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RETELLING A LIFE

Narration and Dialogue in Psychoanalysis

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Although competitive, envious, possessive, and prurient interest in the analyst keeps coming up all through the analysis, its forms usually become much more temperate, and they do not undermine the intense and benevolent collaborative spirit that usually characterizes the final phase of analysis.

This mature self interest will be evident at the very end of a beneficial analysis when progressed analysands depart, smiling or crying or both, convinced not only of a better and truer set of storylines with which to give an account of a past life, including a past analytic life, but convinced that there are better and more truth-making sets of storylines with which to organize and conduct a life among people in the future. Analysands recognize the inseparability of self-interest and self interest and the inseparability of both from interest in the self-interest and self interest of others. For the most part it will no longer seem to serve well or to be necessary to keep saying or implying of self and others, "I don't care," "I don't dare," and "It's no use trying," and also "You don't care," "You don't dare," and "You're not trying." There are other and better stories of human relatedness to construct and tell.

CHAPTER 2

Narratives of the Self

THE concept of the self can be approached in two ways: as posing a significant problem for theory construction in psychoanalysis and as a significant feature of the self psychology of everyday life. Herein I attempt to show that the terms and the results of these two approaches need not be as different as might be expected. That is, the self psychology of theory may be shown to have a good deal in common with everyday self psychology as it appears in ordinary language, such as analysts hear from the couch. In particular, both approaches may be characterized as the construction of narratives. Grossman (1982), it should be noted, took up some of these problems under the aspects of individual *fantasy* of a self and individual *theory* of a self and considered both aspects in relation to psychoanalysts' theories of the self.

THE SELF IN CONTEMPORARY ANALYTIC THOUGHT

The self has become the most popular figure in modern, innovative psychoanalytic accounts of human development and action. Usually the self is presented in these accounts as an active agency: It is the source of motivation and initiative; it is a self-starter, the originator of action; it is the first-person, singular, indicative subject, that is, the "I" of "I come," "I go," "I will," "I won't," "I know," "I wonder," and "I do

declare!" This is the self that exhibits itself and hides itself and can love or loathe its own reflection.

There is still more to the usual presentation of this active self. The self appears in these accounts as the subject of experience: It constructs and participates in an experiential world; it is the self of taste and value, impression and emotional direction; it is the sexual self, the private self, the fragile self, and the bodily self.

Furthermore, this featured active self is the central organized and organizing constituent of the person considered as a structured psychological entity. In this aspect the self is the unity, the essence, the existential core, the gestalt, and the mastermind of a person's life.

In modern times this self or some selective version of it has been called by many names: the self and the self-system by Sullivan (1940), the action self by Rado (1956), the true self by Winnicott (1958), and the cohesive or nuclear self by Kohut (1977). Additionally, it is the superordinate self of Kernberg (1982) and the self as agent of the philosopher Macmurray (1957).

Concurrently, however, this self is not always and only active. Usually it has been presented as also being the object rather than the subject of action and experience. And often, as in reflexive locutions, this self appears as the object of its own action and experience, as when we speak of self-observation and self-esteem. Moreover, the self as object is not just a reactive agency or an observed agency; it is also the ensemble of self-representations. That is, it is the core content of all of a person's ideas about him- or herself, the self-concept or self-image. In this mixing together of agency and content, there is, I believe, some serious overloading of the conceptualization of self and possibly some theoretical incoherence as well (Schafer, 1976, 1978). Despite this, modern theory has it that the object-self is impinged upon by internal and external stimulation, and as a result of this impingement, both the functional self and the represented self may be fragmented, shriveled, inflated, chilled, and so forth.

Even in a brief and incomplete introductory survey of the self in contemporary analytic thought, which is all I claim for this section of this chapter, it is mandatory to mention that this self has also been presented, at least implicitly, as a force. In one respect this force is very much like an instinctual drive the aim of which is full selfhood or self-realization; in another respect this force is very much like a growth principle that vies with or replaces Freud's (1911b) pleasure principle. I believe this obviously teleological self principle or self drive is at the center of Kohut's (1977) self psychology; there it plays just as essential a part in explanations of psychopathology and cure as it does in explanations of normal development and personality organization. And I believe there can be discerned a similar teleological thrust in Erik Erikson's (1950, 1956) "ground plan" of development and its particular manifestation in a close relative of the self, namely, ego identity.

To continue establishing the terms for a narrative account of the self, I discuss, first, the self as active agent and second, the experiential self.

THE SELF AS AGENT

It is intrinsic to any psychological theory to present the human being as an agent or actor in certain essential ways and to some significant extent (Schafer, 1976, 1978, 1983). Even an extreme tabula rasa theory must include an account of how the person who has been written on by the surrounding world and by bodily processes becomes, in turn, an author of existence. Although the person may be a repetitive and largely preprogrammed author, he or she cannot be that entirely, for there is no one program to be applied to everything identically. The person must select and organize in order to construe reality in one adaptive way or another or one maladaptive way or another. Certainly, the theorist who is advancing a new set of ideas about human psychology must be viewed as a selective and organizing agent.

An author of existence is someone who constructs experience. Experience is made or fashioned; it is not encountered, discovered, or observed, except upon secondary reflection. Even the idea of experience as that which is turned up by the introspecting subject introduces an actively introspecting subject, an agent engaging in a particular set of actions, and thus someone who may introspect in different ways and for different reasons (Grossman, 1967). The introspecting subject extracts from the plenitude of potential experience what is wanted; in one case it may be sense data and in another case a self or, as is more usual, an array of selves. Introspection does not encounter ready-made material. For these reasons, developmental theories cannot avoid giving accounts of the different ways in which experience is constructed as advances take place in the child's and adult's cognitive and psychosexual functioning. Analysts refer to this as phase-specificity.

All this has to do with the self, for in their necessarily presupposing an agent, psychological theories of the self usually equate agency with selfhood. These theories then speak of what the self does. This is a

permissible move in the game of theory construction. Once agency and selfhood have been equated, however, at least two new problems will have to be dealt with.

Self or Person?

The first problem is explaining what advantage is gained by saying that a self engages in actions rather than saying that a person does. Why speak of activity at one remove from the person—from him or her or, for that matter, from you or me? Might there be some misguided need on the theorist's part to add an air of detachment to the discussion, an air that spuriously gives it an appearance of scientific legitimacy or clinical objectivity? Is it demonstrably more plausible or heuristic to say that a self can be organized and organizing than to say that a person can be?

But perhaps it is not an image of scientific detachment and of clinical objectivity that is at stake; perhaps it is a culturally reinforced need to retain in our psychologies some extrapersonal source of agency and thereby some implicit passive stance toward life. Although the self that is set apart from the person is not quite a soul or a god, it may be viewed as an idea that is not quite free of the kind of disclaiming of personal agency that most of us associate with souls and divine visitations. This is so because in adequate accounts of human action the person is retained alongside the self as a necessary activating figure.

Self psychologies retain the person in this way. They tend to exempt the "I"—the first-person pronoun, singular indicative—from the self in order to make the theories work; for the "I" is the informative witness to its own self and the source of the theorist's data. Comparably, when Freud talked of psychic structure, he still found it necessary to refer to the person or subject, for the structural theory could not do all the work; it needed a psychological being to stand behind it and to contain it, and it is that being that I call the person. In "The Ego and the Id" (1923a), for example, Freud introduced the person through blatant personification of the ego (see, for example, p. 58).

Doubling and Multiplying the Self

The second problem encountered by a psychological theory that attributes agency to the self rather than to the person follows on the heels of the first. If the theorist tries to deal with the first problem by making every effort to include the "I" within the self, then he or she is required to speak of that self as being self-constructing, self-maintaining, self-containing, and self-evaluating. That is, the theory is committed

both to self as mental mover and to self as mental content, or to self as subject and object simultaneously—and thus to a self that includes itself. There occurs at the least a doubling of the self. This doubling is a feature of Kohut's (1977) self psychology: The Kohutian self is not only an experiential self, it is also a center of initiative that establishes and repairs self-experience in general and self-esteem in particular. Additionally, in order to account for the profusion of diverse tendencies that characterizes each person's life, the self psychologist must sooner or later, and more or less officially, propose the existence of various subselves (for example, the grandiose self, the true and false self). Each of these subselves is supposed to be viewed as acting as a more or less independent agent even while it is still to be regarded as part of one basic self.

What is the result of this doubling and multiplying of selves? We seem to end up with a mind that is located both *within* and *outside* its boundaries and that contains numerous little minds that are *within* itself and at the same time *are* itself. This odd turn in self theory is a sign that it is in deep trouble. It has become fluid if not weakened. In contrast, it is less artificially detached and perhaps theoretically and scientifically less pretentious to think more plainly in terms of persons constructing and revising their various experiential selves of everyday life and ordinary language. Then each person is taken to be a narrator of selves rather than a non-Euclidean container of self entities. In the next section I hope to strengthen the case for a narrative approach to the self.

THE EXPERIENTIAL SELF

I begin with a puzzle and my solution to it. The puzzle is analogous to the one where you look for hidden faces in a sketch of the landscape. Here is the puzzle: How many selves and how many types of self are stated or implied in the following account? A male analysand says to his analyst: "I told my friend that whenever I catch myself exaggerating, I bombard myself with reproaches that I never tell the truth about myself, so that I end up feeling rotten inside, and even though I tell myself to cut it out, that there is more to me than that, that it is important for me to be truthful, I keep dumping on myself."

I count eight selves of five types. The first self is the analysand self talking to his analyst, and the second is the social self who had been talking to a friend. These two selves are similar but not identical in that self-organization and self-presentation are known to vary to some

extent with the situation a person is in, and in many ways the analytic situation is unlike any other in life. The third self I count is the bombarding self; the fourth, the derogated self that exaggerates; and the fifth, the exaggerated self itself. The sixth is the truthful self the man aspires to be; the seventh, the conciliatory advisor of the bombarding self, the self that advises cutting out the reproaches; and the eighth is the defended self, the one with redeeming features. As to type, there is what is presented as the actual self (whether exaggerated, reproached, or defended), the ideal self (truthful), the self as place (the one with the rotten inside and the one that can be dumped on), the self as agent or subject (the teller, the bombardier, the aspirant, and the advisor), and the self as object (the self observed, evaluated, reproached, and defended).

My answer to the puzzle introduces once again my thesis that there is value in viewing the self in narrative terms. I suggest that the analysand's experiential self may be seen as a set of varied narratives that seem to be told by and about a cast of varied selves. And yet, like the dream, which has one dreamer, the entire tale is told by one narrator. Nothing here supports the common illusion that there is a single self-entity that each person has and experiences, a self-entity that is, so to speak, out there in Nature where it can be objectively observed, clinically analyzed, and then summarized and bound in a technical definition—as if Humpty Dumpty could be put back together again. Whether the material is rhymed, brief, and cute like Humpty Dumpty, or prosy, long, and difficult like most analytic material, we analysts may be said to be constantly dealing with self narratives—that is, with all the storylines that keep cropping up in clinical work—such as storylines of the empty self, the false self, the secret self, and so on.

SELF NARRATIVES

I must point out first that it is consistent with ordinary language to speak of self *narratives.* In ordinary language, we refer to ourselves or to the self of another person in a variety of ways that derive from the different vantage points that we occupy at different times and in different emotional contexts. Implicitly it is accepted that, except for certain rhetorical purposes, there is no one way of telling it "like it is." For example, in my puzzle, it comes across as perfectly acceptable to produce what appears to be one narrative that includes a self that never tells the truth and another self characterized by other and more estimable tendencies within which self is situated the self that exaggerates. It is taken for granted, it is common practice to converse on the understanding that, whether in the role of observer or observed, a person can only *tell* a self or encounter it as something *told* (Schafer, 1983). Or, as the case may be, tell more than one self. The so-called self exists in versions, only in versions, and commonly in multiple simultaneous versions.

For example, to say "I told myself to get going" is to tell a self story with two characters, an admonishing self and an admonished self, or perhaps with three characters if we include the implied author who is telling about the admonishing. To say "Deep inside him there is a grandiose self" is also to tell a story about two selves, this time about one self contained within another. And smacking one's head after making a mistake is to make a show of punishing a dumb self. This last example also makes it plain that some of these versions of self are nonverbal. That is, they are versions that are shown in expressive movements or life-style rather than told verbally; however, showing or enactment may be regarded as a form of telling, so that it is warranted to treat nonverbal manifestations as self narratives in another form of our common language, say, as charades of self narratives.

To debunk the idea, as I have been doing, that personal experience discloses a single self-entity and that theory must include that self is not to maintain that all self narratives are inherently unstable and inconsistent; nor is it to maintain that all these narratives are on the same level; nor yet that the content of these narratives concerns only chronic flux or chaos. Many of our actions may be presented noncontroversially as differentiated, integrated, and stable, and these presentations themselves may share these organized and enduring qualities. In many instances, certain self narratives are so impressively stable in organization and content and so clearly superordinate to others that it seems a matter of simple observation to say that there must be, or we must be seeing, psychic structure. There must be nuts and bolts somewhere, we feel, or good strong glue to make it possible. But in reacting thus we are, I submit, following the good old storyline of primal chaos: This chaos is the baby with only an id to start life with, the seething cauldron of instinctual drives that must be curbed and contained by psychic structures. This is not the account of a preadapted baby in a world of prepared objects or others, the account that today seems much more adequate to express the way we make sense of humanness and its development.

Furthermore, through developmental study and analytic recon-

struction, we can often impressively claim to trace a progressive differentiation, integration, stabilization, and hierarchical arrangement of self stories.

At the same time, however, it must be said that in daily life we seem to have acquired an exaggerated impression of single and unvarying self-entities. This results from our unreflective attitude toward the heavy use we all make in our ordinary language of first-person singular pronouns and of such reflexive terms as self-esteem and self-control. Also, as we have self as agent available to us as a culturally or linguistically well-established narrative possibility, we gain an apparently experiential conviction that we possess a unitary and enduring self that may be experienced directly, unmediated by language and story. Locutions such as "be yourself" and "divided self" are instances of what I mean. Our common language authorizes us to think and speak in terms of single, stable self-entities. And so we want to protest that the self is not a matter of language, theory, and narrative mediation at all: The self is something we know firsthand; it is (in that marvelously vague phrase) the sense of self, a self we feel in our bones. I submit that it is correct to reply that "to feel it in your bones" is to resort to yet another good old storyline of the knowing body or the body as mind; the "sense of self" does not escape the web of narration.

In addition, from the psychoanalyst's point of view, there are still more and differently told experiential selves to take into account than my first answer to my puzzle suggested. I referred only to selves that appear to be consciously or preconsciously available at the moment. Yet unconsciously, the analysand in my puzzle may also be regarded as experiencing and presenting to the analyst *in the transference* a helpless self—that is, a child-self that cannot run its own affairs and so must appeal to a parental figure for help. Additionally, the puzzle statement may be indicating to the analyst that, unconsciously, the speaker is maintaining, among other experiential selves, a cruel and totalistic moral self, a grandiose self without blemishes, and an anal self that defiantly makes messes by lying.

I have just named only a few of the narrative retellings of the troubled analysand's self stories that the analyst may have to develop in the form of interpretations. Even what I called his actual self may have to be retold. For example, it may turn out that, for this analysand, his actual self is given very little to exaggerating; he produces no impressive analytic evidence in his sessions that he does exaggerate to any notable degree; and the significant problem may be that, fearing the envy of others, he has suppressed the presentation of a justifiably proud actual self and has substituted for it an unconvincing defensive

account of an outrageous braggart. The self that is claimed to be felt in one's bones could not possibly encompass all of these experiential selves, even if it could think; neither could the "sense of self" encompass all of them.

At this point, we might ask whether, in the interest of our own mental safety, we should not avoid this milling crowd of narrated selves in which we could easily get lost or trampled. Should we not instead mingle with only a few well-behaved self categories? My answer is, first, we do have available superordinate self categories, such as the actual self and the ideal self (Schafer, 1967). Second, we should be careful not to lose sight of the proliferation of selves in each person's construction of experience lest we begin to mistake our superordinate categories for entities discovered in Nature and observable without narrative mediation. In principle, no limit can be set on the number of experiential self constructions that it may be profitable to discuss in one or another context of inquiry. It is no good saying that we already have enough concepts to do the job of interpretation, for to do so is to close the book on new approaches and the new phenomena made available by these approaches. As I have argued in connection with prisoner fantasies (1983), each proposal in this realm should be assessed on its merits.

STORYLINES

Although I have alluded to the storylines of self narratives, I have neither attempted to define them nor provided examples. In this connection, however, we must ask not only "What *is* a storyline?" We must also ask "What is the relation of storyline to self-representation, fantasy, and metaphor, the three apparently germane concepts that clearly occupy more or less established or at least familiar places in analytic thought?" It is around these questions that I have organized this next section of my argument.

First, then, what is a storyline? By "storyline" I refer to whatever it is that can be used to establish a set of guidelines and constraints for telling a story that conveys what convention would certify as having a certain general kind of content. These guidelines and constraints may be derived from one or more symbols, metaphors, similes, images, themes, or dramatic scenes, or some combination of these. This storyline serves as a tool for working out ways to retell other stories in its terms, and so it makes it possible for narrators both to generate many versions of what is conventionally regarded as the same basic story

and, through reduction, to create faithful repetitions of these versions out of apparently diverse narrative materials. In one respect, for example, we have the storylines of imprisonment, rebirth, and odyssey that are commonly developed in the course of analytic work.

Take, for example, the instance of using rebirth as the storyline: The analyst may understand an analysand's references to new growth, new beginnings, glowing embers among the ashes, emergence from water, revival, and so on, as references to rebirth. In other instances, analysts develop narratives of oedipal victory and defeat and of masochism: When using the oedipal storyline, analysts may take a negative therapeutic reaction in part as a frightened retreat from oedipal victory and in part as a switch to the negative oedipal position. In contrast, when using the masochism storyline, analysts may take a negative therapeutic reaction in part as a sign of powerful reluctance to give up preferred forms of compromised and painful gratification and in part as a bid for their pain-inducing, preferably sadistic response to the dashing of their own therapeutic hopes.

With this sketchy account of storyline and its uses in analytic interpretation, let us now compare and contrast storyline with self-representation, unconscious fantasy, and metaphor. In this way I hope to bring home what I mean when I speak of the storylines of self narratives and why I give storyline the central position that I do.

Self-representation

Self-representation is a concept with a complex history and current status in psychoanalysis. As one of its most relevant features, the concept of self-representation is intended to announce the writer's assumption or realization that the self, like the object, is knowable only through more or less individual, partial, or whole versions of it. These are the versions the analyst encounters or defines in the analysand's psychic reality, and they may have little to do with conventional or putatively true versions of the self.

There is nothing mutually exclusive about the concepts of storyline and self-representation. Storyline may, however, be regarded as the more inclusive concept of the two. This is so because in practice single representations are not identified and analyzed as static and isolated mental contents. Rather, they are dealt with thematically, that is, as being significant insofar as they actually or potentially play parts in basic stories of the self. For example, the prisoner storyline includes a large array of not necessarily glaring representations of the self as deprived, confined, or punished; at the same time, it includes a large array of more or less subtle representations of others as judges, jailers,

or fellow prisoners. It is the job of interpretation to show that those are the representations it will be important to define more sharply and relate to one another in a thematically unified rendition of the analysand's diverse associations. Seen in this light, storyline pulls together and develops important aspects of the conceptualization of self-representations—and object representations, too.

Unconscious Fantasy

Unconscious fantasy is another concept with a complex psychoanalytic history and current status. Arlow (1969a, 1969b), in two discussions that seem to have become the standard references in modern Freudian literature to unconscious fantasy, came close to the idea of basic storyline. He took note of the aspect of unconscious fantasies he called "plot line." However, Arlow was not concerned, as I am now, with working out a narrative approach to psychoanalytic topics. He referred to these plot lines, such as Sleeping Beauty, in a way that was conceptually subordinate to fantasy, and he mentioned plot line only in passing, in a footnote (1969b, p. 47); obviously, he was engaged in making another kind of contribution.

As I see it, we must go beyond the consideration that to speak of a fantasy is to imply that we are referring to mental content organized by a storyline; we must also note that storyline has a more obvious generative connotation than emplotted fantasy does, for it is forward-looking or anticipatory. It is on this basis that storyline can more readily encompass the many variations of basic stories we conventionally recognize in daily life and analytic work. Fairy tales, too, have many versions; indeed, they have so many that it becomes unclear at what point we may no longer speak persuasively or confidently of a specific story as an unusual version of the same basic story (Smith, 1980). The same is true of any of the storylines I mentioned earlier: Odyssey, for example, which can encompass many variations, has the generative advantage and at the same time the disadvantage of unclear outer limits. In practice, it can become unclear when the analyst is forcing the same storyline on material that is extremely varied.

Metaphor

Have I been talking of metaphor all the while, and also of metaphoric entailment (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980)? Metaphoric entailment is exemplified by the basic spatial metaphor, Good is Up. This metaphor entails that, among other attributes, intelligence, good taste, and wealth are Up, while stupidity, vulgarity, and poverty are

Down. These are entailments insofar as consistency and coherence of discourse are being aimed at, which they often are. Thus, for example, very intelligent is "highly" intelligent. These few remarks on metaphor and entailment seem to suggest that metaphor says the same as storyline.

Again, however, it seems to me that storyline is the more inclusive term of the two. As I noted earlier, metaphor may establish a storyline, and what is called unpacking a metaphor is in certain respects much like laying out the kinds of story that are entailed by the metaphor. For example, "Analysis is Hell" entails the analyst being experienced as the devil. The analyst's attention to departures from the fundamental rule are experienced as the heat being put on. Perhaps in analogy with "War is Hell," the analyst's discipline is likened to Sherman marching to the sea. The stress of the analytic process becomes punishment for past sins; and so on. It is understood that the manifestly metaphoric "Analysis is Hell" is to be used as a set of latent instructions or rules for telling certain kinds of story about being analyzed. Analysts who can work through a core conflict show that they understand the narrative regulations of metaphor; they show it by their steady sense of relevance as they listen to apparently diverse communications.

A Clinical Example

There are many ways by which children are provided with storylines for the construction of self narratives and at the same time the construction of narratives concerning others. The dynamic content involved in these transactions is well known to analysts, but because that content has not usually been conceptualized in narrative terms, I should like to present a clinical example of consequential storylines and to bring it into relation with the topic of childhood memories.

The example concerns a successful, hard-driving, loveless career woman in her forties, once-divorced, who had never managed to establish a lasting, intimate, and gratifying relationship with an adequate and assertive man. From her early years on, she had been warned emphatically by her mother never to let herself be dependent on a man. That warning may be retold as having conveyed to her a number of interrelated storylines, only some of which I shall mention here.

It was being conveyed to her that as a girl and woman she was fated to be vulnerable to helplessness in relation to any man with whom she got deeply involved; further, that the only way to develop and maintain significant strength and dignity was to cut herself off from heterosexual love. Thus, she was being told that a heterosexual female self is a weak and degraded self and, also, that to love her father was to make herself vulnerable to this fate. In the broadest terms, she was fated to live in a world of powerful, dangerous, and certainly untrustworthy men. Although this woman had by no means renounced her heterosexuality altogether, she had repetitively developed and played out many versions of this set of storylines in her relationships, and ultimately she did so in her transference to her male analyst. Penis awe and envy, fantasies of castration and of a hidden penis, and primal scene themes were woven into the grim stories of her life that she both elaborated and enacted.

Before going any further, I should make it clear that I am not suggesting that her parents and others around her were the only conveyors of storylines for her life. As I mentioned, analysts assume that the child, too, is a storyteller from the onset of subjective experience. For example, there is the storyline "I once had a penis and lost it." The usual analytic term for childhood constructions of this sort is fantasy. I have been saying that fantasy is a story and that children manufacture stories that interweave what they are told and what they imagine. There is nothing analytically new in this point except my emphasis on narration. And, of course, there is always our culture with its stock of established storylines.

To return to the analysand: An additional and congruent burden had been imposed on her explicitly during her adolescence and her early adult years by her father's admonishing her never to have children. In this way, he authorized and reinforced her own guilty, anxious, and defeated account of her childhood oedipal romance. This romance included in the usual way wishing to bear her father's child. Thus, from her father's side, too, she was being pressed to renounce her heterosexual femininity. In large part she was to construct stories of marriage as offering extremely limited prospects of satisfaction and fulfillment; there was little to hope for even in the ordinary marital form of displaced and matured forms of oedipal love. Furthermore, her father's admonishment could not fail to add weight to her own storyline that she was an unwanted and burdensome child who somehow was responsible for her parents' unhappiness and lack of fulfillment. As was to be expected, she repetitively applied and elaborated this self story in her transference. For example, the repetition began with her earliest appointments when she insisted on paying for each visit at its conclusion. It turned out that she did so in order not to be a financial burden on the analyst, and, in addition, in the terms of the

storyline of dangerous dependence on men, so she would not be indebted to the analyst in any way. The storyline she was acting on was this: The only good woman is a good man; more exactly, a tough, utterly self-reliant man in drag. In effect, by paying as she did, she was saying "This is the story of my life." This enactment included some other major storylines, too, such as those touching on anality, concerns with social status, and so forth.

My intent in this summary of a few aspects of this analysis is theoretical clarification primarily rather than revision of the dynamic variables analysts customarily invoke to understand clinical phenomena. My theoretical point is that so-called self-concepts, self-images, self-representations, or more generally the so-called self may be considered to be a set of narrative strategies or storylines each person follows in trying to develop an emotionally coherent account of his or her life among people. We organize our past and present experiences narratively.

On my reading, this perspective on experience as a narrative construction is implied in Freud's final comments in his 1899 essay, "Screen Memories." There, after commenting on the "peculiarity of the childhood scenes" in that the child is portrayed as an outside observer of scenes in which he or she is an involved participant, and thereupon taking this peculiarity as "evidence that the original impression has been worked over," Freud soon concluded:

> The recognition of this fact must diminish the distinction we have drawn between screen memories and other memories derived from our childhood. It may indeed be questioned whether we have any memories at all *from* our childhood: memories *relating to* our childhood may be all that we possess. Our childhood memories show us our earliest years not as they were but as they appeared at the later periods when the memories were aroused. In these periods of arousal, the childhood memories did not, as people are accustomed to say, *emerge*, they were *formed* at that time. And a number of motives, with no concern for historical accuracy, had a part in forming them, as well as in the selection of memories themselves. (P. 322; Freud's italics)

I further believe that Freud was indicating the view, subsequently developed in ego-psychological terms by Ernst Kris (1956b) and that I am now recommending in narrative terms, that theoretical clarification of this sort *does* make a difference in practice. It encourages analysts to be aware that the life-historial material being worked with may

be usefully approached as a series of tellings and retellings constructed and reconstructed over the course of development—indeed over the course of the analysis itself. In this light, what we call free association may be retold as the production of bits and pieces or even larger segments of life stories being constructed and related in the here and now of the analytic relationship.

Speaking in terms of memory, Freud said, "the raw material of memory-traces out of which it [the screen memory] was forged remains unknown to us in its original form" (1899, p. 322). I am adding that we do best to think of the raw material itself as having, to begin with, become *psychic* material in narrative form, however rudimentary the narrative. In other words, the clinical questions we put to whatever we hear from the couch are these: Of which story is this now a part or a version and for which further stories has it served or is it now serving as a storyline? With regard to the self specifically, the questions become these: Which self stories are now being hinted at or disclosed or are now in the process of being constructed or revised and for which purposes?

CHAPTER 3

Self-deception, Defense, and Narration

SELF-DECEPTION AND DEFENSE

Freudian analysts have not established the idea of self-deception as a problem with which they should be concerned. They do not focus on self-deception in their formal propositions, and they do not mention it with any frequency in their informal discussions of theoretical and clinical matters. However, some casual versions of self-deception do crop up within the clinical dialogue—for example, when the analysand says to the analyst, "My mind played tricks on me," and when the analyst says to the analysand, "You are kidding yourself."

Traditionally, analysts have taken up the phenomena presented in these self-deception locutions under the description *defense.* The idea of defense, however, is not simple and straightforward. It has been embedded in the complex, technical vocabulary that Freud introduced and dubbed metapsychology. Consequently, before considering self-deception as narration, it will be necessary to review at some length both the place of defense in traditional analytic discourse and the assumptions that secure it in this place. And this review requires a comparative discussion of defense in the mechanistic terms of Freud's metapsychology and the nonmechanistic terms of action language. In order to situate this chapter in the context of the analyst's daily practice, I refer frequently to clinical problems, practices, and ambiguities; it is in practice that the foundation has been laid for the psychoanalytic understanding of defense. At the same time, however, the

complexity of the conceptual problems to be dealt with requires a measured, formalistic, unhurried mode of exposition and also some familiarity with the argument of chapter 2.

Freudian psychoanalysts take up defenses under two headings. The first is the mechanisms of defense. Included here are, for example, repression, projection, and reaction formation. The second is defense, or defensive measure, operation, or function, terms that connote a virtually limitless number of actions, any one of which may, after adequate clinical investigation, be said to be engaged in, or to have been engaged in, defensively. Included here are, for example, altruistic surrender as a defense against greed and envy, hostility as a defense against clinging dependency, and clinging dependency as a defense against hostility. The limits on what can be subsumed under this meaning of defense are set only by the analysand's inventiveness and the analyst's perceptiveness and narrative skills.

When the description *defense* is being used appropriately, the claim is made that in some sense (one analysts usually leave vague or unspecified) the subject—say, a woman—both knows and does not know that she sees, remembers, desires, believes, or feels something that she believes does or will involve her in some kind of dangerous situation, X. We cannot attribute a defense to her without attributing to her the knowledge (in some sense) that there is a danger to defend against. Further, not only is it assumed that the subject believes that because of X, she is in danger or is about to be; it is also assumed that she believes in this threat unconsciously and that she engages in defense against it unconsciously. Accordingly, she cannot be expected to explain as defensive those actions or changes of action (including reconstructions of experience) that she is aware of in this connection, such as an impulsive gesture of generosity or a flattening of emotional responsiveness. In one way or another, she will describe and explain these actions and changes of action in ways that skirt or deny their defensive employment and significance.

Freud (1926) laid out what he considered to be the four major danger situations of early childhood: loss of the love object, loss of the object's love, castration, and superego condemnation and punishment. He proposed that in psychic reality, where whatever is thought or imagined is taken by the subject to be real or actual, these dangers are the prototypes of all later dangers (even of death). That is, all later dangers in psychic reality are considered to be derivatives of these early ones and are potentially and usefully reducible to them through interpretation. In Freud's terms, when that part of the "mental appa-

ratus" he called the ego unconsciously recognizes that one of these danger situations or one of its derivatives is developing, it responds with anxiety. Under ordinary circumstances, the ego then uses the first phase of this anxious reaction as a signal of impending or mounting danger, and it invokes one or more mechanisms of defense or defensive measures against this danger or its consequences. In one account, the ego makes this defensive move to prevent the danger situation from materializing full force (for example, it represses certain fantasies in order to curb "immoral" sexual inclinations). In another account, the ego aims to avert panicky dissolution of its own organization. The essential phases of this defensive process are passed through unconsciously, and its essential constituents operate unconsciously.

These accounts of defense require the subject to deceive herself twice (at least) as to the dangerous state of affairs, X: (1) She manages somehow not to know consciously part or all of what she knows and believes unconsciously; (2) she manages somehow not to know consciously that and how she is effecting this split between knowing and not knowing. For example, by unconsciously employing the mechanism of projection, she attributes an unacceptable hostile impulse of her own to someone else. In another defensive context, she might resort to any of the countless defensive measures that make it possible to block, divert, misrepresent, or obscure her knowledge of X. For example, by defensively exaggerated optimism, cheerfulness, and initiative, she might represent in glowing terms both herself and her experienced situation. Thereby she avoids consciously experiencing her life in the exceedingly painful terms of the profound and chronic passive-depressive mood with which she feels herself to be continuously threatened. And for this ruse to be successful, she must take the defensive measure unconsciously. To be successful, the deception must be immaculate.

I will assume from this point on that when psychoanalysts refer to defense, they are also referring (among other things) to multiple self-deceiving actions that are performed unconsciously. But when, why, and how they refer to defense requires some clarification.

DEFENSE: SOME DISTINCTIONS, QUALIFICATIONS, AND ELABORATIONS

Freud's Metapsychology

Freud (1915a), ever interested in developing a model of mind to help him explain psychoanalytic phenomena, tried in a number of

ways to explain this knowing/unknowing defensive split in the subject's mental processes. (Because he did not deal with all the phenomena that today's analysts define and deal with, his discussions are not always as refined and comprehensive as would now be required. Accordingly, they are no longer as authoritative as they once were.) All of his explanations were essentially nonpsychological in that he based them on his mechanistic-energic metapsychology. That is, he based his explanations on shifts, accumulations, and expenditures of unmeasurable and qualitatively varied psychic energies (libido, aggression, attention cathexis) and on other factors that were holdovers from his earlier, neurologically conceived "Project" (Gill, 1976). Additionally, these energic explanations were, in one way or another, redundant or gratuitous (G. Klein, 1975). Subsequently, other analysts, among them Hartmann (1964), Kris (1975), Jacobson (1964), and Rapaport (1967), made noteworthy efforts to follow in Freud's metapsychological footsteps.

Notwithstanding these efforts, typical Freudian analysts in the course of their daily practice do not concern themselves with asking "How is it possible for someone simultaneously to know something and not know it?" and "How is it possible to defend and not know that one is doing so?" They just take it for granted that it is possible to effect this split unconsciously and that the split is probably present in what they hear and see in their clinical work. They do not seek a philosophically secure account of defense, and they do not justify their doing without that account. They try to pinpoint the occurrences of defensive transformations; they try to investigate their origins, their occasions, and their reasons or "determinants"; and in their own thinking perhaps, they try to sort out all the "mechanisms" involved. All this they do in order to interpret as precisely as possible the conflicts that necessitate self-deceiving actions, the compromise formations or attempted solutions that rest on self-deceiving actions, and the defense-serving characterological rigidities that must be both explained and modified for therapeutic purposes.

Wishful Thinking

Analysts distinguish between defense against X and simple wishful thinking to the effect that Y, something desirable, is the case. In simple wishful thinking (for example, in the presumably simple case of a very young child's idealization of a parent), the subject is assumed to be altogether ignorant that anything but Y could be the case. There is nothing to suggest that the subject is trying to rule out some other unconsciously known account of things (the dangerous X) owing to

the intense anxiety that would be experienced should it consciously be recognized that X is, or is threatening to be, the case.

But analysts do frequently follow two other possible lines of interpretation of wishful thinking. The first is that there are complex forms of wishful thinking, as when the defense mechanism of denial is being used (for example, in a later phase of idealization, the child idealizes the parents defensively in order not to experience the insecurity that it feels upon recognizing its relative helplessness and their shortcomings). The second is that there are complex forms of ignorance, as when the subject evinces anxiety over finding things out (for example, the subject actively maintains ignorance of family secrets, an ignorance that not rarely is dispelled solely by clinical analysis of anxiety-based situational avoidances and both gaps and contradictions in remembering). Thus, in their work with adult analysands, modern analysts typically are skeptical of the idea of simple or nondefensive, conflict-free wishful thinking. In keeping with the principle that psychoanalysis is a conflict psychology, they look for defensive or self-deceiving features routinely, and usually they are not disappointed in the results (Fenichel [1941], A. Freud [1936], Schafer [1968c]).

Defense Mechanisms

With the possible exception of repression, the mechanisms of defense are not held to be inherently and exclusively designed for defense. For example, projection and introjection, which are believed to operate as malignant defense mechanisms in certain forms of psychopathology, are also presented as playing central roles in the highly adaptive process of empathy. Even though repression may never be taken to be entirely without defensive uses and consequences, it may on occasion be interpreted as being used to implement aims that are not exclusively defensive. For example, repression may help a young child bear up under conditions that otherwise would be intolerable. Later in life, this use of repression may be established by reconstructions during analysis, reconstructions according to which "forgetting" psychic wounds and their occasions seems to have been the only way to endure excruciatingly painful phases, situations, and relationships of childhood. When recounted in contexts of this sort, repression will be presented as an adaptive resource or process; the analyst then will able to anticipate with some confidence that any sudden relinquishing, relaxing, or failure of specific repressions could be traumatic or lead to traumatization. In psychic reality, the analysand appears to view these modifications of repressions in just that way and will, accordingly,

approach analysis in the most gingerly or defensive manner.

It makes no sense to pigeonhole any one of the myriad activities thay may be used defensively—such as being altruistic, clinging, or hostile—as inherently and exclusively designed for defense.

Self-deception

Self-deception need not be linked to mechanistic conceptualization just because it is linked to defense. It is not necessary ever to invoke the term *mechanism* when speaking of defense. Speaking nonmechanistically, which is a linguistic option being taken by more and more analysts as they discard the model of a "mental apparatus," we can just as well put the matter in this way: In times of apparent danger, and in order to be able to function less anxiously and in a less restricted or damaging manner, the subject (not the ego) will aim to develop or restore subjective feelings of safety and confidence by employing forms and contents of thought whose nature it is to transform threatening conceptions of the current state of affairs and threatening courses of action, or both, into less threatening ones. This occurs in the case of denials, idealizations, and reaction formations. In this, the subject will be self-deceiving.

Rather than acting less anxiously, a person may, of course, act defensively in order to function less guiltily, in a less ashamed or depressed manner, or in some other less painful and restrictive fashion. These variations of affective tone and action do not alter the criteria as to what is the best way to conceptualize defensive actions.

Defense by the Analysand

Defense is, of course, defense *by* as well as defense *against*. Everything that has already been mentioned about the types and instances of defense and defense mechanisms indicates the often bewildering variety of factors the analyst must take into account. On a higher level of abstraction, defense is, mechanistically, instituted by the metapsychological "ego" or, nonmechanistically, *by* the person or agent.

Defense of the Ego

Defense is also defense *of*. The traditional Freudian analyst regards defense as defense of the ego, the adaptive "organ" or "structure" of the mind. There are many aspects of defense of the ego, and which of these aspects the analyst emphasizes depends on the specific intersys-

temic or intrasystemic problem he or she is placing in the foreground. Problems in the ego's relations with the id center on intersystemic boundaries; specifically, they center on protecting ego functions against the dangers of sexualization and aggressivization. The function of perceiving, for example, may be said to be excessively sexualized (invaded by the sexual drives of the id) when it is being used to implement voyeuristic aims. Similarly, remembering may be said to be excessively aggressivized (invaded by the aggressive drives of the id) when the faults and errors of others are relentlessly and remorselessly cataloged and rehearsed. Self-deception might implicitly enter this intersystemic interpretive context when, for example, although the subject defensively believes consciously that she is engaged in reading purely for scholarly purposes, the analyst is able to interpret that she is also reading sexually, perhaps mainly in order to bring herself into a sexually excited state. In another instance, she might be reading not for scholarly purposes alone, as she maintains consciously, but also and unconsciously aggressively, perhaps mainly in order to violate or destroy certain familial or general social conventions or to prepare an "overkill" critique of a hated rival.

Problems in the metapsychological ego's relations with the superego and the ego ideal center on reducing the need for self-punishment, making restitution to others, and recovering from loss of self-esteem, all seemingly in response to, or as manifestations of, the subject's painfully experiencing guilt and shame. Self-deception enters this intersystemic context when, for example, reading, ostensibly undertaken for pleasure, competition, or profit, is interpretable at least partly as an unconsciously carried out, weighty act of self-punishment or penitence (for example, as a way of forgoing certain social or erotic pleasures).

In the metapsychologically based structural theory of psychoanalysis, the ego also has organizational or intrasystemic problems of its own, and it uses defensive measures in this connection too. It may even be said to be engaged in defense against defense, as in the case of a conscious Pollyanna stance of denial that defends against projective paranoid mistrust of others. Analysts usually discuss these conflictual actions as reflecting the ego's problems both in preserving its own organization against potentially traumatic threats in the environment and in resolving the difficulties inherent in coordinating or synthesizing its multiple aims, functions, and contents. Garden-variety instances of intrasystemic problems are confronting and resolving contradictions among beliefs, values, and personal loyalties. For example, self-deception may take the form of representing oneself as being more

interested in social relationships than one actually demonstrates to be the case, as when one does not, despite ample opportunity to do so, do things with other, presumably interesting or enjoyable people.

Complete analysis of significant clinical phenomena will include some reference to all the intersystemic and intrasystemic problems that have just been reviewed. Analysts speak in this regard of multiple function (Waelder, 1930) and compromise formation (Freud, 1899). Typically and repeatedly, they focus their attention on a number of such problems until they are satisfied that they have developed and worked through with the analysand the needed insights.

To emphasize that defense is defense *of* is, in part, to point again to the adaptive aspect of self-deceiving actions. However, it must be borne in mind in this connection that what an analysand may be defending adaptively might not conform to any conventional use of the term *adaptive*. For example, in a seemingly unadaptive way, the analysand might be protecting a rosy view of a terrible occupational situation; only after analysis will the analyst be able to understand that rosy view in its adaptive aspect (for example, it makes it possible for the analysand to go on working). Analysts do not use adaptation to mean conventional adjustment or conformity (Hartmann, 1953). They mean something closer to socialized survival values and the means-end relations these values imply and are used to support, any or all of which may be highly individualistic or conventionally disapproved.

Goals of Psychoanalytic Interpretation

Analysts assume that the more desperate the conditions under which defensive action is initiated, the more rigidly will the defenses be deployed. In less extreme circumstances, when defenses are being less rigidly maintained because they are less desperately resorted to, they can sometimes be modified by the subject herself. For example, in one context, the subject might notice that she is rationalizing her envy of a strong rival by thinking she is merely expressing a sense of decorum and then stop being defensive in that way. In another context, she might calm down after being upset and realize that it was because her pride had been hurt that she had been trying so hard and even arbitrarily to find fault with others in order to humiliate them and thereby, she hoped, restore her own self-esteem; whereupon she might reestablish with increased stability her usual more tolerant and less self-deceiving outlook.

Among its many potential accomplishments, psychoanalytic inter-

pretation prepares or assists the analysand to be independently and regularly self-correcting or less self-deceiving. Through interpretation, it reduces the desperateness of the prototypic danger situations of childhood in terms of which, unconsciously, the analysand has continued to construct experience. It also familiarizes the analysand with her characteristic, hitherto unconsciously employed repertoire of defensive activities and their histories and fantasy content. It does so in order to help her recognize signs that she feels endangered and is already beginning to respond defensively in a way that now she mostly does not want. And it reduces the multiple, more or less irrational aims and emotional positions that have, over time, come to be served by these defensive activities, a development that has made them seem even more indispensable than they had seemed initially. (It does so, for example, when the need to be pleasing through defensive reaction formation against hostility has come to serve effectively other, maladaptively restrictive functions, such as gaining attention and sympathy by presenting oneself and conducting one's affairs in an overly pliable or "spineless" manner.)

SELF-DECEPTION AND NARRATION

In defense, the subject restricts what can be represented and experienced consciously, thereby excluding X, the threatening content, from her idea of . . . of what? Her self? Her personality? Her ego? Her being? Her consciousness? There is no single, correct, and exclusive answer to the question. Each of the answers I suggested is permissible; each covers a somewhat different range of phenomena, and each has had its uses within one or another philosophical, literary, or psychological framework of assumptions and concepts.

In the preceding sections of this chapter I have tried to establish the legitimacy of claiming that, for psychoanalytic purposes, what conventionally could be presented as one and the same action may be described as defense, wish fulfillment, punishment, and adaptation. The description to be used should depend on the analytic observer's aims and on the context of method and attribution of significance that has been established by, or in keeping with, these aims. For example, consider the repression that appears to have enabled the subject to endure terrible events of childhood. It might be said, *within a social-developmental context,* that that repression had been an essential means of adaptation at that time and under those circumstances. Then repression is presented not as a defense merely but as a process of

adaptation as well. In contrast, *in a clinical context,* later on, when this victim's suitability for psychoanalytic treatment is being assessed, the analyst wants to emphasize the current, pathological rigidity and scope of the defensive repression that once had had that psychological survival value. Then the analyst may present that repression primarily as an extremely costly and forbidding defense.

I am applying the familiar proposition that no single designation of an action may be presented as final, definitive, exclusive, or conclusive. Narrative priority may be given to a particular description of an action only after carefully spelling out a context of aims, conventions, circumstances, and practices, or at least when there is ample reason to assume that the listener or reader knows this context very well. The description to be given of an action depends on the kind of account one wants to give of it. No action can be presented intelligibly or usefully if it is not in the context of an implicit or explicit narrative. The narrative context helps readers understand the description being employed at the same time as the description contributes to the further development and persuasiveness of that narrative account. Part-whole interactions of this sort seem to be intrinsic to informative or clarifying communication.

It may be argued that it is incoherent to refer to "*an* action" or "the same action" under different descriptions, for different descriptions present different actions. "The same action" loses all meaning or all power to constrain or verify what is being said. Yet it can be asserted that this argument does not take into account the fact that, in order to communicate at all, we abide provisionally by conventions with regard to sameness or identity. Convention provides minimal accounts of actions—for example, kissing or hitting. A minimal account makes possible the beginning of an answer to the question "Just what are we talking about?" It is only a beginning in that the minimal account does not provide an explicit and developed context in which to consider the action in any useful way. Contexts for action descriptions are established by an emphasis on motivation, pragmatic consequences, ethical import, historical circumstance, or whatever else would relate minimal descriptions to our interests. In turn, the significance of each such context derives from still larger contexts; depending on what kind of inquiry is being undertaken, those larger contexts might or might not have to be specified. Closure on contexts is endlessly deferrable.

I am not claiming that the minimal account is not conceived narratively itself, for even an extremely terse description of an action may be viewed as being the expression of a choice that is in accord with an implicit narrative design. Nevertheless, in each instance of minimal

description we are left to ask: What are we to see it as and why? The regulative and generative influences of the description are minimal. We are left with many degrees of freedom—even if, under the prevailing conditions, not with total freedom. There are constraints, even though it is characteristic of psychoanalytic and some kinds of interpretation in the humanities to show that these constraints are far fewer than the conventional narrator would feel comfortable with. For example, some kissing may be retold as an attack that is close to hitting and some hitting may be retold as a sadistic form of loving that is close to kissing.

Briefly, then, I am claiming that—provisionally and always open to critical review and revision—we may speak of different descriptions of the same action, even though we can work only with the different versions of that action and in principle can never get to *the* action itself. (This is true except for certain conventionally acceptable minimal descriptions whose narrativity it is not usually to the point to consider.)

Returning now to defense: No instance of action is, therefore, to be limited in presentation only to being (1) a defense—or self-deceiving. In principle, it is always possible, and it may be more to the point, to present it also as: (2) one or more wish fulfillments, (3) one or more adaptations, (4) one or more punishments, (5) any combination or compromise of the four sets of possibilities, (6) any other description of these possibilities, combinations, or compromises, and (7) any other description of defense or self-deceiving action (for example, in some circumstances defensive reaction formation can also be presented as an instance of defensive identification).

Also, for certain narrative purposes, we might give an account of an action that contains less than we could include. For example, the accounts that analysts give in their writings are not always as complex as they could be, for an action might be considered merely under the description of a specific defense or a specific wish. That many of Freud's examples of wish fulfillment in dreams are of this optionally simplified sort may be inferred readily from the contrast between them and the examples of the complex approach to dreams he used in his work with Dora (1905a), work in which he was engaged at about the same time he wrote his dream book (1900). Simple in one narrative context, he was complex in another; indeed, there is a considerable range of complexity within the dream book itself. A similar range of complexity characterizes the interventions and the written examples of any adequate clinical analyst.

Because so much describing, relating, and explaining depends on the kind of account of action that is desired, the topic of defense and, with it, self-deception may be placed squarely in the interesting and evocative realm of narration. In this narrational realm, questions are asked that differ from those asked in Freud's mechanistic and objectivist metapsychological realm. Now, usually implicitly, it is asked: What kind of story do I as observer want to tell? What kind of story am I now committed to tell (assuming I concurrently have made the commitment to provide a consistent and coherent account) by my beginning to organize a clinical or theoretical report around a specific description, that is, as my implied storyline? For example, in using the description of *defense,* a warlike storyline is established, and in the interest of narrative consistency and coherence the writer makes a commitment to follow that storyline. Such terms as *abwehr, warding off, attack, infiltration, breakthrough, collapse, strengthening,* and *rebuilding* may be used: terms that have figured prominently in conventional psychoanalytic discussions of defense, and all of which may be said to be entailed and regulated by commitment to the same bellicose storyline. Elsewhere (see, for example, chapter 14), I have tried to show that the term *resistance* (a close relative of defense) establishes a commitment to the same adversarial storyline and that it may misrepresent or limit the technically desirable impartial and affirmative aspects of psychoanalytic practice.

I have already pointed out in chapter 2 that "storyline" is to be favored over "metaphor" and over unpacking metaphor or working out metaphoric entailments because, in my estimate, it has more obvious generative and regulatory connotations. Storyline suggests that there are a number of versions of the story that may be actualized, provided only that the storyteller observes enough of the conventional constraints (follows the "line"). These conventional constraints are not ordinarily extremely limiting, but there is usually a point beyond which attentive readers or listeners will begin to question whether a different story is now being told; for example, a consistent emphasis on experiences of relaxed pleasure in the context of giving an account of defense will be thought to be changing the story unless it is made clear that and how that relaxed pleasure is necessary to the story of defense.

Also, to favor "storyline" entails no neglect or exclusion of metaphor. Along with theme, image, dramatic scene, and expressive movement, metaphor is now to be regarded as one of the ways of introducing a storyline, one that is undeveloped or only implied. Unpacking a metaphor or working out its entailments should be regarded as making explicit its implications and defining its narrative consequences.

Consequently, self-deception may be considered a description that derives from and invites the further development of two storylines combined: *the self* and *deception*. Next I give an account of the problems raised by, and the generative potential and regulative effects of, this combination of storylines.

The Self Storyline

Let us consider the issues first from the side of the *self* storyline. Upon taking self-deception to be laying down the storyline of the self lying to itself, we encounter the same problems that reside in those accounts in which the mechanistic ego, when defending itself, seems to be deceiving itself and, equally odd in Freud's (1926) account, to be doing so after signaling to itself with blips of anxiety that defense (deception) is in order. Freud noted that the ego's deception is practiced unconsciously. As he developed his ideas, he seemed to argue that this unconscious aspect of the deception is both a necessary inference from analytic "data" (analysands give no sign of knowing they are defending) and a commonsense requirement (a deception cannot succeed if it is known to be a deception). In his studies of defense Freud proposed that he seemed to have encountered another kind of unconscious, that is, an unconscious that had *not* been repressed (1923a). With this proposition, he tried to avoid that infinite regress in explanation according to which there would have to be defenses against defenses against defenses ad infinitum. But in introducing another kind of unconscious into his model, in saying that one unconscious set of mental operations may deceive another such set, Freud was establishing another mind within the metapsychological mental apparatus. Thus, at least in this respect, a multiple-ego narrative took the place of the story of the ego's deceiving itself.

A version of this second mind or ego appears in the storyline of *self*-deception. Not that we are obliged to tell the odd and necessarily unconvincing story in which the self deceives itself; rather, we are to tell the story of one self in the act of deceiving another self. Self-deception is an event in a narrative that features multiple selves. In this multiple-self narrative, we are to present each self as able to act autonomously and at least one of these selves as able to act secretively. A story of this sort can be told in much the same way as a story of one person deceiving another. Thus, the account "I was kidding myself" differs little from "He was kidding me." The storyline's generative and regulating roles are the same. Whether the story will feature one or more persons should not affect its development. All that is needed is a pair of selves, belonging either to one person or two, each self having its own capabilities, initiatives, and reasons. If one person may have or does have at least two selves, the story of self-deception may continue unhampered. It is just that another kind of mind—actually multiple-mind—must be featured in this story. And it is not thrown into question that only one person is the subject of this story; the philosophical problem of how the identity of one person is established is not raised (nor, of course, is it settled).

As I argued earlier, there are many narratives of self, and many selves have been named to fit the tales in which they are to figure. There is the true self, false self, cohesive self, fragmented self, public self, secret self, sexual self, ideal self, and so on. There are also implicit multiple selves in the notions of self-control, self-love, self-hatred, self-esteem, and so on (Schafer, 1978). Consider, for example, the multiple selves (including the self of the speaker) in these locutions: "I won that fight with myself"; "My feelings washed over me like a giant wave"; "I can't forgive myself for showing myself off so."

Are we bound to reject multiple-self narratives? Is there any compelling reason to disallow psychological narratives featuring a proliferation of selves? The criterion of parsimony is no help in setting limits on multiple-self narratives or in excluding them altogether, for that criterion is always more treacherous to apply than seems at first to be the case. Simply to posit fewer selves or just one self is not sufficient to establish parsimony, as it may be necessary then to make many additional assumptions in order to accommodate the smaller cast of characters. Was Freud really being parsimonious when, to locate anxiety in the ego, he invoked the problematic idea of the ego's sending itself anxiety signals?

To the objection that multiple-self narratives introduce something like a demonological model to explain human action, it may be countered that at present there seems to be no other satisfactory way to provide for the following: (1) the accounts of multiple personality in which one personality observes another but not vice versa; (2) the accounts of posthypnotic suggestion, in which the subject acts as if he or she were maintaining a second, distinct self that independently complies with the hypnotist's suggestions; (3) the accounts of the subjective experience of introjects, that is, figures that seem to be in the subject's "inner world" and to observe, judge, and otherwise influence him or her (for example, a consciously experienced maternal figure that seems to operate as an independent persecutory or reassuring presence); (4) the accounts of splitting, said to be particularly prominent in so-called borderline personalities, according to which there

are distinct and totalistic "good" and "bad" selves organized around positive and negative affects and with corresponding "good" and "bad" others or "objects" (Kernberg, 1975) and, in Kohut's (1977) self-psychological theory, apparently autonomous subselves, such as the "grandiose self." We do not yet have a way to discuss these accounts that avoids altogether the use of manifest and latent multiple-self narratives. On this basis, we continue to develop multiple-self stories, like it or not. I am proposing that it is useful to consider these "phenomena" under the description of complex narratives and, further, that we should not ignore the often cumbersome consequences of using the multiple-self storyline (Thalberg, 1977).

Matters are not easier when considering the alternative storyline of a single self. Some problems arise out of a misunderstanding. Typically, those analysts who insist that there is *only* a single self, like those who employ accounts of multiple selves, do not recognize that they are making a narrative choice. Consequently, their accounts of a self that is simply *found* have a naïvely empirical tone. They seem to reify *the* self as a concrete mental entity. According to this sort of monistic view, there can be only one self (or mind, or ego, and so on) per person. Only one is demonstrable, and only one exists. The self is not a construction made by observers—that is, one way of telling about mental and behavioral actions; it is an entity in Nature that may be observed directly by the objective or the "empathic" observer, who may be the subject whose self it is. This a priori account is holistic. It establishes a narrative of basic mental unity. Typically, that narrative features the progressive differentiation and integration (except under pathological circumstances) of that one entity and also its regressive fragmentation and fluidity under conditions of stress. Additionally, this entity is presented as retaining its identity over time even though every one of its elements may change, and it is supposedly capable of regaining its mature identity after it has lost it through stress-induced regression.

In the history of the psychological study of human beings, the possibilities and the advantages of this holistic story have been developed extensively (Werner and Kaplan, 1963). It has probably been the dominant narrative in psychology. The story is very well documented. Because the story is so familiar, we are not ordinarily prepared to recognize it as a story. We do not automatically view it as just one way of telling about personality development and action. Other ways of telling about development and action, such as the multiple-self way, are brushed aside. The phrase "I am not myself today" or "be yourself" is regarded merely as a manner of speaking. Either the accounts of multiple personality, posthypnotic suggestion, and so on, are ignored, or tortuous monistic versions of them must be developed in order to remain consistent theoretically.

In my own case (1976, 1978, 1983), before I recognized the consequences of the view that we are always and only dealing with implicit or explicit narrative presentations of reality and never with reality pure and simple, I deplored the (often implicit) proliferation of selves. I saw that proliferation not only as theoretically cumbersome; I saw it also as an instance of defensively disclaimed action and of importing into theory the phenomenon that that theory intends to explain. I favored the monistic narrative.

I continue to favor the monistic narrative and for much the same reasons. However, the storyline I favor is not that of one self or one mind, but of *one person* as agent. And I propose that that person be viewed as a narrator, that is, as someone who, among other noteworthy actions, narrates selves. One person narrates numerous selves both in order to develop desirable (not necessarily "happy" but at least defensively secure) versions of his or her actions and the actions of others and to act in ways that conform to those selves. In this account, there is no self that does anything. Instead, there is one person telling stories about single selves, multiple selves, fragments of selves, and selves of different sorts, including *deceiving* and *deceived selves*. The narrator may, of course, attribute selves or self-states of these sorts to others, too, and others may (and do) reciprocate.

This single-person program seems to have an important heuristic advantage over the multiple-self program. The multiple-self narrative always allows the narrator-theorist to slip by some important theoretical problems by introducing one more self into the cast of characters; this is what instinct theorists used to do when they added to their lists of instincts new ones to deal with difficult phenomena. These ad hoc improvisations offer little prospect of sustained dialogue about self-psychological "phenomena." Additionally, a simple multiple-self choice introduces all the fruitless problems of arranging those selves that do get official recognition into some kind of stable, hierarchically organized structure. This structure is bound to be controlled or regulated by a super-self once due recognition is extended to commonly accepted accounts of large-scale coherence and consistency of functioning. In this way, the concretized monistic self returns through the back door, and we witness a failure of the entire enterprise.

To summarize, self-deception is but one instance of a set of problematic ideas that are introduced by self theories or grand self narratives. It is advantageous to regard self-deception as a story that people

tell in order to present themselves or others as their own dupes or in order to make a psychoanalytic interpretation. In this story, the person is constituted by more than one self. The self-deception story is consistent with numerous other conventional multiple-self stories that are always being told by parents, friends, teachers, poets, philosophers, psychologists, analysts, and so on. By common consent, it is a story that "works": It communicates effectively and it helps construct experience. But it is only a version.

For those who do not accept this multiple-self version, the critical problem is not that of establishing one definitive, presumably nonnarrative account of what self-deception *is*. Rather, what should be examined are the origins, the occasions, the reasons, and the consequences of the variety of self narratives that may be rendered in connection with the study of what seem to be knowing/unknowing splits and corresponding reports of self experience. On this basis analysts consider the cast of self characters in the accounts people give of action as similar to the cast of characters in a dream; upon analysis this cast of dream characters gets to be retold as distributed versions of self: the self in desire, the self sitting in judgment, the self as child, the self as opposite gender, and so on.

The Deception Storyline

Let us take the following instance as an example around which to organize an examination of the storyline of deception. By all conventional standards, S.M., a teacher, derives pleasure from regularly treating his students cruelly; that is, he is a sadistic teacher. He, however, thinks that he treats his students fairly, dispassionately, professionally, and he is pained to think that he might ever have to do something in his role as teacher that any of his students might feel or any witness in the classroom might think to be cruel. His pleasure, he maintains, is in being a dedicated teacher. Surely, an ordinary observer would be inclined to say, S.M. is deceiving himself. Isn't the discrepancy of accounts as plain as can be? How can S.M. not see it?

The attribution of self-deception is, however, based on a number of unstated assumptions, interpretations, and evidential claims. Far from this deception being an unmediated perception by an "objective" observer of what S.M. is "really" doing, it is a rather elaborate construction.

The construction begins with the assumption that there is (or certainly there could readily be established) a firm consensus of informed and competent observers to the effect that S.M. is sadistic to

his students. It is assumed that there exists a conventional description of that sort of conduct on the part of a teacher that fits S.M.'s conduct to a *t;* the consequence of this consensual validation is that a sadistic account is true or adequate while any other is false or inadequate. To tell it otherwise would violate our common sense of social coherence and ordinary reality. The burden of proof is not ours.

The construction continues with the assumption that S.M. knows the conventional account or is capable of using it appropriately in other situations, and does use it so, perhaps with reference to the actions of other teachers or other authority figures or even his own actions outside the classroom. It is also assumed that S.M. knows unconsciously that the sadistic account does fit his conduct in the classroom and that he will not admit this knowledge consciously to himself. We will make these assumptions if we are in possession of enough "evidence" of the following sort (in addition to S.M.'s inconsistency or incoherence in his use of "sadistic"). To the least suggestion that he is being sadistic to his students he overreacts: He protests his benevolent intentions more frequently, indignantly, anxiously, or desperately than would be expected. Also, he is impervious to rational confrontations by others that his conduct does fit a conventional description that he does accept in other contexts. Further, he behaves in a conspicuously frustrated or otherwise troubled manner when circumstance prevents his continuing to act cruelly to his students and derive pleasure from it. He exaggerates, minimizes, forgets, jumps to conclusions, contradicts himself, and so on, in ways that are not typical of him when he gives accounts of the relevant situations and actions. A psychoanalytic examination of his life history, fantasies, dreams, conduct in love, and so forth, strongly supports "sadistic" as the description that best fits his personality picture. These are the kinds of "evidence" psychoanalysts hope to obtain in order to justify attributing noteworthy sadism to some people and attributing correlated defensive measures (and self-deceptions) to them. In S.M.'s case, analysts can then say that he has a stake in not seeing himself as he is (that is, as sadistic) and latently believes himself to be; he is bound to be fooling himself.

We cannot fail to notice how obtaining this warrant and making this attribution depends entirely on the observer's adhering to conventions of description, interpretation, contextualization, and reduction of one account to the terms of another. Specifically, there are judgments to be made about types and degrees of inconsistency, competence, overreacting, imperviousness, frustration, and so on. There are other judgments to be made as to which accounts adequately con-

vey a life history and personality make-up and additional judgments as to whether specific accounts of events fit these general ones and how well they do so relative to alternative psychoanalytic accounts. The evidence does not consist of simple, narratively unmediated, objective facts. What is called the evidence is, like all other evidence, theory-laden. It is constructed in that uncertain area between what is found and what is created, and it is that "evidence" that is used to support reasoning which, unreflectively, is taken to be simply logical, factual, and conclusive.

Two more sweeping assumptions go into the construction of the deception story: First, individuals are best regarded as being naturally and primarily truth-seekers; second, they engage in truth-seeking primarily consciously. These, however, were not Freud's (1911b) assumptions. He assumed that gratification (the pleasure principle) is natural and primary, while truth-seeking (the reality principle) not only is secondary but is difficult to attain and sustain and is clearly a compromise with harsh necessity; it is a compromise that is entered into in order to guarantee as much gratification as is compatible with security or, in extreme cases, survival. Freud (1915a) further assumed that unconscious mental processes—fluid, concrete, illogical, wishful, timeless, contradictory—are primary, while conscious rational mental processes not only are secondary but normally are merely the fragmentary result of selective endorsement and attention. Certainly, conscious mental processes are not in themselves the best guides for making sense of the decisive features of anyone's cognitive and emotional development and present functioning. Thus, for Freud the problem was not to explain social and personal incoherence; it was to explain the attainment of socialized, objective, and coherent mental processes. In his account, we start out with mercurial wishful thinking; we never give it up altogether; we work out ingenious compromises, including especially those that provide for us, in the derivative form of social conformity and consensus, everything that we wished for so urgently as children, such as a secure and gratifying place in a secure and gratifying family.

For Freud, then, deception was not the preferred storyline of personal development and everyday functioning. His story goes from the nonveridical unconscious id to the rational, realistic conscious ego. In contrast, the story of self-deception seems to be the story of a rational, realistic conscious ego that is somehow losing its supremacy.

Those who tell the deception story ignore the availability of more than one convention to describe or explain a situation or course of action. They also ignore the way some available conventions contra-

dict others, rather like those proverbs that seem to work well enough when taken singly but begin to look untrustworthy when paired with other well-working proverbs that more or less contradict them. Additionally, a sweeping consensus in human affairs is pretty hard to come by unless the issue is so impersonal and conventionalized that it is irrelevant, trivial, and uninteresting. Further still, conventions change over time, and what we regard as desirable social change often stems from gross breaks with convention. We cannot depend uncritically on convention and consensual validation in making claims about what is real or true.

Prepared with these qualifications, let us return now to S.M. If we say he is acting cruelly to his students in order to derive pleasure from doing so, we are initiating the construction of a story that depends on many other stories, among which is the story that there is an overwhelming coalition of real and safely imagined witnesses who would give a sadistic and self-deceiving account of S.M.'s conduct. This coalition would agree on the judgment that S.M.'s conduct meets enough of the criteria of sadistic action and self-deceiving action to leave little room for doubt. Further, the coalition would reject both the idea that S.M. is unmotivatedly and incompetently missing the point and the idea that he is secure in another conventional account, such as that he is trying to bring out the best in his students by holding up and strictly enforcing high standards of achievement and decorum, not being put off by their juvenile and manipulative howls and protests, and so on. They refuse to acknowledge that they might be making value judgments in the realm of legitimate and competing educational psychologies and philosophies. But would they be arguing fact or preferred storylines?

The answer I propose here is that it is the storylines that establish the facts of the case, which of these facts are to be taken as significant (for example, as evidence of sadism), and how these facts are to be situated in an account of the situations and actions in question. Like the self, deception can be taken as a storyline, and it is useful to do so. And self-deception can be taken to be a complex and coordinated elaboration of two storylines. The case of S.M. could be told differently; it often is. Owing to ambiguities that are encountered all along the line, it is not easy, though it is not impossible, to discredit alternative, nonsadistic versions of the case of S.M.

I am not proposing that any account is as acceptable as any other. Rather, I am proposing this—when we speak of true and false accounts of actions, we are positioning ourselves in a matrix of narratives that are always open to examination as to their precritical

assumptions and values and as to their usefulness in one or another project. Some versions of S.M.'s conduct, such as that he is totally permissive, would depart so far from the conventions and uses of social or clinical discourse that they would founder from the start, except perhaps if they were being developed with obvious irony. Of them we say that they are false, inadequate, or illogical in any comprehensible discourse. Some accounts will be judged to be better or closer to the truth than others on the basis that they show a higher degree of consistency, coherence, comprehensiveness, and common sense than the others. But in the complex instances that concern us the most, we cannot count on incontestable proofs of superiority and we resort to, or submit to, rhetorical, ethical, and esthetic persuasiveness to decide what is better or best. Such, at any rate, is the account being used here of the way narratives of action are constructed and used.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Analysts deal intensively with defense in their clinical work. As defense implies self-deceiving actions, analysts have a lot to say about the when, the why, and the various forms and transformations of these actions. However, none of this gives them a basis outside a narrative project to say anything in response to the question of how it is possible in the first place for anyone to be self-deceiving. Self-deception itself is a description of action that inaugurates an explicit or implicit narrative; it lays down a complex storyline of multiple selves interacting. Like self-deception, defense, too, can be taken to lay down a storyline. Thus, it is open to examination as a term that both conforms to a version of mental development and functioning and prescribes certain ways of maintaining and extending that version. I presented the contrasting versions of defense in Freud's mechanistic metapsychology and my action language. I did so to support my thesis that it can be illuminating to approach self-deception in the terms of narration, that is, as a matter of choosing a storyline and observing such constraints as it exercises on narrators working within the conventions of how these deceptions are to be presented.

PART TWO

NARRATING GENDER

same source. It is impossible to love the truth of psychic reality, to be moved by this love as Freud was in his lifework, and not to love and care for the object whose truth we want to discover. All great scientists are moved by this passion. Our object, being what it is, is the other in ourselves and oneself in the other. To discover truth about the patient is always discovering it with him and for him as well as for ourselves and about ourselves. And it is discovering truth between each other, as the truth of human beings in their interrelatedness. (1970, pp. 297–298)

To develop further the sense of Loewald's references to analytic love, it will help to turn to a poet, specifically Rilke writing about Cézanne. In a letter to his wife, Rilke is describing his efforts to comprehend the artist Cézanne at work. Cézanne's work has just burst on his consciousness in a way that makes him feel, as he says, "I must change my life."

Here now is Rilke, in a translation by Joel Agee:

> We also notice, a little more clearly each time, how necessary it was to go beyond love, too; it's natural, after all, to love each of these things as one makes it: but if one shows this, one makes it less well; one *judges* it instead of *saying* it. One ceases to be impartial; and the very best—love—stays outside the work, does not enter it, is left aside, untranslated; that's how the painting of sentiments came about. . . . They'd paint: I love this here; instead of painting: here it is. In which case everyone must see for himself whether or not I loved it. This is not shown at all, and some would even insist that love has nothing to do with it. It's that thoroughly exhausted in the action of making, there is no residue. It may be that this emptying out of love in anonymous work, which produces such pure things, was never achieved as completely as in the work of this old man. (1907, pp. 50–51)

I suppose that in this passage Rilke was writing about his own artistic aspirations as well as Cézanne's way of working. I further suppose that Rilke was also doing a piece of creative writing of his own about love as well as artistic creativity. I mention these suppositions to indicate my belief that there is no one right way of delivering Loewald's meaning or anyone else's meaning, though there are some ways that can serve much better than others.

Taken together, these two narratives of love in work—Loewald's and Rilke's—may serve as model renderings of an essential component of the engaged analyst at his or her best.

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