Chapter 6

On the Existential/ Subjectivism–Scientific/Objectivism Dialectic in Self Psychology: A View from Evolutionary Biology

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From the very beginning of the history of human ideas, there has been an ongoing debate about the validity of perception and communication. Does what we see—and what we say we see—bear any resemblance to the way the world actually is? If so, how much? In the seventeenth century, Francis Bacon (1620) began a line of thinking that ultimately led to modern science with its objectivist epistemology. His suspicions about humans as accurate observers were pronounced: "Man's sense is falsely asserted to be the standard of things: on the contrary, all the perceptions, both of the senses and the mind, bear reference to man and not to the universe; and the human mind resembles those uneven mirrors which impart their own properties to different objects . . . and distort and disfigure them" (*Novum Organum*, i, 41). Empirical tests become essential when the human mind is considered to be such a source of distortion.

Two and a half centuries later, within a culture completely dominated by the epistemology of Western science, Freud began his training as a

neurologist. It is not surprising that the issue of the accuracy of human perception and communication ultimately became a major psychoanalytic theme. The ego's capacity to accurately know what is real has long been considered a sign of healthy functioning. The "distortions" inherent in transferential relating have often been considered the sine qua non of transference itself: if the patient's experience of the analyst is colored (distorted) by the past, then we are dealing with transference; if not, we are dealing with the "real" relationship (Greenson, 1971). For example, in a recent article describing a psychoanalytic perspective on couples and marital therapy, Finkelstein (1988) quotes Merton Gill (1986, personal communication) as saying: "It may be all very well to speak about a perspectival view and multiple plausible assessments of reality, but it still makes an important difference as to whether the patient's spouse would generally be considered nonsupportive or whether this is a significant 'distortion' on the patient's part as seen by most external observers" (p. 910).

Finkelstein (1988) then notes that:

> Schafer (1985) describes how analysts . . . do not always work within the confines of psychic reality. . . . He says, "The analyst requires some ground to stand on in order to make analytic sense of what is being reported in the analysand's associations." The analyst does this on the basis of "versions of common human situations and cause-effect relations that . . . meet the criteria of narrative good fit" (pp. 544–545). Thus, the analyst shifts in his focus of listening between the psychic reality of the analysand and what the analyst believes is "actually" happening in the patient's life [pp. 910–911].

Finkelstein goes on to argue for the advantages of bringing marital therapy to psychoanalysis: "There is . . . no assurance that an analytic patient will ever provide information that will allow the analyst to unravel some of these 'distortions.' The marital therapist, by contrast, is in a position quickly to observe the 'actual' interactions of his patients and to identify their 'distorted' views of each other as they appear to an external observer" (p. 911).

In reacting to this quite ingrained and widespread psychoanalytic view of the patient's distortions and because of his concern that the analyst, in judging the patient's experience, was leaving the field-defining empathic stance, Kohut (1982, 1984) pleaded with analysts to try to remain within the patient's subjective experience. Others (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987; Stolorow and Atwood, 1989) have attempted to take this position to its extreme. Based on their interpretation of the work of the philosophers Husserl, Heidegger, and Sartre, they propose an existential phenomenology in which reality is seen as a subjective construction (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984). As the world can only be known through our experience of it, reality only exists in subjectivities. The universe has no external, independent existence apart from our subjective experience of it. Thus, the most fundamental ground of reality is subjective experience itself.[1] In attempting to be consistent with this view, they ultimately call for a separation of psychoanalysis from the natural sciences.[2]

[1] Note that both Stolorow and Atwood (personal communications, 1995) appear to have moved from this earlier position and both feel they can embrace Orange's (1995a) moderate realism. In Orange's epistemology, grounded in the pragmatism of the American philosophers Charles Sanders Peirce and William James, certain aspects of experience are made (construed, organized) by the perceiver whereas others are given (brute, unavoidable), "like a forty-mile-an-hour wind that smacks us in the face." In the pragmatic perspectivalism that James developed from Peirce's pragmatism, what is "true" is what *works* for the individual. In James's sense, this "pragmatism" embraces a basic human empiricism compatible with the viewpoint of this chapter; but James goes beyond empirical knowledge of the world. For James, anything that works in making life easier or more enjoyable is reasonable to believe: if religious myths "work," in this sense, for example, then it can be as reasonable to believe in them as an alternative theory that may lead to more accurate predictions. Thus, pragmatic perspectivalism is somewhat compatible with yet ultimately incompatible with the epistemological stance suggested in this paper. Note that this very distinction between James's view and my own (i.e., James's attempt to reconcile science and religion using Peirce's conception of pragmatism) was "the origin of Peirce's decision to disassociate himself from the doctrine by rebaptizing his own view 'pragmaticism,' a term which he described as 'ugly enough to be safe from kidnappers'" (White, 1955, p. 158).

Despite their current willingness to embrace Orange's moderate realism, the earlier work of Atwood and Stolorow laid out the epistemological issue more starkly and, for this chapter, the inconsistencies and problems in their stance are clearer in that work (also see Carveth, 1995). As Orange (1995b) notes, there are numerous statements in the works of Stolorow and Atwood that are quite consistent with the epistemological stance taken in this chapter. But rather than suggest that this means I have misunderstood the intersubjectivists, this is exactly my point: by the very nature of the extreme perspectivalist position they suggest, they end up being inconsistent and continually slip into a more objectivist epistemology. Stolorow (personal communication, 1995) made it clear that he and Atwood are not proposing a general epistemology. For example, he noted that he would not want someone to drive a car using the epistemology they propose for psychoanalysis. But is it possible to have one epistemology for psychoanalysis and another for the rest of one's life? As will be seen, this is a tricky stance that many analysts cannot maintain. Ultimately, I am proposing a single epistemological stance for psychoanalysis (the *introspective* science of complex mental states observed via empathy and introspection), natural science (the *extrospective* sciences), and daily life (common sense and experience).

[2] Atwood and Stolorow (1984) and Stolorow and Atwood (1994) certainly use the term "science" and define psychoanalysis as an interpretive science. However, their "science" is interpretive (hermeneutic) in that they are defining criteria for determining meaning in a single case. Although I find myself agreeing with the criteria they set out for tests of validity (again, meaning in the particular case) and how such tests must by the nature of the process differ from tests in the natural sciences where the subject matter is "external," I think they end up using the word *science* in a totally different manner from what most people understand it to mean. In their conception, because meanings arise in a specific intersubjective field we cannot expect independent verifiability

Recently, Stolorow (1995) lamented this as a misreading of intersubjectivity theory: "None of us claims that objective reality does not exist" (p. xvi). Yet I will not only suggest that such a claim is implied in their writing (also see Carveth, 1995), I will, in a sense, go further and (somewhat paradoxically) suggest that there is nothing outside of subjective experience about which to speak. However, I will end up in a framework that—unlike intersubjectivity theory as it has been developed thus far—is more compatible with natural science (with prediction, causation, and intersubjective verifiability), that can include objectivity, and that actually necessitates some acknowledgment that distortion is an important human, intersubjective phenomenon. At this point, let's just look briefly at the ways in which the challenge to—if not the outright rejection of—objective reality is implied in the work of the intersubjectivists.

by other observers—as in the natural sciences. But the natural sciences don't require *simultaneous* independent verification; the independent observer must simply carry out a similar process in their own setting. Note that the process must be *similar*, not *identical* (exact sameness would be impossible). In fact, verification of scientific theories is often enhanced when a theory can explain a number of similar but not necessarily identical events occurring in similar but not identical contexts. Contrast Stolorow and Atwood's (1994) distinction between psychoanalysis and the natural sciences—they claim that only in the latter do we find the "doctrine of replication"—to Kohut's (1977, p. 141; 1980, p. 515) plea to analysts to suspend their disbelief and test the ideas contained within self psychology with their own patients—to see for themselves if replication is possible (in similar but not identical situations).

In addition, Stolorow and Atwood (1994) and Atwoood and Stolorow (1984) call for a psychoanalytic phenomenology that is based on structuralism, which they contrast with causal analysis: "causal thinking leads to the use of *prediction* as a criterion for assessing the adequacy of an explanation" (p. 23). Without prediction, why would anyone go to an analyst? There is implicit, causal/predictive thinking involved, that is, the immersion in an analytic relationship (cause) will lead to a productive change (prediction). Testing causes (the different analytic interventions prescribed by self psychology) and examining their outcome (how well they lead to the predicted result) is exactly what Kohut called for: a test of the theory of self psychology by application and observation to assess whether it worked. We all do this all the time; it is the way we learn what works and what doesn't work clinically. By rejecting the utility of the concepts of causation and prediction, Stolorow and Atwood have parted with many self psychologists who believe that ultimately the criteria of natural science (e.g., causation, prediction, and independent verification) can be applied to psychoanalysis to test ideas and clinical interventions. This is generally accepted even though few analysts find that such tests are most meaningful in controlled, statistical studies. Rather, we function as scientists—using causation, prediction, and independent verification to determine the value of our ideas (validity)—when we apply *Stolorow and Atwood's* own criteria for determining validity in each independent clinical interaction. We can function as "scientists" (as the term is generally understood) on *a case by case basis* while simultaneously believing that a statistical analysis of controlled studies of behavior (i.e., academic psychology's methodology as contrasted with the psychoanalytic method) comes as close to capturing the essence of the essential subjective experience of being human as a chemical analysis of pigments comes to capturing the experience that one may have when viewing a great painting (see Kohut, 1977).

In their attempt to explicate their position on this issue, Stolorow and Atwood (1992) claim that "we encounter a reification . . . involving the experience of the world as real and existing separately from the self. What psychological purpose can be ascribed to the reifying of the experience that there is an enduring world distinct from the self?" (p. 11).[3] As Atwood and Stolorow (1984) note, the philosophical underpinnings of such notions can be found in Husserl's phenomenology: "Whereas traditional sciences take the existence of the world for granted as a 'pregiven' reality, transcendental phenomenology suspends or 'brackets' assumptions regarding the nature of objective reality . . . [using] a mental operation by which the phenomenologist frees himself from presuppositions and moves into a perspective from which what had previously been taken as real presents itself purely as a field of appearances" (p. 9). In Husserl's terms, this enables the philosopher to break free from the strongest and most universal internal bondage: the pregivenness of the world.

Such statements certainly seem to me (despite Stolorow's disclaimer) to challenge the notion that a reality separate from the self exists, that there is "an enduring world distinct from the self" to use his terms. Furthermore, I believe that such notions are related to the intersubjectivists' attempt to take the definition of the psychoanalytic field as limited by empathy and introspection and "push to its limits Kohut's (1959) proposition" (Stolorow et al., 1987, p. 5). In this push, they reject any use within psychoanalytic investigation by the analyst of knowledge gained from extrospective modes of data gathering. In contrast, following Wolf (1983), Shane and Shane (1986), and Basch (1986)—all of whose work the intersubjectivists specifically reject in this regard—I hope to show how such knowledge can, at times, aid the analyst in maintaining and even deepening the empathic stance (also see Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). It is in the rejection of any role for extrospective knowledge and objectivity (within psychoanalytic investigation) that the intersubjectivists reveal a tendency toward an extreme relativistic stance in which Stolorow (1995) can claim that "the concepts of objectivity and distor-

[3] Unfortunately (because it makes the argument more complex as the following was probably formulated to avoid the very criticism being made), Stolorow and Atwood go on to speak of a subjective *sense* of a reality separate from the self, a sense of reality that is sustained by the intersubjective field. This becomes reified when the deep insecurities of modern life (psychological aloneness) make it too frightening for a person to see that his or her sense of reality is being sustained by a particular intersubjective field. The contradictions in this attempt to acknowledge a *sense* of reality while maintaining an extreme subjectivist view are taken up in footnote number 21 to a following discussion of psychosis and delusions.

tion have no place within the theoretical lexicon of psychoanalysis" (p. xvi).

Although Atwood and Stolorow (1984) are careful not to fall into the extremes of existential phenomenology,[4] there appears to be a tendency throughout their work to use such concepts to challenge *any* notion of the analyst's "objectivity"; certainly they create a taboo against holding *any* notion of patients' "distortions." Although I am in wholehearted agreement with their *aim*—the prevention of the elevation of the analyst's reality to a position of dominance to which the patient must acquiesce—this chapter explores the possibility that there may be better *methods* to guard against the abuses that concern the intersubjectivists (a concern shared by almost all self psychologists), and that such methods may actually deepen our understanding of intersubjective experience. The view I will be developing is actually highly consistent with existential phenomenology[5] while simultaneously being far more compatible with natural science.

Science has been based on the notion that there is something more objectively real than subjective experience and that the true nature of the world can be more closely approximated through careful observation, data accumulation, and theory development. Such a position takes the material world as given and assumes that we can approach a more accurate representation of an a priori (i.e., existing prior to our perception of it, or "pregiven") material world through observation, experimentation, and theory development. Despite the many critiques of objectivist science—especially as it is used by psychology—as an anachronism that has been overthrown by the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, the theory of relativity, chaos theory, and postmodernist critiques of scientific objectivity, it is clear that the notion of a reality existing independent of biased, subjective observation—a reality that can only be approximated by careful repeated observation—still holds sway as the underlying philosophical paradigm for science.[6]

[4] For example they recognize that Husserl's radical autonomy (of the transcendental ego) from the world of appearances has solipsistic contradictions, and they see Sartre's radical notions of freedom in which consciousness is not determined by anything other than itself as incompatible with both considerable human experience and with our understanding that even the experience of freedom has genetic origins the vicissitudes of which affect its development.

[5] It is actually *more* consistent with existential phenomenology as it much more fully (but not completely) embraces Husserl's, Heidegger's, and Sartre's concerns about how others can define oneself and alienate one from oneself. Their struggle with interpersonal conflict has to be removed before the intersubjectivists can make use of their notions of how the world of experience is created by the experiencer (see Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992).

[6] Consider, for example, Sucharov (1992) and Holt (1989). I believe that Sucharov's attempt to apply the uncertainty principle to self psychology—which leads to his call to make permanent Kohut's temporary expedient of adopting a complementarity approach to psychoanalysis—is a misapplication of an extremely experience-distant theory to the science of complex mental states that can only be known through vicarious introspection (this is examined further in footnote 17). In contrast, consider Holt's analysis in which he describes a process of giving up naive realism for relativism and then ultimately replacing that by critical realism. Naive realism is the belief that the observer does not affect the observed. Relativism is the belief that there is no reality outside of subjective observation. And critical realism is the awareness that beyond numerous relativistic perspectives—and the inevitable effects of the observer on the observed—there exists a reality that can be transformed by certain rules to yield the different perspectives. Far from saying that everything is relative, Einstein's theory of relativity provided the transformational rules that allow us to view the essence of the universe as *invariant* but show how each observer will see a different picture! Holt's analysis and conceptualization of critical realism (as I understand it) is quite close to the viewpoint presented in this chapter.

AN EVOLUTIONARY VIEW OF THE EMPATHIC STANCE

Although Kohut was unable to follow the intersubjectivists into their separation of psychoanalysis from the *Zeitgeist* of science (see Kohut, 1980), I will argue that it is precisely this *rejection of the objectivist view* that enables the intersubjectivists to maintain a stance of exquisitely empathic inquiry. It should become clearer as we proceed that the rejection of objectivity helps the analyst maintain consistent empathy because the empathic stance is not a simple technical maneuver; rather, it is a profoundly *unnatural* stance (Kriegman and Slavin, 1990; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). Whereas *empathy* is entirely natural, a consistent, unremitting empathic *stance* (or *sustained* empathic inquiry) vis-à-vis another's subjective experience cannot be found in the natural world—not even in the often idyllically pictured mother–infant relationship. As evolved animals, humans—like all other living creatures—have been designed (shaped) by evolution (natural selection) to maximize their success. Though parental success overlaps greatly with the success of their children, a parent's interests are never exactly the same as the interests of *one* child (Trivers, 1974). Nowhere in nature will you find an organism that generally gives up its own interests and adopts those of another. As has been argued (Kriegman and Slavin, 1990; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992), conflicts of interest are omnipresent. This "evolutionary" perspective is not a reversion to the dog-eat-dog, Hobbesian, or classical Freudian views. The evolutionary perspective supports innate, mutualistic motivations just as well as it does selfish ones (Kriegman, 1988, 1990).

However, it is important to acknowledge that, even in the analytic setting, conflict is always present. No analyst can achieve a consistent

empathic immersion in another's experience.[7] The design of our psyche mitigates against it. Even a largely consistent empathic stance is very hard to achieve. In a recent discussion of Evelyne Schwaber's persistent struggle to come to share her patient's point of view, Lawrence Friedman (1992) states:

> Dr. Schwaber shows us something that we might not see as clearly in Kohut: it is not just empathy that is powerful, but the wish and effort to empathize. Dr. Schwaber puts the spotlight on what is in the shadow of Kohut's theory: the negative aspect of empathizing is as important as the positive; the empathizer's willingness to give up his own investment. . . . The analyst is frustrating her own natural..thinking style in order to . . . come close to the patient. Recognizing the magnitude of the sacrifice, the patient can probably feel the analyst's urge toward closeness almost physically. Ordinarily, only an unusually dedicated love would produce such a self-sacrificing devotion. . . . Most analysts want to know their patients well. But they are not all equally willing to discomfort themselves in the process, and not all theories encourage such discomfort.

I suggest that Friedman has accurately captured some of the enormous meaning hidden within the struggle to maintain an empathic stance and that Kohut and the self psychologists have, indeed, left the meaning of this struggle in the shadows. That is, for many self psychologists, the empathic stance is largely a technical maneuver. In self-psychological clinical discussions, the failure to maintain an empathic stance is almost always attributed to some unanalyzed aspect of the analyst's pathological narcissism.[8] A full appreciation of the enormous cost to anyone of maintaining an empathic stance—and thus the reason for many empathic failures—is largely absent from self psychology.[9]

[7] Anna Ornstein (personal communication, 1994) argues that we must remember that empathy is value neutral and thus there is no need to see a conflict with one's own self-interest when one maintains an empathic stance: the empathizer can be acting out of self-interest and not in the interests of the one whose experience is being empathically understood. However, this is not *therapeutic* use of empathy. In the clinical setting, we find empathy used for the *patient's* interests to be part of the curative process. Empathy aimed at understanding the patient in the pursuit of the *therapist's* interests is not only not therapeutic, it is often unethical and destructive. It is the persistent employment of clinically useful empathy—an unremitting empathic stance used almost solely for the best interests of the other—that is unnatural.

Furthermore, there are numerous moments in analysis—possibly more than those moments in which this is not so—in which the natural inclination of the analyst's mind will be to take an entirely unempathic stance that does not attempt to see the patient as subject (see P. Ornstein's [1979] definition of the empathic stance) and rather sees the patient as object, or in which the analyst is pursuing thoughts related to himself or herself and is relatively unaware of the patient. Although some of these moments may be productively understood as countertransference reactions, frequently the analyst will naturally be pulled away from an empathic stance in the pursuit of thoughts unrelated or even inimical to the patient: we therapists have our own problems, interests, and agendas and we simply do not stop thinking about them when the patient enters the consulting room. The need to pull oneself out of such moments to reenter the clinically useful empathic stance (i.e., the empathic stance that is being used for the pursuit of the patient's interests) is a struggle. This will be discussed further as we look at Friedman's (1992) response to Schwaber's attempts to maintain a viewpoint entirely within the patient's subjectivity.

THE INTERSUBJECTIVIST SOLUTION TO THE "PROBLEM OF EMPATHY"

In their struggle to remain true to their patient's experience and in their determination not to slip into confrontations that elevate the therapist's "reality"—often, as they have demonstrated, at the cost of the patient's well-being—the intersubjectivists appear to turn to existential phenome-

[8] Though more recent writings (e.g., Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) acknowledge the *inherent* difficulty in maintaining an empathic stance, they do not appear to identify the source of this difficulty. Without the notion of inherent *conflict* between individuals, they have no source for the fact that "seeing himself and the world consistently through the eyes of another can pose serious threats to the analyst's personal reality and sense of self" (p. 93). Why is adopting another's view so difficult? Why is it so threatening? Though their clinical discussions (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) now acknowledge how a particular patient's ways of organizing the world can be problematic for a specific analyst with needs and vulnerabilities threatened by such organizing principles (i.e., they are emphasizing the complex interplay between the two parties), there still is a sense that an analyst whose vulnerabilities have been sufficiently analyzed will not have such a conflict. There is no conception of *inherent conflict* between individuals with a concomitant *built-in tendency* on the part of all parties to hold to one's own views and protect them from the influence of others—a conception that can be readily found in the phenomenological and existential authors that they use as their philosophical foundation *only after they remove* this inherent conflict between people (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984). Thus, the *inherency* and *inevitability* of conflict in the analytic setting is given no foundation despite an attempt to acknowledge some difficulty in maintaining an empathic stance.

[9] Anna Ornstein (personal communication, 1994) claims that she and Paul Ornstein have indeed struggled with and described some of the difficulty in maintaining an empathic stance. She says that one must first differentiate the *developmentally* naturally mutualistic relationship between mother and child and the *clinical* situation in which an individual who has been traumatized is trying to find an empathic resonance. It is far more difficult to empathically "hold" a traumatized child who is now an adult than it is to hold an infant. However, as important as this distinction may be—and I believe it does indeed account for some of the most difficult problems in attaining an empathic tie with many patients—it still does not address the inevitable conflict in human relations that is not based on pathology (prior trauma). Even in good-enough parenting relationships, there is significant conflict based on inherently divergent aims between parent and child (Trivers, 1974) that exist prior to traumatic empathic failure. In fact, much, if not most, traumatic empathic failure—which can have exactly the effect that Anna Ornstein describes—may have its roots in inherent conflicts of interest that exist prior to empathic failure (see Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). It is this inherent conflict—that, despite enormous overlapping interests, there are also quite problematic (conflict-causing), inherently divergent aims separating parent and child—that has been missing from self psychology.

nal philosophy. Their philosophical solution works like this: If in our analytic work we utilize an epistemology in which there is no world existing separately from the self (or from subjectivity), then we are simply dealing with the intersection of subjectivities creating an intersubjective field in which the analysand's subjectivity must be granted the same epistemological validity as the analyst's subjectivity, which includes the analyst's psychoanalytic theory and interpretive understanding. These two subjectivities are merely two variations of existential phenomenal constructions of reality. No more "objective" reality exists against which one can compare these two constructions and therefore neither is to be given higher epistemological status, for neither can be considered more objective than the other. Neither can appeal to science, psychological theory, prior experience, or any other ground to claim that their views, conceptions, and perceptions have any claim to "accuracy"; neither can claim that the other's view is "distorted" (see Stolorow, 1995, p. xvi).

This stance eliminates the ground necessary for many clinical confrontations—most of which are, in fact, of dubious value and often are quite harmful—and it provides a framework for a far-reaching empathic acceptance of the patient's subjective experience. In this view, problematic conflict results from the failure of the therapist to decenter from his or her reality to join with the patient on the meeting ground created in the intersubjective field. In clinical discussions, the failure to sufficiently decenter is almost always laid at the door of the therapist's pathology.

Some illustrations may enable me to elaborate this position to clarify some of my terms and the point of view being critiqued. As I noted, the view I am taking in this chapter actually embraces much of the essence of subjectivist, existential phenomenology. However, it will also become clear that there are crucial differences between an approach that leads to rejection of a scientific worldview (the intersubjectivist position), and the subjectivist stance I utilize that can incorporate scientific empiricism along with its related concepts of objectivity, validity, distortion, causation, prediction, and intersubjective verifiability. In this latter (more moderate) subjectivist stance, we can retain a conception of an objective reality that is part of each person's subjective experience (see Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) while simultaneously it is subjectively known that reality exists in some form that is independent of subjective experience (see Holt, 1989, and footnote 6).

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE EXISTENTIAL, SUBJECTIVIST PERSPECTIVE

It appears quite correct to say that the only world that we can know to exist is the world of our experience. What—if anything—exists outside of our experience can only be described metaphorically and can never be known (see also Kohut, 1983, p. 391). In a sense, this can be taken to indicate that psychic reality is the only reality; internal representations are "more real" (are the *actual* content of experience) than the hypothetical "real objects" (that can never be experienced and are *assumed* to exist).[10] For example, if I were to hold up a red rose, we would all

[10] What is also fascinating is the degree to which those who created the dominant, Western, empirical system of knowledge shared this view of the limits of knowledge (Kors, 1993). Empiricism—scientific testing of ideas about the world—is often incorrectly placed in opposition to subjectivism, the belief that the only knowable world is the world of subjective experience. However, for those individuals most responsible for taking up the mantle of Bacon's call for an inductive science and for bringing the empirical/scientific method to a position of prominence in Western thought (Locke, Berkeley, and Hume), there was no opposition between empiricism and the subjectivist limitation of knowledge. For the British empiricists (and Voltaire following Locke), there is nothing knowable outside of human experience. All we can talk about is what we experience and how different aspects of our experience relate to one another. Our knowledge of the world is absolutely bounded by what we can experience; there are no exceptions. (Experience is defined as being *both* sense impressions and mental reflection—the experience of mind operating—upon those impressions; thus abstract ideas can be part of knowledge.) Yet, rather than lead the empiricists to eschew notions of objectivity, this very notion led them to emphasize the importance of carefully observing, comparing, analyzing, and measuring the *data* of *subjective* experience along with our subjective *ideas* about how our world of experiences is structured. An ultimate reality, the world beyond experience that gives rise to experiences, was assumed by Locke to exist but—by the very nature of the experiential/subjectivist limits on what can be known—we can have no knowledge of its nature other than our experiences. Locke was quite emphatic: All we can say about such ultimate reality is "I don't know." Bishop Berkeley believed that true religion gives us some knowledge of the ultimate (external) reality that gives rise to our internal experiences; the external reality must be the mind of God in which all that is exists. Hume went further then either Locke or Berkeley. In Hume's skepticism, since all we can know are our experiences, what exists beyond them (what "gives rise" to them) is completely unintelligible. For Hume, it is meaningless to talk about that of which we can have no knowledge whatsoever. Meaningless statements are best left unsaid. For many reasons beyond the scope of this chapter, I believe that a revised and updated version of Locke's position is most consistent with both common sense and modern science: our experiences arise through our interactions with something not directly knowable that exists beyond our experience.

Using an empiricist epistemology, we can speak about the content of our subjective experiences and our expectations for subjective experience in the future with a higher or lesser degree of certainty depending on our knowledge, but even here we can only talk probabilistically—future experience can disconfirm or modify what we thought we knew. This is consistent with the view taken in this chapter, which embraces the subjectivist notion that the only world we can know (i.e., speak meaningfully about) is the world of subjective experience. However, the view being presented here fully embraces scientific empiricism as essential to the accumulation of knowledge about the world of our experience. Without trying to squeeze human experience into the methods of academic psychology (i.e., attempting to strictly apply numerical measurement to our observations), the scientific method can be applied to psychoanalysis on a case-by-case basis (also see footnote 2). It is my understanding that Kohut was making a call for this type of *empirical* observation and

agree that it is red. That is, we all would use the word *red* to refer to the sensation of color that we experience when we look at it. But we know that human nervous systems vary. It is quite likely that some people may have the experience that another may know as "red-orange," "orange," or even—if they are color blind—what another may experience as "green" when they look at the rose. But, because we all call the rose "red" whenever we *experience* that particular hue (that particular wavelength of light), we all agree that the rose is red. But where and what is the "red"? Is it in the rose? It would seem that the redness of the rose—and by logical extension, all its other features—must be *a subjectively created experience existing in the mind of the beholder* (see Basch, 1988).

This is an essentially phenomenological subjectivist view in which reality is, in fact, a creation of the psyche; a subjective experiential construction of reality is all we can know to exist. A cogent description of this existential subjectivist position was provided by Watts (1966) who also proposed some insights into the resistance to its acceptance. Watts examined the phenomenon we call a rainbow. A rainbow requires three elements for it to exist: the sun, moisture in the atmosphere, and an observer. All three must be present and they must be in a certain angular relationship for the rainbow to be manifested.

> Diaphanous as it may be, a rainbow is no subjective hallucination. It can be verified by any number of observers, though each will see it in a slightly different position. . . . The point is, then, that an observer in the proper position is as necessary for the manifestation of a rainbow as the other two components, the sun and the moisture. Of course, one could say that *if* the sun and a body of moisture were in the right relationship, say, over the ocean, any observer on a ship that sailed into line with them *would* see a rainbow. But one could also say that if an observer and the sun were correctly aligned there would be a rainbow *if* there were moisture in the air! [p. 92].

testing of his theory when he asked analysts to try out his ideas and see if *their* experience in the analytic setting did or did not fit with his self-psychological formulations.

Note that empiricism—with the erroneously associated notion that in empiricist perspectives the perceiver must be considered a passive spectator—has also been placed in opposition to constructivism in which the perceiver actively constructs the experience of the world (Rabin, 1995). Contrast this view of the supposed passivity of perception in empiricist epistemology with Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* in which the same empiricist limits on what an be known are fully integrated with the notion that the human mind *structures* experience according to certain human perceptual characteristics. The *empiricist* limits on knowledge are fully consistent with (and the call for empirically grounded inductive science is significantly based upon) the notion that we *construct*, color, and shape what we experience (see the quote from Francis Bacon at the beginning of this chapter).

Somehow we feel that, if we have sun and moisture over the ocean *without an observer*, the rainbow still exists. But if we have the observer and sun both within a potentially proper, rainbow producing angular relationship *without moisture in the air* then there is no rainbow. In this latter condition the elimination of

> a good, solid "external reality," seems to make it an indisputable fact that, under such conditions, there is no rainbow. The reason is that it supports our . . . mythology to assert that things exist on their own, whether there is an observer or not. It supports the fantasy that man is not really involved in the world, that he makes no real difference to it, and that he can observe reality . . . without [influencing or creating] it . . .
>
> Perhaps we can accept this reasoning without too much struggle when it concerns things like rainbows . . . whose reality status was never too high [to begin with]. But what if it dawns on us that our perception of rocks, mountains and stars is a situation of just the same kind? . . . We [are] simply . . . saying only that creatures with brains are an *integral* feature of the pattern which also includes the solid earth and the stars, and that without this integral feature . . . the whole cosmos would be as unmanifested as a rainbow without droplets in the sky, or without an observer. [This notion] makes us feel insecure because it unsettles a familiar image of the world in which rocks, above all, are symbols of hard, unshakable reality, and the Eternal Rock a metaphor for God himself. [This] mythology . . . had reduced man to an utterly unimportant little germ in an unimaginably vast and enduring universe. It is just too much of a shock, too fast a switch, to recognize that this little germ with its fabulous brain is evoking the whole thing, including the nebulae millions of light-years away [pp. 92–93].

THE LIMITS OF EXISTENTIAL SUBJECTIVISM

Such an existentialist, subjectivist view does not force us to the absurd conclusion that before there were life forms there was no universe. The point is that we know there is a universe consisting of atoms, protons, electrons, electromagnetic forces, and so on. But these are only metaphors we use to enable our psyches to have some intuitive sense of the essence of the universe that is *not knowable*, that lies beyond experience, for even the greatest scientists cannot begin to say what the underlying essence is of the phenomena we refer to with words such as protons, quarks, neutrons, atoms, photons, the strong and the weak nuclear forces.[11] Although we use *models* in which the underlying fabric

[11] Gleick (1992) notes how modern physicists are increasingly giving up "visualization." Earlier physical models were based on metaphorical models we could sense (see) in our minds as they have counterparts in the real world (e.g., the model of an atom with little ball electrons rapidly circling a core, each electron at a different energy level). Such models have given way to ones in

of the universe is composed of these basic particles, forces, and arrangements of matter, all we can actually know is the *human* experience that comes into being (is known) when the human nervous system interacts with the unknown essence of the world, an unknown essence that even skeptical scientists take on "faith" to exist; for what scientist would argue against the notion that something not knowable exists, something that we are merely struggling to envision using metaphors, models, or hypothetical constructs like protons, electrons, atoms, and so on.

This view supports aspects of existential subjectivism, but it simultaneously suggests the existence of *something* beyond experience, even if that something can never be directly experienced and can only be described metaphorically or with mathematical scientific models. Although one may embrace even extreme subjectivism as containing profound truths, it is clear that something exists beyond our subjectivities.

There is a story of an ant on a leaf that was being drawn underwater by a whirlpool. "Help," cried the ant, "the world is drowning." Maybe so, if we are referring to the ant's subjective experience of the world. But clearly there is something that goes on existing beyond our deaths. The ant's narcissistic grandiosity is echoed by our own horror and essential incomprehension of death. Yet we know that the world does not disappear when we go to sleep, enter unconsciousness, or die. It is true that the only world we can know is the world of subjective experience, but we must simultaneously embrace the notion of *something* (even if it

which, for example, an electron is not in any one position but simultaneously in all positions possible at different levels of probability! What can that mean? What can that refer to in our experience? It works in the sense that plugging the probabilities into the equations yields better predictions. But anyone who has read Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* quickly gets the sense that we are talking about fundamentally incomprehensible (i.e., unvisualizable) phenomena. His (1988) description of modern physics is replete with notions as unintelligible as the following:

> In this approach a particle does not have just a single history, as it would in classical theory. Instead, it is supposed to follow every possible path in space-time, and with each of these histories there are associated a couple of numbers. . . . The probability that the particle passes through some particular point is found by adding. . . . When one actually tries to perform these sums, however, one runs into severe technical problems. The only way around these is the following peculiar prescription: One must add up the waves for particle histories that are not in the "real" time that you and I experience but take place in what is called imaginary time. Imaginary time . . . is in fact a well-defined mathematical concept. . . . That is to say, for the purposes of the calculation one must measure time using imaginary numbers, rather than real ones. This has an interesting effect on space-time: the distinction between time and space disappears completely [p. 134].

is not directly knowable) that exists beyond experience—a world that does exist *separate from the self*. Further, the evolutionary biological perspective in suggesting an intuitive, innate knowledge of the existence of an "objective" reality that stands apart from subjective experience poses a profound challenge to the existential phenomenalist position.

SUBJECTIVITY AND OBJECTIVITY FROM AN EVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

Both altruistic and selfish motives are essential for maximizing one's inclusive fitness, but from the evolutionary perspective each individual is trying to influence others in a manner that benefits the individual's own unique, inclusive fitness (Slavin 1985, 1990; Kriegman and Slavin, 1989; Slavin and Kriegman, 1990, 1992). Maximizing inclusive fitness is the only goal underlying all life forms, structures, motivations, and behavioral tendencies.[12]

Because the self-interest of two individuals is never the same, conflict—indeed, problem-causing conflict—is an inherent feature of the relational world. As such, subjective views of the world will also be in inherent conflict (Slavin and Kriegman, 1992, 1996). In this perspective, subjectivities are not attempts to form accurate views of the world. Rather, subjective worldviews are biased attempts to formulate a sense of reality (a sense of what is real) that is most consistent with our own personal interests, agendas, and goals. To a significant degree, an individual's goals are furthered by *accurate* perception that enables effective action. But there are also significant ways in which *distorted* (biased) perception can be highly adaptive. Consider one common example that is striking in the contrast between Freud and Kohut. Freud (1914) described some of the distortions inherent in parents' attitudes toward their children:

> Overvaluation . . . dominates, as we all know, their emotional attitude. Thus they are under a compulsion to ascribe every perfection to the child—which sober observation would find no occasion to do—and to conceal and forget all his shortcomings. (Incidentally, the denial of sexuality in children is connected with this.) . . . Illness, death, renunciation of enjoyment, restrictions on his own will, shall not touch him; the laws of nature and of society shall be abrogated in his favour; he shall once more really be the centre and core of creation—"His Majesty the Baby," as we once fancied ourselves . . . Parental love, which is so moving and at bottom so childish, is nothing but the parents' narcissism born again [p. 91].

[12] The limitations and criticisms of this adaptationist perspective (e.g., Gould, 1980), specifically in regard to psychoanalysis, are discussed elsewhere (Kriegman and Slavin, 1989; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992).

Kohut, in contrast, does not question the fact that parents distort, but completely reverses the pejorative tone found in Freud. The distortions are adaptive and healthy, or in Kohut's term, "normal" (see Kriegman, 1988, 1990). Consider his discussion (1984) of overstimulation by doting parents and

> the functionally analogous overvaluation of analysands by their analysts. We have in general been taught to look upon these attitudes as misguided, as manifestations of the fact that our sober judgment has been led astray by our emotions. And analysts in particular have interpreted their tendency to think more highly of their patients . . . than others who know them . . . as variants of countertransference . . . that must be mastered and eventually dissolved by self-analysis . . . into the dynamics . . . of such distorted judgments. . . . [H]owever, there is another dimension to this attitude that pertains to both parents . . . and analysts. . . . [T]his overvaluating attitude . . . is "normal" [in] that it expresses the fact that, as parents and therapists, we are indeed functioning in accordance with our design and that an analyst who consciously eradicates this attitude . . . is . . . misguided [p. 190].

Distortions, even loving ones such as these that, as Kohut suggests, are necessary for healthy development often lead to conflict between individuals. I remember one initially funny interaction between two otherwise quite sophisticated and level-headed colleagues who got into an increasingly serious argument as to whose one-and-a-half-year-old daughter was more beautiful.

Worldviews, beliefs, and overall subjectivities are designed to enhance the inclusive fitness of those holding such views. In this perspective—completely independent from whatever additional problems are introduced by narcissistic pathology—subjectivities inevitably clash. Communication, then, is not an attempt merely to impart information. In a biased relational world, we have *competing* subjectivities. It is not a matter of indifference what the subjective experience of another is to each individual. People distort, deceive, and self-deceive. Unlike the tendency in self psychology to see such biased perception and deception as a result of empathic failure, I believe it has been shown that such tendencies toward distortion and deception operate without empathic failure and may, in fact, generate problematic empathic failures rather than simply result from them (Kriegman and Slavin, 1990; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). In fact, deception and the ability to counter deception by more accurate perception are major features of the biological world. If humans, like all existing organisms, have evolved to maximize their interests, then we must consider the possibility that biased perception, deception, and self-deception may be working to promote those interests.

As an important aside, note that in this view of distortion and biased perception, I am not retreating to the view shared by ego psychologists, Kleinian object relations theorists, and some interpersonalists—that the *therapist* has a clearer view of reality than the patient, who distorts. Rather, although we can acknowledge that the patient's view of reality may be less self-reflective owing to a lack of prior analytic experience, both the therapist's and the patient's views of reality are constantly colored by an innate tendency to form perceptions biased toward one's own interests. Furthermore, in addition to this *adaptive* tendency to engage in biased perception (on the part of *both* patient and analyst), because the psyche is a self-enhancing, fitness-optimizing "organ," the *patient* is almost certain to have more direct access to signals and affects representing the patient's true interests than the therapist is—even though the therapist may have ideas and insights that at times can help to illuminate the patient's interests better than the patient's conscious, verbalized thoughts. Thus, in the view I am presenting of inherent bias and distortion—in *contrast* to more classical views—the patient is more likely to accurately sense his or her own self-interest, true aims, goals, and objectives. This evolutionary, adaptive view resonates strongly with Kohut's (1984) oft-quoted statement: "that many times when I believed I was right and my patients were wrong, it turned out . . . that *my* rightness was superficial whereas *their* rightness was profound" (pp. 93–94).[13]

Before I return to the general discussion of the evolutionary view of inherent bias, another digression appears necessary to discuss the postmodernist attacks on truth, science, and objectivity. I introduce this brief discussion by noting that I share the intersubjectivists' concern that the notions of objectivity and distortion can (and often have) led to abusive attempts to get patients to reshape their experiential world in order to bring it into accordance with the analyst's subjectivity. Yet I believe that the best protection against such abuses lies not in denying what we know to be true (that people "distort"), but in a fuller realization of how self-interested and biased *all* perspectives are likely to be (see Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). It is probably no coincidence that a concern over the abuse of power and authority in psychoanalysis leads the intersubjectivists to reject objectivity just as similar concerns about the abuse of power in society (e.g., racism and sexism) leads postmodern critics of the use of language and science to reject *representationalism*—the view that there is an intrinsic relationship between words and world (Gergen,

[13] This emphasis differentiates the self-psychological from other analytic attitudes toward a patient's distortions. For a fuller elaboration of this perspective that clearly includes the notion of distortion, see Kohut, 1984, p. 182, 182n.

1994). In this view, there are no facts, just interpretations (see Foucault, 1979).

Postmodern challenges to a scientific worldview are steeped in extremist cultural relativism and an extreme relational view of language in which "truth" or "reality" are merely social constructions in a particular culture at a particular time. In such a view, for example, Gergen (1991) following Rorty[14] (1979), "The conception that knowledge represents external reality becomes merely optional" (Smith, 1994, p. 408). Gergen (1994), a postmodernist, unabashedly summarizes the postmodern attack on representationalism thusly: "Whatever is the case makes no requirements on our descriptions or theories, and our modes of writing and talking have no necessary consequences for action" (p. 412). Yet, as Smith (1994) notes, we can take the "constructionist, contextualist, and yes feminist critiques very seriously . . . [and yet not conclude that truth claims can be reduced to] rhetoric and politics, even when we become more alert to the role of rhetoric and politics in our would-be scientific discourse" (p. 409). That is, we can try to account for the effects of the observer on the observed, for the observer's biased agendas, and for the effect of the observer's cultural and personal assumptions (prereflective unconscious organizing principles) without rejecting the notions that reality exists and that words can refer to something beyond social convention. The earth never was at the center of the universe with the heavens revolving around it daily. It was never flat and no one sailed over the edge no matter what people believed and what the Church said.

In fact, the distorting tendencies that concern the postmodernist are seen in the evolutionary view to be universal (though politically correct postmodernists cannot make universal claims). Furthermore, if words, ideas, and concepts do not simply reflect reality (and here I am in full agreement with the postmodernists) but rather have social, political, and cultural assumptions and implications interwoven within them,[15] then it

[14] Rorty, in turn, seems to be expanding on the position of Derrida (1978).

[15] Hegel placed ideas in a historical context: our beliefs cannot be seen as simple, correspondence reflections of a reality that exists independent of our observation. Rather, beliefs are shaped by the larger cultural context in which they take form. Marx then took Hegel's notion of how, as a culture changes, new ideas develop in an inevitable dialectic with older, culturally embedded ideas, and he systematically showed how the dominant ideas at any time support the interests of those currently in power. Following Marx, the postmodernists developed the trend toward deconstructing ideas so that the underlying assumptions and values of a set of beliefs can be analyzed to reveal just whose interests are being served. As can be seen from the current discussion, these philosophical developments can be highly consistent with an evolutionary perspective on conflict, bias, and belief despite the fact that evolutionary biology, in general—and sociobiology especially—is often associated with reactionary politics.

is of vital importance to have an innate empirical suspiciousness built into our psyches, an "I'm from Missouri; show me!" kind of attitude. The paradox is that the valid social realities that motivate the postmodernist attack on naive realism (see footnote 6) underscore the importance of scientific empiricism![16]

Socrates attacked the sophists' use of extreme relativism to support a self-serving, "might makes right" view of morality: In a world where truth was relative, there was nothing wrong with those in power determining truth to be that which was in accord with their interests. Of course, this is, in fact, the way history proceeds. "Terrorist revolutionaries" become "founding fathers" if they win and are executed as "murderers" if they lose. It is both ironic and simultaneously illustrative to note that the use of epistemological stances is now reversed. The naked assertion that "might makes right" would not win many elections in the modern world. Therefore, those in power today needed to find an alternative way to justify their privileged position. They have thus developed complicated objectivist arguments supporting their claim that they are the proper ones to rule and that the manner in which they currently wield power is both appropriate and necessary. They are opposed in this use of objectivism by those who (in their own attempt to gain greater power and influence) argue for a relativistic conception of truth that shows how supposed objective truths are really biases supporting the interests of the powerful. This reversal illustrates how flexible conceptions can be when they are placed in the service of the human tendency to use ideas to promote one's self-interest.

In a similar way, evolutionary biology itself can be (and has been) used in a reactionary manner supporting the interests of those in power. It can also be used, however, to reveal the deceptive and self-deceptive ways in which those in power hide their pursuit of self-interest behind a whole range of notions, e.g., freedom, national interest, truth, caring concern, fairness, love of God, economic necessity, and so on. The evolutionary perspective, itself, predicts this flexible use of beliefs: the human tendency to create and hold to concepts, philosophies, and belief systems is derived from the benefit they provide to the self-interest of those holding them. This is the selective pressure (adaptive advantage) that shaped the tendency to develop and promulgate world views and perspectives on reality.

[16] If one wants to safeguard the central importance of the empathic perception of our patients' subjective experience and protect patients from the abuses that arise from dogmatic adherence to particular psychoanalytic theories, rather than eschewing scientific empiricism, consider the following prescription:

> The doctrine of those who have denied that certainty could be attained at all, has some agreement with my way of proceeding at the first setting out; but they end in being infinitely separated and opposed. For the holders of that doctrine assert simply that nothing can be known; I also assert that not much can be known in nature by the [use of opinion and dogma] (37). In general, let every student of nature take this as a rule: that whatever his mind seizes and dwells upon with peculiar satisfaction is to be held in suspicion, and that so much the more care is to be taken in dealing with such questions to keep the understanding even and clear (58). The understanding must not be allowed to jump and fly from particulars to remote axioms . . . It must not be supplied with wings but rather hung with weights to keep it from leaping and flying (104). One method of delivery alone remains to us . . . we must lead men to the particulars themselves . . . while men on their side must force themselves for awhile to lay their notions by and begin to familiarize themselves with facts (36). [Such men must]

I now end these digressions and return to the more general discussion of inherently biased worldviews. Because, frequently, those around us are not merely imparting information, but are trying to influence our subjective experience of the world to be consistent with a subjective view that is in *their* best interest, in the course of evolution there must have been strong selective pressures to develop a protection against such influence. I would suggest that an important part of the foundation of such a protection is the awareness that around us exist not accurate views of the world, but rather subjective biases that include some valid information and a good deal of bias. This suggests that *built into the human psyche* is a conception of *validity* (i.e., objective reality) as well as subjectivity (that is, *potentially biased* conceptions of reality). Thus, existential phenomenology aside, natural selection may have designed an organism that has an innate belief in the existence of a reality separate and distinct from the biased subjectivities that are sensed surrounding each individual.

Human brains are designed for a "midworld," not the macro- or microworlds. When we attempt to understand the macroworld (infinite space or the number of stars and galaxies in the universe, infinite mass and time halting at the speed of light) or the microworld (what an electron is "made" of, or the forces that bind the atom) our midworld models break down. There was no evolutionary need (selective pressure) to design a brain that functioned to comprehend the large-scale architecture of the galaxies or the submicroscopic world of the atom. Thus, our psyches are structured to function in a midworld while we are simultaneously aware of phenomena beyond our midworld experience in both the macro- and microworlds. We then use midworld metaphors (creating models) to aid us in attempting to grasp the nature of the unknowable (i.e., that which we are unable to know directly) macro- and microworlds.[17]

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resolutely compel themselves to sweep away all theories and common notions, and to apply the understanding, thus made fair and even, to a fresh examination of particulars (107) [Francis Bacon (1620), *Novum Organum: First Book of Aphorisms*].

Those familiar with Kohut's struggle with classical psychoanalysis may find in Bacon's prescription a formula similar to Kohut's plea to analysts to look afresh at the data before them in order to build an experience-near theory that does justice to that data.

[17] This distinction between the midworld of our experience and the macro- and microworlds also explains why Sucharov's (1992) application of complementarity is so inappropriate for psychoanalysis (see footnote 6). In complementarity, two incompatible theories are used alternately to understand different aspects of a phenomenon. In physics, this has occurred in interpreting experiments investigating the nature of light. Certain experiments are best understood, and the results accurately predicted, when light is considered to be composed of particles (photons), each

Similarly, the design of the psyche enables us to sense the existence of something not knowable, of reality that cannot be *directly* known; all we can know of this ultimately unknowable reality is our own subjective experience of it and the subjective experiences of others as they are presented to us. Thus there is a sense of something "ultimately real" that is felt as existing independent both from others' biases and from our own potentially misleading beliefs, wishes, and motives. The psyche is designed with an intuitive awareness of the fact that our subjective sense

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with a discrete mass. Other experiments cannot be predicted or explained using this model, and for these the wave model of oscillating, nondiscrete, undulating quantities of energy leads to accurate predictions and better explanations. There has been no way to integrate these models, and light is considered to be best understood by sometimes using a wave model and at other times using a particle model, depending on which works better in the particular situation. This is a *pragmatic* nonintegration of two models, yielding a dual model that has, somewhat facetiously, been referred to as the "wavicle" model of light. This pragmatic oscillation between two theories is justified in our study of light because our midworld models break down when we try to apply them consistently to the microscopic world. Thus, when looking at any particular micro- or macroworld phenomenon, we simply pick the most adequate of our inadequate midworld models if we want to try to "visualize" a particular aspect of the phenomenon.

In his early development of self psychology, Kohut used a similar strategy oscillating between the classical model to explain some phenomena (oedipal neuroses) and the new psychology of the self to explain others (narcissistic disorders). As a *temporary* expedient, borrowing the strategy of complementarity from physics made some sense. But, as in the case with theories of light, this was due to a *failure*, an unavailability of a larger, cohesive, internally consistent picture of the human psyche. As time passed, Kohut developed just such an overarching theory and that is what self psychology has become. This development toward greater cohesiveness in psychological theory over time makes sense just as it makes sense that our probing deeper into the micro- and macroworlds leads to further breakdowns in our ability to visualize and thus increases our use of makeshift midworld models. That is, unlike the attempt in physics to understand the nature of light (a microworld phenomenon), our psyches were designed precisely to comprehend the psychoanalytic midworld phenomena—human experience, meaning, and action—that we are examining. Oscillation between two inadequate models (even if necessary in physics) should *not* be used to suggest a valid method—except as a temporary expedient while developing a more overarching theory—for using our midworld-designed minds to comprehend the very midworld phenomena they were designed to understand.

It is interesting to note that, in his attempt to formulate a religious refutation of this view, George Berkeley (1710) showed a clear understanding of this relationship between the "natural" (a century and a half later to become "evolved") design of the psyche and those aspects of the world that are beyond the midworld in which we must function:

> It is said the faculties we have are . . . designed by nature for the support . . . of life, and not to penetrate into the inward essence and constitution of things. Besides, the mind of man being finite, when it treats of things which partake of infinity it is not to be wondered at if it run into absurdities and contradictions, out of which it is impossible it should ever extricate itself [*Treatise Concerning the Principles of Human Knowledge*, Introduction, 2].

of reality is a working model of something that can never be known—something fundamentally unknowable existing beyond subjective awareness. We naturally sense that our subjective map or model of reality is buffeted by the biased realities presented by others and by our own wishes and fantasies, both of which experience teaches us to mistrust to some degree. Our experience has shown that what others present and what we have believed and wish to believe can lead to our making highly fallible subjective models of the world. Thus, we have an innate sense of both something "true" and of biased realities (our own and others). This is so even though—just as we cannot directly know the macro- or microworlds directly, only our midworld models of them—we don't have the ability to formulate a model of the unknown true without using the contents of subjective experience.

THE HUMAN AS NATURAL SCIENTIST

We can go one step further. Even though our psyches are not simply designed for accurate perception and are rather designed to formulate worldviews that are most consistent with our individual agendas, there are many ways in which these agendas require a significant degree of accurate perception (i.e., of reliably useful knowledge of how the world is actually structured). We can even conclude that science itself has been "built into" the psyche. To reach this conclusion we must define science in a very specific way. Clearly, the elaborate scientific methods, technologies, statistical analyses, and culture of science with its particular concepts and politics—all of which have come to characterize "science"—have *not* been structured into the human psyche. However, if we define science in a very simple way—as experimentation and observation designed to achieve attitudes and understandings about the world that lead to accurate prediction and control of events in the world—then humans can be seen to be natural scientists.

In fact, a thorough understanding of aspects of the environment and the ability to reliably predict how the environment will behave appears to be the very capacity for which natural selection has "designed" the human brain. This is noted most clearly when one observes a small child, or even an infant, exploring a new object. Over and over they repeat the same actions as if to see if they will get the same results. Then they vary these actions to see what new result will occur. Once they have tried all the actions they are capable of, and achieved all the novel results, they move on to some new focus of attention. The next time they encounter the original object, there is a sense of knowing the structure of the object, how that object will behave, and how their actions will affect it. Children are natural empiricists.

But even more important than empirical exploration of the inanimate world are the testing and probing of the human surround. In this perspective, people in general (and our patients, especially) should be seen as "social scientists" (Harold Sampson, personal communication, 1995; also see footnote 20). It is now widely held among evolutionary biologists and anthropologists that human intelligence evolved not primarily for manipulation, understanding, and control of material aspects of the physical world, but rather for understanding, predicting, and attempting to control *human* behavior and its impact on us. There was little or no complex technology with which to control the inanimate world over the four million years or more of our evolution as a species. Yet during this time the human brain exploded in size. Rather than being technology focused, our brains appear to be complex "social computers" that allow us to predict, and attempt to influence the behavior of the most important objects in our environment, other humans. The ability to observe and predict the behavior of others was essential for the survival of our ancestors.[18] Thus, *social* evolutionary pressures shaped the rapid devel-

[18] This is probably the selective pressure that led to the evolution of our empathic capacity. An in-depth sense of another's experience gives us a foundation for predicting the other's behavior (What will they do? Are they reliable?) and sensing both how and when to try to influence others. Our psyches appear to be complicated social computers designed to comprehend complex mental states. What an ironic mistake it is for many academic and behavioral psychologists and biopsychiatrists to attempt to "turn off" this marvelous device! Academic psychologists claiming that only their approach safeguards objectivity eschew the attempt to perceive complex mental states through empathy/introspection and try to replace it with complicated, numerical, statistical analyses of isolated bits of behavior (see footnotes 2 and 10). Some behaviorists continue to insist that human experience is an epiphenomenon that can be ignored in the study of actions (behavior). From an evolutionary-psychoanalytic viewpoint, intentionally ignoring the data obtainable only through the use of the most sophisticated and exquisite perceptual device ever produced seems like a highly misguided strategy.

Modern biopsychiatrists not only increasingly question the usefulness of engaging in a long-term empathic exploration of the meaning of another's experience, they can go much further and—sometimes without considering the value or meaning of such experience in an individual's life—attempt to chemically "adjust" experience by shutting troublesome parts of it down or by "turning up the volume" on other parts (Kriegman, in press). While research is called for to determine if the following anecdote reflects a larger reality, a recent experience suggested to me that the "better living through chemistry" philosophy may already be more than an approach to the treatment of others; it may be far along in the process of becoming a belief system—a way of life. After having my blood drawn and answering detailed questions regarding my medical history (as part of an application for life insurance), the interviewer/phlebotomist told me I was the *first* of the psychiatrists or psychologists he had interviewed (out of approximately 20) who was not taking an antidepressant and/or Ritalin. He said he was repeatedly surprised to find that many were using both simultaneously!

With the negative press psychoanalysis has received in recent years in the mainstream media, with the anti-analytic trend in academic psychology, with the short-term behavioral approaches that are increasingly popular with managed care, and with biopsychiatry and its alliance with the psy-

opment and enlargement of the human brain (Trivers, 1971, 1985; Kriegman, 1988, 1990; Kriegman and Slavin, 1989).

In the process of navigating through a biased social world, the human psyche intrinsically uses—as a *tool* for managing biased communication—the innate anticipation[19] of a world we can discover that has predictable responses, relatively reliable rules for certain interactions, and its own structure—a world or reality that is independent of 1) our subjective fantasies, wishes, and beliefs, and 2) the fantasies, wishes, beliefs, and communications of others. There was a need (selective pressure) for the development of such a tool by psyches that evolved to function within a predictable world governed by reliable "laws of nature," yet presented to us, in large part, through the biased views of others. As the infant explores new objects, it inevitably experiences certain frustrations and rapidly learns that its wishes do not influence the outcome, only certain actions do. In a world we can explore and discover, there are realities stubbornly independent of what goes on within us. A child must struggle to come to terms with the difference between one's wishes, fantasies, and needs—even powerfully felt needs—and the realities of the world. "No matter how much you wish it were true doesn't make it true." "Just saying it's so doesn't make it so." Simultaneously, a child attempts to learn to distinguish between what is communicated by others about the world from how the world is actually structured. As we know from clinical experience, these maturational accomplishments are never fully achieved.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS: THE CLINICAL COST/BENEFITS OF THE SUBJECTIVIST STANCE

Elsewhere it has been shown that maintaining a nearly unwavering empathic stance, that is, joining in the patient's subjective experience,

chopharmaceutical industry (also increasingly supported by managed care), psychoanalysis is becoming the only remaining major approach to emphasize the empathic mode of data gathering. Though there are many reasons for this trend, the upshot is that what may be our most impressive evolutionary achievement—our empathic capacity—is being increasingly ignored.

[19] By "innate anticipation," I am implying that the small child *turns* to explore and understand the world with a biologically built-in expectation that it can discover and comprehend the structure of its environment in a manner similar to the way the newborn infant *turns* its head with an innate expectation that it will find a breast (or other source of milk) when a stimulating object touches its cheek. There appear to be many innate programs for learning—with "innate anticipations" or "built-in expectations"—that have been structured into the human psyche. One major example can be found in the work of Chomsky (1972) who has shown how the remarkably rapid acquisition of a *specific* language can occur only if there is an innate, preexisting understanding of those *universal* aspects of the "deep structure" of the way sounds, words, and sentences relate to meanings in all languages. (See Slavin and Kriegman, 1992, for a fuller discussion of the notion of innate knowledge.)

and accepting that such subjective experiences have essential validity, is an a priori condition for effective treatment (Kohut, 1982, 1984; Omstein, 1979; Omstein and Omstein, 1980; Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987; Kriegman and Slavin, 1989; Slavin and Kriegman, 1992).[20] It has been suggested (Slavin and Kriegman, 1992) that the intersubjectivists, by taking an extreme relativistic or perspectivalist point of view, are enabled to take a remarkably unwavering stance in accepting a patient's internal subjective experience. However, they do so at a cost. The price that must be paid is an inconsistency in the analyst's own internal experience, as Friedman's (1992) comments about the discomfort of the empathic stance suggest. We naturally believe that sometimes our patients' beliefs are grossly biased and at times "distorted." The extreme subjectivist position entails an inconsistency that cannot be maintained by many clinicians, and therefore we find that many analysts, in remaining true to their *natural* "scientific" attitude, reject extreme "perspectivalism." Let's look a bit closer at the cost of empathy.

Part of the cost in maintaining the extreme subjectivist position is the denial of the *natural* human sense of an objective world that can be discovered, understood, and predicted (i.e., an objective world that is independent of any specific subjectivity). A related cost is internal inconsis-

[20] In fact, this view of inherent bias, distortion (deception and self-deception), and interpersonal conflict forms the foundation for a view of the empathic stance as *the* essential ingredient in psychoanalytic treatment (Slavin and Kriegman, 1992). However, the meaning of an empathy-based relationship is understood to be quite different from that commonly found in self psychology: the experience of being consistently understood takes on different meaning in a theory that assumes the psyche is designed to function in a world of conflicting and biased viewpoints in which sustained empathic inquiry would be a most unusual phenomenon. This may also explain why Weiss and Sampson (1986) place so much emphasis on the patient's need to *test* the analyst—operating essentially as a scientist both consciously and unconsciously (Harold Sampson, personal communication, 1995)—to determine if it is *safe* to proceed in their treatment.

In self psychology, there is a tendency to see something akin to the therapist's sustained empathic stance as a natural, developmentally expectable part of human experience. Part of what Friedman (1992) seems to have been aiming at when he said that self psychology leaves part of the meaning of empathy in the shadows is the sense that the empathic other is primarily *allying* himself or herself with the patient's deepest interests despite a natural tendency *not* to do so (the natural tendency being to primarily pursue his or her own interests instead). The meaning of the empathic stance in this view is that it is a tangible, dramatic alliance with the patient's interests (as represented by the patient's point of view or bias) in a world of conflicting interests. Slavin and Kriegman (1992, 1996) describe a process of negotiation in the clinical setting that requires change on the part of both patient and analyst as part of a therapeutic relationship between two people designed to function in a world of competing interests. It is striking that Goldberg (1984) arrives at a similar notion (of negotiated mutual change) as his solution to the tension between realism and relativism. Such a view—along with Kohut's emphasis on empathy and introspection—may enable us to protect the patient from the abuse of being forced to accommodate to the analyst's reality, without needing to reject the notions of objectivity and distortion in human communication.

tency in theory construction. For example, the intersubjectivists (Stolorow, Brandchaft, and Atwood, 1987; Stolorow and Atwood, 1992) talk about psychotic delusions having truth encoded within them. But how can one speak of a delusion (or the truth encoded in it) if no more objective reality exists about which one can be deluded? The intersubjectivist might reply that he or she does not necessarily accept a patient's subjectivity as true. Truth is a concept derived from an objectivist epistemology that the intersubjectivists reject for psychoanalysis (Atwood and Stolorow, 1984; Stolorow and Atwood, 1989).[21] However, on what ground can one subjectivity label the other subjectivity "deluded" and only containing *encoded* truth? Why not conclude that the analyst's subjectivity is deluded and needs to be altered to come into line with what was formerly called the patient's "delusions"? Without the notion of "distortion," which (along with objectivity) Stolorow (1995) has claimed has "no place within the theoretical lexicon of psychoanalysis" (p. xvi), what can the term "delusion" refer to? (See also Goldberg, 1990, p. 24.)

Stolorow and Atwood (1992) aptly point out that trying to show patients how their experience of reality is distorted is often experienced as a profound assaultive threat to the patient's self. In some cases, this can be hidden from the clinician (and the patient) by a compliant patient who hides the threat and develops a false self accommodation to the therapist's worldview. However, most clinicians, who have also been patients, know from their experience on either side of the couch that these are not the only possibilities. Not infrequently a therapist's suggestion that reality is different from the patient's experience is not only not experienced as an assault or threat to the self, but is experienced as a relief or an alternative that allows for new configurations of experience and possibilities for action.

Despite repeated explorations of the discrepancy between his self perception and how others saw him, and despite numerous reconstructive interpretations of the sources of his devaluing self conception, the patient remained unable to consider alternative views of himself as possessing any competence or value. In one dramatic, provocative confrontation, the therapist forcefully told this high functioning, senior vice president of a major New England bank that his extremely negative self image was an indication of "psychotic thinking." After an initial look of surprise, the patient visibly brightened as he was actually able to consider the possibility that his habitual self image was sadly way off the mark. The therapist essentially *mirrored* his competence back to him (functioned as a mirroring selfobject) even though, at the moment, the patient's subjective experience contained no such image to mirror. The therapist presented a truly alien way of viewing the patient—an alternative way of affectively organizing the patient's experience that could not be found in his unconscious organizing principles.

In addition, note that no patient wants to sense that we experience his or her reality as just as good as any other. Just consider the sexually abused patient who, after asking if the therapist believes in the reality of the patient's memories, is told—either directly or implicitly—that what actually happened is not as important as what the patient believes happened. When patients need their reality affirmed, supported, or joined with, they want to sense that the therapist truly believes in the *objective realness* of their experience. Thus, in more than one way, patients frequently need to sense that the therapist believes in the objectively real.

There is a fundamental inconsistency in a clinical theory that rests on a nonjudgmental, nonobjectivist epistemology and then provides clinical descriptions of the patient's subjectivity slowly becoming more like the analyst's subjectivity through interactions in the intersubjective field. While Stolorow et al. may object that this is *not* their goal, one goal that they must surely have in treating a patient with delusions would be for the patient to discover the truth *encoded* in the delusion and eventually to hold onto that truth *without the delusion*. "Anna's relinquishment of her delusions . . . could occur only because the subjective truth encoded in those delusions had been fully acknowledged and understood within the therapeutic dialogue" (Stolorow et al., 1987, p. 167). In this process, presumably the patient's subjectivity is altered to come more in line with the analyst's subjectivity that originally recognized the patient's subjective experience as delusional and containing *encoded* truth; that is, the patient's subjectivity is altered to come more in line with a subjectivity that includes the analyst's developmental theory, a theory of an unconscious—such as the intersubjectivists' dynamic unconscious in which certain aspects of the *patient's* experience have been barred from consciousness whereas the analyst remains aware that such experiences must exist in the patient's dynamic unconscious—and numerous other

[21] As noted in footnote 3, Stolorow and Atwood (1992) now speak of a subjective sense of what is real. However, their attempt to acknowledge this essential aspect of human experience without abandoning a thoroughly subjectivist view of reality is fraught with contradiction: 1) "I subjectively experience aspects of my subjectivity as objectively real"; 2) but, "I subjectively have developed and experience a philosophical way of viewing the world in which there is nothing objectively real beyond any subjectivity"; so 3) "I simultaneously hold two completely incompatible subjective beliefs." The intersubjectivist holds to a belief in the objective reality of the world and simultaneously holds that such a belief is a reification of what is really just a subjective experience (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992, p. 11). They then oscillate back and forth between these two views: when attempting to *talk to* a patient (especially a psychotic one), they take the latter stance. When *talking about* a psychotic patient, they take the former stance. This is a tricky maneuver that flies in the face of most therapists' own experiences and thus is not possible for many clinicians.

insights that the analyst hopes to impart to the patient. If all that exists are subjectivities with no lesser or greater validity (i.e., no lesser or greater claim to being a more objective match to the "real" world) why give any epistemic superiority to the analyst's subjective world, theories, interpretations, and reconstructions over the patient's "delusions"?

As noted at the beginning, this whole discussion is actually an ancient debate. Consider the interchange between the ideas of Protagoras: "Man is the measure of all things: of the things that are, that they are; and of those things that are not, that they are not" and Socrates: "Protagoras, admitting as he does that everybody's opinion is true, must acknowledge the truth of his opponent's belief about his own belief where they think he is wrong. . . . If no one is entitled to say what another thinks is true or false, where is the wisdom of Protagoras to justify his setting up to teach others, and to be handsomely paid for it? And where is our need to go and sit at his feet, when each of us is himself the measure of his own wisdom?"

Note that the point I am making is not "the fear of anarchy in the analytic relationship" (Stolorow, Atwood, and Brandchaft, 1994) in which one worries that role confusion is the outcome of the rejection of objectivist epistemology. I see no sign whatsoever of role confusion or a dangerous diminution in the authority of the analyst in any of the cases presented by the intersubjectivists. Rather, the point is that they are logically inconsistent when they claim to reject objectivist epistemology and then proceed to use it. It is such explicitly stated or intuitively sensed inconsistencies that make the extreme perspectivalist stance of the intersubjectivists unacceptable to many analysts, despite the fact that the clinical work based on their existential intersubjectivism appears to be brilliantly perceptive and effective. It is my contention that intersubjectivity theory provides a way to join with the patient's experience in a necessary and thorough manner that maximizes therapeutic effectiveness, yet is based on a philosophical intellectualization—with problematic inconsistencies—that many analysts cannot utilize.

TOWARD A SUBJECTIVIST, EMPIRICAL (EXPERIENTIAL) DEFINITION OF OBJECTIVITY FOR PSYCHOANALYSIS

Although I believe one must accept the subjectivist view that the true nature of the world is always an unknown and can only be apprehended through our subjective perceptions, we can still define an "objective reality" that stands in contrast to "subjective realities." *Objective* reality can be defined as that group of *subjectively* perceived features of the universe—along with the *subjectively* apprehended rules of interaction,

transformation, and relationship between these features—that maximizes reliable and accurate predictions and explanations of *subjectively* experienced events.[22] Even if it can only be known through specific subjective experiences of it, such an "objective reality" stands in marked contrast to subjective beliefs that fail these standard scientific, empirical tests—beliefs such as astrology, psychotic denial of a child's death, belief in a medium's ability to communicate with the dead, the notion that the earth is flat and at the center of the universe, phrenology, and Scientology and other cultic beliefs (Kriegman and Solomon, 1985a, b).

Just as Stolorow et al. (1987) described, my patient could not relinquish her delusion (that she killed her mother by eating her, as the hallucinated, persecutory voices insisted) until the truth encoded within the delusion was fully acknowledged (see Slavin and Kriegman, 1992, pp. 171–172). Yet I knew from the first day I heard this delusion that 1) despite the encoded truth it may (and did) contain, it was a *distortion* (she was an infant when her mother died during childbirth), and 2) one goal of treatment was for her to be free of such an ugly belief. Sometimes I do know my patient is wrong just as I can be wrong as a therapist and erroneously interpret something to mean what it does not. Note that, for the intersubjectivists, the *therapist's* notions can be erroneous (Stolorow and Atwood, 1992, p. 106). It is precisely their concern about the tendency of gross failures of attunement to retraumatize patients that makes me want to join with them in identifying the therapist's erroneous (distorted) interpretations. When it comes to looking at what the *therapist* does, it seems even harder for the intersubjectivists to remain consistent with the claim that "distortion" has no place in the lexicon of psychoanalysis.

In the clinical setting, aspects of this more objective reality can be seen in contrast to *beliefs* about the analyst and about the analyst's feelings and attitudes that are a manifestation of transference and are not based on accurate perception (Goldberg, 1990). Science—and, I suggest, the structure of the human brain as well—is based on the empirical exploration of the world in an attempt to form an accurate (i.e., more objective) subjectivity. Despite Kohut's (1984) emphasis on opening a path of empathy between the self and selfobjects as the essence of a psychoanalytic "cure," analysts almost universally continue to see certain increases in the accuracy of a patient's subjectivity—the concordance between one's subjectively held views of the world and the

[22] Objective reality can also be defined in more intersubjective terms as those features of experience and principles of organizing subjective experience that lead to reliable predictions about future subjective experience.

way the world is actually structured[23]—as signs of increasingly healthy functioning.[24]

In addition, the clinician is frequently confronted by a patient's urgent request for aid in determining what is, in fact, real. We are not simply asked for validation (mirroring) of our patients' experiences. Often, very confused patients trying to cope with complex relational realities—especially those attempting to obtain an accurate view of themselves—intuitively sense that there is a more objective view than their conflicting internal self-images and their conflicting and confusing views of others. Frequently, our patients—sensing that beyond their own subjective experience must lie a more accurate view of the world—are actually asking for aid in developing a clearer, more objective picture of themselves in the context of their relational world.

Aspects of the ability to differentiate the notions of objective and subjective reality underlie our differentiating fantasy from reality. Such ideas about the distinction of objective and subjective reality are nonclinical, nontheoretical, essential, universal, and basic human notions that have been structured into the human psyche over millions of years. It is part of the essential human experience that others who are biased in favor of their own self-interest can be wrong, and can even be "crazy." These notions can be found in all cultures and all languages at all times. They are an inherent and inevitable part of almost all subjectivities, and the propensity for creating and holding such notions has been built into the human psyche. Just as the newborn infant's eyes will

[23] Such phrases as "the way the world is actually structured" are not meant to imply knowledge of the world *beyond* experience. Rather than employing a version of a correspondence theory of truth, I use such phrases to refer to subjective experience and subjective organizing principles that maximize our ability to reliably predict future subjective experience. Since the only world we can speak of is the world of subjective experience, when one talks about the "real nature of the world," one is speaking of those subjectively held perceptions and notions that make the most sense of past experience and most reliably predict future experience.

[24] As noted previously, certain biased (distorted) perceptions are also indications of normal, healthy functioning. Kohut (1984) was certainly right to question Freud's "truth morality" and the ways in which it colors our goals and theories. Over 100 years ago, the American pragmatist, Charles Sanders Peirce, noted that natural selection could have formed the basis for both accurate perception, logic, and reason as well as distorted perception and beliefs:

> Logicality in regard to practical matters (if this be understood . . . as consisting in a wise union of security with fruitfulness of reasoning) is the most useful quality an animal can possess, and might therefore result from the action of natural selection; but outside of these [practical matters] it is probably of more advantage to the animal to have his mind filled with pleasing and encouraging visions, independently of their truth; and thus, upon unpractical subjects, natural selection might occasion a fallacious tendency of thought [From "The fixation of belief," *Popular Science Monthly*, 1877].

follow the path of a ball that has traveled behind a screen—indicating that a built-in anticipation of the principles of inertia have been structured into the human psyche—the human psyche has been structured to ensure the universal awareness of bias and the notion that other subjectivities can be "delusional" or simply wrong. The built-in, distinct notions of subjectivity and objectivity are an integral part of the foundation for those human activities that we now call science. It is this foundation that I am calling the inherent empiricism built into the human psyche.[25]

CONCLUSIONS

It is possible to accept the primacy of subjective experience as the only source of knowledge of the world while retaining the capacity to evaluate subjectivities on the basis of their accuracy. That is, beliefs, understandings, and explanations can be evaluated by their ability to organize and explain our subjective experience in useful ways that lead to accurate prediction and control of our world. In this view, subjectivities can include intersubjectively verifiable scientific models with their focus on causal relationships and prediction as well as notions of objectivity (accuracy) and distortion (bias).

[25] It should be noted that there is an inherent opposition between the notion of innate (built-in) dispositions and knowledge, and the extreme subjectivist view of reality. Plato and Socrates believed in innate knowledge and—as can be seen in the quotations preceding—they also fought against the Sophists' notion of subjectivist philosophy. There appears to be a relation between the belief in innate knowledge and objectivity. If knowledge can be built in, it must be in response to some reliable features of the universe that are independent of specific viewpoints and individual experience. If all knowledge is constructed and the universe is created in the act of perception, then there cannot be any a priori knowledge. Thus the extreme subjectivist and interpersonalist positions (e.g., Mitchell, 1988) tend to eliminate any conceptualization of innate knowledge or inner predispositions: everything other than the need to organize experience (the intersubjectivists) or to maintain relationships (the interpersonalists) is constructed through experience..

As an interesting aside, consider Locke's "blank slate," empirical scientism. In the Lockean view, there is no preexisting knowledge and the metaphor of the blank slate is often used to contrast nature and nurture; the blank slate is the ultimate nurture theory. In this view, there is nothing inherent in the human psyche at birth; all human psychological phenomena are derived from experience. However, Locke appears to have believed in innate, a priori knowledge! Though he would not have called it such, it is clear from his religious notion of "divine providence" that the human mind is designed (has preexisting, divinely planned structures similar in some ways to Kant's notion of a priori concepts that structure experience) to apprehend and understand the world in which we live. Having no category for understanding how an "innate anticipation" of the structure of the world could be built into the human psyche (writing two centuries before the theory of evolution), Locke attributed the uncanny ways in which the human mind appears to readily understand and organize experience to divine providence rather than innate knowledge of the way the world is structured (see the discussion of innate knowledge of the structure of language in footnote 19).

In developing a clinical theory and approach, we must never lose sight of the fact that the only knowable reality is the subjective experience that comes into being when our psyches interact with the unknowable essence of our world. Although this unknowable essence can be metaphorically described using scientific models and constructs, it is clinically essential to retain the primacy of subjective experience.[26] This is part of what Kohut (1971, 1977, 1982, 1984) meant when he focused on the importance of experience-near theory for psychoanalysis. Though Kohut never addressed the issue in the terms being utilized here, he emphasized that the only meaningful psychological reality is composed of the experiences that can be grasped through vicarious introspection or empathy, and that these are the field-defining "tools" of the empathic scientific investigator/psychoanalyst (Kohut, 1959, 1982).

Yet Kohut did not deny the usefulness of experience-distant theory. Even though he ultimately rejected the classical psychoanalytic paradigm that he referred to as an experience-distant theory, he did not reject it *because* it was experience-distant. He rejected the experience-distant *classical* theory because it contained a *distorted* view of the human psyche—a view of human psychological experience that was inconsistent with the empirical data obtained through vicarious introspection. Kohut realized that only an emphasis on experience-near theorizing could correct and guard against the distortions of human experience that were theory-bound within the classical perspective. He never rejected the need for experience-distant theory and realized that every advance in self-psychological theory added a layer of more experience-distant theory (i.e., scientific models or metaphors that are used to organize the data obtained through empathic immersion in another's subjective experience).

Although an extreme existential subjectivist position provides the purest safeguard for experience-near, empathic observation, it does so at a cost too great for many analysts to pay. It has been shown that an evolutionary psychoanalytic model that includes an emphasis on deception, self-deception, and distortion in human communication—and thus implicitly indicates that some communications and subjective experiences can be more accurately in sync with reality—actually can enable the analyst to *deepen* the empathic stance (Slavin and Kriegman, 1992,

[26] This is like Goldberg's (1984) view in which the paramount importance of *relativism* within a *real world* is recognized. That is, real actual events do or do not occur (e.g., incest), and the reality of such events clearly matters. However, we can still only deal with psychic reality, which is relative, as each person may experience and react to the world in dramatically different ways. In my wording, the paramount *relativism* is represented by the "primacy of subjective experience," which is the experience of the real world, that is the experience of "the unknowable—but metaphorically and subjectively (experientially) describable—essence."

1996). This evolutionary framework also provides a firm foundation —which is not based on an extreme philosophical stance unavailable to most analysts—for the clinical primacy of the empathic stance. Rather, in this latter view the emphasis on the clinical importance of empathically sharing the subjective experience of the patient is grounded in our only *scientific theory of creation* (Trivers, 1985), the theory of evolution.

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