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Secondary Selfobject, Secondary Self-Structure

Five-year-old Allen came into his fourth session with two bags of dinosaurs. As we went into my office his mother told me that he was talking of killing himself and the rest of the family. He sat in the middle of the floor and began unpacking. He had a pillow that looked like a Tyrannosaurus Rex skeleton, a walking Brontosaurus skeleton, and numerous paper dinosaurs that he arranged in a circle. He told me that he made the Brontosaurus skeleton and that a friend supplied the motor to make it walk. He knew all the dinosaur names.

In the sessions before, his behavior had been very chaotic. It was hard to identify any consistent theme. From the fourth session on, dinosaurs became an important topic. He spent many sessions drawing, tracing, and cutting out dinosaurs. He would at times wear the cutouts he made, as if to become a dinosaur himself. At the same time, he would bring his dinosaur clothes and dinosaur knapsack to school. There he even made dinosaur noises for which he was ridiculed, yet he persisted, revealing how important they were to his sense of self.

I struggled to understand the meaning of the dinosaurs and how I might help Allen the most. My ego psychological training had taught me that the dinosaurs

might have many meanings. Some of these included: a powerful hunger for relationships, symbolized by the dinosaur's large mouth; rage, symbolized by the sharp teeth and fighting of the dinosaurs; reactive grandiosity, symbolized by the large size of the dinosaurs and by the use of phrases like "the tyrant king"; awareness of his vulnerability and helplessness and the wish for protection and power, symbolized by the bloody fights the dinosaurs had; longing for an ideal; and longing for and fear of his father. I knew that some of the material might be understood as relating to oedipal dynamics, as described by Freud. However, it seemed to me that this explanation was not sufficient to describe the way the material Allen presented changed and grew within the therapy.

All of these possible meanings could also be understood as different aspects or fragments of Allen's self. It was clear to me from the initial evaluation that he had existed in a fragmented state for several years. This was reflected in the first few sessions. But after the fourth session, the chaos of his life seemed to settle down and his therapy became more focused. What was happening? How could I relate this to ego psychology or to Kohut's theory?

For two years Allen had remained in a chronic state of fragmentation, unable to grow and maintain a positive primary self-structure. This was undoubtedly due to certain initial traumas, continued mild traumatization, and a deficient primary selfobject milieu. When he entered therapy, the primary selfobject milieu improved. This stabilized him enough to where he could begin to put the pieces of himself together. To do that, he had to construct a meaning, a life story, if you will, that explained his fragmentary experience. Only in this way could his feelings of rage, emotional hunger, insignificance, reactive grandiosity, and abandonment coexist

without tearing him apart. Without meaning he was left overwhelmed and fragmented.

The first step he took was to see what culture offered as a model. There he found the dinosaur. These powerful creatures seemed to symbolize many of his fragmented feelings. By playing dinosaurs Allen was able to play with the feelings he formally could not tolerate. This gave him hope that self-cohesion was possible. As hope serves positive selfobject functions, merely imagining about dinosaurs was cohesion-enhancing. Every time he played out a dinosaur story he was playing with the fragmented experiences of his self—trying to create a better harmony among the pieces.

As Allen elaborated his dinosaur world he simultaneously restructured and reorganized his primary self-structure. The disjointed painful memories of trauma and neglect were being connected into a coherent whole. Although the dinosaur fantasies that were linking up the broken shards of his primary self-structure could not replace the needed experiences he missed out on or undo past traumas, they could provide another source of self-cohesion and organization. The fantasies, in being experienced as a part of his self and in serving self-restorative functions, can be considered selfobjects—in this case, secondary selfobjects. They are not primary selfobjects in that they do not come from his experience with other people. Rather, they are his attempt to impart meaning and organization to his memories of relationship failures and thus to his self. Even as the collection of memories of primary selfobject experiences can be described as a primary self-structure, so the collection of fantasies that give our lives meaning can be described as a secondary self-structure.

It should be noted that Allen's creation of secondary selfobjects could not begin until he had a minimum

amount of positive primary selfobject input: that is, until he entered therapy. As the therapy progressed, it became apparent to me that there was a strong connection between the primary selfobject milieu that therapy provided and the development of his secondary selfobjects. When the therapy was going well his work on secondary selfobjects progressed. Initial attempts at capturing his feelings in symbolic form were followed by increasing elaboration, complexity, and refinement of an organizing story. Furthermore, the secondary selfobject support he gained from his stories strengthened him enough to begin to open up more in our relationship.

When there was a disruption in the therapy, or an empathic failure on my part, there was evidence of fragmentation followed by several possible responses. One was a regression of his secondary selfobject stories. Another was an elaboration of a new, more primitive story. There might be evidence in the story of hurt, loneliness, grandiosity, and rage. There also might be evidence of a wish to deny these feelings. After one Christmas break he had the fantasy that I had given him a present, even though I hadn't. His need for me as a caring, loving parent substitute was so strong he couldn't tolerate the anxiety associated with the awareness that I was only a therapist.

There is more than one way of handling such disruptions in therapy. One is to identify the cause of the patient's disintegrated state and interpret from an empathic vantage point his experience of the break. This communication of empathic understanding is the classic self psychological way of handling such situations. But it is not always easy to identify the trigger of the self-state change. Furthermore, some children will deliberately try to prevent the therapist from interpreting anything to them, interpretation being too threatening.

Finally, communicating empathic understanding is an art form in itself and can easily result in additional pain if not handled properly. So, there are times when the child's experiences from the disruption can be played out, rather than worked through. In this case the therapist will empathically immerse himself in the child's play. Although there may be some initial trepidation on the child's part to resume play, if the bond between therapist and patient is good the play will resume and will contain the child's reactive feelings that are connected to the disruption.

As the child plays however he wants to play, his feelings become validated within the relationship. This validation is a basic form of mirroring that allows an increase of self-cohesion. From this new vantage point of improved cohesion the child modifies the play to bring in other reactive affect states. These in turn are mirrored through the play, and cohesion continues to increase. In this process temporary secondary selfobjects are formed, which allow the child enough cohesion to survive minor misattunements. Finally, a point is reached where the child is able to pick up what he was working on before the disruption and move ahead.

Of course, it is not always that easy. Some disruptions are experienced by the child as much worse than others. Often it is necessary to combine verbalization about the process and play to help restore the therapy. Sometimes it is helpful to interpret through the play itself, having a doll talk about feelings, for example. The point is that there are several options. Selecting which to use and understanding what is happening is improved by being aware of both secondary selfobject and primary selfobject phenomena.

Child therapy can be very frustrating without a keen appreciation of the importance of fantasy formation in self-development. Kohut's theory does not explain the

purpose of play. His theory is concerned solely with the disruptions in the primary selfobject milieu. The fragmentation products that follow the disruptions are regarded as epiphenomena. Kohut's therapeutic goal was to identify the disruption and repair it. Although this is an admirable goal in itself it ignores our powerful innate capacity for self-healing. Kohut's approach underestimates our important efforts to restore cohesion for ourselves by creating a meaning for our lives. It ignores the way we shape our own destiny, not just by eliciting responses from others but through our imaginations. Kohut may have avoided the issue of fantasy because Freud's theory was so heavily dependent on it. In shifting his focus Kohut was turning our therapeutic lenses to a crucial aspect of psychotherapy that had been neglected. Now it is time to integrate Kohut's and Freud's experiences in a more cohesive way. This will make our work less fragmented. One way to do this is to consider the intersection of fantasy and interpersonal interaction—play.

PLAY

There are several different kinds of play, which serve different developmental purposes (Schaefer 1993). I wish to focus on the pretend play that is so evident from ages 2 to 6. What is its purpose? I believe that the main reason children pretend is to create and develop fantasies, some of which become recognizable secondary selfobjects that add to the developing secondary self-structure. The child is literally building himself during the play. If the child is playing in the presence of another person, then there is the additional advantage of his benefiting from mirroring or validation of his efforts at self-construction.

Children take great pleasure in pretend play. That pleasure has in the past been assumed to be the result of fantasied wish fulfillment. To some extent that is true. But I believe that there is an intrinsic pleasure that comes from creating self-structure. This pleasure comes from a satisfaction of the Principle of Internal Harmony and the Will To Do. As adults, we often don't see the importance of pretend play, but children know how important it is to them. During Allen's fourth session he told me that he had built the dinosaur skeleton and his friend had contributed the motor. He was telling me metaphorically that he was working on building his self, and although it lacked skin, or muscles, or organs, it had a skeleton. Furthermore, he was helped in this by an ideal other, his friend, who gave him the motor. Thus he was aware, on some level, of both his attempts to create his own self-structure and his need for an ideal other to help him in this process.

Play allows the child's fantasies to be elaborated, modified, and refined. By acting out his fantasies the child creates a realm where his intrapsychic world can come into contact with external reality. This enactment provides an opportunity to get outside help in resolving the problems inherent in the nascent secondary self-structure. Further, it allows the fantasies to be strengthened through the mirroring of playmates and watchful parents. Let us look at specific examples.

Many of Allen's sessions were spent drawing dinosaurs. Sometimes he would trace a dinosaur out of a book or from a toy; sometimes he drew them freehand. Then he would color them and add figures to the picture to make a story. Finally, he might cut the drawings out and tape them to his body. Each step of this sequence gave him a chance to work on defining, modifying, and clarifying his fantasy. The final act of cutting out and wearing his

creation was an attempt to further strengthen and identify with his fantasy.

At other times, Allen would spend time building a fantasy with wooden blocks. Blocks have the advantage of being not only three dimensional but also tactile. I believe that secondary selfobject formation and development is aided by involving all the senses in the play. After building a scene with the blocks Allen could then act out the action of his story, including blowing up buildings and constructing new ones.

There were occasions, especially as therapy progressed, that we left the miniature world of drawings, toy soldiers, and blocks and used the office furniture and our bodies as the figures in the play. We might be involved in a paper airplane war, or he might be a character in a Nintendo game and I the person controlling him with a joystick. As the Nintendo character, he would climb up on my chairs, my desk, and the cabinets to avoid the bad guys and get the treasure. It was hard to think of interpretations then. The play demanded that I participate. I found myself alternating between periods when I stopped thinking like a therapist and just played and other periods when I would try to reassess what was happening.

During the times when I lost myself in the play I found myself adding to it. This was something that I had been taught not to do. The idea in mainstream psychoanalytic psychotherapy of children is to observe the play, trying to gain some understanding of what the underlying issues are, and to gradually impart that understanding to the youngster. This is awfully hard to do when you are getting socked in the head with a ball of wet paper towels. Furthermore, if you step out of character long enough to figure out what is going on and interpret it you risk interrupting the play process. Finally, by letting yourself be relatively free in the play you allow your unconscious to contribute, which means that a

much larger part of your self is now open to helping the child. Of course this approach carries with it risks, which have been emphasized in the literature, but it also brings opportunities.

What can come of a therapist adding to the child's play? When a child engages in play with you and sets the scene, he is acting out his fantasies. When you make a change in the play that the patient can accept you essentially create a change in his secondary selfobject fantasy that can then be reinternalized as a change in secondary self-structure. I use the term "reinternalized" loosely here because in my view the secondary selfobject fantasies are the secondary self-structure, just as the memories of primary selfobject experiences are the primary self-structure.

Making changes in a child's play creation should be done sparingly, however. This is because one key aspect of secondary self-structure formation is the experience of having created it yourself. In this way the child satisfies his Will To Do. It is our task to try to enter the child's inner world and learn about it and this can be hindered by our adding too much to his play. On the other hand, children are constantly borrowing images from the world around them in constructing their fantasies. Where a previous generation may have played cowboys and Indians or cops and robbers, today's children may play X-men (a television cartoon) or act out the characters from a video game. This simply reflects that we organize around whatever experience we have. We use that experience to try to make sense out of life and, particularly out of our own fragmentation products.

It is inevitable that we will add something to the child's fantasy world. Not only do we act as a source of primary selfobject support, we also serve as role models and figures for identification. There are many sources

where today's children can look to seek out figures to identify with as they construct their secondary self-object fantasies. Television, movies, video games, peers, books, parents, siblings, teachers, and others all serve this purpose. Our role as therapists can provide the child patient both primary selfobject support — through an idealizing selfobject transference — and a model for constructing an image of his self in a secondary selfobject fantasy. Both of these functions are important during the phase that epitomizes secondary self-structure formation — the oedipal period.

Before I turn to the oedipal period I want to refine my definition of a secondary selfobject. A secondary selfobject is a self reparative fantasy created by the child in response to fragmentation. It consists of a representation of the self and a representation of an other bound together in some form of a relationship. The representation of the other is not always easy to see but is always implied. For instance, if a narcissistic teenage girl has a fantasy of becoming an astronaut traveling alone in a spaceship above the earth, there may be no one else explicitly described in her fantasy, but the people of the earth that she constantly orbits are there nevertheless. When Allen was busy drawing the Tyrannosaurus Rex he included blood dripping from its mouth — the blood of another dinosaur. If we carefully look for the representations of both self and other, we can learn more about what functions the secondary selfobject serves. This, in turn, will tell us more about the primary self-structure it is meant to repair. Also, on one level all the characters in the secondary selfobject are representations of the self as well as of experiences with other people. Hence, learning about the lesser characters in the story can be informative.

As we leave the subject of play for the moment I want to emphasize that the content of play reflects the frag-

ments and experiences of the child — including the experience of being in therapy — and that foremost among our concerns should be an attempt to identify in the play representations of our own relationship to the child.

PERIODS OF SECONDARY SELF-STRUCTURE FORMATION

Secondary self-structure is formed throughout life after about 1½ years of age, but it is particularly prominent at a few key periods. These periods correspond to periods of normal fragmentation that all people go through. During early infancy, before symbolic representation is possible, it is difficult to imagine anything that fits the present definition of a secondary selfobject. But with the advent of toddlerhood, at roughly 1 year of age, speech and fantasy formation rapidly develop. Shortly after that a period of normal pre-programmed fragmentation ensues. This begins somewhere around 15 to 18 months of age. It is commonly known as the beginning of the "terrible twos."

THE TERRIBLE TWOS

There are several developmental factors at work during this time. The Will To Do, which has always been an important motivational force, seems to grow in influence as it finds new forms of expression. Because of sufficient maturation of the motor system, the child is able to walk and get around. The great intensity and pleasure with which children pursue learning to walk and run is amazing to watch. There is no more obvious illustration of the Will To Do in life.

As the child begins to walk, run, and climb, he "gets into things" more and more. This is when he first starts running into the limits his parents set for him. He is not allowed to play with the electrical plugs, even when they fascinate him more than anything else. He is not allowed to eat the drain cleaner that his mother uses. He is forbidden to write on the walls. He cannot wander into the street where all those fascinating automobiles go. His wish to do what he wants is almost constantly in conflict with his parents' need to keep him safe.

Almost overnight his relationship to his parents has changed. Where before he received a lot of mirroring and admiration for being a baby and for his cute ways of trying and failing to do things, now he is faced with admonition. Multiple times an hour he is being taken away from things he wants. Throughout the day he is being told "no" as he reaches for one thing or another. His own sense of inner accomplishment does not always get the same positive validation it had received until now. Instead, many of his accomplishments are frowned upon. This is experienced by the toddler as a partial loss of his selfobject support and contributes to the fragmentation of this period.

At the same time that the child's motor system is developing, his cognitive abilities are growing. With increasing cognitive complexity comes increasing awareness. As he runs up against parental limits he becomes aware of his limitations, his small size, his weakness and vulnerability compared to adults. This awareness adds to his fragmentation. Because he is driven by the need to increase cohesion and order—the Principle of Internal Harmony—he will do whatever he can to counter the fragmentation. The most obvious way to do this, and the one most consistent with his present capabilities, is to try to prove that he is not weak and powerless. The Will To Do and his developing motor

system are used to make this point, and what was formerly a fairly easy job of limit-setting for the parents has now become a power struggle.

Through these power struggles, if the child has reasonably empathetic parents, he discovers that he does have some real power. Though he is not as big and strong as his parents, he finds that he can sometimes get his way and sometimes even get them mad. He practices his new found sense of power and learns to apply it in new ways. One of these ways has been called identification with the aggressor. In this context, the child perceives the parents to be the aggressor when they prohibit him from doing what he wants and tell him "no." The child decides that two can play that game and begins to tell his parents "no" at every opportunity. In his fantasy he is now the one in charge, the one in control, instead of the one being controlled. His use of the word "no" both helps him develop a sense of power and preserves his sense of self during a difficult time.

The mechanism of identification with the aggressor, which develops during this period, remains an important means of maintaining self cohesion for many people. It generally involves turning a passive role into an active one and thus is an expression of the Will To Do. One way it can be used during the period between 12 and 18 months is exemplified by the way both of my boys handled my going to work in the mornings. Starting when they were 15 months old, they would try to block the front door, closing it so I couldn't get out. Later on, when they were 2, they would pretend they were going to work and would wave good-bye to me. They would also gleefully run away from me when we were going for a walk. Each of these instances was an attempt to turn the tables on me.

I believe that behind the child's action of trying to turn the tables on his parents is the beginning of a rich

fantasy life. The fantasies may include being more pow-. erful than parents, or making the parents helpless. Each fantasy includes an image of the child and of the parent but in opposite roles. These fantasies help concretize feelings of vulnerability, the wish for power, reactive rage, and grandiosity. As such they help keep the child from being overwhelmed by helplessness in the face of separations. They are the first secondary selfobjects.

As the child continues to develop, his Will To Do conflicts not only with his parents' will but with his own Need for Others. Although he can gain a lot of interaction and attention from his parents for his oppositional behavior, he can also see their anger. With his increasing cognitive skills, he begins to imagine that he might lose their love or that they might leave him. This creates a conflict for the child between the part of him that wants to continue exercising his sense of power and the part of him that fears it will cost him his primary selfobject support. To the extent that his sense of power is maintained by acting out certain fantasies, the conflict is between primary selfobject needs and secondary selfobject motivations. This sets up a strong ambivalence within the child, which is amplified by an increasing ability to perceive choices. Though he can now see various possibilities, the child hasn't yet developed the ability to choose. The ambivalence resulting from both these factors contributes to the developmental fragmentation of this time.

I remember when my first son was 19 months old. He woke up late at night and wanted out of his crib. After failing to calm him back to sleep and enduring a period of screaming, I took him out. As he indicated he wanted to go to his mother I began taking him to our bed. But when I got there he changed his mind and wanted to go back to his bed. All the way back to the crib he agreed, but once he was there he began screaming again. I then

took him to the living room—he had been falling asleep with me there—and he called out for bed. Finally he fell asleep after crawling to the floor and lying by the couch in which I was sitting. Earlier that day he had turned the television on and off repeatedly, wanting both to watch the program and to exercise his power. In both cases the powerful ambivalence he was feeling was obvious.

During this tumultuous period the child discovers a whole range of negative emotions in his parents. Simultaneously, he develops an awareness of bodily injury. This becomes apparent somewhere between 18 and 24 months. With the awareness in the child come two fears: that he will be injured in general and that the parents will injure him to punish him. The latter fear has been called a fear of retaliation, one form of which is castration anxiety—or a loss of a part of oneself.

As we can see, the forces acting to fragment the child are many. There is separation anxiety, which is a fragmentation anxiety associated with loss of the primary selfobject's presence. This anxiety is magnified by the ambivalence the child feels at this period. As the child's Will To Do conflicts with his parent's rules, and as he experiences the inner conflict between his will and his Need For Others, separation anxiety peaks. This is seen in the child's behavior at about 18 months. Add to this the fear of bodily injury and the fear of retaliation and the toddler period looks like a pretty scary time. Fortunately, there are two major sources of help: secondary selfobject formation and primary selfobject responsiveness.

By the time my second son was 20 months old he was into everything. He threw his silverware at mealtime, would hit his big brother, and try to hit me, laughing all the while. He refused to get into his car seat, be still for his diaper changing, or stay in his seat at restaurants. He was running everywhere, trying to do and see every-

thing. At that time he developed a fascination with "Shining Time Station," a British series about trains. Each train had a personality and my son became enamored of one named Gordon. Every time he saw Gordon, or something that looked like Gordon, he would shriek with joy. He wanted to watch the videotapes over and over again. Gordon was the biggest engine and bossed the other engines around. Sometimes he was depicted with an angry face and he seemed to think himself superior to the other engines. I think he captured my son's wish to be bigger and stronger than us. Gordon may have also represented an ideal figure that would always remain connected to the coaches he pulled, thus capturing my son's wishes to have me around more. Serving as a symbol for these feelings, Gordon became a useful means for keeping my son's feelings of personal strength and connection to an ideal other alive. As long as those feelings were kept strong, my son could better tolerate the turmoil of that time.

Another example of how a fantasy can be soothing to the toddler is the first time my son stayed the night with his grandmother. He didn't know her very well at the time. He had her keep the book *Goodnight Moon* by Brown and Hurd open to the page where the mommy rabbit watches the baby rabbit sleep. In this way he was stimulating his own fantasy of being watched over by his mother even though she wasn't there.

At 23 months my son developed another fascination: Batman. His older brother had been feeding into his fears at the time, telling him houseflies were mean and would bite him. He in turn had become more aggressive, running over our toes with some of his larger toys. He made explosion-like sounds when he threw things down on the floor, saying "I do" to claim responsibility. In the midst of all this he began playing a game in which he would throw the pillows off the bed and call them "bad

guys." He had drawn on his face with markers to make it look like a mask—Batman's mask. He began pretending to be Batman more and more. There was also evidence of Batman representing a longed for ideal: my son would pretend Batman was sleeping in the back room and he would want to go see him there.

My son's fascination with Gordon the engine waned as his interest in Batman grew. For a time both images were called upon to steel him during times of crisis. For instance, when he was 25 months old his brother, who is three years older, came menacingly toward him. My younger son became agitated, hopping around, and then said quickly, "Batman, Gordon." After that he was able to hold himself up against his brother's attack by fighting back without crying. By invoking the names Batman and Gordon he was calling up fantasies of personal power and strength to steel himself for the conflict with his brother. These fantasies gave him increased cohesion and a sense of power, decreasing his fear.

There are many other types of fantasy characteristic of this period. Instead of emphasizing a powerful self or an ideal other, the fantasy may, for example, be of a mean dog with sharp teeth that bites grass, to paraphrase my older son. This fantasy can capture the fear of bodily injury, the rage of frustration, the sense of vulnerability, and a way to alleviate the fear. By saying that the dog bites grass, my son was saying that it doesn't bite him. Fantasies like these and others capture different aspects of experience and create a story that weaves it all together.

Children are constantly creating fantasies and stories that, metaphorically or directly, seek to explain and bind together their experiences. The particular fantasies they come up with, the experiences which seem most salient, will depend on many unique factors. For instance, the presence of siblings can be formative. Cul-

ture also contributes material, such as Batman and Gordon, for secondary selfobject construction.

The other major force that helps maintain cohesion during this difficult time comes from the parents. The parents' manner of handling the child's oppositional behavior, ambivalence, and temper tantrums is very important for self development. With the change in the parent–child relationship there must be an adaptation on both sides. Although the earlier period of being a cute baby has passed, admiration must continue in some form for the child to develop normally. In spite of the stress that the willful toddler imposes on his parents, they must be able to take some pleasure in his accomplishments and pride in the strength of his will. While they limit his behavior they must do it with compassion, realizing how frustrating these limits are for him.

If the limits are set with a sufficient admixture of empathy, and if the child is getting enough positive selfobject input from other areas of his life, then the experience of running up against limits can leave the area of intolerable frustration and enter the realm of optimal frustration. In such a case the empathic limit-setting itself may be seen as furthering self growth. The development of a cohesive self necessitates an external structure to organize against. The internal organization comes to reflect the external one. Limits, rules, and prohibitions are as much a part of that external structure as are its mirroring and idealizing aspects. Wolf (1988) classifies the limit setting as adversarial selfobject functions.

Because of the child's powerful ambivalence, and because the child's self-structure is still so dependent on the parent's presence to maintain cohesion, separation anxiety is heightened. Temper tantrums both result from the fragmentation of the time and can serve as a way to regain a sense of control. This is accomplished

when the child gets the parents' attention, forcing them to notice him, thus decreasing the scary feelings of separation that are triggered when the child feels ignored. Also, the tantrum forces the good parent to become palpably firm. This sense of the parent's firmness, of running up against the strength of the parent's will, is an antidote to the disintegration that the child feels within.

The combination of primary selfobject support provided through adversarial, mirroring, and idealizing functions, secondary selfobject development, and the parents' mirroring of the secondary selfobjects, helps the child to grow in this difficult time. The secondary selfobjects that initially develop are just the beginning of a process that will increase in complexity and richness for the next several years, culminating in the phase that represents the epitome of childhood secondary self-structure formation: the oedipal complex.

THE OEDIPAL PHASE

The issues that arise in the first two years of life continue to unfold. The ability to create complex fantasies expands and the relative importance of secondary selfobject formation increases. The oedipal period may be the peak time of secondary selfobject formation during life, with the possible exception of adolescence. As the child's ability to use fantasy grows, he gains in being able to withstand some of the ambivalence inherent in his primary self-structure, synthesizing it into functional secondary self-structure. This process, and the brain development that was nurtured by primary selfobject support, leads to the gradual lessening of separation anxiety.

Meanwhile, the child's awareness of the many ways he could be hurt, and a burgeoning appreciation for his

limitations, increases his fear of bodily injury. The frustrations of life feed his rage, which leads to a fear of retaliation and more fear of being hurt. Inevitably, the adversarial selfobject relationship that begins during the toddler years is not always positive. The anger and fear of this time affect the parent–child relationships. The parent is perceived not just as a protector who helps contain out-of-control feelings but as a competitive adversary.

At the same time, the child now has an increased cognitive awareness of the special relationship that the parents have with one another and an increased sense of being excluded from this relationship. There is something going on behind closed doors of which he can't be a part. This reactivates old pains associated with separations as well as feelings of powerlessness. More fuel is added to the fire of rage and the fear of retaliation that goes with it.

The oedipal child is treated differently than he had been in the past. Gone are the intimacies of diaper changes, being bathed, being nursed, perhaps even of sleeping with the parents. The oedipal child is expected to make it on his own a great deal more than the 6-month-old was. If there is a younger sibling the sense of loss is all the more poignant. Not until marriage will the oedipal child find the physical intimacy he once had. That realization is not easily accepted.

Increasing cognitive development and his own heightened sensitivity to feeling excluded allows the oedipal child to begin to consider death. I remember when my oldest son was 4, one night he began crying and crying that he didn't want to die. It hurt me to watch him struggle. I tried to help him as I could, talking about heaven. It is not uncommon for parents to begin to introduce religion at this age. Not only is the child more cognitively ready for it, the idea of heaven helps to

soothe the painful fear of ultimate fragmentation and loss. Religion can become an important source for material to use in secondary selfobject formation.

There is another function that religion serves as well. With the dawning awareness of death comes a dawning awareness that there are limitations in parental power. This can result in a deidealization followed by fragmentation. One method some families have of coping with this is through talking about God. God, being the ultimate ideal, provides a counterbalance to some of the child's disappointment in his parents. But the child's ability to make use of religion to help increase his cohesion is limited. He still has strong primary selfobject needs that religion cannot fill. Only his parents or other adults can do that. So the deidealization will come, and along with it increasing feelings of vulnerability. In response, the child will modify the secondary selfobjects of his later toddler years to produce a competitive grandiose self-image.

Even if an initial understanding of death is not present at this period, there are plenty of other ways that the parents may be seen as not living up to an ideal image at this time. Perceiving limits in the parents' power is ultimately anxiety provoking. The child struggles simultaneously to restore the parent to an exalted position and to shore up his own reactive grandiosity. The threat to the self is immense. To the preoedipal fears are added all the real and fantasied ways of being physically injured and killed. More and more the child realizes that his old illusion of safety was just that, an illusion. At the same time, he has not lived long enough to see how improbable some of the things he worries about are. When he hears about deadly cobra snakes he may imagine them in his backyard until someone tells him that they live in another country far away. His need for an ideal protector has never been greater.

Out of the child's experience of this intense need may come the fear that he will be taken advantage of. This reflects the fear of the negative ideal. The negative ideal threatens self-cohesion by using the selfobject bond to humiliate the child or physically harm him. The competitive behavior of this time serves to help keep the fear under control; the child deliberately provokes an attack and is relieved when it does not come.

Let me review the major forces that must be bound into the child's cohesive self-structure. One is the need for an ideal other who protects the child and lessens his anxiety. Another is the fear of a negative ideal. Other forces are: the wish to be one's own ideal other—the competitive grandiose self-image, the natural desire to have all the rights and privileges he sees his parents having—the wish to be an adult, the wish for the intimacy he had as an infant—an intimacy his parents still share. Along with all these wishes come frustration and rage. The child's need to deal with the rage is then a large determinant of the fantasies he creates. With the rage comes a fear of retaliation that adds to the fears of bodily injury already present. How can all these forces, as well as the feelings of the preoedipal phases, be integrated into a healthy self?

Each one of these forces becomes represented in a story or fantasy that the child tells himself. Gradually these stories are modified so that they can be combined. Each combination is refined, modified, and combined again. This process of refinement and modification is not simple. It involves acting out many aspects of the stories to find out how the parents will respond. The responses of the primary selfobjects will enable modifications, not allow them, or add something new to the process. The slightly modified fantasy is then compared with the burgeoning world of inner fantasy to see how well it fits. A shift in the relative importance of the

different inner fantasies may then occur and new aspects of the developing secondary self-structure will present themselves. The process continues in a back and forth interaction between inner fantasy generation and primary selfobject responsiveness.

In some cases the predominant fantasies follow a common developmental line. In the beginning there are fears of animals, insects, forces of nature. The child is scared of monsters and ghosts. At this stage the child will identify with the aggressor and play at being the terrifying monster. The wish for intimacy and the jealousy of the parents' relationship tends to be more disguised. But the rage that comes from the frustration of those wishes is very evident in the child's stories, and so is the fear of retaliation. Through the developmental process these stories will gradually be transformed into ones with more organized, coherent, and complex themes. The plethora of scary creatures at war with everything around them tends to condense to a few stories involving specific combatants. Often this takes the form of the good guy versus bad guy format. The characters become more definable and more like real people. Animals and hideous monsters make way for pirates, super villains, and evil rulers. Death by being devoured is replaced with death by sword, gun, or karate chop.

At this point in development, roughhousing with dad may be very important for the young boy. The boy's need for a strong ideal father who will protect him and with whom he can identify comes in conflict with several other aspects of his self. One is his need to feel invincible in the face of all that threatens him. Another is his rage over losing the intimacy of infancy and seeing that his father still has a special relationship with mother. Another is his wish to exert his Will To Do to its maximum extent and to be an adult. By playing out these feelings in

mock sword fights with his son the father validates, or mirrors them. By carefully walking the line between letting his son win and winning himself he allows the boy to play with feelings of vulnerability and omnipotence. By keeping the play within reasonable bounds the father both validates and helps control his son's rage. By joining his son in rough and tumble play he acknowledges and partly satisfies his son's wish for closeness. The conflicts that arise between father and son, whether in a game or in reality, are not just incidents of blowing off steam. Rather, they are an essential part of structure building.

A careful examination of the course of a typical play session between father and son reveals that there is an alternation between Dad as the mighty enemy who must be destroyed and Dad as an ideal other who must be preserved. This constant interplay—between an idealization of the father and the wish to destroy him—is one of the defining elements of the oedipal story. The pretend play battles tend to revolve around an implacable, immensely powerful adversary. A child recently told me a story about going into a spooky house where he had to fight ghosts as tall as the ceiling. After he beat them he had to fight their master, the snake king, who was even more powerful. Soon there was another master and another, each more deadly than the last. When he finally made it out of the house he had to face a great field of enormous tanks, all with their guns pointed at him. Leading the tanks was one that stood eighty feet taller than all the rest. There was only one way to kill it—shooting an arrow down its gun barrel to hit its weak spot inside. Note the amount of power and grandiosity this child gives his adversaries. Of course this reflects his fears and his own projected grandiosity, but it also gives his adversary an ideal quality. I also want to point out that every time this child defeated his enemy a newer, more powerful one emerged. This is part of the oedipal dilemma—

defeating your rival means robbing your self of the ideal other you desperately need. How can this be resolved?

The need of the son to idealize his rival is given final expression in the classic oedipal myth, in which his father—his rival—is the king. A child who reaches this level of fantasy formation has already achieved a great deal. For, if his father is a king, he himself is a prince. His ability to imagine killing his father and having his mother to himself indicates he has developed some sense of personal power and hope that he can get the intimacy he wants. Hence, when some of my more borderline patients reach this level of fantasy evolution, an improvement in symptomatology often follows. The classic oedipal fantasy represents a higher order secondary selfobject than the ones that came before. It serves to integrate the self more effectively, lending the individual a greater cohesion. The competitive games between father and son then serve to revitalize and maintain this fantasy. This enables further stabilization of the self.

With increasing self-stability the conflicts inherent in the oedipal fantasy can begin to be addressed. The solution of the conflict between the wish to be as strong as dad, having all that he does, and the need to idealize him, is to become the heir apparent. In the original oedipal myth, Oedipus did not know that the man he was killing was his father and that the woman he was marrying was his mother. He had been raised by others. This point must be emphasized. The common wish of adopted children is to be reunited with their "real" parents. This parallels the oedipal child's wish for regaining the intimacy he had as a baby. The sexualization of this wish becomes the boy's wish to marry his mother. One of the things the oedipal child is struggling with is the restoration of a positive relationship with his parents in spite of all the ambivalence he feels. The 2-year-old's use of the word "no" gives way to the 4-year-old's

swearing, hitting, and kicking. The only solution he initially sees is a violent one. If all goes well, however, the heir apparent solution will emerge.

As heir apparent, the son can safely idealize his father. He now feels confident in his position and does not worry about being killed for it. As heir apparent, he can share in his father's greatness and learn from him. He has realized that it is not so simple to take over the king's job and he has resolved to learn the ropes. He now has the hope and belief that one day he will be as strong and powerful as his father and that he will have the intimacy his parents enjoy. He has the nascent realization that this usually involves getting an education, meeting a girl, getting married, and getting a job. This realization becomes the basis for new fantasy elaboration. This new set of fantasies then becomes the organizer for the next decade of personality development.

Central to those fantasies is an identification with the father. This identification has been going on all through the oedipal period but it is only at the end of this phase that it has become a firm part of psychic structure. The process of going from selfobject to psychic structure is mediated by an attempt to become the secondary selfobject. This is another way that the oedipal struggles are helpful. When the child's fantasies involved monsters, he played at being the monster. If the monsters were dinosaurs he might get dressed up like one and parade around making dinosaur noises. He might also pretend to be Batman or Superman. In each of these examples, acting out or becoming the fantasy is a crucial step in making that fantasy more real and bringing it into contact with the outside world.

The wish to become the secondary selfobject is a part of the natural evolution of selfobject to self-structure. In the case of the oedipal period it is a driving force behind both the oedipal conflicts and their ultimate

solution. When the child exchanges the secondary selfobject of being the king for that of being the heir apparent his need to become the secondary selfobject persists. Instead of being acted out in play, however, it is acted out in diligent schoolwork. The quiet industriousness of the latency years is no less an attempt to become the secondary selfobject than the free play of the earlier years. It is, in fact, a continuation of it.

Another important issue of the oedipal period is the perception of good versus bad. In particular, the child wonders if he is a bad person for having powerful wishes and feelings, especially when they bring him into conflict with his parents. Several factors help determine the outcome of this questioning. One is the father's character. If the father seems to the child to be a moral, just individual then the child will tend to see himself this way too. That is because in forming the oedipal secondary selfobject the image of the father is used as a model. The heir apparent naturally patterns himself after the king. This identification can be seen as a primary selfobject aspect of secondary selfobject formation. The father becomes part of the self of the child. Another factor influencing the child's view of himself is the parents' response to his displays of aggression and demands for special attention. If the parents are unable to help the child deal with the aggression, then those aggressive feelings may lead the child to think badly of himself. If one parent gets too jealous of the special attention that the other one gets from the child, that too may lead the child to see himself in a bad light.

With this concern over whether he is a good person or not, it is not surprising that the idea of good and bad, or right and wrong, begins to be attached to behaviors. This is the time when guilt develops. Guilt is preceded by shame, which is a primary self-structure emotion. It is fundamentally the dread of a negative selfobject expe-

rience. The child does something he knows the parent does not like and he dreads either that the selfobject tie with the parent will be cut or that the parent will glower at him, making him feel small.

Guilt develops with the creation of secondary self-structure. The child has organized himself around a certain story or set of stories. Now if he does something that is out of keeping with the role of an heir apparent, he not only worries that his connection to his essential others will be interrupted, he also experiences damage to his secondary self-structure. He is no longer on the course to becoming the king. There is a secondary selfobject loss. Unlike shame, which is a dread of losing something, guilt occurs after the experience of the loss. Because of that it tends to last a lot longer. There begins a search to find a way to "make things better" and repair the damaged self-image. When reparation is done the secondary self-structure is restored and growth resumes.

The secondary selfobject is also where culture and child meet. As the boy identifies with his father he is entering the culture of men. When he enters school he will use this same mode of identification to refine and modify his secondary self-structure following experiences with teachers and peers. He will take this into his play with his friends and together they will work to create a culture of their own—an intersection of secondary selfobjects. This gradual refinement, modification, and elaboration will continue to occur until the child reaches the next major era of secondary selfobject formation: adolescence.

LATENCY—A TIME OF CONSOLIDATION

Following the successful creation of an overarching secondary selfobject—the Oedipus complex—which has

been modified to resolve any initial conflicts, a period of increased cohesion and quiet refinement of existing psychic structure ensues. During this time the child is in elementary school acquiring the basics that will give him access to the adult world. As he learns to read and understand numbers he has the immediate satisfaction of being able to enter a part of his parents' world that he was incapable of entering before. This satisfaction, and the belief that he is the heir apparent to all the grandeur and greatness he ascribes to his parents, keeps him going for some time. He focuses on developing his physical and mental skills and learning the rules of the society that he now wants to join.

His developing cognitive capacities allow him to return again and again to work on improving his self-structure. Old experiences and fantasies are revisited and given new meaning. The scatological jokes and curiosity of this time reveal the continued work on smoothing the edges and improving the integration of his self-structure with available cultural structures. Reactive grandiosity and aggression are bound up in interests in superheroes. Idealizing needs are focused on sports heroes. As he explores each of these avenues, the child is reworking and revitalizing his self-structure.

Friends are becoming more and more important. If there hadn't been much opportunity before, now is the time when peer relationships begin to take on some of the selfobject functions previously held only by the parents. Children look for mirroring from each other; they idealize one another and develop adversaries against whom they can define themselves.

In addition, through their relationships to each other, they can now begin to serve what Kohut described as twinship functions. As I mentioned in Chapter 2, these functions might be seen as a combination of mirroring and idealization along with the sharing of experience.

Another aspect of twinship is familiarity—the individual seeing in the other something of himself, something familiar. This creates a sense of kinship. The sense of familiarity may come about when the individual is familiar with the other, or when a child discovers another child of the same age at a party for adults. The children don't know each other but are immediately linked. This phenomenon may be thought of as twinship, in keeping with Kohut, or it may be seen as a manifestation of the child getting a very concrete mirroring experience.

The latency years prepare the child for the fragmentation of adolescence by giving him a chance to develop his skills, teaching him the rules of society outside of the family and allowing him to rework and refine his self-structure accordingly. I now turn to adolescence, restricting my focus to some of its evolving self–selfobject relationships.

ADOLESCENCE—THE FALL OF THE HEIR APPARENT

By the beginning of adolescence the child is able to see that his central organizing fantasies, such as being the heir apparent, conflict with reality. These fantasies were forged by the child when he was younger and do not fit an adult world. It becomes evident that the crown is not automatically the child's when he reaches a certain age; he must earn it. Further, he begins to see that what once appeared to be gold is brass, what once seemed to be jewels are glass. The world does not seem as magical. Where before the child imagined the adult world to be one of unlimited gratification and power, he now begins to see the responsibilities, the limitations, and the problems that adults have. The fantasies he had created to sustain himself lose their power, and he fragments.

With frustration and rage at having his fantasies ruined he blames his parents. In the early adolescent's eyes the parents have broken the covenant. They had a deal: the child gave up his idea of becoming the king to become the heir apparent. In return, the child expected to inherit a kingdom. Now the child begins to suspect that there never was a kingdom and he may feel cheated. Hence, it is not surprising that the preadolescent or early adolescent period is characterized frequently by an oppositional quality.

Experiencing a loss of secondary selfobject support, the child looks for new sources of self-cohesion. Because of the reasons mentioned above, and because both parents and child know he must start developing competence in society at large, the early adolescent looks outside the nuclear family. Thus, relationships with peers take on a new intensity as do relationships with a few favored adults such as teachers, coaches, or distant relatives.

Although the weight of selfobject support has apparently shifted to the peers, because the teenager's friends also struggle with fragmentation and restoration at this time, there is plenty of opportunity for narcissistic injury. Thus the adolescent's parents remain vitally important in self-growth. During times of injury the teen needs someone to reconnect with. Sometimes this will be a coach or teacher, but it is often a parent. Having to create a new secondary self-structure is not easy.

The teenager is often tempted to deny that his oedipal dream is broken. He will defensively try to live it out, acting like the entitled heir he had thought himself to be. To a prince the idea of earning money or living by the common law may seem unimportant. The parents must now provide enough primary selfobject support to allow the teenager to elaborate new, more adaptive secondary self-structure. This primary selfobject support

consists of a mixture of mirroring and adversarial functions. For this to occur there must be a firm parent–child tie, born of a positive selfobject relationship during childhood, that acts as an unseen tether, keeping the teenager on a safe path. This bond represents the core of idealization that remains in spite of the superficial devaluation of the parents. Underneath all the turmoil something grand and admirable about the parents remains and the original identifications persist, only to become evident again in adulthood.

In this stage of normal fragmentation the child continues to need his parents, but in a more distant way. He needs the anchor of their quiet presence to help him through the inner storms. Added to all the upheaval that I mentioned are the great changes the adolescent's body goes through. The sex hormones rush through his blood, coloring the old self-structure configurations with a hue of sexuality. Sexuality and the primary selfobject needs become confused with each other. Frustration abounds.

In the midst of all this the teenager desperately struggles to piece together a new secondary selfobject to replace the heir apparent fantasy. The adolescent may experiment with different role models in an attempt to find material for this purpose. Fads are often followed in great fervor. There may be a keen interest in religion, politics, and philosophy as the child struggles to create meaning. Everyone's version of reality, everyone's secondary selfobjects are given a try. Not since the oedipal period has there been such an urgent creativity.

As in the oedipal period, there is a need for primary selfobject support in order for optimal secondary selfobject creation to develop. This is crucial because the secondary selfobjects that are formed at this stage of development will become the guiding plan and motivational force for much of adult life. Somehow parents

must sense the right distance and degree of involvement they should have in their teenager's life.

If all goes successfully, a new secondary self-structure will emerge as the adolescent reaches adulthood. This structure will contain all the old elements built during the toddler, oedipal, and latency years: reactive grandiosity, rage, feelings of accomplishment, prior experience—all connected together through a series of stories that are further linked into an overarching guiding fable. Strong identifications with the parents as well as other significant adults are key elements of the self-structure. In healthier selves identification with peers will be less important. Most such apparent identifications can often be seen to be thinly disguised displacements of identifications with adults, or with an ideal other. In the healthy individual, the overarching story will be a life plan that contains the teenager's aspirations and hopes. These aspirations and hopes serve the same purpose that the heir apparent beliefs did during the oedipal period—they renew the promise of intimacy, power, and independence, this time from a perspective more closely matching adult reality.

Those individuals who fail to construct a positive secondary self-structure during this time will remain in a fragmented state, unable to effectively balance and integrate needs for intimacy, mirroring, work aspirations, and friendship. They will leave their adolescence without a sense of meaning. They may fall back on earlier secondary self configurations, develop maladaptive or only partially functional new ones, or fragment further into psychosis.

For many individuals this process continues until the early twenties. This is especially true for those who go on to college and graduate school. While they emerge from adolescence with a functional secondary self-structure, the organizing stories of their life may have certain blanks that need to be filled in. For instance, an

individual may be firmly organized around the idea of going to college and graduate school, becoming a professional, making a certain income, and getting married, without yet knowing what kind of professional he wants to become, or whom he will marry. Despite the superficially vague quality of his story, chances are that unconsciously he has a belief that he will find a way to satisfy his feelings of grandiosity, his Will To Do, his Need For Others, and his Principle of Internal Harmony. Further reorganizations of the secondary self-structure occur periodically, most noticeably during parenthood, later midlife, menopause, and retirement.

Although I have discussed secondary self-development from the boy's perspective, the process is the same for girls. No matter which parent is the primary caretaker, both parents are important in the self-development of the child. There is a natural identification with the same sex parent, but that partly depends on the roles involved and the expectations and fantasies the child develops. The choice of career, for instance, may involve an identification with a same sex parent, or it may involve an identification with and attempt to get close to a distant idealized opposite sex parent. Nonetheless, parents are not fully interchangeable. This becomes apparent in children of single-parent families. There are certain functions that only an opposite sex parent serves optimally, and others that only a same sex parent can serve well. These functions differ somewhat for boys and girls.

A boy needs his father to look up to, to idealize, and to confirm his maleness. He needs a father to teach him how to be a man. Without a father, a boy will feel less masculine, and he will have more of a need to prove his masculinity, often through very primitive means. Without a father, a boy will feel a great deal of frustration and rage, which he will take out on the only people in his

environment: women, himself, and peers. Without a father, a boy will lack a concrete figure to idealize and to be mirrored by. This will result in weakened primary and secondary self-structures with a tendency toward poor self-esteem, a feeling of powerlessness, and a lack of cohesion. Haughty grandiosity and a reactive need for physical power may follow.

A boy needs a mother to admire his maleness and make him feel special. He needs a mother to teach him about caring and tenderness, introduce him to culture and religion, and help him develop empathy. Without a mother, a boy will be emotionally shallow, disconnected from the greater culture. His maleness may be cohesive around other males but he will lack a sense of maleness in relation to females. Without a mother, a boy will be left with feelings of abandonment and rage, which will affect his self-esteem and cohesion.

A girl needs a father to admire her femininity and to confirm her attractiveness. She needs him to help her feel protected and less anxious, to confirm her sense of power. She needs to see her parents together to learn about intimacy. Without a father, she will grow up resentful and angry for what she missed. This may interfere with relationships with men. She may carry within her the negative things her mother said about her father. This will hurt her self-esteem. Without a father, the girl may feel she has already failed in relationships.

A girl needs a mother to identify with and idealize. She needs a mother to help her develop empathy and caring, to introduce her to the world of feminine culture. She needs the special mirroring of a same sex parent. She needs to be able to see how a mother and father relate with each other. Without a mother, a girl may feel an outsider in her own sex group. Without a mother, the girl will feel less sure of her femininity, particularly around other women. Without a mother,

the girl will feel abandoned and will tend to blame herself.

Of course, the issue of single-parent households has more complexity then can be captured here. Further, there are ways to partially compensate for the lacks it presents. For instance, a single mother can try to find a father substitute for her children. The point is that a single parent family starts with a handicap that needs to be recognized if treatment is to be successful. Families in which both parents work and the children are in day care from infancy also pose certain risks, though not to the degree of single parent homes.

SELF-STRUCTURE AND SELFOBJECT VALENCE

Secondary selfobjects and secondary self-structure are reactions to fragmentation of the primary self-structure. This fragmentation may come about for many reasons. There are periods of developmental fragmentation such as toddlerhood, the oedipal phase, and adolescence. New experience also causes minute fragmentations. There are the more pathogenic fragmentations that follow trauma or chronic frustration of primary selfobject needs. We respond to this fragmentation with a predictable sequence of adaptations. First, there is a period of concretization when the individual fragments are identified and symbolized. This step of symbolization can itself be experienced as partially ameliorative. Then, the individual tries to make sense out of the various symbols. He attempts to create a meaning or story that binds coherently together as many of the symbols as possible. These stories represent the most basic level of secondary selfobject formation, generally containing a subject and an object involved in some sort of affect-tinged interaction.

The person will then try to "become" the different characters in his story to strengthen their power to bind the fragmented self. At this point there will be a complex interaction with the primary selfobject milieu.

If the child gets sufficient validation of his secondary selfobjects attempts—in the form of mirroring from various aspects of the culture in addition to the parents—then the neural circuits corresponding to those fantasies will become connected into the motivational centers of the brain and in so doing become a relatively permanent part of self-structure. As the number and complexity of the stories grow the opportunity emerges for an overarching story to become the central guiding plan in that individual's life.

As the child grows various forces challenge the existing secondary self-structure and changes need to be made. Such changes can occur through the addition of new secondary selfobjects, with an alteration in the relative emphasis of one over another, or through an actual modification of existing stories.

There are two main ways to modify existing self-structure in treatment. One is through intensive positive primary selfobject input; like warming the sealing wax of Chapter 2, the secondary self-structure becomes more pliable. It can then more easily reorganize around the selfobject experience of therapy. This is consistent with an empathic introspective approach to therapy that emphasizes listening and understanding. The other way is through confrontation, which breaks apart existing self-structure while providing alternative secondary selfobjects to organize around and primary selfobject support to facilitate the process. The latter technique is used by "deprogrammers" of cult members as well as by some very directive psychotherapists. Unfortunately, it can have a negative selfobject effect and is frequently of superficial benefit.

Individuals with significant psychopathology often have characteristic secondary selfobjects. For instance, a 12-year-old girl I treated wanted to be an astronaut. She wanted to be alone, in a space ship, circling the earth. That fantasy captured a number of things including the wish to protect herself from further pain by distancing herself, the need to maintain a connection to people through the gravity that keeps her circling the earth, a sense of loneliness, and a haughty grandiosity. It did not contain her rage and it was an attempt to defend against her profound neediness.

Another patient of mine, a 15-year-old boy, tattooed his arm with a snarling leopard lying on a skull. In his case the anger, feelings of loneliness, and sense of abandonment were brought into one image. Tattooing that image onto his skin was his way of strengthening its effectiveness as a secondary selfobject. Others could now mirror his fantasy, and he was able to feel that it was truly an indelible part of him. The tattoo strategy was very similar to the one used by one of my younger patients, who cut out dinosaur pictures and taped them to his body. In both cases there was an underlying urge to become the secondary selfobject. To become the fantasy is truly to assume its cohesive power. This urge is like the oedipal boy's wish to become his father. And, as is true during the oedipal period, the attempts to become the secondary selfobject are an important part of creating effective secondary self-structure.

Secondary selfobjects, like primary selfobjects, can be positive, negative, or ambivalent. Positive secondary selfobjects create an increase in cohesion and allow for growth. They are not only effective within the self-structure of the individual, but are in keeping with cultural selfobjects.

Ambivalent secondary selfobjects may help the child regain and hold onto some cohesion, but they get in

the way of further growth. My patient with the astronaut fantasy was someone who never let anyone get truly close to her; she could not fully participate in therapy.

Negative secondary selfobjects tend to inhibit growth and promote fragmentation. At one time they may have been the best the child could come up with in his efforts to find meaning in his experience and may have temporarily helped cohesion, but their long-term effect is deleterious. These include all the self-deprecatory fantasies that young children elaborate in response to abuse and neglect.

The wish to fulfill a secondary selfobject fantasy is fraught with danger as well as promise, depending on how well the fantasy fits with society's values. If one forms an image of oneself as a basically good, kind individual who will fight to protect his family, and if one lives up to that image, he receives a lot of external validation. On the other hand, if one's fragmented feelings can be captured only in a fantasy of adultery, and if one acts on this fantasy, one may trade a moment's cohesion for many years of subsequent fragmentation. Fantasies such as this latter one may serve positive functions for us as long as they remain fantasies. The problem is that if a fantasy is central enough to our self-structure we will have a powerful urge to act it out.

Hence, whether a fantasy is more positive or negative in its selfobject functions varies along several dimensions. One is time—a particular fantasy may enhance cohesion in the short run but restrict it in the long run. Another is how much the individual's behavior is influenced by the fantasy, and how society regards that behavior.

Kohut emphasized the role of mirroring, idealization, and twinship in forming basic ambitions, guiding ideals, and a life plan. In my system, ambitions, ideals, and

a life plan are part of the secondary self-structure. It must be remembered, however, that all secondary self-structure is laid down in the context of a particular primary selfobject milieu. The fantasies we have that make up our ambitions, guiding ideals, and life plans were created around the experiences Kohut emphasized. In a healthy individual primary and secondary self-structure are ultimately seamless.

To summarize, secondary self-structure develops gradually from its inception as a way to identify and symbolize fragmented experience. The initial concretization is followed by a series of maturational steps in selfobject growth. Each step represents an attempt to capture the fragments of primary self experience in a more cohesive and inclusive form. Certain selfobject fantasies seem to be common to most children, including ones that fit general oedipal themes. The attempts to become the selfobject bring the intrapsychic world of the child into contact with the interpersonal world of adults—through the play of childhood and the arguments of adolescence. These attempts lend strength to a few overarching fantasies that evolve to become the pillars of the secondary self-structure.

Of the two types of self-structure, primary self-structure is composed of memories of interactions with the essential others in one's life. Healthy primary self-structure is laid down through the influence of optimal parental responsiveness and attunement to the child's needs. Secondary self-structure—the meaning that the child creates for his experiences that is composed of a collection of fantasies—is of particular value as a response to fragmentation. Healthy secondary self-structure might be said to be laid down following an optimal frustration. But even with a nonoptimal or intolerable frustration secondary selfobject formation continues, with the selfobject being less adaptive.

I have described the major periods of secondary selfobject formation in childhood, which are normal developmental phases of fragmentation, emphasizing the interaction between the primary selfobject milieu and the development of secondary selfobjects. I now turn to the application of this theory of self development to the psychotherapy of children.