as a basis for therapy, appears to be less and less viable as theory of psychological development in the light of current infant research (Lichtenberg, 1983; Stern, 1985). This viewpoint appears increasingly valid with respect to normal development and also, but perhaps less clearly so, with respect to pathological development. As Lichtenberg said, "It seems clear that much bridging must be accomplished before analytic thinking on drives, ego functioning, and early intrapsychic conflict can be integrated with the data of infant researchers" (p. 16).

There is a need, therefore, to investigate the question of the extent to which some of the concepts and constructs, and even some of the basic premises, of psychoanalytic developmental theory, based largely on data derived within the patient/therapist context, can be effectively related to and possibly integrated with the more academic and experimentally based developmental theories such as those based on Piagetian cognitive-developmentalism and current infant research.

There have been efforts by theorists to lay the broad outlines of the groundwork for the eventual integration of the contributions of Freud and Piaget. Fast (1985) stated that the earliest efforts to propose and promote the idea of studying areas of congruence between the essentially cognitive framework of Piaget and the essentially affective domain of psychoanalytic theory came from Rapaport. It was in the expansion of psychoanalytic theory by ego psychology to include the concept of a conflict-free zone of ego development that Rapaport (cited in Fast, 1985) saw an opportunity to find common ground between drive and defense theory and the cognitive developmentalism of Piaget.

The concept of a conflict-free area of the ego, as it was developed especially by the work of Hartmann (1958), suggests a line of development that is essentially free from the area of the drives and defenses and the conflict between the structures of the mind. This separate line of development has its source in inborn mechanisms that are autonomous of the drives, developing instead by maturation in the context of interaction and experience with the largely neutral and impersonal aspects of the environment. This conflict-free area

included such functions as cognition, perception, memory, and motor skills, and these mature through adaptive engagement with the environment.

This addition to the psychoanalytic conception of the ego seemed to provide a place for the inclusion of Piaget's work within the psychoanalytic framework. Fast (1985) suggested that the two most elaborately developed efforts to integrate Freud and Piaget by the use of Hartmann's (1958) conflict-free zone of the ego are those of Wolff (1960) and Greenspan (cited in Fast, 1985). Wolff suggested that the two frameworks complement each other, addressing different but overlapping aspects of human behavior. The one area, comprising the development of intelligence, perception, and adaptive behavior, is best explained by Piaget's sensorimotor stages viewed in the context of ego psychology's concept of inborn ego mechanisms; these behavior patterns are activated when organic needs are not pressing. The other area of behavior patterns emerges when drive tensions are pressing and the infant is responding to inner forces rather than focusing on the external world and learning to adapt to it.

Greenspan (cited in Fast, 1985) also tended to see two separate lines of development, one affective and the other cognitive. He suggested that there are two ego boundaries oriented to different "stimulus worlds," one being the inner world, the stimuli "connected to drives, wishes, feelings, internal representations and affectively colored human relationships" (p. 129), and the other set of stimuli coming from the outer world, relating "more (or less) to the impersonal, often inanimate world" (p. 129). Fast (1985) suggested that

the problem with both of these efforts towards integrating Freud and Piaget is that they maintain an inherent dichotomy between affective and cognitive development; and that while they accommodate Piaget's contribution in terms of his delineation of successive cognitive stages, they miss his deeper contribution, which relates to his view of the underlying processes by which psychological growth takes place.

According to Fast (1985), the basic issue for Piaget "is the development of the individual's ability to differentiate the subjective and the objective, the internal and the external, the psychical and the physical" (p. 3). This view of Piaget is very similar to that of Kegan (1982), whose work is a major part of this study. Fast, as Kegan, emphasizes that Piaget's work is misunderstood when it is limited to mere stages of cognitive development. She stated that for Piaget affect "is integral to all the individual's experience and to the development of all mental structures" (p. 4). This same point is made unequivocally by Piaget in a 1981 translation of a series of lectures on affect that he delivered at the Sorbonne in 1953-54. He stated, "Affective states that have no cognitive elements are never seen, nor are behaviors found that are wholly cognitive" (p. 5).

Fast (1985) proposed a framework for integrating Freud and Piaget that maintains the essential unity of cognitive and affective development. In her view the differentiation of self and non-self, the subjective and the objective, is the basic, underlying process out of which all facets of development emerge, the affective and interpersonal as well as the cognitive and impersonal. Her aim is



"to provide an object-relational model for the development of psychic structure" (p. ix) that will take account of all the major psychoanalytic conceptualizations of developmental phenomenon within the basic Piagetian matrix of self and non-self differentiation.

Calling her approach "event theory," Fast (1985) focused on the individual's experience of an action or event as the basic building blocks or psychological material out of which psychological development arises. Her use of term "event" is similar to Piaget's concept of "action," which is registered initially in sensorimotor schemes, but her term emphasizes the mental and experiential aspect of the action, and it defines an event as inherently object-relational in the sense that it always involves the infant in interaction with some aspect of the environment. The key issue here is the point that in early infancy an event, even though from an external point of view it involves an infant self and an other, is experienced by the infant simply as an event, the self and other not being differentiated aspects of the action, and not having independent mental representation.

The significance of this conceptualization of early experience is that it leads to a new way of understanding the phenomenon of primary narcissism, which from the psychoanalytic perspective is explained as the infant's total self absorption and its concomitant obliviousness to its environment. Event theory suggests that what appears as the phenomenon of primary narcissism is merely a product of the infant's level of mental organization, its nondifferentiated experience of self and other, rather than an affective involvement

with the self which in later development shifts toward the object world.

This brief and incomplete sketch of Fast's (1985) approach to integrating Freud and Piaget is included here to introduce the important notions which she suggested are necessary to an integration of the theories that does justice to them both--the essential indivisibility of affect and cognition, the process of self and non-self differentiation and reintegration as the matrix of all psychological development, and the consequent reformulation of narcissism as a mental state in which the self is completely or partially undifferentiated from the other. Each of these notions will be taken up in considerable detail below as aspects of the work of Robert Kegan and Heinz Kohut. Kegan's theory of development is based on a similar integration of affect and cognition, and he identified "motion" as the ground out of which personality emerges. And as stated before, Kegan's view of Piaget's underlying framework for development is similar to Fast's (1985). As for Kohut, his unique view of narcissism can be understood in the same framework as Fast's nondifferentiation of self and other.

The purpose of this study is considerably narrower than Fast's (1985) ambitious attempt to integrate Freud and Piaget. Its purpose is to explore the limited question of whether one specific cognitive developmental theory can be fruitfully related to and perhaps integrated with one specific psychoanalytic developmental theory. The two contemporary theorists to be studied are Robert Kegan and Heinz Kohut. Kohut will be studied as the representative of an emerging

branch of psychoanalytic theory known as self psychology. Kegan will be studied as representing a Piagetian based developmental theory he called constructive-developmentalism.

There are obvious advantages and disadvantages to such a limitation, and this issue will be addressed in more depth as the dissertation progresses. One obvious criticism that might be made of this limitation of scope is that these two theorists may not be fully representative of the respective theoretical fields. One response to such a criticism might be that, given the state of complex diversity in contemporary psychological theory, it is neither possible nor desirable to look for a single theory or theorist to be fully representative of the broader paradigm out of which the theory may be evolving. Secondly, it is the position of this author that an intensely focused investigation may be what is called for here if the purpose is to search for small but significant beginnings in the larger effort to bring some integration and synthesis to a field as diverse and fragmented as psychology currently is.

This study is also intended to be limited by its nature and purpose. It is the intention of the author to present an analysis of the two theorists that is based for the most part on the primary writings of Kohut and Kegan themselves. In the case of Kohut, however, some source material will be drawn from individuals who worked closely with him and have begun efforts to present the development of Kohut's thinking and writing in an organized, sequential manner. The work of Ornstein (1978) and Wolf (1988) will be especially helpful in this respect. In the aspects of the study that will present the

separate theories of Kegan and Kohut it is not the intention of the writer to analyze or comment but to present as clearly and accurately as possible a summary of the respective theories that is consistent with the original intention of the authors. However, the heart of the study--the attempt to investigate the extent to which the two theories might be integrated and thereby shed light on and support each other--is original and, therefore, will be supported primarily by theoretical argument rather than by reference to literature. It is in this aspect of the study that the writer may be extrapolating at times from the original terms and concepts of Kohut and Kegan to demonstrate that underlying patterns of integration and synthesis might be justified.

The rationale for choosing the work of Kegan and Kohut to explore the question of bridging and eventually integrating analytic theory with cognitive-developmentalism is that in both cases these theorists begin with and continue to build their theories on the foundation of the primary originators of the general theories in question--Kegan on Piaget and Kohut on Freud. Kegan's research and theorizing is an attempt to build a metapsychology out of Piaget's underlying framework. His psychology is an extrapolation of Piaget's epistemological, biological, and philosophical framework which Kegan (1982) suggested is a "Trojan horse with an army inside as daring as psychoanalysis" (p. 42). He suggested that, while Piaget and Freud both view psychological growth in developmental terms, psychoanalytic theory tends to be a theory about affect, and cognitive-developmental theory tends to be about cognition. Kegan's intention was to locate

a broader context than either affect or cognition as the matrix out of which personality development emerges. Thus, while the primary purpose of Kegan's work is not to articulate a theoretical integration of psychoanalytic and cognitive developmental theory, his work helps to lay the groundwork for such an effort.

A second major element in Kegan's theory besides developmentalism is what he called constructivism--the idea that the human individual is constitutive of his own experience, an idea which, according to Fingarette (1963), crosses philosophy, theology, literary criticism, and psychology. Kegan said that in psychology the idea of the human being as a participant creator of his own experience is "an axiom of existential, phenomenological, Gestalt, Piagetian, perception theorist, and Kelly-construct approaches" (p. 11). Thus, Kegan appeared to be suggesting a metapsychology that not only integrates analytic and cognitive developmental theories but also includes what is sometimes referred to as the "Third Force" in psychology--the existential-humanistic view of human nature.

In summary, Kegan's work is an attempt to build a psychology--in this case psychology meaning not only a description and explanation of the inner processes that occur in a person's development, but also what it is like for the person to experience these shifts and changes--based on the foundation of Piaget's remarkable and lucid objective descriptions of universal perceptual and cognitive developmental shifts and the foundation of the existential premise that a person is literally a meaning-maker, that is, a person is participantly involved in constructing his or her own experience of life.

The bridge from Kegan to Kohut can be made at this point by the use of a rather lengthy quotation from Kegan (1982) in which he offered a rationale for his work as well as an explanation of the connection of his work to Piagetian and existential, or what he called "constructive" theory. After recognizing the value of these theories for revealing the universal shape and sequence of the processes and stages that a person goes through in constructing one's own development, he said:

And yet this constructive-developmental perspective has taken no interest whatever in the equally important, but quite different, side of the same activity--the way that activity is experienced by a dynamically maintained "self," the rhythms and labors of the struggle to make meaning, to have meaning, to protect meaning, to enhance meaning, to lose meaning, and to lose the "self" along the way. The Piagetian approach, viewing meaning-making from the outside, descriptively, has powerfully advanced a conception of that activity as naturally epistemological; it is about the balancing and rebalancing of subject and object, or self and other. But what remains ignored from this approach is a consideration of the same activity from the inside, what Fingarette would call the "participative." From the point of view of the "self," then, what is at stake in preserving any given balance is the ultimate question of whether the "self" shall continue to be, a naturally ontological matter. (p. 12)

The fact that Kegan placed the "self" in the center of his psychology does not automatically place him philosophically or psychologically within or even close to the self psychology framework of Kohut, for as Chessick (1985) said, one is hard put to find two authors who use the term self in the same way. Nevertheless, it is Kegan's placement of the ongoing experiential sense of oneself (including the perennial experience of losing and reconstituting the self) as central to his psychology that provides the basis in this dissertation for a

fundamental bridge between Kegan and Kohut.

In Kohut's (1977) self psychology it is also the self--a "center of initiative" present virtually from birth--that is central to his psychology. Kohut (1984) spoke of the survival of the "nuclear program of the self" as the "basic force in everyone's personality" (p. 147) and he repeatedly referred to disintegration anxiety as the deepest anxiety that man can experience (Kohut, 1977, 1984). Thus it is exploring and understanding the nature of and the experience of an ongoing "self" that both Kegan and Kohut view as the proper province of the study of psychology.

With respect to his broad description of the process of psychological development of the emergence of the self, Kohut's conception is very similar to Kegan's. Kohut (1984) said that "the developmental moves of normal psychological life must be seen in the changing nature of the relationships between the self and its selfobjects" (p. 52). By "selfobject" Kohut was referring to any other or "object" whom the self uses in its own service to maintain itself and who is in some degree experienced as a part of the self. This concept will be dealt with at length in Chapters II and III.

To summarize: Both Kegan and Kohut postulate a sense of self as a central and organizing feature of an individual's psychological life and development. Second they both view this sense of self as actively participating in its own development. Third, their field of inquiry in studying psychological development includes the inner experience of what it is and means to be such a self in development. Fourth, they each end up describing the most fundamental features of

the stages or eras of psychological development in terms of successive configurations of the self and other balance.

The question being addressed in this paper is whether or not these two theories can be demonstrated to be fundamentally compatible on a number of levels, from their philosophical bases to their psychological conceptions of the self/other relationship, to the process of internalizing psychological structure and the roles of the self and other in this process. It is the hypothesis of this paper that not only can the theories be demonstrated to be essentially compatible, but that in exploring their areas of congruence and difference each theory will have unique aspects and insights that can throw light on certain areas of the other theory so as to enrich them both. To the extent that this effort is at all successful, the possible integration of these two theories may serve as part of a basis for addressing the larger problem outlined above--the essential estrangement of psychoanalytic developmental theory from its counterpart in academic developmental theory.

The organizational plan of this study is as follows: It will begin with a summary overview of the separate developmental theories of Kegan and Kohut. Following the overview will be a more detailed explication of the key concepts, the psychological constructs, and the specific terminology used by each writer. The purpose of this terminology section will be to present as accurately as possible the precise intentions of each author in his use of language. Terms and concepts that relate to similar psychological processes will be compared and contrasted so as to bring out the unique emphasis of each



writer. While the similarities and compatibility of their views will be noted at this time, there will be no argument for their overall integration during this section.

Of the concepts compared and analyzed, the one that is the most complex and will require the most explication will be the nature and process of psychological growth, especially the internalization process and the building of psychological structure as seen from the viewpoint of each author. This issue requires a special consideration because it is so central to developmental theory from both the psychoanalytic view and the cognitive view of psychological growth. This section will be especially important to an understanding of the basic differences and similarities of Kegan and Kohut. It will also serve as the major area in which to demonstrate how each theory has unique aspects and strengths that can shed light on areas within the other theory and perhaps fill out existing areas that are weakly sketched or even evoke possibilities for expansion of areas in the other theory.

The third chapter will be the formal argument for the compatibility of several fundamental concepts of the two theories as well as many of the specific constructs used in explaining and describing psychological growth. This argument will have two thrusts. The first will be that the theories are in principle compatible and complementary, and the second will be that their proposed integration could be beneficial to each of them in their separate efforts at continued development and support from research.

The chapter on integration will start with the idea that there is a basic common premise about the nature of the self that can be used as a framework for the integration. This premise is the paradoxical one that the unity of the self is composed and maintained by the dynamic tension between two components or poles that exist in complementary opposition to each other. It will then be argued that there is a remarkable resemblance of the point of view of each theorist in the nature and purpose or drive of each side of the dual composition of the self. Following this will be a comparison of the nature and function of the environment or "other" with respect to each pole of the self, since both Kegan and Kohut have a strong object-relational cast to their views. After establishing the basic framework of integration, an attempted synthesis of their views of the process of psychological growth will be offered. It will be suggested that Kegan's view does tend to emphasize the cognitive and perceptual aspects of growth and that his contribution lies more in the larger view of the major reorganizational shifts of development. Kohut, on the other hand, emphasized the affective dimension of development and his contribution lies in his microscopic view of development. Finally, some areas of reciprocal strengths and weaknesses will be pointed out.

The final section will suggest some possibilities for continued research with respect to the specific content of this study--the integration of the work of Kohut and Kegan. Since Kohut's self psychology is based much more on clinical material and issues and Kegan's developmental theory is based more on studies of the normal

interactions of individuals from a psychological (self/other balance) viewpoint, an effort will be made to suggest the type of studies that could apply and test the insights of Kegan with respect to clinical issues that are being dealt with in a self psychology framework; conversely, an effort will be made to suggest studies that would apply and test the insights of self psychology with respect to the behavior of individuals seen in the framework of Kegan's self/other balances.

## CHAPTER II

### OVERVIEW

The purpose of this chapter is to present separate overviews of the developmental theories of Kohut and Kegan. In Chapter I some of the broad similarities of a few of their basic ideas were mentioned, but a coherent presentation of their theories was not given. The intention is to present a broad enough overview of each theory to allow the reader to hold the main framework of each one in mind and to get a clear grasp of the basic concepts without getting bogged down in a great deal of intricate detail. A more detailed explication of main concepts will be offered in the following chapter, along with some contrast and comparison of the concepts.

#### Kohut

##### Theoretical Roots

It is interesting to note with respect to Kohut's current influence that in a review by Strauss, Yager, and Strauss (1984), "The Cutting Edge in Psychiatry," in which leading American psychiatrists were asked for their views on the most important developments in their field in the last decade, only 13 publications were listed often enough to be considered of major importance, and of these 13 only one author was listed twice--Heinz Kohut, for The Analysis of the Self (1971) and The Restoration of the Self (1977).

Kohut's self psychology is historically rooted in Freud's psychoanalytic theory. He was born in Vienna in 1913 and received his medical degree from the University of Vienna in 1938. In 1940 he arrived at the University of Chicago. He studied at the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis and taught psychoanalytic theory there for 15 years. His theoretical roots are in Freudian thought, and one cannot help being struck by the pains Kohut took, especially in his early writing, to demonstrate that the psychology of the self is not a fundamental break from Freudian theory but rather is continuous with and complementary to it. However, most reviewers end up seeing self psychology as having some fundamental and irreconcilable differences from traditional psychoanalytic theory (Baker & Baker, 1987; Chessick, 1985; Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983; Ornstein, 1978).

It is this writer's view that the fundamental differences between Kohut and traditional psychoanalytic theory can best be understood in the framework of the fundamental shift from the 19th century philosophical and scientific outlook of mechanistic determinism to the 20-century views of relativism, field theory, and intrinsic inseparability of the observer-observed unit in scientific study. Both Chessick (1985) and Ornstein (1978) concluded that self psychology is indeed a new paradigm. For this writer it is helpful to think of Kohut's relation to classical psychoanalytic theory in terms of Kuhn's (1962) description of the nature of the relationship of a new paradigm to the one it is superseding--that it is a larger perspective which may include much of the knowledge gained and even some of the constructs of the former, but which goes beyond the limits of the

former and may reinterpret much of the factual material of the former. Kohut, for example, retains such fundamental concepts as the Oedipus complex, libido, and aggression; but he redefines them and explains their place and value from a new perspective.

Wolf (1980) offered the following general description of self psychology with respect to distinguishing it from classical psychoanalytic theory.

Self psychology represents a shift in emphasis toward the explicit acknowledgement of the empathic-experiential base of psychoanalytic data--introspective data had always been implicit in Freud's theorizing--concomitant with a shift in conceptualization from a natural science model of the psychic apparatus to an experiential self-selfobject model. Furthermore, the self psychological focus on interactions of the self with selfobjects results in a more balanced view of the influence of the environment on the subject. These environmental influences are not seen as mere accidents impinging on drive and ego development that is relatively innate and autonomous. Rather, in self psychology the interactions between self and selfobjects are conceptualized in terms of continuous and reciprocal influences. The feedback process between the self and its selfobject milieu result in the continuous modification of both. The relationship, therefore, is gradually changed over time. In this way, the self-selfobject model makes it possible to construct a developmental line of selfobject relations (a more euphonious term than self-selfobject relations).  
(pp. 118-119)

Wolf indicated that at the present time the developmental line of selfobject relations is rather scantily sketched out in self psychology theory. Part of the intention of this study is to examine whether the much more elaborated line of development that Kegan presents might be usefully related to an attempt to expand upon the core of Kohut's line of development.

This overview, and this entire study, present self psychology in its later formulations by Kohut without paying much attention to

the historical or theoretical evolution of his thought, a necessary limitation of this study, but at some cost to the appreciation of Kohut's lifelong struggle to both maintain his ties to classical psychoanalytic theory and to allow his essentially new vision to emerge. In 1977, after more than 25 years of the continual process of reexamining what he believed to be new clinical data in the light of existing and as well as expanded theory, Kohut stated:

The infantile sexual drive in isolation is not the primary psychological configuration--whether on the oral, anal, urethral, or phallic level. The primary psychological configuration (of which the drive is only a constituent) is the experience of the relation between the self and the empathic selfobject. (p. 122)

In his earlier work Kohut (1972) had defined the nature of the self as part of the mind's content, and he viewed the self as a psychological abstraction derived from the data of psychoanalytic experience--the sense of an ongoing "I" that is continuous in time and cohesive in configuration. By 1977 "the self finally emerged as a bipolar, supraordinate configuration--but not as a fourth agency of the mind--with its own center of initiative and thus no longer only a content of the mind" (Ornstein, 1978, p. 97).

Self psychology theory is based on data derived from empathic-experiential introspection in the psychoanalytic setting. In his work with narcissistic personality disorders Kohut began to experience and observe a quality and kind of transference that was an anomaly to the standard transference neuroses of neurotic patients. When he allowed these new types of transference-like attachments to evolve without interpreting them to the patients as infantile sexual or

aggressive wishes, he observed that the "use" these patients were making of him had distinct characteristics that could be described and explained in terms of fundamental therapist-patient, self-other, or to use Kohut's terminology, self-selfobject configurations. These fundamental configurations were essentially different from classic transferences in that they were not transferences of previously internalized affect laden objects which were projected onto the therapist but were actual efforts on the part of the patient to reestablish an aborted developmental process that required a specific "use" of an appropriately responsive other (selfobject) in an intricate and interdependent relationship.

From the data of such empathically tuned participation and observation, Kohut reconstructed a new view of psychological development with respect to the nature of the infant-caregiver relationship as a whole, the unique roles of each, the motivation driving the interactions, the specific configurations that the dyadic unit takes, and the actual nature of psychological growth in its microprocesses.

### The Self and the Selfobject

Central to Kohut's (1977) theory is the self, a whole self which is present virtually from birth. He stated:

I suggest that we undertake the examination of the question of the existence of a rudimentary self in earliest infancy from perhaps a surprising starting point, namely, by stressing that the human environment reacts to even the smallest baby as if it had already formed such a self. . . . The crucial question concerns, of course, the point in time when, within the matrix of mutual empathy between the infant and his self-object, the baby's innate potentialities and the self-object's expectations with regard to



the baby converge. (p. 99)

This "self" comes to occupy a central position in the personality in Kohut's mature theory, and the self is understood to be a center of initiative and perception with its own "nuclear program." It may be helpful to conceptualize the self's motivation to realize its "nuclear program" in terms similar to the "self-actualizing" tendencies as presented by Rogers (1961) or Maslow (1954).

This self, which at first is rather diffuse and has no subjective awareness of itself, nevertheless has enough cohesion and firmness virtually from the beginning to interact with its environment (not just react or act in what might be described as preprogrammed, generalized responses) in subtle, responsive, initiatory ways suggestive of delicate dialogue with the attuned caregiver. In other words, there appears to be genuine reciprocity in the infant-caregiver interaction. The infant studies now being carried out by such researchers as Stern (1985) and Lichtenberg (1983) offer strong observational support for this view of an infant's capacities.

In order to realize its nuclear program, the self requires a life-long, mutual (but with distinct roles which undergo great changes through the emerging developmental process), interdependence with its selfobjects. The nature of the early self-selfobject interaction and the role that the selfobject provides for the self is described by Kohut (1977):

The child's rudimentary psyche participates in the self-object's highly developed psychic organization; the child experiences the feeling states of the selfobject--they are transmitted to the child via touch and tone of voice and

perhaps by still other means--as if they were his own.  
(p. 86)

Thus the selfobject provides the glue, so to speak, that maintains the cohesion of the infant psyche. In general, the selfobject serves the function of providing an externalized form of the infant's own tenuous but essentially whole internal psychic apparatus. In other words, the selfobject, experienced by the self as though it were performing its own functions by itself, operates as the externalized psychic apparatus of the self in performing such functions as the regulation of affective extremes, self-soothing, organizing experience, and maintaining a sense of coherence both spatially and temporally. The empathically attuned caregiver senses the inner state of the infant, takes in the psychic state of the infant and resonates with it, whether it be experiencing joyful well-being or overwhelming fear. Then the caregiver, especially in the case of the infant experiencing any distress, by remaining in subtle attunement with the second by second experience of the infant, organizes, regulates, calms, and restores a sense of well-being by herself experiencing, demonstrating, and communicating her capacity to manage the upset and restore a sense of well-being. Thus the infant actually participates in the experience of the psychic regulation carried out by the caregiver, much as, in a crude analogy, a child participates in the experience of walking when an adult places the child's feet on top of his or her own and walks while holding the child against his or her legs.

The nature of the psychological growth process is described by Kohut as taking place over thousands and thousands of

microinternalizations which occur normally in the handling of "optimal frustrations" (small upsets handled by the competent caregiver as described just above). This process, which will be described in more detail below, is called "transmuting internalization" by Kohut, and is the process by which psychic structure is slowly built up by repeated experiences in the self-selfobject dyad in which the self gets stronger by participating in the psychological functioning of the selfobject and then internalizing the soothing and regulating functions that were carried out by the caregiver. In the case of gross lack of attunement the self structure remains diffuse and depleted, or it attempts to build compensatory or defensive structure that may be pathological.

Although the growth and strengthening of most psychological structure, both normal and pathological, takes place slowly through numerous, minute interactions, Kohut recognized that some psychological growth takes place more intensely and massively. Some pathology may result from massive trauma and some normal growth takes place in phase-appropriate internalizations of a more massive type than the ongoing microinternalizations. Kohut's view of the Oedipal phase is an example of a more massive internalization and a concomitant shift in the self-selfobject configuration. A descriptive summary of the developmental stages will be presented below.

### The Bipolar Concept

Turning now to a description of the fundamental modes that the self-selfobject unit takes in order to facilitate the psychological

growth and to maintain psychological health and vigor of the emerging self, the self requires three general configurational modes of being in relationship to selfobjects, and as the self develops, each of these three modes undergoes a slow transformation from a relationship of near total dependence to one of relative dependence and eventually to mutual interdependence. The naming and defining of these three modes come directly from the psychoanalytically derived data that Kohut experienced and struggled with in an attempt to fit these data into classical theory.

Two of these modes are basic to Kohut's view of the development of the self, and they form the poles of the "bipolar" self. These two--the grandiose self (GS), which Kohut formerly called the narcissistic self, and the idealized parent imago (IPI)--have separate lines of development although they are intricately related. Kohut used the image of magnetic poles to suggest the relationship of these aspects of the self. The third aspect of the self--the innate tendencies in the nuclear program of a given self towards the eventual realization of the unique talents and skills inherent in that self--are played out on the "tension arc" (Kohut, 1984) formed between the poles of the grandiose self and the idealized parent imago.

Some clarification with respect to the difficulty that many critics have expressed regarding the separate developmental lines of the "bipolar" self or even a "tripolar" self (if the third transference-like configuration is extrapolated into another component of the self) may be helpful at this point. These separate developmental lines are not unrelated. They are the natural and inevitable efforts

of the one, underlying or supraordinate self to maintain its cohesion and realize its unique nuclear program. Kohut theorized (Ornstein, 1978) that the child begins in a state of primary narcissism in which the infant "experiences the mother and her ministrations, not as a you and its actions, but within a view of the world in which the I-you differentiation has not yet been established" (p. 430). This perfect state, however, is soon disturbed by maturational pressures from within and environmental frustrations from without. The baby seeks to restore its perfect state with two separately developing attempts to build up new systems of perfection, one along an object relational line, and the other by developing the narcissistic (grandiose) self. Thus the bipolar self represents the two basic modes of connection that the underlying self creates with its environmental objects to ensure its life project. The third constituent, the talents and skills, is a later product that emerges in distinct form and strength (much as later ego competencies are understood to develop in classical theory) from the tension field created by the interaction of the two basic poles--one seeking merely to express its unique and grandiose self celebration and the other seeking to shape itself like and achieve the realization of external ideals and models. The modification of and inhibition of some of the expressions of the grandiose pole is required to achieve the realization of the ideals, thus creating the tension arc between them.

The GS construct can be understood by examining its unique self-selfobject mode (this is the first "transference-like" phenomenon that Kohut observed in his narcissistic patients, and he referred

to it as the mirror transference). This is the pole of the self that is unique to this individual. It was born with this potential as though imprinted in the genetic coding of its DNA. This aspect of the self does not develop by taking in aspects of its significant environment, whether as part or whole objects. Instead, this grandiose constituent of the self seeks to develop what is already inherent in it by establishing a self-selfobject relationship that nourishes its life project by mirroring, confirming, holding, and admiring the efforts of the infant to express itself. The infant, experiencing the delighted response of the selfobject as to some extent its own, experiences an enhancement of self-worth and self-esteem in the process. Baker and Baker (1987) stated, "The mirroring responses of the parent are concerned with the maintenance and development of self-esteem and self-assertive ambitions" (p. 3). It is the term "ambitions" that Kohut constantly uses to refer to the direction and shape that the nuclear program of the grandiose self will take.

The GS can be related to classical theory as the aspect of the individual that incessantly seeks unbridled expression--the drive element. In most object relations theories it would be similar to the true self. In relation to Kegan's theory, it could be compared to the pole of the self that pulls for autonomy, separateness, and uniqueness. The grandiose self seeks to express itself in two basic ways--exhibitionistic displays (the pleasure of being itself), and grandiose fantasies (the sense of initiative and power).

The other constituent of the bipolar self is the idealized parent imago (IPI). This line of development is an object relational

line of development more akin to the view of development in most object relations theories in that the self that develops along this line is intrinsically formed in relation to and by internalization of aspects of the other. Its healthy development contributes to the eventual capacity for mature object relations in which the other is experienced and loved as a unique and separate person. This line of development results in the drive regulation and inhibition (to use classical language) of the grandiose drive expressions. This is one source of the tension between the two poles of the self.

The IPI line of development, like the GS, is an effort on the part of the infant to maintain the perfection of its early infancy. In both cases a selfobject is used to maintain the self; but in this case (which comes slightly later in actual development because it requires the beginning capacity to separate self and other), the effort to maintain a sense of perfection (power and cohesion) is accomplished by projecting the grandiosity onto the object and participating in its strength. The internalization of the IPI throughout childhood results in the internal structure that forms the ego matrix--the drive regulation that once was performed by the parent, and ego ideals, the ego-syntonic values and goals that guide and pull a person forward towards certain goals. In this paper some comparison will be made between Kohut's IPI pole and Kegan's pole towards inclusion, dependence, and belonging.

### Selfobject Functions

To describe the development of the self with its bipolar constituents as above is somewhat misleading in that it suggests a view of development that sees the individual as a separate entity developing from within its intrapsychic process by use of some external care and nutriment, but Kohut's view is much more fundamentally object relational than that. The self-selfobject relationship is a dynamic field and remains so from infancy to death, although obviously undergoing changes of a transformational order that change the relative roles of each part of the self-selfobject unit. Thus, the very nature of the self is that its reality is maintained in a context or culturing environment (to use the language of Kegan, 1982) of others that are not just separate others but always in some ways intimately and essentially a part of the self. This concept recalls Winnicott's (cited in Davis & Wallbridge, 1981) simple and astounding insight expressed in his famous statement that "there is no such thing as a baby," meaning more than the simple fact that there is never a baby without a mother (even a classical Freudian steeped in 19th-century science could accept that fact), but that any attempt to study a baby (or self) apart from its context is bad science because it has violated the nature of the reality it is studying.

The point here is that for Kohut and Kegan the study of the "other" is equally important as the study of the self, and, stated more accurately, the development of the self/other relationship is what psychological development is about. But for now, a brief



synopsis of the other and its functions, treated as though the "other" were a separate entity, may be helpful. In self psychology, the "other" performs three ongoing functions to create a nurturing environment for the emerging self.

The first function is mirroring, which became a richly elaborated construct for Kohut. It is, of course, much more than accurate reflection. It includes the gleam in the mother's eye when she is holding the infant, holding in her eyes, hands, and mind. It is a participatory mirroring that shares in and expresses the infant's earliest experiences and communicates them as delightful and valued. It is the numerous ways of confirming and affirming the infant's sense of existence in a positive and welcoming context which lays the earliest foundation of self-esteem. In the subtle interactions and intricate dialogue of self and selfobject, the self, through the process of transmuted internalization, firms up what already exists in potential inside itself. But it must see and experience itself "externalized" and confirmed in the mirroring in order to take in and own what is already there in potential.

Without mirroring the infant could develop neither the awareness that he or she existed nor that his or her existence was desirable and worthy as an ongoing project. Inadequate mirroring may result in the child's inability to build and strengthen the internal structure required to regulate his or her own self-esteem. Pathological mirroring can result in distorted internal self structure that causes the individual to relate to others in ways that perpetuate low self-esteem. Throughout life an individual experiences the

environment as mirroring and thus confirming essential aspects of the self. In the healthy person the majority of the mirroring reflects a positive self, sustained by its own as well as other's feedback. One demonstration of an unhealthy self is its uncanny ability to get itself reflected in consistently negative ways.

The second function of the other is to provide an idealizable, strong, safe, problem-solving model with whom the self can partially merge in its first efforts to meet the exigencies of existence. As with the mirroring, it is an external object with whom the infant can participate in such a way as to experience the internal psychic functioning that produces calmness and comforting. As the self matures this function operates less in terms of merged psychic functioning and more in terms of a separate self learning from the modeling of an idealized other. As with mirroring, the need for idealization continues throughout life, as in mentoring and symbolic ideals.

The third function of the other is to provide a connection in reciprocal relationship that confirms a sense of likeness and belonging with others. These are Kohut's twinship or alter ego needs. This function of the other developed late in Kohut's experience and theory, perhaps because the developing self does not rely upon and call out these needs from others until the later stages of its development (the school years). Much of Kohut's clinical work was with more primitive, pre-Oedipal issues. The development of skills and talents, and what these competencies mean to the developing self, are later developments of the self. In any case, according to Kohut, the maturing self requires from the environment some ongoing feedback

that reflects its self-concept (with its skills and talents in action, as in sports or a career) as being like some others, as belonging to a group of similarly minded and behaving people.

Finally, it should be noted that all three of these functions of the other provide a key ingredient required for the internalization of psychological structure--"optimal frustration." This concept of Kohut is central to his view of normal psychological growth as well as growth that occurs in the course of therapy. This concept will be explained in more detail in the next chapter.

### Developmental Stages

As mentioned, self psychology does not currently have an elaborated stage by stage conceptualization of the sequential shifts in the self-selfobject configuration. The developmental line of selfobject relations as viewed by Kohut appears to be a mixture of psychosexual and object relations elements and conceptions. During the first year of life the self and the experience of the self is essentially inseparable from the "benignly facilitating influence of an empathically attuned caretaker" (Wolf, 1980, p. 123). Towards the end of the first year, marked by such behavior as the onset of stranger anxiety, the precursors of the self begin to consolidate with enough cohesion to reflect an ongoing center of initiative involved in its own life project. During the second year, with adequate parenting, the increments of psychic structure strengthen to the point where, towards the end of the second year, the emergent self is viable enough for the first stage of actual self-selfobject

relations.

The task at this time for the emerging self is to establish and maintain its boundaries within the context of its selfobject milieu and to experience some mastery over some aspect of its bodily functioning. Since both of these issues involve separating out the experience of the self and some aspects of its functioning that were formerly experienced as part of the selfobject, this process involves some conflict and struggle. The challenge for the emerging self is to accomplish this transformation without losing the selfobject's continued availability for mirroring and idealization. Wolf (1980) explained this conflict and ambivalence in self psychology concepts:

The boundaries are strengthened within the context of self-object relationships by drawing on the aid of the confirming selfobject as an ally while simultaneously confronting the selfobject as an antagonist against whom self-assertion mobilizes healthy aggression that promotes the cohesive strength of the self. These contradictory needs for an ally-antagonist selfobject account for the inevitable ambivalence of this phase of development. These contradictions color all subsequent relations and, in general, impart a dialectical element to the human enterprise.  
(pp. 125-126)

The first node, then, is prototypical in that it is the first primitive experience of a self that is in some way separate from its environment and yet connected with it, establishing a lifelong dialectic of tension between two poles.

As the maturing self increases in capacity to relate to the selfobject as a separate object (although at a primitive level of this distinction), it also increases its capacity to differentiate one selfobject from another, a capacity that had its first level consolidation at the time of the appearance of stranger anxiety.

Now, at the three and four year level this capacity increases in complexity and strength as the child extends the selfobject milieu to both parents as well as siblings. The earlier ambivalence towards a single selfobject may now be ameliorated by differentiating the ally-antagonist need onto separate selfobjects. Although Kohut viewed this era of development as sexually tinged, it is not ultimately driven by sexual desire for the opposite sex parent and the consequent aggression towards the same sex parent. The motivation is still based on the developing self's need to maintain a sense of coherence while balancing the polar needs of separateness and connection, and these needs may be played out in various ways including times of switching back and forth between the parents as to the ally and the antagonist.

The significant shift that occurs in basic self-selfobject relations at this time is the shift from the tight, closed, concrete, dyadic type of relationships typical of the pre-Oedipal child to the expanded use of various selfobjects to meet the mirroring, idealizing, and twinship needs of the maturing self. The capacity to shift the nature of the selfobject from concrete, dyadic units to triadic and multiple forms and connections (what might be called a selfobject field) requires the increased firmness and coherence of internal self structure that can maintain itself across a field of selfobjects. The archaic need for an exclusive, concrete selfobject is mitigated at this time, setting the foundation for the continued socialization and maturing of the child's lifelong selfobject connections.

During adolescence another significant shift occurs in which the primary source of self-esteem is switched from the family context to a peer context; and in addition, new forms of selfobjects such as symbolic heroes, real heroes, ideals, and values emerge. As the self continues to mature by internalizing the values of idealized figures and by strengthening its own talents and skills, and by realizing its own ambitions in the supportive environment of family and peers, it eventually builds a support system that includes these symbolic values (for example, patriotism), identification with groups (career, religion, politics), and gratification from accomplishing one's own ambitions. But the need for the selfobject as a source of nourishment, like the need for oxygen, is never outgrown. Wolf (1980) stated:

The progression of the developmental process also continues so that by the time the adult has reached old age, he may often have achieved a selfobject relation with the wider world of mankind and beyond. Mature selflessness is really the expansion of the self and its selfobjects to take in the whole world. It is in this furthest development of the line of selfobject relations that we can discern those noble goals that are rooted in the transformations of infantile narcissism--the goals of wisdom and the acceptance of transience. (p. 130)

### Summary

Self psychology, although derived from clinical data (as is psychoanalytic theory), puts forth a theory of healthy psychological development couched very much in terms of self/other, relational development. As such it appears closely aligned with object relations theories. Unlike psychoanalytic theory it views the

development of the self or ego in primarily positive motivational terms. That is to say, the motivation for development and for object relations is not to satisfy biological instincts or psychological drives but to realize and fulfill a "nuclear program" of a self that is unique and uniquely related to others by its very nature and program. Unlike many object relations theories in which the uniqueness and separate qualities of the self tend to get deemphasized or lost in the total commitment to the theoretical unit of the self/other, and the self as a "unique center of initiative" is finally lost, self psychology restores the self to a position of more prominence in the self/environment balance. The self, according to Kohut (1977), has the potential for genuine creativity in the universe and can be described as having a measure of free will within its field of existence.

Kegan

### Theoretical Roots

As noted in the Chapter I, Kegan's (1982) constructive-developmental theory has its origins in Piaget's underlying framework of "genetic epistemology," a framework attuned to both biology and philosophy. In addition to the work of Piaget, Kegan viewed the origins of his theory in the works of Baldwin (1906), Dewey (1938/1963), and Meade (1934). Kegan stated that his theory is based on "empirically grounded speculation" (p. viii) and that he drew on a wide range of observed human phenomena from his own and others' life experience,

clinical experience, and research. Although rooted in Piaget, Kegan's theory is not merely an elaboration of Piaget's cognitive developmental stages into what might be called the inner psychological and experiential counterparts of these stages. It is that and much more, for Kegan sought to explore the implications of the "Trojan horse" that he sees in Piaget's discoveries. His point is that when certain types of major new discoveries are made, whether it be Columbus discovering America or Freud discovering the unconscious, the process of integrating this new knowledge with what was known before requires an entire reorganization or re-cognition of the previously known world. Thus the new "part" does more than add to the whole; it changes the whole.

For Kegan (1982), the "part" that Piaget discovered leads to the bigger discovery of "the process of evolution as a meaning-constitutive activity" (p. 42). Traditional attempts to conceptualize the life force and how the individual develops within it have either located the life force within the organism as a separate entity, an essentially biologically autonomous system with its own instincts or drives which require it to interact with its environment in order to get its needs met (the view of psychoanalysis, genetic biology, or sociobiology), or they have conceptualized the life force and located the theater of action in the environmental surround (the view of behaviorism), a view in which the individual organism is merely a responding or reacting product of the complex external forces impinging on it.



Kegan (1982) suggested that Piaget's vision offers a third alternative which is difficult for the Western mind to even conceptualize. He stated:

In fact, Piaget's vision derives from a model of open-systems evolutionary biology. Rather than locating the life force in the closed individual or the environmental press, it locates a prior context which continually elaborates the distinction between the individual and the environment in the first place. . . . Its primary attention, then, is not to shifts and changes in an internal equilibrium, but to an equilibrium in the world, between the progressively individuated self and the bigger life field, an interaction sculpted by both and constitutive of reality itself. (p. 43)

Kegan was suggesting that this eternal dialectic between the organism and the environment, this assimilation and accommodation on the part of each, "this evolutionary motion is the prior (or grounding) phenomenon in personality; that this process or activity, this adaptive conversation, is the very source of, and the unifying context for, thought and feeling; that this motion is observable, researchable, [and] intersubjectively ascertainable" (p. 44).

Furthermore Kegan suggested that this activity and motion which form the ground or context for personality development as the self evolves within its matrix is experienced by the self, and this experience may be the very source of human emotions. He stated, "Loss and recovery, separation and attachment, anxiety and play, depression and transformation, disintegration and coherence--all may owe their origins to the felt experience of this activity, this motion to which the word 'emotion' refers" (p. 44).

In offering this view of a wider context or prior ground from which to view personality development, Kegan has attempted to expand

the very perspective from which one observes the phenomena of human development and then formulates theoretical explanations of the data. He acknowledges that his approach is not "shy." What his expanded observational stance has allowed him to do is to view several of the traditional dichotomies that have appeared as irreconcilable opposites in different theories as having underlying unity or synthesis by virtue of their being dialectical poles of a common unity rather than mutually exclusive opposites. From this vantage point such questions as the following are poorly constructed questions and lead eventually to dead ends: Which is master of personality, affect or cognition? Which should be the central focus, the social or the individual, the intrapsychic or the interpersonal? Which is the more powerful framework, the psychoanalytic or the cognitive-structural?

### New Perspectives

Kegan's use of the word meaning is a key to understanding his approach towards synthesizing such dichotomized metapsychological problems as those above. When he took the broad context of the dialectical conversation between the organism and the environment and narrowed it to his psychology of the evolving self, he referred to the meaning-making of the individual. It is in the evolution of meaning-making that Kegan has sought to find a context which itself is constitutive of the polarities mentioned above. The self in its dialectical motion and conversation with its environment is literally a meaning-maker, that is, it makes meaning or sense out of its environment and its self, as it continually evolves from lesser stages to

more evolved forms of embeddedness with its environment by defining and redefining itself in successively more articulated configurational relationships with its environment or "culture of embeddedness." This self in evolvment can be understood as both a process and an entity, both a meaning-making system which creates more and more "self" as meaning or content and this made self which becomes identified as the person. Thus Kegan referred to the meaning that is the self and the meaning that is experienced in the process of constantly recreating a new self as both an "epistemological and ontological activity; it is about knowing and being, about theory-making and investments and commitments of the self" (pp. 44-45).

It is this definition of the self as a meaning-maker and the use of the term in two very different, in a sense contradictory, ways that makes Kegan's theory so difficult to grasp. Nevertheless, it is this very stance, this philosophical and scientific viewpoint, that, in this writer's understanding, is the heart of Kegan's theory. It is this approach which places Kegan as a scientist and theorist, within the 20th-century approach to science and the increase of knowledge. It may be helpful for the reader attempting to maintain conceptually the apparently opposing concepts of the self as entity and the self as process, to think of them in the same way that one is required to hold apparent opposites together in union in many other modern relativistic concepts. For example, light is viewed both as particles and waves, and atoms are viewed as both energy and structure. It may require a sort of mental juggling or balancing act, but then, to bring this philosophical abstraction down to immediate and

experience-near reality, if one takes note of his or her experience at any given moment, one can become aware of fact that he or she has at the moment a given, fairly stable or constant sense of self (an entity) and at the same time one is experiencing change and process in this very moment. There is no static self but a becoming, experiencing, moving sense of reality in which the self and its environment are part of a larger process. To help the Western mind comprehend this conception, Kegan (1982) said "we can begin by saying that it does not place an energy system within us so much as it places us in a single energy system of all living things" (p. 43).

It may be helpful to expand upon each of these aspects of the meaning-making of the self. With respect to the "made meaning" aspect, the self can be viewed at any given moment as a conscious and knowing entity that has more or less found a way to make sense out of things and has come to terms with this viewpoint. It has found a way of organizing experience in a somewhat stable framework of what constitutes the outside world and others, and what constitutes the inside world, the self sense, and what interactions between these two are all about. This is the somewhat static or balanced state that Kegan referred to as an evolutionary truce, a subject-object balance which the self uses to organize and make sense out of experience. This aspect emphasizes the cognitive and conceptual qualities of knowing and meaning. The Piagetian stages of development are descriptions of the successively more mature and differentiated ways of perceiving and knowing that human development goes through, each level being a wider perspective from which to view and know the self

and the world. This is the self that assimilates new experience into its presently organized structure or set of "made meanings," its way of perceiving and knowing. But it is also this self that goes through major upheavals in its organization, major accommodations to experience that does not "compute" in its old organization; or to use more Piagetian language, it goes through processes of "decentration" and "recentration" during major developmental shifts.

It is especially during these transitional and stressful times of reorganizing the frame or structure of one's made meaning, when one's made meaning framework seems inadequate to meet new challenges, that the second aspect of Kegan's notion of self as meaning-maker comes to the foreground. This is the self-as-process, and here the focus is on what it means, in the sense of what the experience is like, for the self to feel that its very existence is in motion, that it is unfixed and unstable, the existence is at all times a process of becoming as well as being. The self-as-process is dealing with what it means to make sense and then not to make sense, to feel a sense of coherence and then the loosening of that coherence. The emphasis is not so much on the cognitive aspect of knowing and meaning but the affective experience of knowing such "meanings" as loss, fragmentation, meaninglessness, and their attending negative emotions such as fear and anxiety, as well as the counterparts of coherence, attachment, and meaning, and the attendant positive emotions such as peace, delight, and a sense of well-being.

For Kegan then, the ground or context of personality development is this area of tension between the fixed and the changing, the

tension that the self experiences in the ongoing activity of assimilation and accommodation. It is in the context or framework of this field of tension that self experience occurs, resulting in the two ways of meaning-making, the one more cognitive (like an existing paradigm) and the other more affective (what it means to be this always emerging process, always hanging in the balance, even if the balance is sometimes relatively stable and sometimes unstable and shifting).

### Integration

It is through his complex view of the self as meaning-maker that Kegan attempted to find some common ground between such theoretically divided psychological traditions as existential-phenomenological theories and neo-psychoanalytic theories, including ego psychologies and object relations theories. Although he made no formal effort to integrate the theoretical differences between them, he suggested that the constructive-developmental theory he put forth "ends up doing honor to a surprising extent to the deepest convictions of both existential and dynamic personality psychologies" (p. 4). All of these theories pay attention, according to Kegan, to the "zone of mediation where meaning is made" and name this area variously as the "ego," the "self," and the "person" (p. 3). In other words, all of these theories take as the proper domain of psychological study that intermediate area between what is called an external event (by an observer), and the reaction or response of a subject to that event, the private area in which the person actually composes this experience into an

event for him or her. It is in this area that meaning is made of the event by the subject, and it this subjective, psychological meaning, whether cognitive or affective, experienced and to some extent created by the subject, that the psychologist seeks to understand and thereby make sense out of human behavior.

Kegan suggested that although both the existential and the dynamic traditions have greatly expanded our understanding of the self as meaning-maker, each of these traditions is, "by itself, in difficulty" (p. 4). He was suggesting that the basic convictions of each theory appear to be helpful and valid psychological conceptions, but they may have been taken as far as they can go within their own meta-psychological or philosophical frameworks. According to Kuhn (1962), each of these traditions could be said to be at that stage of scientific evolution when the theoretical structure which had served so well to illuminate many previously unknown or unexplained phenomena seems now to have run its course, having been employed as extensively as possible in its field, and now its experimental applications seem either to turn up no significantly new material or they turn up the kind of new and anomalous material which appears to challenge or contradict the premises of the very theoretical structure that brought the material to light. Thus the need for a new and wider paradigm under whose framework the anomalies can be studied while the old, hard won knowledge, much of which will be retained, may need to be reorganized and reintegrated in such a way as to change some of its meaning.

The "old knowledge" or basic convictions of the existential tradition which Kegan's constructive-developmental approach honors include the following: First, there is the self-actualizing principle as the sole motive of personality, a view so well developed by Maslow (1954) and Rogers (1961). Although Kegan rarely referred to or elaborated an argument for the presumed motivation behind the self's behavior, implicit in every aspect of his account of the self as meaning-maker is the notion that the compelling force behind the self's ongoing dialectical struggle with its environment is the self's need to continuously reestablish or "actualize" who and what it is in relation to its current amniotic surround. The second basic existential conviction Kegan retained is the old axiom that "existence precedes essence." This is the understanding of the self as process rather than entity. While Kegan may not be as radical as some existentialists in this regard (recall his double and paradoxical view of meaning described above), it is clear that his is fundamentally a theory of motion, of process, rather than a static or stage view of development. A third principle of agreement is that the self or person in process is best viewed as a basic unity, an integrated whole, which seeks to maintain and enhance itself as a coherent whole and to act out of a sense of wholeness and integrity; this is in contrast to views in which the self is part of a system, a bundle of separate facets each with its own motivation and set in inevitable conflict with each other. In the unified view of the self, anxieties, defenses, conflicts, and even psychopathology are viewed as products created and established as efforts by a unified



self system to maintain, enhance, or transform itself.

The limitations of these convictions which Kegan's approach seeks to address include the following: First, the self that is "actualized" in the existential view is often described as though it is one and the same self, or one "kind of self" that is always in the process of self-actualizing. Such a view does not pay attention to the qualitatively different "self" that is being actualized at different times, say at age 3 or 6 or 12 or 60. Likewise, it does not attend to the connections or ties between the earlier "selves" and the later ones and how these ties impact on the experience of the self at a given time. In addition, the emphasis on the "one" self in its existential moment takes no account of the commonality between all persons, especially with respect to the regularities of its development and the commonalities of this regular development among different individuals.

A second limitation of the existential view of development, according to Kegan, is its tendency to view development in a linear fashion from dependence to independence, with a strong bias towards independence or autonomy as opposed to relatedness. The constructive-developmental view, while maintaining the ever present motivation for self-actualization in terms of greater and clearer differentiation from the other (and less dependence in the sense of being embedded in the other), never loses sight of the equally important motivation towards inclusion or connection with others, the quality of this capacity to relate actually being enhanced by healthy individuation. Finally, Kegan suggested that the existential

understanding of the function of the culturing environment, whether this be the mother, the family, the wider culture, or the therapeutic function in assisting the self to grow or heal or actualize is vaguely delineated. Rogers's (1961) many discussions of the "client-centered response" and his explanations of what constitutes "unconditional positive regard" provide more "warmth than light" according to Kegan (p. 6) when it comes to understanding what is really going on in the self-other interaction and what might be needed from the therapist or mother at different moments and in different phases of the self's evolvment.

As stated above, Kegan also claimed to honor many of the basic positions of neo-psychoanalytic theory (ego psychology and object relations) with respect to viewing the self or ego as meaning-maker. Guntrip (1971) and others have outlined the changes that the concept of the ego or self has undergone within the history of psychoanalytic theory. Guntrip defined the essence of this change as a basic shift from a systems-ego to a person-ego, and he traced this slow shift through the words of Harry Stack Sullivan, Melanie Klein, Erik Erikson, W. D. Fairbairn, Heinz Hartmann, D. W. Winnicott, and Edith Jacobson. Central to the view of personality development in these theorists, according to Kegan, is the notion that ego or self development is intrinsically a product of the interaction of the organism and its environment. As a result, "the very essence of ego activity is object relations, and ego activity is presumed to begin immediately at birth, rather than waiting for years to be hatched out of prior and more powerful systems" (p. 7). In addition, Kegan accepted

the basic premise of neoanalytic theorists such as Erikson (1968) and Kernberg (1966) that psychological development takes place through predictable, successive evolutions of self-other stages. Kegan stated that his basic alignment with ego and object relations theorists lies in their common efforts "to understand the process and stages of development in our self-other configurations" (p. 7).

As with the existential views, the neo-psychoanalytic views have some built-in limitations and opposing dualities which Kegan suggested will require a larger perspective to resolve. He mentioned the three foremost of these: "the need for a sophisticated understanding of the relationship between the psychological and the social, between the past and the present, and between emotion and thought" (p. 15). Psychoanalytic theory has certainly emphasized one side of each of these dualities: the psychological (particularly the intrapsychic dimension) as opposed to the social, the past as opposed to the present, and affect over cognition. As Kegan said, while psychoanalytic theory has tended to be a theory about emotion, and cognitive-developmentalism has tended to be a theory of cognition, they each are theories of both, and each makes one the master and the other the slave of personality. Kegan stated that very little headway has been made in the last 30 years with respect to these polarities, and that a larger metapsychology is required to bring about a fruitful study of the tensions created by these polarities. His offering for that metapsychology is the constructive-developmental approach, which takes the activity of meaning-making, within the

context of the organism-environment struggle, as the fundamental motion of personality development.

### The Process

Having offered a brief summary of Kegan's theoretical roots and a short exposition of how his constructive-developmental theory relates to the main ideas in the existential-phenomenological and neo-psychoanalytic traditions, this overview now focuses on his actual description and explanation of the developmental process. Before going into a description of the stages or "eras" that mark the successive constitutions of the self, it will be helpful to have an understanding of how Kegan viewed the underlying process of evolution itself.

For him, psychological development is "a lifetime activity of differentiating and integrating what is taken as self and what is taken as other" (Kegan, 1982, p. 76). One can begin to get the significance of that statement by distinguishing Kegan's neo-Piagetian view of infancy and the earliest emergence from virtual symbiosis with the mother from the psychoanalytic object relations view of the same phenomena. From the psychoanalytic viewpoint the psychological events of infancy are more than precedent setting, they are continually operative and, especially in pathology, may be primary forces motivating and shaping current behavior. Especially around such issues as separation and integration, the events of infancy set the stage for and establish patterns for future personality structure and behavior. For Kegan, while the infancy experience is extremely

important and may have a direct impact on later behavior in the sense of establishing a poor foundation or setting a weak precedent, the later problems are not just replays of repressed infancy issues but are new and current wrestlings involving a higher level developmental struggle with an issue--the current form of a differentiation issue--that may have echoes of its infant cousin but is also an existential experience of separation in its own right. As Kegan stated, "While early infancy has great importance from a neo-Piagetian view, it is not, in its most fundamental respect, qualitatively different from any other moment in the lifespan" (p. 77).

Another helpful way to begin to understand Kegan's view of development is through his view of the phenomena around the concept known as object constancy and the earliest emergence of object relating that occur during and after the achievement of object constancy. From the psychoanalytic viewpoint the achievement of object constancy appears to involve and perhaps follow upon an energy redirection from the self (primary narcissism) to the object, now differentiated and experienced as separate because it has become the object of an external focus of energy or libido. The earliest form of object relations are understood, then, as resulting from a withdrawal of attachment to the self in favor of a new object outside the self. For Kegan it is the differentiation process itself, the evolutionary motion and struggle of "hatching out" that creates both the cognitive shift or maturation and the emotional value of the experience. The dawn of the object world is created by the infant as it participates in its emergence from embeddedness in its culturing environment. "By

differentiating itself from the world and the world from it, the organism brings into being that which is independent of its own sensing and moving" (p. 78). Thus, the development of maturing object relations might better be understood as resulting from "object creation" rather than object choice. It may appear that Kegan's view emphasizes the perceptual and cognitive aspect of this process and the psychoanalytic view concentrates primarily on the affective aspect, but Kegan insisted that the emotions play an equally significant role in the process. In fact, his whole point is that he has been trying to pay attention to and view the entire process from a prior and wider context--the evolutionary motion--that itself is generative of both cognition and emotion.

But before addressing Kegan's (1982) view of the role of affect in the process of achieving object constancy, it might be helpful to offer the following quotations describing the essential nature of the process as it is repeated with new content at various life junctures:

From a neo-Piagetian view, the transformation in the first eighteen months of life--giving birth to object relations--is only the first instance of that basic evolutionary activity taken as the fundamental ground of personality development. The infant's "moving and sensing," as the basic structure of its personality organization (the reflexes), get "thrown from"; [Kegan's exegesis of the etymology of object as that which gets projected from the subject] they become the object of attention, the "content" of a newly evolved structure. Rather than being my reflexes, I now have them, and "I" am something other. "I" am that which coordinates or mediates the reflexes, what we mean by "impulses" and "perceptions." This is the new subjectivity. For the first time, this creates a world separate from me, the first qualitative transformation in the history of guaranteeing the world its distinct integrity, of having it to relate to, rather than be embedded in.  
(p. 79)

This statement is a concise view of Kegan's theory from the perspective of the developing person, a description of what it might be like from the inside to grow through these changes. The following quotation is a more general description of the same phenomena from the outside:

The events of the first eighteen months culminate with the creation of the object and make evolutionary activity henceforth an activity of equilibration, of preserving or renegotiating the balance between what is taken as subject or self and what is taken as object or other. I suggest that human development involves a succession of renegotiated balances, or "biologics," which come to organize the experience of the individual in qualitatively different ways. (p. 81)

This description of the process is complete in so far as it describes what happens in development, but it does not include the meaning and place of the emotions in the process.

What is actually happening in the psychological organization of the person during this first stage of development and, indeed, at every subsequent transitional phase of reorganizing and renegotiating what is self and what is other amounts to the actual coming apart or the disorganization of what was composed as self; the experience of this disequilibrium results in the affective response of anxiety over the loss of the coherence and organization of the old self. If this anxiety is severe (as in cases in which the supportive environment is seriously deficient), depression may result; in extreme case the trauma may be so great that the person may, in Kegan's words, turn against his or her own life project.

Even in normal development, however, where there is appropriate support from what Kegan called the life-surround, anxiety always

accompanies the reorganization of the self and other. The point here is that Kegan has suggested that the very source of our emotions is the evolutionary process, the experience "of defending, surrendering, and reconstructing a center" (p. 82). From this perspective what is commonly known as separation anxiety takes on a remarkable new twist. The usual view of separation anxiety is that it is the infant's response to the loss of the object. But since separation or stranger anxiety is commonly observed to begin at around 8 or 9 months of age, before the clear achievement of object constancy, the "object" of stranger or separation anxiety at this stage may not be experienced as a separate object but still as partially fused with the self. And since the process of emerging from embeddedness as experienced by the infant is a process of separating itself out from that which it was previously merged with (in unawareness), the sudden disappearance of what was until recently experienced as part of the self and is still only partially differentiated, may be experienced as a loss of what was the self. Thus the process of transition from an old organization of the self and other to a new one is always a critical and vulnerable time for the person. It is a time when the very experience of the self as an organized, meaningful, ongoing enterprise appears to be in question.

It is for this reason that Kegan placed as much emphasis on the importance of integration as he did on separation or differentiation at each stage of development. After separating out from some part of what was the self, after "throwing it out" or making what was subject into object, it is crucial that what was part of the self be



reintegrated into the new organization of the self. Its reintegration changes its meaning and function--it is now a part of the outside, separate reality to which the self can be in relation. But if it is lost at the very time the self is differentiating from it, its loss is actually experienced as a loss of some part of the self. During the transition of an object's emergence from being fused with the self to becoming distinct and separate from the self, there is a need for a time of moving back and forth between merger and separation, times of feeling fused, not fused, and transitional times in between, until the maturing consciousness can hold the object as separate, external, and reliably there to relate to. The untimely disappearance of the actual object during this time may give the message to the self struggling to differentiate that this effort is indeed a dangerous and even self-destructive process. Growth, then, would appear to involve irrecoverable loss (of what looks like the object to an outside observer but what feels like part of the self to the emerging self).

Thus far this presentation has dealt with the developmental process primarily from the point of view of the developing infant or self, but what about the equally important function of the environment in this process? Since this issue will be detailed in later chapters, only the briefest summary will be provided here. Kegan placed great emphasis on the culturing environment, the amniotic surround, as the equal dynamic partner in the evolutionary matrix. The self and the current other, however it is constituted, are poles in dynamic relation, each playing a major role in maintaining the

current state of the other. In essence, the two poles form a single unit rather than separate entities. It is easier to imagine this formulation of the infant-environment relationship when the infant is in utero or in its earliest extra uterine infancy (as with Winnicott's "there's no such thing as a baby" perspective) than it is to carry this perspective to the lifelong emerging evolutionary relationship of the self to its environment. This is the radical quality of Kegan's (1982) psychology. As he stated:

In Winnicott's view the "holding environment" is an idea intrinsic to infancy. In my view it is an idea intrinsic to evolution. There is not one holding environment early in life, but a succession of holding environments, a life history of cultures of embeddedness. They are the psychosocial environments which hold us (with which we are fused) and which let go of us (from which we differentiate).  
(p. 116)

Kegan defined three distinct functions that the culturing environment plays in the evolution of the self. Although all functions may be present and needed to some extent at all times, the three functions are especially critical in a sequential pattern in response to the periodic phases or self transformations that occur when the self and other equilibrium becomes unbalanced, goes through the unsettling transitional time, and then reorganizes. In a given balance or somewhat stable phase, the primary function of the other is to hold, confirm, and affirm the self as it is presently constituted. This confirmation and holding contributes to the strengthening of the self and the maturing of its capacities at a given stage.

The second function of the supporting culture is to assist in the emergence or change of the self from a current level of

organization to a more complex level entailing a more complex and elaborated self and other relationship. At these times the function of the culture is to "contradict" the self's tendency to stay in or regress to the old level of organization. This contradiction is also called a "letting go" by Kegan, and it involves the parents' letting go of their old way of being connected to the child and thereby encouraging the emerging independence of the child. This is the delicate transition time when the self experiences a disintegration of its old structure. It may respond in contradictory ways to the intended "supportive" letting go of the parent, at one time feeling this letting go as loss of support (as when the parent lets go of the bicycle and the child becomes frightened and crashes), and at other times feeling the letting go as supportive of and a demonstration of faith in the child's capacity to ride on his or her own. The emerging self may experience significant upheaval and present quite a challenge for the supporting other, who is trying to both encourage the leading edge of the emergent self (with its attendant anxiety) and perhaps discourage some of the old behaviors. In performing this sensitive and difficult function, it is important to keep in mind that it is not just the emerging self who is undergoing change, but the parent (or other half of the unit) is undergoing an equally significant change, the "other" is also remaking and reorganizing its meaning and its way of being in relation to the child.

The third function of the culture is the counterpart to the critical process of reintegration that was described above. After the transition to a new and more mature self-other configuration, the

new self may find it necessary for a while to push away from and even repudiate the aspect of the other that was made object, and from which the self is now differentiated. This may be necessary during the late transitional time and for a time afterward in order to insure the new boundary, the sense of separation and independence, and to avoid the danger of feeling as though it is being reabsorbed into the old way of being connected with the culture. Thus the 2-year-old in the latter stage of the primal separation from that which is "not me" or the adolescent in differentiating from some identity values that are "not me," may have to be somewhat negative, noisy, and insistent about being its new self and not being the old. The important function of the culture at this time, and one that is often overlooked in developmental theories, is to allow itself to be repudiated without retaliating or rejecting or leaving the newly emerged self. Only by patiently "staying in place," as Kegan put it, can the holding and supportive other fulfill its third function and allow the new self to eventually complete its reorganization process by coming to terms with the new other that it has "created" by differentiating from it. When the new self forges a new relationship with this new form of the other, a reintegration of the other has taken place, but if the other does not stick around for this process or rejects the efforts of the new self to relate to it, the process may be seriously hindered and remain incomplete, and, as stated above, the message to the self may be that growth towards independence involves irrecoverable loss.

## Two Motivations

A final way of looking at the polarities is necessary before presenting a description of the stages of development. It is part of the wider perspective that Kegan offered that allowed him to claim that his theory is both interpersonal and intrapsychic. (And in this claim lies the central rationale for this study--that the interpersonal and intrapsychic viewpoints need not remain totally separate viewpoints with no hope of developing a common language.) The basic polarity described above is seen as the fundamental biological as well as social and psychological reality of the organism always existing within a life-surround, a "biosociopsychic" amniotic field, so to speak. This polarity creates the context of evolutionary motion, and the tension within it is a manifestation of the energy or life force that facilitates the continuous emergence of organisms from their current embeddedness. However, when one begins to work with this view of development, there is the constant tendency to think in terms of the duality of the observer versus the observed, as though this is a theory about developmental reality as taking place in the context of two poles (the self or child and its environment) which are external to the observer-researcher-theorist and as such constitute "objective reality." The intrapsychic claim of this theory is that these poles also exist within the psychic experience of the self. That is to say, there is a self-other polarity experienced as an internal dialectic tension, the manifestation of which is observed in human behaviors that demonstrate two lifelong needs that appear to

be opposed--the need to belong, to be included, and the need to be separate and independent. It is by taking account of these needs, and the presumed intrapsychic motivation and development that occurs in relation to them--the yearnings for them and the fears and anxieties associated with losing and restoring them--that Kegan's theory can make the claim of being an intrapsychic theory, for these are the primary phenomena of psychodynamic drive and defense theory. Kegan wrote of the psychologies favoring inclusion and the psychologies favoring independence. The psychologies favoring inclusion are grounded in the phenomenological experience of the self as always being a part of a larger reality, which results in the psychological need or motivation to belong, to be connected, and to have meaning in relation to the other; the loss of this experience results in the profound anxiety of feeling isolated, unconnected, cut off, of having no meaning in relation to something else. The psychologies favoring independence are grounded in the phenomenological experience of being a separate entity, which results in the psychological need to maintain personal boundaries, to be separate and distinct; the loss of this experience results in the profound fear of being swallowed up or totally fused with and thereby lost. These two needs or yearnings play the major motivating roles in the self's development. Kegan's developmental model rests on the assumption that the self forms its successive self-other balances in alternate favorings of one or the other side of the inclusion-independence polarity. What psychological development amounts to, then, is a progressive series of emergings from a given stage of deeper embeddedness, through a relatively

unstable period of transition, to the next stage of lesser embeddedness, each of these relatively stable stages or eras or evolutionary truces being settled in favor of, and alternately so, the psychologies of inclusion and the psychologies of independence.

### The Model and the Stages

The model that Kegan (1982) used to visualize the developmental journey is the helix (see Figure 1).

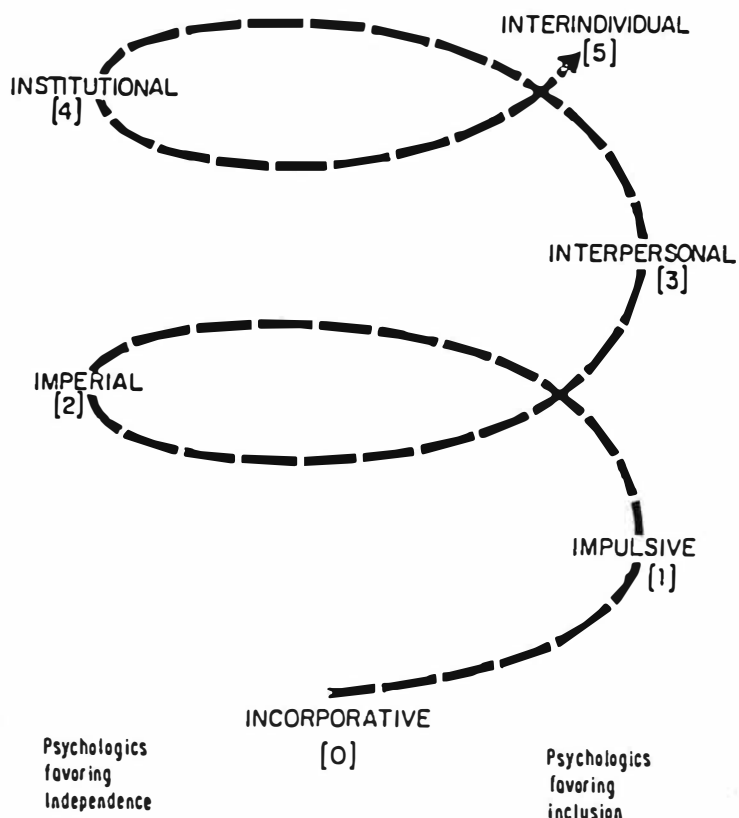


Figure 1. The Helix.

Source: From The Evolving Self (p. 109) by R. Kegan, 1982, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press. Reprinted by permission.

The helix is chosen to represent the lifelong back and forth struggle between psychologies favoring inclusion (the right side of the helix) and independence (the left side), and to demonstrate the equal value and part that each plays in development, in contrast to most developmental theories, which favor growth towards independence at the expense of integration and inclusion, and tend to view that growth in a linear progression towards independence, rather than alternating between dependence and independence.

The infant begins life in the incorporative state, being virtually one with or totally embedded in his or her environment, from a psychological point of view. Kegan called this time the incorporative era. The essential work of this era is the psychological "hatching out" (to use Mahler, Pine, & Bergman's, 1975, metaphor). During this time the psychological embeddedness of the infant is in the reflexes, sensing, and moving. In other words, the infant's experience, its sense of reality, is in reflexing, sensing, and moving. The infant does not so much have these qualities as he or she is these things, a distinction of that which is subject and that which is object that Kegan makes at every level of development. The external culture of embeddedness during this time, as viewed from an objective perspective, is the mother or primary caretaker. From the infant's point of view its reflexes, senses, and movements are first experienced as fused with, or at least in fluid boundary states with respect to the culturing environment.

From an outside perspective the hatching out work of this era appears to result in the emerging or birth of an infant, a



primitively differentiated self, but from the inside the perspective is about the birth of the object, of a world that is separate and remains separate from the child's sensing and moving. The psychological shift or maturation that takes place in this emergence is that the reflexes and senses shift from their subjective fusion with the infant to a place of objective awareness on the part of the child. In other words, the child no longer is his or her reflexes, instead he or she has reflexes. And by virtue of this shift, this psychological maturation, the infant gains some control over the reflexes and sensing. The infant can take some perspective on the experience of having sensations rather than just being them.

As mentioned above, the role of the culturing environment retains the same underlying structure and purpose throughout all eras of development, and its three, generally sequential, functions are holding, letting go, and staying in place. In early infancy the holding would involve empathic attunement with the reflexes of the infant. Needs such as food, touching, actual holding, and eye to eye mirroring constitute some aspects of the function of holding or confirming required at this time. The letting go (contradicting) function would include less immediate responses to all reflexive needs, reducing carrying, and encouraging initial efforts and moves of independent actions. The staying in place would involve the primary caretaker's capacity to still be there and still function as an ultimate source of security and soothing, especially in moments of fear or hurt, but also to stay in place as the child moves to extend his or her world of attachments to include others, perhaps the larger

family, baby sitters, and others. While still primary, the main caretaker would allow and support a shift to being one among many rather than being exclusive.

One additional function of the culturing environment that has not been mentioned up to this point is the "medium of transition" (Kegan, 1982, p. 118). This is very similar to Winnicott's (1965) "transitional object." The meaning of the transitional object from the point of view of the emerging self, is that it is comprised of a paradoxical mixture of what was the old self and what is the newly constituted self. As such, during a transitional time, the child uses this object as a bridge, since it is connected to the old way of being (and can provide some of the old feelings, the security of the old way of being) and to the new way of being (it is in some ways separate from the child and can be taken as object). As object, it can even be actively repudiated at times (the "not me") or it can be related to (as separate from me). Typical transitional objects for the shift from the incorporative era to the impulsive one are teddy bears and blankets.

The first differentiated era, or Stage 1, is called the impulsive era; the previous era, the incorporative, is called Stage 0. Stage 1 is the relatively balanced evolutionary truce that comes with the permanent birth of the object (object constancy). Now that the object world exists, the normal maturing process involves a new attachment, a new embeddedness in a qualitatively different amniotic sac--the family environment. The new psychological embeddedness is in the impulses and perceptions. The child virtually is its impulses

and perceptions, that is, he or she lives through and experiences through the media of the impulses and perceptions. He or she is subjective to them and can take no perspective on them. For a child at this stage the world changes with his or her perception of it, as was so effectively demonstrated in Piaget's experiments with the child's perception of the amount of water increasing as it was poured from a short, fat glass to a tall, thin glass.

As at every stage, the external world is only partially differentiated and partly fused. As the Stage 0 infant could confuse the working of its own reflexes and senses with its culture of embeddedness, so the Stage 1 child can confuse the working of its own impulses with that of its current culture--the people in its family. The appropriate and needed holding and confirming at this time would take the form of honoring the child's impulses and perceptions, of allowing fantasies and actions based on these impulses to have some free play and support from the environment. Included in these impulsive behaviors would be times of intense attachments and also intense rivalries.

The lack of impulse control demonstrated by the preschooler is understood, then, not as a deficiency but as an inevitable state of things when the child is embedded in his impulses and perceptions. This can help explain the rage reactions of a child whose impulses are blocked, for, as Kegan (1982) said, "When I am subject to my impulses, their nonexpression raises an ultimate threat; they risk who I am" (p. 88).

It is obvious, however, that the culturing environment cannot and should not support all of the impulses and perceptions of the child. That would contribute to the establishment of grandiosity and perhaps narcissism. The second supportive function--letting go or contradicting--creates a context for the initial moves that eventuate in shifting the child out of this first stage or balance of self and other. It requires such things as holding the child responsible for his impulses and actions, of excluding him from the marriage bed, and encouraging small examples of self sufficiency and independence.

The actual transition towards the next balance or truce often corresponds with the first school experience--perhaps preschool, kindergarten, and first grade. This shift of the culture of embeddedness from the family to the larger environment of the school requires for its support the staying in place of the family culture. If the child is to successfully cross the bridge from one environment to the next, it is crucial for the child to find the family there when he or she returns. Without this staying in place, the family that before was intrinsic to who the child was (part of his or her subjectivity), cannot be made into object, one part of the new and larger external world, and integrated into the new and more evolved self system. Thus Kegan wrote of the danger of family dissolution at the time that the child is differentiating from the family. This again would raise the old specter that growth and differentiation entails unrecoverable loss, loss of something that was partially constituted as the self.

A medium of transition for this stage is often one or more imaginary friends. The imaginary friend is part of the old me and can be the repository of the old impulses which the emerging child is struggling to gain control over. It is actually the reining in of the impulses, having impulses rather than being them, that gives the growing child a new sense of control and power. The capacity to choose whether or not to act on an impulse is experienced as a triumph, and to fall back into being the slave of the impulses can be experienced as losing control. Thus the imaginary friend may get the blame for occasional lapses into what is now considered unacceptable behavior.

As noted earlier, Kegan's view of the evolution of the self within a context of self-other polarities is driven by two great human yearnings--the desire for inclusion, connection, and belonging, and the opposing desire for independence and separateness. It was also noted that development consists of self-other balances that alternate between those being resolved in favor of inclusion and those resolved in favor of independence. As development moves up the helix model from the incorporate era, which is placed in the center and called Stage 0, the move is in a curve to the right side of the helix, which represents Stage 1, the impulsive era. The first move is towards inclusion. After primary differentiation, the need is to be safely and fully immersed in the arms of the family. Thus the first self-other balance that is negotiated is resolved in favor of inclusion with the other. This is not a conscious need but rather an underlying need or condition that is simply a prerequisite for

healthy development at this time. Awareness of it would be brought about mostly by its inadequacy or loss.

The first transition across the helix to a self-other truce in favor of independence leads to Stage 2, called the imperial era. The settling in of this balance in the early school years is signified by what Kegan called a "sealing up" or a "self-containment" of the youngster. He or she now has a private world and does not always let the parent in. Boundaries between the self and other are in place, and the young child has a clear measure of control and agency regarding himself or herself, with impulses and perceptions under some control and integration, and actions appearing much more planned and deliberate. There is a growing stability around a self-concept, not merely that I am (as Stage 1), but what I am, a person with some defined preferences and dispositions.

If the Stage 1 balance was about the birth of the object, Stage 2 is about the birth of the role. The holding and confirming function of the culture, both at home and at school, is to recognize and confirm the role of the child. The child's experience of himself or herself now is primarily in terms of the role that he or she plays in the family, the school, and with peers. During these years great growth takes place in terms of skills and competence development. Again the holding function has the job of supporting the self-sufficiency, the independence, the role-taking, and the competence and confidence building of this era.

What makes this era imperial is the pronounced self-sufficiency, the absence of shared reality, the emphasis on one's own needs and

interests at the expense of others. If the child now has impulses (the impulses are under control), the new subjectivity is his or her own needs and interests--the child is his or her needs and interests and therefore others are also counted very much in terms of how they serve the needs and interests of the child. Eventually the forces from within (the yearning for inclusion again after a time of pronounced independence) and the forces from without (the contradicting and letting go function of the culturing environment) create pressure to move from a balance of unqualified self-interest towards a shift to mutuality, of taking the needs and interests of others into account. More and more the child is required to hold up his or her end of relationships.

The shift from Stage 2 to Stage 3 can be especially difficult for many adolescents. As mentioned before, the loss of an established and hard won truce with the world is usually attended with considerable stress and turbulence. It is experienced as a loss of the self in that the old way of making meaning out of the self and world is indeed coming apart. Adolescents may feel that their very identity and independence are being taken from them if they are forced to include the needs, interests, and rights of others in their deliberations and decisions. The peer culture is especially important at this time, and the staying in place function of the old culture--the home, the school, and the peer group--is important. Kegan suggested that relocation of the family is especially disruptive of this function. The transitional object that may help the adolescent to bridge the transition from the imperial era to the next one, the

interpersonal, may be a special chum, someone whose needs and interest were identical to the adolescent's, but who now serves the function of one whom the developing person may also observe objectively, as though looking at the way he or she was, and often still is, and thereby being able to take some perspective on the needs and interests that were experienced as ultimates. This growing capacity to take a perspective on the needs assists in the beginning of the shifting of the needs from subject to object, from being one's needs to having needs that can be integrated with the needs of others.

The next balance, Stage 3, is a shift back to the inclusion side of the helix. This interpersonal era has its embeddedness in mutuality, often in intense one-to-one relationships. In this culture of mutuality there is a capacity for collaborative self-sacrifice. There is an intense need to be in a shared space, a shared subjective experience. In this era the sense of self is located in the interpersonal matrix, and the loss of the other can feel like the loss of all self-meaning. Conflict in this era is not really conflict between two parts of the self or between self and other, but between the self as part of one shared context and the self as part of another shared context--Will this friend be mad at me if I do something with that friend?

The contradiction or letting go function for this era is performed by the person who will not allow him or herself to be fused but still seeks to maintain a positive association. This type of person demonstrates the possibility of relating while maintaining independence, and insists that the over-included friend assert some



independence and initiative. The risk at this time is that the interpersonal partner will leave or reject at the very time the previously overly dependent person is just beginning to risk some independence. The transitional object that often helps a person across the transition from the overly included interpersonal era to the next independence-favored era, the institutional, is a temporary job, going to college, or a military stint.

In Stage 4, the institutional era, the culture of embeddedness is personal autonomy, self authorship, the self as the administrator of a self-system. The supporting confirmation comes in terms of admission to a group or profession in which the self is guiding its own ship. It is experienced as self authoring as it integrates work, marriage, family, and interests. The self can be viewed as an institution with its own reason for being, its own rules and beliefs, and its own organizational style. This self, like its imperial cousin, can be very self-contained. It may feel threatened by any intrusion into its domain or any demands that it subordinate its interests to another.

As for all eras Stage 4 has its limit or constraint. The self here cannot see beyond its own ideological definition of itself. It cannot take a perspective on its own system. It runs the risk of maintaining its self-government at the expense of those around it. The contradicting function of the culture that encourages growth beyond this stage would include the insistence of a partner, for example, on being included as partner and not being a subordinated part of the other's system. It would mean the relativizing of the

identification with a system, a set of conventions or beliefs, to a position beyond identification with any one system, institution, or government. The loosening of this identification allows for the possibility of true intimacy with others, for the self as a separate system is no longer threatened by considerations of and sharing with those of different persuasions. This kind of sharing does not mean the disintegration of the old system, but a loosening of narrow identification with it. The new self can actually be above all systems, but enjoy its chosen relationship with its old system while enhancing its experience in that system by the cross fertilization of other systems.

Kegan called this highly evolved Stage 5 the interindividual stage. The embeddedness is a culture of intimacy (not fusion) in which individuality is retained and enhanced. This interpenetration of systems supports and enhances true individuation in work and love as it creates a mutual and reciprocal culture in which each individual is supported by and supports the other. At this stage a true balance of self and other is achieved. All previous balances were actually somewhat imbalanced (tipped in favor of inclusion or independence) and therefore temporary and unstable. The achievement of the interindividual level creates a self that is above all the other selves and coordinates and integrates them. It no longer is any limited set of needs, relationships, or career definitions. It has all these and therefore can participate in all the others from a perspective that can view the good of all without threat to its self definition. With others who have achieved a similar perspective,

such a person can unite to create true community, a community that maintains a supportive context for the continuing development of all the emerging persons within it.

## CHAPTER III

### CONCEPT COMPARISON

#### Definitions of Self

Since the term self is central in the writings of both Kegan and Kohut, it seems fitting to begin this analysis and comparison of their basic concepts by defining and distinguishing their respective conceptualizations of the self. First, it should come as no surprise that Kohut's use of the term self has several implications that are far more theoretically intricate and philosophically weighted than Kegan's use of the term. After all, Kohut's "self" is the intrapsychic centerpiece of a new paradigm in psychoanalytic theory, whereas Kegan's "self" is primarily a descriptive reference to the organism or individual as an experiencing component in the evolving self-other dyad. Kegan's use of self would generally be interchangeable with such terms as person, organism, or, on a more psychological plane, ego.

#### Kohut

Kohut (1977) distinguished between his earlier psychology of the self in the "narrower sense" and his later elaboration of the psychology of the self in the "broader sense." In the narrower sense the self is conceptualized as contents of the mental apparatus, a view that was essentially compatible with classic structural theory.

However, when used in the broader sense, the self is understood to constitute the center of the psychological universe, and "the concept of the self is supraordinated to that of the mental apparatus and its agencies" (p. 228), and furthermore, it is a "supraordinated configuration whose significance transcends that of the sum of its parts" (p. 97). From such statements as these and references to a "nuclear self" that seeks to fulfill its innate program one begins to get an anthropomorphized sense of Kohut's "self."

Chessick (1985) contrasted Kohut's definition of self with that of Meade, for whom the mind and self arise out of social interaction and have no innate separate existence. For Kohut the self, while always requiring the interaction with its environment to maintain and to develop its own unique potential, nevertheless seems to have qualities and properties that are not entirely products of its interactions. Chessick made note of Kant's distinction between the "noumenal" and the "phenomenal" self, that is, between the self as an experience-distant entity with some sort of "essence" or being, and the experiential, empirical flow of self states in a string of existential moments. Chessick suggested that Kohut often slips into the noumenal sense when speaking of the self but that his self should not be equated with a noumenal self (in religious terms, a soul). Kohut (1978) himself distinguished his view from Kant's noumenal self. The self for Kohut always retains psychological, experience-near qualities, available to the "scientist" through the tools of empathic introspection. In addition, unlike the noumenal self, Kohut's self retains the characteristic of having unconscious contents and

structure.

Kohut's (1977) own views regarding defining the self cannot be better explained or summarized than in this lengthy statement:

My investigation contains hundreds of pages 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 fact without contrition or shame. The self . . . is, like all reality--physical reality (the data about the world perceived by our sense) or psychological reality (the data about the world perceived via introspection and empathy)--not knowable in its essence. We cannot, by introspection and empathy, penetrate to the self per se; only its introspectively or empathically perceived psychological manifestations are open to us. Demands for an exact definition of the nature of the self disregard that fact that "the self" is not a concept of an abstract science, but a generalization derived from empirical data. Demands for a differentiation of "self" and "self representation" (or, similarly, of "self" and a "sense of self") are, therefore, based on a misunderstanding. We can collect data concerning the way in which the set of introspectively or empathically perceived inner experiences to which we later refer as "I" is gradually established, and we can observe certain characteristic vicissitudes of this experience. We can describe the various cohesive forms in which the self appears, can demonstrate the several constituents that make up the self--its two poles (ambitions and ideals) and the area of talents and skills that is interposed between the two poles--and explain their genesis and functions. And we can, finally, distinguish between various self types and can explain their distinguishing features on the basis of the predominance of one or the other of their constituents. We can do all that, but we still will not know the essence of the self as differentiated from its manifestations. (pp. 310-311)

Guntrip (1971) has traced the struggle within psychoanalytic theory that brought about the conceptual shift from a system-ego (Freud's weak clown attempting to modulate biologically based drives far superior in strength and significance) to a person-ego, a whole self, which can only thrive, especially in infancy, within the matrix of a supportive object relational context. The theorist who took

this shift to its logical extreme was Fairbairn (cited in Guntrip, 1971), and his view of the "whole true self," which is present from the beginning of life, and the "unitary dynamic ego" are perhaps the closest one can come in the literature to Kohut's view of the self. Guntrip stated that Freud did not start with the concept of a whole person, but for Fairbairn, "The baby starts life as a whole psychic self however primitive and undeveloped and undifferentiated" (p. 92).

### Kegan

One does not get the same sense of the self as a "center of initiative" in Kegan's (1982) writings, that is, a unique entity with its own will or intentionality about its unique life project. Nevertheless, in Kegan's view of the self there is the same attempt to bridge the gap between the self as content or image and the self as person, or between the noumenal and phenomenal concepts of the self. In his view of man as meaning-maker he sometimes seemed to be speaking of the "meaning made," which would be the content self, the self with its current self concept or identity, its self-recognized attitudes, characteristics, and relatively stable behavior patterns and disposition. When he used the term this way, it seems similar to Kohut's use of the self in the "narrower" sense, that is, a content of the mental apparatus. But more often Kegan seemed to be speaking of the self as process, or motion, not as a separate psychic entity but as the consciousness capacity of the experiencing organism whose evolutionary emergence from psychological embeddedness with its

surround results in increasingly higher forms of consciousness. Consciousness seems to be a by-product derived from the activity of the self rather than the ground and nature of the self. Consciousness is described primarily in terms of levels and experiences of self and other differentiation as described above in the "stages" that compose various constitutions of the self-other balance. In short, for Kegan the self appears to be a psychological product of evolutionary activity. He stated:

For we are not our stages; we are not the self who hangs in the balance at this moment in our evolution. We are the activity [italics added] of this evolution. We compose our stages, and we experience this composing. Out of this evolutionary motion, which we are [italics added], we experience emotion (this is what the word means--ex + motion: out of, or from, motion). Any theory of emotion must begin by naming that motion it regards as the source. I have named my candidate. Feeling may be the sensation of evolution; more complexly, the phenomenology of personality in its predicament as self-constituting meaning-making.  
(p. 169)

From a philosophical standpoint there appear to be substantial differences between Kegan's and Kohut's views of the self, Kegan's falling more clearly into an existential-phenomenological framework, and Kohut's definition seeming to at least allow for a self in terms of an essence or ongoing entity, even though that essence can never be directly known or even conceptually defined.

These philosophical differences, however, are not fundamental obstacles with respect to the compatibility or even the integration of their respective psychological views of the self. In both cases the field of study is the ongoing, experiential self, whether the data are derived, as in Kohut's case, from empathic introspection, or



in Kegan's case, from observation and the self reports of the person.

What is different, however, in their theorizing about the self is that Kohut's is an intrapsychic theory of the self, and Kegan's is an interpersonal or psychosocial view of the self. Thus, when Kohut spoke of the self and its vicissitudes, he was speaking conceptually of complex intrapsychic structure (the bipolar or tripolar self as previously outlined) and how the experience of the self (cognitive and affective) with others is largely a function of the health and stability of the intrapsychic self structure. But more importantly, one always has the sense with Kohut that it is the whole self, the being whose unique reality is the prior ground within which and out of which the endopsychic structure takes form that is the focus of concern. It is the whole self's capacity to experience the joy of its own aliveness and well-being and the satisfaction of striving and thriving towards the realizations of its own inner directed goals that are the marks of a healthy and vigorous self.

When Kegan referred to the self, he appeared to be simply designating that experiencing organism (without implications of complex mental states or the presumed structure in which these occur) which, in the process of differentiating from its life-surround, can and does actively participate in this differentiation (making meaning out of it) and affectively respond to this process in an ontological awareness--the experience of a self in a relative state of equilibrium (having organized and made meaning of its current self-other relationship), or the experience of disequilibrium (the awareness of change, of shifting ground) in the ongoing sense of self. In short,

for Kegan the self appears to be the conscious, experiencing agency of the organism, an agency whose capacities mature through ever more complex cognitive levels of self-other configurations.

### Selfobject and Culture of Embeddedness

Regardless of whether or not the self is ultimately conceived of as a separate entity, it should be clear from much of the previous analysis, that both Kohut and Kegan placed primary emphasis on the self-in-relation rather than the self in isolation. A brief description of the functions of the "other" in the development of the self was given above, but a careful examination is needed of the precise qualities of the "other," both when the other is viewed as the external, interpersonal environment of the self, and when it is viewed psychologically, from the inside of the self. It is the psychological value and meaning of the "other" that will be the primary focus of this discussion.

#### Kohut

Kohut called the "other" or object, in so far as it relates to and promotes the psychological growth of the self, the selfobject. In his earlier work he hyphenated the term, but the later form in which the two words are combined will be used here. Kohut (1984) distinguished between the general and the specific use of the term selfobject. The general meaning is "that dimension of our experience of another person that relates to this person's functions in shoring up our self" (p. 50). This refers to a unique aspect of the

ordinary, mature relationships of the self with others in which the response of the other or the meaning and value of the other is such that the self receives enhancement from that experience. Kohut (1984) wrote of the self-other relationship in its selfobject function as being sectoral or layered rather than segmental. In other words, when the adult self experiences certain types of self enhancement, for example, feeling an uplifting surge in admiration of a great ideal, "the selfobject experiences of all the previous stages of life reverberate unconsciously" (p. 50). The specific meaning of selfobject, as opposed to the general meaning just given, refers to the early infancy development of the selfobject as integral to the psychological reality of the infant. Kohut called this the archaic selfobject, and the difference is that the archaic selfobject is experienced as part of the self. In this archaic form the selfobject is the precursor of psychic structure and, in fact, often functions for and as the psychological equipment of the infant. In early infancy there are many times in which the merger is nearly total, the selfobject being experienced as an extension of the self with the expected control over the other that one would have over his or her own mind or body. In the treatment of narcissistic personality disorders (or any condition related to the lack of completion of basic self formation), these archaic forms of creating and relating to the other are revived in special types of transferences.

It should go without saying that the archaic selfobject is not a true object wanted or desired on the basis of its own separate qualities. Rather, it is needed for the function it provides in the

maintenance of the primitive self. Without empathic mirroring the primitive self would not experience the joy of its own well-being--its grandiose (narcissistic) pleasure. The self experiences this suffusion of joy and energy by merging with the experience of the empathic mirrorer as the selfobject empathically and accurately reflects back and reverberates with the experience of the self. Likewise, by merging with the idealized other in moments of distress or need, the self again experiences an archaic sense of its own omnipotence by participating in the calm, strong, all-sufficient capacity of the idealized caregiver providing for its needs. The absence or serious inadequacy of such selfobject merger experiences severely retards the capacity of the self to develop some independent capacity to perform these self-expressive and self-soothing functions. The selfobject is the source that provides the confirmation of the self's own emerging capacities. Without appropriate merger and the subsequent, complex process of separating from the merger in supportive contexts, the self cannot become a viable entity.

With the psychological maturation process, the functions that were performed for the self by the selfobject as its externalized psyche are internalized, resulting in the endopsychic structure of the self. Selfobjects are needed now no less than before, but the way they are needed begins to shift significantly. In some respects, and at some times, they still function for the self, especially at times of stress and anxiety. In other respects their function begins to be experienced as coming from a separate other in a supportive, interactive relationship. The archaic merger features of early

infancy slowly give way to a more differentiated relationship in which the self recognizes that the source of support is external. There now is a self that is cohesive enough to work at sustaining itself by turning to others in a deliberate and conscious way for selfobject needs. During moments of affective intensity or stress the self restores its cohesion by temporary merger with the self-object aspect of the caretaker, whether through evoking mirroring or identifying with the idealized power of the other. In addition the cohesive self has the capacity to turn to others as true objects in the classic sense of instinctual object cathexis. The early cathexis was a narcissistic cathexis only in the sense that the cathexis was with an "object" that the self experienced as itself. It is not the same as the classical notion of narcissism in which libido is withdrawn from an object and invested in a separately experienced ego or self. In the language of the myth of Narcissus it would be a type of narcissism without Narcissus, at least without Narcissus experiencing himself as an object of attention.

In healthy development a firmly consolidated self would be achieved in the pre-Oedipal years, allowing for the strength to handle the somewhat more stressful and more large scale internalizations that occur during the Oedipal phase. During the Oedipal phase there occurs a shift from the predominantly narcissistic cathexis of the selfobject to a cathexis of the object as a separately experienced other desired for its own characteristics and capacities to satisfy the wishes of the self. The important difference between self psychology and classical theory must be reiterated here. For

self psychology development is not a "replacement of selfobjects by object love, not as a move from narcissism to object love" (Kohut, 1984, p. 52). It is a matter of archaic narcissism (healthy infantile grandiosity) being transformed into mature narcissism (productive and creative self expression) with the ongoing, nurturing feedback from mature selfobjects. Parallel to this development is the healthy self's true object (object as a separately recognized other or center of initiative) relations, in which objects are both cathected as separate realities and related to as separate realities, as in classical theory. The absence or inadequacy of the real object, or rejection by the object of the self has distinctly different detrimental effects on the self from the effects produced by poor selfobject functioning. Poor selfobject functioning diminishes the cohesion and vigor of the whole self; poor object functioning (given a reasonably vigorous and healthy self) results in the kinds of symptoms associated with neurosis, the distress of an ego attempting to resolve inner conflict.

Thus, in self psychology the more mature functioning of the selfobject (as opposed to its archaic function) is still and always distinguished from that of the instinct-satisfying function of the object of traditional theory. Kohut (1984) said that "the healthy self always needs the sustaining responses of selfobjects from the first to last breath" (p. 49). The mature selfobject is not just a source of nourishment which the otherwise independent self draws on; neither is the object a necessary inconvenience by which the self gets its instincts satisfied; rather the self-selfobject relationship

is always one of essential interdependence. The mature sophisticated performer needs the response of the audience as the audience needs the performer, each being nourished through a projection of aspects of the self onto the other. The parent and child need each other and they both need the family--the self cannot be experienced as a self apart from these relations. The advanced scholar needs ideals and heroes as much as the schoolchild needs them as inspirations and goals around which to focus and shape the ambitions of the self. A mature adult has built an elaborate support system for his or her self, much of which is internalized and self-generated, but much of which is still dependent on the ongoing complex interactions of the self and others. But without the unique supporting nourishment of confirmation (mirroring) and the drawing of inspiration from ideals, even the healthy, strong self would begin to deteriorate, as is evidenced in the extreme circumstances of prisoners of war or people suddenly placed in a totally foreign environment.

In summary, for Kohut the "other" (studied and explained primarily in its intrapsychic rather than its interpersonal manifestation), fulfills two different but complementary functions in its relationship with the self. The first is the selfobject function and the second is the standard object function of traditional theory.

Kohut (1984) said:

It is fruitful to look upon the "I's" experience of the "You" within two separate frames of reference: (1) with regard to the role the "You" plays in supporting the cohesion, strength, and harmony of the self, that is, to the experience of the "You" as "selfobject"; and (2) with regard to the "You" (a) as the target of our desire and love and (b) as the target of our anger and aggression when

it blocks the way to the object we desire and love, i.e., to the experience of the "You" as "object." (p. 52)

### Kegan

Kegan's (1982) notion of a "culture of embeddedness" in which part of the self is always submerged and out of which the self will evolve and differentiate from in its next evolutionary move is a concept as rich as Kohut's "selfobject." In many ways these two concepts are similar or at least they may be ways of describing the same psychological phenomena--the way in which the self and other are always partially merged, the ways that the "other" component of the dyadic unit supports and contributes to the growth of the self, and the way that the differentiation and reintegration process takes place.

Kegan's "other," more so than Kohut's, is considered from both an intrapsychic and a psychosocial viewpoint. Intrapsychic here is used to refer to the inner experience or meaning of a given self-other interaction or stage of relationship, not to intrapsychic structure or functioning. As for Kohut the infant's self experience is virtually merged with that of the selfobject, so for Kegan the infant's experience is confused and mingled with its human environment. Making the point that this culture of embeddedness is both real and psychological, Kegan (1982) wrote, "The infant, I have said, is embedded in its sensing and moving, but there is a real human environment in which it lives, with which it confuses its own sensing and moving" (p. 115). The caretaker "provides the very context in



which development takes place, and from the point of view of the newborn she is part of the self. She provides a true psychosocial context . . . and the transformation by which she becomes for the infant gradually less 'psycho' and more 'social' describes the very evolution of meaning itself" (p. 115).

Kegan took Winnicott's idea of a "holding environment," the psychosocial context necessary for the survival of the infant, and extends it to all levels of development, each "holding environment" being different in quality and content from the previous one but essentially similar in the nature of the function it provides--to so harmoniously correspond in its confirming and culturing function to the unique and current state or stage of the self. When the holding environment is doing its job well, the self may not even notice that it is there but simply takes for granted that its supportive environment is there. At any stage (except for the incorporative) there is for the merging self some aspects of the real, social "other," but there is also a significant portion of the self (psychologically speaking) embedded in and undifferentiated from its environment. Kegan said, "Since this is the very context in which, and out of which, the person grows, I have come to think of it as a culture of embeddedness" (p. 116).

The specific function of the culture of embeddedness, much like the function of the selfobject aspect of the other, is a psychological function rather than a "real" function of feeding, holding, and praising. It is to support in the sense of incubating, so to speak, those emerging aspects of the self that are still experienced, in

their intimate interactions with the other, only subjectively, as automatic, unexamined qualities of the self still partially fused or embedded in the other, not as objective, conscious qualities of the self over which it has some control. Just as for Kohut when the mirroring other empathically responds to a child's experience, the child participates, emotionally and psychologically, in the more mature psychic organization of the selfobject, thus enhancing the inner, self experience of the child, so for Kegan the function of the culture of embeddedness is to hold and confirm the inner experience (the way the child is making meaning or experiencing) by going along with the movement and flow of the child. For example, in the incorporative era the psychologies of the infant are reflexes, sensing, and moving. The attuned caretaker responds with holding (emotional and physical) that is in delicate harmony with the sensations felt and the moves initiated by the infant.

After some basic differentiation has been attained, some sense that there is a difference between the moving of the self and the moving of the other, the child achieves some sense of control over his or her moves and differentiation of his or her own moves from those of the caretaker. However, the child is now embedded in his or her impulses and perceptions. At this stage, the other, although differentiated at a primary level (that there is another), is not differentiated from the current embeddedness--the perceptions and impulses. Therefore, the healthy mother and family intuitively respond to the toddler's way of perceiving them (without correcting the egocentric perception) and to the toddler's impulses (when

appropriate) by honoring the impulse, perhaps in extending the excited movement of the child or doing its bidding as though the child's wish were its command. This has the same psychological flavor as Kohut's suggestion that the selfobject is experienced as an extension of the body and mind of the self and with the same sense of expected control over them.

### Summary

It seems justifiable to say, then, that for both Kegan and Kohut psychological development, while it can to some extent be described as a series of changing patterns in external relationships between two separate beings, a self and an other (or many others), is much more about the changing nature and role of the other with respect to its inner, psychological function and meaning at any given stage. The primary focus of both their theories is on the inner role that the "other" plays (even though its performance takes place and is observable in the external world of interactions) in sustaining the currently composed self and in stimulating the growth of the emerging self, the side of the self struggling to emerge from embeddedness (Kegan) and the self attempting to imitate and then internalize the function that had been modeled by and idealized in the selfobject (Kohut).

The use of the term "role" here is obviously doing double duty. Empirically one could observe the action of the mother performing her "role" vis-a-vis the child. From the inside of the child, that role is much more complex, for at any given moment, there is (after

earliest infancy) the child's experience of an external person interacting with it and, also, at various levels and qualities, an intermingling and confusion of, and an experience of an echo and extension of, itself in the other; not just an actor on its stage, but one intimately connected to its sense of self such that there is the unexamined expectation that the other is there to express and meet the impulses, wishes, and needs of the self.

The difference in their theories with regard to the successive changes of the self-other relationship is that Kegan attempted to name both the inner qualities and capacities (the "psychologics") which constitute the subjective portion of the self at any given stage (for example, reflexes, impulses, enduring disposition or needs) and then to name the corresponding external "real" world aspects of the environment that are needed to culture the inner and emerging qualities at each level of emergence. Kohut does not attempt to delineate a succession of increasingly differentiated and sophisticated cognitive conceptions of the self-other experience, nor does he attempt to name and describe a series of uniquely constituted environments needed to correspond with each level of development. Wolf (1980) stated that one of the current challenges for self psychology is to develop a more detailed view of the line of selfobject development. It is one of the objectives of this study to examine whether Kegan's more detailed psychosocial developmental framework might be usefully related to an elaboration of self psychology's basic framework.

The strength of self psychology may lie in the paradox of its simplicity vis-a-vis its depth and richness with respect to naming, conceptualizing, and describing the subtle functioning of two universal modes of self and other relating. At first reading the discoveries of Kohut can appear to be too obvious to be worthy of new attention, as breakthroughs in conceptualizations often appear to be. As one begins to appreciate the power of his conceptualizations to explain the subtle processes involved in the development of the self, and the multifaceted aspects of selfobject functioning, what once seemed simple and obvious becomes considerably more complex. It is another objective of this study to examine how Kohut's selfobject concept might enrich the notion that Kegan has of the self's meaning with respect to any given self and other configuration.

#### The Subject to Object Shift and Transmuting Internalization

At the core of any developmental theory, regardless of how the theory might end up characterizing the various stages of development, is its conceptualization of the process of psychological growth. Ways to examine a conceptualization of the process of psychological growth are helped by questions such as the following: What motivates or spurs growth? What is it that actually changes in the psychological make-up of the self when growth occurs and how does this change occur? What is meant by internalization? What are the respective roles of the self and other in the process? What role do cognition, perception, and affect play in change and growth?

Kegan

Every aspect of Kegan's formulation of the process of psychological growth is born out of the basic Piagetian image of growth as evolutionary emergence from a state of lesser to a state of greater differentiation. This underlying framework operates through a repeated back and forth motion or dialogue between the self and the other. Each new stage begins with a struggle by which some aspect of the self differentiates itself from that with which it was formerly embedded, and ends, after reorganizing the construction of the self, by reintegrating (relating to as a separate object) the aspect of the other that was formerly experienced as part of the self. This is the subject to object shift, and it is a complex operation requiring some explanation.

The subject-object balance is the deep structure in meaning evolution, and growth involves a restructuring of a given balance. Kegan (1982) said, "Growth always involves a process of differentiation, or emergence from embeddedness (Schactel, 1959), thus creating out of the former subject a new object to be taken by the new subjectivity" (p. 31). Viewed from an observer position this description seems fairly simple and obvious--an organism (a self) at one level of connection or merger with its environment makes a distinct step outward, emerges to a new stage, and thereby becomes more distinct and less embedded. When experienced from within the emerging self, however, it is an entirely different story. From the inside what was formerly a whole way of being, a way of experiencing oneself and

one's relationship to the outside, begins to give way. One's whole way of knowing, not just what was known and taken for granted to be so about the outside world and the self, but the very way the self was organized to know, the perspective or glasses through which all experience was perceived, now gives way; it seems to no longer hold, and it is experienced as inadequate to meet the needs of new experience. After a time of confusion and transition, a new and wider perspective begins to come together which involves a significant reorganization of both the self and the other. Thus both the self and the "world" are completely recreated in this shift. Not only is there a new self and world to be known but a fundamentally new quality to the way of knowing. This is what Kegan meant when he referred to psychological growth as the evolution of meaning-constitutive activity.

One of the best methods to understand this concept is to think in terms of Kuhn's (1962) notion of what really happens in a given science when a new paradigm supercedes an old one--how everything that was "known" before (all the facts, so to speak) are given a new and wider frame of reference; they are remade and newly understood in a new contextual framework, and the knower understands himself or herself differently in respect to the known. Kegan used the geographical comparison of Columbus discovering the New World, a discovery that was not just a new addition to an old framework but one that required a new understanding of the entire known world.

Kegan (1982) described a beautiful film taken over a period of months that tries to capture the nature of psychological "hatching"

by showing the subtle changes in an infant's relationship with an object (in this case a necklace and a ball):

It is difficult, for anyone, unless forewarned, to resist the perception that the little necklace or the rubber ball is remaining the same throughout the film while only the infant is changing; that the two-year drama contains two characters--an infant and an object--whose entity remains the same. The film takes on a whole new life if one sees that a single dynamic organism, "baby-and-ball," is gradually undergoing a process of transformation. Over a period roughly from nine to twenty-one months, the baby-and-ball begins to be something other than a single entity, but does not quite constitute, as yet, two distinct entities. Although the hidden object is not immediately given up, its pursuit is easily defeated. One has the sense of a differentiation so fragile, so tentative, that it can very easily merge back into oneness. . . . In the early months the child gives it up without protest of any kind. He does not, it seems clear, have it, in the sense of its being something apart from, something to be bound up with. As he gets older it seems that it is not only his physical grasp that intensifies and articulates (from gross to fine motor coordination, for example), but a psychological one as well. All in all, the film, then, is capturing a motion, the motion of "throwing from," of differentiation, which creates the object, and the motion of integration, which creates the object relation. (pp. 80-81)

This is Kegan's description of the first reconstruction of the self and other--the creation of the permanence of the object and the new relationship to the object (which also entails a new sense of the self). All subsequent subject-object shifts are higher level transformations of the same basic process.

It might be asked at this point how such a view of psychological growth--the increasing emergence of a distinct and separate self and the increasing creation of and experiencing of a separate and more distinct outside world--uses the concept of internalization, a concept that is central to the psychoanalytic understanding of growth. In this theory internalization does not just happen by virtue of the



self taking in and making mental representation of that which happens to be outside the self. Rather, internalization is intricately a part of the process of differentiation, the process of the subject to object shift. Kegan (1982) noted that it "seems counterintuitive to describe internalization as a process by which something becomes less subjective, or moves from subject to object" (p. 31), but it is only after the self has differentiated itself from the ball, the mother, or some aspect of the mother, that it can then hold that object or experience of the object, as a separate reality in its mind. The same is true not only of external objects but also of the experiences of the self--psychological qualities and capacities like reflexes or sensations, and later on perceptions, and still later such qualities as self conceptualizations and stable dispositions.

These internal qualities, as long as they are wholly subjective, are not really part of the internalized structure that the self can deliberately work with until after the self has "made them object" and then taken them into the mind as distinct elements of the self. Thus Kegan spoke of having these qualities as part of the self rather than being them, as is the case before differentiating from them. In having them, as in the child eventually having the ball described above, what was "subject" or psychologically "fused with" becomes object or separate, allowing for its internalization, its being held in the mind.

An interesting image that Kegan used to convey his notion of internalization is that of a species evolution from exoskeletal to endoskeletal. Psychologically it is a shift from a state in which

the child could only experience something while in immediate and direct contact with some external or physical part of reality to a state in which that experience or object is given a stable, ongoing place in the child's internal reality; and consequently, the child can have a new relationship to the object and, with regard to emerging psychological capacities, some degree of conscious control over them.

With regard to what motivates or spurs psychological growth in Kegan's theory, it is again very helpful to think in terms of Kuhn's (1962) explanation of what produces a paradigm shift in given discipline or field of inquiry. When increasing "anomalies" appear on the scene that cannot be understood in the old frame of reference, and when one or more of these anomalies is of sufficient weight and nature that it forces a direct questioning of the underlying premises of the old paradigm, there is great stress and great pressure to find a new way of thinking, a new way of organizing the material, so that once again things "make sense." It was noted above that growth from one psychological era to the next entails what amounts to a loss of the old self, a loss of the old way of cohering, and of knowing, and essentially of being. At such a time the self is powerfully motivated, according to Kegan (1982), by a "transorganic motive shared by all living things" which can be described as the need to restore "the greater coherence of its organization" or, more cognitively speaking, "to make meaning or resolve discrepancy; but this would not be different than to say it is moved to preserve and enhance its integrity" (p. 84).

The pressures for a major reorganization come both from within the organism (as maturational growth in mental and physical capacities occurs and seeks expression) and from the environment (as less mature behavior is given less support over time and new behaviors and attitudes are encouraged). Thus, the child experiences that the old way of doing things does not seem to be working as well as it once did, and although it is painful and sometimes deeply resisted, a new way of seeing things is eventually not only accepted, but also demanded.

### Kohut

For Kohut the process of psychological growth, which he called "transmuting internalization," is motivated by similar needs--the need of the self to maintain a sense of coherence and of the self's well-being and mastery in the face of threats and frustrations. Ultimately the motivations of the self and the subsequent specific formations of selfobject relationships are based on the self's effort to maintain a sense of well-being and wholeness (integrity) that was originally experienced in a state of perfection (thus the attempt to restore perfection through the grandiosity of the self or the idealization of the parent).

With Kegan the conditions for growth are brought on by discrepancies and inadequacies of the given structure to accommodate new material; with Kohut it is the frustration experienced by the self in interaction with selfobjects that goads the self to growth. In this case it is some small aspect or function (not the whole) of the

selfobject that is internalized. It might be a self-soothing sound or statement, or a problem-solving act, that was formerly experienced in a sense of partial merger with the power of the selfobject, which, under conditions of "optimal frustration," the self begins to recognize as a capacity it can perform for itself. This is similar to Kegan's notion of eventually having a capacity rather than being it.

Kohut's conceptualization is clearly more psychoanalytic than Kegan's, but there is the basic similarity that psychological growth occurs by virtue of a separating out or differentiation process and then an internalization of new material--a mental representation or a mental awareness of a psychological experience, for example, the experience of an impulse. This new material is taken into the mind or self in such a way that this new material is now more "usable," more under the conscious control and awareness of the self, more objective by virtue of its being made an object of mental attention and then held (internalized) in the mind.

Kohut (1977) said that the basic process of building self structure takes place by "bringing about the separation of the psychological structures that ultimately form the self from those that will be excluded" (p. 174). This process takes place in the matrix of self-object interactions in which alternating experiences of merger with and separation from the selfobject abet the separation and growth process, just as for Kegan the self emerges from a merged embeddedness with its environment. As for Kegan, the process is triggered by arising anomalies or discrepancies that overtax the old system. Kohut referred to such experiences as "optimal frustrations." They

are the necessary and inevitable nontraumatic disturbances in the flow of things that stimulate the self to participate in its own growth by stretching its psychological muscles, so to speak.

Kohut (1977) suggested that the child "expects" an empathic environment to be in tune with its needs and wishes just as its lungs "expect" an environment which contains oxygen. On thousands of occasions microinternalizations occur when, after minor disturbances of the child's psychological balance, the child's tensions are empathically perceived and responded to be the selfobject. He described the process:

The self-object then establishes tactile and/or vocal contact with the child (the mother picks up the child, talks to it while holding and carrying it) and thus creates conditions that the child phase-appropriately experiences as a merger with the omnipotent self-object. . . . The relevant feeling states--either the child's own or those of the self-object in which he participates--, in the order in which they are experienced by the self/self-object unit are: mounting anxiety (self); followed by stabilized mild anxiety--a "signal" not panic--(self-object); followed by calmness, absence of anxiety (self-object). . . . It is the experience of this sequence of psychological events via the merger with the empathic omnipotent self-object that sets up the base line from which optimum (nontraumatic, phase-appropriate) failures of the self-object lead, under normal circumstances, to structure building via transmuting internalization. (pp. 86-87)

It is under such conditions that the self internalizes aspects and functions of the selfobject that the self formerly experienced as part of itself thereby laying down structure that forms the nuclear self. It should be emphasized that Kohut insisted that the first step, the empathic selfobject's attunement to and inclusion of the child into its own psychological organization, is more important than the second step, remedying the problem through action, at least with

respect to fostering the child's ability to build psychological structure.

In a more experience-distant and abstract formulation of growth Kohut (1971) described three factors involved in transmuting internalization. The first involves a psychic readiness for specific formation, a "maturationally preformed receptivity for specific introjects" (p. 49). The second, more complicated concept involves the breaking up or fractionalization of the aspects of the "object imago" that are being internalized. This relates to the nontraumatic, optimal doses that are needed. Kohut stated:

Expressed concretely, the withdrawal of narcissistic cathexis takes place in a fractionated way if the child can experience disappointments with one idealized aspect or quality of the object after another; transmuting internalization is prevented, however, if, for example, the disappointment in the perfection of the object concerns the total object, e.g., when the child suddenly recognizes that the omnipotent object is powerless. (p. 50)

The third factor involved in building self structure is related to the second. The breaking up of the total imago into smaller aspects that are internalized bit by bit allows for the depersonalization of the introjected aspects of the idealized image of the object. "The internal structure, in other words, now performs the functions which the object used to perform for the child--the well-functioning structure, however, has largely been divested of the personality features of the object" (Kohut, 1971, p. 50)

For Kohut, then, psychological growth always takes place in a matrix of interaction between the self and the environment (usually a selfobject) in which a disruption in the perfection experience of the

unity of the self and selfobject results in awareness of separate-ness. This awareness evokes anxiety, which if appropriately responded to by the selfobject, restores the sense of well-being, and in the process of repairing the rift between the self and selfobject, the self is challenged to expand its own resources and thus experiences a small increment in its capacity to care for itself. As with Kegan's view, if this restoration and reintegration of the self-selfobject relationship does not occur, the process of growth is experienced psychologically as a traumatic loss of both the self and the selfobject as they were constituted.

#### Summary

Although there are many similarities between Kohut's and Kegan's view of growth, there are significant differences. One difference is that Kohut sees most growth taking place in tiny increments whose accumulated result is largely seen in a stronger, more coherent, and stabler self. Growth is conceptualized more in enrichment and elaboration of a basic self structure than in wholesale reconstructions of the self, although more massive changes do take place at nodal points such as the Oedipal phase. Kohut's view of growth clearly emphasizes its affective factors, both as motivators and as evidences of growth (improved sense of well-being and self-esteem manifested in creative and vigorous self-expression).

Kegan's view of growth is clearly described in more cognitive language and conception than is Kohut's. He sees growth as manifested in new and more elaborate ways of looking at and experiencing

the world. A greater difference lies in the fact that Kegan formulates change not so much in terms of minute increments as in substantial reconstructions of the way the self and other are constituted. He included affect in the process in terms of motivation, that is, frustration and anxiety in the face of discrepancies evokes the need to make sense out of things, but the positive motivation to change, the need to "make meaning," while having an affective component, has a more cognitive flavor than Kohut's notion of the motivation to restore a sense of well-being in a relationship.



## CHAPTER IV

### INTEGRATION

#### A Common Premise

Part of the rationale for this study is based on the assumption that if it can be successfully argued that two theorists who relied on different data bases could eventually develop similar theoretical explanations for a broad range of psychological and behavioral phenomena around human development, then those conceptualizations gain merit and theoretical strength in at least two ways. First, those theoretical constructions can be said to have a broader and more substantial foundation in diverse primary data, supported as they are by two different data bases from related disciplines--intrapsychic data and psychosocial (behavioral) data. And second, those theoretical constructions, reinforcing each other, would merit increased attention from practitioners and researchers with respect to testing out various applications of the constructs as well as the validity of the implications of the theories.

The two theories in this study are derived from different data bases--Kohut's from data observed in a clinical setting through the special instrumentation of vicarious introspection (empathy), and Kegan's from a mixture of empirical research findings and observations of behavior in clinical and natural settings. Nevertheless it is the general contention of this study that Kegan and Kohut have

identified a wide range of psychological phenomena that are essentially the same phenomena seen from a slightly different point of view. Secondly, their explanations for these phenomena, while different in terminology and conceptualization, can often be shown to be compatible and supportive of one another. In other words, they may be starting from different observational stances and using different primary data as building blocks for their theories, but some of their basic premises and many of the conclusions that they reach and the constructs they employ to explain psychological development can be demonstrated to be complementary and harmonious.

This study suggests that there is a common underlying premise about the nature of the self that can be used as a framework for integrating the two theories. Although there are differences in their respective philosophical views of the self, as discussed in Chapters II and III, and also differences in their conceptualizations of the psychological characteristics of the self, they appear to have identified a common basic characteristic of the self that underlies all of their higher level concepts and constructs.

This underlying premise is that the self, in all its dealings with and configurational connections with others, is motivated by two innate psychological needs or strivings (regardless of how these needs may be based on or related to physiological needs or drives). For both Kegan and Kohut these two sets of needs are not just two separate and distinct sets of needs; rather the two are dynamic parts of an underlying unity. They appear opposed when defined in terms of their behavioral manifestations and the type and nature of the

psychological needs they fulfill, but they are better understood as partners in harness in the sense that each is needed for the development and integrity of the whole self. Just as magnetic poles require each other to create a unified magnetic field, each of the poles of the self is essential to the dynamic energy flow of the whole self. It is, in fact, the creative tension between these opposites that seems to produce the energy for growth and to give that energy shape and direction with respect to the specific type, quality, and contents of a given self and other configuration.

Kegan described these polarities in terms of two profound human "yearnings"--the yearning to be included, part of, joined with, and held, versus the yearning to be autonomous, separate, distinct, and independent. It was suggested in Chapter II that Kegan's view of the internal psychologies of inclusion versus independence are reflected in external forms of interpersonal relationships, and that this view of the internal psychologies of the self offers a bridge between Kegan's essentially psychosocial psychology and an intrapsychic view of psychology. Speaking of the internal dynamics of these poles and their essential unity, Kegan (1982) said:

But what is most striking about these two great human yearnings is that they seem to be in conflict, and it is, in fact, their relation--this tension--that is of more interest to me at the moment than either yearning by itself. I believe it is a lifelong tension. Our experience of the unitary, restless, creative motion of life itself.  
(p. 107)

For Kohut it is not just that there are two dynamically related strivings in the self, but he postulates a distinct intrapsychic self structure from which each striving arises. The similarity in their

views of the dynamic relation between the two poles as well as the underlying unity is especially demonstrated by Wolf (1980):

Tension between divergent constituent trends of the self becomes an integral part of the organization of the self from the very beginning. Kohut (1977) has discussed the bipolar nature of the self in great detail. The tension arc from the pole which harbors the nuclear ambitions to the pole which is the carrier of the nuclear ideals makes internal contradiction and tension part of the very constitution of the self. . . . The bipolar organization of the self may well be an expression of the fundamental dialectic of all life precariously balanced between the entropic direction of matter and the negentropic direction inherent in biological organizations. Thus the self is also forever precariously balanced between the entropic yearning for union (or merger) on the one hand, and the negentropic striving for differentiation, separateness, and boundaries on the other. (p. 126f)

What this study proposes is that Kohut and Kegan have each arrived at (one could even say discovered) a common underlying psychological phenomenon--the whole self expressed through and constituted by a dynamic polarity that has distinct inner (psychological) characteristics and observable external manifestations (interpersonal behavior). Kohut's emphasis has been on the intrapsychic characteristics, but he also has dealt with the "real life" manifestations in therapeutic and normal relationships. Kegan's emphasis has been on the interpersonal characteristics, but he has dealt very much with the psychological characteristics as well. Kegan insisted that his theory is both cognitive and affective, but it is the view of this writer that Kegan's is primarily a cognitive psychology with affect being understood in terms of and in response to cognitive structure and its changes. Nevertheless, affect is clearly seen as intrinsic to the whole process, not an added dimension. Kohut's psychology,

being psychoanalytic, couches most of the central issues of the self's development in terms of affective tensions and needs. It is suggested here that if the two theories can be bridged, the old problem of affect versus cognition may be better understood.

The broad lines of the proposed integration will be built around Kegan's model of the helix. Using this framework it will be demonstrated how Kohut's bipolar self concept might be viewed as an integral part of the helix, with special emphasis throughout on how the underlying dual dynamics of each theory contribute to this integration. After the basic model has been modified to accommodate the contributions of each theory, an effort will be made to demonstrate how many of the higher order but less basic concepts and terms of each theorist can be seen to reflect each other. It should be noted that there will be no exact "term for term" correspondence, for that would not do justice to the different frameworks that produced the concepts or to the nuances of each theorist's terms and concepts.

### The Basic Framework

The basic thrust of this proposed integration is that a correlation can be drawn between Kegan's "psychologies of inclusion" and Kohut's "idealized parent imago" on the one side of the dual-structured model, and between Kegan's "psychologies of autonomy" and Kohut's "grandiose self" on the other side of the model. It is not contended that these constructs are synonymous but that they are highly compatible formulations of the same phenomena, each emphasizing different aspects of the whole picture. It should be remembered

that each of these poles of the self is never conceptualized as a part of an isolated psychological entity called the self but is intrinsically defined in relation to its current configurational connection with others, whether as internalized objects or actual significant others. Therefore, in each case it will be shown not only how a given pole of the self (as though it were an isolated entity) is similar in Kegan and Kohut, but how the correlated relationship of that pole of the self to its environment bears many similarities in the different approaches.

The constituent of the self that has a powerful need or pull for autonomy in Kegan can be compared to the constituent of the self that seeks its own unique expression and aggrandizement in Kohut--the autonomous self parallels the grandiose self. In both cases they seem to be acknowledging a basic and primary aspect of the self and a basic need of the self that requires reasonable expression and fulfillment for normal and healthy development. This pole of the self strives for uniqueness, separate identity, and its own grand self expression under the sometimes intense impetus of not being influenced by the wishes or input from others. Its very meaning is that it emerges from the unique potential of this particular self, and it will insure that this need gets some fulfillment even at great cost to what appears to be its "outside" relationships. From an interpersonal or psychosocial perspective some manifestations of this need would appear to be selfish, egocentric, and negative with respect to others in the environment. Intrapsychic perspectives usually explain this phenomenon in terms of narcissism. This idea bears some

resemblance to the traditional psychoanalytic notion of the pleasure principle in which the Id seeks unbridled expression. However, for both Kegan and Kohut the purpose and meaning of this aspect of the self is very different from a drive for libidinal satisfaction. The purpose of this aspect of development is to strengthen the self (that which would be referred to as the ego from many perspectives) in order that the self become a viable psychological reality able to withstand the many misfortunes and blows of life, to develop its unique abilities, to relate to others as a differentiated and independent self, and to sustain its own life project. Without the development of this pole of the self, there could be no clear self identity (distinct from all others), no firm and cohesive self agency, no capacity for healthy self-esteem, and no relating to others apart from dependency needs.

The paradox of the development of this grandiose, egocentric, autonomous side of the self, which can appear to be so sealed up and even anti-other, is that it requires just as much connection with, support from, and even psychological merger with, others as the inclusion pole of the self. An integration of the ways each theorist views this pole's connection with others will be given, but first the similarity in their views of the dependent, inclusive pole of the self will be presented.

The pole of Kegan's self that is "yearning" for inclusion can be compared with Kohut's "idealized parent imago." It is interesting that in both cases this constituent of the self is less defined as a reality in itself and more defined in terms of others. For Kegan

this is the yearning of the self to blend with others, to be part of another or part of a group (like a family or peer group). This aspect of the self is by definition very much shaped by others and is willing to yield some separateness and uniqueness in the process. Kohut did not give this constituent of the self a name, as he did with the grandiose self, because this aspect of the self sustains its reality by projecting itself onto others. Recall that this pole is one of two efforts by the self to maintain its sense of power and perfection when it experiences the initial loss of paradise. It is as though part of the self says, "I am no longer perfect and powerful, but you are and I am part of you." This part of the self is eventually built up by internalizing aspects of the idealized others through the appropriate breakdown and reorganization process called transmuting internalization.

The different theoretical cast of the two theories can be seen in their emphases and their views of motivation and purpose with respect to this component of the self. Kegan sees the motivation in more cognitive and existential terms. The self needs to make meaning out of its ways of being connected; that is, to be part of others is a way of making sense out of one's experience. Also, it means something, in the sense that it is desirable and meaningful, to belong to others. On a psychosocial level the purpose of this pole of the self is to develop socialization skills and interpersonal capacities.

For Kohut the motivation driving the development of this pole has a more affective cast--the maintenance of a sense of power and perfection which support an underlying sense of well-being. In



addition the desire to merge with another has its roots in the legacy of the sexual or erotic component of psychoanalytic drive theory. For Kohut the intrapsychic drive and value or purpose of this pole of the self is to build up the component of the self that can formulate and work to achieve ideals and goals that are in general harmony with those of society. Psychosocially the purpose of this pole is to internalize the values and ideals of the society in a way that is uniquely workable and appropriate for this individual, which will require reforging them in a way that respects as much of the idealized original as possible while also respecting the uniqueness of the ambitions of the grandiose self (now becoming tamed and modulated under the influence of the internalized ideals).

#### The Object-Relational Component of the Poles

Comparing their views on the internal nature and the external function of the "other" with respect to each pole, reveals a continued similarity. For Kohut the need for and connection with others by the grandiose self takes the form of mirroring. Mirroring is not simply reflection but a form of echoing and confirming the experience and reality of the grandiose self in which the mirroring person is experienced as an extension or amplification of the self, without drawing attention to its separateness and its own individuality. Of course, there is a whole range of qualitatively different forms of mirroring from archaic to very mature in which the merger experience is less and less primitive.

For Kegan the needed relationship with the other by the autonomous self is described in the confirming function of the culture of embeddedness. Kegan described the need of the confirming function on both sides of the helix, the inclusion side as well as the autonomous, but the nature of the confirming is different on each side. It will be suggested later that the functions of the selfobject in Kohut's bipolar self-other configurations can enrich Kegan's single notion of confirming. The confirming function on the autonomous side of the helix is to acknowledge and support the self in its highly independent periods--the imperial and institutional eras. This would require supporting the self-sufficiency, independence, and competence building efforts of the imperial school child and the authority, ambition, and "self-authoring" of the institutional adult. In both cases it would require a degree of being willing to be valuable to the "grandiose" one as a planet in his or her system rather than for one's real and individual value. This is what Kegan meant by the subjectivity of a given self-other balance. The embeddedness is such that the supporting function of the environment is largely taken for granted; it is not consciously recognized except when its lack or absence calls its value to attention.

On the other side of the helix--the inclusive, dependent side (and Kohut's pole of ideals)--the function of the other is again to confirm the need for inclusion and to confirm the self in its included configuration. Confirming on the inclusion side would mean acknowledging and participating in the expression of impulses and intense attachments in the impulsive era, and acknowledging and

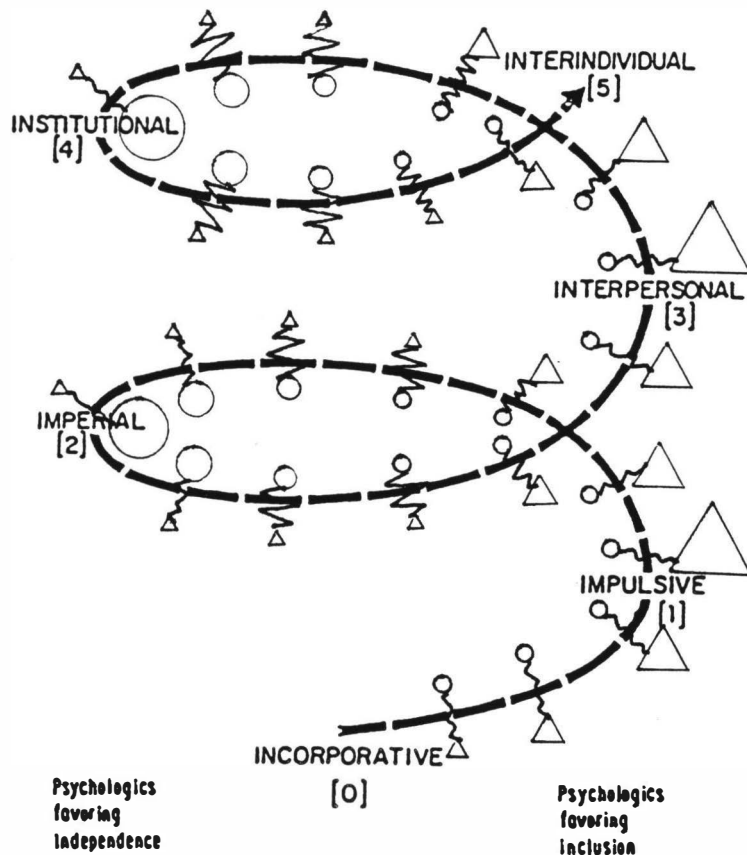
participating in the mutuality and intersubjectivity of the interpersonal era.

For Kohut the confirming function of the "other" on this side of the helix would be the allowance of and participation in the merger experiences of the self with its idealized selfobjects. As a parent this would mean being sensitive to the need of a child to idealize the parent, to welcome and support the child's efforts to imitate the parent, and to spend time in side by side activities with the child in which the child participates in the strength and competence of the idealized parent. At a more mature level (Kegan's interpersonal era), it would mean the capacity to handle being idealized in a mutual relationship (perhaps romantic) in which each party carries the idealized projections of the other to some extent.

This completes the integration of the basic two-pillar supporting structure that underlies each theory to the extent that they can be represented as static conceptualizations of self and other stages and relationships. The following section shifts from comparing the static conceptualizations to an integration of the growth process itself.

### Integrating the Growth Process

Figure 2 represents a modification of Kegan's (1982) helix (Figure 1) in which symbols of Kohut's bipolar self are superimposed on the helix. There is also an effort to depict the possible place and function of the third pole, the talents and skills. The symbolic representation of Kohut's self is represented by circles (the



GS/Mirror Constellation: Normal--○; Activated--○  
 IPI/Idealizing Constellation: Normal--Δ; Activated--△  
 Talents/Twinship Constellation: Normal--~; Activated--~

Figure 2. Helix With Self-Selfobject Integrated.

grandiose self) connected to triangles (the idealizing pole) via an electric-like jagged line (the talents and skills). Note that the repeated representations of Kohut's self as it develops along the helix change in several ways. While both poles are always there and operating, the idealizing pole is more activated (depicted by the growing triangle) when the self is moving through what Kegan called an inclusion era (the impulsive and interpersonal eras). Likewise, when Kohut's bipolar self moves through an independence era of Kegan,

such as the imperial or institutional, the grandiose self (depicted by the circle) is much larger than at other times. Finally, the talents and skills are suggested to be more activated at times of transition from one era to another, a time when the felt identity and cohesion of the self, with respect to its self/other configuration is unstable. Thus the self clings to and relies upon its identity in terms of known skills and competencies when other aspects of the self are changing. It goes without saying that although these symbols represent the self at various stages, it is its relationship to the environment that is being depicted as different at each stage. Thus, when the grandiose self is constellated, there is a demand on the environment for mirroring, and likewise when the other poles are dominant, their respective demands on the environment are being made.

Kegan's basic notion of distinct stages or eras in which the self (and other) is reorganized or reconstituted is based on his theory that these reorganizations can be understood as alternating forms of the "psychologies of inclusion versus the psychologies of independence." For a period of time, usually several years, the self/other configuration is settled or balanced in favor of inclusion and then, after a turbulent transition, is resettled in favor of autonomy and separateness. It is suggested here that these "resettlements" are best understood as reorganizations of the underlying cognitive structure of the self. It is similar to the way the deep structure of a paradigm, the unquestioned basic premises, get settled and then essentially taken for granted as all new information and experimentation takes place within that framework. To question the

basic premises is to threaten the entire system, the way of knowing and being that had been taken for granted. This way of knowing is what Kegan meant by the "new subjectivity" of each new stage.

When the self is settled or organized around the inclusion pole, the autonomy pole might be said to be recessive, but it is not entirely dormant. In fact, the "pushes" from within and the "pulls" from the environment that constantly emanate from the opposite pole are essential contributions to the dynamic struggle of the self to grow. And, after some growth within a given self organization, those pushes and pulls from the opposite pole accumulate enough momentum to dislodge the old structure and then draw together the contents of the old structure, after significant transformations, around the new (autonomy) pole.

The question now is how Kohut's basic conception of a dual dynamic as the core of the self relates to Kegan's. It is suggested here that Kohut's view of the way the bipolar dynamics of the self work to facilitate psychological growth can add a great deal of depth and richness to the understanding of the way growth takes place within a given stage of Kegan's.

Although Kegan does not like to be viewed as a "stage" theorist, and there is much emphasis on process as well as his existential and evolutionary motion approach to development that sets him apart from stage theory, he nevertheless ends up seeing life development in terms of five basic self/other configurations. And although he spoke of the existential meaning and experiential qualities of what it is like for the self to be in these configurations, it is the underlying

cognitive and perceptual structure formation of the self that is the very grammar of his theory. The point is that he spoke of psychological development as a complicated interaction of self and environment which produces five fundamental self/other configurations in predictable sequence.

Thus, when Kegan spoke of growth, he was talking about major reorganizations of the self, what produces them and how they take shape. The longer periods of life, the times within a given configuration, tend to be seen as periods when psychological growth is somewhat latent for a while as the status quo is maintained within a given self/other configuration.

This is not intended as criticism of this view, which after all seems both intuitively valid and has much support in observational research. The point is that Kegan's emphasis is on major self reorganizations rather than on the growth process as minute accumulations of self structure through what Kohut called microinternalizations. Kegan did place great emphasis on the role of the culturing environment to hold and confirm the self as it is, in any given stage, and as it becomes, in its transformational struggles. It is in this confirming function of the culturing environment, especially with regard to the strengthening of the self in a given stage, that Kohut's view might add so much to Kegan's view.

Kohut's emphasis is not on major transformations of the self but on the microprocesses of growth by which the nuclear seed or potential of the self is nourished. One could say that Kohut offered a microscopic view of the tiny pipelines that deliver the nutrients

necessary to psychological growth. The basic condition for this process to work is the empathic attunement of the self and self-object.

The two basic forms that allow the tiny pipelines to connect are mirroring and idealizing mergers. The end product of growth is a more vigorous, coherent self able to realize its innate direction and potential and, by virtue of its continuous growth in vigor and coherence, to more easily weather the turbulence of periods of more large scale transformations, whether they be conceptualized in terms of cognitive-perceptual shifts or psychodynamic transformations of intrapsychic structure resulting from powerful shifts and conflicts in the realm of self and object cathexis.

Kegan's broad lines of cognitive reorganization and Kohut's microprocesses can be integrated in the following way. If one takes the self as it might be in a given stage of Kegan's, say the inclusively organized self of the impulsive era (with the opposite pole of autonomy somewhat recessed and latent), and superimposes the bipolar self of Kohut onto the given self-other configuration, one could say that the idealized parent imago (IPI) is highly constellated during this era. Kegan's "self" of this era is a basically stable configuration. As he said, the question of what constitutes self and what constitutes other gets temporarily settled in each stage, and in this stage it is settled in favor of inclusion. But what is settled here is the underlying cognitive and perceptual structure which forms the subjectivity, the "unconscious" organization of the self through which it sees and on the basis of which it makes meaning out of



experience. Kohut's notion of an IPI transference-like relationship of the self and other can suggest how growth takes place within Kegan's essentially stable configuration, not by major transformations and reorganizations but by minute internalizations of the self-object--appropriately broken down or fractionalized aspects of the idealized image.

Thus, as this somewhat "static" self (Kegan) lives for a while in a given underlying structure, that "self" is strengthened and grows (Kohut) through microtransformations which strengthen and increase this pole of the self. The term transformation is used deliberately here in conjunction with growth, for although Kohut's notion of growth is described more in terms of accumulation or adding to what already exists (the current state of the self) to strengthen it, it is also eventually transformational in that minute, new pieces of the self structure are being created out of the material, so to speak, of the idealized imagoes. So even this form of growth is not simply adding to what is but is slowly transforming the self. It is suggested that the slow strengthening and transformation of this pole of the self eventuates in its capacity to use its newly formed but relatively stable contents, firmly and cohesively enough established now, to assist in its transition across the helix towards a new adventure into independence and autonomy.

This point might be made clearer by bringing together Kegan's "subject to object" shift and Kohut's "transmuting internalization." Any shift of some part of the self from subject to object involves a major internal and external reorganization. This does not happen

easily or quickly. Kohut gave us a conceptualization of how this process transpires from minute accumulations into enough mass to create the conditions for the shift. Kohut showed how the self, in a given selfobject connection, mirroring, for example, slowly internalizes the function of the selfobject, and thereby builds structure in that pole of the self so that eventually it no longer needs that particular form of selfobject. This can help to understand how from Kegan's point of view what was subject (fused with the selfobject) is transformed into object by the minute building up of that capacity or function until it has the weight and strength to push away from (differentiate) the selfobject (its former embeddedness) and own that function and capacity for itself (take it as object).

Two points need to be mentioned here. First, although Kohut referred to the IPI and GS and their respective attachments to self-objects as transference-like attachments, he made it clear that these are not transferences in the traditional sense of the term. They are (both in the therapy of disorders of the self and in normal development) actual, needed formations of self and other connections designed to facilitate the flow of nurturance from the selfobject to the self. They are, as it were, configurations of psychic receptor cells designed to attach and receive specific nutrients from specific sending units. A second point is that Kohut (1977) did not write extensively or specifically about the possible sequential or alternating constellation of the IPI and the GS. However, he did indicate in several clinical cases that the transference-like attachments are generally constellated in one form at a time and that the shift to

another would occur with some difficulty over a period of time. The view here is an extrapolation of his suggestions to normal development in which it is hypothesized that one constellation tends to predominate at a given stage of life.

To continue the integration, it is suggested that when the self is organized cognitively and perceptually around the autonomy pole (Kegan), the primary nutritional attachment takes the form of a GS constellation with the "other." Growth of the self would occur within the basic configuration by virtue of infusions of energy to the GS via the media of mirroring. The ambitions of this uniquely constituted nuclear self, expressing itself and taking pleasure in its own sense of aliveness, would find its culturing environment holding and confirming it (Kegan) in the highly specialized and active confirmation form of mirroring (Kohut). It is as though the psychic musculature is strengthened by applause, echo, and amplification from the environment.

Another aspect of the process of growth on this side of the helix, from Kohut's contribution, would be the slow, microinternalizing of the selfobject's functions of repairing and soothing the self after disappointments and blows to self-esteem. The microinfusions of numerous mirror experiences would result in the growth and strengthening of the self's sense of separateness and specialness to the point where the sense of the self was firm enough to handle the next journey towards inclusion without being too much threatened by a sense that it would lose its coherence and uniqueness by again merging to some extent with another.

Any attempt to integrate these views on the process of growth would not be complete without relating Kegan's notion of "contradiction" to Kohut's notion of "optimal frustration." In both cases these concepts deal with essential functions of the culturing environment that foster growth. The term contradiction has a negative sound that may be misleading. Kegan often suggested a more positive connotation by referring to contradiction as encouragement. The concept essentially refers to the supportive effort of caretakers to encourage and foster the next higher level of behavior and maturity. While impulsiveness might be appropriately confirmed at one time and age, it would be discouraged at another, and the capacity for patience and delayed gratification would be encouraged and rewarded. This type of response from caring others helps the growing child separate from the "old" self and take on the "new" self.

Likewise for Kohut, the caring parent, many times unintentionally but at other appropriate times very intentionally, does not mirror certain behaviors. Thus, those expressions no longer get reinforced, and the child is challenged to find new behaviors that will get mirrored. Similarly, with the performance of the idealized parent, there will come times when empathy is absent and other times when the parent chooses not to perform the role of the strong and competent hero, encouraging the child to perform the task for him or her self.

*Kohut and Kegan appear remarkably similar in their descriptions of these functions of the environment. What is different in their total conceptions of these functions is again influenced by the*

origins of their theories. The key to growth in response to optimal frustration is Kohut's notion of the repair and restoration of the empathic bond with the selfobject after the self has experienced fear and anger in the face of the temporary loss of support which occasioned the self's effort to solve the problem on its own or to soothe its own fears. It is this restoration that strengthens and inspires the child to handle and integrate the new way of doing things, even if it is more difficult or challenging. Thus an affective bond seems to underlie the growth process.

The issue of anger and conflict between the child and caregiver, and even intense rage and hatred are much more important aspects in the growth process for Kohut with his psychoanalytic views of the child and parent drama than they are for Kegan. For Kohut, it is within the matrix of affective intensity that the wound from faulty empathy occurs, with the resulting anger and rift in the relationship. And this same matrix of love and hate creates the context for restoration, for the healing of the wound and the restoration of an empathic connection. Paradoxically, it is through just such intense dramas carried on in numerous small and some large ways, that growth in the self occurs.

For Kegan the key to growth is that the "contradictions" of the parent encourage or urge the child to develop a new way of making sense out of what the other is doing and what the self and other really are or mean in relation to each other. The child grows by making meaning out of things in a larger perspective. Kegan's theory is cast much more in the manner of theories which suggest cognitive

dissonance as the motivation to growth, and the growth that occurs is described more in terms of an enlarged or more elaborated perspective and reorganized relationship of the self and the other rather than in terms of a strengthened affective bond in the relationship.

### A Third Dimension

It is intriguing that both Kohut and Kegan dealt with a third type of configuration of the self and other. In both cases this configuration does not seem to fit into the basic dual framework as part of the underlying tension of dynamic opposites. For that reason it was not included as a basic part of the integration of these theories, and yet it is too significant a part of each theory to be omitted. It is almost as though this third type of connection with the "other" has a special and temporary purpose called upon at special times. Kegan's notion seems closely identified with the concept in object relations theory called the transitional object (Winnicott, 1965). He spoke of a "medium of transition" and of "subject-object bridges" which constitute a configuration of self and other that does not fall into either the psychologies of inclusion or autonomy. Rather they are a type of connection with others (or objects or symbols) in which the self is like the other but not the same as the other. The special need for such a vehicle to support and carry the self arises especially during the unstable times of transition from one side of the helix to the other. During these times the self apparently needs a connection that is familiar enough and alike enough to be a reminder of the old self, but which is paradoxically

separate from the self enough to be discarded when no longer needed. Early examples would be blankets and teddy bears; later examples might be imaginary playmates (part of whose function it is to bear the projections of the self that are being discarded and separated from), and still later examples would be pals who are slightly younger but are associated with the way one was and from which he or she is now differentiating.

Kohut likewise found more and more of a need to come to terms with a third configuration. Early in his work he spoke only of the bipolar self as the basic constituents, but he always included a third set of components--the talents and skills (the unique constitutional gifts and tendencies) which develop on the "tension arc" between the basic poles. In his later writings this component of the self takes on a more prominent role with respect to the GS and the IPI. In his last book, Kohut (1984) began to speak of the possible theoretical value of conceptualizing a tripolar self.

As was the case with the GS and the IPI, the third constituent of the self emerged directly from Kohut's primary data vis-a-vis the therapist and patient in analysis. Kohut began to identify a third transference-like constellation that was different from and required different therapeutic responses than the mirror or the idealizing transference. He called this transference the twinship or alter ego transference. He had identified it much earlier in his work (Kohut, 1971) but at that time had thought that it was a special form of the mirror transference. Perhaps one reason that Kohut did not recognize its independent status is that this type of connection with others

develops somewhat later than the more fundamental constituents of the self, and its needs are especially felt at special times like transitional periods.

Kohut's (1984) description of the type of need the self has for the other in this configuration is remarkably like Kegan's description, and the interesting thing is that his primary sources for this material are the dream material, transference behaviors, and obsessional preoccupations of his patients. He wrote of the "need to experience the presence of essential likeness" (p. 194) and of a specific patient's need to experience "a twin, someone just like herself and yet not herself to whom she could talk" (p. 196).

For the purposes of this integration it is suggested that Kegan's medium of transition might be performing the same function of the culture of embeddedness as the twin or alter ego transference is for Kohut. If that is valid, it would suggest that the alter ego transference is constellated primarily at the times in one's life when the whole self and other configuration is undergoing a transition. This may or may not be so, and this aspect of the integration is more speculative and less easy to support than the other aspects. In any case it is interesting that both theorists again seem to have identified a similar phenomenon from very different primary data and end up explaining some aspects of ordinary, observable behavior in ways consistent with their own theories.



### Reciprocal Values to Each Other

It has been suggested that one of the ways that Kohut's contribution can add richness and depth to Kegan's theory is through the light it sheds on the nature of the minute interactions between the self and others and how the accumulation of the effects of these complex microprocesses can be seen to produce growth in a way that is harmonious with the larger process of change that Kegan described.

It was also suggested that Kohut's underlying concept of the self as a "center of initiative" and his conceptualization of the dual (or triadic) intrapsychic self structure giving specific shape and qualities and behavioral manifestations to the basic strivings of the self can add a great deal to Kegan's self concept, which seems in the end to be limited to the self being a center of existential consciousness lacking its own unique and innate psychological potentialities.

The entire affective domain is another area in which Kohut's contributions could add a great deal to Kegan's conceptualizations of the stages as well as the growth process. Kegan offered a view of development that is seductively convincing as a description of development until one tries to fit real people into it. When one does so the clarity of the stages and how an actual individual is manifesting the characteristics of a given stage becomes much less clear. The problem is that the theory is presented as a common pattern through which everyone moves in essentially the same way. The affective dynamics and the whole psychoanalytic system of defenses against

undesirable affects could add a great deal to the picture of how different each individual might look in his or her attempts to negotiate a given era or transition.

This study has been restricted to these developmental views as they relate to normal and healthy development, but the infinite variations on normal and the complex mixture of healthy and unhealthy traits in most individuals presents a great challenge to any theory of normal development. It is suggested here that Kohut's contribution could add a great deal in the way of explaining not only pathological deviations in development but also the infinite variety of so-called normal development.

What Kegan's contributions might add to a theory like self psychology would be a rich body of "real life" observational material that gives support and confirmation of the more experience-distant concepts and constructs of an intrapsychic theory. Kegan's research and anecdotal material gives full color and life-blood to the abstract concepts such as grandiose self structure. Furthermore, his distinct stages help to identify the qualitative and quantitative differences that might obtain between different levels of maturity in the self and selfobjects. Kegan demonstrated the behavioral manifestations and the real life relationship patterns that are embodiments of these underlying constructs.

One example of this would be the issue of idealized heroes. Kohut makes a great deal of the need of the growing self to create and connect with idealized figures and later to internalize aspects of these heroes. Kegan's description of the nature of heroes at

different levels of development can be helpful in differentiating lesser from more mature selfobject heroes.

Heroes of the Stage 1, impulsive and over-included child, are fantasy heroes of the fairy tales and cartoons. With these heroes the child merges psychologically; the child dons the clothing of the cartoon hero and becomes that hero, participating in his or her greatness and power. This illuminates one level of selfobject quality for Kohut. At the next level, the imperial, independent school age youngster, heroes are also important, but they function differently. They are more clearly maintained as real but idealized models, and the child struggles to actually achieve some level of competence in the relevant activity. As he or she does so, a higher level of mirroring--recognition, applause, and encouragement--is needed than the mirroring of infancy that requires exquisite attunement and co-participation.

At the next stage, the interpersonal, a form of inclusion with the idealized one is again needed (as in romantic love or team membership). And the heroes of the Stage 4, independent adult, again provide a new level or quality as ideals, and function as high level selfobjects that the self has chosen as supporting ideals. In short, as a developmental theory, self psychology is in its infancy, and its developmental line is very sketchy (Wolf, 1980), so the possible contributions of a compatible theory that is more richly detailed in behavioral, interpersonal, and sequential stage characteristics might be assimilated with great benefit.

## Summary

The basis for this proposed integration of two developmental theories which are derived from different primary data and which appear very different on the surface is that each theory rests on a similar fundamental view of the make-up and functioning of the self. In each case the unity and wholeness of the self is paradoxically maintained by the inner relationship of two dynamically opposed aspects of the self. These opposite aspects and tendencies are not opposite in the sense of being mutually exclusive, but in the sense of being mutually necessary to each other, as a magnetic field requires both a north and a south pole.

It is then suggested that fundamental similarities can be drawn between the way each theorist views each of these constituents or poles of the self. Kegan viewed one basic yearning of the self as the life-long need for and effort to maintain connection and inclusion with others. Kohut described a similar pole of the self that is formed from thousands of experienced mergers with idealized others. This pole of the self is motivated by a need to be like others and to participate in their qualities.

The part of the self opposed to the inclusionary aspect is described by Kegan as a fundamental yearning for separateness, autonomy, and uniqueness. Kohut described a similar pole of the self as the grandiose self. It represents the inborn potential of the unique psychological make-up of that self. It seeks to express and develop its own nuclear plan independently of the influence of others.

Since both of these theorists view all psychological development in terms of an object-relational framework rather than as the development of an essentially intrapsychic plan of an isolated ego, their views of the life-long series of "object" counterparts to the parts of the self is essential to their views of development. This study attempts to show how the "culture of embeddedness," which is Kegan's broad term for the human holding environment, is similar to the "selfobjects" of Kohut. In each case these conceptualizations of the "other" and its relationship to the self show how the self and other are to one degree or another psychologically merged or fused as well as being "real" others in an interpersonal sense. The similarity in these conceptualizations is argued on the basis of the functions that the "other" provides to the growing self. Kegan's concept of confirming, which is needed on both sides of his helix, is compared to Kohut's two functions of mirroring and idealizability, which can be seen as two forms of confirmation. In addition the more "negative" functions of the environment are compared--Kegan's "contradiction" and Kohut's "optimal frustration."

The actual growth process itself emphasizes another important function of the "other"--the capacity to facilitate the internalization of parts of itself into the growing self by maintaining physical and emotional presence even in the face of conflict and turmoil. Their views of the growth process are integrated in the suggestion that Kegan saw the larger process of evolutionary individuation whereby major shifts occur that involve transforming what was subject to the self (its self and other aspects that were unconscious and

undifferentiated) into objects of the self which it could relate to and control to some extent. Kohut's view of the growth process is integrated into the larger process by the way it explains how the minute microinternalizations of self structure build up enough strength and mass to emerge and stand on their own as "objects" or capacities that the self can maintain and use with some degree of control.

A third dimension of the self and its object-relational counterpart is also compared. This component seems less clearly defined in both theories and seems to relate to transitional periods in which the old self and other configuration is undergoing change. Kegan spoke of the need of the self for "a medium of transition," and Kohut spoke of the need for a "twinship or alter ego" connection with others. In both cases it calls for an experience of relatedness with others that bridges inclusion and independence--a sense of being alike but not the same as the other.

Finally some suggestion is given for how each theory has areas of strength which might be integrated by the other theory to contribute to areas of that theory that are less developed. It is suggested that the Kegan's clear conceptualization of the stages and his rich descriptions of actual human relationships and behaviors might be helpful in elaborating the sketchy developmental line of self and selfobject as it currently stands in self psychology. It is suggested that Kohut's affective emphasis can add a great deal to understanding the inner experiences of the self within stages and in its transitional struggles. Finally, the point is made that Kohut's

affective and psychodynamic emphasis might contribute a better understanding of the great diversity and deviation by individuals on their presumed common trek up the helix.

## CHAPTER V

### FUTURE RESEARCH

Kohut has been criticized for his independent and isolated approach to the development of the theory of self psychology (Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). Kohut's (1980) response was that he had no objections in principle to attempts at integration of self psychology with other theories, but that self psychology needed a time to establish and consolidate itself before the benefits of cross-fertilization with other theories could be realized.

In response to an effort by Shane and Shane (1980) to draw some broad lines of integration between developmental theories of the self (particularly with respect to Winnicott, Spitz, and Mahler), Kohut (1980) had this to say:

Self psychology does not see the essence of man's development as a move from dependence to independence, from merger to autonomy, or even as a move from no-self to self. We do not disregard man's anxieties and depressions, in infancy, in adulthood, and when face to face with death. And while we certainly do not ignore man's greed and lust or his destructive rage, we see them not as primary givens but as secondary phenomena due to disturbances in the self-selfobject unit. Accordingly, we do not focus our attention on the baby's anxiety vis-a-vis strangers (Spitz), his clutching of substitutes for the unresponsive or unavailable mother (Winnicott), or the affective and ideational swings that accompany his reluctant move from symbiotic existence to individuality (Mahler) as if these phenomena represent primary and circumscribed psychological configurations. From the vantage point of self psychology, these phenomena are secondary, their meaning and significance becoming understandable only when seen from the point of view of man's abiding need for selfobjects throughout the whole span of life. What we have begun to study,



therefore, and what we hope, in the future, to investigate in fruitful cooperation with others, is the sequence of self-selfobject relationships that occur throughout life. (p. 479)

This quotation was selected because it represents both the historical reluctance of Kohut to integrate self psychology with other theories before it has firmly consolidated itself (much as the self needs to do in its own development) and also his hope that eventually such mutually beneficial integration will take place.

It was the intention of this study to help lay the theoretical groundwork for using Kegan's cognitive developmental stages as a reference framework for elaborating the sequence of selfobjects of which Kohut wrote. Kegan (1990) has indicated that he sees strong connections between Kohut's work and his own. In addition he stated that a number of scholars considered to be in Kohut's inner circle (Michael Basch, Ernest Wolf, and Marion Tolpin) have been complimentary of his work and also see strong connections between the two theories. Thus, there appears to be some foundation for the prospect of future research aimed at integrating these two theories.

After offering a detailed description of the processes by which the self is formed, Kohut (1977) stated that a great many "how and when" questions remained to be answered. He indicated that they would have to be answered with the combined research efforts from different approaches including the direct observation of children. He stated these questions:

(1) how the constituents of the nuclear self are gathered and how they become integrated to form the specific energetic tension arc (from nuclear ambitions via nuclear talents and skills to nuclear idealized goals) that persists throughout

each person's lifetime; (2) when the several constituents of the nuclear self are acquired (when, for example, the nuclear ambitions are established through the consolidation of the central grandiose-exhibitionistic fantasies, when the nuclear structure of the specific idealized goals is set up which thereafter remains permanent, etc.) and (3) when the whole series of processes by which the nuclear self is laid down may be said to have in essence its beginning and when it has its end. (pp. 178-179)

Kohut (1977) speculated that the bulk of nuclear grandiosity consolidates into nuclear ambitions in the second, third, and fourth years, and that the bulk of the nuclear idealized goal structure is laid down in the fourth, fifth, and sixth years.

One way to research the possible correspondence between the proposed stages of the two theories would be to use the instrument that Kegan has been developing over the last several years to determine subject-object levels of development (Lahey, Souvaine, Kegan, Goodman, & Felix, undated). This instrument attempts through a structured interview to determine where an individual would be placed along five increasingly complicated epistemologies (ways of making meaning) corresponding to Kegan's eras. It is possible that studies could be devised in which examiners trained from a self psychology perspective would interview subjects and rate their mode and level of selfobject connection; these same subjects could be interviewed with Kegan's instrument, and the findings correlated.

One speculation that comes to mind for this writer after having studied the corresponding features of these two theories is that Kohut's view of the early years, particularly ages 2 and 3, might offer material that could lead Kegan to consider a possible alteration and addition to his helix. This would be the consideration of

an early, short-lived swing to the autonomy side of the helix. It might be considered a weakness in Kegan's theory that he deals rather lightly and generally with an area of development that has received so much attention from both psychoanalytic theory and from infant studies, that is, from infancy to about 3 years of age. In Kegan's schema there is only one configuration (after the incorporative stage) of the self-other or subject-object make-up from birth to about age 6--the impulsive era.

Kohut's theorizing would suggest that there is an early move towards autonomy, along with the needed selfobject constellation of mirroring, that occurs just after the emergence from the archaic fusion with the selfobject (Wolf, 1980). This would correspond generally with the separation-individuation phase of Mahler's et al. (1975) theory and precisely with the practicing subphase of that period. It would be based primarily on the simple need to be separate, no longer incorporated and totally fused. It would consolidate the first efforts of the infant to experience and express itself as a unique and separate center of initiative and awareness. This would be Kohut's grandiose 2-year-old whose oyster is the entire world (now that it is out there in a relatively stable and separate way), and who needs mirroring to confirm his grand exploits as an independent adventurer. This is different from the archaic mirroring that confirms and supports the infant's very capacity to have coherent, psychologically organized responses to experiences.

The healthy establishment of this basic and primitive level of individuation would result in a grandiose self firm enough in its

psychological boundaries not to be overwhelmed by the fear of being totally absorbed again into the selfobject. Once this fear is reduced, the grandiose infant can risk the process of plunging wholeheartedly back into the family culture of embeddedness in what Kegan called the impulsive era. Those extending the work of Kohut need to begin building constructs that can be empirically tested to demonstrate these levels of selfobject connections.

This study has been restricted almost entirely to normal development. The reason for that is that Kegan's theory is intended as a theory of normal development, even though it has many implications for understanding pathological development and what might constitute a therapeutic environment, both in clinical settings and in natural circumstances. Kohut's theory of development was derived from clinical settings and is deeply influenced by issues of pathology and the treatment of pathology. Yet Kohut (1977, 1984) clearly views his overall theory as a theory of health rather than a theory of disease. Nevertheless, it is his contribution towards the understanding and treating the whole self in its lifelong relationship with others that Kohut's strength lies. Therefore, it is suggested that the whole area of psychopathology--its origins, diagnosis, and treatment--would richly benefit from studies that interface the work of Kegan with that of Kohut.

Once valid correlations have been worked out between Kegan's eras and Kohut's selfobjects levels, disturbed individuals could be studied with respect to their demonstrating extreme or distorted positions on Kegan's helix. These conditions could be studied with

respect to Kohut's (1977) constructs about self pathology, which includes two major forms--compensatory structure built into one of the poles to make up for deficiencies in another, and defensive structure (pathologically organized self structure) that defends against the self's ultimate anxiety--fragmentation.

It is possible that such studies would reveal that a specific self defect (for example a depleted, weak grandiose self) would result in that individual's attempt to go through life, in Kegan's terms, by trying to stay on the inclusion side of the helix. In other words such an individual might try to jump the ladder from the type of relationships characterized by the impulsive era to those characterized by the interpersonal era after an abortive attempt to master the next level of autonomy and independence. A therapist from a self psychology perspective might hypothesize and anticipate that such a patient would form a certain level and type of mirror transference. That hypothesis would inform the therapeutic responses and shape the kind of context he or she might attempt to create.

With respect to interfacing the therapeutic implications of the work of Kegan and Kohut, the heart of the issue would revolve around the concept of empathy. Kohut is well known if perhaps often misunderstood for his emphasis on the value of empathy in psychotherapy. He has on many occasions (1971, 1977, 1984) attempted to answer his critics who simplify his use of the concept by suggesting that he is calling for more warmth or sympathy from the therapist. His view of the nature and purpose of empathy is much more technical and scientific than is often realized. Kohut (1984) stated:

Empathy is the operation that defines the field of psychoanalysis. No psychology of complex mental states is conceivable without the employment of empathy. It is a value-neutral tool of observation which (a) can lead to correct or incorrect results, (b) can be used in the service of either compassionate, inimical, or dispassionate-neutral purposes, and (c) can be employed either rapidly and outside awareness or slowly and deliberately, with focused conscious attention. We define it as "vicarious introspection" or, more simply, as one person's (attempt to) experience the inner life of another while simultaneously retaining the stance of an objective observer. (p. 175)

Kohut's point is that self psychology has not so much introduced a new kind of empathy into psychoanalytic theory but that its theoretical perspective (especially the selfobject concept as demonstrated in transference-like constellations as well as in normal, sequential, maturing forms) can broaden and deepen the therapist's ability to understand and empathize with the experience of the client.

Kegan (1982), in writing about applying his framework of a sequence of meaning-making systems to therapy, said:

As a clinician I am attending to the way this framework might help clinicians in their most fundamental activity: conveying to the client that they understand something of his or her experience in the way he or she experiences it. Why this activity on the part of the therapist is so crucial to the client's thriving has not been well understood, although it has been long appreciated by phenomenological and client-centered psychologists and is lately being re-discovered by psychiatry through the work of Heinz Kohut. In this book I try to demonstrate that this special kind of empathy is crucial at every phase in the lifespan because it is actually intrinsic to the process by which we develop. (p. viii)

It is the point of this entire study that Kegan and Kohut may be elucidating and articulating different perspectives on the same very subtle aspect of the lifelong self and other relationship. It has to do with the way the environment holds, nurtures, and fosters the

psychological growth of the individual, and the way the growing individual forms the type of connections that will meet its needs. If Kegan's work is about establishing that empathy is intrinsic to the process at every stage of development, Kohut's work is about how empathy works at the minutest level of self and other interactions.

Central to every aspect of each of these views is the unending need for a responsive, attuned, and empathetic environment. Kegan has emphasized and developed with great detail the observable, "real world" stages and functions by which a reasonably normal environment provides the sequential supporting cultures needed for growth. In so doing he helps the reader understand the ordinary behaviors and roles that individuals provide for each other from a whole new perspective. Kegan also speculates on what this experience is like from the inside of the participating self, but Kegan's strength is not in this area.

Kohut, through vicarious introspection, has observed what he believes to be the minute processes by which the self feeds from its selfobjects. From these data he has built a theory of intrapsychic structure and functioning vis-a-vis selfobjects. The landscape of Kegan's vision of development can use the magnification powers and focused beam of Kohut's vision to examine and elucidate the intricate pathways by which empathy promotes the growth of the self.

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