

Heinz Kohut, The Making of a Psychoanalyst

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My yellowed copy of the news item in The New York Times of October 11, 1981 reads: 'Heinz Kohut, a leading psychoanalyst who developed a new theory of the self in opposition to the ideas of Sigmund Freud, died Thursday of congestive heart failure at Billings Hospital in Chicago. He was 68 years old'.

Kohut was certainly a seminal thinker in psychoanalysis and the founder of a major orientation or movement, especially in the US, that has developed world wide, including Germany and Australia. Although his ideas parallel British object relations theorists such as Winnicott, a number of the concepts of his 'psychology of the self are separate developments (e.g., selfobject, his emphasis on empathy, narcissism and forms of transference).

Kohut's work has had a pervasive influence in the mental health field in general. A 1984 study asking leading American psychiatrists for what they regarded as the most important developments in the field in the preceding decade found thirteen books and only one journal article listed sufficiently often to be seen as the most important publications. Kohut (1971, 1977) was the only author mentioned twice (Strauss et al, 1984). According to a lead article in the American Journal of Psychiatry, Kohut's work precipitated 'a firestorm of controversy, challenging fundamental precepts about both the etiology and the treatment of psychopathology' (Baker and Baker, 1987, p. 1). Kohut's work was regarded by many in the mainstream as a 'cult' and, according to John Gedo, once a close colleague of Kohut's, Kohut moved from being a 'scion of the psychoanalytic establishment' to inaugurating a school which was to be 'the most powerful

dissident movement' in American psychoanalysis (Gedo, 1986, p. 99). Although self psychology was certainly the major dissident movement within American psychoanalysis during the 1970s and 1980s, another related movement emerged in the 1990s, relational psychoanalysis, led by a number of New York psychologist-psychoanalysts, notably Stephen Mitchell, Jay Greenberg and Lewis Aron (see Mitchell and Aron, (Eds.), 1999).

Kohut was born in Austria and graduated from medical school in 1938 with an interest in psychoanalysis. He was analyzed by August Aichhorn, a close friend of Freud's. Kohut never met Freud, though he liked to tell the story of going to the train station in 1938 to farewell Freud on his journey to London. Kohut tipped his hat and Freud responded in like manner from his carriage. Kohut somewhat modelled himself on Freud (Strozier, 1985, p. 7). Kohut emigrated finally to Chicago, became a neurologist, and, like Freud, left neurology to become a psychiatrist and psychoanalyst.

Before 1965 when Kohut first outlined his views on narcissism to a meeting of the American Psychoanalytic Association, he had been 'Mr. Psychoanalysis, the most eminent spokesman for classical Freudian thought' and had been President of the American Psychoanalytic Association (1964–65). He was also a Vice-President of the IPA (1965–73). Kohut was widely viewed as conservative and was respected by eminent figures such as Anna Freud, Heinz Hartmann and Kurt Eissler (Strozier, 1985, p. 10). Anna Freud had delivered her lecture, 'The Ideal Psychoanalytic Institute: a Utopia' to the Chicago Institute at Kohut's invitation and stayed with him for the duration of her visit to Chicago. In turn, Kohut was proud of his relations with these people. As he drew away from classical analysis his relations with some figures soured somewhat but he remained especially proud of his relation with Anna Freud. Anna Freud played down Kohut's new ideas; as Strozier put it, she 'quietly withdrew from Kohut's ideas' after the publication of *The Analysis of the Self* (1971). In the end, Anna Freud saw Kohut's work as having become anti-psychoanalytic. In a letter to Ralph Greenson she even wondered, 'What will happen to psychoanalysis in the future? And where will its backbone be when our generation is gone?' (Young-Bruehl, 1988, p. 440). Kohut was reportedly 'crushed' when Kurt Eissler told him that he did not understand what Kohut was doing. As he changed perspective he increasingly lost the respect of those he admired and was 'increasingly and sometimes viciously attacked', as Strozier put it in 1985 (pp. 10–11). Kohut's own narcissism helped him to withstand attacks and to separate himself off from the mainstream and the figures he so admired and to branch out in his own direction.

Many scions of the psychoanalytic establishment were critical of a 'cult' around Kohut, that he had indeed betrayed psychoanalysis for reasons that were constantly speculated upon by former friends and colleagues. After all, he was, as Kohut once later half-jokingly called himself, 'Mr Psychoanalysis' in the 1960s and was supported by Anna Freud in his unsuccessful bid for the Presidency of the International Psychoanalytic Association. There is good evidence for Leo Rangell's assertion (2002) that an important reason for Kohut's so drastically changing his approach lay in his effective defeat for that position by Rangell.

Kohut generally considered his own theories as developments within the psychoanalytic field and not deviations from it. He viewed psychoanalysis as a field like physics rather than a set of theories within a field, such as Newton's theories within physics. Psychoanalysis was defined primarily as a field of inquiry opened up by the dialogue between Breuer and Anna O. Nonetheless, as he developed his theories further, Kohut was increasingly regarded as a deviationist who had given up analysis for a sophisticated form of psychotherapy. Criticisms were not just on account of deviation as such but included views that Kohut's ideas were simply based

on error. I remember Margaret Mahler telling me in her New York apartment in 1981 that Kohut did not understand babies. As Kohut's ideas developed during the 1970s he was supported by his own group based in the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis which became increasingly split off from the mainstream with their own de facto organization which included meetings, seminars and referral networks—and later, national conferences now held annually. As opposed to some others within his group, Kohut wished to remain very much within the ambit of the American Psychoanalytic Association and certainly did not want to split off. In fact he wanted his ideas to be discussed and absorbed in an evolutionary way. But Kohut suffered severe heart problems in the early 1970s when he was around sixty years old, and this made him aware that he needed to move faster than he would have otherwise liked in the development of his ideas away from orthodox psychoanalysis; his friend and colleague Ernest Wolf told me this fast development in Kohut's theory was 'quick because he's not a young man and he must feel that he only has a limited amount of time and so he has to get his ideas down' (Interview with Ernest Wolf, Chicago, June 10, 1981).

The publication of *The Restoration of the Self* (1977) marked the public move which established self psychology as a distinct movement and later work, especially *The Restoration of the Self* and an article, 'The Two Analyses of Mr. Z' (1979), raised immense controversy and rancour within orthodox psychoanalysis. As an example of the reaction one senior analyst commented to me, 'So other analysts misunderstood him but I think it was his own fault. I must admit in the first book he showed I thought a brilliant set of observations. In the second one I thought he went over the line in terms of working out a great deal of theory on very little basis'. After *The Analysis of the Self* (1971), he developed his own ideas more explicitly and came to be seen to differ more and more from orthodox analysis. After *The Restoration of the Self* (1977) Kohut threw all caution to the winds and became still more explicit in his formulations and in the development of a school. However he reined in a number of his group who were fed up with their treatment within the American Psychoanalytic Association and were anxious to develop their own group. What has actually developed has been both: Kohut's ideas have been taken far more seriously within the American Psychoanalytic Association since his death and the self psychology group became institutionalized with Annual Conferences and a number of books with wide ranges of contributions on self psychology. That group also went the way of all psychoanalytic institutions and split between the more 'traditional' Chicago self psychologists and the intersubjectivists led by Bob Stolorow in Los Angeles.

Charles Strozier has produced a landmark book on Kohut which is the result of two decades' work. He explores the path, personal, political and conceptual of 'the making of a psychoanalyst'. It has been reviewed not only in the obvious psychoanalytic journals but has been glowingly reviewed in the mainstream papers such as *The New York Times Book Review* and *The Chicago Tribune*. He is a professor of history at John Jay College in New York, a training and supervising analyst with a self psychology institute in New York and the author of *Lincoln's Quest for Unionscad On the Psychology of Fundamentalism in America* as well as a number of edited collections.

The book is very detailed and meticulous as well as arrestingly written, holding the attention of the reader in the twists and turns of Kohut's developments within the contexts of life and politics in Vienna and the US, and of course psychoanalytic politics. It is an impressive work of scholarship that reveals both Kohut's flaws and genius. Strozier traces the way ideas developed in the context of the interweaving of personal, political, social, historical, clinical and theoretical factors. The book provides much material for further critical thinking about Kohut, psychoanalytic ideas and politics, as well as the way ideas develop.

Strozier demonstrates in a masterly way that truth is surely stranger than fiction in the case of Heinz Kohut, who never seemed to let reality get in the way of a good story. Kohut claimed that he was half Jewish on his father's side but it turns out that he had a ceremony for his Bar Mitzvah. It seems he had an intense homosexual relationship with a camp counsellor. He invented Mr Z, the analysand who was supposed to show the difference between Psychoanalysis Mark 1 (Freud) and Mark 2 (Kohut).

Kohut 'touched the pulse' of the 'core issues of contemporary America' in his work there. Given his 'protean sexuality and identity confusions' Kohut didn't fit well with the world of Freud's psychoanalytic world (p. x).

After completing a PhD in history at the University of Chicago and having become a Freudian, Strozier became a candidate at the Chicago Institute of Psychoanalysis and was impressed by its intellectual atmosphere, particularly by Kohut. Strozier organized interviews, panels, conferences and other events with him and conducted the last series of interviews with him before he died (p. xi). (This must have been around the time I interviewed Kohut less than four months before he died [Kirsner, 1982]). Strozier started to think about writing Kohut's biography six months after Kohut's death, and began the book in 1982 with interviews over the next four years and then came to a standstill until 1994 when the Kohut correspondence became available. Then Strozier resumed interviewing and writing.

Heinz Kohut was born to Jewish parents in 1913 in Vienna. There is no evidence for the claim that Heinz's mother converted to Catholicism early and Kohut's later claims at different times to being only half Jewish were clearly fabrications on his part. He brought up his family as Episcopalians and constantly denied his Jewish origins. Kohut had a bris, the ritualistic circumcision, at the Miillerngasse synagogue and was legally registered as a member of 'the Israelite community'. He had a Bar Mitzvah ceremony and was clearly part of the Viennese Jewish culture of the time. But he went further than being assimilated—he actively disidentified with his Jewish background and became a Christian. As Ernest Wolf put it, 'Jewish culture, Jewish food, Jewish jokes were alien to him' (p. 39). He would even feign not understanding Jewish expressions or jokes.

Nowhere is Kohut's lack of concern for the facts clearer than in his seminal paper on the development of self psychology, 'The Two Analyses of Mr Z' (1979) (Kohut named his cases with letters of the alphabet). This paper chronicles two analyses that Kohut undertook with the same patient, Mr. Z, the earlier one from a classical perspective and the later one from a self psychological point of view. Kohut attempted to demonstrate that the first one was far inferior to the second. As Kohut put it, the development of the point of view of *The Analysis of the Self* enabled him 'to perceive meanings, or the significance of meanings, I had formerly not consciously perceived. This case thus allows me to demonstrate that the change in my theoretical outlook that had taken place during this time influenced decisively the focus of my perception of Mr. Z's psychopathology and enabled me, to the great benefit of the patient, to give him access to certain sectors of his personality that had not been reached in the first part of his treatment' (Kohut, 1979, p. 3). Kohut argued that he could not have made the second analysis work without the insights into narcissism. It was supposed to provide incontrovertible clinical evidence of the superiority of the new self psychology over the old approach.

Yet what is most odd about this story is something that Strozier discovered—that the analysand in

the story was none other than Kohut himself. The material from the childhood of Mr Z, it turns out, is important evidence of Kohut's own: for example, Mr Z's early masturbatory fantasies about his mother based on *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While the first Freudian analysis interpreted these in terms of sexual yearnings more archaic than the oedipus complex, the self psychological approach stressed the hopelessness and depression evoked in him by his mother's intrusiveness (p. 19).

But Kohut's family was fragmented and atomized since his father and mother constantly fought, effectively separated and both had affairs. In this situation, his mother became less involved with Heinz and Kohut survived the family breakup well because of a relationship at age ten he had with a twenty year old tutor who replaced his mother. Ernst Morawetz was a companion to Kohut after school and they developed a deep rapport; it was, Kohut said, 'psychologically life-saving for me' (p. 24). He learned much from his older friend about art and the world and he idealized the tutor. But it was also a physical sexual relationship and would today be characterized as childhood sexual abuse (p. 25). Strozier sympathizes with Kohut's stress on self-needs, his position of downplaying the sexual side of the relationship and emphasizing how the empathy and affection filled a large hole in his psychic world during that period (p. 26).

Strozier discusses Kohut's analysis with August Aichhorn, a close friend of Freud who is known for his work with delinquents. It seems that Aichhorn seemed pretty informal and was not strict about 'the rules' of psychoanalysis (p. 52). However, this was not at all unusual for that first generation, including Freud.

The 1938 Anschluss meant confronting a very new reality. Kohut realized he had to leave. Symbolically, Freud's emigration was a major blow marking the end of psychoanalysis in Vienna for that period. Symbolically too a personal myth was set up for Kohut. Kohut went to the station, tipped his hat to Freud as a good-bye, which Freud acknowledged. This goodbye became what Kohut called 'the germinal point for my professional and scientific future' (p. 58). After Kristallnacht on November 8–9, 1938, there was an urgent need to emigrate. In March 1939, Kohut was able to lead a group of 125 Jews on a transport out of Vienna that ended up safely in London (p. 62). After a year in a refugee camp in rural England, he managed to travel to Chicago where he spent the rest of his life (p. 68).

On the night he arrived in Chicago Kohut met Robert Wadsworth who was to be Kohut's closest friend for the rest of his life. Wadsworth was a librarian who worked on the Oxford English Dictionary and was deeply involved with music and literature. Some thought it an explicitly homosexual relationship though others suggested it was not (p. 70).

Kohut applied to the Chicago Institute for Psychoanalysis for training in 1942. After interviews he was rejected and advised to undertake a therapeutic analysis, meaning he was seen as not yet sufficiently healthy to undertake a training analysis. The committee must have noted character flaws since it was unlikely that Kohut was not sufficiently qualified academically. And Strozier suggests from his evidence that it was Kohut's deviation from heterosexuality that was seen as the problem (p. 80). Through the strange dynastic relationships of psychoanalysis Kohut chose Ruth Eissler as his analyst in hopes that it could be converted into a training analysis at the Institute.

Kohut lived and worked at the University of Chicago's Billings Hospital from 1941 to 1948. He started specializing in neurology but in 1944 took a strategic decision to switch his instructorship to neurology and psychiatry. It was a move reflecting Kohut's new interests away

from science and into the clinic (pp. 82–3). Craving status, Kohut worked at and excelled in his two board examinations in neurology (1946) and in psychiatry (1949). But in 1944 Kohut had decided to make psychoanalysis his life's vocation (p. 83). In 1947 he was made Assistant Professor of Psychiatry, an achievement of which he was immensely proud (p. 93) and graduated as a psychoanalyst in 1950 (p. 96).

Strozier makes two interesting points about the process of Kohut's prodigious writing that now began. Ideas generated throughout the year were mainly put down over an intense two months summer vacation in Carmel. Kohut wrote as he spoke, Strozier says, 'with a kind of planned chaos, an associative style that circled and deepened rather than moved along any simple narrative line' (p. 111). That is strikingly true for anyone who has seen him lecture (either directly or recorded), read his seminars and books. They all have exactly the same quality. I can attest to this having interviewed Kohut just four months before he died. There is an unravelling of a theme that works by association and somehow flows back to a point at a different level. It was an instance of how, as he told me, he could 'play with concepts' (Kirsner, 1982). Although he wrote in English, it seemed that he wrote down his ideas in his native German (p. 112).

But Kohut was identifying with being mainstream American. He had been apolitical in Vienna until the world collapsed around him. Even then he seemed to regard the rise of Nazism, his refugee experiences and the war as interferences in his life and professional development. Like many migrants he identified with his adopted country and was cautious about politics. And about religion too. He was openly Christian, celebrating Christmas with all the trimmings, read *Christian Century* and occasionally gave sermons in the Unitarian Church. He brought up his son, Thomas, as a Christian, hid his Jewish origins from him and proclaimed to him that he was not Jewish. He told Thomas how difficult it had been in the refugee camp since the other inmates had an identity; he was just a Viennese and was lost. He could claim that he wasn't Jewish since his mother was Catholic. The problem was his mother had converted in 1948, when Kohut was 35! Strozier attributes his need to 'reconfigure the past' down to Kohut's driving ambition as a leading psychoanalyst (p. 115–16).

Kohut commenced practice as a full time psychoanalyst in 1949 and placed primary emphasis on clinical work over the academic. His analytic approach was purist, prolonged analysis with few interpretations. He was generally known to be a fine therapist, someone who took many of the cases others could not handle, someone who was a master at following associations and empathized with his patients (pp. 117–19). Strozier gives quite detailed accounts of some of Kohut's patients during Kohut's classical period. Over his first fifteen years as an analyst, Kohut was, Strozier concludes, 'as good an analyst as his theory allowed him to be' (p. 126)

During the 1950s Kohut was a rising star in Chicago and American psychoanalysis. In 1956 he even turned down the chairmanship of psychiatry at the University of Chicago. He was, Strozier writes, priming himself as 'the respectable, cautious man of the future, assiduously cultivating his reputation as the chosen one to provide leadership for the next generation of psychoanalysts. That became his professional identity' (p. 127).

Only three years after graduating Kohut became a training analyst in 1953 and was simultaneously appointed to the all-powerful 'staff' that controlled the Institute. A quibble though. Kohut didn't, as Strozier claims, keep that position for the rest of his life (p. 128) since the 'staff' was abolished when George Pollock became director in 1971 (see Kirsner 2000, p. 117). Although Kohut then was elected as a member of the Council, a kind of replacement for the Staff, in 1978 Pollock successfully campaigned to have him not re-elected to the Council of the Institute. Kohut was

very inordinately upset about the removal (Kirsner 2000, p. 125). But clearly, Kohut was very enthusiastic about psychoanalysis and idealized it as our best shot at truth about human psychology. He was concerned that psychoanalysis should not be just a technical discipline, that institutes should be more like universities than trade schools. He was closely involved in the design of a new curriculum and was very involved with teaching and training (pp. 128–9). He clearly thought that the Institute and other psychoanalytic organizations were in pre-eminent positions as vehicles for this vital science of psychoanalysis.

He threw himself into national psychoanalytic politics and was president of the American Psychoanalytic Association (1964–65). He was very busy but, as he put it, ‘beloved by everybody and on the right kind of handshaking terms’. He was particularly pleased with his relationship with Anna Freud, Kurt Eissler and Heinz Hartmann (pp. 135–9). He claimed to have learned all he knew about narcissism from his experience of the American Psychoanalytic Association (p. 140).

During this phase of his life, the beginnings of his new formulations came through in his writings, particularly his essay on empathy. He began to challenge the primacy of drive theory and emphasized a new starting point. However, as Strozier comments, ‘It took many years after he wrote his empathy paper for Kohut himself to grasp its implications’ (p. 143).

Kohut reached a turning point in 1965 at his usual summer vacation at Carmel after finishing his presidency of the American Psychoanalytic Association at the age of 52. As Kohut put it in 1980, ‘Essentially everything I have written since then I wrote in those weeks in that one summer’ (p. 153). The specific paper he wrote then, ‘Forms and Transformations of Narcissism’ was a new beginning in contesting the idea that narcissism was necessarily bad but Kohut still found legitimacy in its being an interpretation of Freud on ‘primary narcissism’. Kohut emphasized the importance of introspection as a perspective in understanding the state where a distinction between self and other was not yet established. According to Kohut, grandiosity and idealization played an important positive role in the development of outstanding political leaders such as Churchill. Creativity is itself, as Strozier puts it, ‘a form of transformed narcissism’ as are empathy and humour (pp. 134–8).

Over this period too, Kohut’s mother was becoming clearly paranoid and confirmed Kohut’s perceptions of her as crazy during his childhood, as revealed in ‘Mr Z’. This realization, Strozier astutely surmises, had an impact on unlocking Kohut’s creativity. She died in 1972 (pp. 160–3).

Strozier records that Kohut ‘continued to cultivate important figures in the field’ such as Kurt and Ruth Eissler and Heinz Hartmann. But Kohut’s relationship with Anna Freud was especially significant. When Anna Freud came to Chicago to receive an honorary degree, she accepted Kohut’s invitation to stay with him and they bonded closely. Letters between them became more frequent and Anna Freud much encouraged Kohut to stand for the presidency of the International Psychoanalytic Association. Although he eschewed other administrative positions within the American Psychoanalytic after his presidency there, he successfully lobbied Kurt Eissler for an IPA vice-presidency in 1964 and served on the Program Committee for the Amsterdam Congress. The default option was to stand for the presidency. Anna Freud was, Strozier says, ‘high on Kohut’ and strongly encouraged him to stand. Moreover, Anna Freud did not want either of the other candidates, Jacob Arlow and Leo Rangell. Kohut told Anna Freud that he had no drive for the presidency but was leaning towards standing out of duty. It is clear, however, that Kohut was being disingenuous. He very much wanted the position and was

clearing his writing tasks so as to occupy it effectively. But soon after, Anna Freud dropped the bombshell to Kohut that he would not garner sufficient votes to be elected president. The Kleinians and Europeans were moving towards supporting Rangell. She communicated her surprise and regret for her encouragement for Kohut to run. Kohut told her of his active campaign thus far, how he had written about a hundred personal notes to analysts around the world and of his 'waves of hurt pride and anger'. He withdrew from the race, accepting her advice that it was not a 'good thing to offer oneself in defeat'. Kohut wrote to her, 'My major efforts can now be devoted to my scientific goals, and—after I will have done with my reaction to the present disappointment—I will now have a chance for a fruitful period of work'. This hurt endured for some time. But Strozier correctly points to the creation of a widely-held myth spread by Kohut that his withdrawal was so he could pursue his scientific work (pp. 168–79). More likely it was the other way around. He decided to move to a different paradigm increasingly outside the Freudian framework because of his narcissistic wounds in not achieving the IPA presidency, which was won by his rival and Carmel neighbour, Leo Rangell. Rangell (2002) wrote about the seminal importance of these events at the 1969 Rome Congress, which were

of scientific-political import, which was to have a major effect on the course of psychoanalytic theory. Heinz Kohut reacted to a personal, organizational event, his failure to be elected President of the IPA, by switching his theories on narcissism and empathy, which had developed and to that time had been well contained within classical theory, to their becoming the database for a new theory of self-psychology. From my direct and intimate experience of the event and its sequence, I felt that Heinz Kohut became a Kohutian on this particular occasion. While I kept this opinion private for over a quarter-century, since it would appear to be subjective and based on interpolation, this received supportive evidence in 1994 in *The Curve of Life* (Cocks, 1994), a record of Kohut's correspondence, in letters between him and Anna Freud.

While Kohut was writing *The Analysis of the Self* in 1969, he gathered together a sympathetic and significant young group of graduates to discuss the manuscript. In the tradition of Freud's Wednesday group, they became his disciples and were sent out to spread the word. 'To remain close to Kohut meant relinquishing a measure of one's own self,' Strozier writes. 'He cast a huge shadow. Kohut used his followers mercilessly for his own purposes'. Kohut noted the parallels between Freud's secret committee and the group dubbed the 'sacred seven' that consisted of Arnold Goldberg, Michael Basch, the Ornsteins, the Tolpins and Ernest Wolf. The lives of the members of the group were greatly influenced and advantages accrued in terms of building an important international movement and being associated with someone regarded as a genius. John Gedo was regarded as Carl Jung while Arnold Goldberg was 'the Peter upon whom the church was built', upon whom Kohut depended greatly (p. 183). Strozier describes the other important members of the group in detail and explains the significance of the group to Kohut as providing vital feedback and support (p. 191).

Strozier notes that Kohut's creativity really blossomed in his late fifties and explains the key ideas in *The Analysis of the Self* (p. 192). Did Kohut plagiarize some of his ideas from other thinkers he did not acknowledge? Did Kohut's lack of footnotes imply using ideas such as Winnicott's 'transitional object' as his own without acknowledgement? Strozier argues that Kohut did not know Winnicott's concept well. I think Strozier is right to argue that Kohut was unconcerned about such issues. I suspect that was part of his narcissism. His emphasis, as was clear from his interview with me for example, was on his new vantage point and a new explanation of phenomena rather than the discovery of new phenomena as such. The selfobject was quite

different from object relations concepts, Kohut told me, as it was ‘an object not separate from the child’ (Kirsner 1982, p. 491). Part of the explanation also lay in Kohut’s realization that he might not have that much time left. Soon after *Analysis* was published Kohut was diagnosed with lymphoma, a diagnosis that profoundly affected him as a blow to his sense of invincibility (p. 233–4). For years he lied to many about having it (pp. 236–8). Yet the imminent threat of death focused Kohut’s mind on urgently breaking with drive theory and attempting to explicitly formulate his new theory of the self as agency. He feared he would not have the time left to properly explicate his new theories so he was on a mission that may have helped keep him alive (p. 241).

That mission in the context of his cancer intensified Kohut’s self-centredness and alienation from his peers and colleagues. He experienced even minor criticisms of *The Analysis of the Self* totalistically, especially when they came from the psychoanalytic establishment. But there were major criticisms, such as from Anna Freud and Kurt Eissler who moved into conflict with Kohut as they recognized the implications of the book (p. 269). Kohut responded to being shunned by his old psychoanalytic colleagues by becoming closer to his old personal friends and reconvening his original support group that had lapsed in 1969. In 1974 this became the *Casebook Group* since its aim was to write up cases for publication as a companion to *The Analysis of the Self*. In November John Gedo was greatly offended by the manner in which Marian Tolpin quizzed him about his case presentation and demanded to no avail that she be kicked out of the group. This was the spark that led Gedo to leave the group and have no more to do with Kohut and the others. Kohut was clearly very invested in Gedo—Gedo believes sexually as well as intellectually. Gedo withdrew, refusing to be enveloped by Kohut’s lack of boundaries. It was also Kohut’s need for control, Strozier argues, that led Kohut to withdraw from the group whom he discerned he could not mould. Despite his name being on the cover of the results of the group work, the casebook, it seems Kohut never read it (pp. 269–77; Gedo 1999).

During that same year (1974) Kohut began drafting what Strozier calls Kohut’s ‘best written and most accessible book’, *The Restoration of the Self*. He takes off from Freud but sketches the limits of Freud’s vision, especially on guilt and the drives, and on his understanding of the nature of the self as a whole as struggling from fragmentation right from the beginning. Strozier quotes Eugene O’Neill’s dramatic lines as summarizing *Restoration*: ‘Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue’ (p. 300).

The final section of the book is titled, ‘The birth of the hero’ (1977–81). Strozier rightly points out that each of the long tradition of heroes—mostly charismatic—in psychoanalysis lays ‘claim to psychological truth and to an understanding of the nature of cure’. The ‘movement’ aspect of psychoanalysis has been prominent throughout its history with cults and gurus, narcissistic identification and adherences, leaders and followers, splits and fragmentations. Did the enthusiasm for self psychology derive from new ideas or from transference and cultishness? (pp. 303–17).

According to Strozier, ‘the most remarkable thing Kohut ever did was to write an entire case history that was pure autobiography’. This was ‘Mr Z’, written in 1977 when he was 64, and was elaborately disguised. Why, Strozier asks, write an autobiography only to disguise it? Strozier answers that Kohut identified his life with his theory and work. ‘One can say Kohut sacrificed his life to his creativity. He was also sick and essentially dying from cancer when he wrote “Mr. Z”.’ The time when he was emotionally freest coincided with when his notoriety was peaking. Kohut lied, Strozier argues, because he correctly realized that the autobiographical case provided the best evidence for his theories (pp. 308–16).

In his waning years in which he was dying Kohut devoted himself to general issues, but in particular the importance of healing in psychoanalysis reflected in his posthumously published book, *How Does Analysis Cure?* (In my interview with Kohut, I recall placing my microphone on the manuscript of that book in the hope that it might cure the microphone of the problems it was having). He was optimistic about what therapy could do when released from received strictures of a particular theory, empathically using an experience-near approach. Strozier provides accounts of some of Kohut's new clinical directions through accounts of analysands and supervisees over Kohut's last years (Chapter 30). The book concludes with an account of his last lecture in Berkeley delivered just before he died. I have seen the videotape in the Chicago Psychoanalytic Institute Library, and it strongly conveys Kohut's enthusiasm for the centrality of empathy in a heartfelt way. Also of course it is moving to experience the finality of this lecture.

In all Strozier has created a rare achievement, the combination and interweaving of theory, history, personality, emotion, culture, therapy, politics and psychoanalysis. It is eminently readable and an exemplar of what can be done in critical biography in context.

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