

Agency and  
Organization: Intrinsic  
Motivation,  
Autonomy, and the  
Self in Psychological  
Development

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The term *development*, which is the theme of this 1992 Symposium, connotes a kind of change that is unique to living things. It pertains to an internal principle through which an entity expands and elaborates itself while at the same time preserving its integrity and cohesion (Jacob, 1973; Varela, 1979). This internal principle is described by the concept of *organization*. Once alive, organisms are ever attempting to "overtake themselves," as Jean Piaget (1971) described it. This organizational feature or attribute of development is an aspect of the more general tendency of life to move toward greater variability, flexibility, and higher-order processes (Nicolis & Prigogine, 1977). So widely accepted is the idea that living things tend toward greater organization that organismic and systems perspectives have become paradigmatic in biology (Lazlo, 1987; Mayr, 1982; Rosenberg, 1985; von Bertalanffy, 1968).

The idea of a biologically based organizational propensity has been widely adopted in structural approaches to cognitive development. Heinz Werner (1948) argued in his orthogenetic model that development proceeds in the direction of differentiation and hierarchic integration. Piaget (1971) similarly depicted cognitive development in terms of progressive elaboration of individual structures and their increasing organization through "reciprocal assimilation."

Ego psychologists such as Loevinger (1976) view the ego as a synthetic process that, following Freud (1923/1962), "aims at complicating life, and at the same time . . . preserving it" (p. 30). This synthetic function results in a series of stagelike equilibrations that describe growth in individual personality organization.

More recently the new paradigms in developmental psychopathology conceptualize many pathological phenomena in terms of disruptions of normal organization or ontogenetic processes. In these approaches both organic and environmental (interpersonal) factors can interrupt the natural integrative tendency of development and result in less organized, adaptive configurations of functioning (see Cicchetti, 1990).

Finally, a number of organismic theories in the fields of clinical and personality psychology also assume developmental trajectories toward greater organization. Kurt Goldstein (1939) postulated a general need among organisms to realize potential and achieve wholeness in functioning. Jung (1951/1959) portrayed the development of the psyche in terms of differentiation and individuation, guided by the integrative function of the self. Carl Rogers (1963) argued that the basic principle of life is actualization, which for him involves the differentiation of organs and functions, and their integration, resulting in an overall thrust away from heteronomy and toward autonomy. Andras Angyal (1965) described life as a process of "self-expansion" in the directions of both increased self-regulation and homonomy. The developmental assumptions of these theories are also reflected in their conceptualizations of personality growth and therapy. For the theorists mentioned, therapy entails mobilizing healing forces that are believed to reside within the individual. These "forces" refer back, of course, to the tendency toward organization, actualization, and wholeness.

In most of these perspectives the concept of organization serves not only as a trajectory or goal of development, but also as a basic explanatory principle of the process of development—a kind of prime mover. In terms of a trajectory, organization models suggest that psychological development proceeds toward increased autonomy or self-regulation (as opposed to heteronomy) and toward increased unity or integration in functioning. In terms of a process conception, organizational perspectives typically assume that the movement toward integration and order occurs "naturally," which is to say that it

appears to be an "automatic" feature of organisms. For example, in his model of cognitive development, Piaget (1952) argued that it is simply the inherent tendency of structures to elaborate themselves through further functioning (Flavell, 1963). We do not ask what motivates a seed to grow, so why should we ask this of developmental processes in the realm of psychology? As Piaget (1971) puts it, organization is such a basic attribute of life that it cannot be further defined or reduced. Similarly, structural approaches to personality development such as Jane Loevinger's (1976) focus mainly on the residue of the organizational processes rather than on their energetic bases. The ego's synthetic activity is assumed to create a pattern of personality stages that is relatively invariant across individuals and cultures (Loevinger & Blasi, 1991). However, the motivational bases of the real-life activities that produce such equilibrations receive little attention compared with the detailed assessments of the formal properties of the progressive stages her theory posits. Finally, humanistic approaches conceive of actualization as "the very nature of the process called life" (Rogers, 1963, p. 3) and thus view it as a fundamental and irreducible motivational force.

Significant risks are involved in positing irreducible or inherent directional processes in development. Chief among such risks, in my view, is that explanations of development in terms of an innate or invariant trajectory can obscure the dialectical relationship between the developing person and the social context in which such development is embedded. Social environments clearly can either facilitate or forestall organization and activity and accordingly exert a major impact on developmental rate and on the degree of integration the individual achieves. Organismic views are too often insulated from a *social* psychology of development, that is, from an examination of social forces as they act upon, and sometimes redirect, the organizational tendencies that nature provides.

An associated risk of organizational viewpoints is their tendency to imply a passive subject who is "lived" by his or her organizational tendencies. The assumption of an automatic tendency toward differentiation and integration reifies development, making *it* the "actor" within an individual over time. But phenomenological accounts suggest that development is an active process of engaging one's internal and external environments. Most integration occurs through activity, and accordingly, the work (and play) of develop-

ment is done in each case by an agent or subject who either tackles challenges or balks and stutters. Thus, from the subjective viewpoint negotiating the trials and tasks of development is hardly automatic or unproblematic. Differentiation and synthesis involve activity, effort, and sometimes courage.

Put more specifically, explaining psychological development merely in terms of a propensity toward organization can obscure the *agency* that at each moment along the way enacts learning, change, and new syntheses. An abstract developmental principle removes the subject from the activity of integration. Even if development, on average, may be described by a relatively invariant sequence of stages (Loevinger, 1976) or by processes "inherent in structures" (Piaget, 1952), it is still done by *someone* through moment-to-moment intentions, willing, and motives. An understanding of the process of development is enriched by focusing on the being-in-context that *does* the developing. This requires, however, shifting one's view to consider what Michael Polanyi (1958, p. 336) so aptly described as that "active center operating unspecifiably in all animals" from which activity proceeds.

Other authors have made these critical points concerning organismic theories in somewhat different ways. On the issue of obscuring the social context of development, Broughton and Zahaykevich (1988) maintain that focusing on the "natural" process of synthesis within the individual minimizes one's attention to conflictual and oppressive aspects of culture, resulting in a psychology of conformity. Dannefer (1984) suggests that organismic approaches are "reductionistic" in that they explain behavior at the individual and biological levels and thus ignore the influence of socioeconomic forces on development and organization. Wapner, Ciottone, Hornstein, McNeil, and Pacheco (1983) argue that the morphogenetic emphasis of developmental theory needs to be complemented by an ideographic analysis of concrete sociohistorical agents who are obliged to deal with various cultural stresses and strains. These critical perspectives suggest that a focus on the inner forces of development is often associated with an underemphasis on the dynamic effects of "outer" structures on development and ignores the types of content that a culture may offer for assimilation or integration by the individual.

With regard to the obscuring of agency, Blasi (1976) argues that

the "intrinsic" properties of personality and their role in functioning, particularly the issues of freedom and consciousness, are lost in purely structural perspectives. Kaplan (1983) states that development always implicates *agents* who are using or constructing "means" to attain "ends." He maintains that there is no development without an agency that realizes it. Quite recently Vandenberg (1991) has argued that structural and constructivist models of development typically fail to address the existential concerns and realities of the developing subject. These and other thinkers view development as dependent on activity, and thus as involving agency and enactment.<sup>1</sup>

In the motivational work that my colleagues and I at Rochester<sup>2</sup> have undertaken, we have tried to place the concept of agency back into the study of action and organization, as well as to provide a dialectical viewpoint on the social psychology of development. To do so we begin with an acknowledgment that there is an active center of initiation and spontaneous engagement with the surround, namely the *self*. The self, at least as I use the term here, is both the agent that integrates and the structure to which new functions, values, and propensities are integrated (Ryan, 1991). The core sense of self is thus the phenomenal correspondent to the organization function that is described in biological and structural theories.

When activity proceeds from the self, we describe it as *self-regulated* or *autonomous*, which means that activity is (relatively) consistent with and proceeds coherently from the core organization. In this view the self in self-regulation is an emergent of organizational processes, and the sense of autonomy we possess pertains to whether our activity flows from this emergent center of activity as opposed to some other locus.

Whether activity is experienced as stemming from the self is of great psychological significance to the individual. Self-regulated activity is experienced as coherent and vital. This vitality is exuded because individuals, in self-regulated activity, operate from the energetic center of animate existence and thus tap the springs of their own living nature. Coherence follows insofar as self-regulated or autonomous action is integrated—it reflects the coming together of the self in action. Such feelings are the phenomenological accompaniments of actions that reflect the core self.

This concept of autonomy also bears significantly on theories of

relatedness and attachments between people. I will argue that a central dimension that defines the quality of relatedness between individuals is the degree to which each experiences the other as accepting and supporting the core self. In early relationships the quality of attachment is thus hypothesized to relate to how sensitive and responsive caregivers are to spontaneous signals and initiatives that emanate from the infant's core self. The quality of adult relationships can similarly be understood in terms of a mutuality of autonomy, involving contact with and openness to each other's selves. In either case, relatedness fundamentally requires the reception and support of the self, and such relationships facilitate development and organization. The self is what relates and is related to in authentic interpersonal transactions.

Clinicians like myself are apt to consider the construct of a core self or organization central to their understanding of personality change and pathology. Most of the concerns that occupy clients involve the regulation of behavior and affect by external or intrapsychic forces that are not well integrated or under their control. They have lost a sense of self in relationships or in behavior. Such concerns reverberate throughout clinical literature, in which constructs concerning the true versus the false self (Horney, 1950; Winnicott, 1965) or integrated versus introjected regulation (Meissner, 1981; Schafer, 1968) abound. Much of the work of therapy involves the recovery (or acquisition) of autonomy and integration with respect to significant life issues.

In clinical work the "nonautomatic" nature of organization and integration in development is particularly apparent. If the unity of behavior and attitudes were easy or "natural," then autonomy and integration would be the common outcome for individuals, whereas splitting, defensiveness, and conflict would be a rarity. Instead, we find many people who have faced circumstances and experiences that are not readily "reciprocally assimilated" to one another or brought into harmony within oneself. Other people have given up their autonomy and self to preserve connections with others. Still others are obstructed from self-realization and relatedness by overpowering economic and social forces affecting them, their families, and their communities.

So pervasive is fragmentation that a number of theorists have raised serious doubts concerning the viability of any unity or inte-

gration hypotheses (e.g., Dennett, 1985; Hilgard, 1977; Meissner, 1988; Minsky, 1982). Others continue to place important emphasis on synthetic or integrative tendencies (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Loevinger, 1976; Popper & Eccles, 1977; Westen, 1985). Greenwald (1982, p. 157) summarized the ambivalence of the field in stating that "if there is a position on the unity issue . . . it is that unity of the person is not to be taken for granted."

Unity is not to be taken for granted. But assuming an organizational tendency toward unification and integration in personality does not particularly contradict evidence that disintegration, dissociation, self-deception, and inconsistency are common in human action and personality. Such departures from integrity become understandable when the organizational function is seen in its dialectical role with respect to an environment that is not always conducive to assimilation and integration. If families and culture supply contradictory values or provide conditions that disrupt rather than nourish the natural psychological functions, then fragmentation will be a common result. The very fact that achieving psychic harmony is so difficult in contemporary society suggests that we need to examine the interpersonal and cultural conditions under which organizational tendencies are either encouraged or stunted and blocked.

Another reason why instances of dissociation, nonregulation, or other forms of disunity do not necessarily contradict organizational perspectives derives from understanding that the self, as an organization, never encompasses the psyche as a whole—it is only an aspect of it. Thus there are many psychological events that are not capable of ready assimilation within self structure, and there is situational variation in how active the self is in regulating experience. There are also realms of human experience that defy symbolization and can escape even one's sincere efforts to assimilate them. This is only to say that although the self is a synthetic function, it can never, even in ideal circumstances, achieve complete synthesis. The self must thus be understood as a central but not all-encompassing aspect of the person. As Broughton (1991) puts it, the self is not "all there is" in mental and social life, but it strives to be so. It is, however, a significant focus of developmental study because of its role in initiating and regulating action and experience and its phenomenological salience from the standpoint of the actor.

In the remainder of this essay I examine more closely the connections between organization, autonomy, and the self in development. In particular I will be concerned with the role of autonomy in the kinds of actions on which development depends. I begin by reflecting on what is meant by autonomy or self-regulation, focusing particularly on the phenomenological connections between the sense of self and the experience of autonomy. I will then turn to empirical studies that examine the functional significance of autonomy in development and personality.

### Autonomy and Heteronomy in Relation to the Self

The term *autonomy* literally means "self-governing" and therefore implies regulation by the self. Its opposite, heteronomy, refers to regulation from outside the self, by alien or external forces. Comprehension of the phenomenal experience of autonomy versus heteronomy is thus relevant for understanding what it means for behavior or experience to emanate from, or to express, the self.

One of the earliest theorists who explored the phenomenology of autonomy was Alexander Pfander (1908/1967). Using methods drawn from Brentano and Husserl, Pfander distinguished between self-determined acts—those that reflect one's *will*—and other forms of striving or motivation. According to Pfander, acts of will are distinguished phenomenally because they are experienced "precisely not as an occurrence caused by a different agent but as an initial act of the ego-center itself" (p. 20). Although inner impulses or external pressures may supply "grounds" for willing, the act of will or self-determination requires an *endorsement* of the behavior that might follow from these grounds by the self or "ego-center." Insofar as one's actions are perceived to be engendered by forces outside the self (ego-center) or are not fully condoned or endorsed by the self, then willing or self-determination is not in evidence.

Paul Ricoeur (1966) ventured further into the same territory in his *Freedom and Nature*. Like Pfander, he ascertained that the terms will and autonomy refer to acts that are fully endorsed by the self. However, autonomy need not entail a literal absence of strong pressures, grounds, or even mandates to act in a specific way. One can be willful and free even under pressure to act in certain ways, pro-

vided one *concurrs with* or *accepts* the mandates in a personal sense. Influences and inputs to my behavior must *engender in me* reasons for acting in concert with them, otherwise my behavior is not self-determined. Thus one is autonomous to the extent that one willfully consents or is truly receptive to motives, obligations, or inducements.

Accordingly, autonomy or will (here used interchangeably) pertains to acts that are experienced as freely done and endorsed by the self. This of course applies to behaviors that are easily chosen (playing tennis might typically be autonomous, since it is unconflicted fun and expresses a self interest) as well as to more difficult choices such as forgoing fun to work on a valued volunteer task. Here the self endorses and enacts the behavior because of its fittingness and coherence with one's inner organization of values and personal commitments. In either case, the self phenomenologically underlies actions that seem to have the character of volition or inner commitment. Autonomy is also a relevant dimension in analyzing one's response to environmental pressures and rewards. If I comply with pressure or force without the full consent of the self, then my behavior, by these definitions, is not autonomous. However, I can also "willingly" behave as I am pressured to do and thus, in such assent, experience autonomy. Finally, phenomenological analysis suggests that autonomy or self-determination can be threatened by factors both within and without. Just as an external authority may coerce one, so can an inner impulse or drive. One can locate the cause of one's behavior in a desire or impulse that "lies outside the self"—that one feels compelled to follow—and thus not feel self-determined when acting on it.

Existentially oriented theorists distinguish between authentic and inauthentic actions using definitions akin to those of phenomenologists. The term *authentic* means literally "really proceeding from its reputed source or author" (cf. Wild, 1965). Authentic actions are those that one identifies as proceeding from the self, and for which one takes responsibility. A person's actions, even intentional ones, are inauthentic if they are experienced as not truly reflecting or emanating from the self (e.g., Kierkegaard 1849/1968).

The importance of such phenomenological analyses lies in their locating the definitions of self-determination or autonomy in a subjective framework. They specify that for an act to be autonomous it

must be "endorsed" by the self or experienced as one's own doing. Autonomous acts are also integral to the person, reflecting the relative unity of the self "behind" one's actions. They convey how the senses of ownership, authenticity, responsibility, and choice are all entailed in autonomy.

In a recent analytic approach to the philosophy of autonomy, Dworkin (1988) arrived at considerations similar to those derived from existential phenomenology. Dworkin (like Ricoeur) argues that autonomy does not entail "being subject to no external influences" (e.g., parents, teachers, public figures). As Dworkin points out, there is no possible world that is free of external influences. The issue is whether my following such influences reflects mere obedience or coercion rather than a reflective valuing of the direction or guidance these inputs provide. It is in one's subjective assent to some influences and not others that the question of autonomy becomes meaningful. Similarly, Dworkin argues that autonomy does not necessarily mean behaving without constraint. Clearly, one can act in accord with certain constraints and in doing so still be autonomous. I may feel constrained in stopping for a particular red light, but at the same time I may assent to the idea that traffic laws are useful in ensuring my safety and everyone else's. I therefore consent to follow them, and in doing so have lost no autonomy. Indeed, I enact my autonomy with this *higher-order*, reflective commitment. For Dworkin, in fact, autonomy entails endorsement of one's actions at the highest order of reflection.

From a psychological viewpoint this process of reflective appraisal from a higher order that Dworkin and others cite is similar to what Søren Kierkegaard (1849/1968) referred to as *relating the self to the self*. It means taking stock of or *interest in* one's feelings, evaluations, choices, and actions and, in doing so, organizing and regulating them from the standpoint of the whole. This is an essential aspect of synthetic process involved in progressive self-regulation. In order to synthesize, or bring into unity, a possible action, value, or belief, one must both acknowledge and evaluate it from the standpoint of the self (see also Blasi, 1984). Reconciling and coordinating values, beliefs, and potential actions with respect to the self entails taking an interest in them, and such reflective interest is typically incited or catalyzed only under specific conditions.

#### FROM PHENOMENOLOGY TO ATTRIBUTION: PERCEIVED LOCUS OF CAUSALITY

The philosophical traditions reviewed above are relatively divorced from the literature of empirical psychology. Yet, as often happens, philosophical issues enter psychology through a side door. Distinctions concerning authentic and autonomous actions were smuggled into the mainstream through just such a side entrance by Fritz Heider (1958) and Richard deCharms (1968) with their formulations of "naive" psychology. Heider, in fact, was conversant with phenomenological methods and may have derived some of his thinking from that tradition (Spiegelberg, 1972).

Heider felt that people, in the process of understanding their own and others' behavior, are centrally concerned with the "causes" of action. To describe how such causes are phenomenally encoded, he introduced the construct of *perceived locus of causality*. According to Heider, actions and outcomes could be perceived either as personally caused or as a result of nonintentional or impersonal causes. The critical feature of personal causation is *intentionality*, which implies that both ability and effort toward some end are evinced. In contrast, impersonal causation is marked by an absence of control or initiation with regard to actions or outcomes. Heider's distinction has become important in the literature of interpersonal perception, in which people's inferences about the motives and intentions of others are examined.

A decade later, deCharms (1968) extended and applied Heider's work in his book *Personal Causation*. He argued that intentional action is itself not always free or self-initiated. In fact, we often perform intentional actions precisely because we feel pressured or coerced to do so by external agents. The policeman *makes* me slow down to 55 miles per hour, or my boss *forces* me to take on an extra task at work. Both the speed change and the task done in these examples represent intentional acts—but neither is necessarily done autonomously.

To clarify the differences between freely performed and heteronomous intentional actions, deCharms proposed a further distinction that applied *within* the category of intentionality or personal causation. He argued that intentional acts can be accompanied by either an *internal* or an *external perceived locus of causality* (PLOC). The

former connotes actions that are volitional, in which one experiences oneself as an "origin" of action, whereas the latter represents instances in which one is a "pawn" to pressures or inducements, even though one intends to perform the action.

DeCharms (1968) also pointed out that there is an enormous difference between interpersonal attributions regarding perceived locus of causality and personal knowledge concerning this issue. The central difference is that in interpersonal attribution one lacks direct access to the internal states of others and must make inferences based on external conditions surrounding action. By contrast, individuals know the motivational status of their own behavior directly, because they themselves enact it. Thus one does not typically need to "observe" one's own behavior to know whether an act is intentional and whether it is autonomous. I have personal knowledge of autonomy, insofar as my autonomous act is something I organize and authenticate in the context of behaving (Ryan & Connell, 1989).

The difference between these two types of intentional behavior—with an internal versus an external PLOC—is exemplified in everyday occurrences. For example, a worker may intentionally proceed to her job each morning. She may feel compelled to work by financial stress or need or by social pressures of one sort or another. In this case she may lack a sense of volition, working only because she "has to." She experiences herself as a *pawn* in deCharms's terminology. In a second case, however, imagine a person who "wants" to go to work—who feels enjoyment, challenge, and a sense of commitment to her work. She sees her work as an expression of herself. Here she is an *origin*, and she perceives her efforts as emanating from an internal locus of causality—the self. In these examples the contrast between origin and pawn is akin to the distinction between alienated labor and autonomous labor.

To show the real-life impact of such alienation, Ryan and Grolnick (1986) used a measure developed by deCharms (1976) to assess children's perceptions of their classroom climate along a dimension ranging from origin to pawn. They found that students who experienced the classroom as more pawnlike evinced less curiosity, desire for challenge, and independent mastery orientation than students who viewed their classroom climate as having more of an "origin" character. Being in an atmosphere that was conducive to an external perceived locus of causality led to a less active, less mastery-

motivated mind-set and, we suggest, to less expression of the assimilative integrative tendency that is natural to learners. In a separate part of this study, students who rated their current classroom climate as more pawn-oriented also wrote projective stories about a neutral classroom scene that depicted more authority, rebellion, and control than students in "origin" climates. This suggested that children "internalize" a set of expectations concerning social contexts and motivation and apply or generalize it to new situations.

As this study illustrates, the perceived locus of causality construct offers an operational route into the issues of agency and self-determination versus heteronomy. By instantiating conditions that add salience to external forces or reasons for acting, presumably the PLOC can be shifted from internal to external, thus creating the experience of being a pawn. Conversely, conditions that conduce to choice and volition should facilitate a more internal PLOC, or a sense of autonomy.

An internal perceived locus of causality refers to initiation and organization of behavior by the self. Typically the contrast with self-regulation is external regulation, that is, when other people regulate one's actions. It is also common that *inner* forces, such as drives and impulses, can be the cause or impetus to action without the "endorsement" or support of the self, indeed, without even the sense of intentionality. Thus, for example, a person who was impulsively aggressive after drinking alcohol claims the next day, "I was not myself." By this he means that his actions did not reflect his self organization; they occurred without self-regulation. Much of the struggle for autonomy, in fact, concerns gaining regulatory control or management over inner wishes and drives as well as over outer regulations and commands. Thus there are forces that are external to the self at both its "internal" and its "external" boundaries (Greenspan, 1979).

We have used this construct of perceived locus of causality to organize a variety of empirical projects that examine the functional effects of autonomy versus heteronomy on behavior, learning, and personality development. We do not see the issue of autonomy as merely an attributional issue, however. Rather, we view the sense of autonomy as reflecting a *quality of behavior* that is meaningful throughout development and applies to activity in all domains. Autonomy is not primarily a cognitive process, nor is it well defined as

a concept or representation. It is a hypothetical variable we use to understand the dynamics of behavioral regulation, and we attribute to it a *functional significance* (Deci & Ryan, 1985b), whether or not it explicitly enters awareness.

#### WHAT AUTONOMY IS NOT: A DISCURSION

Having discussed both structurally and phenomenologically what autonomy is, it seems worth a brief digression to examine some concepts that are often confused with autonomy, or particular uses of the concept of autonomy that are inconsistent with the current formulation. I will argue that autonomy is not a stage; is not reducible to self-efficacy; and is not equivalent to "independence" or detachment. I take up these issues in turn.

**Autonomy is not a stage.** Autonomy, when viewed as a sense of volition and choice resulting from the integration of regulatory processes, is an ongoing issue throughout the life span. Behavior at all levels of development reflects either more or less autonomy—it is more or less self-regulated. The form and content of autonomous action will vary, however, at different developmental stages. Several authors stress the salience of autonomy at specific points in development, suggesting that these life periods are particularly critical.

Perhaps the best-known theory in which autonomy is regarded as a specific stage is that of Erik Erikson (1950). Erikson modified and expanded Freud's (1913/1959) theory of psychosexual development by reformulating the theory in interpersonal rather than libidinal terms and by differentiating new stages of adult development. In his formulation, Erikson delineates the second and third years of a child's life as representing the crucial stage for the development of autonomy. He suggests that if allowed a gradual experience of increasing autonomy and choice a child develops a sense of pride and confidence, whereas a child who continually faces rigid dominance or evaluation will instead develop a sense of shame and doubt.

Piaget (1967) discussed the concept of will, suggesting that it is a regulatory process that comes into existence during middle childhood in relation to moral issues. For a child of that age, morality is gradually shifting from being based wholly on authority to being de-

termined more by mutuality and consent. The shift away from exclusive reliance on authority necessitates the development of internal regulatory processes that will, in the words of Piaget, allow a morally superior principle to win a conflict with a morally inferior drive.

Adolescence has also been widely characterized as an important phase in the development of autonomy (e.g., A. Freud, 1958; Steinberg & Silverberg, 1986). The teenager is gradually individuating from parental direction and guidance, facing the challenge of developing the types of internal regulatory processes that constitute mature self-direction and judgment (Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

Finally, Loevinger (1976) reserves the term *autonomous* to describe her fifth stage of ego development. This stage is characterized by a capacity to acknowledge and cope with ambiguity and conflict and to project less of one's inner conflict onto external figures. The autonomous person recognizes other people's needs for autonomy and is able to see individual motives as products of differences in experience. An autonomous level of ego development is rarely achieved before adulthood, and the modal individual in American culture may not reach it at all.

In each of these cases the significance of autonomy at various phases of development is underscored. However, that issues of autonomy figure heavily in each of these conceptualizations suggests that its dynamics affect development at every level. Thus in infancy autonomy concerns the consolidation of a sense of self and the emergence of a sense of initiative and trust. For toddlers the prominent issue may be assimilating social practices while preserving initiative, and in middle childhood and early adolescence the struggle for autonomy may be more concerned with sorting out what is one's own from prescribed moral concerns. In adolescence autonomy may take the form of negotiating increasing self-direction while maintaining one's connections with caregivers. At every level of development the social tasks and the competencies brought to them differ, but at all levels the degree to which regulation is assumed by the self or located in external sources is at issue. Thus each of these stage-oriented conceptions describes issues related to perceived locus of causality, though that issue is applied to different contents and plays out in different contexts.

In our conception, the issue of autonomy is psychologically rele-

vant from the very beginning of life. A sense of a core self appears, by sound empirical accounts, to be central to activity and organization in the human infant quite soon after birth. It is, as Stern (1985) argues, a "first order of business" for the infant to develop this core sense of self. He suggests that the kinds of experiences required to consolidate a core self are amply provided in early development, such that the sense of self is generally integrated in the first half year of life in humans. He also maintains that though this core self is *not* a mental concept or a representation of oneself in awareness, however, it is accompanied by a sense of both coherence and volition (initiation). Thus very young infants show evidence of "knowing" which actions emerge from the self and which ones do not.

Crockenberg and Litman (1990) argued that autonomy is important in late infancy and to toddlers as well. They distinguish compliance from autonomy, arguing that autonomy reflects a "willing engagement" on the part of the child, whereas compliance occurs through fear or force. Clearly, here the consideration that underlies their distinction is the internal perceived locus of causality of the child.

This core sense of self continues to be involved in the progressive ordering of experience and is by no means a static or fixed organization. With development, the sense of self—and also one's purposes and values that organize behavior—becomes more elaborate and changes in content. In addition, the conditions required to nourish and enhance the core self and its autonomous functioning vary with development. It is these changing dynamics of autonomy throughout the life span that suggest autonomy should be construed as a quality of behavior rather than as a specific stage of development in which the issue is settled once and for all.

**Autonomy is not self-efficacy.** Bandura (1989) has articulated a "social-cognitive" theory of *agency* that is built on his earlier construct of self-efficacy. In Bandura's model, motivation is ultimately explained by the idea that "people strive to gain anticipated beneficial outcomes and to forestall aversive ones" (p. 1180). This striving is influenced by self-efficacy, which entails feeling able to perform the activities connected with such outcomes. One exercises agency, in Bandura's view, by envisioning the likely outcomes of prospective actions.

The equating of agency with the rather restricted notion of self-efficacy is particularly problematic. The belief that one can successfully perform an action and thus obtain an outcome does not address the question of why one might perform the action in the first place. And it is this "why" question that is the very crux of the issues of autonomy and agency, and of motivation more generally (Ryan & Connell, 1989). An obedient but competent slave could be self-efficacious ("I can competently do what he tells me and thus obtain a reward or avoid punishment") and thus would be "agentic" in this social-cognitive model. There is simply no view here of an integrated organization of purposes, and no theoretical position on what is meant by the idea of self, so that agency becomes merely a statement about outcome-oriented beliefs and capabilities.

Competence and efficacy do figure importantly in the issue of agency, but more complexly than considered in social-cognitive theory. All intentional actions have as their prerequisite some form of efficacy beliefs. As Heider (1958) stated long ago, one must believe one "can" do something to be motivated to do it. But true agency requires more than mere ability or efficacy. The true agent feels volitional in action, viewing action as having an internal locus of causality. Thus the most efficacious pawn—whether a success-driven stockbroker or a highly introjected achiever—is not an agent unless his or her actions are experienced as authentic and autonomous. Bandura, however, writes off the concept of autonomy as meaningless by defining it as action that is "entirely independent" (1989, p. 1175) of the environment. The issue of relative assent, consent, or volition with respect to an "environment" is thus disregarded without serious analysis.

Not only does the definition of agency as self-efficacy ignore the issue of autonomy, it also bespeaks a conformist ideology, fitting perfectly with postindustrial economic organizations (Ryan, 1991). In social-cognitive theories (e.g., Bandura, 1989; Locke & Latham, 1990) behavior is ultimately regulated by rewards and approvals, and the "agentic" person is the one who can set the right goals and grab them up most efficiently. No matter that the efficacious character might be type A, greedy, conflicted, or alienated from inner needs. In this *weltanschauung*, effectiveness at obtaining rewards and approval becomes elevated to a developmental ideal.

In a more extreme, but more internally consistent argument,

B. F. Skinner (1971) denied any credibility to ideas of autonomy and agency. He argued that we speak of autonomy primarily when we are ignorant of the actual factors that control behavior. Thus, "If we do not know why a person acts as he does, we attribute his behavior to him" (p. 53). In his theory, control over action is tautologically defined as external to the organism, and whatever unity or organization appears in action must in principle be due to the unity and organization of the contingencies in the environment.

Like Bandura, Skinner pits the idea of "the external" against the concept of autonomy, and thus he can dismiss this most difficult yet crucial construct for a human psychology. In contrast to their views, I suggest that the issue of autonomy does not primarily concern whether external contingencies and circumstances influence behavior, but rather involves whether the behavior that occurs in the context of an environment is experienced as emanating from or congruent with the self. Behaviorisms and neobehaviorisms, built as they are on efficient causal foundations rather than organismic principles, simply cannot adequately address whether the locus of regulation resides within one's developing self-organization or outside it. They thus ignore the phenomenological and functional effects that follow from this difference.

**Autonomy is not independence.** In common usage, and in some theories, independence is equated with autonomy. Obviously, dictionary definitions of these two terms overlap. However, I suggest that there are at least some meanings of autonomy and independence that can be distinguished, and that such differentiation is crucial for developmental theory.

*Independence* refers primarily to not relying on others for the fulfillment of needs. One is therefore independent to the extent that one is self-reliant. Conversely, dependence in human relationships involves having one's needs provided for by another. Infants are highly dependent on their parents for the gratification of their needs. In growing older, a child becomes less dependent on others for those same needs—he or she acquires new skills and functions that can sustain and protect the organism and the self—but significant elements of dependence will remain. Dependence throughout the life span is both natural and appropriate; it is the specific provi-

sions for which one relies on others that change considerably with development.

Insofar as we have defined autonomy as a sense of volition, it is clear that a person can be dependent in a relationship yet not necessarily lack autonomy (Memmi, 1984). One can be happily and unconflictually provided for, experiencing a sense of choice about it. Alternatively, of course, a person can feel controlled or coerced in the context of dependence. Providers, for example, may use their position to control behavior in the dependent, and thus their provisions can come to be viewed as instruments of subjugation or control. Here dependence may take on an external perceived locus of causality: "I take from them, but I don't like it."

Independence, defined as lack of reliance on others, can also be characterized by either autonomy or control. One can be quite volitional in one's independence from another, fully choosing to do for oneself. But being independent does not ensure autonomy, as when one feels forced by others to assume some independent functions. A teenager, for instance, may want to earn his own spending money, and the independence is initiated from within. But he may also get a job because he feels humiliated by asking his parents for help. Here he works because he has to, and the perceived locus of causality for the "independent" behavior will be external.

Although independence and autonomy are analytically and operationally separable, they are often dynamically related. Most human needs are met in the context of interdependencies, and these interdependencies do not in themselves threaten autonomy. On the contrary, most of us desire interdependencies; we would not choose to be wholly self-reliant. Dependency and control are easily fused, however, so that people often find the road to freedom may require relinquishing reliance on certain others.

There is another way the development of independence and the issue of autonomy are intertwined. As I have already argued, the organizational propensity entails individuals' continually exercising and elaborating their functioning, and this results in the acquisition of new capabilities and areas of independence (White, 1963). The one-year-old *wants* to walk to the car (rather than be carried), the two-year-old *wants* to dress herself (rather than be dressed). These expressions of desire to do for oneself emanate from the core self

and can be either supported or ignored by caregivers. Caregivers are thus in a position to support developing autonomy—that is, volition and intentionality—when they support self-initiated independence. However, there is always a judgment to be made about the dependent's readiness to be self-reliant with respect to a given activity. Premature pressure toward self-reliance or thwarting of initiative toward self-reliance both represent dynamic situations where issues of autonomy and independence become separable and sometimes stand in opposition.

**Autonomy is not detachment.** Several theories view the development of autonomy in terms of relinquishing attachments to others. This is particularly true of some approaches to adolescent development, where autonomy is construed in terms of breaking ties with the family (e.g., A. Freud, 1958; Blos, 1962; Steinberg and Silverberg, 1986). Presumably such detachment sets the stage for establishing extrafamilial attachments and for greater self-direction.

I have argued both theoretically (Ryan, 1991) and empirically (Ryan & Lynch, 1989) that autonomy and detachment are not equivalent. One can be attached to another quite volitionally, just as previously I pointed out that one can be autonomously dependent or interdependent. Furthermore, there is no evidence that adolescents who detach from parents are more autonomous as a result. On the contrary, detachment from parents in adolescence typically results in less optimal circumstances for developing self-direction and autonomy. Detached adolescents are more susceptible to conformity and less able to form mature relationships with others (see Ryan & Lynch, 1989).

Good-quality attachments to others not only do not prevent autonomy, they facilitate it. In a secure attachment the other person is attuned to and receptive of one's self. This resonance and attunement help the individual to be more aware of his or her own needs and desires as well as their effects on others. Such attachments enhance rather than detract from self-determination. Conversely, relationships in which there is not support for or receptivity to self-expression and autonomy are likely to be insecure. Excessive control or neglect of the inner self by significant others leads to the need either to detach (as in the rebellious or isolated adolescent) or to insecurely cling to and comply with attachment figures (as in the inse-

cure, enmeshed adolescent). In these latter cases, conflicts between relatedness needs and the overall thrust toward autonomy in functioning come into unnecessary conflict. Thus, although attachment and autonomy can conflict, in optimal circumstances they support one another.

### The Effect of Variations in Autonomy on Behaviors related to Organization

Having defined autonomy both positively (in phenomenological terms) and negatively (in terms of what it is not), I now turn to the *functional* impact of autonomy in development. I will rely heavily on empirical investigations of autonomy with regard to types of behavior that are crucial to organization and development. In particular I will examine two processes intricately associated with organizational propensities, namely intrinsic motivation and internalization. Intrinsic motivation concerns the active, exploratory, challenge-seeking nature of individuals, which plays a crucial role in the acquisition and elaboration of structures and functions. Internalization refers to the assimilation of external regulations and values and their integration into the self.

#### THE SELF AND AUTONOMY IN INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Intrinsic motivation is defined as doing something "for its own sake," for example, out of curiosity, from a sense of challenge, or for the inherent satisfactions that accompany the activity. Intrinsic motivation emerged as a specific construct in post-Hullian experimental work in the 1950s, when it was noticed that animals would spontaneously explore, manipulate, and examine novel aspects of their surround without any reinforcement, and sometimes in spite of aversive consequences.

Robert White (1959, 1963) used the term *effectance motivation* to describe this phenomenon, noting that there seemed to be a spontaneous need for organisms to "have an effect" on their environment and to experience an inherent pleasure or interest in the exercise of

their skills and capacities. He also attempted to conceptualize a bridge between animal and human psychologies by articulating the common character of their spontaneous effectance-related action. White's work brought into focus the significant developmental role of intrinsic motivation, in that the progressive elaboration of functions is energized by this endogenous need (see also Flavell, 1977).

DeCharms (1968), building on White's ideas, suggested further that intrinsic or effectance motivation is evinced only when one experiences an internal locus of causality. He argued that the desire to be a causal agent or an "origin" is a primary motivational propensity and that being intrinsically motivated requires that one's behavior originate from the self. Exploration, curiosity, creativity, and spontaneous interest are all characterized by deCharms as self-determined, and he hypothesized that factors that detract from a sense of self-determination will diminish the occurrence of these types of behavior.

Deci (1975) and Deci and Ryan (1980, 1985b, 1987, 1991) drew on the theories of White and deCharms in formulating a functional theory of intrinsic motivation. In their cognitive evaluation theory they proposed that inputs or conditions that foster *perceived competence* and *perceived autonomy* enhance intrinsic motivation. Furthermore, they argue that competence feedback will not promote intrinsic motivation unless it occurs in a context that affords autonomy, thus differentiating their approach from theories that emphasize only competence and optimal challenge in the analysis of intrinsic motivation. To be intrinsically motivated, one must feel that one's competent actions come from the self.<sup>3</sup>

Deci (1971) accomplished the first test of the hypothesis that conditions conducive to a perceived external locus of causality would "undermine" intrinsic motivation. He gave college students a monetary reward for doing an interesting puzzle-solving activity, hypothesizing that this would lead them to experience an external locus of causality. Relative to unrewarded subjects, rewarded participants evinced significantly less interest and persistence at the task during a subsequent free-choice period where they were unrestricted in their choice of activity.

As the subsequent literature has developed, it has been shown that the effects of rewards on intrinsic motivation vary considerably. Such variations are largely a function of the degree to which rewards

are perceived as supporting or threatening self-determination. Rewards that are salient as controls over behavior have a deleterious effect on intrinsic motivation, whereas those used in noncontrolling ways (e.g., to acknowledge competence) do not necessarily undermine intrinsic motivation (see Ryan, Mims, & Koestner, 1983). Thus rewards are undermining primarily when they detract from the individual's sense of autonomy and initiative.

Theoretically, such activities as creative work, interested exploration, or curious problem solving are natural expressions of the organizational tendency of the self. They are thus experienced as autonomous by our current definition. When rewards are used by others as tools for promoting certain behaviors, however, the perceived locus of behavioral regulation shifts away from the self and to the rewarder. Rewards thus pull one away from the organization of activity by the self, and behavior is seen as "determined" by exogenous forces.

This describes on a psychological level what many social critics refer to as *alienation*. To be alienated means to have one's activity subjugated. One no longer acts from one's own center but is regulated by a source alien to the self. To the extent that rewards are used in a way that specifies such external control, they will produce a sense of alienation and drive out any intrinsic motivation that might otherwise have been present.

Danner and Lonky (1981) provided a classic demonstration of the link between intrinsic motivation, rewards, and perceived locus of causality in cognitive development. They preclassified children on a variety of Piagetian tasks, then showed that when children were left free to work on such tasks without external direction (using a free-choice paradigm) they spontaneously chose tasks that were just beyond their current levels of ability. However, Danner and Lonky also showed in the same experimental setting that children who were rewarded for task engagement were more likely to select nonchallenging tasks—that is, they chose tasks within their already established range of skills. They interpreted their findings within the framework of cognitive evaluation theory (Deci & Ryan, 1980), arguing that behaviors that stretch and elaborate existing schemata are more likely to occur when conditions facilitate an internal perceived locus of causality.

Rewards obviously instantiate only one type of strategy people

use to control others' behavior and thus are only one way to undermine intrinsic motivation. A variety of experimental studies using varied tasks and age groups have identified other factors that promote a perceived external locus of causality and reduce intrinsic motivation, including threats of punishment (Deci & Cascio, 1972); awards and prizes (Harackiewicz, 1979; Lepper, Greene, & Nisbett, 1973); controlling praise (Ryan, Mims, & Koestner, 1983); externally set deadlines (Amabile, DeJong, & Lepper, 1976); surveillance (Plant & Ryan, 1985); evaluations (Amabile, 1979; Benware & Deci, 1984), and numerous other factors. Such studies have been widely replicated and reviewed (see Deci & Ryan, 1987; Koestner, & McClelland, 1990). In all these studies, subjects' spontaneous interests and actions were made less likely to occur by contexts that conveyed pressure to behave in specified ways. Conversely, conditions affording choice (Zuckerman, Porac, Lathin, Smith, & Deci, 1978) and support for autonomy (Grolnick, Frodi, & Bridges, 1984; Koestner, Ryan, Bernieri, & Holt, 1984) sustain and enhance intrinsic motivation.

The significance of these studies lies in what they can tell us about how to motivate or promote development. Many well-intentioned people believe in and extensively use external controls to foster learning or developmental change, without realizing that such factors often have unintended deleterious consequences. In fact, some research suggests that adults typically endorse a heavy use of controls and rewards to motivate children's intrinsic interest (Boggiano, Barrett, Weiher, McClelland, & Lusk, 1987). Attempts to instill learning and change using such strategies often paradoxically interfere with the intrinsic growth forces that more typically inspire development and interest.

Deci, Schwartz, Scheinman, and Ryan (1981) tested the hypothesis that adults' beliefs and assumptions about how to motivate children could affect developing mastery motivation. Before an academic year began they assessed teachers' values and orientations concerning how to motivate children along a dimension ranging from autonomy-supportive to controlling. Eight weeks into the school year, students in the classrooms of more controlling teachers were found to be lower on measures of mastery motivation and perceived competence than those in classrooms of more autonomy-supportive teachers. These children were less eager to learn, less interested in challenge, and less self-directed in their mastery at-

tempts than children exposed to autonomy-supportive teachers. They also reported lower self-esteem than children in an autonomy-supportive context. This study suggests that the ideology adults hold about how children grow and learn does in fact affect how they grow and learn. Adults who treat children as origins facilitate intrinsic motivation, whereas those who focus on external control produce alienated and less challenge-seeking "pawns."

This literature on intrinsic motivation has important implications for developmental theory. First, it demonstrates that using external pressures to "push" development along typically backfires by undermining the spontaneous organismic tendency that more naturally underlies growth. Second, it bespeaks the inner initiative that underlies organismic development and the fact that it is nurtured under conditions supportive of autonomy. Elkind (1971) took a similar position in an earlier Nebraska Symposium. He argued that cognitive growth cycles are motivated by what he labeled *intrinsic growth forces*. Whereas cognitive growth largely depends on intrinsic motivation, however, performance using existing competencies usually occurs because of extrinsic factors. Cognitive growth, that is, typically is not promoted by external prods, though such prods certainly can lead to actions of an extrinsic sort.

The literature on the "undermining" of intrinsic motivation can be most meaningfully interpreted through a dialectical model of developmental processes. We assume there is an innate and vital movement in the direction of assimilation and synthesis that is typified in spontaneous, intrinsically motivated activities. However, this activity meets with various inputs and obstacles that are largely a function of social relationships in which the individual is embedded. These obstacles and inputs can either forestall or encourage further activity and organization, such that the residue of development (i.e., the structures, competencies, and functions that evolve) represent the synthesis of culture and nature in interaction. The human agent is of course the fulcrum of this interaction.

At this point there is a plethora of studies demonstrating the negative impact of external controls on mastery or intrinsically motivated activity. The few studies reviewed here are merely illustrative (see Ryan & Stiller, 1991, for a more extensive review). The point to be gleaned from them is that the kinds of behaviors associated with cognitive growth are facilitated by conditions that support auton-

omy, are inhibited by factors that lead to a perception of being controlled or pressured, and tend to be experienced by the actor as emanating from the self—that is, they have an internal perceived locus of causality.

#### EGO INVOLVEMENT, AUTONOMY, AND INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

About a decade ago, I became interested in why so much of the heteronomous regulation that occurred in my clients and in my students (and, needless to say, in myself) was not so much a function of external events as of internal ones. People's internalized ideals, standards, "shoulds," and "have tos" often seem to enslave them and pressure them at least as powerfully as any external agent could. These same internalized controls often appeared to be inimical to further development, killing intrinsic interest, rigidifying values, and foreclosing alternative directions for growth and change. A student could lose all the fun of learning under the self-held gun of achievement standards; a client could shy away from desired relationships under the self-scrutiny of concern with appearance; an athlete could come to find sports participation onerous under the yoke of performance pressure.

Most such cases of "internally controlling" dynamics have at least one feature in common: Individuals see their own worth or "esteemability" as contingent on attaining certain outcomes. This common feature I labeled "ego involvement" after discovering that it had been well described as early as 1947 by the social psychologists Sherif and Cantril. I reasoned that if ego involvement represented an internal form of heteronomy, and if intrinsic motivation would be expressed only when one was acting autonomously, then ego involvement would be just as obstructive to intrinsic motivation as any external control.

In the first experiment testing this (Ryan, 1982), I led students to believe that their performance on a simple hidden-figures test might reflect their intelligence. Other students were simply given a description of the task without the tie to intelligence. Results showed that even though all subjects received positive feedback on their performance, those who received the ego involvement induction lost a

significant degree of their intrinsic motivation for the task. A number of subsequent experiments with varied tasks and age groups have obtained results consistent with this formulation (Butler, 1987; Koestner, Zuckerman, & Koestner, 1987; Plant & Ryan, 1985; Ryan, Koestner, & Deci, 1991; and others). It seems that the spontaneous activity of the self can be quashed when one regulates action "in order to" attain some outcome that one's self-esteem hinges on.

An important aspect of this research is the clarification of the idea of "internal" in the locus of causality construct. Ego-involvements represent internal but heteronomous pressures that disrupt autonomy. Thus, although ego involvements, being intrapsychic forces, are internal to the person, they are "external" to the self. They therefore have an external perceived locus of causality (deCharms, 1968) and can be as coercive (or compelling) as any external regulator.

In educational settings ego involvement is a pervasive phenomenon implicitly and explicitly fostered by teachers, parents, and the evaluative "motivational" structures that are widely employed. This ego involving atmosphere, in turn, has a lot to do with why the "natural" tendency to assimilate and learn goes awry in schools (Nicholls, 1984; Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985). It seems that perceiving one's self-worth as contingent on attaining specified performance outcomes can affect not only one's interest in learning but also its quality.

Recent experiments, in fact, suggest that depth of processing and conceptual integration of new inputs is obstructed by ego involvement. For example, an experimental study of children's learning (Grolnick & Ryan, 1987) examined how variations in control versus autonomy support affected not only children's interest but also the quality of their learning. Results showed that learning that occurred under ego-involving pressures (grades) was less integrative or conceptual (and more "rote" oriented) than learning that occurred under noncontrolling conditions. A number of additional studies have similarly shown that ego involvement can result in more superficial processing, more rigid learning sets, less challenge seeking, and less long-term memory in learning settings (see Ryan & Stiller, 1991, for a review).

Although the focus of the ego involvement literature has tended to be on educational processes, it is equally clear that this phenome-

non extends to many domains. Ego involvement can have as its content one's appearance, one's wealth, one's achievement, one's status, or a variety of other concerns (Ryan & Deci, 1989). To the extent that one has come to believe one's worth is related to such outcomes, ego involvement and its associated heteronomy, internal pressure, and disruptive effects on intrinsic motivation will be in evidence.

To what social factors can we attribute the etiology and pervasiveness of ego involvement? I argue that ego involvement is inevitable wherever social structures, or the people who internalize them, contingently value and esteem individuals based on some specified attribute. Thus if school systems or parents implicitly define as "better" children who are smarter and more efficacious, then children will come to base their own sense of worth on this contingent standard. In a similar way, other forms of ego involvement are hatched. Young girls come to see both from others and from the mass media that their worth in the eyes of others is contingent on their looks (Henley, 1977). Both girls and boys can be led to believe it is wealth that "makes it" and that possessions define one's adequacy. In these cases the internalization of contingent evaluation in the form of ego involvement is the inevitable next step. Looking deeper, we can also examine how the socioeconomic structure of society generates and supports the ethics of ego involvement. Here we can also see how the psychology of ego involvement is compatible with the ideology of self-efficacy (e.g., Bandura, 1989; Locke & Latham, 1990). Social-cognitive "agents" can establish their worth by competently pursuing the "right" outcomes. The exclusive focus on outcome efficacy precludes critical analysis of why one seeks those outcomes or whether their pursuit is congruent with autonomy and integration.

#### THE SELF AND AUTONOMY IN INTERNALIZATION

Research on ego involvement led directly to another much more important domain of inquiry, one that I believe subsumes the idea of ego involvement. This domain concerns the assimilation of new forms of behavioral regulation that are not inherent in the organism but are socially transmitted. This process of assimilation is referred to in several theoretical perspectives as *internalization*. Internaliza-

tion on the most global level can be described as the transformation of external controls and regulations into internal ones. More fundamentally, it means transmuted heteronomous demands into autonomous ones where possible (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan, Connell, & Deci, 1985).

Internalization is clearly implicated in most conceptions of development that are based on the organizational perspective. Internalization represents the organism's acquisition of internal regulations to replace external ones. Internalization has adaptive consequences (the organism anticipates and "fits" with the surround) and also results in greater coordination and unity between people. Internalization, that is, holds together the fabric of culture by weaving in the organization of the individual (Parsons, 1952; Ryan, Connell, & Grolnick, 1992). Thus internalization pertains to both individual and social organization.

It is also clear that internalization assumes many forms. Some internalizations are of the same nature as described in ego involvement, in that a person can "take on" a regulation or an idea about how to behave in order to preserve a sense of worth. A child may learn to stay neat even while playing outside if he has felt the pain of rejection or disapproval from a parent when he "looked a mess." To the extent that he has internalized this parental attitude and value structure, he will act to stay neat and clean even when away from the parent—say in a day-care setting where that same attitude is not held by adults. If we examine what motivates the child (from a phenomenological or dynamic viewpoint), we see that he has come to conceive of messiness as "bad" and sees himself as less estimable if he gets dirty. The behavior is thus internalized—it is independently maintained by the child—through an internalization of the contingent approval that was originally externally applied. One part of himself now oversees and evaluates behavior as the parent originally did. We label this internally controlling type of internalization *introjection* (Deci & Ryan, 1985b; Ryan et al., 1985; Ryan & Connell, 1989).

Not all internalization bears the mark of such self-splitting and esteem-related contingency, however. In another form of internalization, which we refer to as *identification*, an adopted value or regulation is motivated by an appreciation of the importance or *worth of the behavior* (or outcomes associated with it) rather than the *worth of the child* for doing it. This seemingly subtle difference in motivation is

hugely different in terms of intrapsychic experience and functional consequences.

In our conceptualization, both introjection and ego involvement represent partial internalizations. The source of regulation is internal to the person but remains external to the self. It thus retains a character of heteronomy with respect to the self because it is not fully organized or assimilated as one's own value. By contrast, identification represents a fuller assimilation of values or regulations insofar as they are interpreted as one's own. Really, both introjection and identification represent points along a continuum of internalization that runs from external regulation to fully integrated self-regulation, or from heteronomy to autonomy.

Ryan and Connell (1989) attempted to empirically demonstrate the continuum of internalization and its character in terms of relative autonomy. They sampled children's reasons for acting in two domains: achievement (e.g., doing homework) and pro-social behavior (e.g., inhibiting aggression). Children were given reasons for performing behaviors in these two areas that were categorized a priori into four types. *External* reasons described doing the target activities to comply with authorities or because they "had to"; *introjected* reasons pertained to performing the behavior to gain approval from self and others or to avoid guilt and "feeling bad" about themselves; reasons subsumed under *identification* entailed endorsing the value or importance of the activity; and *intrinsic* reasons involved doing the activity for fun or enjoyment. It was hypothesized and found that such reasons could be mathematically described by a quasi-simplex or "ordered correlation" pattern in which the categories fell along a continuum of relative autonomy.

In a cross-sectional study of internalization, Chandler and Connell (1987) examined the motivational basis for both intrinsically motivated activities and activities that were more uninteresting and socially mandated. Behaviors in the former category included play and games; activities in the latter category included such things as doing chores, brushing teeth, or doing homework. They found that games and play were done "for fun" throughout their sampled age groups. By contrast, socially mandated activities tended to be done, according to younger subjects, for external reasons such as avoiding punishment or following parents' directions. With increasing age, however, these nonintrinsically motivated behaviors were more fre-

quently reported to be performed because they were important to or valued by the children themselves. These results supported the view that development entails an increasing internalization to the self of that which is originally externally prescribed. We view such internalization as an aspect of an overall tendency to move away from heteronomy toward autonomy by assimilating regulations into the self.

In recent studies variations in the degree to which behavioral regulations are internalized to the self have been shown to have a strong impact on mental health. Ryan, Rigby, and King (1992) examined introjection versus identification with regard to religious beliefs and practices in various adult Christian samples. In general, they found that whereas introjection was associated with poorer personal adjustment (more anxiety, depression, and lower self-worth), identification with religious beliefs was positively correlated with better mental health and adjustment. This suggests, again, that *how* a set of values or regulations is internalized or anchored in the self has a functional effect on the overall integrity and well-being of the individual. Similar results were obtained by O'Connor and Vallerand (1990), who employed a simplex model to study religious motivation in the elderly. In their sample more fully internalized religious motivation was associated with greater well-being and life satisfaction. Other studies in different domains of internalization show similar patterns of results, including school motivation (Ryan & Connell, 1989; Vallerand & Bissonnette, 1992), leisure motivation (Pelletier, Vallerand, Blais, & Briere, 1990), and treatment motivation (Plant, 1990).

What are the social-contextual conditions that foster this integration process? Our first hypothesis stems from our metatheoretical understanding of organization and its relation to internalization. We suggest that whereas behaviors related to the values and regulations one internalizes are not themselves intrinsically motivated, the *process* of integrating external regulations into the self is intrinsically motivated. *Internalization is part of the overall thrust of development toward assimilation to the self.* Thus conditions of autonomy support should encourage fuller assimilation of conveyed regulations and values of this type. Second, we hypothesize that one motive clearly implicated in internalization is *relatedness* (Ryan, 1991). The more closely related one feels to socializing others, the more likely it is that

internalization will occur. We have begun to empirically test these theoretical assumptions in several ways.

In a field study examining some of these hypotheses, Grolnick and Ryan (1989) interviewed parents about their motivational techniques with regard to school behaviors. Parents who were rated as more "controlling" versus "autonomy supportive" had children who reported less internalization of school-related values. Teachers reported similarly less self-motivation in the children of more controlling parents and more problems in their behavioral self-regulation in school. An interesting side benefit of such internalization dynamics was that the children who had more autonomy-supportive parents (and accordingly more identification with school-relevant values) had better objective achievement outcomes as well. Another finding from this study was that maternal involvement—the dedication of time and resources to child rearing—was associated with better school-related outcomes. Thus an environment characterized by support for autonomy and by maternal care maximized internalization and adjustment to the extrafamilial domain of school.

More recently, children's *perceptions* of parents' autonomy support and involvement were shown to predict both children's internalization of academic values and their perceived competence. In turn these motivationally relevant variables predicted objective achievement outcomes (Grolnick, Ryan, & Deci, 1991). In this study, children's degree of internalized motivation and sense of competence mediated between the perceived parental environment and performance. This again speaks to the functional significance of the social context in facilitating internalization of socially transmitted values. In this case it appears that children will more actively internalize parental values when they do not feel overly controlled while they are learning them.

An intriguing experimental study suggests a similar point. Maccoby and Martin (1983) hypothesized that reciprocal relationships between parents and children (where each has some negotiating power and voice) would be more likely to produce children who would "accept" influence from the parents, such as adhering to parents' requests. Pappalardo and Maccoby (1985) then tested this assumption by instructing mothers in an experimental study to either allow their children control during a play period or not. Children who had been allowed some control were more likely to subsequently comply

with the request to pick up toys than ones who were not afforded control over their play.

The crucial point here is that internalization, in which external practices, regulations, and values are adopted as one's own, can be understood in terms of autonomy. The more fully internalized a regulation, the more it is experienced as reflecting the self. Furthermore, the process of internalization is itself intrinsically motivated, and it is furthered by contexts that afford support for autonomy.

A final point is that a consideration of internalization shows that cultural prescriptions are "taken in" to various degrees. We suggest that some regulations and values can never be fully internalized (although they may be introjected). Thus the idea of internalization allows us to examine the congruence of cultural transmissions with the human nature that assimilates them. Although the "telos" of internalization is the integration of culture and self, mere compliance with culture is not necessarily a desirable developmental end.

### Autonomy in Human Relationships

During the same period when experimental psychologists were grappling with the concept of an organismic need for effectance and autonomy represented in intrinsic motivation, another non-drive-based organismic need was being studied. John Bowlby (1969), Harry Harlow (1958), and others argued for recognizing a primary need for relatedness as a basic organismic attribute. As Bowlby (1988, p. 3) put it, "The propensity to make strong emotional bonds to particular individuals [is] a basic component of human nature." The need for relatedness is also expressed by object-relations theorists who, following W. Ronald Fairbairn (1954), proposed that people are innately "object seeking," meaning that we naturally seek connection and relatedness with others.

The recognition on the psychological level of an intrinsic need for relatedness faced opposition similar to that faced by other intrinsic motives. Alternative reinforcement and drive-based explanations had to be countered, and investigations of the functional impact of object-seeking motives had to be provided. Early work by Harry Harlow, René Spitz, Mary Ainsworth, and others accomplished much of this, showing that the propensity to form bonds

with others was "neither subordinate to nor derivative from food and sex" (Bowlby, 1988, p. 3).

My interest in the current thesis concerns not so much the history of this work as how the apparently intrinsic need for relatedness<sup>4</sup> connects with the concept of autonomy. That is, my focus will be on the impact that attachment and relatedness have on the development of autonomy, and on the meaning of autonomy in the context of adult relationships. Finally, I will examine the contrast between the core self as reflected in autonomy and the concept of the looking-glass self of symbolic interactionism.

**Autonomy and attachment.** Human attachments are the major context of development, and they represent the earliest and most pervasive environmental influence on organizational processes and autonomy. The earliest relationships with caregivers provide the cradle for nascent self-organization and the nourishment for its development. The importance of this interpersonal context for self-development and integrative capacities cannot be overstated. Let us now consider the qualities that make an attachment facilitative for the self and those that interfere with the expression of that active center.

The neonate begins early on sorting out and integrating "self-invariants" into a stable self-organization (Stern, 1985). This task is made optimal because the nascent self structure of the infant "shares in" the self-organization of the caretakers, who anticipate needs and regulate stimulation. Consolidation of the self is facilitated as well by complex integrative capacities infants possess, which have only recently become recognized (see, e.g., Papousek & Papousek, 1987). Integration occurs primarily through activity, however, and the growth of self-regulation therefore depends on a more or less responsive world that acknowledges and supports activity.

In this regard, note that most conceptualizations of the caregiving environment that produces a secure attachment in infancy prominently include the idea of support for such autonomous initiations. As Bretherton (1987, p. 1075) states, "In the framework of attachment theory, maternal respect for the child's autonomy is an aspect of sensitivity to the infant's signals." Failure to respect or respond to signals as they emanate from the infant thus disrupts attachment and has consequences for the infant's further self-development.

One immediate consequence of insensitivity is its disruption of the "attachment-exploration balance." Secure infants can more safely use the caregiver as a base from which to freely explore the environment or to engage in play, manipulation, and other spontaneous assimilative adventures (Sroufe & Waters, 1977). Grolnick, Frodi, and Bridges (1984), for example, examined the relation between behavioral ratings of maternal autonomy support and mastery motivation in a sample of one-year-olds. Their results showed that infants whose mothers were more autonomy supportive were more persistent at the mastery task.

Such findings show how autonomy support may be related to organizational development. The infant whose initiations and signals are acknowledged and responded to develops more initiative and vitality in exploring his or her world. As Sroufe (1990, p. 298) suggests, children with histories of secure attachment are more likely to be "independent, resourceful, curious, and confident in their approach to the environment." In our terms, infants who have been supported in developing a sense of autonomy and initiative are more mastery oriented or intrinsically motivated in a variety of situations.

Besides attachment theory, other perspectives on early self-development also emphasize the issue of support for the infant's nascent autonomy. Winnicott (1965), for example, stresses the need for caregivers to create a "facilitating environment" that includes both responsive caregiving and sensitivity to the infant's initiations. For Winnicott, a facilitating environment enables the infant to express his or her *true self*, the original sense of organization and aliveness. Winnicott's concept of true self is akin to the core self I have described as an emergent organization—a center of spontaneity and vitality. Responsiveness to signals from the infant and lack of intrusion during periods of quiescence result in the strengthening of the true self, and along with it the sense of being real. However, with surplus intrusions or demands from the caregiver the infant must reorganize the world in accord with something external, and this compliant reorganization is referred to by Winnicott as the *false self*: putting forth what one is not in order to preserve contact and support. For Winnicott, the false self serves primarily as protection for the true self. One puts up a false front in order to adapt to or satisfy others to whom one needs to stay connected.

Behrends and Blatt (1985), in their psychoanalytically oriented developmental theory, argue that optimal relationships are those that involve emotional closeness and support within a context of encouragement for "one's efforts at individuation and autonomy" (p. 20). They apply this model not only in infancy but across child and adolescent development. For them, as for Winnicott, the development of self is aided by empathic, sensitive caregiving that draws forth communication and affords acknowledgment and support.

Each of these approaches recognizes a nascent self that requires a responsive and encouraging caregiving environment in order to gain strength and coherence. This responsiveness to the self of the infant is what we would call autonomy support, and it reflects the caregiver's capacity to take on the child's internal frame of reference in organizing responses and provisions.

The role of autonomy support in sustaining attachment goes beyond infancy and in part explains the figures to whom children attach, whom they model, and whose lessons they internalize. In later relationships we predict that, as in infancy, when adults provide autonomy support and nurturance (involvement) they draw forth a sense of relatedness and facilitate the development and integration of the child's self.

We have tested this formulation in a few studies to date. Avery and Ryan (1988) examined object representations in a middle childhood sample using a projective procedure developed by Blatt, Chevron, Quinlan, and Wein (1981). Avery and Ryan found that "good" objects (those perceived as nurturant and positive) were described on independent self-report surveys as parents who were "involved" and "autonomy supportive." Grolnick and Ryan (1989), in their interview study discussed earlier, showed similarly that maternal involvement and autonomy support were pivotal predictors of adjustment, internalization, and achievement in middle childhood.

More recently, Ryan, Stiller, and Lynch (1992) explored how the experienced quality of relatedness to parents, teachers, and friends was connected with motivational and adjustment outcomes in a junior-high-school sample. They found that the internalization of school-related values was uniquely and independently associated with the perceived quality of parent and teacher relationships, whereas relatedness to friends was not systematically connected to these outcomes. Here socializing adults are more likely to suc-

cessfully transmit their values if children feel secure and identify with them. Furthermore, as Ryan and Lynch (1989) had previously shown, students who felt detached from adults fared less well on indexes of self-regulation, again showing that autonomy and relatedness typically are complementary rather than antithetical constructs. Most notable for our present focus is that the general quality of relationship, as perceived by the child, was found to be largely a function of the perceived autonomy support and involvement of parents or teachers.

In all these studies it appears that what makes a relationship secure and facilitating is that the adult provides real resources for the still developing child, in the context of supporting the child's autonomy. For us that specifically means acknowledging and being responsive to the child's core self and encouraging a perceived internal locus of causality for action. Parents, teachers, and other caregivers who offer these psychological provisions also have as a result a stronger bond of attachment between them and the children they care for. We recognize as well that though autonomy and "ego strength" are heavily shaped by processes occurring in infancy, relationships with significant others continue to affect motivation, autonomy, and organization throughout development. Relationships contribute *situationally* as well as developmentally to one's autonomy, integrity, and coherence.

**The dynamics of autonomy and relatedness.** We have seen in the research and theory described above that the regulation of behavior is often based in an external perceived locus of causality. This means that the impetus or basis for acting stems from outside the self. When we further examine the factors that lead people to behave other than autonomously, we find that in most cases it is *the regard or approval of other people* that they seek.

A few case examples may help to illustrate. Case A: A seemingly buoyant child acts "happy" all the time to sustain his parents' affects and thus his own self-approval. Surrounding affective expression lies an introjection based on the perceived contingency of parental approval or responsiveness, such that the child constricts the range of affects available to the self, giving up some internal signals to maintain relatedness. Case B: A financially successful man continues to pursue further wealth, giving up his true interests to make

more money. We find underneath this that money is a surrogate for parental approval. Case C: A client engages in self-destructive patterns of dieting in order to appear attractive and "under control" to others from her past and present. In doing so she lives up to her mother's standards, with regard to which she must be vigilant and unfailing. In these examples, the disruption of autonomy comes about because of the perceived contingent regard of others. They illustrate that, dynamically, people will often forgo autonomy (give up a part of the self) in order to preserve relatedness.

In many situations, then, the intrinsic needs for autonomy and for relatedness are placed in opposition to one another. One can give up autonomy to secure regard or approval from an attachment figure. This is the case in introjected internalizations, where one preserves a sense of approval and esteemability by compliantly doing what one "should." Alternatively, one can give up relatedness to preserve autonomy. Teenagers, for example, may detach themselves from parents who are too controlling and thus retain a sense of individuality, but they forgo the support and guidance parents can offer during a critical developmental passage. It is particularly interesting to note that when a person forgoes satisfaction of one need for the other the degree or quality of both autonomy and relatedness suffers. The quality of the relatedness one achieves by complying with others' demands (thus giving up autonomy) lacks the characteristics of high-quality relatedness, namely the sense of mutuality and the experience of one's true self relating to another. Similarly, as shown by Ryan and Lynch (1989), when people forsake relationships to gain autonomy, they are likely to end up with independence or detachment but not a real sense of personal autonomy.

In optimal development neither autonomy nor relatedness is forgone. In what circumstances can this happen? First and foremost, it requires parents who do not make relatedness contingent on specified kinds of behavior. They convey a noncontingent love for their child and a willingness to care for and nurture their dependent while giving support for the ever growing range of autonomous decision making the child exhibits. In fact we suggest that, insofar as parents are both autonomy supportive and involved, children can remain securely attached throughout development—they will see no need to detach in order to individuate. Thus we predict both the development of intrapersonal integration (autonomy)

and the development of mutually satisfying interpersonal relations (homonymy) in the context of such parental provisions.

**Autonomy in adult relationships.** The role of autonomy support in caregiving relationships is clearly crucial. Autonomy support translates into sensitivity and responsiveness and helps strengthen self in the dependent. But what is the role of autonomy in mature relationships that are characterized by interdependence and equality rather than unilateral dependence?

Autonomy in adult relationships concerns, in part, the authenticity of the relationship. In other words, autonomy in relationships concerns what one relates to in the other, and how. An authentic relationship between people involves the self of each, rather than just any connection between people. Each person is capable of understanding and strives to understand the world of his or her partner from the partner's internal frame of reference. Each is receptive of and acknowledges disclosed experience and encourages self-expression, meaning what one really feels, believes, and is. Furthermore, in authentic relationships one does not attempt to make the other be or behave in specified ways. Together the mutual perspective sharing and support for autonomy create conditions ripe for a meeting of the hearts, a true relatedness. Insofar as these qualities of addressing each other are shared, the condition of "mutuality of autonomy" described in object-relations theory has been achieved (Ryan, 1989).

One factor contributing to whether a relationship will be authentic concerns *why* each partner is relating to the other. This issue of why one relates to another can be addressed in terms of one's reasons for relating and their perceived locus of causality. I may relate to someone, say a boss or a customer, because I "have to." Rewards, promotions, or other instrumental gains can be had from "relating." Here the "locus of causality" lies in external inducements, and the relationship is "extrinsically motivated." I may relate to others, say a parent or an in-law, because I would feel guilty if I did not. Such an internally controlling motivation also represents an external locus of causality. Whatever the impetus, to the degree that I relate to another without full volition and autonomy, my relating is inauthentic. Alternatively, I can be relating for authentic purposes such as the intrinsic satisfactions inherent in connecting, sharing, and being with

another, or because I value some aspects of the relationship. Relating would thus have an internal perceived locus of causality and be authentic—it would come from the self.

Several recent studies support the view that the “why” of relationships affects their quality and security. Blais, Sabourin, Boucher, and Vallerand (1990) applied self-determination theory to a model of couple happiness. To do so they developed a measure of the relative autonomy of each partner’s motives for sustaining the relationship. Using this survey, they then showed that marital satisfaction and happiness were largely a function of how much autonomy the participants expressed. The more autonomous the participation of the partners, the greater the perception of cohesion, affectivity, and positive dyadic interactions. In a similar vein, Rempel, Holmes, and Zanna (1985) showed that the belief that one’s partner is “intrinsically” motivated was associated with increased emotional security in the relationship. In these studies, the perception that relatedness is authentic bespeaks its quality and translates into security and satisfaction.

There are clearly many relationships in which one does not communicate authentically. Much day-to-day interaction is made up of such relating. It would certainly be difficult to be real and authentic in every encounter, whereas wearing a persona fit for each occasion can be highly adaptive. However, the need for relatedness suggests that there must be some interactions where authentic relating happens if the self is to feel sustained, enhanced, and coherent. In cases where such contact with significant others does not occur, usually one experiences too little sensitivity to one’s frame of reference to risk exposure, or else one feels pressure and control to be or to feel certain ways. Accordingly, one attempts to relate through a false self (Winnicott, 1965), so as to protect the core self from vulnerability, rejection, or merely frustration. Thus is described the absence of authenticity or self-engagement in relationships—the inability or unwillingness to be who one is in the context of others.

Authentic relatedness describes a particular type of human interaction, one in which there is freedom and openness between selves. Such relatedness between adults reflects a mutuality of autonomy and expresses the object-seeking, emotionally bonding nature that makes us human. Humans need such relatedness throughout the life span. Whether in a dependent or interdependent position,

each of us both thrives and coheres best in the context of others who can reach and acknowledge our self. The need for sensitive partners continues beyond the early “attachment” years, as long as a vital core self persists in reaching beyond itself to others.

#### HOW DOES THE CORE SELF COMPARE WITH THE LOOKING-GLASS SELF?

Much of the developmental literature on the self pertains not at all to my concerns with autonomy and authenticity. For the most part, developmental psychologists have focused on the self not as a center of synthesis or organization, but rather as a concept or representation. In this approach the self is “acquired” at about 20 months of age, when there is evidence of a clear awareness of self as an object in the world, separate from others. By contrast, the self at the center of the present theory is not a mere concept, but rather is a process. The self as conceptualized here thus predates self-awareness, being manifest in synthetic or integrative activities inherent in the organism and evident from birth. How then do theories of self-concept compare with an organismic conception of self and of autonomy?

The theoretical framework for much of the literature on self-concept is derived from *symbolic interactionism*, and the idea of the *looking-glass self* (Cooley, 1902). Harter (1988, p. 51) describes the idea of the looking-glass self succinctly: “The significant others in one’s life become social mirrors, as it were, and one gazes into these mirrors in order to determine others’ opinions of oneself. One then adopts this opinion in forming one’s self definition.” Self-concepts are thus understood as internalizations of other people’s appraisals. This framework suggests that our perceptions of how valuable or competent we are in the eyes of others are used to organize behavior, and further that we possess a powerful set of motives to maintain self-esteem either by eliciting positive appraisals from others or by avoiding negative ones.

Theories that emphasize the looking-glass self accordingly place considerable emphasis on public aspects of the self, since these are the primary bases on which others’ opinions are formed. Self-concept formation depends heavily on social comparisons of competencies, achievements, appearance, status, and other issues where ex-

ternal feedback is provided. It is, after all, the external view of the self that is ultimately internalized.

One can see immediately that the looking-glass self is in stark contrast to the core self examined in this essay. Whereas the core self is innate and emergent, albeit dependent on a social environment, the looking-glass self is socially imputed; whereas the sense of self entailed by the core self concerns the degree to which one initiates and organizes action, the sense of self in the looking-glass model is externally derived; whereas the core self is defined by its subjectivity, the looking-glass self is the self as object (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1991).

The looking-glass self of Charles Cooley (1902) parallels William James's description of the "social self." James (1890, p. 294) argued that a person has as many social selves as "there are distinct groups of persons about whose opinion he cares." It is because these others' opinions matter that one's behavior can be regulated in order to affect their appraisal. This alteration of behavior, I maintain, can reflect either more or less autonomy. That is, either one believes the opinions and appraisals of others and can endorse and embrace them as also one's own, or one can merely conform with them to avoid disapproval.

Generally speaking, behavior that reflects the social self represents an adaptation to the individuals and groups with whom one interacts. However, the specific form such adaptation often takes is a heightened concern with what others might think of oneself (Cooley, 1902; Webster & Sobieszek, 1974). Specifically, the gaze into the looking glass typically entails experiencing the self as an "object" from the perspective of the other. One becomes *self-conscious*, or "objectively" (Duval & Wicklund, 1972) or "publicly" (Carver & Scheier, 1981) self-aware. Although this objectifying self-consciousness can be a source of useful information or feedback, it more typically represents a heteronomous factor in the organization of action, fostering conformity and lack of self-expression.

If this reasoning is correct, then conditions that give rise to this objectifying self-consciousness should promote an external perceived locus of causality. Accordingly, we hypothesized that in a situation where one was intrinsically motivated, the induction of public self-consciousness would undermine autonomy and thus motivation. Plant and Ryan (1985) tested this by placing subjects in

conditions that typically enhance public self-consciousness (in a room with a mirror in front of them or under video camera surveillance) and comparing them with subjects not exposed to a catalyst of public self-focus. They found that both situational and dispositional public self-consciousness undermined intrinsic motivation. They interpreted this as showing that the regulation of self through the (projected) eyes of others is inimical to autonomy and thus to intrinsic motivation, which depends upon autonomy. This finding is consistent with a plethora of studies showing that surveillance, evaluation, and contingent praise from others tend to disrupt intrinsic motivation insofar as they reflect regulation for the other rather than self-regulation.

In a recent study, Ryan and Kuczowski (in press) examined the imaginary audience phenomenon (Elkind & Bowen, 1979) in a cross-sectional adolescent sample. The imaginary audience is a form of objective self-awareness that reaches its height after early adolescence. We suggested that while the imaginary audience experience is a normal developmental process, it nonetheless serves to constrain or inhibit self-expression. In this study we found, as expected, that individual differences in the salience of the imaginary audience were positively correlated with public self-consciousness as traditionally measured. More important, both the imaginary audience and public self-consciousness constructs predicted lower public individuation (Maslach, Stapp, & Santee, 1985). That is, adolescents who were most concerned with others' views of the self were least willing to stand out from the crowd, or to be nonconforming. This again suggested that concern with the looking-glass self is frequently antagonistic to autonomy.

Public self-awareness is a prototypical "state" version of the Cooleian self. The publicly self-aware person is always checking and adjusting his or her behavior with respect to projections about what others think. Self-consciousness is thus a form of ego involvement in the sense that self-esteem hinges on one's presumed impression in the eyes of others. This formulation is consistent with evidence that when made publicly self-aware, people are more likely to conform, wear makeup, or make other adjustments that might gain the regard of others (Carver & Scheier, 1981). In addition, public self-awareness has been associated with a controlling style of self-regulation in adulthood (Deci & Ryan, 1985a). When one's self-esteem

becomes contingent on the inferred appraisals of others, the possibility of acting contrary to the self (inauthentically) is maximized. In short, it seems that when the interpersonal context offers only contingent approval, so that people must be content with relatedness that is not accompanied by autonomy support, their development is likely to be characterized by the emergence of a strong, unintegrated social self that in turn perpetuates public self-consciousness.

The general point here is that when the looking-glass self is the focus of concern, the core self is often subjugated to it. Yet this need not be the case. Decentering one's perception, viewing oneself "as if" from the outside, and taking stock of others' appraisals of oneself can all be helpful inputs into self-regulation. Insofar as concern with the regard of others is preeminent, however, external regulation becomes the predominant trend in personality, and the integration of the self is hampered.

The conditions of the current culture potentiate this antagonism. To the extent that modern economic conditions increasingly pressure people toward individualism, self-sufficiency, and self-interest, there is increased concern with the relative standing of each "me" compared with others (Derber, 1979). One's value becomes a function of how one is packaged and presented and can be likened to a commodity in a marketplace where the currency is approval and regard. Individuals become preoccupied with enhancing the visible self, spending energy and time on appearance, possessions, and status building. One must purchase the right clothes, own the fashionable car, develop the right body type and the impressive self-presentation. These motives represent the myriad ego involvements that I previously showed represent heteronomy rather than autonomy. Approval and esteem can thus become alienating forces, forming the basis for a cultural narcissism so aptly described by one of my colleagues at Rochester (Lasch, 1978). Given these conditions, it should not be surprising that Loevinger (1976) finds the modal level of ego development among American adults to be conformity, marked by preoccupation with appearance and regulation by socially prescribed roles and attitudes. We again see how cultural and interpersonal contexts dynamically affect autonomy and integration in individual development.

Certain groups are hardest hit by such cultural conditions. Fore-

man (1978), for example, argues that the focus on the self as object has been particularly oppressive to women. She suggests that women exist in the mode of "being-for-others," obtaining a sense of worth through the projected lens of the other. Thus women's self-conceptions are frequently based on others' reactions and needs, often to the neglect of their own development. Women's preoccupation with the appraisals and values of others is also reflected in excessive focus on body, appearance, and styles—all of which address only externalized self-definitions (Eichenbaum & Orbach, 1983).

Lerner (1988) suggests that the preoccupation with being-for-others lies at the heart of many clinical problems brought to her by adult women. She views her work, in part, as helping clients toward increased autonomy. In this struggle she argues that autonomy requires that "we determine our own choices, decide our own risks, and assume primary responsibility for our own growth and development" (p. 64). Much of that work means facing the loss of self-definitions based on the love and approval of others and moving toward mutuality and equality. This in part requires reexamining the relations of contingent regard experienced early in life, as well as relying less on the looking glass in current behavior.

The existence of a looking-glass psychology thus exists in some relation to a psychology of the core self I have outlined, but the relation is a complex one. The core self and the internalized social self are neither essentially compatible nor contradictory. In development, however, social contexts can either be oriented so as to strengthen and reinforce the need to be checking the looking glass and regulating the self through the eyes of others, or alternatively can provide enough unconditional regard and autonomy support so that the core self can be enhanced. Ultimately, the core self must synthesize and integrate the various "mes" that interactions within the social world precipitate if they are to be used as input into self-regulation rather than as a basis for nonautonomous regulation. Whereas developmental psychologists have paid considerable attention to the nature of internalized appraisals, less consideration has been placed on how the mes can be reconstructed into an order and congruence with the core self that would constitute autonomy.

## Toward a Synthetic View of Agency in Development

Living things share an organizational propensity that is the defining feature of development. Organismic theories in psychology acknowledge this and place organization at the core of their models. In many of these theories this organizational propensity is assumed to be automatic, and theorists have been content to focus on the structural products that result from it rather than on the dynamics of its exercise. My goal has been to challenge this contentment in two ways: by arguing first that many developmental processes in the psychological sphere are mediated by behavior and thus require an agent, and second that the dynamics of agency can be explicated by a consistent theory of autonomy.

I have placed the role of agency in development in the hands of a core self. In forwarding this view, I argued that the core self is not a mere representation or a concept, but rather corresponds to an active center of organization, one that concerns assimilating and integrating one's experience with inner and outer worlds. Autonomy, accordingly, entails the experience of regulation or endorsement of behavior by this self, which means that behavior fits or is congruent with psychological organization. Thus the self has both a phenomenological referent in the idea of autonomy and a structural referent vis-à-vis organization.

There appear to be two directions that the core self takes. On the one hand, self-organization proceeds toward differentiation and integration within the individual, a process poetically described by Varela, Maturana, and Uribe (1974) as *autopoiesis*, or "self-creation." But the other thrust is toward the *relatedness* and integration of the individual with others (Angyal, 1965; Ryan, 1991). It appears that the development and well-being of the core self depend heavily on the success of the organization in progressing in both directions, without forgoing one for the other. On the level of psychological development, the dual directions of the organizational tendency are expressed in dynamic relations between intrinsic needs for autonomy and relatedness. In this essay I have focused primarily on autonomy, but its embeddedness in relational dynamics necessarily brings both organizational tendencies to the fore.

These dynamics of relatedness and autonomy tell us much

about the social psychology of development. We see that in most circumstances the kinds of behaviors that concern developmentalists, such as intrinsic motivation and processes of internalization, are spontaneous functions of the individual. However, these spontaneous growth-related activities are enhanced and sustained by autonomy support and relatedness. Considerable research suggests that development is something that typically cannot be controlled, imputed, reinforced, or shaped; rather, it must be afforded, facilitated, catalyzed, guided, and supported. Growing out of motivational work on these developmental processes is thus a model of facilitating interpersonal environments based on autonomy support and relatedness that has application in domains ranging from education to psychotherapy.

The spontaneous nature of development involves assimilation and integration. Not only does one assimilate new stimuli, new skills, and new knowledge, one also assimilates ways of living with others. This assimilation of ambient, culturally accepted forms of life is a process of internalization to the self. The more fully internalized something is, the more it reflects autonomy, whereas partial assimilations remain heteronomous. Examination of social development, then, must be accompanied by a concern for the degree of internalization reflected in socialized actions. How autonomous such actions are can be explained both by the process through which internalization is achieved and by the nature of the content and practices that culture transmits. In the dialectic viewpoint of self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985b, 1991) not just anything can be taken in, and the humanity of a given cultural milieu can be judged both by the assimilability of its teachings and by the methods through which it transmits those teachings.

More generally, the developmental psychology of human beings cannot, in the present view, be divorced from the perspective of the life sciences (Ryan, 1991). Once we recognize that we are products of evolution on both biological and cultural levels, we see that our sense of self is not created *ex nihilo*. On the contrary, from the very beginning we operate from a regulatory center that tends toward greater organization. In cognitive and social development, actualization of that tendency depends heavily upon particular social conditions. Social contexts that support the expression of autonomy, competence, and relatedness provide the psychological nutri-

ments that ultimately afford individuals a sense of unity and coherence. It is also within such environments that individuals are most likely to integrate practices important to the community and develop authentic attachments with others.

## NOTES

1. The structure of the problem regarding organization principles and the agency that often "carries them out" is parallel to the Kierkegaardian critique of Hegel. For Hegel the development of the individual, the culture, and history is explained as necessity by the dialectical laws of the Spirit. But according to Kierkegaard these developments are made possible only by human action, which he describes as the "secret agent" of cultural and individual change (Kierkegaard, 1844, CD).

2. I take responsibility, but not full credit, for the viewpoints expressed here. Self-determination theory is a profoundly collaborative product between myself and Ed Deci. Wendy Grolnick of Clark University has made substantial contributions both theoretically and empirically. James Connell (Public Private Ventures in Philadelphia), Richard Koestner (McGill University), and Robert Vallerand (University of Quebec, Montreal) each have added their own unique perspectives. The members of the Motivation Research Group at Rochester continually inspire changes in the theory. Preparation of this chapter was supported by grants from NICHD (HD19914) and NIMH (MH18922).

3. A number of studies have supported the cognitive evaluation theory propositions concerning the effects of feedback and level of challenge on intrinsic motivation. However the focus on autonomy in this chapter precludes coverage of this important area. See Koestner and McClelland (1990) for a recent review of relevant research.

4. Self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Ryan, 1991) posits three fundamental or intrinsic psychological needs that underlie development—namely, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. The emphasis of this essay on agency in development has led me to focus primarily on autonomy, to the relative neglect of relatedness.

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## The Measurement of Flow in Everyday Life: Toward a Theory of Emergent Motivation

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The concept of intrinsic motivation explored in this chapter focuses on rewards emergent from the interaction of a person with his or her environment. Our approach differs from theories that look to the past for the key to motivation (those that stress the importance of drives, needs, learning, or other responses programmed in the individual) and also from theories that look to the future (those that stress the importance of goals in directing action). Instead, we are interested in what propels people to initiate or to continue an activity *because they enjoy its performance in the present*.

Theories of motivation generally neglect the phenomenology of the person to whom motivation is being attributed. They explain the reason for action in functional terms, that is, by considering outcomes rather than processes. How the person feels while acting tends to be ignored. Yet people constantly monitor and evaluate the quality of experience in the stream of consciousness, and we often decide whether to continue or terminate a given behavior sequence in terms of such evaluations. If the experience meets certain criteria and the action is rewarding in itself, we are likely to keep going, and we say that we "want to do" whatever we are doing. This is the class of behaviors we call intrinsically motivated. If the experience is not rewarding we stop the activity, or else we go on because we "have to