

The Structure of Self-Realisation¹

Jan Tønnesvang
University of Aarhus

Abstract

The article argues that the structure of self-realisation is bipolar, and that genuine self-realisation should be conceptualised as a phenomenon of connectedness manifesting itself simultaneously in both a horizontal and a vertical dimension. As a relation between individual self-assertion and self-exposition on the one hand and ideals and values in relation to individually transcending horizons of meaning on the other hand, genuine self-realisation develops through different self-organisational levels, with the relational character of the self being transformed in ways corresponding to the level of its self-organisation.

Framing The Question of Self-Realisation

The Historical Root

Like so many psychological-existential topics, the question of how we shall understand the relation between the *right* of the individual to act out and realise his individual lust, desire and needs versus his *duty* to realise higher moral ideals in his way of living dates back in history. Looking at specific moments in history, we will find, that it was discussed by the Greeks in the conflict between the Sophist's hedonistic philosophy and the "universal ideal of excellence" promoted by Socrates; that it was core-positioned in the dispute between Nietzsche's philosophy of volition and Christian moral teaching; and that in the early years of psychology, it became a nodal point in the conflict between Freud's id and superego, between *homo natura* and *homo socius*. Although Freud did not as such deem morality unnecessary, (but rather saw it as a necessary evil), he was in line with the Sophist's and

¹The article is an elaborated and revised version of a Danish publication (Tønnesvang, 2005: *Selv-realisering som bipolart fænomen*) printed in Brinkmand, S. & Eriksen, C. (Eds.). (2005). *Selvrealisering – kritiske diskussioner af en grænseløs udviklingskultur*. Aarhus: Klim. It is printed with permission from the publishers.

Nietzsche's view that there is a fundamental conflict between individuality and sociality, in which "the chief enemy of natural individual self-assertion and vitality is the morality of society" (Riker, 1996, p. 69). For Socrates and the Christian moral thinkers the problem was the same, only in a reversed order, with individual self-assertion and lust considered the enemy of morality (p. 72).

*The Point of and the Problem in Traditional Humanistic Psychology
– Illustrated with Maslow*

Though Maslow understood the relation between the individual and sociality in a more friendly way than the Sophists, Nietzsche and Freud, he, too, gave priority to the individual when he formulated his theory of self-actualisation. With his conceptualisation of self-actualisation as a way of fulfilling the essence of one's unique positive nature and realising the latent potentials embedded therein, self-actualisation became a strictly individual phenomenon, which is essentially determined from within where the child "knows" better than anyone else, what is good for him" (Maslow, 1968, p.198), and where culture might be the sun, food and water of self-actualisation: it is not the seed (p. 161).

For certain, Maslow contrasted the individual and sociality in a less radical way than Nietzsche and Freud. In his opinion, culture could actually be "growth-fostering" for the individual (p. 211), meaning that there is not necessarily a conflict between the individual and culture. But in keeping with a romantic vision of development (Strenger, 1989), he thought that the function of culture and sociality could at best be to stimulate growth of an already given core of personality. Thus, culture and sociality are a *means to* and not a *genuine part of* the natural growth sphere of the individual.

With respect to this natural growth sphere then, it is well known that it was conceptualised by Maslow in terms of a hierarchical inter-relationship between different forms of needs – from physiological needs to needs for security, safety, love, belongingness, self-respect and actualisation. While I believe he was on the right track in working with a hierarchical understanding, I also believe that somehow he got it wrong in his particular way of doing it. Though I fully agree that a hierarchical understanding is both important and necessary, if one is to understand the possible developmental transformations in self-realisation, I find Maslow's approach problematic to the extent that it is letting the *contents* of the different needs determine, how the hierarchy is arranged. The problem with this content-determined conceptualisation of the hierarchy is that self-actualisation – if the theory is to be consistent – is not possible, unless the need for security, safety, love, recognition, etc. has been transcended (or suspended). Though Maslow, in different places (1970, chap. 12), treat love as a true ingredient in self-

actualisation manifesting itself as a love for the Being of the other, self-actualisation through love should not *in principle* be possible in his theory. Because self-actualisation takes place, when the need for love is overcome, it could be said – as did Maslow in line with his theory – that: "The perfectly healthy, normal, fortunate man has no sex needs or hunger needs, or needs for safety, or for love, or for prestige, or self-esteem, except in stray moments of quickly passing threat" (1970, p. 56). The general point is that besides reducing culture and sociality to a means of self-actualisation of the individual, Maslow advocated the view that some types of needs (the so-called "being needs") should be considered as higher means, whilst other types (the so-called "deficiency needs") should be considered as belonging to a lower sphere (Neher, 1991, p. 104).

The Analytics of Self-Realisation

Though I am aware that my identification of Maslow prioritising the individual over sociality and his hierarchical understanding of needs should come as no surprise to those who know of Maslow's work, I think it deserves to be rementioned, since it illustrates the continued need to have two analytical dimensions in mind, when attempting to understand and explain the structure of self-realisation as a psychological phenomenon. On the one hand, we must analyse the phenomenon in a *horizontal dimension* that concerns the relationship between the individual and sociality, and on the other hand, we must analyse it in a *vertical dimension* that concerns the relationship between lower and higher levels of development (or less and more complex levels, respectively) in human existence. The challenge then, is to understand, how these analytical dimensions are related to each other. And in that respect, a third parameter of analysis – namely *the concept of the self* – becomes important, since the way in which the relationship between horizontal and vertical dimensions is understood, will be determined by the way in which *the self to be realized* is conceptualized. If the self is understood and conceptualised in terms of essentialism, individualism and as an autonomous phenomenon resting in itself, the pathway to self-realisation should be found in the individual's contemplative inward-looking search for an inner core-truth. With such a conceptualisation of the self, the answer to the question of self-realisation will unavoidably be *either* a variation of the Sophists', Nietzsche's or Freud's radical cultural pessimism *or* a variation of Maslow's moderate cultural pessimism. The common denominator in these pessimistic perspectives is that sociality and culture is reduced to being a means of self-realisation for the individual. The difference between them is that, in a radical perspective, the unambiguous understanding of culture and sociality is one of being in opposition to the nature of the individual (i.e. a *horizontal dichotomisation*), whereas in a moderate perspective

(as Maslow's), culture and sociality can actually stimulate the natural growth of the individual (i.e. a *horizontal one-sidedness*).

If, however, the self – in the tradition from G.W.F. Hegel and phenomenologists such as M. Merleau-Ponty – is understood and conceptualised as a phenomenon of *connectedness*, the answer would be that self-realisation is fundamentally a relational enterprise unfolding itself in the specific forms of connectedness of which the individual is part, and which develop as a consequence of the individual's involvement therein. We can, of course, choose to call such self-realisation-in-connectedness by another name, e.g. life-realisation (highlighting the fact that we are not concerned about a narrow-minded *self-relating* realisation). This, however, is merely a question of words, since basically we are dealing with self-realisation as understood in a framework of connectedness, in which one's strivings toward self-realisation are not the actualisation of an inner core, but have to do with finding a unique personal style in one's way of discovering, living, and fulfilling *oneself-in-one's-connectedness* and *one's-connectedness-in-oneself*.

Throughout the rest of this article, I will attempt to answer the question of how we theoretically should understand such self-realisation-in-connectedness. First, I will introduce a few considerations of the relationship between the individual and sociality/culture in a horizontal dimension of analysis. In that respect, I will take my starting point in Charles Taylor's philosophy of connectedness and Heinz Kohut's theory of the bipolar self, and discuss how it is possible, with these approaches, to actually overcome the points of disagreement between the Sophists, Nietzsche and Freud's id on the one side and Socrates, the Christian moral thinkers and Freud's superego on the other. Following that, I will proceed to explain, how self-development in the vertical dimension's management of the horizontal dimension is in fact an expression of, what I call, *self-realisation-in-connectedness*. I will argue that it is only such self-realisation-in-connectedness that (contrary to a multitude of incomplete or distorted self-realisation) deserves to be called self-realisation in a genuine sense.

Horizontal Connectedness, I: Identity, Authenticity and Self-Realisation

Identity

In *Sources of the Self* (1989), Taylor pushes the question of identity to its logical conclusion by emphasizing that, in order to know, who we are, we must know, where we stand and what we stand for: "To know who I am", he writes, "is a species of knowing where I stand" (p. 27). According to Taylor, man's identity is intimately connected with the commitments and identifications, he is experiencing, and that constitute a horizon of meaning for his attitude to that which is good and

valuable and that which ought to be done in varying situations. In this sense, identity constitutes – what I would call – a *field of self-understanding*, within which we can make decisions, act and find our stand in relation to our environment without losing ourselves. And the broadness of this field of self-understanding will influence how and within how many different contexts, we can navigate without putting our identity to the test. Thus a broad field of self-understanding will enable flexible navigation in many life-arenas without losing oneself, whilst a narrow field of self-understanding is connected with a less flexible and more rigid ability to navigate. However, although a broad field of self-understanding enables us to widely navigate our environment without losing ourselves, this does not mean that we can then *reduce* identity to a multi-centred swarm of participations, as certain post-modern thinkers maintain it. Due to the dimension of commitment in identity, there will always be key areas of a person's identity that are of particular importance to his self-understanding and that limit just how visionary and multi-centred he can be, if he is to avoid losing both himself and his ability to distinguish between meaningless and meaningful spheres in his environment. In Taylor's words:

People may see their identity as defined partly by some moral or spiritual commitment, say as a Catholic, or an anarchist. Or they may define it in part by the nation or tradition they belong to, as an Armenian, say, or a Québécois. What they are saying by this is not just that they are strongly attached to this spiritual view or background; rather it is that this provides the frame within which they can determine where they stand on questions of what is good, or worthwhile, or admirable, or of value. Put counterfactually, they are saying that were they to lose this commitment or identification, they would be at sea, as it were; they wouldn't know anymore, for an important range of questions, what the significance of things were for them. (1989/2000, p. 27)

As noted by E. H. Erikson (1968), identity is formed during youth, when the youngsters *ideological mind* is established as basis for the forms of self-experimentation in relation to the meaning spheres outside oneself that might become the ingredients of commitment in the sort of self-understanding that Taylor talks about. Along with D. P. McAdams (1993; 1996) it can thus be added that identity continuously develops through adulthood in the form of a more or less consistent, differentiated and integrated narrative of who one is and what is one's purpose in life. In line with Taylor's view, McAdams sees a mature identity as a narrative that is not only self-relating, but also involves other-relating elements. From his studies in the life stories of adults, he concludes, "mature identity in modern adulthood requires a creative

involvement in a social world that is larger and more enduring than the self” (McAdams, 1996, p. 315).

Authenticity

Taylor himself follows up on his treatment of identity in *The Ethics of Authenticity* (1991) by arguing that authenticity is self-relating in the sense that it is rooted in the individual’s original self-creation, self-discovery and potential opposition to the rules and ties of society. However, as with identity, this self-relating aspect is only one of the roots of genuine authenticity, in as much as authenticity also includes an other-relating root in the form of dialogue with others and openness to horizons of meaning beyond oneself, respectively. The point is that without this other-relating root, the individual will lose the reference point for valuing his experience of individual importance, which inevitably will result in the individual’s experience of individual meaninglessness. Thus the price of this narrow-minded, self-relating self-obsession is not merely one of the environment being rendered meaningless (which of course in itself is problematic), but also one of the meaninglessness hitting the individual himself like a boomerang. Or in reverse Taylor-speak: “If I don’t know where I stand, then I don’t know who I am either”. Which seems to be the inevitable situation that post-modern thinkers such as M. Foucault, J. Derrida and their followers end up in, due to their radical de-legitimation of genuine horizons of meaning for the creation of individuals by themselves (p. 66).

On the other hand, a like-wise extreme polarisation in the other direction leading away from the self and manifesting itself in a narrow-minded, other-relating other-obsession will result in the individual being deprived of vitality, involvement and creativity. The challenge for a psychology of authenticity is thus to understand, how its self- and other-relating roots are connected with each other. And Taylor’s reply is that they are connected as the “manner” and the “matter” of authenticity:

Modern freedom and autonomy centres us on ourselves, and the ideal of authenticity requires that we discover and articulate our own identity. But there are two importantly different facets to this movement, one concerning the *manner* and the other concerning the *matter* or *content* of action. We can illustrate this with the ideal of authenticity. On one level, [authenticity] is clearly self-referential: this has to be *my* orientation. But this doesn’t mean that on another level the *content* must be self-referential: that my goals must express or fulfil my desires or aspirations, *as against* something that stands beyond these. . . . Indeed, the argument above suggests that we will find genuine fulfilment only in something like this, which has significance

independent of us or our desires. . . . Self-referentiality of manner is unavoidable in our culture. To confuse the two is to create the illusion that self-referentiality of matter is equally inescapable. The confusion lends legitimacy to the worst forms of subjectivism. (Taylor, 1991, pp. 81-82)

Identity, Authenticity and Self-Realisation

Combining McAdams' and Taylor's definitions of identity on the one hand with Taylor's distinction between the "manner" of authenticity (referring to the self-relating investment of one's personal style in a cause) and the "matter" of authenticity (referring to the other-relating causes and other people that one might be committed to in one's self-management) on the other hand, gives the opportunity for establishing a solid basis for understanding what self-realisation is in fact about. Thus, the basic structure of self-realisation should be understood as *the processes through which an individual realises his potentials in an individually creative and original style in relation to those horizons of meaning that lie beyond himself and those forms of connectedness in which he is involved as part of his humanity and as foundation for his self-understanding*. The premise for such a conceptualisation of the structure of self-realisation is, of course, that it is reasonable to say that self-realisation must include our self-understanding (identity) and originality (authenticity) in the choices we make and the actions we take. To my view, this is not really a point for discussion, if by self-realisation we mean something like a genuine fulfilment (original realisation) of the self that we already are and that we are in the process of becoming (identity). The term "self-realisation" should at least refer to something along those lines, as otherwise it becomes meaningless.

That genuine authenticity (and identity and self-realisation) incorporates both self- and other-relating aspects, does not imply that tension cannot and will not occur between the two at different times during a person's life and as a consequence of different cultural influences. For instance, the neo-liberal "free-choice-mantra" and the consumer mentality of the western world seem to coincide with a tendency for the individual's attention to his duties towards the greater community (and his solidarity with an "old-fashioned word") to disappear into the background with respect to his self-relating attention to "his right" to position himself in the centre of stages and "to demand" and "regret" the quality of the "services", which he thinks himself entitled to receiving from his environment. Taylor is well aware of the fact that such imbalances both can and will occur, and his point concerns a different matter, namely that in principle it would be wrong to prefer one root of authenticity (e.g. the self-relating) over the other (the other-relating) (1991, p. 66).

Bearing my introductory remarks in mind, it was exactly such attempts of one-sided preferences that caused dissension between the Sophists and Socrates, Nietzsche and the Christian moral thinkers, and that was built into Freud's model of conflict and also was immanent in Maslow's humanistic naturalism. So bearing Taylor's reflections in mind, it could be worthwhile to investigate, how these 'conflicts' could be overcome within a psychological framework, which is compatible with Taylor's philosophical interpretation. My starting point for this will be Heinz Kohut's concept of the bipolar self.

Horizontal Connectedness, II: The Bipolar Self as a Basic Concept in a Psychology of Self-Realisation

The Bipolar Self

Although I have for some time been working with the self, I have not as yet come across a better proposal for how to understand the basic structure of the self than the one found in Kohut's conceptualisation of the self-structure as bipolar.² Bipolar structure means that the self consists of two poles, one of which concerns the self-assertion and self-exposition of the individual, whilst the other concerns the way in which the individual orients himself towards the greater meaning contexts that he is part of and develops through. One pole is the pole for the individual's creation of ambition and might be considered a psychodynamic specification of that which within evolutionary psychology is termed "agency". The other pole is a pole for the individual's idealising attention towards and his amalgamation with his environment and might be considered as a psychodynamic specification of that which within evolutionary psychology is termed "communion". Evolutionary psychology is the branch of psychology that seeks to determine the universal characteristics and functions of the psyche, as these have evolved in order to ensure the survival of our ancestors (Buss, 1999). And as maintained in this context, agency and communion are basic modalities in the existence of living organisms, i.e. their agentic manifestation as individualities on one hand and their communal orienta-

²Heinz Kohut (1913-1981) was originally a psychoanalyst, but found that traditional psychoanalytical thought was insufficient as a basis for understanding narcissism and treating narcissist disorders. In a relatively short list of works (1971, 1977, 1984), he gradually developed an alternative understanding, in which the self takes on a central position and Freud's concepts of structure (regarding id, ego and superego) is subordinated to the creation and function of the self. For Kohut, the primary source of the mental suffering of modern man is not problems related to the development of the id, but to the self's management of its ambitions, ideals and pride, etc. See e.g. Hansen (2001).

tion towards and amalgamation with greater communities on the other (Bakan, 1966). The subtlety of Kohut's bipolar self is that it in its basic structural form includes these evolutionary modalities as poles in a dynamic tension arc. Like a stick with two ends, individuality and sociality are in that way immanent (i.e. always already included) in the structural creation and development of the bipolar self.

The way, in which the two poles of the self are then tied together in the tension arc between them, is through those abilities, talents and skills which the individual originally possesses in embryo and that he develops and acquires through the ontogenetic interplay with his environment.³ Under ideal life-conditions, the individual will get the possibility to use his abilities, talents and skills to realise his individual creativity, desire and self-assertion (the pole of ambition) in a relationship that is realistically attuned to his ideals and values in connection with the greater context against which it is constitutionally directed, and of which it is part (the pole of idealisation).

According to Kohut (1977), the self refers in a phenomenological sense to the unifying and self-experienced linking of perception, feeling and initiative that characterizes a dynamic and organised universe of action and experience. To a varying degree, and depending on a person's integrity and maturity, the self is experienced as the centre in his life management, from which his initiatives spring and his experiences end (1979/1996, pp. 452-454). Thus understood, the self is both an action-initiating (self-as-agent) and an experience-organising (self-as-structure) *system-of-readiness* that – with specific ways of asserting and exposing itself – will respond individually differentiated to specific ideals and values in the environment. Basically then, the self is the fundamental organising principle in the individual's management of himself within his surroundings. As formulated by Bertelsen (1996) in terms of intentionality, the self is the first-person perspective in our directedness *towards* and directedness *by* our environment – a point that I will return to, when dealing with the question of vertical connectedness later in the article.

Selfobjects and the Built-in Sociality of the Self

To specify what it is in particular that the self responds to in its environment, Kohut introduced the concept of *selfobjects*, which refers to those experiential dimensions in the horizontal connectedness of the

³I should here add that the environment of the self in a broad sense includes concrete relations with others, discursive practices, culture, nature, etc., and that this environment naturally always will have a co-creative function and meaning for the actual creation of the self, though not by changing the character of the basic structure of the self which will remain bipolar.

self by which it is sustained, supported and vitalised in its development and self-cohesion. Metaphorically, he used the term “psychological oxygen” for selfobjects; a metaphor that quite precisely signals the idea:

- that the self is intrinsically connected with selfobjects in its environment, in the same way as an organism is connected with organic oxygen;
- that the connectedness of the self with selfobjects is lifelong, in the same way as an organism throughout its life needs organic oxygen; and
- that in its immediate relations with the environment, the self does not much notice its need for and use of selfobjects, as long as these are available and of a “good enough” quality, much in the same way as the organism does not notice its use of oxygen, while this is readily available.

In addition to the point that the bipolar self-structure in itself is weaving the individual’s self-volition (the pole of ambition) into its directedness towards something bigger than itself (through the pole of idealisation), the constitutive connectedness between self and selfobjects underscores the existential fact that a fundamental dualism between individuality and sociality is an illusion. The bipolar self does not develop as a relation-independent core with the environment being the means only for its growth. In both its basic bipolar structure and by way of its constitutional selfobject relatedness, the bipolar self is a conceptual capturing of the genuine meaning of sociality in self-development and self-realisation. Sociality becomes, so to speak, built into the self through processes of *transmuting* internalisation by means of which selfobject phenomena are turned into ingredients in the self’s organised relating itself to its environment (in a horizontal dimension) and to itself (in a vertical dimension). And since the course of these transmuting internalisations is influenced by the active and organised endeavours of the self, the self will at the same time be both fundamentally relational (related to the selfobject phenomenon) and subjectively unique (through the individually organised and organising processes). Genuine self-realisation understood as a realisation of such a subject-relational self can never be merely either self-relating or other-relating, but must inevitably be a question of, how the self-/other-relating sides are integrated in authentic life projects characterized by a subjective anchored “manner” and a social-relational anchored “matter”.

The Self in Surplus and Deficiency Positions

As a system-of-readiness attuned to responding to the environment with a specific “manner”, the self will respond in ways varying in relational quality depending on its individual state of development. Even if the specific lived “manners” of the self are individually unique, they

will – influenced by the general developmental state of the self – appear as figures of action and experience on a dynamic structural configuration being more or less in a surplus or deficiency position (Tønnesvang, 2005). In a surplus position, the “manners” of the self will characteristically be responsive, flexible, mutual, open and directed towards potentials for contact and growth in the environment. In a deficiency position, the “manners” will typically be more reactive, narrow-minded, rigid, closed and directed towards security and self-protection. In both the surplus and the deficiency positions, the individual can be polarised towards the self-relating pole (the pole of ambition) as well as towards the other-relating pole (the pole of idealisation). If the individual is in a surplus position and at the same time is polarised towards one pole, the other pole will be included in his polarisation. That is, he has established an existential relationship with the pole towards which he is not polarised. If, however, he is both polarised and in a deficiency position, he will typically have blocked his contact with, and have denied, undermined or suppressed the other pole and the content thereof. Which, for instance, could be the case in a narrow-minded, self-relating polarisation, in which the individual’s preoccupation with his own personal well-being and self-experienced importance becomes the lived figure of his attention, with the surroundings and other people being reduced to nothing but instruments for nourishing his self-relating, narcissist self-inflation. Or it may be the case, in a 180 degrees turned around narrow-minded other-relating polarisation, in which the individual – ideologically seduced and fanatically dedicated to a lofty image – turns himself into the blindly obeying servant of this image. In both of these deficiency positions, there will be confusion between and mistaking of Taylor’s “manner” and “matter”. With respect to the self-relating narrow-mindedness, it is thus the self itself, which in its self-circling “manner” becomes its own “matter”. And with respect to the other-relating narrow-mindedness, the “manner” of the individual will be pre-dictated by the precepts of the codes of “correct behaviour” stemming from the idealised “matter” that ultimately will end up undermining his individuality.

Suffice it to say for now that the precondition for self-realisation in the true meaning of realising the self must be that it – independently of its individually different polarisations – takes places from a position on the surplus-deficiency continuum closer to surplus than deficiency, corresponding to a growth-oriented rather than a deficiency-oriented position in Maslow’s terminology. However, this alignment to Maslow’s thinking does not mean that we are obliged to follow his pre-determined view as to which type of needs have the characteristics of growth- or deficiency-needs respectively.

The Bipolar Self and the Historical “Points of Dissension”

With respect to “the points of dissension” between the hedonism of the Sophists and the universal ethics of Socrates, between Nietzsche’s philosophy of volition and Christian moral teachings, and between Freud’s id and his superego, J. H. Riker (1996) clarifies how they can be transcended by using the concept of the bipolar self. On the one hand, he is arguing that these approaches all deal with crucial aspects of the relationship between the individual and sociality, but that they are also individually limited if taken for themselves (p. 73). On the other hand, he shows how it is possible, not just to transcend their disagreements but also to include their partial insights into a more encompassing theoretical understanding of the basis for being a (bipolar) self. As to the question of self-realisation, Riker’s agenda seems to be in family with Taylor’s when Taylor is commenting on the dissension between “boosters” and “knockers” in relation to the understanding of authenticity (which in my argumentation is a component of genuine self-realisation):

[The] battle going on between the boosters and the knockers as far as the culture of authenticity is concerned . . . is a mistake; *both* sides are wrong. What we ought to be doing is fighting over the meaning of authenticity, and . . . to be trying to persuade people that self-fulfilment, so far from excluding unconditional relationships and moral demands beyond the self, actually requires these in some form. The struggle ought not to be *over* authenticity, for or against, but *about* it, defining its proper meaning. (1991, pp. 72-73)

The Self-Relating Pole

As to the position of Nietzsche, a bipolar thinker will certainly agree that individual self-assertion is both a positive and a necessary part of realising himself. But where Nietzsche understands individual self-assertion as the ultimate driver in his life-fulfilment, the bipolar thinker is aware that individual self-assertion only makes up one (self-relating) component of the self, and that it is equally important for this component to be balanced by ideals in an other-relating sphere. Without such adjusted balancing of self-assertion in relation to ideals, it is not possible to establish a developmental theory that can explain how self-assertion can be something other and more than an infantile, grandiose self-inflation and an omnipotent search for status and control over others (Riker, 1996, p. 79).

A bipolar thinker will consequently appreciate that Nietzsche identifies one important element of the motivational constitution of man, i.e. his self-asserting status and power seeking agency side. But he will *not*

agree with Nietzsche that *in principle*, it should be social and moral conventions that suppress the self-assertiveness of the individual. Even though this *may* be the case under certain (e.g. totalitarian) social conditions, it is not necessarily so. If morality and convention reflect *both* the agency side *and* the communion side of human life and thus allow variation in the ways in which individuals assert themselves (agency) – if this takes place without damage to or instrumentation of others (communion) – it is not moral and convention *as such* that obstruct the development of healthy self-assertion. Basically, it is the lack of corrective empathic responses to the individual's way of manifesting himself in his early selfobject relations that prevents elementary self-assertion from evolving into mature forms of self-manifestation. To secure that natural self-assertion (which all things considered is *natural*, since it is the expression of the agency-side) can become a healthy and harmonious part of an individual's self-realisation, we do not need to demolish convention and morality (which relate to the communion side), but instead to create possibilities for children and young people to participate in morally responsible and psychologically healthy relations which enable them to develop their elementary self-assertion into more mature forms of socially attuned self-assertion. The good news here is that all societies (at least in principle) have the potential to change their upbringing and educational practises, while no society can do without convention and morality (Riker, 1996, p. 70).⁴

For Nietzsche, ideals (including moral ideals) will primarily install their importance to the individual as *either* barriers from the outside that blocks his existential battles *or* as manifestations of his own creative willpower. Ideals from the outside will thus *not* – as it surely will for the bipolar thinker – create genuine opportunities for the self's fulfilling experience of happiness and vitality.

On one hand, the bipolar self maintains that man has evolved as a being that needs and desires to live by and for ideals. Contrary to Freud's understanding of moral as a necessary evil, this means that "oughts" and ideals are natural to humans rather than being foreign obstacles imposed by society" (p. 71). On the other hand, the very point that ideal-seeking behaviour is constitutional does not mean that the concept of the bipolar self in itself can give us the answer as to what makes certain ideals better than others. Such decision cannot be directly deduced from the bipolar self, but must include discursive

⁴Which is one of the reasons why I think the self-realisation issue should be understood as an issue of "Bildung" and thus a task that involves both education and upbringing. Due to considerations of space I will not discuss this topic any further here (readers of the Danish language can consult Tønnesvang (2002), who develops a theory of "Bildung" which includes a modified version of the bipolar self).

moral arguments. Regarding the topic of self-realisation, the point is merely that the bipolar thinker will be aware of, how the potential absence of ideals and ideal-seeking behaviour might be connected with a distorted or blocked development, and also that a Nietzschean denial of this idealising element in human existence will result in an amputated understanding of, what the fundamental structure of self-realisation is.⁵

In addition to the point that the bipolarist would reject Nietzsche's position as one-sided in its self-relating focus, he would also, as suggested, note that we could actually use the concept of the bipolar self to dissolve the fundamental contradiction between Freud's id and his superego. Whilst for Freud, id and superego were in fact inextricably in conflict with each other, and the objective of the psychoanalytical endeavour was to transform the miserable hysteria of clients into controlled dissatisfaction, the bipolar thinker notes that "There can be a productive and joyous dialectical development between the grandiose and idealized poles of the self, with the ideal luring ambitious energy into more complex and mature forms of attainment" (Riker, 1996, p. 73).

The Other-Relating Pole

With respect to the function of ideals in human development, the bipolar thinker would agree with the Socratic-Platonic tradition that the individual must be understood as a participator in larger meaning and value structures that relates to his common humanity and deep sense of "we-ness". In a bipolar framework, this will be considered as manifestations of man's communion-side and like Socrates, the logic will be that it is through identification with universal dimensions (in my terms understood as something larger than the self) and by acting with commitment to human communality that an individual gains access to experiencing the sort of life meaning and well-being, which transcends the throbbing desire that characteristically come and go (Riker, 1996, p. 72).

Furthermore, the bipolar thinker would agree with Socrates that such fundamental attitude would be a necessary component in the

⁵Recently Katzenelson (2004) has argued that Nietzsche's thesis of willpower is actually misunderstood, if seen as an expression of selfish self-assertion. He maintains that the thesis concerns man's "search for creative development of the organic life given by nature expanding beyond mere self-sustainability" (p. 80) – i.e. a form of self-realisation, which is not bound to be selfish. Katzenelson could be right, and if this is the case, I will suggest that my criticism of Nietzsche's position is read as a comment on the general perception of Nietzsche's power thesis as a narrow-minded favouring of the individual.

potential overcoming of the fear of death, because the essence of one's deep sense of "we-ness" (i.e. one's humanity), does not die along with the biological organism (Riker, 1996, p. 72). An individual's overcoming his fear of death is connected with his working himself through his narrow-minded, self-relating philosophy of life. The condition hereof is that a self-polarisation will be formed, in which the centre of gravity has moved towards the pole of idealisation as an expression of the life experience of the individual of being connected with a "something more" (James, 1902) outside himself that create a reference point for his life projects. Kohut (1966) termed such an orientation "cosmic narcissism", whereby is meant a mode of being in which we experience our individual existence as comprising a future that outlives the biological existence of the self and thus creates an eternal glimpse of meaning in our daily life activities. The central parameter of whether a person's life is successful or not, is thus for Kohut the psychological survival of the self, and for Socrates it is virtue, with both pointing to the future and not, as in biological life, finishing with the death of the organism (see e.g. Kohut, 1985). For the Sophists as for Nietzsche, death is a violation of the self-relating existential right of the individual – a scandal as could be said with a Sartrean tongue.

In spite of these similarities, there are still bipolar reasons for reservations towards the Socratic-Platonic tradition. First it should be countered that the idealisation pole is merely one component of the self and not its single or most central core. Where Nietzsche is narrow-mindedly self-relating in his thinking, the Socratic-Platonic tradition becomes narrow-mindedly other-relating. Both camps are lacking an adequate basis for understanding how self-realisation is conditioned by both poles of the self being included in a personal integrated style of existence (or "manner") with which the individual directs himself towards life-goals (or "matter") transcending his self-referentiality: "Life is not simply becoming an ideal, for it then loses all of its lusty vitality; nor is it simply desire, for then it would simply be infantile" (Riker, 1996, p. 73). Using the same, albeit reversed, logic as in relation to Nietzsche, it can be counted that it is not individual lust and desire that undermines the co-existential importance of ideals, sociality and morality; it is the lack of accessible selfobjects providing a "good enough" environment in which to create and develop the self. In other words, it is not man's lust and desire *as such* that undermines moral and communality, but confined narcissistic aggression, immature, unbalanced or inflated self-assertion and distorted or insufficiently developed idealisation.

Secondly, with respect to *the concrete psychological meaning* of ideals, one would say that the phenomenological content of the idealisation pole of the self is not an abstract universal ideal, but a personal incarnated containment of the ideal, which as a more specific and sig-

nificant “matter” is intrinsically related to the ways in which the individual asserts his personal “manner” by using his abilities, talents and skills.⁶ One of the problems contained in identifying too strongly and narrow-mindedly with an ideal “in abstractum” – i.e. an ideal which is not seen in relation to the peculiarity and limitations of the individual – is that it creates a sense of guilt that, as a concrete organismic-existential being you *are* not this ideal. Such guilt might result in anxiety, depression, etc., and lead to a life lacking in vitality, which is *not* likely to promote genuine self-realisation. As a minimum, the understanding of the psychology of self-realisation should be based on a bipolar philosophy that takes both sides of the polarity serious.

Vertical Connectedness: Organisational Levels in the Self-Realising Self

Having said so far that the bipolar self can form a basis on which to formulate a psychology of self-realisation-in-connectedness, this does not in itself complete the conceptualisation of the structure of the phenomenon. As mentioned (e.g. Bertelsen, 1996; Riker, 1996; Hagman, 1997; Hansen, 2001), Kohut did not himself develop an articulated theoretical understanding of the mature self and its environmental relationships. At least in his theoretical formulation, it remained unclear to Kohut, how in mature self-selfobject relationships there is a self, which is not primarily preoccupied with gaining nourishments from its surroundings, but is at the same time (or primarily) concerned about how it contributes to the development of these. Furthermore, it remained unclear if and why some ideals are better than others, and what the markers of the ideals of a mature self should be. Whilst it is understandable that a child’s ideals are centred round its own needs, it is to be expected that the ideals of the mature person include other-relating elements. But – as we may ask along with Riker (1996) – how and why should a person give up a narcissistic ideal in favour of a moral? When in fact it turns out that so-called “overt narcissism” may be connected with a high level of self-esteem and happiness (Rose, 2002), and thus may seem to be a parameter for genuine self-realisation.

Organisational-Dynamics and Vertical Self-Connectedness

A theoretical explanation of different degrees of maturity in the self might be developed using an organisational-dynamic framework as in for instance Bertelsen (2005).⁷ In line with Kohut, the self in Bertelsen is understood as a phenomenon of connectedness. On a baseline, he

⁶For a more detailed description of incarnate values, see (Karpatschhof, 1997; 2000; Karpatschhof & Helweg, 2003).

⁷Even though Bertelsen and I, each in our own way, have rewritten and further developed sides of Kohut’s concept of the self, the basic

argues that the minimum condition for the existence of a self is a person's phenomenological sense of being a *someone* who is directed *towards* something/someone in the surroundings and at the same time is being directed *by* this something/someone *towards* which he is directing himself. Further, it is argued that the self is vertically connected with itself in its understanding of itself as the *someone*, who is experiencing itself in (and as) its horizontal connectedness. This vertical self-connectedness is consequently seen to consist of hierarchically ordered levels of existence, with the lower levels constituting the upper levels, and the upper levels organising the lower levels. Organisational-dynamic thinking thus involves a structural/organisational logic, which says that lower and higher levels are mutually conditional elements. Without one, the other does not occur, and neither level can be reduced to the other. The structural aspect refers to the fact that the basic conditions for there being a self at all is the presence of a variety of biological and psychological components that create the foundation for, what a given self with a given constitutional outfit can achieve and experience in its horizontal connectedness. The organisational aspect as a consequence refers to the fact that the self is also characterised by its particular way of relating itself to, organising, and developing the constituent outfits in a more or less integrated whole specific to the individual. It is thus not the neurological outfit as such (e.g. low or high IQ) of an individual, which determines his fate alone, but the relationship between this and the way in which the individual through his connections within his surroundings get the chance to develop different self-organisational strategies.

Whilst with the bipolar self *as such*, we can avoid ending in a horizontal one-sidedness, in which the individual or the sociality is given preference, organisational-dynamic philosophy maintains that it will be similarly untenable to operate with a vertical one-sidedness, since it is indeed the relationship between the constituent basic components of the self and its organisation of these that determine the peculiarity of the self, and neither the constituent, nor the organisational components on their own. Overall, we should locate our understanding of the self in a framework, which involves four core movements:

- in part, there are two movements in a horizontal dimension, which are determined in an inside-out & an outside-in perspective, in which the self directs itself (inside-out) *towards* its environment and is directed (outside-in) *by* sides of its environment;
- in part, there are two movements in a vertical dimension, which are determined in a downwards-up & a upwards-down perspective, where the self (in the downwards-up movement) is deter-

figure is still the bipolar tension arc between reflection and idealisation.

mined by its given constitutional outfit, and (in the upwards-down movement) directs itself towards, organises and develops this outfit within the organisation of a personality in its entirety. The central point of the above is that each of these movements can only be understood within their full meaning and function for the doings and actions of the self, if they are perceived in connection with the other movements. An isolated reflection of *either* the vertical movements *or* the horizontal movements will result in a reductionistic understanding of both the individuality of the self and its relationality, and will thus inevitably also result in a reduced understanding of, what it means to realise oneself as a self.

The Organisational Levels of the Self

Depending on the objective of one's study, different vertical levels of relevance can be identified, and when, as here, we are concerned with the basic structure of self-realisation, I should propose that we follow Bertelsen (2005) in his dividing the self in a first, second and third order respectively. *The first order self* refers to the immediate, non-self-reflecting connectedness, within which the bipolar self-structure as such is created, and through which we are immediately directed towards/by someone or something in the environment. *The second order self* refers to the fact that we from a higher-level position are directed towards/by the way in which, we – with our basic self-structure generally and in specific situations – are directed toward/by our environment. With the second order self, we are in a self-reflecting connectedness, in which we – by use of our own will, effort and creativity – direct ourselves with an open attitude toward the ways, in which we idealise and seek mirroring, recognition and connectedness in the environment in general. Whilst in the first order self (for better or for worse) we seek recognition and idealise in an unreflective manner, in the second order self we are able to reflect upon and relate to the ways in which we are doing this. By way of that it becomes possible to work ourselves through our unsuitable idealising and mirroring-seeking tendencies and make an effort to develop new ways in which to be horizontally connected as part of a gradual development of more mature self-realisation projects. *The third order self* then refers to the fact that from an even higher self-position, we are reflectively directed towards/by that which *as such* is ultimate conditions for life, or (in Bertelsen's words) "that which matters: reflections of an ethical, juridical, social, political, psychological, etc. nature that is ponderings of what matters in life, and how one can involve oneself in deeper and more competent considerations in relation to this" (Bertelsen, 2002, p. 81).

So whilst the second order self is a condition for reflecting on and changing our life contents and value basis, e.g. changing characteristics of a potential deficiency position through therapy, the third order self

will see such reflections as relative in relation to what life and human co-existence *as such* is about. When Taylor talks about the horizons of meaning, they will from the perspective of a third order self include considerations of ultimate human concerns (Emmons, 1999), moral bonds (Bertelsen, 2003) and basic existential questions, which we are confronted with, “because we are aware that we and others like us are alive and that we will die” (Batson et al., 1993, p. 8).

Selfsubjects and Mature Connectedness

Concurrently with the vertical development of the self from a first order position to a second and third order position, development in the selfobject relations of the self will take shape as a development from *selfobject* to *selfsubject* relations. As explained elsewhere (Hansen, 2001, chap. IX; Tønnesvang, 2002a), *selfobject* relations concern the immature relationship of the self with supporting and vitalising others, whilst *selfsubject* relations concern the mature relationship. The common denominator of these immature and mature selfobject relations is that in both areas, the self is nourished, supported and vitalised by these. The difference is that in *selfsubject* relations the self simultaneously understands, accepts and respects the other in his subjective being an independent centre for initiative and needs, whilst in *selfobject* relations the self takes the other for granted as a source of its own self-support – irrespective of whether it concerns the normal relationship of a small child with others or that of a narrow-mindedly self-relating or narcissistically disturbed self.

With an organisational-dynamic conceptualisation of the levels of the self, we can say that *selfobject* and *selfsubject* relations are characteristics of the first and second order self respectively. This emphasizes the fact that the child and the immature person as well as the mature person are in connectedness and need to be part of vitalising and self-supporting relations with others. But at the same time, a distinction is made between the qualitatively different ways of being present in this connectedness, so that in (the immature) first order level, it is a question of *selfobject* relations, whereas in (the more mature) second order level, it is a question of *selfsubject* relations.

In those cases, where, for a variety of reasons, the development of the self goes wrong, and its consolidation and differentiation remain imperfect, the transformation from *selfobject* to *selfsubject* relations will become more or less blocked, and the directedness of the self towards its surroundings will remain asymmetrical, be utilising in an instrumental sense and without any appreciation of the own-being of the self-supporting others, as well as without any appreciation as to how, one can for oneself *be there* for these others. The condition for being there for others in a *selfsubject* mode is to be at the least at a second order organisational level at which the self is able to relate

itself towards its ways of directing itself towards and being directed by these others. This is a necessary precondition, since without such second order reflection, the self will not be able to see and relate itself to, how it actually lives out its needs through others. What this shows is that the relationship that the self is having with itself in the vertical dimension – whether it is in a first or a second order mode – must be of the same qualitative peculiarity, as the relationship it is having with others in the horizontal dimension. This means that the development of the self towards realisation must include the development of horizontal connectedness, in order that this connectedness becomes *selfsubject*-relational rather than *selfobject*-relational in a similar manner to that of a genuine realisation of the self which then inevitably has to include a simultaneous development of the vertical and horizontal connectedness of the self, and thus includes development in the self-relating as well as in the other-relating poles of the self.

If therefore we are to assess the previously mentioned overt narcissists – who according to Rose (2002) have high self-esteem and experience happiness in life – with respect to their potential self-realisation, then in *selfobject*-terminology the criteria would be, whether they are *selfobject*-related or *selfsubject*-related with others in a first or a second order mode respectively. To the extent that overt narcissists – as an expression of their narcissistic disturbance – will turn out as generally being *selfobject*-related with others, they will *not* be considered as being self-realised. Similar reflections can be made in relation to the “happy” hangman, who, in his near relations, seems to connect with others in a *selfsubject* mode, but in his “work” is brutal and evil. Using the logic of this article, such a hangman will never be considered genuinely self-realising, as he does not relate to his victims in the *selfsubject* mode that is characterised by an emphasized understanding of, acceptance of and respect for the humanity and subjective own-being of his victims.

Whether it is necessary to operate with yet another differentiation of *selfobject* relations in order to capture the difference between the second and the third order self, is currently unclear. Perhaps we could imagine a terminology that signals the overcoming of the preoccupation of the self with the existential realisation of its own and of those near to it. Using a slightly complicated term, we could name these forms of relatedness *selfbindingobjects* and *selfbindingrelations*, indicating that the self is nourished and vitalised by including a world-centric regard for the humanity and the co-existence of man (Bertelsen, 2003) in its reflections on and in those actions that involve itself. An example of such mode of being could be Jesus, and in a more earthly sense, Mandela (Karpatschhof, 1997, pp. 229-231), but hardly many among the “happy” consumer chameleons seen today.

Reformulating Maslow's Vertical One-Sidedness

As mentioned in my passages with Maslow, a hierarchical way of thinking is both necessary and appropriate, if we are to understand what self-realisation is about. Realising oneself inevitably involves developing a higher order self-organisational way of being related to oneself and others. As also mentioned, I find Maslow's understanding of hierarchy problematic, as it is pre-determined by the content of the specific needs as criteria for the distinction between lower and higher levels. If, however, we – as suggested in Hansen (2001, chap. XII) – use the explanatory logic contained in an organisational-dynamic framework, it is possible to distinguish between Maslow's deficiency needs and growth needs in a different way than he does, and in a way that includes a consideration for the characteristic peculiarity and function of the needs in the total psychology of the individual. The logic consists in distinguishing between deficiency needs and growth needs on the basis of whether they serve a self-preserving function in a deficiency position in relation to the actual need, or whether they serve a self-developing function in a surplus position in relation to the actual need. With such a distinction, we would use a *qualitative* differentiation criterion in relation to all of Maslow's needs, all of which would thus be able to take on a deficiency or growth function. The theoretical gain from distinguishing between deficiency needs and growth needs on the basis of their *qualitative peculiarity* instead of their *contents*, is that we can still talk about differences between deficiency and growth needs (and there is an important point here), but that we have not for that reason locked ourselves into the idea that self-actualisation cannot, for instance, take place on the basis of a need for love. Against Maslow's actualisation theory it can be argued that if anything, it is through continuous emotional ties with others (i.e. in love) that the individual really meets and sees himself as he is, and that it is through such forms of connectedness, he finds his ultimate potential for individual-relational growth. Using an organisational-dynamic framework, we will then see that that which determines, whether love has the character of growth or of deficiency, is whether it forms part of a first order self-organisation or whether it forms part of a second (or a third) order self-organisation. Whilst love in a second (or third) order self-organisational modus will turn out to be a theme of growth, in a first order self-organisational modus it will manifest itself as a theme of deficiency.

The Persisting Value of Humanistic Psychology

Other than thus positively taking note of Maslow's distinction between deficiency and growth needs, it turns out that with a bipolar and organisational-dynamic conceptualisation of the structure of self-realisation we can see why we do not need to discard all the knowledge of self-realisation and self-actualisation that was formulated with refer-

ence to a philosophy of individuality in the classical humanistic frameworks. And to that there is a point, in as far as Maslow (and like-minded people, e.g. Rogers) captured a central element in self-realisation (one end of the stick, so to speak), when saying that it involves searching inside oneself in order to arrive at the point, where one might know what is the right thing to mean, do and be. It is important not to discard the importance of such knowledge on the basis of an exaggerated and hysterical humanism fright; such as it is seen in diverse areas of today's psychology. On the other hand, one of the central challenges for a theoretical understanding of self-realisation is to make sure that the individual's search process is framed in a philosophy of connectedness according to which an individual's search inside himself becomes an *also*, which involves a *more*, i.e. the connectedness of the individual with other people and things (the other end of the stick). In such a framework, individual self-searching and experiential exercising is thus not something that happens at the detriment of or in necessary contrast to the connectedness within which (and of which) the individual live. Such contrasts *may* be seen as almost real, if for a period of time a person has a need to be "self-centred" and is reading modern self-help literature or is in therapy in an attempt to adjust an already distorted line of development. But such special cases should not be confused with the general premises for the phenomenon of self-realisation (including both ends of the stick), or else they will result in a derailed understanding of the conditions for the existence of man and thus also as a derailed understanding of, what self-realisation basically is.

Figure 1 summarises how self-realisation as a bipolar phenomenon can manifest itself in different forms depending on the different relations between self- and other-relating aspects, characterised as either means or ends. Using the argumentation of this article, only the genuine self-realisation in the bottom right hand corner of the scheme will be a full-toned realisation of the self.

Concluding Remarks: Knowledge versus Beliefs of "The Good Life"

A critical comment to the thesis and argumentation of this article could be that it takes its starting point in a specific theoretical philosophy, maintaining that self-realisation-in-connectedness is the right way to achieve an understanding of what it means to realise oneself as an individuality and that this is "better" than both a one-sided self-relating realisation of one's individual needs and a one-sided other-relating realisation of abstract ideas. One could object that it is a question of "taste", when I maintain that with Taylor, with the bipolar self, and with an organisational-dynamic logic, we are on the "right" track in trying to conceptualise a basic structure from which we can clarify, what self-realisation consists of. Other than the arguments already put

	Self-Relating Aspects as Means	Self-Relating Aspects as Ends
Other-Relating Aspects as Means	<p><i>No Self-Realisation</i></p> <p>Notion of oneself as self-realised is an expression of imagination and/or self-deception – for instance in the form of overt narcissism</p> <p>Two-sided instrumental relationship with oneself and with others</p>	<p><i>Distorted Self-Realisation</i></p> <p>Individual search for true inner core with sociality understood as an effect of the realisation of the inner core</p> <p>Self-realisation as acting out lust and desire with relations understood as means to achieving this</p>
Other-Relating Aspects as Ends	<p><i>Distorted Self-Realisation</i></p> <p>The dedication of virtue: One-sided strivings towards fulfilling the code of an exalted figure or ideal</p> <p>Lack in the individual's ability to be an "ideal" might result in exposed senses of guilt and anxiety</p>	<p><i>Genuine Self-Realisation</i></p> <p>Self-Realisation consisting of self-relating "manner" & other-relating "matter"</p> <p>Bipolar understanding of the individuality-sociality relation as developed in levels of connectedness</p>

Figure 1. Forms of self-realisation determined in relation to their self-relating and other-relating aspects as means and as ends.

forward, this is not the place for me to venture deeper into such objection, but as a final remark it should be mentioned that some of the empirical studies of so-called generativity in the life stories of adults seem to support the argumentation of this article. The phenomenon of generativity was identified by Erikson, as the seventh step in his theory of lifelong development, and is defined by McAdams and de St. Aubin as:

the concern for and commitment to promoting the next generation, through parenting, teaching, mentoring, and generating products and outcomes that aim to benefit youth and foster the development and well-being of individuals and social systems that will outlive the self. (McAdams & de St. Aubin, 1998, p.xx)

McAdams et al. (1997) investigated the importance of a generative orientation in the life stories of 70 well-functioning people. Of the 70 participants, 40 had high scores in two generativity tests,⁸ whilst the

⁸One of these tests was the Loyola Generativity Scale (LGS), which measures differences in the preoccupation with generative aspects. Scores on the LGS correlate positively with measurements of generative actions, generative everyday aspirations and the extent of genera-

remaining 30 had low scores, but otherwise were similar to the first in several important respects (including professional status, level of education, family income, age and sex). It appears from the results of this study that the life stories of high generative adults have *neither* a more optimistic narrative tone *nor* do they contain more positive and less negative emotional experiences than the life stories of less generative adults. Neither was any difference found in their perceiving the associations in their childhood, and the distribution of positive and negative events in their lives as a whole was the same (p. 682).

But a significant difference was found in the way in which high and low generative people typically turn negative and positive life events and experiences respectively into their opposites. It turned out that the high generative adults more so than low generative adults use a so-called “redemption” strategy, i.e. seeing bad experiences and negative life events as an opportunity to work hard to turn these into positive endeavours, resulting in a positive outcome. Low generative adults on the contrary more often used a “contamination” strategy, turning positive experiences into negative. This contamination strategy was almost absent in the high generative adults.

So although the life stories of the two groups were no different in relation to the total amount of positive and negative life events, the ways in which they handled these events were different. The high generative group was better able to *cope* with negative life events than the low generative group, the reason for which, according to McAdams et al., seemed to be that the high generative group was more likely to put their suffering and their life meaning into perspective in relation to their generative commitment to the world outside themselves (p. 688).

To the extent that we consider the ability to find meaning in and turn negative life events into offensive life strategies as a positive quality in the life of the individual, the studies of McAdams et al. seem to confirm the argument that the basic structure of self-realisation is bipolar and that certain values are truly “better” than others. The characteristics of the generative attitude is indeed that by including the self-relating element in serving an other-relating cause, it not only serves the generative cause, but at the same time optimises the ability of the individual to handle the strains of life, and thus gives a positive outcome for both the individual and his environment. Research into generativity thus seems to put us on track of an empirical exposure of parameters for “the good life”, which forms a scientifically supported basis for

tivity topics in autobiographies. The other test used was the Generative Behavior Checklist (GBC) that measures the amount of generative actions each day and that correlates positively with the LGS scores as well as measurements of generative aspirations and autobiographical generativity topics (McAdams et al., 1997, p. 681).

maintaining that these values (including generative-moral values) are more valuable than others.

References

- Bakan, D. (1966). *The duality of human existence: Isolation and communion in western man*. Boston: Beacon.
- Batson, C. D., Schoenrade, P., & Ventis, W. L. (1993). *Religion and the individual: A social-psychological perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bertelsen, P. (1996). General psychological principles in Kohut's self psychology reconsidered from a phenomenological perspective. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 27, 146-173.
- Bertelsen, P. (2002). Realismens begreb om selvet. [A realistic conceptualisation of the self] In Bertelsen, P., Hermansen, M. & Tønnesvang, J. (Eds.). *Vinkler på selvet*. [Perspectives on the self], (pp. 61-95). Aarhus: Klim.
- Bertelsen, P. (2003). Moral, psykologi og den antropologiske grundmodel. [Morality, psychology and the basic anthropological model. *Bulletin fra Forum for Antropologisk Psykologi*, 12, 126-146.
- Bertelsen, P. (2005). *Free will, consciousness, and self: Anthropological perspectives on general psychology*. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Buss, D. M. (1999). *Evolutionary psychology: The new science of mind*. London: Allyn & Bacon.
- Emmons, R. A. (1999). *The psychology of ultimate concerns: Motivation and spirituality in personality*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Hagman, G. (1997). Mature selfobject experience. In A. Goldberg (Ed). *Progress in self psychology (Vol. 13)*, pp. 85-108). New York: The Analytic Press.
- Hansen, J. T. (2001). *Selvet som rettedhed: en teori om noget af dét, der driver og former menneskeliv*. [The Self as directedness: A general psychological conceptualisation of motivational intentionality in human life-striving activities]. Aarhus: Forlaget Klim.
- James, W. (1902). *Varieties of religious experience*. New York: Longmans, Green, and Company.
- Karpatschof, B. (1997). I kødet båret – om de inkarnerede og idealiserede værdier – et moralpsykologisk essay. [Born in flesh: On incarnated and idealised values – a moral psychological essay]. In P. Bertelsen et al. (Eds.). *Erkendelse, stræben, følelse – ti bidrag til almenpsykologien*. [Knowing, striving, feeling – ten contributions to general psychology], (pp. 213-232). Aarhus: Aarhus University Press.

- Karpatschof, B. (2000). Opbygningen af den personlige moral. [The development of personal morality]. In H. Høgh-Olesen (Ed.). *Ånd og natur – ti almenpsykologiske essays*. [Mind and nature – ten general psychological essays], (pp. 263-276). Copenhagen: Dansk Psykologisk Forlag.
- Karpschof, B. & Helweg, E. (2003). En tilknytning hinsides døden – om det sørgende barns kamp for en fortsat tilknytning til en afdød far eller mor. [Attachment beyond death – the mourning child's struggle for a continuous attachment to a dead father or mother]. *Psyke & Logos*, 24 (2), 588-620.
- Katzenelson, B. (2004). *Drivkræfter, følelse og erkendelse*. [Driving, feeling and knowing]. Copenhagen: Hans Reitzels Forlag.
- Kohut, H. (1966). Forms and transformations of narcissism. *Journal of the American Psycho-Analytical Association*, 14, 243-272.
- Kohut, H. (1971). *The analysis of the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Kohut, H. (1977). *The restoration of the self*. New York: International Universities Press.
- Kohut, H. (1979/1996). Four basic concepts in self psychology. In P. Ornstein (Ed.) *The search for the self* (Vol. 4, pp. 447-470). New York: International Universities Press.
- Kohut, H. (1984). *How does analysis cure*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Kohut, H. (1985). *Self psychology and the humanities*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Maslow, A. H. (1968). *Toward a psychology of being* (2nd. ed.). Toronto: D. van Nostrand.
- Maslow, A. H. (1970). *Motivation and personality* (2nd. ed.). New York: Harper & Row.
- McAdams, D. P. (1993). *The Stories we live by: Personal myths and the making of the self*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- McAdams, D. P. (1996). Personality, modernity and the storied self: a contemporary framework for studying persons. *Psychological Inquiry*, 7 (4), 295-321.
- McAdams, D. P., Diamond, A., de St. Aubin, E. & Mansfield, E. (1997). Stories of commitment: The psychosocial construction of generative lives. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 72 (3), 678-694.
- McAdams, D. P. & de St. Aubin, E. (Eds.). (1998). *Generativity and adult development: How and why we care for the next generation*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Riker, J. H. (1996). The philosophical importance of Kohut's bipolar theory of the self. In A. Goldberg (Ed.). *Progress in self psychology* (Vol. 12, pp. 67-83). Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Rogers, C. (1961). *On becoming a person*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

- Rose, P. (2002). The happy and unhappy face of narcissism. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 33, 379-391.
- Strenger, C. (1989). The classic and romantic vision in psychoanalysis. *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 70, 593-609.
- Taylor, C. (1989/2000). *Sources of the self*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Taylor, C. (1991). *The ethics of authenticity*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Tønnesvang, J. (2002). *Selvet i pædagogikken: selvpsykologiens bidrag til en moderne dannespædagogik*. [The self in educational settings: Contributions from self psychology to a modern theory of "Bildung"]. Aarhus: Forlaget Klim.
- Tønnesvang, J. (2002a). Selfobject & selfsubject relationships. In A. Goldberg (Ed.). *Progress in self psychology (Vol. 18)*, pp. 151-168. Hillsdale, NJ: The Analytic Press.
- Tønnesvang J. (2005). Elementer i religiøsitetens psykologik: sentiment, selvobjektfunktionalitet og tilknytningsdimensioner. [Elements in the psycho-logic of religiosity: Sentiments, selfobject functions, and attachments]. *Bulletin fra Forum for Antropologisk Psykologi*, 16, 6-57.

Author Note

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jan Tønnesvang, Department of Psychology, University of Aarhus, Jens Chr. Skous Vej 4, DK-8000 Aarhus C. E-mail: jan@psy.au.dk