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The "New Look" at the Imaginary Audience and Personal Fable: Toward a General Model of Adolescent Ego Development

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In an often-cited passage, Piaget has remarked, "A day will come when the psychology of cognitive functions and psychoanalysis will have to fuse in a general theory which will improve both through mutual correction, and starting right now we should be preparing for that prospect by showing the relations which could exist between them" (cited in Noam, Kohlberg, & Snarey, 1983, p. 59). As if to redeem Piaget's prophecy, a number of papers have appeared over the years that have attempted to explore the common ground between (orthodox and revisionist) psychoanalytic and structural developmental theory (e.g., Greenspan, 1979; Lester, 1983; Shapiro, 1963; Wolff, 1960). As Noam et al. (1983) point out, this comparative work has not led to any systematic integration of the two theories. What precludes a full integration is the fact that the two theories are beset by important paradigmatic differences. There is an emerging consensus, however, that some rapprochement is necessary in order to further our understanding of "developmental psychopathology" (Noam, this volume; Noam, 1986; Noam et al., 1983; Selman, 1980). Hence, the search for meaningful integrative linkages has entered a new phase. According to Noam et al. (1983), theoretical rapprochement will be better served not by focusing on Piaget's theory, but rather on neo-Piagetian social-cognitive theories, which address more forthrightly psychological concerns (e.g., ego development, object relations) of interest to the psychoanalytical theorist. In their view social cognition is the "missing link" that can better bridge these two dominant developmental paradigms. They write:

Integrations and theoretical synthesis between psychoanalytic ego psychology, self and object relations theory, and Piagetian ego models have come into closer reach. Piaget's vision of a general psychology that would one day integrate psychoanalysis and genetic epistemology is still far from realization, though by [focusing] on the self and the ego, in combination with our cumulative knowledge in social cognition, a greater synthesis with psychoanalytic thought will be attained (Noam et al., 1983, p. 127).

In this chapter we explore the possibilities of a "greater synthesis" be-

development. This synthesis should be capable of providing (a) a common theoretical language for describing both the development of self-understanding in adolescence and the ego process of separation-individuation, (b) a developmental grounding for certain individual differences constructs (e.g., self-monitoring) that have not before been implicated in adolescent ego development, and perhaps more importantly, (c) a unified account not only of the common affective reactions that accompany normal adolescent ego development, but also the psychopathological reactions of impaired development as well.

Our point of departure is the "new look" at the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs developed by Lapsley and Murphy (Lapsley, 1985; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985). The imaginary audience is the adolescent's belief that he or she is the object of others' attention and evaluation. The personal fable is the belief in one's uniqueness, invulnerability, and omnipotence. These twin constructs have considerable heuristic power for explaining typically observed adolescent behaviors. Self-consciousness, show-off behavior, and the preoccupation with shame, shyness, and embarrassment all seem to reflect the tendency to construct imaginary audiences. The adolescent's heightened sense of personal agency, idealism, and indestructibility (as evidenced, for example, in risk-taking behavior) implicate the personal fable. Although these constructs are useful for understanding the normal adolescent experience, Elkind (1985) has argued that they can also be applied with profit to conceptualize certain clinical phenomenon as well. Indeed, Elkind (1985) suggests that a suitable theory of adolescent social-cognitive development must have sufficient generative power to account for the clinical case.

The chapter proceeds in the following manner. We first argue, following Noam (1986), that attempts to phrase integrative models of development require a consideration of additional concepts to describe the rhythm of development, concepts that have not been exploited by orthodox structural-developmental theorists. In particular we argue that the study of recapitulated patterns of development has considerable descriptive power. To demonstrate the utility of this strategy, we examine three recapitulation hypotheses. We first briefly review the ego separation-individuation process in infancy, and show, following Josselson (1980), how it is recapitulated in the second phase of separation-individuation in adolescence (Blos, 1962). Next, we show how the sequences of self-understanding in infancy, as revealed by the various mirror recognition studies, is recapitulated in the adolescent levels of self-understanding described by Selman (1980) and Broughton (1978). Third, we extend the recapitulation heuristic to a consideration of the "grandiose self," as described by object-relations theory (broadly defined, see Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). We particularly attend to the requirement of good-enough parenting to mirror, in phase-appropriate ways, the infant's normal grandiosity and narcissism, so as to encourage the nascent infant ego to take over for itself the soothing func-

tions performed by the external object, a process called *transmuting internalization*. We argue that adolescent ego development also involves a transmuting internalization process with respect to parental introjects, and that the narcissism of the grandiose self of infancy is recapitulated as imaginary audience and personal fable ideations in adolescence. We suggest that a consideration of the three recapitulation themes involving separation-individuation, self-understanding, and narcissism may provide the grounding of a general model of adolescent ego development. We conclude with some reflections on good-enough parenting in adolescence, and on how narcissistic personality and borderline disturbances can be understood in light of the present synthesis.

Recapitulation and Rhythm of Development

Most structural developmental stage theories have at least a tacit commitment to variants of the orthogenetic principle (Werner, 1957) that development proceeds from a state of globality and lack of differentiation to a state of differentiation and hierarchical integration. Progress toward the developmental apex is conceived to be linear and cumulative, yielding greater adaptive capabilities with each successive acquisition in the sequence. This understanding of the rhythm of development, however, is ill-suited to fully account for clinical phenomena. According to Noam (1986, p. 32), "There are too many simultaneous 'ego states', repetitions and breakthroughs of primitive thought to be able to organize the material around the most mature stage alone." For this reason the orthogenetic understanding of development must be supplemented with additional concepts, concepts that take into account the repetitive nature of psychopathology (Noam, 1986). The psychoanalytic tradition suggests such concepts as fixation, regression, transference, encapsulation, and recapitulation. A model of developmental psychopathology so integrated recognizes that the progressive development of the ego can, on the one hand, transform the meaning of early psychic experiences, "thaw out" the basic faults incurred in early childhood, and integrate earlier vulnerabilities with later developmental experiences. Such a model would also recognize, on the other hand, that aspects of the self can become arrested, encapsulated, even though the overall structures of the self may continue to develop throughout the life span (Noam, 1986).

Noam (1986; this volume) has shown how the encapsulation of developmental experiences can aid in our understanding of borderline personality conditions. In this chapter we are interested in exploring the heuristic power of the recapitulation concept. Recapitulation describes the continuity, persistence, or repetition of a structural form or pattern for a given developmental process. By this definition we do not mean to imply that developmental issues (e.g., attachment, separation-individuation) that

arise in later parts of the life span are *mere* recapitulations of early psychic experiences. We do not believe, for example, that adolescents are merely reworking fixated patterns of infant separation-individuation. Rather, we argue that while adolescent separation-individuation is governed by "later psychological organizations" (Noam, 1986, p. 25), the form of the process in adolescence is structurally similar to the process in infancy.

RECAPITULATION AND PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY

Although the concept of recapitulation has not been exploited by structural developmentalists, it has been given a more prominent role in psychoanalytic theory (e.g., A Freud, 1946, p. 152). A recapitulated pattern of development can be seen in the similarity between ego ideal formation in adolescence, and superego formation in early childhood (Blos, 1962). A child in the phallic stage partakes of the magnificence of his or her parents by identifying with them, bringing the superego into play. In contrast, in early adolescence, the genital child partakes of perfection by identifying with an idealized friend, which lays the groundwork for ego ideal formation. Blos (1962) also speaks of a recapitulated pattern of defensive amnesia between the two age periods.

Usually, memories of the adolescent period become vague at the close of adolescence, buried under an amnesic veil. Facts are remembered well, but the affective side of the experience cannot be clearly recalled. Repression takes over at the decline of the resuscitated oedipal complex as it once did before the close of the oedipal period (Blos, 1962, p. 116).

More recently, Josselson (1980) has made explicit the claim by Blos (1979) that adolescence constitutes the second phase of separation-individuation, by showing how the stages of the first phase in infancy, as described by Mahler (Mahler, Pine & Bergman 1975), are recapitulated in the second. She writes:

The dynamics of adolescent individuation are strikingly parallel to the process described by Mahler and her associates. Although the outcome of the early individuation phase is structuralization, it is not unlikely that the massive structural modification that takes place in adolescence repeats the process of the original structure formation (Josselson, 1980, p. 193).

Mahler's description of the phases (e.g., symbiosis, differentiation, practicing, rapprochement, consolidation) of "psychological birth" of the infant are well-known. According to Josselson (1980), themes involving symbiosis, differentiation, and practicing are recapitulated during the latency period. Symbiosis is reflected in the child's emotional dependence on parents; in the fact that the child's superego is composed of parental introjects, in the derivation of self-esteem through parental approval, and in the belief in parental omnipotence. Differentiation is seen in the child's understanding that he or she is a separate person with unique attributes, though

as Josselson (1980) points out, this is more aptly described as a "symbiotic differentiation," a sense of "we-ness." Finally, the development of interpersonal and motor abilities during latency reflects the practicing element of separation-individuation.

Of particular interest to us is the recapitulation in adolescence of the rapprochement crisis of the infancy period. With the onset of puberty there is a resurgence of drive that undermines the harmony of the latency period. There is once again pronounced ambivalence over autonomy, an oscillation between separation and autonomy, closeness and flight—a sort of "splitting" of the object world. As in the rapprochement crisis of early childhood, "the adolescent may come suddenly to an awareness of separateness, to a realization of the meaning of psychological detachment and of its negative aspects" (Josselson, 1980, p. 195). As in the shadowing and clinging behavior of the toddler, the adolescent desires to restore the symbiotic unity, wishes to share ego experiences, and desires approval from parents. Similar patterns of repudiation are also evident: by saying "No" to parents, by irritating them, and by acting as if he or she had no parents (Josselson, 1980). Hence, as in infancy, the rapprochement crisis of the adolescent involves the simultaneous repudiation and reliance on parents, the desire to be separate and the desire to share with parents without engulfment by them. When the adolescent can successfully consolidate the conflict between autonomy and dependence by developing a sense of individuality within the context of ongoing relationships (i.e., the "capacity to be alone"; see Winnicott, 1965), the rapprochement crisis is brought to a close.

As Blos (1979) points out, the individuation process is an attempt by the adolescent to transcend infantile object ties, to gain distance from the internalized object, which is to say that individuation is primarily an intrapsychic process. What is required is an end to the domination of the repressive superego, an end to dependency on parental introjects for approval, self-esteem, and standards of behavior. The initial move in the ego's attempt to master the superego involves the de-idealization of parents, a move that typically results in "mourning" reactions, and also a press toward conformity (Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). Optimally, the reorganization of the ego-superego balance results in an ascendent ego that internally regulates self-esteem based on realistic content, and not on the idealized content of the superego. Hence, according to Josselson (1980).

The ego must dissociate self-esteem from both the environmental vicissitudes personified by the parents and the valent self-representations of the superego. This involves the construction of stable, reality-tested self-representations that can withstand both archaic guilt and reality-related disapproval (Josselson, 1980, p. 198).

What is crucial to adolescent separation-individuation, then, is that the ego take over for itself the services previously provided by parental in-

projects. In a progressive fashion, played out over a number of years, the ego must wrest control from the superego in the matter of self-esteem regulation and in the regulation of guilt. Object-relations theory describes a similar process operating in infancy, where the vulnerable infant ego progressively manages to take over for itself the functions provided by the good-enough mother (i.e., the functions of soothing, holding, and quieting). This "transmuting internalization" process, then, is immanent in both the infancy and adolescence phases of separation-individuation, so that the neopsychoanalytic account of adolescent ego development involves not one but two recapitulation themes. There is first the recapitulation of "phases" (Josselson, 1980) and also the recapitulation of the transmuting internalization process. We develop the latter theme more fully in a later section.

In sum, neopsychoanalytic theory shows that the structure of the ego development process is formally similar in infancy and adolescence. Both phases of separation-individuation involve rapprochement crises, an ambivalence of autonomy, mourning reaction, similar defensive maneuvers, and transmuting internalization. In the next section we continue our development of the recapitulation heuristic by considering cognitive-structural theories of self-development.

RECAPITULATION AND COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

As we have indicated, the recapitulation concept has been most frequently used within the psychoanalytic tradition to explicate the developmental process. The strategy has not been exploited, however, by the cognitive developmental approach. In order to demonstrate the unifying power of this concept, we will need to show that cognitive and structural developmental accounts of the self in both infancy and adolescence can also be described in terms of a recapitulated pattern of development. We turn first to the emergence of self-understanding in infancy.

Much contemporary research on the self is organized around the distinction made by James (1985) between the self as subject and self as object (for reviews, see Damon & Hart, 1982; Harter, 1983). The self as subject is the I as knower. It is the existential self, implicating knowledge of independent existence, agency, and volition. The self as object is the Me as known. It subsumes the categories and concepts, the special features and characteristics, that are revealed by the knower. It says "Not only do I exist and have agency, but 'I know', in addition, the particular concepts that define Me." According to Lewis and Brooks-Gunn (1979), infants develop expectancies about their agentic control of the environment as a result of the contingent feedback that they receive from kinesthetic and external (people and objects) sources. The existential self is evident in visual recognition (mirror) studies when the infant engages in contingency play with the mirror image, imitates the movements of the mirror image, engages in rhythmic (bounc-

contingent videotaped representations of the self (Harter, 1983). After 15 months of age, infants show considerable facility at feature recognition. They make mark-directed behaviors to spots of rouge placed on their nose, indicating that a figural schema of the self has been violated. They also use appropriate personal pronouns to their mirror image, can label the self, and can distinguish self from other in pictorial representations. These abilities are interpreted as evidence for the categorical self (Lewis & Brooks-Gunn, 1979). The ordered acquisition of existential and categorical self-understanding has been documented as well by Bertenthal and Fischer (1978). Hence, the available research on self-understanding in infancy shows that the existential and categorical aspects of the self constitutes a developmental progression. The infant first develops an existential understanding of the self, "*that I am*," and then comes to understand the categorical features of the self, "*what or who I am*."

The existential to categorical progression of infant self-understanding is also evident in the phases of self-understanding in adolescence, as described by Selman (1980) and Broughton (1978). As Damon and Hart (1982) point out, there is a noteworthy convergence in the findings presented by these independently derived sequences.

Virtually all researchers have found that, with development, adolescent self-understanding shows an increasing use of psychological and social relational concepts for describing the "Me," a more prominent belief in the "I's" agency and volitional power, and a tendency toward integration of the disparate aspects of the self into an internally consistent construct system (Damon & Hart, 1982, p. 855).

In Selman's (1980) Level 3, for example, his first stage in adolescence, the adolescent conceives of the "mind" as an active processor, monitor, and manipulator of experience. As such, the mind is endowed with volitional powers and is conceived as a powerful mode of self-control. Broughton's (1978) first level in adolescence (Level 3) describes the mind similarly as an entity that is endowed with volitional characteristics, and which is independent of the physical activities of the body. The "I" mentally processes information, monitors and evaluates inner states, and "knows itself" in a privileged way. The heightened sense of personal agency in young teenagers has been attributed to this level of self-understanding (Damon & Hart, 1982; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985).

The limitations of early adolescent self-understanding is described somewhat differently by Selman (1980) and Broughton (1978). Selman (1980) sees the limitation of Level 3 self-understanding as residing in the adolescent's tacit understanding that there are some aspects of self-experience that are beyond the volitional control of his or her "observing ego." This understanding of limits is uncoordinated with and contradicts the agentic understanding of the "I" as an active manipulator of experience. Broughton (1978) sees the lack of appreciation for the self's unique properties as being the limitation of self-understanding in adolescence. Both limitations

Broughton (1978) sequences. In Selman's Level 4, the late adolescent construes the self as a unified system with conscious and unconscious levels and boundaries. In Broughton's (1978) Broughton (1981) Level 4, the self is seen as a system of distinct elements (e.g., real self, false self) that can operate in either a concordant or divided fashion.

Apart from the subtle differences, what both theories describe is a sequence of self-understanding in adolescence that proceeds from an *existential* understanding of the "I" as involving agency, volition, monitoring, and evaluation, to a *categorical* understanding of particular characteristics, of levels and boundaries (Selman), and of the systemic properties of self-elements (Broughton). If different terminology is preferred to *existential* and *categorical* to describe the progression of self-understanding in adolescence, and if this is to highlight the *theoretical* nature of self-consciousness in adolescence (Broughton, 1977), we might suggest that adolescent thought be described in terms of an *ontological* and *epistemological* self. In early adolescence there is a keen sense of the mental self's existence, that it has *being*, and is endowed with volition and agency. This is the problem of ontology, "*that I am*," that concerns the young adolescent. The knowledge of self-boundaries, the legitimation of "*what or who I am*," is the *epistemological* problem of late adolescence. Apart from terminological preferences, however, what is clear is that the process of self-understanding bears remarkable structural similarities in infancy and adolescence, which we are describing as a recapitulated pattern of development.

SUMMARY

We have now examined the recapitulation themes that are immanent to theoretical accounts of self and ego development in infancy and adolescence. We have shown how the first process of separation-individuation in infancy is recapitulated in the second phase in adolescence, and how the emergence of self-understanding proceeds from an existential (ontological) understanding of the self to a categorical (epistemological) understanding in both age periods. The recapitulation heuristic, then, seems to possess general power to conceptualize self and ego process irrespective of particular theoretical traditions. We are now in a position to extend the recapitulation strategy in order to show how imaginary audience and personal fable ideations can be considered recapitulations of the narcissism and grandiosity of infancy.

Narcissism and the Grandiose Self

INFANCY

The dialectical interplay between narcissism and sensitive mothering is a

The narcissistic infant's self-fascination has to be "mirrored" back to the infant in the "gleam in the mother's eye" (Kohut, 1971). The mother has to acknowledge and implement the prideful exhibitionism and sense of omnipotence of the infant, giving strength to the infant's vulnerable ego (Winnicott, 1965) and confirming the child's self-esteem (Kohut, 1971) in the process. But the child cannot rely forever on the ego sustenance provided by mother. Kohut (1971) suggests the term *transmuting internalization* to describe the process "where the mother's capacity to reduce physical and psychological tensions in the infant are gradually taken over by the baby through a manageable, bit-by-bit withdrawal of the mother's ministrations" (White, 1986, p. 151). In this way, through phase-appropriate empathic failure, the baby learns to soothe, hold, nurture, encourage, and set limits for itself, reflecting the internalization of the "holding" functions of the good-enough caregiver (White, 1986).

The chronic failure of phase-appropriate, good-enough caregiving results in grandiose (Kohut, 1971) or false (Winnicott, 1965) self-organizations. According to Winnicott (1965), for example, the etiology of the false self resides in the mother who is not good enough, who does not meet the infant's gesture, who does not implement the infant's omnipotence, but rather substitutes her own response, resulting in compliance on the part of the infant. Through the inability of the mother to sense her infant's needs, the infant gets seduced into compliance and becomes reactive to the environment. The "not good-enough" infant lives falsely. "Through this false self the infant builds up a false set of relationships, and by means of introjections even attains a show of being real, so that the child may grow to be just like . . . whoever at the time dominates the scene" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 146). The false self is organized to protect and hide the true self from exploitation, but the defense can be expected to engender feelings of unreality and futility. For Kohut (1971) the "grandiose self" is a developmental arrest and fixation at primitive levels of grandiosity. This arrest occurs as the result of the failure of the environment to provide empathic responses ("mirroring") to the exhibitionistic needs of the child. For healthy development to occur, the caregiver must be sensitive to the infant's need for admiration (Cooper, 1986). When this does not occur, when the infant is instead confronted with disapproval or neglect, the result is a distortion of self-development, leading to "later narcissistic vulnerability because the grandiose fantasy becomes repressed and inaccessible to modifying influences" (Kohut, 1986, p. 67).

Modell (1986) argues that Winnicott's "false self" and Kohut's narcissistic disorder refer to identical clinical types. Both can be traced to insensitive, phase-inappropriate mirroring during the course of the transmuting internalization process. Both clinical types are said to describe a disturbance of affects. For example, the narcissistic character can be considered as a defense against the intrusion of the not good-enough caregiver. This is accomplished by creating the illusion of self-sufficiency, which prevents the

organizations (grandiosity, precocious autonomy) can be seen as "false self" or "as if" presentations that defend the integrity of the true self (Modell, 1986; also, Miller, 1986). Narcissism can also be a defensive reaction against the feelings of separateness and object loss that are experienced during the course of separation-individuation. To counter separation anxiety and the mourning reactions associated with object loss, the infant ego recalls activities that yielded a maternal smile and feelings of symbiotic fusion. "If the 'self-as-agent' can perform in a manner that elicits the internalized representation of a maternal smile, there is the illusion that the mother is present and part of the self, leaving the toddler with a feeling of safety" (Rothstein, 1986, p. 310). The experience of the "self smiling at itself" reduces the anxiety of object loss, thereby preserving the illusion that the ego can control the object. By having recourse to the internalized representation of the maternal smile, the ego preserves the elation of the omnipotent mother smiling at, and in symbiotic unity with, the self (Rothstein, 1986). However, if the object cannot be so controlled, a variety of affective disturbances may result, including "narcissistic rage" (Kohut, 1971; White, 1986), a fixation on the false self (Miller, 1986), mourning (White, 1986) and shame reactions (Morrison, 1986), and feelings of depletion, despair, and emptiness (Kohut, 1972; Morrison, 1986).

This review of theories of infant narcissism reveals a number of important themes. One theme involves the fact that the course of ego development in infancy and early childhood involves normal phases of narcissism and grandiosity. Another theme concerns the ability of good-enough caregivers to effect the transmuting internalization process, and hence to respond to the infant ego in phase-appropriate ways. A third theme concerns the continuity between normal childhood narcissism and narcissistic disturbances. Narcissistic disturbances are the result of defective object relations and a subverted transmuting internalization process. "The development of pathological forms of narcissism is largely dependent upon the actual failure of the environment to provide appropriate empathic responses to the infant's needs" (Cooper, 1986, p. 135). Such forms may be described in terms of self-inflation, grandiosity, shame reactions, self-depletion, depression, and "as if"-false-self organizations. Secondary narcissistic investment can also be seen as a defensive reaction to separation anxiety and to the mourning reactions of object loss during separation-individuation. These themes, normal narcissism, transmuting internalizations, and the various defensive strategies and affective reactions, will be ascendent again during the second phase of separation-individuation. And the structure of this process will take familiar forms. Normal narcissism and grandiosity will find expression as personal fable and imaginary audience ideations (e.g., Lapsley, 1985; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985); transmuting internalization will involve the gradual relinquishment of parental introjections as the basis of self-esteem regulation (Blos, 1962; Josselson, 1980), and this will be accompanied by familiar affective reactions; and finally, patho-

disorders, will be seen to result from the failure of the environment to provide empathic responsiveness to the adolescent's narcissistic strivings and pursuit of ideals.

ADOLESCENCE

Adolescent narcissism is an explicit feature of prominent neopsychoanalytic theories of adolescent ego development. Blos (1962), for example, sees a marked increase in narcissism in the adolescence proper phase, and he distinguishes between narcissistic object choice, narcissistic defense, and the transitory narcissistic stage. Narcissistic object choice describes a type of friendship selection that is motivated by the desire of the adolescent to possess an admired quality, by proxy, through the friendship. Narcissistic defense describes the prolongation of the grandiose self as a narcissistic disturbance in response to the inability of the adolescent ego to relinquish the omnipotence of parental introjects. The phase of transitory narcissism precedes heterosexual object finding, and is occasioned by the decathexis of the internalized parent. The latter two constructs describe the continuity between normal and pathological ego development, and will hence play an important role in the present model.

The shift of cathexis in adolescence is key to understanding normal narcissism during this period (Blos, 1962; Josselson, 1980). The decathexis of parental introjects removes object representations as a source of narcissistic gratification. This is initially experienced as impoverishment, isolation, ambivalence, a feeling of void, or, more generally, as mourning reactions. In a manner similar to the infancy period (Rothstein, 1986), separation anxiety is compensated for by narcissistic self-inflation. In a sense, the grandiose self of infancy is reactivated (Josselson, 1980) to resupply the adolescent ego with the aliments necessary to maintain self-esteem, just as the infant ego was nurtured by the mirroring of the good-enough caregiver. The principal task is to maintain a hold on object relations in the face of the decathexis of the object world, and to reestablish firm ego boundaries. The narcissistic adolescent accomplishes the former task by means of object relational ideation, and the latter by the "willful creation of ego states of a poignant internal perception of the self" (Blos, 1962, p. 98), that is, by a "self-observing ego" (Blos, 1962).

Object relational ideation describes the private fantasies that prepare the adolescent for interpersonal transactions. They are "trial actions" that allow the adolescent to assimilate, in manageable doses, the affective experiences of social participation. The rich fantasy life of the adolescent is crucial to the transmuting internalization process of this period. According to Josselson (1980, p. 199),

The love of the omnipotent parent, previously structured in the superego, must be replaced by love of the self or the possible self. Much of the adolescent fantasy . . . is the enactment of the transmuted narcissism, *visions of the self* [italics added] to replace the lost superego love."

Related to the use of fantasy is the propensity of adolescents to use people in make-believe relationships. "These relationships lack a genuine quality; they constitute experiences which are created for the purpose of disengagement from early love objects" (Blos, 1962, p. 97). Individuals in these relationships are perceived more as representations than as persons, and they serve mostly the need for reassurance in the face of separation anxiety. The "as if" quality of the make-believe relationship can be understood as restitution for object loss and as an attempt to enrich an improverish ego (Blos, 1962).

The keen perception of inner life by a "self-observing ego" is motivated by the desire to reestablish firm ego boundaries. "Self-induced ego states of affective and sensory intensity allow the ego to experience a feeling of self and thus protect the integrity of its boundaries and its cohesion" (Blos, 1962, p. 92). Two important consequences result from the action of the self-observing ego. First, the adolescent is said to experience a heightened sense of personal uniqueness: "Nobody ever felt the way I do"; "Nobody has ever seen the world the way I do." Second, the adolescent experiences a surge of personal agency, and a sense of invulnerability. "This circumstance gives the individual a false sense of power which in turn impairs his judgment in critical situations, often with catastrophic consequences" (Blos, 1962, p. 100). The grandiosity that results from the action of the self-observing ego should also be seen, like object relational ideation, as a restitution for the object loss that occurs with the decathexis of parental introjects. In a manner reminiscent of infant narcissism, the experience of the "self smiling at itself [i.e., self-observing ego] undoes the feeling of object loss implicit in the separation-individuation experience" (Rothstein, 1986, p. 310).

A Synthesis

The crux of our synthesis can be stated as follows: (a) Imaginary audience and personal fable constructions can be seen as normative features of the transitory narcissistic phase of adolescent ego development, features that are described by Blos (1962) as object relational fantasy (e.g., imaginary audience) and the "self-observing ego" (e.g., personal fable). (b) The grandiosity and narcissism that accompanied the first phase of separation-individuation (in infancy) is recapitulated in the second phase (in adolescence) as personal fable and imaginary audience ideations. With imaginary audience ideation, the adolescent anticipates the reactions of others to the self in real or imagined situations (Elkind, 1967, 1985; Lapsley & Murphy, 1985). This constitutes "object relational" ideation, the function of which is to preserve a hold on object ties during the course of psychological separation from parents. The construction of "imaginary audiences," and "visions of the self," serves defense and restitutive functions. They constitute

"trial actions," "make-believe" relationships, that prepare the adolescent for heterosexual intimacy. Hence, these private fantasies of the reactions of others to the self allows the adolescent to prepare for and manage the affective experiences of social interaction.

The personal fable describes the adolescent conviction that he or she is unique, that one's thoughts and feelings are not shared by others, and that the omnipotence of one's reflections should be sufficient to compel others to submit to the adolescent's idealistic schemes. Elkind (1967, p. 1031) describes it this way:

Perhaps because he believes he is of importance to so many people, the imaginary audience, he comes to regard himself, and particularly his feelings, as something special and unique. Only he can suffer with such agonized intensity, or experience such exquisite rapture. The emotional torments . . . exemplify the adolescent's belief in the uniqueness of his own emotional experience.

Blos (1962, p. 93) describes this "personal fable" using similar language: "It as if the adolescent experiences the world with a unique sensory quality that is not shared by others: 'Nobody ever felt the way I do'; 'Nobody sees the world the way I do.'" The adolescent sense of indestructibility is another feature of the personal fable. "This impairs the adolescent's judgment in critical situations since it provides a false sense of power" (Blos, 1962, p. 100). Personal fable ideation is identical to the narcissistic restitution strategy described by Blos (1962), where the keen perception of inner life, "the willful creation of ego states of a poignant internal perception of the self" (Blos, 1962, p. 98), leads to a heightened sense of uniqueness, indestructibility, and personal agency—which impairs adolescent judgment in critical situations.

Although Elkind's (1967) account of the imaginary audience and personal fable and Blos's (1962) description of transitory narcissism seem to refer to identical phenomena, a more complete synthesis is possible when the imaginary audience and personal fable are interpreted in terms of the "new look" proposed by Lapsley and Murphy (1985). The new look suggests that the onset and decline of these twin constructs from early to late adolescence can be accounted for by reference to Selman's (1980) levels of self-understanding (Levels 3 and 4) in adolescence, as described earlier. For example, at Level 3, the mind is conceived to be a monitor, processor, and manipulator of experience. According to Selman (1980, pp. 104–105),

What appears new and striking at Level 3 is a belief in the *observing ego*—that is, the self-aware self as an active agent. This concept of active agency strikes us as . . . critical for a child's feeling of having some control over his own thoughts and feelings. For the Level 3 child, the mind (or ego) is now seen as playing an active moderating role between inner feelings and outer actions.

The self-reflective monitoring properties of the observing ego, the belief in the power of the mind to manipulate experience, accounts for the adoles-

cent tendency to anticipate the reactions to the self in real or imagined situations (Lapsley & Murphy, 1985). The self-reflective properties of the mind permit the construction of object relational fantasies, visions of the self, trial actions, make-believe relationships—imaginary audiences. This stage also provides more suitable language for an integrative understanding of the personal fable. Self-focused attention sets off the self as *figure* from the *background* of other perspectives, highlighting elements of individuality in the process. This is comparable to the function of the “self-observing ego” in Blos’s (1962) theory, that is, to establish a firm sense of ego boundaries “by willful creation of ego states of a poignant perception of the self” (p. 98), which also results in a heightened sense of individuality. The second element of the personal fable, the sense of personal agency and indestructibility, is also explained by Selman’s (1980) Level 3. “The increased self-consciousness of adolescents, who now conceive of the mind as an active processor and manipulator of experience, may now see the power of self-reflection as the capacity or condition for exerting power in other circumstances as well” (Lapsley & Murphy, 1985, p. 213). The heightened early adolescent understanding of the agentic and volitional aspects of the “I,” which are described so well in the sequences of self-understanding (Selman, 1980; Broughton, 1978), readily accounts for personal fable ideation, and is congruent with the “self-observing ego” explanation offered by Blos (1962). Hence, the observing ego features of Level 3 self-understanding provides an explanation of the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs, and is compatible with the self-observing ego explanation offered by Blos (1962).

Lapsley and Murphy (1985) account for the diminution of these ideations in late adolescence by the appearance of the next stage (Level 4) in Selman’s (1980) sequence. At this level the young adult can coordinate all possible third-party perspectives, an ability that obviates the need to imagine the reaction of others to the self. Because the adolescent can now locate the self in the larger matrix of social relations, and because he or she can coordinate the observing egos of others, social cognitions can be more faithful attuned with reality (Lapsley & Murphy, 1985). The notion of personal agency, individuality, and indestructibility also diminishes at this stage. At Level 4 the late adolescent is aware that the observing ego is powerless to control unconscious motivations, which highlights the limits of self-reflective self-control. This understanding diminishes the sense of personal agency. And because the adolescent can coordinate third-party perspectives, he or she can realize the power and limitations of the observing egos of others, thereby decreasing the sense of personal uniqueness. “The self is no longer isolated as *figure* from the *ground* of other perspectives. Rather . . . there is not only an awareness of multiple figures, but also an awareness that the self can be located within the ground of other perspectives (Lapsley & Murphy, 1985, p. 214)

SUMMARY

Thus far we have shown that the second phase of separation-individuation also involves a transmuting internalization process. Crucial to this process is the decathexis of object representations, which is experienced as ambivalence over autonomy and as object loss. As restitution, the adolescent passes through a transitory phase of narcissism, which involves object relational ideation and the self-reflective monitoring of inner states (the self-observing ego). We argue that these twin features of adolescent narcissism are identical in form and function to the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs. These constructs have been interpreted (Lapsley & Murphy, 1985) as being outcomes of the development of self-understanding (e.g., Selman, 1980). Within the present synthesis we can argue that object relational (the imaginary audience) and personal fable ideation, as problems of self-understanding (social cognition), are outcomes of the transmutation of narcissism process of adolescent ego development. Implicit in this summary are the three recapitulation themes. Adolescent ego development, like development during early childhood, can be described with reference to (a) the transmutation process involved in separation-individuation, (b) the agentic (ontological) to categorical (epistemological) shift in self-understanding, and (c) the normal manifestations of transitory narcissism and grandiosity.

NARCISSISTIC DISTURBANCES

The recapitulation heuristic also sheds light on the continuity between transitory narcissism and the narcissistic defense (Blos, 1962). The nature of narcissistic disturbances during the infancy period is described in terms of a fixation of the grandiose (Kohut, 1971) and false self (Winnicott, 1965). This fixation occurs in response to insensitive, not good-enough caregiving that fails to mirror the child’s need for admiration. Adolescence provides a second opportunity to resolve the basic fault incurred in early childhood (Balint, 1957; Giovacchini, 1979). The recapitulation heuristic can be used to generate hypotheses on what to look for during this period. It would seem clear, for example, given the heuristic, that the rhythm of ego development in adolescence would require a formally similar pattern of response from the environment as was required in the first phase of psychological individuation. It would require that parents, siblings, and, perhaps more importantly, peers be empathically responsive to the adolescent’s need for admiration. The requirements of good-enough caregiving remain the same as in early childhood: to be emotionally available during the course of the adolescent’s ambivalence over autonomy; to “mirror” narcissistic and exhibitionistic strivings; to effect the transmutation of narcissism by withdrawing, in phase-appropriate ways, through a gradual

selectivity of response, the mirroring support, thereby channeling the adolescent's narcissistic needs in realistic directions (White, 1986). Hence, on the one hand, parents must be empathic, sensitive, and emotionally available; on the other, they must allow the adolescent to individuate, to develop inner resources, and to regulate self-esteem in light of optimal frustration. As Mahler (Mahler et al., 1975, p. 79) points out in the case of early childhood, the parents' emotional willingness "to let go of the toddler—to give him, as the mother bird does, a gentle push, an encouragement toward independence—is enormously helpful. It may even be the sine qua non of normal (healthy) individuation." There is no reason to doubt that a similar "gentle push" is required in adolescence in order to advance the individuation process.

Impaired ego development in adolescence can also be expected to result in a consolidation of the grandiose or false self. Indeed, we argue that the failure to transmute narcissism builds the clinical foundation for narcissistic personality (Bleiberg, 1984; Kohut & Wolf, 1986) and borderline conditions (Kernberg, 1963; Simon, 1984) (see Cooper, 1986, and Meissner, 1986, on differential diagnosis). The diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder, from the *DSM-III* (American Psychiatric Association, 1980), are reported in Table 6.1. What is plainly evident is that the diagnostic features of narcissistic personality disorder describe exaggerated imaginary audience and personal fable ideation. Pronounced object relational ideation is seen in Criterion B (preoccupation with success and power fantasies) and C (exhibitionism, requiring constant attention and admiration). It is also seen in Criterion D, particularly when the feelings of shame and humiliation are understood as reactions to an "audience" (Elkind, 1967). An exaggerated personal fable is seen in Criterion A (grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness), and in at least some of the disturbances in interpersonal relationships (e.g., entitlement, exploitativeness). Bleiberg (1984) argues that narcissistic children define themselves with reference to the false self, and assume "as if" identities. She writes:

Feelings of unreality pervade their self-experiences, and often they spend their lives acting out a role. It matters little whether the role is . . . a chameleonic performance in which these children carefully monitor the environment and adapt the most convenient identity. The identity of these children . . . are not based on an internal or core sense of identity, but on their perception of what others expect from them or what they believe will gain them admiration or advantage. (Bleiberg, 1984, p. 505)

The pronounced chameleonic adaptation to the environment is also a feature of the Group III borderline category described by Grinker, Werble, and Dryer (1968). These patients await cues from others, assuming "as if" roles in response to the expectations of those with whom they are with. As Simon (1984) points out, adolescents with a Group III disturbance may

TABLE 6.1. Diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality disorder.

- A. Grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness, (e.g., exaggeration of achievements and talents, focus on the special nature of one's problems)
- B. Preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love
- C. Exhibitionism: the person requires constant attention and admiration
- D. Cool indifference or marked feelings of rage, inferiority, shame, humiliation, or emptiness in response to criticism, indifference of others, or defeat
- E. At least two of the following characteristics of disturbances in interpersonal relationships:
 1. Entitlement: expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities (e.g., surprise and anger that people will not do what is wanted)
 2. Interpersonal exploitativeness: taking advantage of others to indulge own desires or for self-aggrandizement; disregard for the personal integrity and rights of others
 3. Relationships that characteristically alternate between the extremes of overidealization and devaluation
 4. Lack of empathy: inability to recognize how others feel (e.g., unable to appreciate the distress of someone who is seriously ill)

Note. From *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (3rd ed., p. 317), American Psychiatric Association, 1980, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press. Reprinted by permission.

behave in ways that are similar to normal adolescents, thus escaping psychiatric attention.

We wish to make two general points. First, we have argued that transitory adolescent narcissism, as a normal phase of adolescent individuation, is expressed as imaginary audience and personal fable ideation. However, narcissistic disturbance can also be subsumed under the present general framework. Narcissistic personality disorder, as one example, is expressed largely in terms of an exaggerated, pronounced, and persistent tendency to construct personal fables and object relational ideation. The narcissistic disturbance, as it does in early childhood, reflects an alienation of the core self, and the ascendance of the false self.

Our second point regards the chameleonic existence of false-self presentations. We are struck by the conceptual similarity between this feature of the narcissistic disturbance, and the self-monitoring construct developed by Snyder (Snyder, 1979; Snyder & Cantor, 1980; Snyder & Gangestad, 1982). Self-monitoring is an individual differences orientation to how one presents and guides one's behavior in social contexts. High self-monitors carefully manage the images of the self that they present in social situations. They are like chameleons, striving to be the type of person called for by a given situation. High self-monitors are hypersensitive to interpersonal cues so as to always be ready to respond in situationally appropriate ways. Indeed, their behavior shows considerable situation-to-situation specificity. Low self-monitors, on the other hand, are (a) less responsive to the contingencies of the situation; (b) more likely to project their own core identities and personal dispositions in social situations, and (c) more likely

to guide their behavior on the basis of "inner" sources of information. We would argue that self-monitoring reflects not only a dimension of individual differences, but that it also has a developmental history that is grounded in the general process of adolescent ego development. The high self-monitor lives a false-self existence. It is an existence predicated on "not good-enough" responses to transitory adolescent narcissism, and it reflects a deficit in the transmuting internalization functions of ego individuation.

Conclusion

In this chapter we extend Lapsley and Murphy's (1985) "new look" at the imaginary audience and personal fable constructs. This view was criticized by Elkind (1985), who doubted whether the "new look" would have sufficient generative power to account for clinical phenomena. In response, Lapsley (1985, p. 235) argued that "interpersonal understanding, and the emergence of Level 3 perspective-taking abilities, may be at the heart of ego development in early adolescence, so that the imaginary audience and personal fable ideations can be seen as an integral part of the ego developmental process of separation-individuation." This chapter is an attempt to "make good" on this expectation. Lapsley and Murphy (1985) showed how the personal fable and imaginary audience can be understood as outcomes of social-cognitive development. In this chapter these constructs are seen to take on new meaning for adolescent development. They are the most visible expressions of adolescent narcissism. They are an outcome of social-cognitive development, and a marker of the transmuting internalization process. Indeed, the three recapitulation themes (e.g., transmuting internalization, self-understanding, narcissism) are anchored by these twin constructs.

It should be clear that what we describe here is not yet a general theory of adolescent ego development. Our aim was more modest. We explore the relations that might exist between neo-Piagetian and neo-Freudian accounts of object relations and self-development in adolescence, using the "new look" as a point of departure, and recapitulation as a unifying heuristic. Future research will need to demonstrate the unifying power of the imaginary audience and personal fable, that is, their relation to levels of self-understanding and to adolescent narcissism. The developmental trajectory of these constructs, particularly as a function of caregiving styles, will also need to be addressed. Additional research questions include how the transmutation of narcissism is expressed in terms of individual differences and in patterns of psychopathology. Fortunately, the availability of models of transmuting internalization (Benjamin, 1979; Goldberg, 1986), and of recently designed assessments of ego individuation (Levine, Green, & Millon, 1986) and adolescent narcissism (Raskin & Hall, 1981) should facilitate the type of integrative research suggested by

the present model. Such research should take us some steps further in the development of a general theory of adolescent ego development.

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