A

A Subself Theory of Personality

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A theory of personality (or a theory of the mind) as made of several subselves. A subself is a coherent system of thoughts, desires, and emotions, organized by a system principle.

Many of the major theorists of personality have proposed that the mind is made up of many subselves. For example, Eric Berne (1961) talked of ego states, Carl Jung (Progoff 1973) of complexes, Abraham Maslow (1970) of syndromes, and Andras Angyal (1965) of subsystems. However, despite this agreement on the usefulness of the concept of the subself, very little theoretical discussion has appeared using this concept. The present chapter explores the past use of the concept and proposes postulates and corollaries for a formal subself theory of the mind.

Other scholars interested in this topic have taken a cognitive approach to the multiple self

(e.g., Higgins et al. 1985) or focused on scales to measure aspects of self-complexity (e.g., Campbell et al. 1996). The present paper, however, is grounded in the major of theories of personality which are usually ignored by these other approaches.

Multiple Selves in the Major Theories of Personality

Carl Jung

Jung's term for the totality of psychological processes was the psyche. Jung proposed that complexes exist within the psyche, autonomous partial systems that are organizations of psychic contents. Complexes are subsystems of the whole. (The complexes in the collective unconscious are called archetypes.) In particular, Jung identified several complexes that he felt were of particular use for a discussion of human behavior.

The *ego* consists of our conscious psychic contents and contains percepts, memories, thoughts, desires, and feelings. The *persona* is a subsystem within the ego and is the self that we present to others, the mask we wear in daily intercourse with others. It involves the roles we play in our lives. The *shadow* consists of those psychic contents in the personal (and to a lesser extent the collective) unconscious that is in opposition to the contents of the ego. These contents are less developed and less differentiated than the contents of the ego, but their presence is made apparent to the

ego whenever the boundaries between the systems break down and the contents from the shadow intrude into the ego.

In addition, the subsystem in the collective unconscious that is in opposition to the persona subsystem of the ego is called the anima in males and the animus in females. By modern standards, Jung erred here in identifying the core of human behavior in terms of the sexual stereotypes of his day. Jung described males as "masculine" and females as "feminine," in what today would be considered a gender-biased fashion. For example, Jung described the unconscious animus of females as rational and discriminating, showing that Jung believed females to have an irrational and emotional conscious ego. Today, there is no need to accept all of Jung's ideas wholesale. The anima and animus can be conceptualized more appropriately as the subsystems of the shadow that are in opposition to the persona, and their content can vary depending upon the psychic contents of the particular persona.

Eric Berne

Whereas psychoanalytic theory usually uses the terms id, ego, and superego to characterize particular wishes, Eric Berne (1961) used the concept of *ego states*. An ego state is a coherent system of feelings and behavior patterns. Complete ego states can be retained in the memory permanently. The defense mechanisms can operate upon complete ego states, and, for example, ego states can be repressed as a whole. Ego states from earlier years remain preserved in a latent state, with the potential to be resurrected (*recathected* in Berne's terminology).

The parent ego state is a judgmental ego state, but in an imitative way (primarily, of course, by imitating the person's parents). It seeks to enforce borrowed standards. The parent ego state parallels the superego in psychoanalytic theory. The adult ego state is concerned with transforming stimuli into information and then processing that information. It corresponds to the ego in psychoanalytic theory. The child ego state reacts impulsively, using prelogical thinking and poorly differentiated and distorted perception. It corresponds to the id in psychoanalytic theory. However, although

this simple correspondence is worth noting, the id, ego, and superego are sets of wishes, while the child, adult, and parent are integrated and coherent ego states. People are always in some ego state, and they shift from one to another (a process which Angyal (1965) called setting and shifting set).

Abraham Maslow

Abraham Maslow (1970), an important influence in the development of humanistic psychology, urged a holistic approach to the study of personality. Behavior, he argued, is as an expression or creation of the whole personality, which in turn is the result of everything that has ever happened to it. Personality is composed of *syndromes*, that is, structured, organized, and integrated complexes of diverse specificities (behavior, thoughts, impulses, perceptions, and so on) that have a common unity. The total personality and the syndromes tend to be well organized, and they resist change, instead seeking to reestablish themselves after forced changes and to change as a whole because of tendencies to seek internal consistency. Behavior is an expression of the whole integrated personality (and thus, an expression of all of the personality syndromes).

Other Proposals for Multiple Selves

Decision Theorists

In discussing the phenomenon of self-deception, some decision theorists have proposed a model of the mind like "the older medieval city, with relatively autonomous neighborhoods, linked by small lanes that change their names half way across their paths, a city that is a very loose confederation of neighborhoods of quite different kinds, each with its distinctive internal organization...." (Rorty 1985, p. 116). Elster (1985) proposed what may be a fitting analogy – the mind as a computer with different programs (software) being loaded and taking control at different times, to which might be added a further analogy for subsubselves, that is, different routines of the software being called up, for example, the crosstabs routine of SPSSX.

Mair (1977), a psychologist, proposed viewing the mind as a *community of selves*. The expressions "to be of two minds" about an issue and "to do battle with ourselves" suggest that we sometimes talk and act as if we were two people rather than one. Mair suggested that it is useful in psychotherapy to encourage people to conceptualize their minds in this way, with some selves which may be persistent while others are transient, some isolated while others work as a team, some who appear on many occasions while others appear only rarely, and some of which are powerful while others are submissive.

James Ogilvy

Ogilvy (1977), a philosopher, described the mind as a *multiplicity of selves* with a decentralized organization. This multiplicity of selves, a pluralized pantheon of selves, as opposed to a single monotheistic ego, leads to freedom. He saw the least free person as one who has a single, highly predictable personality, a predictability which, in his view, signifies lack of freedom. Each self is a source of differing interpretations of the world, based on differing interpretive schemes. The person is the result of mediation among this collection of relatively autonomous subselves. The goal is to prevent one of these subselves from taking over control as a single administrator or having them in a hierarchical organization. Ogilvy viewed the subselves as working together, much as in a group, to devise a final product (behavior). Individual differences result from the different evolution of the multiple selves and their differing organizations.

John Rowan

Rowan (1990) surveyed the many theorists who have used the concept of subselves or variants of it. Rowan's preference is for the term *subpersonality*, and he defines it as "a semipermanent and semiautonomous region of the personality capable of acting as a person" (p. 8). Rowan noted that, on the one hand, it is necessary to reify subpersonalities, but, on the other hand, we must remember that we are not talking about things but about processes that are fluid and in change.

In discussing the origin of subpersonalities, Rowan (1990) suggested that roles could bring out accompanying subpersonalities. Internal conflicts, in which two or more sides argue within us, also can lead to the formation of subpersonalities. Our bodies can participate in these conflicts and act antagonistically to our minds. Thus, the body – and even parts of the body – can also be regarded as subpersonalities. Identification with heroes or heroines can sometimes lead to the person taking on the identity of the hero. Subpersonalities can also derive from the Freudian personal unconscious and the Jungian collective unconscious.

Shapiro and Elliott

Shapiro and Elliott (1976) noted that we often talk to ourselves. Inner dialogues take place as conversations between various subselves, different parts of our self, with different distinct personal characteristics. Shapiro attempted to listen for evidence of conflict in his patients during therapy and then tried to separate the different parts of the person involved in this conflict. Shapiro saw his role as that of coach or facilitator in helping the subselves emerge and training the patient to deal with them in constructive ways. It is critical that none of the subselves be rejected. Each must be understood and integrated back into the self-organization.

Shapiro tried to identify or develop a mediator for the subselves. He called it a chairman of the board or some term best suited for the particular patient. The goal is to transfer energy and power to this mediator (c.f., the ego in psychoanalysis and the adult ego state in transactional analysis). Subself therapy differs from other forms of therapy such as transactional analysis because it permits the patient to identify and label the subselves, rather than fitting them into a set of subselves predetermined by the theorist.

Shapiro felt that the optimal number of subselves was between four and nine. Too many subselves result in a fragmented or chaotic self and are a form of psychological disturbance. Five kinds of subselves are found in most people: (i) a nurturing parent subself; (ii) an evaluative parent subself; (iii) a central organizing subself; (iv) a good, socialized, adapted child subself; and (v) a natural

child subself (a creative, nonconforming, rebellious, spontaneous, and playful subself). Subselves can be introjected subselves, especially those that result from identification with a parent.

These subselves can interact in a drama (or life script), as a family, as an organization or task group, or as a discussion group. It is important for the psychological health of the client for the subselves to get along with one another. An internal civil war or great conflict and tension can lead to psychological disturbance. The group of subselves should be democratic, with a minimal amount of partisanship, favoritism, and moralistic judgments. The energy of the subselves should also be rechanneled away from fighting into constructive problem-solving under the leadership of a chairman. In addition, an observer should be developed to act as a consultant to the group of subselves.

Shapiro identified several different types of psychopathology: (i) too many subselves, leading to inner chaos; (ii) too great an inner conflict, especially where the chairman has little power; and (iii) negative emotions (such as sadness and depression) are often caused by one subself attacking the child, often without the patient's awareness.

Psychological health involves having an effective chairman, who can observe, coordinate and execute decisions, and promote basic harmony among the subselves. However, Shapiro notes that integrating the subselves is not enough. We have various subselves, but we are not them. We are greater than the sum of the parts. We have to disidentify with our subselves eventually and transcend them. We have to achieve a higher level of awareness – a spiritual harmony that is beyond the psychological harmony.

A Formal Theory of the Plural Self

In the following sections, a series of postulates about subselves will be proposed, together with references to other theorists who have suggested the ideas. In addition, some of the postulates will have accompanying corollaries. First, the question of what is a subself must be answered. Any of the definitions provided by those theorists of personality who utilize such a concept will suffice, but for present purposes:

> A subself is defined as a coherent system of thoughts, desires and emotions, organized by a system principle.

Is a Multiple Self Universal?
Postulate 1: Not every individual has a multiple self.
Frick (1993) suggested that only neurotics have multiple selves, not mature and integrated people. He proposed that the level of integration parallels the level of self-awareness, and subselves are associated with low or distorted levels of awareness. Despite Frick's negative view of the concept of subselves, his views lead to the proposition that not everyone may have a mind made up of multiple selves. This raises the question, therefore, of what are the differences between those whose mind can be conceptualized as a multiple self and those whose mind can be conceptualized as a unified self, an issue open to empirical investigation in the future.

Executive Control
Postulate 2: At any point in time, one subself is in control of the mind. It may be said to have executive power.
The notion that one subself is in control of the mind at any point in time was proposed by Eric Berne (1961) in his description of ego states. A good analogy here is a computer in which different programs are in operation at each point in time, such as Excel, SPSS, or Microsoft Word. The subself that has executive power may be called the *executive subself*.

Corollary 2a: When one subself has executive power, the other subselves are said to be suspended.
The concept of suspension of systems of constructs was fully described by George Kelly (1955) in his theory of personal constructs. Berne (1961) called this process *decommissioning*.

Corollary 2b: When one subself has executive power, some of the other subselves may be monitoring what is being processed by the executive subself, but others may not. Empirical investigation of the individual is necessary to determine which subselves are monitoring and which are not.

The extreme of this situation is in multiple personality where the different subselves may have amnesia for what transpires when other subselves have executive power. On the other hand, in descriptions of the "hidden observer" in hypnosis (Hilgard 1986), the belief is that one subself monitors what is going on when other subselves have executive power. It is, therefore, possible that some suspended subselves may monitor what transpires in the executive subself while other subselves may not.

Corollary 2c: Some subselves collaborate in groups or teams, while others may be isolates; some appear in many situations, while others may appear on only rare special occasions; some are domineering while others are submissive.

These dimensions on which subselves may be construed have been suggested by Mair (1977) and others.

Corollary 2d: A subself may have executive power for anywhere from seconds to hours or even longer periods of time.

In the majority of situations, each subself has executive power for a reasonable period, perhaps extending for hours. If subselves are associated with roles, a person may teach a class (in a professorial role) for 2 h and then drive home to a family where he or she switches into a spouse role. On the other hand, when people have internal dialogues within themselves, debating whether to take some action, each subself has executive power for the time it takes to argue one side of the argument.

Corollary 2e: Selfhood is whichever subself has executive power at the time.

The issue of who "I" am has long been debated by psychologists interested in the notion of selfhood. In the present theory, selfhood is perceived by the individual to be whichever subself has executive power at the time.

Corollary 2f: Subselves may form coalitions within the larger group. These coalitions may improve or impair the functioning of the mind.

In groups and in families, coalitions may form between smaller subsets of the whole, such as children versus the parents in family systems. The same process may occur with subselves. This can be good if the coalitions assist a weak subself to assert itself, but bad if a group of subselves forces other subselves into submission.

Corollary 2g: The existence of subselves accounts for the occasional inconsistency in the behavior of individuals.

Mischel (1968) argued that the occasional inconsistency of behavior provided strong support for a contextual or situational theory of human behavior (as opposed to intrapsychic explanations). The existence of subselves weakens Mischel's arguments by viewing some apparent inconsistencies as the result of different subselves having executive power in the different situations.

Subselves as a Small Group

Postulate 3: The subselves function in a manner similar to a small group of individuals.

Lester (2010) suggested the usefulness of viewing the various subselves in the mind as a small group. In group dynamics research, intragroup conflict is typically seen as counterproductive, expending energy on activities unrelated to the group purpose. For example, in Cattell's (1948) group syntality theory, the energy expended on establishing and maintaining cohesion and harmony in the group is called *maintenance synergy*, while that used to achieve the goals of the group is called *effective synergy*. The more energy that goes into maintenance, the less available for achieving goals.

Shapiro and Elliott (1976) demonstrated the usefulness in psychotherapy of creating new subselves in clients designed to reduce this intragroup conflict. For example, it is useful to have a subself with the function of "recording secretary" for information storage, another with the function of "mediator," and sometimes a "chairman of the

board" with the power to help resolve conflict between the subselves. In addition, occasional subselves may outlive their usefulness and should be encouraged to "retire" or no longer try to influence the individual's mind. Lester (2010) noted that small groups with a hierarchical structure are often more productive, but their members are less satisfied. On the other hand, some structure is often useful. The goal is perhaps to have a dominant subself, but not one that is overly dominating.

Research on group dynamics indicates that increasing the size of the group eventually increases the chances that a dominant member will emerge and force conformity from the other group members. Thus, there is a limit to the size of a group for effective functioning. In writing on subselves, Rowan (1990) and Shapiro and Elliott (1976) have suggested that from 4 to 10 subselves is ideal.

Two empirical studies have been reported on this issue. Rowan (1990) asked the clients in a group he led to list their subselves. The mean was 6.5 with a range of 0–18. Lester (2010) asked a sample of undergraduate students to list their subselves and found a mean of 3.5 with a range of 2–6. The number of subselves reported in Lester's study was not associated with age, but the women reported more subselves than did the men (with means of 3.8 vs. 2.5). The number of subselves reported was also associated with neuroticism and extraversion scores, with extraverted neurotics reported the most subselves, with a mean of 4.6. In another study, students who were unable to report subselves scored lower on a test of self-monitoring (Lester 2010).

Research on group dynamics also indicates that egalitarian small groups typically produce more and better solutions to problems than individuals, but that they take longer to reach decision and are more likely to make risky decisions. Perhaps these same principles might apply to people with many subselves. For example, it has been proposed by Andras Angyal (1965), Eric Berne (1961), and Carl Jung (Progoff 1973) that subselves that are excluded from ever assuming control of the mind exert pressure on the dominant (and domineering) subself, often intruding upon

(and even invading) the dominant subself, leading to psychological disturbance.

These ideas can be summarized in several corollaries:

Corollary 3a: In some productive organizations of subselves, one subself acts as a leader, analogous to the conductor of an orchestra, coordinating the contributions of the other subselves.

Corollary 3b: Egalitarian groups of subselves typically result in greater satisfaction for the individual.

Corollary 3c: The individual's subselves can reorganize themselves in new ways as they develop.

Corollary 3d: Groups of subselves are best limited to at least four and no more than ten.

Can a Multiple Self be Healthy?

Postulate 4: Having a unified self or a multiple self has no bearing on the individual's psychological health.

Some theorists (such as Gergen 1971) propose that greater *pluralism* is associated with greater psychological well-being, while others (such as Rogers 1959) propose that greater *unity* is associated with greater psychological well-being.

Corollary 4a: It can be healthy for one subself to maintain overall control of the group of subselves while allowing each subself to have executive power from time to time or delegating duties to other subselves. It may be pathological when this "chairman of the board" is impaired in its role, for this may lead to conflict, struggles, and even war between the subselves, rendering the person's mind chaotic.

Conflict between subselves can be avoided by having good communication between them, validating the existence and function of each subself, and by strengthening the "chairman of the board."

Rationality and Plural Subselves
Postulate 5: Multiple selves may lead to more rational decisions than a unified self.

Moldoveanu and Stevenson (2001) explored the implications of a plural (versus a single) self for the economic theory of humans as rational agents. They portrayed the multiple self as an "ever-changing, possibly internally conflicting entity" (p. 295), and they argued that "Split-self – or schizoid approaches recognize the internally incoherent nature of selfhood..." (p. 318). The idea of an "economic man" implies a self-interested, rational, and temporally stable individual, and classical economic theory conceptualizes humans as rational decision-makers. The possibility of multiple selves might pose grave problems for classical economic theory.

However, not all conceptions of the multiple self would result in irrational decision-making. Indeed, some models, such as that of Shapiro and Elliott (1976) discussed above, in which subselves such as "recording secretary" and "mediator" exist, might lead to greater rationality in decision-making. We have seen above also that decisions made by a small group may be better decisions than those made by a single individual, and we have noted that a parallel situation may be true for a mind made up of many subselves rather than a single unified self. Lester (2010) argued, therefore, that a multiple self may fit the concept of economic man better than a unified self.

Future Subselves
Postulate 6: Individuals can seek to create new subselves for the future.

Several scholars have introduced the concept of *possible selves* (Hooker and Kaus 1992). Although their concept appears to be similar to the present focus on subselves, it is not. Hooker and Kaus's concept of possible selves refers to goals and fears for the future. Hooker and Kaus (1992) instruct their subjects to think about "the kinds of experiences that are in store for us and the kinds of people we might possibly become...what we hope we will be like" (p. 395), and they give an example of "one of my own [possible selves] is to win the lottery and become a millionaire" (p. 305).

Despite this difference between their concept and the present theory, their discussion raises the possibilities that people might indeed seek to create new subselves as defined in the present theory. For example, with regard to roles (one possible form of subselves), an individual might plan to have a child and become a parent, thereby creating a new role. When depressed people enter psychotherapy to change their lives, their behavior can be construed as seeking to create a new happy subself for the future. In this last example, the reality is that the depressed subself will not disappear or be destroyed, but rather that it will take over the mind for less and less time in the future, in the same way that Angyal (1965) proposed that the biopositive system principle organizes the mind for longer periods of time as clients progress through therapy, while the bionegative system principle organizes the mind less often.

Do Subselves Come in Pairs?
Postulate 7: The subselves in some individuals are complemented by subselves differing on critical dimensions.

Boulding (1968), in writing about the subsystems of society, noted that each system tends to create the need for an opposing system that balances it and that typically these two subsystems share similar characteristics. A forceful pro-choice movement for abortion leads to the development of a forceful pro-life antiabortion movement, and vice versa. Racketeering employers and racketeering unions go together.

This might occur in subselves. Carl Jung felt that each complex in the conscious mind was balanced by a complementary complex in the unconscious mind with opposed traits (Progoff 1973). For example, if the conscious complex is extraverted and prone to use intuition, then the unconscious complex will be introverted and prone to use sensing. Jung saw complexes and subcomplexes balanced in extraversion-introversion, thinking-feeling, and sensing-intuition.

Freeing this idea from the polarity of conscious/unconscious, it can be proposed that any subself will tend to encourage the development of another subself with complementary characteristics. An example here is the description of the "top

dog" and "bottom dog" by Perls et al. (1951) in their description of Gestalt therapy – the righteous, nagging, and threatening self versus the self that promises to change if only it could.

Corollary 7a: Some subselves may occur in pairs with complementary attributes, whereas other subselves may occur in pairs with similar attributes. It is an empirical question as to whether individuals have such pairs, the genesis of these pairs, and why some complement each other while others do not.

Corollary 7b: A common polarity in pairs of subselves is the top-dog/bottom-dog dichotomy proposed in Gestalt therapy.

Integration
Postulate 8: The individual eventually tries to integrate the subselves.
If the mind is conceptualized as made up of several subselves, the issue arises as to how the mind might be integrated. It might be that the process of integration (seen by Carl Jung as the task of the second half of life) involves breaking down the boundaries between the subselves and integrating them into a single unified self. Alternatively, it might be that the different subselves are fully developed and coexist in harmony with one another as Berne (1961) and Shapiro and Elliott (1976) have suggested. Other forms of integration include time sharing (where each subself has control of the mind on some occasions), cooperation, absorption (where one subself absorbs another), fusion or merging, and finally synthesis.

Corollary 8a: The integration of subselves is a task for the second half of life.

Corollary 8b: One form of integration is peaceful and harmonious coexistence, cooperation, and collaboration between the subselves.

Corollary 8c: One form of integration is the fusion or merging of the separate subselves into a single unified self.

Corollary 8d: It is an empirical issue as to which individuals choose each path of integration and what determines this choice.

The Varieties of Subselves
There are many possible schemes for categorizing a person's subselves. There have been many proposals for the types of subselves that might exist. Some theorists have suggested that there is a core self (Kelly 1955) and what has been called a social self, pseudo-self, false self, or, preferably, *façade self* (Laing 1969).

Postulate 9: There are several possibilities for subselves that are common to all individuals.

Corollary 9a: One common set of subselves consists of one or more core selves and one or more façade selves.

Corollary 9b: Another common set of subselves is the top-dog/bottom-dog subselves proposed in Corollary 7a.

Corollary 9c: There are probably regressive subselves in most, if not all, individuals which are the subselves that they had at an earlier stage in life.

Corollary 9d: There are probably subselves formed by the introjection of the desires and thoughts of powerful others (in particular, parental figures) and imitation of their personality and behavioral styles.

Corollary 9e: Subselves may be defined in terms of social group membership or personal attributes, and, in some people, there may be mixed types.

Subself Theory and Dissociation
Postulate 10: Some subselves may be in a dissociated state about which the other selves have delusional, minimal, or no knowledge.
There are many phenomena which lend themselves to a subself explanation.

1. At one extreme is multiple personality in which the individual has two or more personalities (often known as *alters*), each of which may have amnesia about events occurring to the individual while in another personality. The different "personalities" of the person with multiple personality may be conceptualized as "subselves."

2. In possession, a person – sometimes in a trance state – is "possessed" by a deceased spirit. This spirit may be exorcized by a shaman, and the individual may or may not remember the possession experience (Lester 2010). It is possible that the "spirit" which apparently possesses the individual is one of his or her subselves which have taken over control of the mind (In an analogous manner, the "it" that comes over us and makes us behave in socially unacceptable ways was construed by Freud as originating in the individual's own id and may be construed as a subself.).

3. Mediums who communicate with the dead often have a spirit guide (also known as a control) who passes on messages from deceased individuals intended for those who have come to the medium for such messages (Lester 2010). Occasional mediums are "possessed" by the deceased spirit and speak as if they "are" the deceased person. Such controls may be subselves of the mediums which they do not recognize as such.

4. People sometimes claim to remember previous lives as another person which is seen as evidence for reincarnation (Lester 2010). These memories may occur spontaneously or under hypnosis. It is difficult to distinguish cases of reincarnation from cases of possession. However, both may be situations where subselves take over the control of the mind temporarily.

5. Schizophrenics often have auditory hallucinations in which they hear voices. Typically, the schizophrenics attribute these voices to some external agency, but the voices most likely originate in their own minds and may be conceptualized as coming from other subselves.

It is clear that the phenomena mentioned in points (1) through (5) fall on a continuum of *distancing* or *dissociation*. In multiple personality, there is amnesia for the events occurring in other personalities, and amnesia is often present in possession experiences. In memories of past lives and the spirit controls of mediums, there is no amnesia, but rather the subject locates the experience as coming from an external source (e.g., a previous life or the spirit world). The same is true for the auditory hallucinations of individuals with schizophrenia which the patient typically views as coming from "other realms."

In contrast, healthy people usually experience their different subselves consciously and acknowledge them as part of the self. They may label these subselves as roles (e.g., employee, parent, spouse), by mood (e.g., the depressed self, the happy self), or in some idiosyncratic way. When they "talk to themselves," they recognize that both "voices" are their own. When they have conflicting desires, they recognize that the opposed desires are all their own.

Interestingly, those who believe in the phenomena described here often use the other phenomena to explain them. For example, multiple personality and reincarnation may be explained as an example of possession. The auditory hallucinations of individuals with schizophrenia may be viewed as communications from deceased individuals dwelling in the spirit world. However, the model of the mind as composed of subselves, with varying amounts of dissociation, remains the most parsimonious explanation of all of these phenomena. It explains the phenomena without recourse to explanations (such as reincarnation or a spirit world) which many scientists reject as unproven, and it does so using a holistic conceptualization of the human mind which has a long history in psychological thought.

Corollary 10a: The concept of dissociated subselves can explain such phenomena as multiple personality, possession, mediumship, reincarnation, and auditory hallucinations.

Psychological Disturbance

The theory of subselves proposed here leads to many types of psychological disturbance.

Postulate 11: There are many forms of psychological disturbance which can arise from the conceptualization of the mind as consisting of many subselves.

Corollary 11a: Psychological disturbance can arise from symptoms of pressure, intrusion, and invasion between subselves.

This description of psychological disturbance was proposed most cogently by Angyal (1965). In symptoms of *pressure*, one subself tries to assume executive power while another subself is in control. This can result in mild symptoms such as insomnia, heightened anxiety, restlessness, and fatigue. In symptoms of *intrusion* (called *contamination* by Berne), while one subself has executive power, other subselves affect occasional behaviors. The tone of voice or other nonverbal qualities of the behavior may be controlled by a suspended subself. Slips of the tongue, obsessive thoughts, hallucinations, and delusions are other manifestations of symptoms of intrusion. Jung considered neurosis to be the result of intrusions. In symptoms of *invasion*, subselves invade one another, and the behavior of the individual becomes chaotic as different behaviors are controlled by different subselves. It is a state of being at war with oneself, and Jung saw the psychoses as the manifestation of symptoms of invasion.

Corollary 11b: Psychological disturbance can arise when one subself has executive power exclusively.

When one subself governs exclusively, the other subselves are deprived permanently of executive power, and this creates an imbalance among the subselves. The ideal situation is for each subself to be recognized, accepted, and permitted expression and to have executive power from time to time.

Corollary 11c: Psychological disturbance can arise when the individual has difficulty setting and shifting set (changing which subself has executive power) appropriately in a situation.

A person may show a stubborn resistance to shifting subselves when a shift is warranted, as when the role in which the individual is operating changes (e.g., from worker to parent), or when the individual shifts sets opportunistically and inappropriately (e.g., when a psychotherapist commits a boundary violation and becomes sexually intimate with a client).

Corollary 11d: Psychological disturbance can arise when the content of the subselves is pathological.

There may be psychopathology because the content of one or more subselves is pathological. A serial murderer may, for example, have several subselves with firm boundaries (and so no symptoms of intrusion or invasion) and be able to set and shift set appropriately and yet may enjoy torturing and killing others. Berne (1961) gave the example of a happy concentration camp guard as illustrating this type of psychopathology. Angyal (1965) in his theory of personality proposed a bionegative system principle (consisting of the pattern of vicarious living and the pattern of noncommitment) which also is an example of content psychopathology.

Corollary 11e: The healthiest individuals may have one subself that is in charge of the set of subselves.

Frick (1993) suggested that a superordinate subself is required for healthy functioning – as some have phrased it, someone to conduct the orchestra. There may also be a core subself than can and should assume leadership.

Corollary 11f: Some subselves may cease to be useful as the individual matures and may need to become less influential in determining the individual's life.

Corollary 11g: Subselves that may be unhelpful for some tasks and impair performance and development may be useful in other situations.

Excellent examples of this can be found in Eric Berne's ego states in which each ego state (child, adult, and parent) is appropriate in some situations.

Corollary 11h: The possibility of attributing negatively valued aspects (thoughts, desires, emotions, or behaviors) of oneself to one or more subselves may enable the individual to maintain high self-esteem since the negative aspects of one subself do not color the other subselves.

Developmental Considerations

There is a long tradition in psychology of viewing development as a progression from a state of relative undifferentiation to a state of greater differentiation and hierarchical integration, leading eventually, in the second half of life, to integration. There are two major issues here. How are subselves formed and what determines whether they become part of the plural self?

Postulate 12: Subselves may be formed as a result of early experiences.

Many subselves are formed early in life, remain with us throughout life, become more or less salient over time, but also change. Subselves can be created by experience. Relevant formative processes include the processes described by psychoanalysis (with its emphasis on early experiences, especially traumatic experiences), the impact that the conditions of worth have on the development of a child's façade self as described by Carl Rogers and Andras Angyal ("the pattern of vicarious living"), and parents who are inconsistent as described by Andras Angyal ("the pattern of noncommitment").

Postulate 13: Subselves may be formed by the encountering of possible subselves exemplified by other people.

Kelly (1955) in his theory of personal constructs introduced the concept of threat – the possibility of an imminent change in the individual's core constructs. Encountering someone who presents an alternative lifestyle can be a threat – "I should behave as that person does." In some situations, other people act toward the individual as if he or she should behave in a certain way – and it is tempting to adopt that subself in order to cope with the situation.

Postulate 14: Subselves are selected to become more or less permanent members of the plural self depending on their usefulness in helping the individual succeed.

This success may be healthy (a humanistic perspective) or may help the individual persist in maladaptive behaviors (as in the view of Gestalt therapy).

Postulate 15: Individuals form fewer possible selves as they age. Aging narrows the possibilities for the individual as he or she moves toward completing their specific system principle.

Angyal saw individuals as eventually having too little time left in their lives for changing their specific system principle, and, as a consequence, they have less freedom of choice.

Subselves and Psychotherapy

Postulate 16: The concept of subselves is useful for psychotherapy and counseling.

The hypothetical existence of subselves has a long history or use in psychotherapy (e.g., Shapiro and Elliott 1976). Transactional analysis (Berne 1961) is based on the existence of ego states. Transactional analysis begins with a structural analysis in which the clients are introduced to the concept of ego states and helped identify which ego state they are in at any time. Intrusions (called contamination in transactional analysis) are identified and eliminated. Psychotherapy then moves to a transactional analysis, in which transactions between individuals are examined for such issues as whether they are complementary or crossed and overt or covert (as in "games").

Corollary 16a: One useful tactic in psychotherapy is to have the client identify and provide names for their subselves.

Naming the subselves helps clients recognize, explore, describe, discuss, and understand these aspects of themselves.

Corollary 16b: Some subselves are more useful in the psychotherapeutic process than others.

The usefulness of particular subselves at particular stages of the psychotherapeutic process is illustrated by crisis intervention. For example, in dealing with a client in crisis, it is helpful to get the client's adult ego state (using transactional analysis terminology) in control. If the crisis counselor speaks from a parent ego state, this will encourage the client's child ego state to take over as executive and increase the client's feelings of helplessness. Asking nonthreatening questions designed to elicit information facilitates the client's Adult ego state assuming executive power and calming the client down.

Corollary 16c: It is important in psychotherapy to know the relationships among a client's network of subselves, that is, the alliances and coalitions that exist and how they change from time to time and situation to situations.

Corollary 16d: Some subselves may become enmeshed, and the psychotherapist must help the client create sufficiently impermeable boundaries. Alternatively, some subselves may become disengaged, and the task then is to recognize them and encourage them to express themselves.

Corollaries 16c and 16d come from ideas common in family therapy, in particular, families in which each family member is far too involved in the personal concerns of the other family members and families in which coalitions form as the members take sides in family disputes.

Criticisms

Several writers have noted that the criteria for identifying a subself must be specified. What are the attributes and parameters of a subself? Katzko (2003) criticized those writing about subselves (or some other comparable term) for not specifying what the term means. He noted that the term can have a dictionary definition, which he saw as the connotative usage, "the relation between a term and a concept" (p. 85). Katzko noted that the term can also refer to some phenomenon, what he saw as the denotative usage, and, in this case, it "points" to a real-world object.

Katzko further criticized the terminology. He dislikes describing the "self" as made up of "subselves," which he contrasts with "an atom is made up of subatoms" (p. 94), an idea that physicists would abhor. Several theorists have avoided this by using terms such as "mind" or "psyche" rather than "self" and by using terms such as ego states or complexes instead of subselves.

Finally, Katzko stressed the importance of distinguishing between a multiplicity of subselves and multiple aspects of one single self. A multiplicity of subselves "implies an aggregate of several independent entities, all of which are members of a single class" (p. 95). Eric Berne's (1961) proposal of three ego states or Lester's (2010) proposal of treating the subselves as analogous to several people working together in a group setting (neither example cited by Katzko) clearly fits into the multiplicity of subselves concept.

Discussion

The notion that individuals have a unified, whole self may be an illusion which is particularly strong in the Western world. This illusion of wholeness may be created by defense mechanisms, the psychological processes of condensation, displacement, transference, and identification, which "create an illusory sense of wholeness and personal continuity out of what are actually inconsistent self-experiences" (Ewing 1990, p. 266). However, cultural anthropologists, making what psychologists would call clinical observations of indigenous peoples in their natural settings, are aware of the varieties of subselves that appear in different contexts or social settings and do not consider this to be an illusion.

Baumeister (1998) has stated: "The multiplicity of selfhood is a metaphor. The unity of selfhood is a defining fact" (p. 682). Since Baumeister presented no facts to back up his assertion, it could just as appropriately be asserted that the unity of the self is a metaphor while the multiplicity of the self is a fact. Postulate 1 of the present theory has granted that some people have a single self while others have a multiple self. It is not crucial, but it

is of some importance, that psychological theories match people's experience. Although the present author is convinced of his continued existence as a single individual, he is also quite sure that he has different, subjectively experienced subselves.

There are many sources from which additional propositions and corollaries about subselves might be identified. Role theory provides such concepts as a role set (a collection of roles), formal and informal roles (such as "professor" and "scapegoat" in the family system), role conflict and role strain, role distance in which the individual resists the role and purposely gives inauthentic performances, and the degree to which individuals see themselves as defined primarily through one of the roles they play. It may be important, however, to clarify the distinctions between (or relationships among) the concepts of subselves, identities, and roles. Other sources of propositions and corollaries may come from analogies with group dynamics and family therapy. It is hoped that this formal presentation of a subself theory of the mind will stimulate analysis and development of the theory.

Cross-References

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