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UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

Self-Deception and Moral Education: The Freudian Legacy

BY

© Edward David Isenor

A THESIS

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Date: July 4, 1991.

FOOL: Prithee, nuncle, keep a schoolmaster that can teach thy fool to lie. I would fain learn to lie.

LEAR: An you lie, sirrah, we'll have you whipp'd.

FOOL: I marvel what kin thou and thy daughters are. They'll have me whipp'd for speaking true; thou'lt have me whipp'd for lying; and sometimes I am whipp'd for holding my peace. I had rather be any kind o' thing than a fool!

William Shakespeare

King Lear (I, iv)

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Self-Deception and Moral Education: The Freudian Legacy," submitted by Edward David Isenor in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Philosophy of Education.

Dr. Allen Pearson, Supervisor

Dr. Eamonn Callan

Dr. Robert Burch

Dr. Debra Shogan

Dr. Clive Beck, External Examiner

DATE: July 4, 1991

To

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart

who died two hundred years ago

but whose sublime music enabled me to retain a modicum of sanity

while writing this thesis

&

To

my students

past, present and future

who strive daily to steal that last modicum of sanity -

to my perpetual delight and amusement

ABSTRACT

Those philosophers of education and educational psychologists who have been most influential in their respective disciplines have argued - or tacitly assumed - that if students are introduced to a system of rational moral principles, they will *ipso facto* become effective moral agents. In this thesis I contend that moral education is a much more complex and difficult task than is assumed by the advocates of the rational principles approach. Specifically, I attempt to demonstrate that transforming self-deception into self-knowledge - an aim that has not yet entered the discussion - constitutes a formidable challenge for the moral educator. If we understand that self-deception consists in holding contradictory beliefs, one of which is partitioned off from one's conscious beliefs, then the Freudian account of defense mechanisms is the best explanation of self-deception; moreover, literature can be used to exemplify self-deception, and moral education must include more than the development of moral reasoning skills: moral education must embrace teaching that will allow students to transform their self-deceptions into self-knowledge, thereby reducing their susceptibility to *akrasia* (weakness of will).

I begin by applying the techniques of conceptual analysis to such common locutions as "self-deception," "deceive oneself," and the like, in an attempt to remove some linguistic confusions. Then I argue that the psychoanalytic model of self-deception (which entails a conscious/unconscious dichotomy) provides the most plausible resolution to the supposed paradox of self-deception. Next I

attempt to show that Freud's term "defense" can be further illuminated by examining fictional characters (Iago from "Othello" and the Loman family from "Death of Salesman"). I defend my contention that moral education is a much more complex and difficult task than is assumed by the advocates of the rational principles approach by arguing that Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive-Developmental Stage Theory of Moral Development is, in spite of its widespread influence, a seriously flawed theory, quite aside from its excessive (indeed exclusive) emphasis on moral reasoning as the foremost component of a moral education program. Finally, I contend that the rational principles approach to moral education needs to be augmented by several new (actually old) elements. Specifically, I argue that transforming self-deception into self-knowledge, thereby reducing susceptibility to *akrasia*, needs to be taken seriously (along with several other vital components) as a major objective of moral education.

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CHAPTER ONE:

INTRODUCTION

1.1 First Words

In a delightful essay titled "Duties Concerning Islands," Mary Midgley cautions us that our thinking is shaped by what our sages *omit* to mention. In recent years there has been an emphasis on rationality as the focus of moral education; the Kantian model of the autonomous moral agent has virtually monopolized the research in moral education. Those philosophers of education and educational psychologists who have been most influential in their respective disciplines (including scholars such as R. M. Hare, J. P. White, Richard Peters, Paul Hirst, John Wilson, and, most notably, Lawrence Kohlberg) have argued - or tacitly assumed - that if students are introduced to a system of rational moral principles, they will *ipso facto* become effective moral agents. I propose to argue that moral education is a much more complex and difficult task than is assumed by the advocates of the rational principles approach. Specifically, I propose to demonstrate that transforming self-deception into self-knowledge - an aim that has not yet entered the discussion - constitutes a formidable challenge for the moral educator. I certainly concede that the ability to engage in moral reasoning is an important attribute for moral agents to cultivate. However, if one is the victim of self-deception, one might very well fail to recognize precisely those situations which require moral reasoning; a racist who does not recognize his own racism, for example, will

probably fail to recognize a whole range of morally hazardous situations in which race is a significant factor, precisely because he is deceived about his own racist inclinations. In relation to acting morally, then, sensitivity to morally hazardous situations is logically prior to moral reasoning. If we understand that self-deception consists in holding contradictory beliefs, one of which is partitioned off from one's conscious beliefs, then the Freudian account of defense mechanisms is the best explanation of self-deception; moreover, literature can be used to exemplify self-deception, and moral education must include more than the development of moral reasoning skills: moral education must embrace teaching that will allow students to transform their self-deceptions into self-knowledge, thereby reducing their susceptibility to *akrasia* (weakness of will). This thesis will be developed in chapters two through six.

In chapter two I will apply the techniques of conceptual analysis to such common locutions as "self-deception," "deceive oneself," and the like, in an attempt to remove some linguistic confusions. I will outline and attempt to resolve some of the paradoxes (with respect to the term "self-deception") which are of concern to philosophers. Then I will attempt to show that locutions such as "self-deception" are acceptable, properly understood, even if one views the human mind as a unity. Furthermore, I will endeavor to show that it is *not* required that a balance be achieved by attributing self-deception to the unconscious mind.

However, in chapter three I will argue that the psychoanalytic model of self-deception (which *does* entail a conscious/unconscious dichotomy) provides the most plausible resolution to the supposed paradox of self-deception. I will

then investigate and expound Freud's classical concept of defense. In so doing, it will be necessary to provide a brief overview of Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory in order to establish the context for a discussion of defense. I will explain certain misunderstandings of Freudian Psychoanalytic Theory and of the concept of defense that are prominent in the scholarly and popular literature. The notion of defense will then be compared with the ideas that I have discussed in chapter two - ideas arising from ordinary discourse concerning self-deception.

In chapter four I will attempt to show that Freud's term "defense" can be further illuminated by examining fictional characters. Specifically, I will examine two plays included on the prescribed reading lists for secondary English courses throughout most of the English-speaking world ("Death of a Salesman" by Arthur Miller and "Othello" by William Shakespeare), both of which provide clear and illuminating case studies in morally hazardous self-deception. Moreover, I will show that these case studies are best understood in terms of the psychoanalytic model of self-deception.

In chapter five I will defend my contention that moral education is a much more complex and difficult task than is assumed by the advocates of the rational principles approach. Moreover, I will argue that Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive-Developmental Stage Theory of Moral Development is, in spite of its widespread influence, a seriously flawed theory, quite aside from its excessive (indeed exclusive) emphasis on moral reasoning as the foremost component of a moral education program.

In chapter six the emphasis will shift from description, analysis,

reasoning, and clarification to making recommendations. I will contend that the rational principles approach to moral education needs to be augmented by several new (actually old) elements. Specifically, I will argue that transforming self-deception into self-knowledge, thereby reducing susceptibility to *akrasia,* needs to be taken seriously (along with several other vital components) as a major objective of moral education.

Thus, if I am successful, this dissertation will demonstrate that moral education is indeed a more elusive venture than the leading moral educators have suspected. It will, moreover, suggest some steps which might be taken toward a more adequate account of what moral education actually entails. Moral education is the most practical of endeavors in the sense that its *raison d'etre* is not moral thinking *per se* but moral action. If I can suggest some ways to reduce self-deception, thereby increasing the likelihood of promoting moral action, an important contribution will have been made to the theory and practice of moral education.

CHAPTER TWO:

SELF-DECEPTION

2.1 Introduction

Demosthenes observes (in Section 19 of his *Third Olynthiac*) that "nothing is easier than self-deceit. For what each man wishes, that he also believes to be true." Small wonder, then, that among opera fans, *bel canto* is more popular than *verismo*. The Latin motto *"Mundus vult decepi"* belies a similar view, namely that self-deception is so prevalent as to be commonplace. *Psychology Today,* addressing itself to the "man in the street" of our time and place, discusses self-deception as if it were a straightforward and unproblematic concept: "Self-Deception," we are informed, "may help [us] avoid some of life's anxieties, but it doesn't always lead to blue skies."[1]

Perhaps an example of self-deception would assist the reader to acquire an intuitive grasp of the concept. Consider the case of Mary, who has been a chain smoker for ten years, even though she has read the warning labels on her cigarette packages, and has seen the Canadian Cancer Society public service messages about lung cancer on television. In fact, Mary has made "black jokes" about her "cancer sticks" on numerous occasions. Over a period of several weeks, Mary becomes increasingly aware that she is afflicted with a very irritating and persistent smoker's cough. Mary buys many cough drops and drinks many glasses of water, but the cough grows steadily worse. Mary considers going to see her doctor, but she decides not to bother. She convinces

herself that she does not want to waste her doctor's time with a trivial cough; she assures her concerned friends that her cough seems to be waning; and she makes a point of not thinking about the cause of her cough. One morning Mary feels very ill, and this time her husband insists upon taking her to see the doctor. When Mary returns to see her doctor one week later (to get the results of some tests), the doctor tells Mary that he has some bad news. Mary replies, "I know. I have lung cancer." Although Mary feels very distressed by the diagnosis, she also feels a strange kind of relief now that the "unspeakable" has been spoken aloud. And Mary admits to herself that she "sort of knew" that she had cancer several weeks before she went to see her doctor. Note that although Mary refused to think about the diagnosis which her symptoms indicated, she was sufficiently aware of the possibility of that diagnosis to avoid going to a doctor who might confirm her worst suspicions. And Mary's is not an isolated case. Recently a prominent cancer specialist (who was being interviewed on CBC radio) estimated that thousands of lives could be saved in Canada each year if people who "suspected" that they had cancer would seek medical attention immediately, instead of waiting for a spontaneous remission of their symptoms. Self-deception can be hazardous to one's health!

In this chapter, "self-deception" and related locutions will be subjected to the techniques of conceptual analysis. Moreover, the philosophical perspectives on self-deception will be surveyed and the so-called paradox of self-deception will be explicated. Strategies to resolve the paradox will be proposed, and arguments will be presented to defend the view that it is possible to explain self-deception, at least to some degree, without resorting

to theories about unconscious motivation. Finally, the moral features of self-deception will be discussed and a case will be presented to support the claim that there are situations wherein truthfulness (with others as well as with oneself) is absolutely necessary to maintain social order, psychological security, epistemic equilibrium, and moral sanity.

2.2 Self-Deception and Related Locutions

Herbert Fingarette attempts a full-scale categorical analysis of the concept "self-deception" in his book by that title. We would be better off, Fingarette argues, if we spoke of self-deception (and related concepts) in terms of "volition-action" rather than in terms of "cognition-perception."[2] We should "not characterize consciousness as a kind of mental mirror, but as the exercise of the (learned) skill of 'spelling-out' some feature of the world as we are engaged in it."[3] "Rather than taking explicit consciousness for granted, we must come to take its absence for granted."[4] Paul Churchland makes this same point in his discussion of the recognition of mental states. He points out that consciousness is a *learned* accomplishment and that self-deception can be reduced by refining the discriminating mechanisms which we already possess.[5] Having realized this, we can recognize that "the person in self-deception is a person of whom it is a patent characteristic that even when normally appropriate he *persistently* avoids spelling-out some feature of his engagement in the world."[6] Thus far, Fingarette's analysis is cogent and useful. But at this point Fingarette introduces an analysis of "sincerity" which is confused and easily refuted. O'Connell and King-Farlow present a series of counterexamples which expose the problematic nature of Fingarette's analysis.[7]

I believe that Fingarette fails in his attempt to analyse self-deception because he falls victim to the Socratic Fallacy. Fingarette attempts to define self-deception in terms of its necessary and sufficient conditions. But perhaps self-deception is a rubric which subsumes a *family* (a la Wittgenstein) of

related but non-isomorphic concepts. If this is the case (as I believe it is), then there can not be any single account of self-deception which would be definitive. Different conditions would obtain for different species of the genus. Self-deception is not just one kind of state or activity; thus the term "self-deception" can be unpacked only in relation to specific contexts.[8] Thus Fingarette's attempt to provide *one* definition of self-deception which will serve in all possible circumstances is, from the outset, an abortive venture.

Fingarette's analysis of self-deception seeks to answer the question "What does self-deception mean?" In attempting to answer this question, Fingarette employs an essentialist analysis of the term "self-deception," an analysis which catalogues the different types of self-deception and the special conditions under which each type occurs. Let us turn now to a different mode of analysis, heeding Wittgenstein's epigramatic advice: "Don't ask for the meaning - ask for the use." In order to discover how the term "self-deception" is used, it will be necessary to employ family resemblance analysis.[9] As we examine the relatives of "self-deception," we shall endeavor to find elements which "criss-cross and overlap" (to borrow Wittgenstein's phrase) rather than seeking common elements. The ways in which we use the words "wishful thinking," "self-encouragement," "self-delusion," "ignorance," and "hypocrisy" will be compared and contrasted with the ways in which we use the word "self-deception," in an attempt to sort out the linguistic facts of the case. (With apologies to J. L. Austin.)

Brian McLaughlin contends that there is "a continuum of cases from mere wishful thinking to self-deception," and that "as we move toward self-

deception, the evidence against the relevant belief mounts," and "the person in question moves from slight inclination to believe that not-*p* toward actual belief that not-*p*."[10] Many people regard self-deception as a species of wishful thinking; this is hardly surprising in light of the fact that self-deception and wishful thinking both entail holding beliefs that are epistemically unwarranted. However, in spite of this superficial similarity, self-deception is definitely *not* a species of wishful thinking. Brian McLaughlin makes this clear by providing an excellent counterexample:

> One can be self-deceived in believing that *p* without desiring that *p*. Paranoia, for instance, *can* involve self-deception (though, of course, it need not). A paranoid might be self-deceived in believing that he is constantly being gossiped about. To be so self-deceived, the paranoid need not want to be gossiped about. It is, in part, because he wants not to be gossiped about that he suffers deeply in believing that he is being gossiped about. He is not a wishful thinker, yet he is a self-deceiver.[11]

Similarly, neither ignorance nor hypocrisy is a species of self-deception. Consider the case of a person who is a racist. If this racist is really unaware of her racist inclinations, then we would speak of her as being ignorant of her racism. We would *not* speak of her as being in a state of self-deception unless we felt that she had at least a modicum of awareness of her racism because, as David Sanford points out, "Mere lack of self-awareness is not self-deception."[12] Our essentialist analysis has already revealed that the self-deceiver must be aware of *p* (at some level) in order for self-deception to occur. Thus ignorance is not a species of self-deception because the ignorant

individual possesses so little self-knowledge that she does not need to hide anything from herself in order to avoid cognitive dissonance and achieve psychological equilibrium.

Hypocrisy, on the other hand, is a different matter altogether. The hypocrite knows himself very well indeed. So well, in fact, that he knows exactly what needs to be concealed from other people. The key here lies in those two words - other people. The hypocrite engages in interpersonal deception rather than in self-deception. The hypocrite may or may not be in a state of self-deception, but his hypocrisy *per se* does not establish that he is in a state of self-deception. Quite the contrary, the hypocrite who delivers philipics on the evils of racism while engaging in racist behaviors is keenly aware of his own racism, but desires that other people should not be aware of his true feelings. If a person behaves like a racist whilst railing against racism, and is not aware of the contradiction between his actions and his words, then he may well be a victim of self-deception, but he is not a hypocrite, at least not in the paradigmatic use of the word. In order to be paradigmatically hypocritical, one must recognize the chasm which separates one's belief statements from one's actions.

Thus far, I have focussed on the paradigmatic use of "hypocrite," but I concede that the word is sometimes used in cases which are less clear and less central than those which I have described. In fact, some of my colleagues contend that the person described above (who behaves like a racist whilst railing against racism) could indeed be described as a hypocrite without doing serious harm to language usage, regardless of whether or not he is aware of

the contradiction between his actions and his words. This ambiguity between central and peripheral cases of hypocrisy allows for the occurrence of an interesting phenomenon. We sometimes denounce other people as hypocrites on the basis of the standards of the peripheral case, but we insist upon applying the rigorous standards of the clear case to determine whether or not we are hypocrites. (Bertrand Russell has dubbed this practice "conjugating adjectives.") In other words, we equivocate by trading on the ambiguity between the clear and unclear cases. Conversely, some of us are so hard on ourselves that we label ourselves as hypocrites in cases wherein we would probably not label others as hypocrites. That is to say, we can be self-deceived as to whether or not we are hypocrites. This becomes very tricky, for, as David Sanford points out, even "a sincere self-ascription of self-deception . . . can itself be a case of self-deception."[13]

The distinction between self-deception and self-delusion is partially a matter of degree. Typically, we speak of someone as being self-deluded only if he manifests extreme self-deception. However, in at least some cases, the distinction between self-deception and self-delusion seems to be based upon considerations and criteria other than mere degree of self-deception. The term "self-deluded" sometimes suggests that the individual in question is *more* culpable than the garden variety self-deceiver, but in other cases suggests that the individual is *less* culpable. For example, when we label someone as being self-deluded we might mean that the individual is such an obtuse dolt that he deserves his misery and our contempt. Or, on the other hand, we might mean that the individual is so hopelessly entrapped in self-deception that he is a

pathetic and helpless victim who warrants our pity rather than our contempt. Even so, it seems clear that in either case (i.e. whether we feel inclined toward contempt or pity), the individual who is self-deluded is self-deceived to a very high degree. Robert Audi argues convincingly that "self-deception manipulates and partially buries, yet does not wholly overthrow, reason," whereas self-delusion (unlike self-deception) precludes even a veiled realization that one is self-deceived.[14] This analysis suggests that self-delusion, unlike self-deception, *does* wholly overthrow reason. Perhaps it is this feature of self-delusion - the complete abandonment of reason - which elicits our pity and/or our contempt. In the course of his discussion of self-delusion, Audi makes several interesting points about the nature of self-deception. He rightly observes that "if we were not minimally rational, as well as complex enough for a kind of dissociation, self-deception would not be possible at all; and if we did not care about and have a minimal grasp of reasons, we could not rationalize."[15] Moreover, self-deception tends to be unstable because it is precariously balanced between the truth and utter delusion. Audi suggests that "rationalization helps to keep that balance," even though "self-deceivers differ considerably in their thresholds for rationalization."[16]

Self-encouragement is a benevolent second cousin of self-deception. The distinction between the two words is not a matter of degree, but of consequences. That is to say, self-encouragement is not a minor or trivial example of self-deception. Indeed, as we shall see, self-encouragement can be self-deception on a

grand scale. Self-encouragement is never a derisive term; it is always commendatory. We would typically refer to a case of "unsuccessful attempted self-encouragement" as a self-deception, precisely to avoid the creation of a case of morally hazardous self-encouragement. Conversely, any act of self-deception (whether trivial or monumental) which is seen to produce desirable consequences, is likely to be described as self-encouragement rather than as positive self-deception. This is not unreasonable, since oftentimes we espouse cheerful philosophies in grim circumstances, not so much to *deceive* ourselves as to *change* ourselves. We have learned that the way we see our life situations can influence the outcome of those situations. Like Anna in *The King and I*, we "whistle a happy tune" - not to deceive ourselves about our fears, but to make our fears "go away," as it were. When I was younger and thinner (i.e. less old and less fat), I competed against older and better pianists in a provincial class at the Kiwanis Music Festival. When I arrived at the hall and saw my competitors and heard them warming up, I was torn between two possible courses of action - pretending to have sprained both of my wrists, or excusing myself to the washroom from whence I could flee or, if needs be, commit suicide. However, just prior to performing, I visualized myself playing my repertoire flawlessly and winning the class. I was not trying to deceive myself; indeed, I saw the truth with painful clarity! I was trying to *encourage* myself and thereby effect a change in myself which would result in a credible performance. In this instance, my self-encouragement was successful; I performed better than anyone (including moi!) dreamed that I could, and I won the class. This self-encouragement in the form of visualizing successful performance has long been

known to sport psychologists. Athletes who see themselves as losers spend precious little time in the winner's circle.

On a much more profound level, a friend of mine who was dying of cancer employed self-encouragement on a grand scale in order to make her final days less hideous - for herself and for her family and friends. My friend chose to believe in hope when there was no evidence to substantiate such a belief. Her insistence that there was still hope sustained her through her months of anguish. Thus, as Brian McLaughlin contends, "motivated beliefs can be prudentially rational, and they can . . . be so even when they are epistemically irrational."[17] This is the case, McLaughlin argues, because prudential reasons appeal to the willing aspect of the mind whereas evidential reasons appeal to the cognitive aspect of the mind.[18] Philosophical claims aside, my friend's campaign of self-encouragement created a blessed life for herself and for all of us who loved her; in spite of her relentless, excruciating agony, she transcended the black abyss of human mortality with dignity, courage, and serenity. And in transforming herself, she transformed those of us who were privy to her epic human journey.

My supervisor recently heard the following (true) story. A nurse overheard a patient dying of cancer and her husband talking of a trip to Hawaii. The nurse was concerned that the patient was in a state of denial (which I take to be a Freudian, or at least psychological, term for self-deception). The nurse, operating on the belief that one should not be self-deceived, decided to confront the patient with respect to her denial. The patient's response was, "It would be denial if we had bought the tickets." The line between hope and self-deception is a difficult one to draw!

I trust that this discussion of wishful thinking, ignorance, hyposcrisy, self-delusion, and self-encouragement has prepared the way for an analysis of self-deception by revealing that self-deception and its linguistic cousins are much more complicated (in terms of their usage) than they might first appear to be. Having set the stage, we must now address the central issue of this chapter, the paradox of self-deception.

2.3 The Paradox of Self-Deception

It seems that most laymen and at least some psychologists naively accept self-deception as a fact of existence. For example, psychologist Tod Sloan discusses a plethora of case studies in (putative) "self-deception" without defining self-deception (he does not even propose a stipulative or operational definition), and without acknowledging that self-deception is a problematic concept.[19] Similarly, psychologists Quattrone and Tversky devised an experiment to ascertain whether or not people actually do engage in self-deception. They concluded that people do indeed engage in self-deception, but their conclusion was not warranted on the basis of the data generated by the experiment because the experiment did not distinguish those subjects who deceived themselves from those who merely deceived the experimenters.[20] Like many psychologists and laymen alike, Quattrone and Tversky did not think deeply enough about the concept of self-deception.

In contrast to the naive and widely-held view that self-deception is both transparent and ubiquitous, many philosophers of mind contend that the term "self-deception" is a linguistic confusion which entails a logical contradiction. Alfred Mele's summary of the skeptic's rejection of literal self-deception provides an excellent springboard from which to launch our discussion of the supposed paradox of self-deception:

> Recent philosophical work on self-deception revolves around two interrelated collections of paradoxes. One collection focuses on the *state* of self-deception. The other is centrally concerned with the *processes* that produce this state. I shall call them, respectively, the static and dynamic paradoxes. In both cases, paradox

> is generated by the application of certain common assumptions about interpersonal deception to the *intra*personal variety. For example, it is frequently held that in order for one person to deceive another into believing that *p*, the former must know, or at least truly believe, that *p* is false, while getting the latter to believe that *p* is true. Thus, if self-deception is properly modeled after interpersonal deception, the self-deceiver must know or truly believe that *p* is false while getting *himself* to believe that *p* is true. If, as is often claimed, this involves his *simulataneously* believing that *p* and believing that not-*p*, self-deception may seem to be an impossible state, and we are saddled with a static paradox. Moreover, even if this doxastic condition is a possible one, the idea that a person can get himself into it by deceiving himself into believing that *p* raises distinct problems. It may seem that any project describable as "getting myself to believe what I now know to be false" is bound to be self-defeating. Thus, we are faced with a dynamic paradox.[21]

Raphael Demos draws our attention to what he regards as being the essential paradox of self-deception: "self-deception entails that B believes both *p* and not-*p* at the same time."[22] Since belief and disbelief in the same proposition are contradictories, Demos concludes that "it is logically impossible for them to exist at the same time in the same person in the same respect."[23] It is essential that we understand the full weight of Demos' argument. Belief and disbelief, knowing and not knowing, are contradictories, not contraries. "John is tall" and "John is short" are contraries because it is possible for both statements to be false. John could be "medium height," neither tall not short. In contrast, "John is tall" and "John is not tall" are contradictories; the two statements are mutually exclusive, and therefore one of them must be true and one of them must be false. Thus the old joke about being "slightly pregnant" is funny (well, supposedly) because it is an example of bifurcation in that contradictories (pregnant and not pregnant) are confused

with contraries (short and tall). The point of this digression is simply this: Demos' point that belief and disbelief are contradictories presents an extremely important logical challenge to those of us who wish to argue that self-deception is a meaningful term. However, the comment which I should like to make is that the Law of Non-Contradiction is a *logical* law rather than a *psychological* law. That is to say, it may be true that people actually *do* believe both *p* and not-*p* simultaneously (in spite of the blatant logical contradiction); people can (and do) believe and behave contrary to logic, at least some of the time. Even though Demos is correct in his assertion that believing both *p* and not-*p* simultaneously entails a logical contradiction, he himself contends that self-deception is nevertheless possible because there are two levels of awareness: one is simple awareness, the other is awareness together with attending or noticing. "It follows that [one] may be aware of something without, at the same time, noticing it or focussing [one's] attention on it."[24] Thus, Demos wants to claim, "the self-deceiver is capable of simultaneously believing that *p* and believing that not-*p* because he is distracted from the former."[25]

Alfred Mele adumbrates a host of strategies (such as Demos' "non-attending" strategy) which have been proposed to resolve the static and dynamic paradoxes of self-deception. I shall discuss only four strategies, but I shall discuss them in some detail. The most successful strategy, provided by Freud, explains the paradox of self-deception by asserting that the existence of the conscious and unconscious minds yields a divided self. This strategy is so potent (and, in some respects, so controversial) that I have devoted all of chapter three to a discussion of the psychoanalytic paradigm of self-deception.

Thus I shall discuss only three strategies in this chapter, all of which attempt to resolve the paradox of self-deception without resorting to theories of the unconscious mind or of divided selves. I will endeavor to show that (in at least some cases) self-deception is an acceptable locution, properly understood, even if one views the human mind as a unity. That is to say, I will attempt to demonstrate that self-deception *is* logically possible, and that the concept *does* admit of instantiation. To facilitate discussion, I shall refer to the three strategies as the Partitioner Theory (P), the Avowal Theory (A), and the Information Overload Theory (O).

Mike Martin, John King-Farlow, and other proponents of the Partitioner Theory regard self-deception as the failure to integrate conflicting social roles under the umbrella of the master self. Herbert Fingarette, the originator and principal apologist of the Avowal Theory, regards self-deception as the failure to spell out one's engagements in the world. A comparison of the P and A theories will reveal their unique perspectives as well as their respective strengths and weaknesses.

Mike Martin, an advocate of the Partitioner Theory, points out that "the air of paradox arises when we try to understand self-deception by modeling it strictly after interpersonal deception."[26] It is the model of interpersonal deception, Martin claims, which leads us into paradoxes about united and divided selves, knowing and not knowing, acting intentionally and unintentionally, being conscious and not conscious, and being responsible and not responsible. Martin proposes an interesting thesis:

> It seems to me that the relationship between "deceiving others" and "deceiving oneself" will turn out to be somewhat like the relationship between "teaching others" and "teaching oneself." Obviously if we tried to treat literal self-teaching as precisely like interpersonal teaching, then self-teaching would be impossible: one cannot first as a teacher know and be conscious of what one as a student is simultaneously ignorant and unaware. At the same time, teaching others and teaching oneself are not wholly unrelated, for in both forms of teaching there is intentional activity directed toward the acquisition of knowledge and understanding. Self-deception and interpersonal deception, by analogy, may often involve purposeful and intentional activities aimed at disguising and concealing truth, or evading its full acceptance and acknowledgment. But many different kinds of activities may be employed in any given instance: for example, ignoring what we suspect is true, disregarding evidence, avoiding inquiries, blocking appropriate emotional responses, avoiding suitable attitudinal adjustments, pretending to ourselves and others, and so on. The ways of evading self-acknowledgment are as varied as the ways of coming to acknowledge and understand ourselves and our world.[27]

Martin then proposes an insightful resolution to the problem of defining self-deception in a non-paradoxical manner. "So-called self-deception," he says, "is best viewed as a failure to have unification occur, rather than as a unified personality purposefully fending off a threatening subself."[28] Seen in this light, self-deception results when we fail to integrate our conflicting social roles under the umbrella of the master self. Ted's master self has extreme difficulty reconciling Ted-the-teacher-of-ethics with Ted-the-cat-burglar-extraordinaire; and Ted-the-loving-son resolves the conflict by pretending that he has never heard of Ted-the-cat-burglar-extraordinaire!

Brian McLaughlin lends credence to the Partitioner Theory when he points out that "habits of mind such as optimism can play a role [in self-

deception]" in that "the wishful thinker accentuates the positive and eliminates the negative more out of habit and interest than design."[29] Moreover, McLaughlin points out that "one can intentionally deceive oneself into believing something and into continuing to believe something via a memory-exploiting stratagem."[30] Thus habits of mind and memory-exploiting stratagems help to explain how (to use Martin's phrase) unification fails to occur.

I believe that Herbert Fingarette's emphasis on the notion of avowal is a very useful clue to solving the supposed paradox of self-deception. The contention that the self-deceiver "knows" the truth about that which he is deceiving himself but does not avow that truth (i.e. does not "spell out" that truth) makes a great deal of sense in the light of contemporary scholarship in linguistics. Many language utterances are indexical to the listener (although not to the speaker). That is to say, indexical language utterances make *complete* sense only if we know every detail of the context in which the utterances were produced. And only the speaker, not the listener, knows every such detail. Consider the following commonplace example. John says "Oh." Fine and dandy - but what does John mean when he says "Oh"? Does he mean, "Oh, I already knew that"? Or does he mean, "Oh, I am shocked to hear that"? Or does he mean, "Oh, I'm tired of listening to you so from now on I'm just going to nod my head and say 'Oh' as if I am paying attention to you, but in reality I am going to ignore you and daydream about a thrilling sexual encounter"? If we knew the context in which John said "Oh," we would have a much better chance of interpreting his "Oh" with some degree of accuracy. But we can never know *every* detail of the context, and so, although we can

usually make reasonable judgments about a speaker's intended meaning, we can never be *absolutely* sure about what John really means when he says "Oh." As the ethnomethodologist Harold Garfinkel points out, in indexical expressions "denotation is relative to the speaker."[31]

Well, at this point an astute reader would no doubt interject that my tangential foray into the nether world of linguistics has shed no light on self-deception because although the listener may not fully understand the meaning of John's indexical utterance (because the listener is not aware of every detail of the context in which the utterance took place, and so the listener is not able to remedy the indexicality of John's utterance), surely John *does* fully understand the meaning of his own utterance (for the rather obvious reason that John is aware of every detail of the context in which the utterance took place, and so John's utterance is not indexical for him). But is this true? Are we justified in assuming that John is indeed aware of every detail of the context of his own utterance? Are we justified in taking the linguists at their word and assuming dogmatically that language is indexical only for the listener, but never for the speaker?

I think not! On the contrary, I wish to contend that although (in most cases) speech utterances are more indexical for a listener than for the speaker, at least some speech utterances are indexical (to at least some degree) even for the speaker. Lest you think I have gone completely mad, let me try to explain why I think that this is the case.

Fingarette gives us the clue to solving this puzzle when he cautions us against taking explicit consciousness for granted. When John says "Oh," he

may mean a great many things all at the same time, but he may be explicitly aware of only some of the meanings that he conveys. He may mean (explicitly) something like "Oh, I knew that." But he may in fact be very bored with the conversation, and so his tone of voice may convey very clearly to his listener that he is saying something like "Oh, I am only standing here to be polite and I really don't care what you are yattering about." Or he may be more exhausted from a long day than even he realizes, and so his uninterested tone of voice might be a surprise (even to John himself) if we were to play an audiotape of his speech utterance. And if it is possible for John to be confronted with the problem of the indexicality of his own speech utterance of a simple phrase (if reflection about indexicality of language teaches us anything at all, of course, it teaches us that there are no such things as simple phrases - language is amazingly complex) like "Oh," then imagine the potential for problems with the indexicality of language for a speech utterance such as "I probably shouldn't have another rye and coke, but I'm so hot and tired, and nothing quenches my thirst like a small rye and coke at the end of a long day." There are so many thoughts and feelings interwoven into such utterances that we should not be surprised if even the speaker is not fully aware of every detail of the context of the speech utterance.

And, as if this were not confusing enough, there is an additional complication. That complication has a fancy name; it is called euphemism. Sometimes we deliberately employ euphemisms to avoid using blunt terminology which is likely to jar delicate sensibilities. The mortician who greets prospective clients by inquiring as to whether "the old coot has finally

kicked off" is likely to do less well than his competitor who greets clients in a similar situation by inquiring whether he can be of "assistance in this time of bereavement." Euphemism is a useful social facilitator. But sometimes we employ euphemism without realizing that we are doing so, and in such cases, euphemism presents an "easy out" for the would-be self-deceiver. Consider the case of Joyce, a woman who is, by any reasonable standard, an out and out lush (i.e. alcoholic of the first magnitude). Any objective observer who spent a week with Joyce would have no doubt that the woman was a hopeless drunkard. But Joyce has become so accustomed to describing herself as a "heavy drinker" that she has managed to avoid spelling out the significance that alcohol has in her life. She admits that she is a heavy drinker (perhaps too heavy, she'll agree), but her constant use of euphemism allows her to avoid facing the unpalatable reality that she is in fact a very, very, very, very (well, you get the idea) heavy drinker - a certified wino!

In fact, confronting Joyce with blunt language (like drunkard and wino) might well serve to entrench her even deeper into her conviction that she is not an alcoholic. Blunt terms like wino and drunkard may evoke in Joyce's mind the image of bums lying in the gutter. And since Joyce (who does most of her drinking in her penthouse apartment or in the penthouse apartments of her wealthy friends) knows that she has never awakened in a gutter, she may well conclude (not unreasonably, from her point of view) that she could not possibly be an alcoholic. At worst, she might admit that she drinks a "teensy bit" too much for her own good. Thus, by vacillating between comforting euphemism and grotesque understatement, Joyce manages to maintain her balance on a

precarious linguistic tight-rope. As long as Joyce is able to marshal euphemism and understatement as pawns in her campaign to avoid affirming (Fingarette would use the more technical term "avowing") her alcoholism, she is able to sustain her self-deception.

Having examined the Partitioner Theory and the Avowal Theory, let us turn our attention to the third strategy to explain the paradox of self-deception, the Information Overload Theory. The first point that needs to be made is that information overload is the normal state of affairs for a human brain. A myriad of (largely irrelevant) information is processed by the brain every moment, and the brain permits only a tiny fraction of that information to reach conscious awareness.[32] Thus all humans are programmed to ignore vast amounts of information all the time. This adaptation permits us to survive in our complex environment. It also endows every one of us with a ready-made capacity to deceive ourselves through careful censorship of information. Brian McLaughlin points out that "the skeptic is mistaken in thinking that a self-deceiver must intentionally deceive himself" because, as Jeffrey Foss has demonstrated, "the actions to which a belief-that-*p* state could give rise are so many and varied that contradictory beliefs may fail 'to clash' in a vast range of circumstances in which they are manifested."[33] Similarly, David Sanford has observed that "misapprehension [of one's attitudes] does not require inconsistent beliefs or a belief in conflict with what one really knows."[34] Although Sanford believes that there is such a thing as deliberate self-deception, he does not believe that the deliberate attempt to deceive oneself is

essential to being self-deceived. As he says:

> We are deceived when we are misled by appearances. It is primitive anthropomorphism to think of every deceptive appearance as set up with the intention to deceive.[35]

Mark Johnston takes a similar position when he observes that "as theorists of self-deception we tend to over-rationalize mental processes that are purposive but not intentional."[36] Accordingly, he suggests that self-deception is better understood in terms of purpose-serving but non-intentional mental tropisms.[37] Johnston points out that many philosophers (but most notably Jean-Paul Sartre) make the mistake of assuming that if self-deception is something that is *done* (rather than merely undergone), then it must be something that is done *intentionally* :

> We know already from the case of bodily activity that this assumption is false. For example, running our eyes predominantly over the tops and not the bottoms of printed words is something many of us do, since many of us read by running our eyes predominantly over the tops of printed words. A way to make this vivid to oneself is to cover the bottom half of a line of print and try to read it and then cover the top half of a similar line of print and try to read it.[38]

There is a sense in which we are all easy victims of self-deception because we are too busy and too preoccupied with a deluge of trivial daily concerns to take the time to reflect about our beliefs. As American essayist Irwin Edman has pointed out, even our leisure time is often stereotyped, programmed, and mechanical.[39] We spend so little time in solitary reflection that we become afraid to be alone with our thoughts, and so we never allow ourselves any serenity or self-examination.[40] And thus we often censor

(purposefully, although not necessarily intentionally) information that is needed if we are ever to unearth our self-deceptions. Joyce, like all of us, possesses this capacity to censor information. (Remember Joyce, our *very* heavy drinker?) Joyce is so busy attending to the details of her job, her responsibilities at home, her community service work, and her social life that she can not possibly keep track of every little detail of her day to day existence. And, tragically, one of the little details that she fails to keep track of is the amount of alcohol that she consumes each and every day. Perhaps we should note the obvious: Joyce is *not* culpable as a result of failing to notice every contextual detail of her environment. Philosophers have long recognized the validity of the maxim "ought implies can." It would be logically absurd and morally unjust to hold Joyce responsible for actions over which she can not exercise control. Joyce is culpable only if she knowingly fails to attend to a detail which she knows (or suspects) to be of importance. However, since it is exceedingly difficult to establish whether Joyce "knows" or does not "know" about her alcoholism, it is difficult to determine whether or not Joyce is morally culpable for her alcoholism. And thus we can see why charges of self-deception leave the accused self-deceiver in a state of moral ambiguity.

The moral features of self-deception will be discussed more fully in the next section of this chapter (2.4). Before proceeding to that discussion, however, I would like to make some general comments with respect to the Avowal, Partitioner, and Information Overload Theories. As I have indicated in the preceeding pages, I see merit in all three of these attempts to resolve the paradox of self-deception. However, I believe that cases of self-deception

which involve unconscious sexual motives and desires can be explained more thoroughly and more clearly by the psychoanalytic model of unconscious motivation and defense than by the A, P, or O theories. In chapters three and four, therefore, I will attempt to demonstrate just how useful (indeed, indispensible) the psychoanalytic model is with respect to explaining certain cases of psycho-sexual self-deception. For now, I would like to make one crucial point. Brian McLaughlin (who, along with Mark Johnston, would like to avoid the homuncularism of the psychoanalytic model) admits that one intractable problem with the A, P, and O explanations is that contradictory beliefs are problematic, ultimately, in that "it seems that they will clash in situations that prompt their *expression.*"[41] This is a very serious problem indeed for the A, P, and O theorists. Significantly, it is *not* a problem for the psychoanalytic theorists because it is not difficult to see how a self-deceiver could hold two contradicotry beliefs if one of them is held unconsciously. In fact, McLaughlin concedes that the standard response to this difficulty of holding contradictory beliefs is the contention that one of the contradictory beliefs is held unconsciously. However, since McLaughlin would prefer not to resort to the theory of unconscious motivation to resolve the paradox of self-deception, he suggests as an alternative explanation the theory that some beliefs may be held consciously, yet be "inaccessible."[42] To be perfectly blunt, it seems to me that McLaughlin's theory that there are beliefs that are both conscious and inaccessible is nothing other than an arbitrary refusal to concede that the notion of *unconscious* belief is *essential* to resolve the paradox of self-deception. In spite of McLaughlin's display of linguistic virtuosity (or,

less charitably, logomachy), one is left with the nagging notion that McLaughlin's "inaccessible conscious belief" is none other than the very same unconscious belief that McLaughlin seeks to eliminate from his theoretical model. By way of summary, then, my point is as follows: In spite of the contributions of the A, P, and O theories, only the psychoanalytic theory can successfully resolve the paradox of self-deception in *all* cases, including those problematic ones wherein the contradictory beliefs are likely to be expressed, thus exposing the contradiction. But more of that later, in chapters three and four. For now, as indicated at the beginning of this paragraph, we will turn our attention to the moral features of self-deception.

2.4 The Moral Features of Self-Deception

Obviously one *ought* to eliminate self-deception if self-deception is morally evil; equally obviously, one *ought not* to eliminate self-deception if self-deception is morally good. But this "answer" is inefficacious in that it merely poses a prior question: Is self-deception good or evil? King-Farlow and Bosley assert that the orthodox view is that self-deception is always either sick (psychologically) or evil (morally), whereas in fact self-deception can bring about human flourishing *(eudaemonia)*.[43] I am not convinced that King-Farlow and Bosley are correct in their assertion that the orthodox view is that self-deception is always sick or evil. A few weeks ago a faculty member asked me if I had selected a focus for my dissertation research. When I replied that I had decided to focus on self-deception, the faculty member responded as follows: "Good for you. We need all the self-deception we can get in this world. I couldn't get through the day without it!" I submit that there are two widely-held views of self-deception, highly polarized and equally mistaken. Some people assume that all self-deception is evil or sick; others assume that all self-deception is useful and even necessary.[44] The defensible position, as King-Farlow and Bosley point out, is that self-deception lies on an Aristotelian Mean, having enormous potential to generate either good or evil, depending upon the circumstances. O'Connell and King-Farlow point out that self-deception is analogous to lying:

> There are white lies which minister well to laudable ends. Then there are black lies which poison, and dark grey lies which gradually destroy the humanity of the liar. Where there is no particular reason of some weight to deviate from the truth, reason and ethics

> stand against lying.[45]

King-Farlow and Bosley conclude, and I concur, that self-deception is "so Protean a term that projects of composing a single definition of *all* its senses must arise from a simplistic, Procrustean analysis."[46]

Robert Audi states the case for the moral ambiguity of self-deception very straightforwardly:

> We do sometimes talk of someone's being a "victim" of self-deception. But being a victim is not always extenuating, and there is such a thing as highly culpable credulity, which can make the ill-fated dupe a subject more fitted for reproach than for extenuation. In the case of self-deception, one has the added burden of being responsible for both deceiver and dupe.[47]

David Sanford goes further than Audi, suggesting that certain aspects or features of self-deception are responsible for the moral status of self-deception:

> So long as self-deception is regarded as a kind of lying to oneself, it appears, as a kind of lying, to be immoral. When it is regarded, as I suggest, as a kind of misapprehension of one's attitude structures, it ceases to appear to be an intrinsically immoral failing. It is the moral status of the particular attitudes involved and the actions they motivate which determines the moral status of particular instances of self-deception.[48]

As we have already noted, King-Farlow and Bosley have demonstrated that self-deception is a Protean term. Accordingly, we must examine the *specific contextual details* of an act of self-deception in order to ascertain whether or not the act is morally laudable or repugnant - or somewhere in between! However, the problem with any proposed distinction between morally culpable self-deception and morally harmless self-deception is that there is no way that we could know, prior to ascertaining the specific contextual details of the acts

of self-deception, which self-deceptions will turn out to be morally culpable and which ones will turn out to be morally harmless (or even laudable). The moral status of a self-deception is only verifiable *after* the results of the self-deception are apparent, but - and here is the problem - the endemic uncertainty of teleological prognostication is notorious! Consider the case of two men, Rufus and Jeremy, who have jogged four miles together every day for several years. One day (probably a Thursday) Jeremy confides to Rufus that he (Jeremy) has been very tired lately. Rufus, who has also been tired of late, assures Jeremy that there is nothing to worry about. Jeremy wants to believe Rufus' interpretation of the situation, and so he persuades himself (deceives himself) that there is nothing to worry about. During their daily jog, Jeremy has a heart attack and is granted tenure at that great jogging track in the sky. After the funeral (at which a charming fellow named Ted delivers a wonderful eulogy) Rufus realizes that he "knew something was wrong" and that he was "just kidding himself" when he dismissed Jeremy's symptom as being *merely* fatigue. In retrospect, Rufus comes to realize that what he took to be a morally inconsequential fact (Jeremy's fatigue) was actually a morally significant fact (a warning of heart disease). Rufus is much comforted (philosophically) to have recognized this distinction between morally significant facts and morally inconsequential facts; Jeremy's grief-stricken widow (and now single parent of twenty-two children) is somewhat less comforted by Rufus' philosophical coup. And even if Rufus and Jeremy could (in principle) have known in advance that Jeremy's fatigue was a morally significant fact, it is precisely these sorts of morally significant facts that we

are likely to deceive ourselves into construing as morally inconsequential facts.

Mike Martin presents a very thought-provoking discussion of the Vital Lie Tradition in philosophy and literature, a tradition which Martin describes as follows:

> The Vital Lie Tradition confronts us with the possible good of self-deception and the possible harm in seeking to eliminate it from ourselves and others. It portrays self-deception as frequently beneficial and healthy, and often benign. And it emphasizes the role of self-deception as a valuable coping technique promoting vital human needs such as self-respect, self-improvement, hope, friendship, love, and viable community.[49]

As my comments on self-encouragement (in section 2.2) would suggest, I am inclined to be sympathetic to many aspects of the Vital Lie Tradition in spite of the fact that I believe that self-deception can sometimes be exceedingly harmful and immoral. The problem, of course, as I have already suggested, is that oftentimes it is difficult (impossible?) to know in advance whether a particular self-deception (whether one's own or that of someone else) is constructive or destructive, morally laudable or morally culpable.[50] Accordingly, I concur with Mike Martin's forthright admission that "it is virtually impossible not to be sometimes self-deceived in ways that cause harm to ourselves or to others."[51] But I also concur with David Sanford's warning that we are sometimes too hard on ourselves, and that "self-hatred can cloud one's perception of reality as much as self-love."[52]

Assuming that self-deception *is* a meaningful concept, and assuming that self-deception *is* an impediment to self-knowledge, and assuming that a

reasonable person *would* prefer self-knowledge over self-ignorance (with the exception of a minimum of "vital lies"), it would seem reasonable for people to rid themselves of self-deception in order to acquire greater self-knowledge. After all, did not Socrates exhort his acolytes to "Know thyself"?[53] Alas, Socrates' motto is easier said than done! Put very plainly, the problem is this: How can the self-deceiver break out of his circle of self-deception?

My contention is that the self-deceiver can *not* break out of his circle of self-deception - unless he has help from other people! In order to escape from his self-deceptions, the self-deceiver needs insights from other people, people who (although they may be deceived about some things) do not share his repertoire of self-deceptions. I hasten to add that these people need not be present in the flesh; historical accounts and philosophical arguments that challenge one's beliefs, as well as vicarious identification with fictional characters, for example, can provide the self-deceiver with profound insights into his self-deceptions. The important point is that only within a *community* of moral agents is there any possibility of exposing self-deceptions. The problem, of course, is that if we associate only with persons of similar background (who are likely to be deceived about a similar matrix or cluster of beliefs), the likelihood of recognizing our self-deceptions *as* self-deceptions is remote. The religious fanatic who associates exclusively with a small circle of similarly inclined religious fanatics is likely to remain a religious fanatic since his friends will not be able to recognize his fanaticism. Quite the contrary, their own fanaticism will serve to fuel his fanatical fires!

However, notwithstanding the fact that there are problems endemic to

the "community of moral agents" solution to self-deception, the role played by moral agents other than ourselves in reducing self-deception is a vital one. Paul Churchland points out that self-consciousness has a very large *learned* component.[54] Since Churchland regards surgical or genetic modification of our innate introspective mechanisms as an unrealistic possibility in the short term, he suggests that "perhaps we can learn to make more refined and penetrating use of the discriminatory mechanisms we already possess."[55] And it is our community of moral agents, I suggest, which can assist us in this endeavor.

At a lecture delivered at the University of Alberta in 1987, Mary Midgley pointed out that belief is complex. We trust the beliefs of people whom we trust. We *must* do so because we cannot verify everything personally. But, Midgley argued, we sometimes deny that this trust is present, *and* necessary. In a similar vein, Adrienne Rich summarizes the importance of being able to trust friends in the process of constructing our world and in our search for self-knowledge:

> We take so much of the universe on trust . . . . Because I love you, because there is not even a question of lying between us, I take [your] accounts of the universe on trust . . . . I allow my universe to change in minute, significant ways, on the basis of things you have said to me, of my trust in you.[56]

The monumental importance of truthfulness and trust between friends is revealed all too clearly when a friend betrays our trust. Adrienne Rich makes this point with great eloquence:

> When we discover that someone we trusted can be trusted no longer, it forces us to reexamine the universe, to question the whole instinct and concept of trust. For a while, we are thrust back onto some bleak,

> jutting ledge, in a dark pierced by sheets of fire, swept by sheets of rain, in a world before kinship, or naming, or tenderness exist; we are brought close to formlessness.[57]

When someone close to us betrays our trust, we have terrible doubts about our ability to judge character, and we lose confidence and trust in ourselves.

How much worse, then, when we betray ourselves! The consequences of betraying ourselves through self-deception are utterly devastating. Upon recognizing that we are self-deceived, we feel (at least momentarily) that we can no longer trust ourselves. And if we can not trust ourselves, whence do we turn? Even though the recognition of our self-deception is (in the long run) a positive first step in ridding ourselves of self-deception, the recognition temporarily destroys the purposefulness of our existence and leaves us in a terrible void, with a convicted liar as our only companion. Small wonder that we have difficulty facing up to our self-deceptions. And, since we *do* have so much difficulty facing up to our self-deceptions precisely because we wish to avoid the excruciating pain that accompanies the recognition of self-deception, the psychoanalytic model of transforming self-deceptions into self-knowledge, with the assistance of a therapist, is particularly appealing because *the therapist provides much-needed support and thereby mitigates the pain of facing our self-deceptions.* For that story, turn to chapter three!

CHAPTER TWO: FOOTNOTES

1. Daniel Goleman, "Who Are You Kidding" in *Psychology Today* (March 1987), p. 24.

2. Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 34.

3. Ibid., p. 39.

4. Ibid., p. 42.

5. Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), pp. 73 & 158.

6. Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception,* p. 47

7. Cf. John King-Farlow and Sean O'Connell, *Self-Conflict and Self Healing,* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), pp. 178-180.

8. Cf. Ibid., p. 174.

9. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization" in Brain P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 163.

10. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Possibility of Self-Deception in Belief" in Brian P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives in Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 44-45.

11. Ibid., p. 40.

12. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization," p. 164.

13. Ibid., p. 167.

14. Robert Audi, "Self-Deception, Rationalization, and Reasons for Acting" in Brain P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), pp. 116 & 96.

15. Ibid., p. 110.

16. Ibid., pp. 109 & 110.

17. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Possibility of Self-Deception in Belief," p. 47.

18. Ibid., p. 47. McLaughlin's putative distinction between the cognitive and

willing aspects of the mind notwithstanding, Robert Audi points out that "self-deception powerfully exhibits the extent to which our beliefs are not under the direct control of our wills. Otherwise one could simply refuse to countenance the evidence and could bring oneself to believe what one self-deceivingly avows." (Cf. Robert Audi, "Self-Deception, Rationalization, and Reasons for Acting," p. 110.)

19. Cf. Tod S. Sloan, *Deciding: Self-Deception in Life Choices* (New York: Methuen, 1987).

20. Neil R. Carlson, *Psychology* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1987), pp. 602-603.

21. Alfred Mele, "Recent Work on Self-Deception" in *American Philosophical Quarterly* (Volume 24, Number 1, January 1987), p. 1.

22. Raphael Demos, "Lying to Oneself" in *Journal of Philosophy* (Volume 57), p. 588.

23. Ibid., p. 591.

24. Ibid., p. 593.

25. Ibid., p. 594.

26. Mike Martin (ed.), *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 13.

27. Ibid., p. 19.

28. Ibid., p. 22.

29. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Possibility of Self-Deception in Belief," p. 43.

30. Ibid., p. 32.

31. Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), p. 5.

32. Daniel Goleman, "Who Are You Kidding," p. 28.

33. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Possibility of Self-Deception in Belief," pp. 44 & 48.

34. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization," p. 169.

35. Ibid., p. 163.

36. Mark Johnston, "Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind" in Brian P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 65.

37. Cf. J. L. Austin, "Three Ways of Spilling Ink" in *The Philosophical Review* (Volume 75, Number 4, 1966). Austin analyses "intentionally," "deliberately," and "purposely" in a delightful and insightful essay in which he points out that a child could spill ink in three different ways: deliberately (after thinking about it carefully), intentionally (spilling ink is what he wishes to do), and purposely (his purpose is to attract attention).

38. Mark Johnston, "Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind," p. 86.

39. Cf. Irwin Edman, "On American Leisure" in Earl W. Buxton *et al.* (eds.), *Points of View* (Toronto: Gage, 1967).

40. Cf. Ronald Rolheiser, *The Loneliness Factor* (Denville, New Jersey: Dimension Books, 1979).

41. Brian P. McLaughlin, "Exploring the Possibility of Self-Deception in Belief," p. 49.

42. Ibid., p. 50.

43. Cf. John King-Farlow and Richard Bosley, "Self-Formation and the Mean" in Mike Martin (ed.), *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), p. 196.

44. Compare, for example, Bertrand Russell's famous hyperbole that "Better the world should perish than I or any other human being should believe a lie" with the Vital Lie Tradition as discussed later in section 2.4 of this thesis. Russell is quoted in Robert C. Solomon, *The Big Questions* (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986), p. 146.

45. John King-Farlow and Sean O'Connell, *Self-conflict and Self Healing* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), p. 173.

46. John King-Farlow and Richard Bosley, "Self-Formation and the Mean," p. 219.

47. Robert Audi, "Self-Deception, Rationalization, and Reasons for Acting," p. 117.

48. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization," p. 109.

49. Mike W. Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1986), p. 137.

50. As David Sanford points out, the famiiy of "deception" nouns easily admit of a process-product shift. (Cf. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization," p. 163.)

51. Mike W. Martin, *Self-Deception and Morality*, p. 137.

52. David H. Sanford, "Self-Deception as Rationalization," p. 165.

53. As J. S. Mill has remarked, "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the fool, or the pig, are of a different opinion, it is because they only know their own side of the question. The other party to the comparison knows both sides." [Cf. John Stuart Mill, *Utilitarianism* (Indianapolis, Bobbs-Merrill, 1957), p. 14.]

54. Paul Churchland, *Matter and Consciousness,* p. 73.

55. Ibid., p. 158

56. Adrienne Rich, "Women and Honor: Some Notes on Lying (1957)" in *On Lies, Secrets, and Silence* (New York: Norton, 1979), p. 192.

57. Ibid., p. 192.

CHAPTER THREE:

FREUDIAN DEFENSE AND SELF-DECEPTION

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I attempted to provide some explanations of self-deception without resorting to claims about unconscious motivation. However, those explanations notwithstanding, I shall now argue that many cases of self-deception can be explained most simply and convincingly in terms of unconscious motivation, and, moreover, that some cases of self-deception can be explained *only* in terms of unconscious motivation. Thus, I have chosen to place great emphasis on the conscious/unconscious dichotomy because I believe that this model provides the most satisfactory resolution to the supposed paradox of self-deception. In this chapter, then, I shall focus on the explanation of self-deception which is based upon the premise that people sometimes act as a result of motivations of which they are not consciously aware. Sigmund Freud, the famous (infamous?) founder of psychoanalysis, explored the notion of unconscious motivation in his writings on "defense." The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to explore the relationship which obtains between the Freudian concept of defense and the concept of self-deception.[1] Before undertaking this task, however, I must do some preparatory work. First, there will be an adumbration of Freudian Theory (section 3.2), followed by an assessment of the current status of psychoanalysis (section 3.3). Then a brief discussion of the problem of

freedom and autonomy in relation to Freudian theory (section 3.4) will precede a more detailed analysis of the Freudian concept of defense (section 3.5). And then I will be able to address the central issue of this chapter, the relationship of defense to self-deception (section 3.6). The chapter will conclude with a concise taxonomy of defense mechanisms (section 3.7).

3.2 Overview of Freudian Theory

"Psychoanalytic Theory" is a set of six related theories which are concerned with instincts, development, psychic structure, defense, symptom formation, and treatment. This set of theories is "held together by the general theory of the unconscious."[2]

Freud described three components of the mind: the id, the superego, and the ego. It is important to note that Freud did not use the Latin pronouns *id* and *ego.* Instead he used the German pronouns *es* and *ich* (more precisely, he converted these two very common pronouns into nouns, *das Es* and *das Ich*), both of which have myriad personal associations for native German speakers. Bruno Bettelheim exposes the consequences of this unfortunate mistranslation of Freud: "The translation of [*das Es* and *das Ich*] into their Latin equivalents rather than into their English ones turned them into cold technical terms which arouse no personal associations."[3] And thus began the campaign (especially in the English-speaking world) to promote psychoanalysis as an arcane and abstruse *medical* specialty (for, as Bettelheim points out, Latin is known to most English speakers as the language of prescriptions!) rather than as an intensely personal humanistic enterprise. Notwithstanding these difficulties, I shall use the Latin pronouns throughout this dissertation, not because I find them a felicitous translation of Freud's intentions, but because the Latin pronouns are used in virtually *all* English translations of Freud's work. To return to the main argument, then, the id is comprised of inherited instincts (biological drives and impulses) such as sex and aggression, and is motivated by the Pleasure Principle. As a child grows older, the social and cultural

restraints imposed upon him or her become internalized as a kind of conscience - the superego. The ego, the rational component of the mind, employs what Freud calls the Reality Principle to mediate between the external world and the desires of the id, and later, between the desires of the id and the restrictions of the superego. "Failure by the ego to obtain satisfaction for the desires of the id leads to frustration, whereas failure to act in accordance with the demands of the superego leads to anxiety."[4] Hans Eysenck points out that Plato portrayed this tension between biological and social man in his famous fable of two horses pulling a chariot, with one driver trying to control them:

> The driver is the ego; the bad, wilful and impulsive horse is the id, and the good horse is the super-ego. Both Plato and Freud are clearly using the mechanism of a fable to illustrate a perfectly sensible and well-known feature of human behavior. We are biosocial animals, with biology dictating certain instinctual needs for food, drink, sex and so forth, but our actions are also controlled by social demands incorporated in rules and laws, and transmitted by parents, teachers and others. The individual person is driven and guided by these two sets of directive impulses, and has to mediate between them.[5]

But there is a twist in Freud's fable! Freud regarded the superego as being a part of the ego which developed as a result of the famous (infamous?) Oedipus complex. The young child experiences sexual attraction to the parent of the opposite sex, but feels threatened by the physical superiority of the other parent. This traumatic event is a harbinger of things to come: "Child development is thus not a smooth and uncontradictory evolution but a more or less successful movement through a series of conflicts, in which not only

actual events but also the child's own phantasies play key roles."[6] This pattern of conflict and resolution continues into adult life, whereupon religion, in its monotheistic form, "replaces the fallible father of reality by projecting onto the heavens an omnipotent and infallible father. By this means the status of a child can be retained into adult life."[7] Freud believed that, as far as the mind was concerned, fantasy was as real as reality. This conviction was the foundation for his doctrine of the omnipotence of thought.[8] Early in his career, Freud had developed the Seduction Theory, believing that his patients (when they were still children) had been sexually molested by their parents. He later revised the Seduction Theory, asserting that children merely *fantasized* that they had been sexually molested by their parents and then, as a result of the omnipotence of thought, had come to believe that their fantasies were memories of actual occurrences.[9]

Freud was committed to the view that "there is an empirical correlation between the occurrence of certain types of events in early childhood and the exhibition of certain traits in adult life."[10] The neuroses of the adult have their genesis in infancy. The tension between the instinctual sexual desires of the id and the social and moral restraints of the superego originates at the time of the Oedipus complex. As the child progresses through the oral, anal, and genital stages of psycho-sexual development, he or she may become "fixated" at one of the stages, thus never reaching psychological maturity.[11] Any conflicts which are not resolved along the path to maturity have the potential to become manifest in neurotic symptoms in adulthood.

Throughout adult life, the ego protects the priggish superego from the prurient id by means of the defense mechanisms. Thoughts which are unacceptable to the superego are not permitted to enter consciousness.

This brings us to the most crucial element of Freudian theory, the distinction between the conscious mind (Cs), the preconscious mind (Pcs), and the unconscious mind (Ucs). Since these distinctions are so central to psychoanalysis, I will let Freud speak for himself:

> We were accustomed to think that every latent idea was so because it was weak and that it grew conscious as soon as it became strong. We have now gained the conviction that there are some latent ideas which do not penetrate into consciousness, however strong they may have become. Therefore we may call the latent ideas of the first type [preconscious], while we reserve the term unconscious (proper) for the latter type which we came to study in the neuroses. . . . Every [mental] act begins as an unconscious one, and it may either remain so or go on developing into consciousness, according as it meets with resistance or not. The distinction between [preconscious] and unconscious activity is not a primary one, but comes to be established after repulsion has sprung up. Only then the difference between [preconscious] ideas, which can appear in consciousness and reappear at any moment, and unconscious ideas which cannot do so gains a theoretical as well as a practical value.[12]

At this point, Freud presents an analogy to clarify the three concepts. He compares the Cs mind to a photograph, and the Pcs and Ucs to negatives. Those negatives which are developed into photographs are the Pcs, whereas those negatives which are never developed into photographs are the Ucs. In a much quoted phrase, Freud expresses the function of psychoanalysis, to make conscious that which was unconscious: "Where id was, there ego shall be."[13]

Believe it or not, unsuspecting reader, you have just been subjected to

a four-page synopsis of Freudian theory. (May God, and Freud, forgive me!) I am willing to grant, however, that I have omitted a *few* minor details in the interest of brevity. By way of apology, I promise to elaborate on some of the intricacies of the defense mechanisms later in this chapter.

3.3 Current Status of Psychoanalysis

Psychoanalysis reached the height of its popularity during the forties, fifties, and early sixties. Since that time, both behaviorism and cognitive theory have surpassed psychoanalysis in the psychology ratings game. In the last few years the challenges to the various psychoanalytic theories have become increasingly vituperative and polemical, but much of the criticism, even the most contumacious, is justified and long overdue.

Karl Popper initiated the campaign against psychoanalysis with his contention that it is *not* a scientific theory because it does not meet the falsifiability criterion.[14] Some contemporary critics, however, disagree with Popper's evaluation: they are convinced not only that psychoanalysis is capable of being empirically falsified, but that it *has* been empirically falsified. Eysenck and Wilson, for example, survey a plethora of empirical studies of psychoanalysis and conclude that the psychoanalytic theories are victims of the following deficiencies:[15]

1. Unwillingness to discuss alternative hypotheses
2. Indefinite nature of the theories
3. Lack of statistical sophistication
4. Unwillingness to review the evidence
5. Embracing of contradictory positions
6. Willful non-replication of experiments
7. Non-Freudian basis of 'Freudian' theories

There is no doubt that psychoanalysts have drawn some astoundingly grandiose conclusions on the basis of very little evidence (some critics would

say *no* empirically verifiable evidence!). A brief examination of the facts concerning four of Freud's most spectacular success stories reveals an egregious disregard for scientific objectivity and intellectual honesty. The Wolf Man was discharged as cured after four years of analysis; but his symptoms continued for the next sixty years, until his death.[16] All paranoia in males, Freud concluded, was the result of latent homosexuality. This conclusion was based on one meeting with one patient, Daniel Paul Schreber - and Schreber was actually a transsexual, not a homosexual, who was almost certainly suffering from schizophrenia, not paranoia.[17] Freud abandoned his career in neurology and established his "talking cure" when he treated Anna O. for neurosis. Anna O. was (almost certainly) suffering from tuberculous meningitis, not neurosis (although Freud was suffering from both neurosis and cocaine addiction at the time).[18] Freud formulated theories regarding the Oedipus complex, castration fear, and early infantile sexuality as universal components of childhood psychic life. These formulations were based on one meeting with one patient, little Hans, who had been frightened when he witnessed an accident involving a horse and carriage.[19] Eysenck concludes from these so-called success stories that "[Freud] was, without doubt, a genius, not of science, but of propaganda, not of rigorous proof, but of persuasion, not of the design of experiments, but of literary art."[20]

A contemporary of Freud, Ebbinghaus, complained of Freud's theories that "what is new is not true, and what is true is not new."[21] This is a harsh judgement, but one that many psychologists and philosophers endorse.

Ellenberger points out that the concept of the unconscious mind (the basis of Freudian theory) was already very well established prior to Freud's earliest writings on the subject.[22] Sulloway reveals (with a myriad of historical evidence) that the picture of Freud as an isolated genius ostracized by his academic peers for his relentless dedication to truth is a myth; Freud's predecessors had discussed sexuality as openly as Freud, and Freud's work received recognition in academic circles from the very beginning.[23] Stannard exposes Freud's psycho-history as an inverted pyramid of fanciful fiction balanced precariously upon a foundation of misinterpreted or imagined facts.[24]

Much of Freud's 'evidence' for psychoanalytic theory is generated by his work on dream interpretation; consequently, much of the criticism of Freudian theory focuses on the alleged inadequacies of Freud's analysis of dreams. Eysenck contends that dream analysis *disproves* psychoanalytic theory since patients are consciously aware of 'hidden' meanings and since these meanings do not originate in infancy: Eysenck concludes that Freud's own analysis of his patients' dreams does not support Freud's claim that dreams express repressed wishes which originate in early infancy.[25] Other critics have pointed out that Freud's interpretations of his patients' dreams are suspect because the interpretations are based more on secondary elaboration than on the actual dreams. Freud knew about the dangers of secondary elaboration, but he chose to ignore their implications for his work.[26] Wittgenstein once observed, with characteristic ironic wit, that Freud went to a lot of effort to formulate clandestine sexual interpretations of dreams, while simultaneously

ignoring those blatant sexual dreams which are "as common as rain."[27] More recently, C. S. Hall has suggested that dreams are a medium of symbolic thought[28] and that they serve to *express* (albeit metaphorically) rather than to hide our thoughts and feelings.[29]

Contemporary neurologists have pointed out that our present knowledge of the morphology and physiology of the human brain renders otiose Freud's quaint notions about the origin and treatment of neuroses. The triune brain theorists insist that emotions originate in the limbic system of the paleocortex, and that conditioning is the operative term in relation to the acquisition and the extinction of emotions. Eysenck underlines the significance of this fact when he asserts that "neurotic disorders are essentially conditioned emotional responses."[30] Conditioning (or extinction), not psychoanalysis, is the logical treatment for the so-called neuroses.

Even if Freud's conclusions were based on good evidence and sound experimental methodology, the model which he develops requires a "Byzantine" system of theoretical structures.[31] And psychoanalysts are notorious for using the ambiguities of this Byzantine system to evade the arguments of their critics. If an experiment does not yield the behavior which Freudian theory predicts, the claim can always be made that the subjects were merely displaying reaction-formation; they experienced X in their Ucs mind, but they displayed not-X in their Cs behavior! This retreat to systematic ambiguity has led many critics to conclude that "To find that one can derive support for a given theory from case history material speaks far less to the

empirical validity of the theory than to the interpretive skills of the theorist."[32] And, if all else fails, the psychoanalyst can always resort to the oldest non-argument of them all, the *ad hominem:* The reason that you are not able to appreciate the contribution of psychoanalysis is that you are yourself the victim of repression and so you resist facing the truth (that psychoanalysis is *true*) because the truth is too threatening!

Well, where does this leave psychoanalysis as a scientific theory? In a rather sorry state, I would suggest. Perhaps the title of Hans Eysenck's most recent book says it all: *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire.* Eysenck suggests that Freudian theory remains popular because it gives the illusion of getting something for nothing; we want to believe that "we can transcend the limitations of our factual material, and arrive at conclusions which are breath-taking in their generality." "More than that," Eysenck continues, "if we have no facts at all, then we can make them up, using the suggested 'scientific laws' of psychoanalysis to deduce what the facts must have been!"[33] Ultimately, Eysenck contends that he has proved that psychoanalytic theories are not scientific theories; I think that he may be correct in this contention.

Although he never asserts it, Eysenck tacitly assumes that because psychoanalytic theories are not scientific theories, they are without value. I think that he is mistaken in this assumption. In spite of the many problems which have been catalogued with respect to Freudian theory, I believe that the "mumbo-jumbo" still has something to offer. Many of the behaviorist criticisms of psychoanalysis are thinly-veiled examples of the genetic fallacy. The fact that Freud formulated his theories under conditions which were often

less than ideal from the standpoint of the scientific paradigm of the experimental method does not establish (as critics like Eysenck seem to think) that psychoanalysis must necessarily be fundamentally flawed. Furthermore, Eysenck and other detractors of Freudian theory base many of their criticisms on an obfuscation: theory and therapy are conflated, as are explanation and prediction. It is not logically inconsistent to admit that Freud was (perhaps) a failure as a therapist, but (possibly) a success as a theoretician. Similarly, it is not a logical contradiction to claim that psychoanalytic theory may be a powerful heuristic model to explain human behavior even if it sometimes fails to predict human behavior. It could just be that human behavior is more complex (and less amenable to simplistic analysis) than most behaviorists are willing to admit. The emotions and the motivations of humans may differ so radically from those of laboratory rats that psychoanalysis may still be useful after all - unless we are only interested in helping neurotic rats! We should remember the *caveat* which is adumbrated by Quine in his celebrated paper on empiricism.[34] It would be foolhardy to jettison a paradigm such as psychoanalytic theory, flawed as it may be, until such time as we can replace it with a better heuristic model. Unlike Eysenck and his entourage of behaviorist acolytes, I do not regard conditioning as a suitable replacement for psychoanalysis as a model for understanding *human* behavior. My reasons will be presented later (at the conclusion of section 3.6). For now, let me say that although I admit that Freud's insights into human nature sometimes display the character of fiction rather than of scientific fact, I see fiction as having value. Ultimately, therefore, I eschew Eysenck's epitaph for Freud and embrace

Sulloway's more sympathetic appraisal: "But if . . . Freud sometimes selects a very thin thread [in tying together his theoretical arguments], he seldom fails to string pearls on it, and these have their value whether the thread snaps or not."[35] In section 3.6 of this chapter, I shall present a case study which reveals a rich bed of Freudian pearls.

3.4 Psychoanalysis and Freedom

What implications does Freud's theory have with respect to the problem of free will and determinism? This question is an important one because some critics of Freud have argued, as we shall see, that psychoanalysis constitutes a sinister and manipulative method of social control. Before we tackle the central question of psychoanalysis and freedom, let us take a moment to consider a related issue. An interesting feature of psychoanalytic theory is the fact that it seems to contradict two widely-held Cartesian doctrines about the mind: incorrigibility and privileged access. Descartes believed that it was *impossible* to be mistaken about the contents of one's own mind, and that one could *only* know the contents of one's own mind, not of other minds. Psychoanalytic theory is predicated upon the assumptions that one *can* be mistaken about the contents of one's own mind, and, moreover, that the contents of one's own mind can, in some cases, be more readily accessible to others than to oneself. However, it does seem to me that the ultimate test of whether a psychoanalytic interpretation is correct is the analysand's assent. That is, a psychoanalytic interpretation is not valid unless the analysand sees it as being true of him or her. This being the case, it would seem that the notions of privileged access and incorrigibility have a central place in psychoanalysis, but only *after* the psychoanalytic therapy has been successful in eliminating the analysand's denial. This is the case because during the time the analysand is in a state of denial, the analysand must indeed (by the definition of denial) be unsure as to the contents of his or her (Ucs) mind, and the analyst could indeed know more about the analysand's (Ucs) mind than does

the analysand.

Ernest Jones, Freud's first major biographer, reveals his belief that determinism is presupposed by psychoanalytic theories when he asserts that even though we have an unshakable conviction of freedom of choice, "if unconscious motivation is taken into account . . . the rule of determinism is of general validity."[36] Ludwig Wittgenstein expresses a similar view when he observes that "a psychoanalytic explanation of what someone did [is] liable to confuse reasons with causes, where investigation of the former [are] based upon what a person said, whilst the latter [are] associated with laws and [can] be investigated through experiment."[37]

Peter Gay, on the other hand, insists that "Sigmund Freud was a determinist, yet his psychology is a psychology of freedom."[38] Gay admits that "psychoanalysis acts to circumscribe the area of freedom in which men fancy they live," but he emphasizes that as a therapy, the intention of psychoanalysis is "to *enlarge* the area of freedom."[39] Professor Gay attempts to draw a distinction between "negative freedom" (freedom *from*), which aims at the removal of obstructions, and "positive freedom" (freedom *to*), which aims at the realisation of ideals.[40] Since he regards self-deception as an obstacle to positive freedom, Gay regards psychoanalysis as an instrument to promote negative freedom by making conscious that which is unconscious, thereby reducing self-deception: "In removing inhibitions, undoing repressions, correcting distortions, and reducing anxieties, analysis has . . . struck mental shackles from the analysand's wrists. But

psychoanalysis does not dictate to him how to use his hands . . ."[41] It seems to me that Peter Gay may have gotten it backwards! If self-deception is an obstacle to positive freedom, would not psychoanalysis (at least insofar as it deals with a person's self-deceptions) promote positive (as opposed to negative) freedom? The confusion here may arise as a consequence of the general inability of this distinction (between positive and negative freedom) to make a difference. After all, do not positive freedoms presuppose negative freedoms, and vice versa? Peter Gay's problematic terminology notwithstanding, the point that he is trying to make is an important one: psychoanalysis is capable of promoting greater individual freedom (be it positive or negative) by transforming self-deceptions into self-knowledge. Alasdair MacIntyre marshals a similar argument in support of his claim that psychoanalysis promotes human freedom:

> Psychoanalysis is in practice an attempt to extend the area of rational control and therefore responsibility. The contribution it makes at the theoretical level is that of assisting in showing that the indefinite extention of causal discoveries in the realm of human behavior in no way of itself necessarily narrows the limits within which we assign human responsibility.[42]

It seems to me that both Gay and MacIntyre base their arguments on the distinction between causation and compulsion. If psychoanalysis can reveal the unconscious *causes* of our behavior, then we are no longer *compelled* to act, unknowingly, in accord with those unconscious motivations:

> It is not because my behavior is caused that I am not responsible for it; it is because and insofar as the causes of its being what it is are outside my control by any

ordinary means.[43]

Kenneth Gergen, unlike Peter Gay and Alisdair MacIntyre, regards psychoanalysis as being a pernicious instrument of social control. He rejects Freud's hypothesis that humans can be the victims of unconscious self-deception, suggesting that the paradoxical concept of self-deception has been retained only because it has social value in that "it enables the individual to be held responsible for his or her actions, but simultaneously holds the person *blameless* [emphasis added]."[44] Gergen concludes that "the concept of self-deception is a potent weapon in the arsenal of social control."[45] It is incumbent upon me to acknowledge Gergen's important insight that the Freudian concept of unconscious self-deception could be used as a weapon of tyranny rather than as an instrument of liberation. Gergen is quite correct when he admonishes that "anyone granted the warrant to ascribe self-deception to others possesses a powerful fulcrum for changing patterns of human conduct."[46] Gergen assumes that this fulcrum will be used to effect social control; Gay and MacIntyre assume that it will be used to promote individual liberation. My verdict coincides with that of Dodo in *Alice in Wonderland:* "Everybody has won and all must have prizes." That is to say, Gergen is correct in his contention that psychoanalysis could indeed be used as a pernicious instrument of social control, but Gay and MacIntyre are equally correct in their contention that psychoanalysis could also be used as an instrument of individual liberation. It would be premature to condemn psychoanalysis because it *could* be misused. In order to condemn

pyschoanalysis, Gergen must establish that it is likely that psychoanalysis will be misused, and unlikely that it will be used appropriately. The mere *possibility* of misuse does not constitute a rational basis for condemning psychoanalysis - or anything else, for that matter.

3.5 The Freudian Concept of Defense

The component of psychoanalytic theory which is of most immediate interest is Freud's theory of defense. The term "repression" is frequently used as being synonymous with defense, this confusion having arisen as a result of Freud's inconsistent deployment of terminology. Joseph Sandler's distinction between defense and repression is a useful one:

> Freud originally used the term "defense" for the ego's struggle against unpleasant ideas or affects. Later the term "repression" was used instead, but in 1926 he returned to the use of "defense" as the general term, while "repression" was used to designate the specific measure that was originally called "defense."[47]

Throughout this paper, I shall use the generic term "defense" to refer to the totality of mechanisms employed by the ego to mask the representation of forbidden desires, and the term "repression" to refer to one specific species of defense mechanism. Psychoanalysts are anything but consistent in their use of terminology with respect to defense mechanisms! I have provided a (partial) taxonomy of defenses at the conclusion of this chapter (section 3.7).[48]

Freud recognized that repressed material sometimes manifests itself in consciousness in a variety of forms and states. It sometimes appears in distorted or disguised form as a symptom or as a defense mechanism such as projection. Sometimes it appears under conditions when ego-recognition of the impulse and its ownership is prevented, as in dreams, free association, hypnosis, daytime fantasies, jokes, and parapraxes (Freudian slips of the

tongue or memory blocks).[49] It can also appear (often after psychoanalysis) in the form of condemnation or repudiation, when the repressed ideas become conscious but no longer retain their motivational power. This disinvestment of psychic energy and significance is called anticathexis.[50]

Freud sought to mitigate defense through rational knowledge and through "a prudent compromise with the instinctual depths out of which rational knowledge emerges."[51] He proposed that some instinctual impulses should be permitted rather than repressed, and that, "in the case of certain others the inefficient method of suppressing them by means of repression should be replaced by a better and securer procedure."[52] Philip Rieff calls this procedure the "ethic of honesty" and asserts that "this honesty Freud would have us achieve by working through the layers of falsehood and fantasy within us to a superior accommodation to reality."[53] This emphasis on stripping away the layers of falsehood gives credence to Bela Szabados' view of Freud as a Socratic figure engaged in the quest for self-knowledge. (Szabados' interpretation will be discussed in detail in section 3.6 of this chapter.)

Freud emphasized that defense is not found exclusively in neurotic persons who have suffered trauma. On the contrary, defense is part of "normal" human development. Frank Sulloway explains the theoretical significance of this important fact:

> It was necessary, above all, to account for the difference between normal, everyday psychical defense against unpleasant or intolerable ideas and the clinically

> more elusive phenomenon of repression followed by complete amnesia concerning what was repressed. . . . It was in his celebrated and controversial *Project for a Scientific Psychology* that [Freud] finally sought to achieve a comprehensive physiological explanation of how pathological repression differs from its normal counterpart.[54]

Freud's original intention in the *Project* was to equate all psychological terms with physiological ones; he wanted to reduce mental acts to neurological functions and to establish Reductive Materialism as the correct paradigm for "solving" the mind-body problem and for understanding the mind.

But Freud abandoned the *Project* almost immediately, declaring that "it is a pointless masquerade to try to account for psychical processes physiologically."[55] For the rest of his life, Freud espoused what his commentators have called the "Thesis for the Autonomy of Psychological Explanation" (the "Autonomy Thesis" for short). Why did Freud abandon his *Project* so quickly and so completely? Owen Flanagan suggests two reasons. He argues that Freud recognized that "neither psychology nor neuroscience [was] in a sufficiently conceptually rigorous state to warrant more than the fantasy of a reduction" since the bridge laws could not be worked through.[56] "You cannot possibly have your type-type identity statements in place if you do not have the typologies of both the science to be reduced and the reducing science down pat."[57] And secondly, Flanagan contends that Freud was influenced by Brentano's Thesis that intentionality is the ineliminable mark of the mental state. (Freud had studied philosophy under Brentano during his days as a medical student.) Brentano's Thesis asserts that "no language that lacks the conceptual resources to capture the meaningful content of mental

states, such as the language of physics or neuroscience, can ever adequately capture the salient facts about psychological phenomena."[58] Flanagan's hypothesis regarding Freud's reasons for abandoning the *Project* and adopting the Autonomy Thesis strikes me as a reasonable explanation, even though the ascription of human motivation is, at best, an endeavor fraught with endemic uncertainty. However, irrespective of whether or not Flanagan's hypothesis is correct, the point is that Freud was *not* able to establish a physiological explanation to distinguish between pathological repression and its non-pathological counterpart. This inability to distinguish clearly and unequivocally between pathological and non-pathological repression remains a problematic aspect of psychoanalysis even today because, as we have seen in section 3.4, Kenneth Gergen (and some other critics of psychoanalysis) trade on this ambiguity to contend that the accusation that one is "repressed" could be made by a psychoanalyst in order to secure a pernicious form of social control over an analysand.

3.6 Freudian Defense and Self-Deception

Having discussed the concept of defense, we turn now to an elucidation of the relationship which obtains between the defense mechanisms and self-deception. Mary Haight confidently asserts that Freud's psychoanalytic theory gives us "an intellectually recognized system according to which people may be divided against themselves both cognitively and in volition, and therefore able after a fashion to deceive themselves."[59] The existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre is less optimistic. He rejects the psychoanalytic paradigm of unconscious repression as an explanation for self-deception, preferring his own model of *mauvaise foi*. Sartre challenges what he regards as being the essential paradox of unconscious repression:

> In a word, how could the censor discern the impulses needing to be repressed without being conscious of discerning them? How can we conceive of a knowledge which is ignorant of itself?[60]

Sartre's questions penetrate very deep, and they must be addressed. Mark Johnston comments that "Sartre's mistake . . . is to suppose that the subagency that does the deceiving and repressing and monitors its success in these projects needs itself to be deceived."[61] As Johnston points out, Sartre fails to realize that the protective system can *lie* to the main system. An equally salutary response to Sartre is provided by W. D. Hart. Hart agrees with H. S. Sullivan that repression results from selective inattention to the contents of the mind as accessed by introspection. This selective inattention, Hart suggests, is analogous to peripheral vision:

> In order to *keep* an object on the periphery of one's visual field (so as to *make* oneself unable to see it clearly), one has to be able to see it clearly *enough* to be able to know when and how to turn so that it will remain always at the edge.[62]

This quantitative way of describing selective inattention suggests that the paradox with which Sartre charges Freud is only an apparent paradox. Hart's analogy is very appealing for two reasons: it resolves the seeming paradox of self-deception, and it coincides with the way we actually talk about self-deception. After we have accepted our self-deceptions *as* self-deceptions, we frequently speak as if we had suspected all along that things were not quite right, not as they should be. We admit that we "could see it [the revelation of the self-deception] coming." We talk as if we were both aware *and* unaware of the self-deception. These sorts of (very common) perceptual metaphors take on new meaning in the light of Hart's insightful analogy.

Herbert Fingarette, like Sartre, regards defense as "a central problem unresolved within psychoanalytic theory."[63] However, Fingarette believes that the problem is amenable to resolution; but, in contrast to Hart, he would prefer to avoid speaking of self-deception in terms of metaphors of perception. Fingarette argues that "the defensive process is a splitting of the ego which is not something that 'happens' to the ego but something the ego *does,* a motivated strategy."[64] In the final analysis, Fingarette argues, defense serves to reject or to disavow the counter-ego nucleus which the ego has split off from itself.[65] Thus, in bringing the patient's repressed information to conscious awareness, "the therapist thus makes possible avowal (removal of counter-

cathexis and integration of the counter-ego into the ego)."[66] What this means (when we jettison the psychoanalytic jargon) is that it is more productive to think of defense in terms of disavowal (volition/action) rather than in terms of hiding (cognition/perception). As Fingarette says:

> I think it reasonable to say that preconsciousness is the state of being available for spelling-out on particular appropriate occasions, and that Freud means by 'conscious' what I have called 'explicit consciousness.'[67]

Roy Schafer espouses a similar view when he expresses his preference for the term "unconscious*ly*" rather than unconscious: "The adverbial form reflects our recognizing it to be a model of action."[68] Schafer, however, regards "self-deception" as being a misnomer:

> It is no kind of reflective activity at all. It is something else. I suggest that it is an incorrect or faulty way of observing one's own actions. . . . The faultiness of faulty self-observation is a matter of bias in some instances and ignorance in others. . . . I am using the word bias to refer to every variety of defensive distortion, including sheer omission or deletion (repression)."[69]

For Schafer, faulty self-observation refers to "acting unheedfully, inattentively, unobservantly, or inaccurately."[70] It is this view of faulty self-observation which prompts Schafer to conclude that, "unlike deception of others, which may be done consciously, self-deception can only be accomplished unconsciously."[71] At the risk of being considered unkind, I submit that Schafer is either engaging in logomachy or else hoping to persuade

his readers with dogmatic assertions in lieu of convincing them with cogent arguments. Shakespeare has provided us with a splendid example of mutual, deliberate, conscious self-deception in Sonnet 138:

> When my love swears that she is made of truth,
> I do believe her, though I know she lies.
> That she might think me some untutor'd youth,
> Unlearned in the world's false subtleties.
> Thus vainly thinking that she thinks me young,
> Although she knows my days are past the best,
> Simply I credit her false-speaking tongue:
> On both sides thus is simple truth suppress'd.
> But wherefor say not I that I am old?
> O, love's best habit is in seeming trust,
> And age in love loves not to have years told:
> Therefore I lie with her and she with me,
> And in our faults by lies we flatter'd be.

Now how is that for an egregiously disingenuous relationship? In the light of Shakespeare's counterexample, Schafer's dogmatic assertion that self-deception cannot be conscious seems rather absurd.

David Pears does not deny the possibility of self-deception, but he does insist that self-deception "cannot be at all like straightforward lying to another person, but what it can be like is a carefully planned campaign of deceit, during which you persistently put gentle pressure on him, slightly distorting the evidence or presenting it in a false light."[72] Pears goes on to make two significant observations about self-deception: "In real life it nearly always happens that much more is screened than needs to be," and, moreover, "what has been repressed will not be a single belief but a whole complex of beliefs and feelings."[73]

John King-Farlow points out that self-deception, like other-deception,

takes many forms:

> . . . I *lie* to him, or *fool* him, or *mislead* him, or give him all the facts and only the relevant ones *but with the wrong emphasis*, or fail to give him the *full* information he has a right to. Or I may tell him what he has a right to know, but deliberately bury it in irrelevant information so that he overlooks it. . . . [Thus] a person is quite often usefully looked at, with major reference to his consciousness, as a *large, loose sort of committee.* There is a most irregularly rotating chairmanship. The members question, warn, praise, and **DECEIVE** each other . . .[74]

By way of summary, let me say that I see merit in the views of Hart, Fingarette, Pears, and King-Farlow. Although these four scholars use different metaphors to describe defense as a type of self-deception, I think that their views constitute a verbal dispute rather than a factual one. Ultimately, they do agree that defense can be a species of self-deception, and this common thread makes the four positions more compatible than they appear to be at first glance.

In the final analysis, my own view of defense and self-deception resembles most closely that of Bela Szabados. Szabados argues (contra Hamlyn) that Freud was a Socratic figure who sought self-knowledge as an objective of psychoanalysis:

> In the struggle for self-knowledge concerning one's own motives, emotions, beliefs, we encounter dearly held ideals and principles violated - by ourselves. Racial prejudice, envy, jealously, greed - stuff that we rather eschew - is recognized as part of the eschewer. And this predicament brings tension, both emotional and intellectual. . . . So now we see why self-knowledge is so often a struggle: it involves a transformation of the self, a creative endeavour that has deep moral importance."[75]

Moving from the level of formal discourse to substantive example, let us consider a case study in self-deception, a case study which explores the sort of transformation of the self to which Szabados refers. After I have outlined the contextual details of the hypothetical case, I will extrapolate from the example certain conditions which are conducive to the promotion of self-deception, and then I will use the case study to illustrate the Freudian model of self-deception. But first the details of the case:

> 'Twas a dark and stormy night. (I always introduce hypothetical cases this way. It sets the mood.) Enter John, a horny male teenager. Enter Martha, a horny female teenager. Result: Martha is pregnant, John is a raconteur in the locker room, and John and Martha's parents are sending out wedding invitations.
>
> Time Passes. (Ten years, more or less!)
>
> John acknowledges a truth about himself which he has "suspected" (dreaded) for some time. (Ten years, more or less!) John has a rather serious chat with Martha, his wife and the mother of their ten-year-old son. Martha is somewhat perplexed when John mentions that he is gay, has been "faking" heterosexual passion for Martha for ten years (more or less!), and would like a divorce.

Now, gentle reader,[76] I know what you are thinking. This bizarre scenario is too outrageous to take seriously. Suspension of disbelief is just not possible, you say. But before you raise these objections, let me make a teensie confession: I lied. This hypothetical case is not hypothetical - it actually happened to real people who suffered the real consequences (including real pain) for a 'real' long time! Only the names have been changed to protect the self-deceivers. (Sorry if I misled you, gentle reader, but I am a philosopher,

not a saint. You should have known better than to have believed me in the first place!)

The contextual details of John's story are typical of many cases of culpable self-deception, so much so that they warrant further discussion. The three conditions which conspire to foster self-deception are weakness of will, ignorance of relevant facts, and psychological pressure to commit self-deception. The first two conditions will be adumbrated in abbreviated form, but the third condition will be examined in some detail because of its relevance to the Freudian model of self-deception.

Turning our attention to literature, the character Macbeth demonstrates a high degree of rationality and moral sensitivity when he decides that he should not murder King Duncan.[77] He understands fully the heinous consequences that will ensue if he breaks his fiduciary bond with his friend, relative, and sovereign - and he articulates that understanding with poetic eloquence. But he murders Duncan, suffers the consequences which he foresaw, articulates his despair, and forfeits his life. Macbeth's actions are bizarre, but they are neither incomprehensible nor unbelievable. Macbeth's *akrasia* is the hallmark of his being all too human. We mortals are all quite capable of behaving like Macbeth; we are capable of acting wrongly even when we know better, Socrates' counter-intuitive claim to the contrary notwithstanding. And we are certainly capable of "convincing ourselves" that we are acting rightly when we suspect (or believe, or know) that we are acting wrongly. "To err is human." So John, like all humans, is a potential victim of *akrasia*.[78]

Secondly, John is ignorant of relevant facts. John does not know very much about sexual orientation when he meets Martha; he certainly has never heard of latent homosexuality. (Apparently he does not know about the fine points of contraception, either.) He has been raised in a world where the only references to homosexuals are derisive, a world where "fags" are impugned and caricatured as limp-wristed wimps. Homosexuals are not like anyone John knows - or so he thinks! Since John is neither limp-wristed nor wimpy, he concludes - wrongly, of course - that he is not a homosexual. (Actually, he probably never even considers the possibility that he could be a homosexual!) And when he "gets Martha in a family way" (to essay his parents' euphemistic vernacular), he thinks that since he has sired a child, he is a "normal" male. And since homosexuality is widely regarded (in John's culture) as "abnormal," John now feels confident that, since he is "normal," he could not possibly be a homosexual. We should note that John's ignorance may not simply be a matter of infortuitous happenstance. Ignorance is often the result of systematic deception practised by skilled deceivers (who, ironically, may themselves be victims of self-deception). It is hardly a coincidence, for example, that John has encountered no "respectable" models of homosexuality in the teaching profession or in the ministry.

And finally, John is under enormous psychological pressure to deceive himself about his sexual orientation. He does not want to let down his parents - for two reasons. Firstly, he does not want to hurt them simply because he loves them. Secondly, he can not afford to hurt them because if they come to despise him, he will see himself mirrored in their loathing and will come to

despise himself. This feedback loop (which Cooley dubbed the "Looking Glass Self") is a crucial element in many human motivations. John does not want to hurt Martha with the truth because he consciously suspects (and unconsciously knows) that he has used her, and so he wants to avoid dealing with the guilt[79] that will accompany the revelation of his homosexuality. Also, less selfishly, John does not want to cause Martha pain because he has grown to love her as his closest companion and as the mother of their child. And John does not want his son to have a "fag" for a father. (He's not too keen to be the fag, either.) And so, ironically, John is motivated to persist in his self-deception in order to maintain his deception of others, even if he has already begun to recognize the possibility of his being a homosexual. This psychological pressure is of paramount importance to our discussion of the Freudian model of self-deception. Since the homosexual desires of John's id are unacceptable to his superego, John's ego attempts to resolve the conflict by concealing those threatening desires from John's Cs mind. The ego defenses which are generated illustrate the efficacy of the psychoanalytic model in terms of explaining human behavior. Let us examine some of the defense mechanisms which John could employ in his attempt to deceive himself about his sexual impulses.

When a self-deceiver displays conversion, the threatening impulse is represented in the Cs mind in the form of physical complaints. John develops a veritable catalogue of seemingly unrelated physical symptoms. He has back pain, stomach cramps, headaches, and a host of other medical complaints. The result of his symptoms, of course, is that he is unable to fulfill his conjugal

obligations to his wife. His homosexual impulses are denied but are manifested in his Cs mind in the form of physical complaints. It is important to note that John's physical complaints are genuine; he really is physically ill, but his physical illness is the result of his attempt to deny his sexual impulses.

A self-deceiver demonstrates denial when he or she withdraws his or her attention from a perception that has occured. John cannot help but notice that he "finds himself" looking at male physiques in the locker room. John becomes consciously aware of this fact, for a fleeting moment, but he denies it by refusing to "spell out" (to borrow Fingarette's terminology) the significance of the fact. Or perhaps his ego adopts a new strategy. Perhaps John systematically avoids locker rooms in the future, thereby blocking the arousal of the impulse. This latter defense mechanism is called inhibition. And now a third defense mechanism is needed to justify John's sudden aversion to locker rooms. This new strategy is called rationalization; a "good" reason is substituted for the real reason. John explains (more to himself than to anyone else) that he must avoid locker rooms because he is susceptible to athlete's foot, or because he chills easily after showering, or because the gymnasium is just too far from his home to be convenient, or because - well, I think we have the idea. Once John discovers how useful rationalization can be in concealing the truth, he elevates rationalization to the status of an art form. He convinces his wife (and himself) that anal intercourse in a darkened room is "romantic" and that it "breaks the monotony" of the missionary position. He never admits (not even to himself) that the reason that he is sexually aroused by having anal intercourse with his wife in a darkened room is because the

experience fulfills his taboo fantasies regarding homosexual sodomy. (The loathsome conviction that "They're all the same in the dark" thus expresses more than it is typically intended to express!) In a similar vein, John convinces himself that he is sexually aroused by lesbian pictorials in "skin mags" because two women are twice as sexy as one woman. The possibility that the *lesbian* aspect of the photographs (rather than the fact that there are two women) is the operative motivation never occurs to John.

Sometimes the self-deceiver responds to a threatening impulse in a much more aggressive manner. Victims of extreme self-deception often resort to a defense mechanism called projection. Suppose that John begins to suspect that he is sexually attracted to one of his close friends, Fred. This suspicion is *so* threatening to John's ego that he responds by ascribing his own sexual impulses to Fred. He suspects Fred of being a "fag" and he avoids Fred like the plague lest Fred will attempt to "seduce" him. If John is sufficiently threatened, he may actually become violent towards Fred, ostensibly to protect himself from Fred's alleged advances. Moreover, it is quite likely that John will generalize his fear of Fred to other males, ultimately subscribing to a thoroughly homophobic world view. John will see leering fags hiding behind every bush.

But sometimes the self-deceiver responds to threatening impulses in a much more socially acceptable manner by displaying the defense mechanism known as sublimation. The threatening impulses are displaced into a socially acceptable outlet. John becomes so involved with his cancer research that he has no time in his life for such trivial distractions as sex. Oh, he has sexual

relations with his wife once in a while, but his performance is perfunctory at best. Cancer research (or music, or quantum physics, or investing money, or just about any non-sexual activity that one could imagine) becomes the focus of John's psychic life.

Reaction-Formation is one of the most common and intricate of defense mechanisms. (Gergen, no doubt, would regard reaction-formation as being "Byzantine" in its intricacy!) The self-deceiver displays an excessive manifestation of the feeling which is opposite to the real feeling (which is being repressed). As John has more and more suspicions about his latent *homo*sexuality, he becomes more and more blatant in flaunting his overt *hetero*sexuality. He works out at the gym to display his masculine physique; he talks dirty to the guys about all the "chicks that he's screwed;" he seizes every opportunity to denigrate homosexuals as being "candy asses" and "low lifes;" and he identifies with only the most macho of "macho-dudes." Using reversal, the most infantile form of reaction-formation, the self-deceiver converts his love to hate. The more that John feels Ucs love, the more he displays Cs hatred.

In many cases, the reaction-formation takes on a strange twist which is referred to as isolation: the threatening impulses are acknowledged in the Cs mind, but are separated from their emotional charge. John engages in puerile antics in the locker room such as bum slapping, initiation rites involving shaving the pubic hair of other males, and a host of other "fun" activities. Although the homosexual impulses are acted upon (albeit in thinly disguised form), these impulses are not acknowledged as being significant, nor

are they recognized as being homosexual in character.

The most commonplace of all the defense mechanisms, repression, is usually described as a selective "forgetting" of threatening impulses. One afternoon when John is clowning around with the guys in the swimming pool, he becomes sexually aroused as a result of the close physical contact with one of his friends. John immediately represses his Cs knowledge of this arousal; he "puts the thought out of his mind" as the saying goes. In psychoanalytic jargon, his ego transfers the threatening memory from his Cs mind to his Ucs mind. The rarest of all the defense mechanisms is, ironically, an extreme form of this very commonplace repression. Under circumstances of extreme trauma wherein the ego can no longer ward off the threatening impulses, the ego sometimes invokes amnesia. John suddenly forgets an entire chapter of his life (or several chapters) - including, of course, the unacceptable impulses which could not be successfully repressed.

Needless to say, the deployment of a battalion of defense mechanisms does precious little to encourage John to acknowledge his real feelings and to acquire self-knowledge. For John, the acceptance of his homosexuality is a most difficult task! To paraphrase Szabados, the stuff that John would rather eschew - stuff such as the knowledge of his own sexual orientation - is recognized as part of the eschewer. (I am not suggesting that John *ought* to eschew his homosexuality, merely that he has been conditioned to eschew it as a consequence of the combination of circumstances which have constituted his life experience.) John's *recognition* of his homosexuality requires insight and courage; his *acceptance* of his homosexuality requires nothing less than a

transformation of his self (to borrow Szabados' phrase). Ideally, psychoanalysis assists in bringing about this transformation. The patient "transfers" his feelings to the therapist and is moved (in small increments) toward greater self-understanding. If the therapy is successful, John will eventually accept ownership of his own threatening impulses; his self-deception will cease and he will be liberated from his delusions, his compulsive behaviors, and his anxieties. John may display condemnation: he may repudiate his threatening impulses after therapy has brought them to consciousness. Or he may opt for transformation; he may accept his threatening impulses and cease his futile attempts to deny or to mask them."[80] In either case, John will know more about himself after therapy than he did prior to therapy.

I believe, therefore, that the case study of John demonstrates that psychoanalytic theory is a viable model for explaining certain cases of self-deception, the critics notwithstanding. Furthermore, although various scholars preceded Freud in investigating both the unconscious mind and human sexuality, it was Freud who first recognized that the two concepts could be synthesized to yield a model of unconscious sexual motivation. And it was Freud who realized that unconscious sexual motivation can wreak havoc with the human personality by giving rise to monumental binges of self-deception. This realization was no mean feat. Critics of psychoanalytic theory tend to bemoan the fact that Freud's model of human behavior is Byzantine in its intricacy. I contend that the intricacy of psychoanalysis is a strength rather than a weakness. Sometimes people *do* behave in the bizarre ways which

Freud describes - they do deceive themselves (with amazingly complicated manoeuvres) about things as fundamental as their own sexuality - and, in such cases, psychoanalytic theory is extremely helpful in making sense of such complex (and all too human) behavior.

At the beginning of this chapter, however, I suggested that I would demonstrate that psychoanalytic theory is the *best* model to explain some cases of self-deception. My critics might well argue, therefore, that although I have shown that psychoanalysis provides a reasonable explanation of John's self-deception, it is incumbent upon me to demonstrate that psychoanalysis provides a *better* explanation than do the two principal challengers to psychoanalysis, behaviorism and cognitive theory. And, since my critics would be fully justified in making this claim, I shall conclude this chapter by attempting to show that psychoanalysis is *indispensable* in explaining John's self-deception because neither behaviorism nor cognitive theory can provide an adequate explanation.

Let us consider behaviorism first. Behaviorism certainly provides a viable model for explaining the behavior of rats in laboratory mazes and dogs in obedience schools. However, behaviorism is much less efficacious with respect to explaining complex human behavior, and, alas, is well nigh useless when it comes to explaining behavior which is motivated by unconscious desires. It is precisely because behaviorism focuses on overt behavior that cases like John's are not amenable to explanation - or treatment - by means of behaviorist theory. This is the case because the meaning of overt behavior is often ambiguous in higher animals. John's overt behavior, for instance,

suggests that he is a "normal" heterosexual. Because his homosexual desires have been repressed, they are not directly present in his conscious awareness nor in his overt behavior.

Cognitive theory, on the other hand, provides a model that, *in theory*, should be able to explain John's behavior. *In practice*, however, cognitive theory is no more useful in explaining John's case than is behaviorism. Let me explain why this is the case. Even if cognitive theorists are correct in their contention that all "mental" events are actually "neurological" events (as I believe they are!), cognitive theory is still in a relatively primitive state as of 1991. As I pointed out in some detail earlier (in section 3.5), Freud himself was intrigued by the notion that mental states could be understood in terms of neurological processes, but Freud also recognized that although intertheoretic reduction would yield a much more precise and scientific theory than psychoanalysis, such intertheoretic reduction was simply not possible given the state of neuroscience in the early decades of the twentieth century. Admittedly, there has been enormous progress in neuroscience since Freud's death. However, neuroscience can not yet provide a completely adequate account of such mundane and trivial mental states as "feeling itchy," let along explain exotic and complicated mental states such as "repressing homoerotic desires." Even though cognitive theory is not able to explain John's case as of 1991, I do not wish to be short-sighted by dogmatically assuming that it will not be able to do so in the future. In fact, I am willing to grant, for the sake of argument, that it is possible that some day [illegible]ether that day will arrive in ten years or in ten millenia I will not predict [illegible]uroscience *might* be able to

account for John's case. However, *until that day arrives*, psychoanalysis is *indispensable* in explaining cases of self-deception such as John's case because neither behaviorism nor cognitive theory (in its present state of development) can provide an adequate explanation.

3.7 Taxonomy of Defense Mechanisms

Non-Repressive Defense Mechanisms:

affectualization	- an emotional experience is prevented from developing
compensation	- an undesirable trait is hidden by emphasizing a desirable one
condemnation	- dangerous impulse is repudiated after therapy has brought it to Cs
insulation	- others are held at a psychological distance
intellectualization	- a refusal to become emotionally involved
introjection	-one takes on the desirable characteristics of others (also referred to as identification)
regression	- retreat from present drive or object to an earlier one
turning against the self	- self-contempt

Repressive Defense Mechanisms:

amnesia	- forgetting everything
conversion	- impulse is represented in Cs in form of physical complaint
denial	- withdrawal of from a perception that has occured
displacement	- scapegoating red to as substitution)
inhibition	- like repression, but arousal of impulse is blocked
isolation	- impulse is present in Cs, but separated from its emotional charge
projection	- ascription of one's impulses and motives to someone else
rationalization	- a good reason is substituted for the real reason
rea formation	- excessive manifestation of the feeling opposite to the real one
re	convenient selective forgetting
reversa	e is converted to hate (in a childhood form of the reaction formation mechanism)
sublimation	- instinctual aims are displaced into an acceptable outlet

CHAPTER THREE: FOOTNOTES

1. The best introductions to Freud's work on self-deception are *Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis* (1910), *Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1916-17), *New Lectures on Psychoanalysis* (1933), *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, *The Interpretation of Dreams*, and *Totem and Taboo*. All references to Freud in this paper are to *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud* (London: Hogarth Press, 1973), translated by James Strachey. A useful secondary souce is Richard Wollheim, *Sigmund Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), although Wollheim tends to gloss over the shortcomings of psychoanalysis. Peter Gay's *Freud: A Life for Our Time* (1988) is a fascinating biography of Freud as well as a history of psychoanalysis.

2. Owen J. Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: M.I.T. Press, 1984), p. 75. Cf. H. J. Eysenck and G. D. Wilson, *The Experimental Study of Freudian Theories* (London: Methuen, 1973), p. 386.

3. Bruno Bettelheim, *Freud and Man's Soul* (New York: Random House, 1982), p. 53.

4. James Hopkins, "Philosophy and Psychoanalysis" in Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (eds.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. xxxvii.

5. Hans J. Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (New York: Penguin Books, 1985), p. 169.

6. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Freud, Sigmund" in Paul Edwards (ed.), *The Encyclopedia of Philosophy: Volume Three* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 250.

7. Ibid., p. 251.

8. W. D. Hart, "Models of Repression" in Richard Wollheim and James Hopkins (eds.), *Philosophical Essays on Freud* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), p. 185.

9. Cf. Jeffrey Moussaieff Masson, *The Assault on Truth: Freud's Suppression of the Seduction Theory* (Toronto: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1984). Masson contends that Freud's patients actually had been seduced when they were children and that Freud "concocted" the theory of omnipotence of thought to suppress the unpalatable truth about the high incidence of child molestation in Vienna.

10. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Freud, Sigmund," p. 251.

11. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*.

12. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *S.E. XII*, pp. 262 & 264. The term "psychic" was used prior to 1925, after which time the term "mental" was used. Similarly, the term "foreconscious" was used prior to 1925, after which time the term "preconscious"

was used.

13. Cf. Sigmund Freud, *S.E. XXII*, p. 80.

14. Cf. Karl R. Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies: Volume II* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962).

15. Eysenck and Wilson, *The Experimental Study of Freudian Theories* (London: Methuen, 1973), pp. 386-390.

16. Cf. K. Obholzer, *The Wolf-Man: Sixty Years Later* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982).

17. Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 58.

18. Cf. E. N. Thornton, *Freud and Cocaine: The Freudian Fallacy* (London: Bond & Briggs, 1983).

19. Cf. J. Wolpe and S. Rachman, "Psychoanalytic evidence: a critique based on Freud's case of Little Hans" in *Journal of Mental and Nervous Diseases: 1960, 131*, pp. 135-145.

20. Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 208. As an aside, it is interesting to note that Paul Feyerabend, in *Against Method*, suggests that persuasion is central to the adoption of *any* scientific position. His example is Galileo, who (Feyeraband claims) did not have the evidence to back up his claims and who therefore resorted to persuasion. Hucksterism may not be confined to psychology and used car lots.

21. Ebbinghaus is quoted in Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 34.

22. Cf. L. L. Whyte, *The Unconscious Before Freud* (London: Tavistock Publications, 1962) and H.F. Ellenberger, *The Discovery of the Unconscious: The History and Evolution of Dynamic Psychiatry* (London: Allen Lane, 1970).

23. Cf. F. J. Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind* (London: Burnett, 1979). Sulloway contends that Freud deliberately perpetrated the (untrue) impression that he suffered as an archetypal mythic hero.

24. Cf. D. E. Stannard, *Shrinking History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980).

25. Cf. Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire* (p. 20) for a more complete discussion of dream analysis.

26. Cf., for example, Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 118.

27. Wittgenstein, as quoted in Hans Eysenck, *Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 126.

28. Cf. C. S. Hall, *The Meaning of Dreams* (New York: Harper, 1953).

29. It is interesting to note that as early as the 1920's, Alexander Luria devised a brilliant experiment (involving hypnosis) to compare reports of manifest dreams with the known content of latent dreams. Luria's experiment is described in Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, pp. 129ff.

30. Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 82. Cf. Richard Restak, *The Brain* (Toronto: Bantam Books, 1984), pp. 136-137 for an alternative discussion of the triune brain.

31. Kenneth J. Gergen, "The Ethnopsychology of Self-Deception" in Mike W. Martin (ed.), *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding* (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1985), p. 236.

32. Ibid., p. 229.

33. Hans Eysenck, *The Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire*, p. 132.

34. Willard Van Orman Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" in Quine, *From a Logical Point of View* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 46

35. Havelock Ellis, as quoted in F. J. Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*, p. 500.

36. Ernest Jones, *Sigmund Freud: Life and Work: Volume One* (London: Hogarth Press, 1953), p. 401.

37. Wittgenstein, as quoted in James Hopkins, "Philosophy and Psychoanalysis," pp. vii & viii.

38. Peter Gay, "Freudian Freedom" in Alan Ryan (ed.), *The Idea of Freedom* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 41.

39. Ibid., p. 52.

40. Ibid., p. 56.

41. Ibid., p. 59.

42. Alasdair MacIntyre, "Freud, Sigmund," p. 252.

43. Ibid., p. 252.

44. Kenneth J. Gergen, "The Ethnopsychology of Self-Deception," p. 239.

45. Ibid., p. 241.

46. Ibid., p. 241.

47. Joseph Sandler with Anna Freud, *The Analysis of Defense: The Ego and*

the Mechanisms of Defense Revisited (New York: Internation Universities Press, Inc., 1985), p. 107.

48. See section 3.7 ("Taxonomy of Defense Mechanisms") at the conclusion of this chapter. The taxonomy is based upon Peter Madison, *Freud's Concept of Repression and Defense, Its Theoretical and Observational Language* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1961) and various other sources.

49. Cf. S. Timpanaro, *The Freudian Slip: Psychoanalysis and Textual Criticism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

50. Anticathexis is a very abstruse concept. Cf. Peter Madison, *Freud's Concept of Repression and Defense*, pp. 109-111.

51. Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 315.

52. Sigmund Freud, *S.E. XIV*, p. 285.

53. Philip Rieff, *Freud: The Mind of the Moralist*, p. 315.

54. F. J. Sulloway, *Freud: Biologist of the Mind*, p. 113.

55. Sigmund Freud, *S.E. XV*, pp. 20-21. Cf. Owen Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind*, p. 60.

56. Owen Flanagan, *The Science of the Mind*, p. 61.

57. Ibid., p. 62.

58. Ibid., p. 63.

59. M. R. Haight, "Tales from a Black Box" in Mike W. Martin (ed.), *Self-Deception and Self-Understanding* (Lawrence, Kansas: University of Kansas Press, 1985), p. 244.

60. Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1956), Translated by Hazel E. Barnes, pp. 52-53. Sartre's case studies are particularly interesting.

61. Mark Johnston, "Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind" in Brain P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 79.

62. W. D. Hart, "Models of Repression," pp. 187 & 201. Mark Johnston points out that Sartre's model of self-deception assumes that "if self-deception is something *done* rather than merely undergone, it must be something intentionally done." Johnston then argues that "We know already from the case of bodily activity that this assumption is false. For example, running our eyes predominantly over the tops and not the bottoms of printed words is something many of us do, since many of us read *by* running our e[illegible]redominantly over the tops of printed words. A way to make this vivid to oneself is to cover the bottom half of a line of print and try to read it and then

cover the top half of a similar line of print and try to read it. Now it would be absurd to suggest that using our eyes this way must be something we do intentionally, e.g., for and from the reason that this makes it possible to read more quickly. For many of us, performing the little experiment just outlined gives us the first inkling of what we were up to. But of course the explanation of why this method of reading is unwittingly used by many of us has to do with the fact that it helps us to read faster. The method, once hit upon, persists because it serves a purpose; it is not intentionaly employed for that purpose." Cf. Mark Johnston, "Self-Deception and the Nature of Mind" in Brian P. McLaughlin & Amelie Oksenberg Rorty (eds.), *Perspectives on Self-Deception* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), p. 36.

63. Herbert Fingarette, *Self-Deception* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p. 125.

64. Ibid., p. 130.

65. Ibid., p. 131.

66. Ibid., p. 133.

67. Ibid., p. 121. Cf. pp. 133ff for a discussion of defense as disavowal.

68. Roy Schafer, *A New Language for Psychoanalysis* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 244.

69. Ibid., pp. 238-239.

70. Ibid., p. 241.

71. Ibid., p. 237. Cf. Schafer's illuminating comments on the use of the passive voice as a tactic to conceal the confusion of language. (p. 236)

72. David Pears, "Freud, Sartre and Self-Deception" in Richard Wollheim (ed.), *Freud: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1974.)

73. Ibid., pp. 109-111.

74. John King-Farlow, "Self-Deceivers and Sartrean Seducers" in *Analysis: 23 (1963),* pp. 131-132.

75. Bela Szabados, "Freud, Self-Knowledge, and Psychoanalysis" in *Canadian Journal of Philosophy: XII, 4, December, 1982,* p. 705.

76. With apologies to Professor Ivan DeFaveri.

77. Cf. Macbeth's soliloquy at the opening of Act I, Scene vii.

78. The term *akrasia* is used by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics.* Professor John King-Farlow contends that *akrasia,* like self-deception, can be either positive or negative.

79. The question of guilt is a thorny one. How far into the future can we

reasonably expect a moral agent to speculate when he or she formulates a calculus of advantages and disadvantages for an act which has teleological implications? A month? A year? A decade? A century? A millenium? The ascription of guilt for future consequences of actions is problematic.

80. Freud himself regarded homosexuality as a pathological disorder. Most contemporary psychoanalysts, however, do not subscribe to this view.

CHAPTER FOUR:

SELF-DECEPTION IN LITERATURE

4.1 Introduction

Having examined the concept of self-deception (in chapter two), and having discussed at some length the Freudian model of self-deception (in chapter three), I will now consider some prominent fictional characters in the light of the psychoanalytic interpretation of self-deception. Arthur Miller's play "Death of a Salesman" and William Shakespeare's play "Othello" (both of which are on the prescribed reading lists for secondary English courses in many English-speaking countries, including both Canada and the United States of America) provide very fertile ground for exemplification of the Freudian model of self-deception. In this chapter I shall interpret the speech and actions of several characters from these two dramatic works in terms of unconscious motivation. I will endeavor to demonstrate that it is both possible and reasonable to regard the characters as being in a state of self-deception. Moreover, in the case of the character Iago, I will argue that the psychoanalytic model provides not just an explanation, but the most reasonable and cogent explanation for this character's motivation. Before I begin the discussion, however, a caveat is in order. My contention is not that the psychoanalytic model constitutes the *only* basis for interpreting the speech and actions of the characters in these two plays; my contention is rather that the psychoanalytic model provides the best explanation.[1] Indeed, I openly

acknowledge the existence of a variety of other explanations (many of which have been explicated by a host of literary critics), contending only that the psychoanalytic explications are reasonable and well-founded, and that, in at least one case, the psychoanalytic explanation is clearly the most plausible of the several purported explanations.

4.2 Self-Deception in "Death of a Salesman"

Arthur Miller's modern tragedy "Death of a Salesman" is a sensitive and poignant study in self-deception. The four main characters - Willy, Linda, Biff and Hap - all display varying degrees of self-deception which is rooted in unconscious motivation.

Willy Loman lives in a world of utter delusion. He lies to his wife, his sons, his neighbour, his employer, and himself. Much of the plot of "Death of a Salesman" is revealed through Willy's dream flashbacks, thereby emphasizing Willy's dependence upon fantasy. These flashbacks are accompanied, appropriately, by flute music which evokes images of bucolic serenity and blissful fantasy. Willy's entire life is a lie: Willy tries to convince himself (and everyone else) that he is a successful salesman, an urban tycoon - but, as the story unfolds, the reader cannot help but realize that Willy is a man out of his element. He belongs in the country, not the city; and he is suited to working with his hands, not his wits. Willy's affinity for the country life is revealed very early in the script when he confides to Linda (his wife) that when he is "on the road" he is drawn to the natural beauty of the countryside:

> I was even observing the scenery. You can imagine, me looking at scenery, on the road every week of my life. But it's so beautiful up there, Linda, the trees are so thick, and the sun is warm.[2]

Ironically, Willy scoffs at his elder son Biff because Biff has given up on the city and has taken refuge in the country:

> How can [Biif] find himself on a farm?
> Is that a life? A farmhand? (p. 15)

Willy, who at the age of sixty-three has almost no self-knowledge, resorts to the psychoanalytic defense mechanism of projection (i.e. ascribing his own impulses, fears, and motives to his son Biff) when he deprecates Biff by declaring that "Not finding yourself at the age of thirty-four is a disgrace!" (p. 16) In a sudden surge of frustration, Willy characterizes Biff as "lazy" and as a "lazy bum." (p. 16) Then, only eight lines later, Willy tells Linda that "There's one thing about Biff - he's not lazy."

These blatant contradictions occur in Willy's bizarre speeches throughout the play, and they serve to emphasize how confused he is about himself and about his environment. Specifically, Willy subscribes to a version of the American Dream which is a dreadful delusion. He talks incessantly about being handsome, athletic, well dressed, and well liked as the cornerstones of success. Sadly, Willy's own low self-esteem is revealed with shocking clarity in a speech which surprises the audience, and perhaps even surprises Willy himself. Willy, in a paradigmatic display of the defense mechanism known as self-contempt, confides to Linda:

> I'm fat. I'm very - foolish to look at, Linda. I didn't tell you . . . . as I was going in to see the buyer, I heard [a salesman] say something about - Walrus. And I - I cracked him right across the face. I won't take that. I simply will not take that. But they do laugh at me. I know that. (p. 37)

Through a series of artfully sequenced flashbacks, Miller reveals a wealth of information about Willy Loman, information which Willy attempts to repress. The reader learns that even Willy's fidelity to Linda is a lie: Biff chances upon Willy in a hotel room in Boston where Willy is "entertaining" a

cheap floozy. Although Willy casts himself in the role of the devoted husband and father, he cheats on his wife as soon as she is not around. And when she is around, Willy treats her like an insipid child, interrupting, correcting, and chastising her to the point that Biff becomes infuriated with Willy's abusive and patronizing attitude toward Linda. Biff is so appalled by his father's clay feet and hypocrisy that he virtually gives up on his own life. Sixteen years later, Willy, true to form, pretends to himself (and to Linda) that he can not understand why Biff, at age thirty-four, has accepted defeat as a *fait accompli*.

Willy's repression of his sordid hotel room escapade gives rise to neurotic behavior. He repeatedly chastises Linda for mending her stockings because her recycled stockings are a symbolic manifestation of his guilt: he paid for the "services" of his Boston chippy by giving her stockings - the stockings that he had purchased for Linda. Because Willy deceives himself about the real significance of stockings, he explodes into a mini-tantrum every time that he chances upon his wife mending stockings. His irrational anger is a classic manifestation of the defense mechanism known as isolation: Willy consciously recognizes that the stockings are important, but he does not recognize *why* they are important. The impulse (the recognition that the stockings are important) is present in Willy's conscious mind, but it is separated from its emotional charge (the guilt which he feels).

Because Willy refuses (or is unable) to expose or confront any of his self-deceptions, they become ubiquitous and spread to every aspect of his existence, supplanting his real world with a world of delusion just as a cancerous growth consumes the very life of its host. Willy retreats into a

fantasy world where he seeks counsel from his brother Ben; Ben becomes Willy's alter ego, "advising" him, perpetuating his fragile world of self-deception, and fueling Willy's conscious self-contempt. Willy steadfastly refuses to recognize the influence that his own actions have had on Biff. Confronted with Biff's history of stealing and lying, Willy protests that "I never in my life told him anything but decent things." (p. 41) The problem, of course, is that Willy's actions speak louder than words, and the example that he sets for Biff is one of a life of sordid lies, misrepresentations, hypocritical pretenses, and half-truths. Even when Biff confronts Willy with the hose that Willy has acquired to enact his own suicide, Willy displays egregious denial when he tells Biff (and himself!) that "I never saw that." (p. 130) Pathetically deluded to the end, Willy commits suicide so that Linda and Biff will inherit the insurance money, and in the hope that Biff will see Willy as a success. Willy deludes himself about his own funeral when he has an imagined "conversation" with his brother Ben:

> Ben, [my] funeral will be massive! They'll come from Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire! All the old-timers with the strange license plates - that boy will be thunder-struck, Ben, because he never realized - I am known! Rhode Island, New York, New Jersey - I am known, Ben, and he'll see it with his eyes once and for all. He'll see what I am, Ben! He's in for a shock, that boy! (p. 126)

The "massive" funeral is attended by Willy's wife, his two sons, and his neighbours Charley and Bernard. Biff does indeed "see" what Willy is!

Willy's self-deception is thoroughly Freudian in that it stems from an attempt to repress a sexual transgression for which Willy is unable to forgive

himself. In one of Arthur Miller's other plays ("The Crucible"), Elizabeth Proctor, when accused by her husband John of refusing to forgive him for an adulterous interlude with one Abigail Williams, tells her husband that "The magistrate sits in your heart that judges you."[3] Although Linda Loman never makes any such statement to her husband Willy in "Death of a Salesman," it would certainly be appropriate for her to do so. Because Willy deceives himself about the significance (for his wife, his sons, and his own self-esteem) of his hotel room escapade, he is never able to purge himself of his guilt. Consequently, his guilt becomes overwhelming and he weaves an ever more intricate web of self-deceptions in order to "protect" himself. Willy's maze of "protective" self-deceptions causes great pain to his wife, turns his son Hap into a philandering bum, drives his son Biff to the very brink of self-loathing, and most tragically, prompts Willy to take his own life.

Hap Loman, Willy's younger son, follows in his father's footsteps. As a child, Hap is obsessed with acquiring recognition and validation from his father, but Willy is so devoted to his elder son Biff that he hardly acknowledges Hap's existence. In the flashback sequences, Hap (as a young boy) spends a substantial portion of his waking hours trying to get Willy's attention by telling his uninterested father "I'm losing weight, you notice, Pop?" (p. 33) As an adult (in age only!), Hap pathetically courts his father's approval by declaring "Pop, I told you I'm gonna retire you for life" (p. 41) and "I'm getting married, Pop." (p. 133) Whereas Willy (so far as we know) indulged in only one sexual indiscretion, Hap makes sexual infidelity a way of life. While reminiscing with Biff about the good old days, Hap describes his first sexual experience: "Yeah,

that was my first time - I think. Boy, there was a pig!" (p. 21) (The bestial imagery here is worthy of Iago!) Hap is incapable of establishing an enduring relationship with any woman because he objectifies all women. Women are not people as far as Hap is concerned: they are asexual saints like Hap's mother, or they are mere trophies of his sexual conquests. Hap sleeps with a girl named Charlotte, knowing full well that she is engaged to be married to one of his immediate superiors at work. Not understanding that he seeks out the sexual favors of women engaged to his superiors in order to compensate for an inner sense of failure, Hap brags to Biff about his sexual conquests:

> Sure, the guy's in line for the vice-presidency of the store. I don't know what gets into me, maybe I just have an overdeveloped sense of competition or something, but I went and ruined her, and furthermore I can't get rid of her. And he's the third executive I've done that to. isn't that a crummy characteristic? And to top it all, I go to their weddings! (Indignantly, but laughing) Like I'm not supposed to take bribes. Manufacturers offer me a hundred-dollar bill now and then to throw an order their way. *You know how honest I am*, but it's like this girl, see. I hate myself for it. Because I don't want the girl, and, still, I take it and - I love it! (p. 25)

Even the most immature reader could hardly fail to notice how "honest" Hap is! With astounding lack of self-knowledge, Hap, the world's foremost liar, projects his own dishonesty onto others, telling Biff that "Everybody around me is so false that I'm constantly lowering my ideals . . ." (p. 24)

Hap's sexual infidelity, like Willy's, is deeply rooted in his low self-esteem. Hap talks about his career as if he is a man on the way to the top, but Biff provides a devastatingly objective appraisal of Hap's career when he

exclaims "You're one of the two assistants to the assistant, aren't you?" (p. 131) Even after Willy's pointless death, Hap rejects all of Biff's attempts to expose Hap's bizarre self-deceptions. Hap refuses to listen to Biff's comments about Willy's self-deception, and repeatedly tells Biff "Don't say that!" (p. 138) Finally, Hap reveals that he really is his father's son, and that he has made self-deception a way of life. In a veritable archetype of self-deception, Hap declares:

> All right, boy. I'm gonna show you and everybody else that Willy Loman did not die in vain. He had a good dream. It's the only dream you can have - to come out number-one man. He fought it our here, and this is where I'm gonna win it for him. (pp. 138-139)

Biff responds to Hap's self-deception with a "hopeless glance."

Linda Loman is a remarkably believable character. She leads a life characterized by profound sensitivity and perspicacious insight, but punctuated with occasional episodes of bizarre self-deception. She sees Willy and Hap with amazing clarity. Moreover, she recognizes that Willy, for all his foibles, is an everyman character in that his very imperfections attest to his humanness, and she expresses this insight to her two sons with regal eloquence:

> I don't say he's a great man. Willy Loman never made a lot of money. His name was never in the paper. He's not the finest character that ever lived. But he's a human being, and a terrible thing is happening to him. So attention must be paid. He's not to be allowed to fall into his grave like an old dog. Attention, attention must be finally paid to such a person. (p. 56)

Linda's recognition that all people must be valued because everyone has intrinsic worth is reminiscent of King Lear's famous "reason not the need"

speech in which Lear eloquently articulates his insight that people need more than food and shelter - they need self-respect and self-esteem.

Linda sees her son Hap as clearly as she sees her husband. In a moment of supreme exasperation, she describes Hap with terrible honesty as a "philandering bum." (p. 57) However, Linda never really understands her other son, Biff, perhaps because of her one self-deception concerning her husband. She is deeply distressed by the rift between Willy and Biff, but even though she makes some attempts to ascertain the root cause of the enmity, she always stops short of exposing the whole truth. I suggest that it is possible (although by no means certain) that Linda stops short of exposing the full truth precisely because she suspects the whole truth but is so threatened by the mere suspicion of Wlly's infidelity that she does not really want to confirm that her suspicion is indeed justified. Two brief exchanges between Biff and Linda come precariously close to revealing Willy's sexual infidelity. When Linda asks Biff why Willy threw him out of the house, Biff is caught off guard and gives an answer which is closer to the truth than he might have wished, declaring "Because I know he's a fake and he doesn't like anybody around who knows." (p. 58) Linda does pursue the issue, asking Biff, "Why a fake? In what way? What do you mean?" (p. 58) However, when Biff becomes evasive and declares "It's between me and him - that's all I have to say," Linda chooses not to pursue the matter further. A few moments later, Biff's strange response to Linda's passing reference to a woman provides the final clue as to the cause of the bitterness between Willy and Biff:

LINDA: It seems there's a woman ...
BIFF: (Sharply, but contained) What woman?
LINDA: (Simultaneously) ... and this woman ...
LINDA: What?
BIFF: Nothing. Go ahead.
LINDA: What did you say?
BIFF: Nothing. I just said what woman? (p. 58)

I have taught "Death of a Salesman" to several secondary English classes, and every one of these classes has been able to deduce from these two passages the fact that Willy Loman has been involved with an "other woman." The remarkable thing is that Linda (who is more experienced and probably more perceptive than my English 30 students) does not add up one and one to get two. I suggest that the most reasonable explanation for Linda's failure to realize that Willy has been sexually unfaithful is her unconscious refusal to connect the two clues which are so obviously connected. I believe, therefore, that Linda, despite her typical perceptiveness, is self-deceived about Willy in this one important respect. I contend that Linda "knows" deep within herself that Willy is a liar and a fake, but she adamantly refuses to articulate this knowledge. And because thinking is so deeply embedded in language, she can not consciously "know" her thoughts until she articulates them. Linda displays the defense mechanism known as denial in withdrawing her attention from the insight which she does not want to recognize. By refusing to avow her deep knowledge, Linda is able to maintain her self-deception that she does not know what has caused the rift between her husband and her elder son.

The funeral scene reveals that Linda does not consciously know that guilt was the root cause of Willy's suicide. She confides to her long-time neighbour and friend, Charley: "I can't understand it. At this time especially.

First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear." (p. 137) The depth of Linda's self-deception is revealed with gut-wrenching poignancy in the final speech of the play:

> Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. It seems to me that you're just on another trip. I keep expecting you. Willy, dear, I can't cry. Why did you do it? I search and search and I search, and I can't understand it, Willy. I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. (A sob rises in her throat.) We're free and clear. (Sobbing more fully, released.) We're free. (Biff comes slowly toward her.) We're free . . . We're free . . . (p. 139)

The bondage of Linda's self-deception yields a "freedom" which is strange indeed.

Only one character in "Death of a Salesman" is able to shatter the fetters of self-deception. Biff Loman transforms his self-deceptions into self-knowledge, but this transformation is arduous, frought with many set-backs, and exacts a heavy price in psychological pain. Biff's struggle for self-knowledge is revealed through three inter-related motifs: country life versus city life, stealing and cheating, and lying.

Very early in the play, Biff reveals his affinity for country life during a conversation with his brother Hap:

> Well, I spent six or seven years after high school trying to work myself up. Shipping clerk, salesman, business of one kind or another. And it's a measly manner of existence. To get on that subway on the hot mornings in summer. To devote your whole life to keeping stock, or making phone calls, or selling or buying. To suffer fifty weeks of the year for the sake of a two-week vacation, when all you really desire is

> to be outdoors, with your shirt off. And always to have to get ahead of the next fella. And still - that's how your build a future. (p. 22)

However, Biff has not yet realized that his own values are valid and worthy. On the contrary, he feels guilty about who he is and wants to pretend to be someone else:

> Hap, I've had twenty or thirty different kinds of jobs since I left home before the war, and it always turns out the same. I just realized it lately. In Nebraska when I herded cattle, and the Dakotas, and Arizona, and now in Texas. It's why I came home now, I guess, because I realized it. This farm I work on, it's spring there now, see? And they've got about fifteen new colts. There's nothing more inspiring or - beautiful than the sight of a mare and a new colt. And it's cool there now, see? Texas is cool now, and it's spring. And whenever spring comes to where I am, I suddenly get the feeling, my God, I'm not gettin' anywhere! What the hell am I doing, playing around with horses, twenty-eight dollars a week! I'm thirty-four years old, I oughta be makin' my future. That's when I come running home. And now, I get here, and I don't know what to do with myself. (After a pause) I've always made a point of not wasting my life, and everytime I come back here I know that all I've done is to waste my life. (p. 23)

However, unlike Willy who deludes himself into believing that he has all the answers, Biff admits that he is "mixed up very bad." (p. 23) This admission (like the famous "My name is XXX and I am an alcoholic") is the first step toward Biff's freedom from self-deception.

The second motif which traces Biff's struggle for self-knowledge is stealing and cheating. Biff attempts to cheat on his math examination, but is outsmarted by his math teacher, Mr. Birnbaum. As the play progresses, we realize that Biff's life has been characterized by repeated episodes of stealing.

During his student years, Biff steals basketballs from his employer. With Willy's encouragement, Biff steals lumber from a building site (lumber which Willy uses to build his porch). In Kansas, Biff steals a suit from a store and is sent to prison. And, most pathetically, Biff regresses (in psychoanalytic terms, he retreats from his present drive to an earlier one) to his childhood pattern of petty theft one last time when he steals a pen from the office of his former employer, Mr. Oliver, while endeavoring to solicit financial support from Oliver!

Closely related to the motif of stealing and cheating is the motif of lying. Like his father and his brother, Biff attempts to deal with all difficult situations by lying to himself, to other people, or to both. Sometimes he lies by omission rather than by commission, as when he refuses to tell Linda why Willy resents and feels threatened by him. There is no doubt that Biff is trying to protect Linda by shielding her from the truth, but there is also no doubt that what the Loman household needs least is more encouragement to evade unpalatable truths. Unlike Willy and Hap, Biff comes to recognize his lying for what it is - a pernicious cancer that is destroying him and his entire family. When Willy lies about the hose which he has acquired to use in carrying out his suicide, declaring that he has never seen it and does not know what it is, Biff can endure the mendacity no longer and explodes with the fury of twenty years of pent-up frustration.[4] He contemptuously tells Willy that he knows "goddam well" what the hose is. (p. 130) When Biff tries to tell the truth and is opposed by Willy, Linda, and Hap, he reveals the one terrible truth that none of them wants to hear: "We never told the truth for ten minutes in this house!"

(p. 131) Biff confesses that he spent three months in jail in Kansas for stealing, and that he stole himself "out of every good job since high school." (p. 131) Finally, Biff describes his turning point, his moment of truth:

> I ran down eleven flights with a pen in my hand today. And suddenly I stopped, you hear me? And in the middle of that office building, do you hear this? I stopped in the middle of that building and I saw - the sky. I saw the things that I love in this world. The work and the food and the time to sit and smoke. And I looked at the pen and said to myself, what the hell am I grabbing this for? What am I doing in an office, making a contemptuous, begging fool of myself, when all I want is out there, waiting for me the minute I say I know who I am! Why can't I say that, Willy? (p. 132)

In psychoanalytic terms, Biff is able to recognize, repudiate and condemn his compulsive behavior (stealing) for what it is as soon as he ceases to repress his real feelings. Once Biff recognizes and accepts his "country values," he does not have to steal in order to pretend that he is someone else. Thus Biff has acquired self-knowledge by questioning his values and by recognizing that he has been lying to himself. True to form, Willy refuses to listen to Biff when Biff tries one last time to get through to his father:

> I am not a leader of men, Willy, and neither are you. You were never anything but a hard-working drummer who landed in the ash can like all the rest of them! I'm one dollar an hour, Willy! I tried seven states and couldn't raise it. A buck an hour! Do you gather my meaning? I'm not bringing home any prizes any more, and you're going to stop waiting for me to bring them home! (p. 132)

Biff's catharsis reaches its climax as he declares "Will you let me go, for Christ's sake? Will you take that phony dream and burn it before something

happens?" (p. 133)

Having understood nothing that Biff has said, Willy wanders off in a daze of self-delusion, declaring that "That boy is going to be magnificent!" and imagining his brother Ben saying "Yes, outstanding, with twenty thousand [the life insurance] behind him." (p. 131) And Hap, still in his own private fantasyland, boasts that "I'm gonna run that department before the year is up." (p. 134)

There is an interesting irony with respect to the self-deceptions of Willy Loman and his two sons. By providing Biff with living examples of the destructive consequences of self-deception, Willy and Hap serve (albeit unwittingly) as "therapists" who assist Biff in his efforts to transform his self-deceptions into self-knowledge. Biff is so frightened by the prospect of "ending up" like Willy and Hap that he is willing to risk the psychological pain of facing some very threatening and unpalatable truths about himself. However, when Biff attempts, consciously and deliberately, to serve as a "therapist" to Willy and Hap, his efforts are fruitless. Willy and Hap are so profoundly self-deceived that they reject utterly Biff's valiant attempts to retrieve them from their make-believe world.

All three motifs - country versus city, stealing and cheating, and lying - are resolved in the final scene of the play, the Requiem. Biff sums up Willy's life with two astute observations: "He had the wrong dreams" and "He never knew who he was." (p. 138) One last time, Biff urges Hap to join him in the real world, but Hap opts to continue the family tradition of living in a world of fantasy and self-deception.

4.3 Self-Deception in "Othello"

Interestingly enough, we do not need to look to post-Freudian literature like Miller's "Death of a Salesman" to find examples of self-deception manifested in various defense mechanisms. Many of Shakespeare's plays explore the difficulty of distinguishing reality from appearance, and intricate webs of deception and self-deception are often woven to create enormously complex scenarios. One play which delves deeply into the moral consequences of self-deception is "Othello." Volumes have been written about Iago's masterful deception of Othello. Very little has been written about Iago's equally masterful deception of himself. In a play which is buttressed and adorned with dramatic irony, the greatest irony of all is frequently ignored. The ultimate irony of "Othello" is that Iago, the arch-fiend who ensnares so many unsuspecting flies in his web of deception, becomes the ultimate victim of his own labyrinthine machinations. In fact, I shall contend in this chapter that Iago is the slave of his lack of self-knowledge and his self-deception, just as Othello is the slave of his sexual jealousy.

Iago claims to have five reasons which motivate him to perpetrate his evil scheme, a scheme which ultimately brings about the deaths of Roderigo, Emilia, and Desdemona, and causes the ruination of Cassio and Othello. My contention, of course, will be that these "reasons" are actually rationalizations wherein "good" reasons are substituted for the "real" reasons. In his first soliloquy, Iago declares that he has been duping the fatuous Roderigo for two reasons, entertainment and money:

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse;
For I mine own gained knowledge should profane
If I would time expend with such a snipe
But for my sport and profit.[5]

Iago goes on to reveal that he hates Othello because he (Iago) suspects Othello of having committed adultery with his (Iago's) wife, Emilia:

I hate the Moor;
And it is thought abroad that 'twixt my sheets
'Has done my office. (I, iii, 378-380)

In his next soliloquy, Iago repeats his suspicion that Othello and Emilia have committed adultery, for he declares that "I do suspect the lusty Moor/ Hath leaped into my seat." (II, i, 289-290) Fourthly, Iago reveals that he is jealous of Cassio because the latter has been appointed Othello's lieutenant; Iago seeks "to get [Cassio's] place" as Othello's second-in-command. (I, iii, 385) Iago castigates Cassio, labelling him as "a great arithmetician" (I, i, 19) whose soldiership is "mere prattle, without practice." (I, i, 26) Lastly, Iago suggests (albeit in a parenthetical aside) that he suspects Cassio of having committed adultery with Emilia: "For I fear Cassio with my nightcap too." (II, i, 301) Thus Iago offers five reasons for his vile plot: sport, profit, revenge for Othello's adultery, jealousy and resentment over Cassio's promotion, and revenge for Cassio's adultery.

Well, what could possibly be more clear than Iago's five reasons for implementing his diabolical mouse trap? But there is a problem here, for, as Iago himself warns Roderigo, "I am not what I am." (I, i, 65) There are actually several difficulties. First, even if we take Iago at his word and accept

all of his reasons as being his real reasons, why does his plot hinge on the murder of Othello's wife, Desdemona, who is not implicated in any of the five reasons? Moreover, only two of Iago's reasons ring true and hold up under close scrutiny, those being "sport and profit." However, "sport and profit" explain only the plot against Roderigo; they are never posited by Iago as reasons for destroying Othello, Desdemona, Cassio, and Emilia. That leaves us with three reasons to consider: jealousy and resentment of Cassio's promotion, and revenge for the supposed adultery of both Cassio and Othello.

Iago's claim that he seeks revenge because he has been cuckolded by Othello and Cassio is difficult to take seriously. The accusation that Othello has committed adultery with Emilia is made nonchalantly and with very little conviction. Iago casually observes that he has heard a rumour ("it is thought abroad" I, iii, 379) about Othello and Emilia, and then he promptly makes an amazing admission about this rumour: "I know not if't be true." (I, iii, 380) Such idle and unfounded speculation constitutes very flimsy justification indeed for masterminding a heinous mass murder! In fact, Iago seems to be rationalizing, making up "reasons" as he goes along, without presenting any evidence to substantiate any of his outrageous allegations. Moreover, Iago's accusation that Cassio has also committed adultery with Emilia (Emilia must have maintained a very active social calendar!) is even less convincing, both in its substance and in its delivery. Iago declares that he wants Michael Cassio "on the hip" (II, i, 299) because he fears "Cassio with [his] nightcap too." (II, i, 301) The most amazing feature of Iago's accusation, however, is the fact that Iago delivers this shocking (and hightly suspect) revelation as a

parenthetical aside. Iago's lack of conviction, coupled with the inherent dubiousness of his claims, casts serious doubt on the credibility of his claims. Astute readers can not help but suspect that Iago's "reasons" are merely impromptu rationalizations, and thinly-veiled ones at that!

Iago's contention that he is livid and resentful because Cassio has been promoted above him seems much more plausible than does his bizarre claim that he seeks revenge for what we might refer to as a case of multiple adultery. Furthermore, he makes frequent references to Cassio's promotion and seems to be genuinely distressed by his colleague's advancement. He refers to Cassio, with obvious contempt, as a "great arithmetician" (I, i, 19) and tells Roderigo that Cassio's soldiership is "mere prattle, without practice." (I, i, 24) Moreover, Iago's bitter complaint that "preferment goes by letter and affection" (i.e. by influence and favoritism) is not entirely devoid of justification. However, even if we grant that Iago's resentment of Cassio is genuine and sincere (and perhaps even partially warranted), we must ask this question: Is it reasonable to believe that such resentment could motivate Iago to orchestrate three murders, one attempted murder, and the ruination of a life? I think not.

My contention is that Iago does not tell us the *real* reason for his behavior because he does not know (consciously) what the real reason is. That real reason, I shall argue, is homoerotic attraction to both Cassio and Othello, compounded by sexual jealousy of Desdemona (because she is Othello's sex partner and Iago is not). Furthermore, I shall contend that Iago's latent homosexuality is the root cause of his misogyny and of his ambivalent and

duplicitous nature; Iago's reversal (a childhood form of reaction formation wherein love is converted to hate) is the unconscious motivation for Iago's hatred of Othello and Cassio.

Iago describes heterosexual love in language which is as gross as it is graphic, language which belies his insecurity with respect to his own sexuality. His bestial imagery pervades the dialogue and sets the prevailing tone for the entire drama. With mocking glee, Iago informs Brabantio that "an old black ram/ Is tupping [his] white ewe." (I, i, 88-89) Adding insult to injury, Iago warns Brabantio that he will have his daughter "cover'd with a Barbary horse," and that he will have "nephews neigh to [him]," "coursers for cousins," and "gennets for germans." (I, i, 111-113). Finally, lest Brabantio has misconstrued the tenor of the discourse (and thinks that Iago is just horsing around!), Iago crudely declares that Desdemona and Othello are "making the beast with two backs." (I, i, 116) Later in the play, Iago torments Othello by speculating about Cassio and Desdemona engaging in love-making, suggesting that in their lust they would be "as prime as goats, as hot as monkeys,/ As salt as wolves in pride." (III, iii, 403-404)

Iago repeatedly castigates and objectifies women. He summarizes his opinion of women for his wife Emilia:

> You [women] are pictures out of doors,
> Bells in your parlours, wildcats in your kitchens,
> Saints in your injuries, devils being offended,
> Players in your housewifery, and housewives in your beds.
> (II, i, 110-113)

Admittedly, Iago purports to be making his comments in jest, but this jest (to

borrow a line from Kent in "King Lear") is "not altogether fool." When Desdemona protests that Iago is a slanderer, he responds by declaring that women "rise to play, and go to bed to work." (II, i, 116) This assertion, coupled with Iago's frequent references to women as being "whores," suggests an attitude which is far removed from idle jesting! When Cassio kisses Emilia out of deference to courtly courtesy, Iago crudely observes that:

> Sir, would she give you so much of her lips
> As of her tongue she oft bestows on me,
> You would have enough. (II, i, 101-103)

But this minor disparagement of Emilia is but a prelude to Iago's conversation with Cassio, a conversation which reveals the depths of Iago's lewd objectification of women:

IAGO:	[Othello] hath not yet made wanton night with [Desdemona], and she is sport for Jove.
CASSIO:	She's a most exquisite lady.
IAGO:	And I'll warrant her, full of game.
CASSIO:	Indeed, she's a most fresh and delicate creature.
IAGO:	What an eye she has! Methinks it sounds a parley to provocation.
CASSIO:	An inviting eye; and yet methinks right modest.
IAGO:	And when she speaks, is it not an alarum to love?
CASSIO:	She is indeed perfection.
IAGO:	Well, happiness to their sheets!

The shocking contrast between the courtly diction of Cassio and the lewd street talk of Iago serves to emphasize Iago's obsession with degrading women by regarding them as mere sex objects. Moreover, Iago reveals his misogyny to Roderigo in unequivocal terms when he declares that "Ere I would say I would

drown myself for the love of a guinea hen [woman or prostitute], I would change my humanity with a baboon." (I, iii, 313-315) All in all, Iago's opinion of women is very low indeed. They are sex objects - to be used whenever and however a man's carnal whim dictates. Iago encourages Roderigo to take heart with respect to his obsession for Desdemona, assuring him that he "shalt enjoy her" soon enough! (I, iii, 355)

When Iago is not describing heterosexual love or women in gross and bestial imagery, his speech is characterized by vulgar curses, satanic prayers, and sadistic images of entrapment. His first words in the play are a curse ("Sblood" in I, i, 4), and his final valediction to his wife is a crude slander ("villainous whore" in V, ii, 229). Between these two passages, Iago utters a veritable catalogue of entrapment imagery. He concludes his fourth soliloquy on a gleeful note, bragging that he will turn Desdemona's virtue into pitch, "And out of her own goodness make the net/ That shall enmesh them all." (II, iii, 337-338). He delights in his conviction that Othello "will as tenderly be led by th' nose as asses are," (I, iii, 393-394) and in his confidence that "with as little a web as this will I ensnare as great a fly as Cassio." (II, i, 167-168). He resolves to "gyve" (ensnare, fetter) Cassio with his own courtly manners, once more perverting the universe by transforming good into evil in order to induce chaos.

Iago's language, then, is characterized by an ugly litany of readily identifiable hallmarks: curses, prayers to darkness, bestial images, entrapment images, and assorted crudities. Women are lumped together as a vile collection of assorted sluts and whores, and heterosexual love is reduced

to the most vulgar terms imaginable. The play literally reeks with rancid imagery as Othello, poisoned by Iago's venom, comes to echo the thoughts and words of his evil mentor. In his diseased madness, Otheilo rants about "a cistern for foul toads/ To knot and gender in" (IV, ii, 61-62) and compares Desdemona to summer flies "in the shambles,/ That quicken even with blowing" (IV, ii, 66-67). Thus, through Iago's own speech and his horrendous influence on the speech of other characters, "Othello" degenerates into a loathsome orgy of wanton promiscuity. Just as "Romeo and Juliet" is dominated by light imagery, and "Macbeth" by blood and darkness imagery, "Othello" is consumed with nauseating images of sexual debauchery. With one astounding exception. And that anomaly is an eloquent, tender, and sensual description of love, delivered by - Iago!

> . . . I lay with Cassio lately,
> And being troubled with a raging tooth,
> I could not sleep.
> There are a kind of men so loose of soul
> That in their sleeps will mutter their affairs,
> One of this kind is Cassio.
> In sleep I heard him say, "Sweet Desdemona,
> Let us be wary, let us hide our loves!"
> And then, sir, would he gripe and wring my hand,
> Cry, "O sweet creature!" and then kiss me hard,
> As if he pluck'd up kisses by the roots
> That grew upon my lips; then laid his leg
> Over my thigh, and sigh'd, and kiss'd, and then
> Cried "Cursed fate that gave thee to the Moor!"
> (III, iii, 413-426)

The diction in this passage contrasts so sharply with everything else that Iago says in the play, that the passage strikes the reader with great intensity, just as one ray of light pierces a vast abyss of utter blackness.[6]

Now, lest the reader suspect that I have misinterpreted the passage, let me explain what I believe to be the importance of this strange passage. I know that Iago is merely fabricating a lie here - a vicious, impromptu lie intended to slander Cassio and Desdemona and to drive Othello to madness. And I certainly understand that Iago is not consciously and deliberately describing a homosexual love encounter. However, I contend that it is not a coincidence that Iago speaks of love in poetic terms only once in the play, and that that one poetic reference springs forth in the midst of a description of two men (Cassio and Iago) in bed together. My contention, then, is that Iago's unconscious attraction to Cassio (in Freudian terms, his latent homoeroticism) manifests itself in the subject matter which Iago selects as the basis for his impromptu lie. Ironically, in his attempt to deceive Othello, Iago unintentionally reveals his innermost feelings, feelings that he is not consciously aware of possessing. The image of Iago being cuddled, kissed, carressed and addressed as "sweet creature" by Cassio presents itself in stark contrast to the hideous bestial imagery which Iago employs to describe heterosexual love relationships.

Iago is a man who is possessed of precious little self-knowledge because he is profoundly self-deceived about his most basic feelings and motivations. He is sexually attracted to men in general, and to Othello and Cassio in particular. Yet he does not recognize, avow, or articulate these significant truths. Consequently, he is a bitter, frustrated and tormented man. In one of Desdemona's futile attempts to make sense out of Othello's irrational behavior, she (unintentionally) describes Iago very perspicaciously:

> Men's natures wrangle with inferior things
> Though great ones are their object. (III, iv, 139-140)

Because Iago does not acknowledge his own homoerotic longings, he engages in displacement (scapegoating) by despising and degrading all women, and he sets out to destroy Desdemona. He takes revenge on Desdemona because he is jealous of her; Desdemona has the one "thing" which Iago wants most in the world - Othello's love. And because Iago is not aware of his (unconscious) love for Othello and Cassio, he employs reversal by displaying (conscious) hatred for Othello and Cassio.

In his efforts to further his plot, Iago systematically isolates Othello from everyone, thereby manipulating Othello into a position whereby he (Othello) is dependent upon Iago - intellectually and emotionally. Thus Iago becomes Othello's confidante, his most intimate and trusted friend. Iago's ambivalent feelings are revealed by his use of language. At every possible opportunity, Iago assures Othello of his devotion:

> My lord, you know I love you. (III, iii, 117)
>
> I humbly do beseech you of your pardon
> For too much loving you. (III, iii, 212-213)
>
> I hope you will consider what is spoke
> Comes from my love. (III, iii, 216-217)

A naive reader might dismiss Iago's protestations of love as the unctuous truckling of a Pecksniffian toady, but there is more here than the naive reader suspects. Within a space of less that twenty lines, Iago tries to convince both Roderigo and himself that he hates Othello: "I hate the Moor." (I, iii, 361 and 378) When Iago declares that "In following [Othello], I follow but myself," (I,

i, 58) he means that he is merely pretending to be faithful to Othello in order to serve his own evil purposes. However, the astute reader comes to understand his cynical words as being laden with late-developing irony; Iago pursues Othello because he really does want to "catch" him - and in pursuing Othello, Iago is indeed following his real self (i.e. his repressed unconscious self).

The naive interpretation of Iago's contradictory claims is that Iago is telling Roderigo the truth when he claims to hate Othello, and that Iago is lying when he tells Othello that he loves him. But this simplistic view fails to recognize the complexity of Iago's personality, and the ambivalent nature of love relationships. In psychoanalytic terms, Iago's repressed love has been converted to hate by the defense mechanism known as reversal. Iago's contradictory claims that he loves and hates Othello are indicative of much more than a duplicitous nature; they are suggestive of a profound ambivalence. Iago is telling a half-truth when he claims to hate Othello, but he is also telling a half-truth when he avows his love for Othello. Iago does not know what is true and what is not, just as Othello, wallowing in the depths of self-deception, believes (contrary to all evidence and rationality) that "For naught did I in hate/ But all in honour." (V, ii, 295) Othello's unfamiliarity with Venetian society, his inexperience with women, and his consequent reliance upon Iago all contrive to induce his (Othello's) self-deception. An abysmal lack of self-knowledge serves to promote and perpetuate Iago's own self-deception. Ironically, the archetypical deceiver is too successful; he manages to deceive even himself with his diabolical web of half-truths, perversions of truth, and outright prevarications. There is much truth in Iago's cryptic answer to

Othello's desperate cry:

> OTHELLO: By heaven, I'll know thy thoughts!
> IAGO: You cannot, if my heart were in your hand.
> (III, iii, 162-163)

How can Iago tell Othello his thoughts, when Iago himself does not know them! The irony becomes almost unbearable when Iago chooses this moment to warn Othello to beware of jealousy:

> It is the green-ey'd monster, which doth mock
> The meat it feeds on. (III, iii, 166-167)

Oh, it is indeed - as Iago's tortured and chaotic life attests!

Coleridge dismisses Iago's malevolence as "motiveless malignity," but I regard Iago's malignity as being anything but motiveless. Iago destroys everyone and everything which is beautiful and perfect because he is consumed with a jealousy which he does not recognize and therefore cannot purge. Since he cannot have Cassio and Othello, he destroys them. And since Desdemona does have Othello, he destroys her too. In the process, he acquires no self-knowledge and immortalizes himself as a depraved monster. Such are the fruits of profound self-deception.

CHAPTER FOUR: FOOTNOTES

1. In using the expression "best explanation," I mean the most plausible and comprehensive explanation. I do *not* intend to appeal to the notion of "best explanation" as it is employed in philosophy of logic.

2. Arthur Miller, "Death of a Salesman" (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 14. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition.

3. Arthur Miller, "The Crucible" (New York: Penguin, 1976), p. 55.

4. The word "mendacity" is the keynote of Tennessee Williams' play "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," a poignant study in self-deception.

5. William Shakespeare, "Othello" ed. by George Lyman Kittredge (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), I, iii, 375-378. All subsequent quotations are taken from this edition. In his book *Iago: Some Approaches to the Illusion of His Motivation* (New York: Athenium, 1970), Stanley Edgar Hyman discusses five possible motivations for Iago's behavior. Hyman analyses Iago as a latent homosexual, a stage villain, a depraved artist, a Machiavellian manipulator, and a Satanic figure.

6. Professor Allen Pearson has pointed out that it is interesting to note that Iago should put these words in Cassio's mouth. It seems that, given that Iago has Cassio talking in his sleep while in bed with Iago, "thee" can refer to either Desdemona or Iago. If "thee" refers to Desdemona, given my analysis, then Iago has Cassio say his (Iago's) true feelings. If "thee" refers to Iago, then it can be understood to be an expression of Cassio's jealously of Iago and Othello, which would represent Iago's true desire.

CHAPTER FIVE:

KOHLBERG AND THE RATIONAL PRINCIPLES APPROACH TO MORAL EDUCATION

5.1 Introduction

There is almost universal agreement that moral education should be a high priority of the public school system. And there is almost universal disagreement as to what form moral education should take! Hare, Cochrane, and Rawls insist that moral education must focus on formal principles; Peters, Warnock, and Dunlop counter that specific moral content is logically prior to procedures and methods.[1] In Lawrence Kohlberg's Cognitive-Developmental Stage Theory, the form of (rational) moral arguments is emphasized; in Iris Murdoch's quasi-mystical moral philosophy, the concept of love is central. Michael Scriven posits a radical dichotomy between reason and emotion; Peters, Solomon, Ryle, and Krishnamurti deny that such a dichotomy exists. The emotivists believe that there can be no justification of ethical statements; Richard Peters attempts a transcendental justification (a la Kant) to demonstrate that just as science presupposes some uniformity in nature but can never be used to prove the uniformity of nature, so morality presupposes freedom, respect for persons, equality and worthwhile activities, but can never be used to prove these conditions. Small wonder that those of us who are active in the front lines of moral education find our thoughts wandering to Dante when we seek wisdom and guidance from the sages: *"Lasciate ogni*

speranza . . ."

In spite of the broad spectrum of competing moral philosophies from which one could choose with respect to moral education, one particular group of models has achieved prominence. Those ethical systems which stress the importance of moral reasoning have become very influential. The widespread acceptance of the assumption that the development of moral reasoning is the most important aspect of moral education has put Kohlberg's Cognitive-Developmental Stage Theory in the limelight. The notion that if students are introduced to a system of rational moral principles they will *ipso facto* become effective moral agents is very alluring. I propose to devote this chapter to challenging Kohlberg's stage theory because I am convinced that it is seriously flawed and, more importantly, because it has become so influential that it has relegated to virtual oblivion the two problems (akrasia and self-deception) which, as I shall argue in the final chapter, are of paramount importance with respect to moral education.

Specifically, I propose to criticize Kohlberg's theory by exploring two separate problems. Firstly, I shall challenge Kohlberg's assumption that the form and content of morality can be separated and that moral education can be advanced without reference to specific judgments. Secondly, I shall attempt to show that Kohlberg's Stage 7 is fraught with dire problems which reveal the fragile and problematic character of the philosophical assumptions which lie at the foundation for Kohlberg's entire theoretical model.

5.2 Form and Content

Lawrence Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of moralization has stimulated considerable discussion with respect to moral education. Kohlberg's claim that the form of moral reasoning can be cultivated without reference to specific moral content is an alluring notion because the contentious issues which are endemic to moral education within the context of a pluralistic society arise in relation to content rather than in relation to form. If moral educators could teach the form of moral reasoning without reference to specific content, then moral education would cease to be a controversial endeavor.

I propose to challenge Kohlberg's claim that a sharp distinction can be drawn between the form of moral reasoning and the content of moral practices; I shall argue that moral education cannot be advanced without reference to substantive rules and specific judgments. Two arguments will be presented to justify my criticism of Kohlberg's stage theory as being mistaken in its fundamental premise that form and content can be separated with respect to moral reasoning. In the first argument I hope to demonstrate that the very concept of isolating form from content is logically absurd; in the second, I shall discuss four specific instances in which arguments in the form of Kohlberg's Stage 6 *do* determine content. I shall conclude by making some observations about the situation in which moral educators find themselves if, as I contend, form and content can not be separated in matters of moral judgment.

Kohlberg's assertion that form and content can be separated with respect to moral judgment is open to question. The term "morality" entails

respect not only for the modes of reasoning and inquiry (form) but also for the specific decisions which are reached (content). If, for example, a man whom we shall identify as Ivan were to claim that he had reached a decision to torture every person who opposed him in any way whatsoever, we would be justified in regarding his decision as being immoral. The objection could be made that Ivan is behaving illogically rather than immorally. In other words, it might be argued that Ivan's decision (content) is morally unacceptable only because the reasoning (form) is flawed. But I do not agree that there is any justification for assuming that Ivan's *reasoning* is necessarily flawed; if he is prepared to accept the consequences of a brutal and barbaric approach to interpersonal relations, then he is *logically* consistent in adopting that approach himself. The point, of course, is that although Ivan's behavior is not necessarily illogical, it is undeniably immoral; the form of moral arguments must always be such that the content which results is a manifestation of substantive rules such as "Do not harm others." Thus Ivan's decision might not be unacceptable on rational grounds, but it certainly is unacceptable on moral grounds. The categorical expectation of the term "morality" excludes all arguments (even rational ones) which do not entail substantive rules that take into consideration the welfare of others. Frances Dunlop has expressed this distinctive feature of morality by asserting that "moral 'content' is logically prior to procedures and methods."[2]

We can approach this argument from a different angle by pointing out that although moral reasoning (sometimes on a very rudimentary level) is a necessary condition for morality, it is not a sufficient condition. In this regard

R. S. Peters has observed that love is prior to morality.[3] Peters' point is a crucially important one; he asserts that love is part of the form of morality, not merely an aspect of moral conduct, as is sometimes assumed to be the case. If respect for persons (love, altruism, and agape are three of the terms which are frequently used to denote such respect) is not operational within an individual, then the term "moral reasoning" can not be used without creating a logical absurdity. Morality entails a mind set which is both dispositional and occurrent and which implies a commitment to morality as a state of being rather than merely as a process of moral reasoning. It is, therefore, absurd to isolate the form of moral arguments from the content which those arguments advocate.

Peters' conviction that love is an aspect of the form of morality suggests the distinction between an appreciation *of* morality as opposed to an appreciation *for* morality.[4] Whereas the former is based upon an appreciation of morality for its intrinsic worth, the latter is based upon an appreciation for the "fringe benefits" which morality offers in terms of promoting prudential concerns and furthering selfish motives. I might, for example, desire other people to be moral because their commitment to morality would protect my property and my rights; I might even avoid being manifestly immoral (or avoid exposing my manifest immorality!) in order to secure the continued moral behavior of others towards me. However, to argue that such behavior (and motivation) on my part constitutes moral behavior is surely to misuse the word "moral." Only when I have acquired an appreciation *of* morality (as respect for others and for that which is "good") can it be said that I am

thinking morally. Since morality is not a means to an end but an end in itself, the notion of "good" must be related to the concept of intention (and, consequently, to one's substantive values) rather than to the concept of blind obedience (or calculated obedience under circumstances which render obedience efficacious) to a fixed set of rules. Form and content are logically interdependent in relation to moral judgment; the two aspects of morality are inextricably linked and can not be isolated in the manner in which Kohlberg's theory posits that they can.

Notwithstanding the above, it is necessary to foster those dispositions in young children which will serve to ensure that 'behaving morally' will become habitual even though the children are too young to appreciate the nature of moral reasoning. I believe that it was Hobbes who observed that even a small child is capable of killing a man while he is sleeping. As Cornel Hamm has observed, "children can and must behave appropriately long before they are able to reason morally."[5] With respect to young children, then, moral content must be taught prior to the teaching of the form of moral reasoning. Furthermore, it is worth noting that children can become autonomous moral agents who act in accordance with moral principles only *after* they have learned what it means to follow a rule. Once again, moral content (as prescribed by simple rules such as "Don't push your sister off the forty-seventh floor balcony") is logically (as well as temporally and practically) prior to forms of moral reasoning.

I have tried to show that the very concept of separating form from content in moral thinking reveals a disregard for the categorical expectation of

"morality." Now, moving from this formal level to the level of substantive judgments, I shall argue that certain specific substantive moral judgments (content) are presupposed by the Kohlbergian system of moral reasoning (form). The substantive moral judgments which I shall examine arise in relation to murder and rape on the one hand, and sodomy and birth control on the other.[6]

It is my contention that there do not exist any postconventional arguments which could serve as justifications for either rape or murder nor as condemnations of either sodomy or birth control. If I am correct in this regard, then, clearly, at least four specific substantive claims are entailed by the stage theory of moralization, the theory which purports to provide a form of moral reasoning which does not presuppose specific substantive content.

What form would a Stage 5/6 argument in support of rape or murder take? On what basis and under what circumstances could rape or murder be justified within the framework of Kohlberg's *a priori* principle of justice? I can envisage no argument which would defend either rape or murder without contradicting the principle of justice.[7] Justice entails the concept of treating people (sentient beings) with respect and, moreover, the concept of treating people equally unless there are relevant reasons for doing otherwise. What relevant reasons could be submitted as a justification for rape or murder? It seems to be manifestly apparent that no such reasons exist.

One might argue that murder is justified if it is committed in self-defense, but such an argument is otiose because the word "murder" is misused when it is applied to a killing perpetrated in self-defense. We speak of X killing

Y in self-defense, but we do not speak of X murdering Y in self-defense unless we misunderstand either "murder" or "self-defense" or both! "Kill" is a neutral term which embodies no normative claims; "murder" is a normative term with pejorative connotations. It is possible, however, for an extreme pacifist to argue that killing in self-defense is murder. One who reaches this judgment is then morally obliged not to defend oneself when attacked, or at least to use no means of self-defense that are life-threatening. In this case it is not nonsensical to say that one murdered in self-defense. The point, though, remains: murder is never morally acceptable.

Rape is likewise a condemnatory normative epithet. One can not imagine any Kohlbergian justification for rape because rape entails a brutal lack of respect for persons. If a rapist is deemed by the court to be legally insane, then his insanity exculpates him in a legal sense. However, even though the rapist is exculpated legally, the act of rape which he committed is still regarded as being morally reprehensible. Moreover, one can not conceive of anyone committing rape unintentionally; the complexity of temporal sequencing precludes the possibility of an accidental rape.[8] On the other hand, someone may kill by accident; but, as was the case with murdering in self-defense, murdering by accident is logically impossible.

I have argued that murder and rape can not be justified in terms of postconventional reasoning. I will now argue that sodomy and birth control can not be condemned in terms of postconventional reasoning. Here, as earlier, I invoke the principle of justice (a principle which, we must keep in mind, is regarded as being the *a priori summum bonum* in the Kohlbergian schema).

Practicing birth control and engaging in sodomy do not necessarily violate the principle of justice. If justice is not violated, then there can be no condemnation of either birth control or sodomy, at least not within the framework of Kohlberg's system of moral reasoning.

We should not allow ourselves to be influenced by the ludicrous claim that sodomy ought to be condemned as immoral because some homosexuals impose their sexual attentions on unwilling persons, molest children, or murder their sex partners. Even if there is a reasonable case (as there certainly is!) for condemning rape, child molestation, and murder; these activities should *not* be included under the rubric "sodomy." The lexical definition of sodomy entails the concept of anal intercourse, including homosexual anal intercourse; it does not entail the concepts of rape, child molestation, and murder. To assert that these concepts are entailed by the term "sodomy" is, therefore, to engage in Humpty-Dumptyism by employing idiosyncratic stipulations instead of lexical definitions.

Furthermore, the normative claim that sodomy is "unnatural" is sometimes invoked by those who would condemn sodomy as though it were a rational argument . This pejorative claim is a paradigmatic case of reasoning which has been subsumed by cultural bias and thereby rendered otiose. Certain ancient cultures, for example, accepted sodomy as being one of several "natural" sexual preferences. It is quite possibly the case that Socrates, Plato, and Alexander the Great all engaged in sodomy (not all at once, however!). I am not suggesting that because these three famous men (and many less famous men) engaged in sodomy, that sodomy should be regarded as

an ideal; my point is that there is no validity to the claim that sodomy is an "unnatural" act if human society is viewed from an historical perspective. Sodomy is indeed "abnormal" in the neutral sense that it occurs much less frequently (in our culture) than do certain other manifestations of sexuality: however, statistical infrequency is *not* evidence for the claim that sodomy is an "unnatural" act. It would seem that persons who are offended by sodomy (perhaps as a result of religious conviction or aesthetic bias) have resorted to name-calling in an attempt to defend a moral stance which can not be justified by rational arguments. To assert that one is personally offended or even disgusted by sodomy is a rational claim if one is indeed thus offended. However, to claim that sodomy is "unnatural" simply because one is personally offended by it is to perpetrate an argument which is blatantly fallacious.

I admit that there might appear to be a bit of a problem here because the notions of natural and unnatural are ambiguous. There is a descriptive meaning (to which I have appealed), but there is also a normative meaning that can not be reduced to personal preference. We say (for example) that it is natural for humans to have two lungs, even though some people (naturally) do not. In this context, "natural" is not being used in a descriptive sense and it is not being used to show a personal preference for people with two lungs. Instead, it presupposes some ideal or standard picture of what humans are. A similar account might be developed with respect to sodomy being "unnatural" in that sodomy violates some ideal or standard picture of what humans are. However, even if some such argument could be advanced with respect to sodomy, my position (that sodomy can not be morally condemned on the basis

of rational arguments appealing to the principle of justice) still holds. Even if it is unnatural (in the sense of not conforming to an ideal or standard of humanness) to have one lung or to engage in sodomy, one would not be justified in condemning *as unjust* (remember that "justice as fairness" is the *a priori summum bonum* of Kohlberg's moral system) those persons who have only one lung or who engage in sodomy. I take the time to make these rather obvious distinctions only because they are critically important ones which many persons fail to make.

These two substantive terms, sodomy and birth control, are particularly interesting because, although they are descriptive terms, they have acquired a normative dimension in the cultural context of a Judeo-Christian society. As recently as 1990, for example, Pope John Paul II condemned birth control as being morally "wrong."[9] The normative dimension of sodomy is even more notorious; not only are the views of Anita Bryant and her followers (mentors?) widely accepted (the most celebrated "arguments" have already been impugned in the previous paragraphs), but deprecatory epithets for homosexuals (such as homo, fag, queer, fairy, pansie, cock-sucker, and candy ass) are enjoying a lively revival in contemporary usage.[10] It is significant that these specific descriptive terms have taken on a more general meaning; more often than not, "fag" simply denotes "undesirable (for *any* reason) person." The broadening application of words which refer to persons disposed to engage in sodomy, to denote persons who are generally undesirable is a clear indication of the extent to which sodomy has become a normative term in our society.

Notwithstanding the above, neither sodomy nor birth control can be condemned on the basis of rational arguments (that appeal to the principle of justice), unless one accepts intuitive claims as rational arguments. The cognitive-developmental theory of moralization rejects intuitive claims because they are not amenable to public scrutiny and therefore can not be verified in terms of evaluative criteria founded upon publicly recognizable standards. Thus Pope John Paul's intuition regarding birth control and Anita Bryant's intuition regarding sodomy can not be accepted as valid arguments within the frameworrk of a rational morality. Since Kohlberg's stage theory is a rational moral system, intuited claims can not be employed to condemn substantive judgments. Therefore, neither sodomy nor birth control can be condemned on the basis of Kohlbergian moral reasoning.

I am willing to concede that my analysis is open to challenge. If, for example, someone could formulate a Stage 5/6 argument to justify rape or murder or to condemn sodomy or birth control, then my claims would become invalid. However, I do not think that any such argument will ever be produced, precisely because Kohlberg posits justice as the *summum bonum*; justice is logically compatible with sodomy and birth control, but it is logically incompatible with murder and rape. There are, to be sure, rational arguments for not engaging in sodomy and birth control. Sodomy is regarded by many persons as being aesthetically unappealing and/or medically imprudent, and certain methods of birth control are regarded as being inconvenient and/or medically imprudent.[11] These arguments are certainly rational, but they are valid only as a basis for making a *personal* choice ragarding whether or not to

engage in sodomy or birth control; they are not valid arguments to justify an all-encompassing moral condemnation of sodomy and birth control.

The point is not that I disagree with the content which Kohlberg's theory generates (indeed, I concur with the moral condemnation of rape and murder and with the moral neutrality with respect to sodomy and birth control); the point is that Kohlberg's system of moral reasoning *does* entail at least four specific substantive claims (and two of these claims, those relating to the moral neutrality of sodomy and birth control, are in opposition to widely-held points of view derived from intuitive moral systems). Form and content are *not* separable and the cognitive-developmental theory of moralization is *not* a subsumption of all other moral systems; it is merely one more metaethical system, albeit a very cogent one, to be considered within the context of an already pluralistic moral milieu. Lawrence Kohlberg and his colleagues have provided us with an important step in that their work has served as a catalyst to promote widespread and earnest debate about moral education, but neither they nor we have yet arrived at the ultimate destination. As of 1991, no panacea exists in the realm of metaethics.

5.3 Kohlberg's Stage 7

Having challenged Kohlberg's assumption that the form and content of morality can be separated and that moral education can be advanced without reference to specific judgments, let us turn our attention to the second issue: Kohlberg's Stage 7 is fraught with dire problems which reveal the fragile and problematic character of the philosophical assumptions which provide the foundation for Kohlberg's entire theoretical model.

Upon learning that his proposed solutions to ethical dilemmas had been scored by Kohlberg as stage five responses, the Oxford philosopher R. M. Hare is reported to have exclaimed, "Send me the correct answers so that I may reach Stage 6 and be saved."[12] We should take care not to dismiss Hare's caustic quip as being merely a clever jibe; Hare's sarcasm engenders a serious challenge to Kohlberg's oft-repeated dogma that there are "stages" of moral reasoning. As many scholars have pointed out, and as Kohlberg himself has admitted, the higher stages (especially Stage 6) are problematic.[13] I should inform the reader from the outset that it is not my intention to discuss the criticisms which have been directed at Kohlberg's empirical methodology; that task belongs to the domain of the psychologists and the philosophers of science. Rather, the focus of my critique will be on the philosophical assumptions which provide the foundation for Kohlberg's stage theory. My contention is that Kohlberg, having discovered that his six-floor edifice had an inadequate foundation, attempted to "solve" the problem by adding a seventh floor! This was a mistake - as any competent carpenter (or philosopher!) would have known. Kohlberg named this new floor Stage 7. Let's take a closer look.

Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of moral reasoning posits justice (actually, justice as fairness a la John Rawls) as the *a priori summum bonum* and derives all its substantive rules from this formal principle.[14] Even if we assume that justice was a good choice for the *a priori* (most of this argument will be devoted to demonstrating that it was *not* a good choice!), there is already a serious problem which must be addressed. If Kohlberg had spent more time studying Plato and less time practising carpentry, he would have noticed the problem. Justice is an ambigious term; sometimes it refers to a virtue, but sometimes it refers to a compendium of all virtues. This ambiguity is exposed in the *Meno* when Meno defines virtue as justice and Socrates asks, "Is [justice] virtue, Meno, or a virtue?"[15] Perhaps I am being naive when I suggest that Kohlberg is not aware of this ambiguity; perhaps Kohlberg is very well aware of the ambiguity and chooses to exploit it. Some people might be inclined to accept "justice" as an appropriate candidate for the *a priori* because, like Meno, they think of justice as being a composite of all virtues. The problem, of course, is that the "justice" which Kohlberg borrows from Rawls is *not* a composite of all virtues; it is one specific virtue. Once one realizes that Kohlberg's "universal" system is constructed upon one particular virtue, its claim to universality becomes contentious or even ludicrous.

"Justice" (even Rawls' narrow definition of justice as fairness) functions as an *a priori* without too much obvious difficulty until we reach Stage 6. Now the fun begins! Kohlberg explains that "At Stage 6 . . . universal ethical principles cannot be as immediately justified by the realities of the human social order. Such a morality uniquely 'requires' an ultimate stage of

religious orientation and moves people toward it."[16] Having built his entire ethical system on the assumption that morality is independent of religion, Kohlberg now declares that in fact religion is a necessary condition of morality! Kohlberg wants to retain "justice" as the *a priori* principle - but he feels obliged to posit a religious orientation in order to justify being moral in the first place:

> The function of moral thinking is to resolve competing claims among individuals on the basis of a norm or principle. The primary function of religious reasoning is to affirm life and morality as related to a transcendent or infinite ground or sense of the whole. . . . The "Why be moral?" question appears at the limit of moral inquiry and raises a new problem for consideration - the fundamental meaningfulness of human activity.[17]

Indeed it does! And in so doing, it challenges the adequacy of Kohlberg's conceptual paradigm. The "Why be moral?" question does not arise in the context of a self which has been extended to include the cosmos - but this commitment to the cosmos is typical of religious orientations to life and morality. Kohlberg attempts to conceal the damage that has been done to his paradigm through the introduction of this religious orientation by concluding that "religious structures presuppose moral structures but go beyond them in the search for answers."[18] Surely it would be more reasonable to conclude that justice as fairness is an inadequate principle upon which to base a metaethical system. At the level of universal ethical principles, Kohlberg's specific conception of justice has proven to be too narrow to serve as an *a priori*; thus a hitherto unmentioned principle has been smuggled in (via the back door!) to shore up the crumbling foundation. This new principle is actually a

very old principle; in the New Testament it is called agape.

A brief excursus is necessary at this juncture to clarify my conception of agape. Although I have already referred to agape as a "principle," I have reservations about the appropriateness of that classification. The word "principle" connotes a fundamental commitment to rationality. A commitment to rationality is not in harmony with the non-rational aspects of agape. (The non-rational component of agape will be discussed later in this chapter.) It has been suggested to me by some of my colleagues that agape could be described as a root metaphor or (to borrow the terminology of cultural anthropology) as a formative myth. I have considered both of these alternatives, but have rejected them because they strike me as rather cumbersome and because I am not convinced that they are any more accurate than the rubric "principle" which, at any rate, has the advantage of being somewhat less esoteric. I do admit, however, that my classification of agape as a principle is open to challenge and that I employ that classification only because I have been unable to seize upon a more felicitous categorization. I trust that my frank admission in this regard will alert the reader to the difficulty and will serve to mitigate any confusion which might arise as a result of my lack of precision.

Having granted the dubious status of agape as a principle, let us return to the main argument. At the risk of being considered unkind, I feel obliged to point out that Kohlberg's invention of a "Stage 7" is an arrogant and profoundly misleading manoeuvre. The fact is that what Kohlberg calls Stage 7 is not (as the name suggests) an extension of Kohlberg's moral system based upon the principle of justice; on the contrary, it is a rival moral system founded upon

some such principle as agape. It has been suggested to me that one could argue that Kohlberg's claim that there is a Stage 7 merely recognizes the distinction which obtains between being moral as opposed to being moral *plus* leading a complete life. There is at least a *prima facie* case here which warrants further examination. As a matter of fact, I would be willing to grant that this interpretation of Stage 7 is not an implausible one. But even if this characterization of Stage 7 is accepted, the objections which I have raised with respect to Kohlberg's use of the name Stage 7 still obtain: it is *not* necessary to progress through and graduate from Kohlberg's system in order to adopt a religious perspective on life. A religious orientation as exemplified by a principle such as agape could subsume all of the substantive content entailed by Kohlberg's system and could, in addition, obviate the necessity of inventing a Stage 7 (based on a new principle!) in order to account for what Kohlberg regards as being the most lofty of moral sentiments. Kohlberg virtually admits that this is the case when he concedes that "an ethic of agape goes beyond justice to supererogation."[19] In other words, agape subsumes justice. Thus Kohlberg's moral system is based upon a principle which is too restrictive to yield the total commitment which Kohlberg himself seeks to generate. Furthermore, whereas justice is always a rational principle (hence my claim that it is "restrictive"), agape is not always a rational principle. Agape entails a total commitment to love. It may manifest itself as a rational principle in some contexts, but as a non-rational "principle" (keeping in mind the caveat adumbrated in the previous paragraph) in other contexts.

If the reader construes that I am merely quibbling over Kohlberg's

choice of terminology, let me emphasize that the formal principles of justice and agape generate remarkably dissimilar substantive moral content. Consider first the parable of the vineyard laborers in the vineyard as told by Jesus in Chapter Twenty of the Gospel According to Matthew. The laborers who have worked all day are envious and distressed when the laborers who have worked for only a portion of the day receive payment for a full day's work. When the disgruntled laborers confront the owner of the vineyard, he asks them, "Why be envious because I am kind?"[20] The laborers conceive of morality in terms of justice, but the owner of the vineyard conceives of morality in terms of agape. From the perspective of justice, the owner of the vineyard performs an act of supererogation when he pays the late arrivals for a full day's work; but, from the perspective of agape, the owner merely acts with kindness. The parable of the prodigal son in the Fifteenth Chapter of the Gospel According to Luke provides an even clearer distinction between the moralities of justice and of agape. The father divides his estate between his two sons. The elder son manages his share of the estate wisely, but the younger son converts his share of the estate to cash and then squanders his fortune. He soon finds himself so destitute that he accepts a job "minding pigs" - a rather unsavory occupation for a Jewish lad and, therefore, an indication from the author of Luke as to how far the son has fallen from grace. The prodigal son comes to his senses (no pun intended!) and returns home; his father, overjoyed, forgives him for his fatuous and lascivious interlude, and stages a feast of celebration. When the elder son realizes what is transpiring, he refuses to enter the home of his father. The father goes outside to ameliorate the anger of his elder son,

assuring the young man that he is appreciated and loved, but also explaining that a feast is warranted to celebrate the return of the younger brother because "Your brother here was dead and has come back to life, was lost and is found." The forgiveness which Kohlberg would probably characterize as an act of supererogation (from the perspective of justice) is regarded by the father as a joyful duty (from the perspective of agape).

The owner of the vineyard and the father of the prodigal son exemplify the principle of agape whereas the laborers who worked all day in the vineyard and the elder brother exemplify the principle of justice. Those who advocate justice insist on treating people fairly, but those who espouse agape insist on treating people with love, generosity, and kindness. Those who advocate justice are, like Shylock, eager to exact a "pound of flesh" from those who trespass against them; those who espouse agape recognize that if we always treat people in accordance with how they deserve to be treated, then we are all in for some harsh treatment because we are all sinners. Rather, we should treat people in accordance with love and forgiveness, realizing (to borrow the words of King Lear, uttered in a state described by Edgar as "reason in madness") that "None does offend."

It is not difficult to see why justice would be a more practical (and therefore more appealing) *a priori* than agape. Justice demands much less of its followers than does agape. Consider the following scenario:

> It was a dark and stormy night. (I just love that sentence!) Suddenly I saw a woman lying in the gutter beside Rutherford Library. She was a lesbian, a Paki, an atheist, a heroin addict, a prostitute, a kard-karrying kommie, a welfare bum, an AIDS victim, and (Alas! Woe!) an engineering student. I knew my duty; 'twas

> only too clear. I phoned Alberta Social Services and they assured me that they would assign a worker to the case within the fortnight.

Now consider this second scenario:

> It was a dark and stormy night. (I just love that sentence!) Suddenly I saw a woman lying in the gutter beside Rutherford Library. She was a lesbian, a Paki, an atheist, a heroin addict, a prostitute, a kard-karrying kommie, a welfare bum, an AIDS victim, and (Alas! Woe!) an engineering student. I knew my duty; 'twas only too clear. I took this woman home and cared for her as if she were my own sister.

The point of these two facetious versions of the parable of the good Samaritan (Luke 10:25ff) is obvious. In the first version, I meet the minimal requirement of justice by informing the authorities of the problem. In the second version, I go far beyond the minimal requirement; in fact, in terms of justice, I perform an act of supererogation. However, in terms of agape, I simply do what I ought to do; I do what is morally incumbent. Justice is a less demanding *a priori* than is agape because justice prescribes only minimal moral obligations, whereas agape prescribes very extensive and (sometimes) excruciatingly demanding moral obligations.

This feature of agape is perhaps best illustrated by considering the implications of adopting agape as the basis for a system of jurisprudence. A legal system which regarded the absence of love as being a crime *per se* would be a remarkably cumbersome system. Indeed, the courts would be obliged to dispense justice (an inappropriate term in this context) twenty-four hours a day, veritable Seven/Eleven's of Jurisprudence! Thus it is obvious that justice is more practical than agape as a basis for a legal system. It may be more desirable as well. The purpose of the legal system is to prevent harm

between people, not to promote love. Anti-discrimination laws do not require me to love others, but they do require me not to express my feelings in ways that harm others. Indeed, it is not too farfetched to say that the point of ethics is not to promote love but to prevent harm.

What is not obvious, however, is the rationale for Kohlberg's decision to choose justice over agape as the basis of his moral system (in spite of the practicality of justice) given that Kohlberg ultimately sneaks agape in surreptitiously to account for Stage 7 attitudes and behaviors. It is this self-justifying, ideological aspect of Kohlberg's theory which is so exasperating.[21] Every time Kohlberg is caught in a logical contradiction or an empirical absurdity, he simply redefines his terms or reinterprets his evidence retroactively to camouflage the anomaly. His evasive tactics would leave Proteus breathless and gaping with envy.

In view of my rather harsh criticisms of Kohlberg's Stage 7, the reader may be surprised to learn that I admire Kohlberg and hold his work in high esteem. At a time when some philosophers seem to be more interested in cataloguing the intricacies of linguistics than in contemplating ultimate questions, it is refreshing (and just a tad ironic!) to find a psychologist who is committed to asking precisely those questions which some philosophers refuse to ask. Some philosophers seem content to confine themselves to the pursuit of trivial and esoteric linguistic distinctions which can be solved with mathematical precision. A philosophy conference held at the University of Alberta in October of 1986 showcased papers on topics such as "Punctuational sources of the truth-functional 'or'" and "Tracking and Transmission." (I did

not attend the latter session - I'm not into trains or cars.)[22] In their zeal to pursue only those questions which are amenable to precise solutions, some philosophers have abandoned philosophy! Perhaps they ought to follow the lead of a psychologist, Lawrence Kohlberg, who persists in asking ultimate questions. Or perhaps they ought to recall Bertrand Russell's profound observation about the nature of philosophy:

> Philosophy is to be studied, not for the sake of any definite answers to its questions, since no definite answers can, as a rule, be known to be true, but rather for the sake of the questions themselves; because these questions enlarge our conception of what is possible, enrich our intellectual imagination, and diminish the dogmatic assurance which closes the mind against speculation; but above all because, through the greatness of the universe which philosophy contemplates, the mind also is rendered great, and becomes capable of that union with the universe which constitutes its highest good.[23]

Let me go on record as saying that I commend Kohlberg for his courageous commitment to asking ultimate questions and for his sensitive and perspicacious account of the human quest for purpose and meaning. Kohlberg and Power's poignant description of the despair which typically accompanies the attempt to address questions such as "Why be moral?" and "What does life mean?" rings true to anyone who has been plagued by such questions.[24] But at this point I must part company with Kohlberg. Kohlberg claims that people pass through all the moral stages and then ask ultimate questions. My intuition and a substantial body of empirical evidence lead me to conclude that Kohlberg has put the cart before the horse. I contend that people ask ultimate questions at many times during their lives, and that many (perhaps most) people ask such

questions, not just a few moral wizards who have graduated from Stage 6!

I work with teenagers. Over the last two decades, I have had conversations with hundreds of teenagers about ultimate questions like "What is the purpose of life?" and "What difference does it make if I behave morally or immorally?" The young people who ask these questions are not graduates of Kohlberg's moral step-ladder; most of them formulate moral arguments more typical of Stage 3 than of Stage 6! (And this is not a contentious claim; Kohlberg himself would agree, I think, that very few individuals reach even Stage 4 until at least the late teens.) And yet a great many of these young people are perplexed by precisely the sorts of ultimate questions which Kohlberg wants to reserve for a moral elite. Kohlberg's metaphor (Stage 7) seems to suggest that after we have achieved a very sophisticated level of moral reasoning, we begin to ask ultimate questions. I would contend that asking ultimate questions is temporally prior to developing sophisticated modes of moral reasoning. The students with whom I work develop moral sensitivity as a result of answering (or of being unable to answer) ultimate questions.

Perhaps a specific example would be illuminating. This is a story about one of my students. I have met this student many times, and he or she has had many names. But I will call this student Adam. Adam has posed ultimate questions such as "Why do good people suffer?" and "Why do wicked people prosper?" (Sometimes Adam goes under the alias of Job!) Adam is capable of asking such questions, and he is certainly capable of experiencing the terrible despair and anguish which results from asking such questions, but he is *not* capable of answering such questions. So Adam has responded to the ambiguity

of life by becoming a party animal. Adam gets pissed (his expression, not mine) every weekend. It is a joyless debauchery. He works too hard at having a good time. Like A. E. Housman, he drinks in order "to see the world as the world's not." Unfortunately, he awakens on Monday morning to find, like Housman, that the world is just as aesthetically beautiful and just as morally heinous as it was on Friday night. Like William Blake, Adam is overwhelmed by a world which is vast enough to encompass both the gentleness of the Little Lamb and the "fearful symmetry" of the Fierce Tyger. And so Adam endures another grim week, anxious for the weekend to arrive so that he can get pissed and make sense of the world. And he does, of course, get pissed; but he does not make sense of the world. But next week will be better . . .

I find it difficult to relate Adam's story without experiencing a sense of overwhelming poignancy, the more so because it is the story of so many Adams, past and present, young and old. Adam's story reminds me of a cartoon I saw lask week. "What can I do to get you to stop drinking and taking drugs?" asks the straight man. "Improve reality!" responds the grim comedian.

Kohlberg is correct, I think, in his belief that the only escape from Adam's treadmill is a religious and/or ontological perspective on the world, a perspective which enables the self to transcend the boundaries of what Iris Murdoch calls the "fat, relentless ego" and to embrace all of creation as a unity.[25] Like King Lear, "When we are born, we cry that we are come/ To this great stage of fools." And, also like King Lear, only after we have jettisoned our *hubris* are we able to embrace all of creation as a unity and to understand

the paradox of our own supreme importance *and* utter insignificance. Kohlberg is also correct, I think, when he implies that very few Adams ever acquire this perspective. But he is not correct when he assumes that one can reach this cosmic orientation only by climbing Larry's Ladder.

To summarize, I agree with Kohlberg that the quest for the meaning of life is "a religious or ontological stage, not a purely moral one."[26] But it is for precisely this reason that Kohlberg should not refer to this stage as Stage 7; the rubric Stage 7 suggests that this stage is an extension of the hierarchy of stages 1 through 6, and clearly this is not the case. It is intellectually unseemly to resort to Procrustean manoeuvres in order to force a "religious or ontological" stage to conform to a hierarchy of moral stages. And to do so is to deny the validity of the existential *Angst* experienced by those of us (like R. M. Hare and Adam) who have not reached Stage 6 and salvation, but must nevertheless ask ultimate questions as we courageously re-enact the Sisyphean labour each and every day of our lives.

CHAPTER FIVE FOOTNOTES

1. To be completely fair, I should state that moral education, for Peters, is very much a matter of learning to reason in a particular way. He *does* state that certain actions have to be learned as habits, but this may be moral *training* rather than moral *education*.

2. Frances Dunlop, "Moral Procedures and Moral Education" in Cochrane, Hamm, & Kazepides (eds.), *The Domain of Moral Education* (Toronto: O.I.S.E., 1979), p. 171.

3. For a complete discussion of the levels of life, see R. S. Peters, *Reason and Compassion* (London: Rutledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

4. I am indebted to L. A. Erickson, whose analysis of aesthetic concepts proved efficacious in analyzing metaethical concepts. (See L. A. Erickson, "An Analysis of Concepts Central to Art Education," Unpublished Master's Thesis, University of Calgary, 1977.)

5. Cornel M. Hamm, "Moral Education as the Achievement of Virtue" (Unpublished Paper, 1987), p. 12.

6. Professor Don Cochrane is responsible for arousing my interest in this problem; one day in conversation he mentioned that he could not formulate a postconventional justification for rape. Professor John McNeill suggested that I should also analyze the concept of murder. Professor Kurt Baier implies that there can be no Stage 5/6 argument which condemns birth control or homosexual relations between consenting adults. See Kurt Baier, "Ethical Pluralism and Moral Education" in Beck *et al.*, eds., *Moral Education: Interdisciplinary Approaches* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971).

7. I admit that the case for rape is much stronger than the case for murder. The latter is problematic in that there are many "killings" which might or might not be "murders." I have not discussed abortion, euthanasia, and capital punishment (to name only three specific sub-categories of "killing") because these concepts require lengthy analysis. For example, we require a precise definition of human life before we can analyze the metaethical considerations which are endemic to abortion. The way in which we choose to define human life (I am assuming, perhaps incorrectly, that there must always be an element of arbitrariness in any such definition) has profound moral implications. There are similar problems which complicate the conceptual analysis of both euthanasia and capital punishment.

8. A *caveat* is necessary here. There is in jurisprudence the notion of statutory rape. Intercourse with a person under a certain age is statutory rape even if the person is a willing partner. Thus, if one is misled about a person's age, one could commit statutory rape unintentionally. Nevertheless, my point holds for the usual meaning of rape.

9. Perhaps, in view of the population explosion, our time would be better spent in considering the moral condemnation of *not* practising birth control!

10. The list is by no means exhaustive; decorum forbids me to include the most explicit and abusive epithets which are corrently in vogue among conversationalists who (alas!) eschew the use of erudite euphemism.

11. The birth control pill, for example, causes a variety of adverse side effects.

12. George F. Kneller, "Lawrence Kohlberg: Response and Stimulus" (Unpublished Paper, 1984), p. 22.

13. Kohlberg even eliminated Stage 6 from his scoring manual for a short time.

14. More accurately, Kohlberg's moral stage theory is based upon John Rawl's conception of justice as fairness AND upon R. M. Hare's formulation of the principles of universalizability and prescriptivity. In the earliest formulations of Kohlberg's stage theory, there was no reference to substantive principles; later formulations, however, do refer to substantive principles.

15. Plato, *Meno* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1976), Translated by G. M. A. Grube, p. 6.

16. Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), p. 344.

17. Ibid, p. 321.

18. Ibid, p. 323.

19. Ibid, p. 352.

20. All Biblical quotations are from the *New English Bible.*

21. I. A. Snook, *Indoctrination and Education* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 56-57.

22. To be completely fair, I must admit that these titles may obscure the deeper questions that gave rise to them. Furthermore, I certainly recognize that conceptual analysis is not necessarily a trivial and esoteric pursuit. One may catalogue the intricacies of linguistics in order to contemplate ultimate questions more clearly; indeed, I have attempted to do just that earlier in this chapter when I analysed four concepts (murder, rape, sodomy, and birth control).

23. Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1912), pp. 93-94.

24. Clark Power is co-author (with Lawrence Kohlberg) of "Moral Development, Religious Thinking, and the Question of a Seventh Stage" in Lawrence Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981). Power is a former student of Lawrence Kohlberg.

25. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1970), p. 41.

26. Kohlberg, *The Philosophy of Moral Development*, p. 354.

CHAPTER SIX:

CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, the emphasis will shift from description, analysis, reasoning, and clarification to making recommendations about the future of moral education in the light of my comments on self-deception, Freudian defense, role models and case studies from literature, and the rational principles approach to moral education. I shall contend that the enormously influential rational principles approach to moral education needs to be augmented by several new (actually old!) elements. I am not suggesting that moral reasoning skills are unimportant; I am merely suggesting that they should not be the *sole* focus of a moral education program. The assumption that people who have acquired sophisticated moral reasoning skills will *ipso facto* become effective moral agents is both naive and unwarranted. As Joel Kupperman has observed:

> The notion that genuinely virtuous choice could be arrived at by someone who had not developed a good character, as a result of a moment's intense rational cogitation, would have struck Aristotle and Confucius as quaint.[1]

I shall explore Kupperman's remarks about character later in this chapter, but for now I want to focus on his skepticism about the worth of moral reasoning skills. Kupperman is not alone in his skepticism; many moral educators have

argued convincingly that an effective moral education program must foster a variety of elements, including (but not limited to) the following:[2]

1. General commitment to morality (i.e. an inclination to think and act morally)

2. Awareness of the impact of the "hidden curriculum" on value acquisition

3. Awareness of the social and economic bases of society

4. Liberal education (i.e. broad knowledge of facts and perspectives)

5. Affective capacities (empathy, imagination, etc.)

6. Action skills (information gathering, lobbying, protesting, etc.)

7. Self-knowledge and relative freedom from morally-hazardous self-deception (the focus of this thesis)

8. Psychological resources (courage, integrity, independence - what Kupperman would call "good character")

9. Moral reasoning skills (including a repertoire of moral concepts and of "tests" such as role exchange, universal consequences, new cases, and subsumption)

Jerrold Coombs provides a clear and succinct statement of the problem that confronts the would-be moral educator:

> The various attainments to be fostered by moral education suggest the complexity of the enterprise. Knowledge must be acquired; abilities, inclinations, sensitivities, and commitments formed; and emotions and imagination developed . . . . Given this complexity, we must expect that moral education will be a long, gradual process requiring a variety of teaching and

> learning activities to be effective. *We must avoid simplistic approaches that foster only a few of the necessary attainments.* Keeping the whole range of attainments clearly in mind is a prerequisite to developing defensible moral education programs.[3]

Moral reasoning skills *are* important, but so are a host of other elements. A thorough discussion of all of those other elements would go beyond the scope of this thesis, but a discussion of two of the elements is absolutely necessary because those two elements are so closely linked to self-deception, which is the primary focus of this thesis. Accordingly, I believe that a variety of components - but especially seeking to transform self-deception into self-knowledge, and resisting temptation - need to be taken seriously as major objectives of moral education. Furthermore, I will show that moral reasoning does not necessarily precede moral action, and, moreover, that in those cases where it does, the moral reasoning is often of less importance than Kohlberg and his followers would have us believe. To this end, I propose to revive two concepts which have received relatively little attention in recent discussions on moral education - *akrasia* and self-deception. I will conclude by commenting briefly on a problem which is likely to arise if moral education is ever taken seriously in the context of public schools. I should emphasize that the purpose of this chapter is to summarize my thoughts with respect to self-deception and moral education, and to make some general comments about the nature of moral education.

6.2 Akrasia

John Wilson maintains that when we act immorally we usually do so because we are not aware of the immorality of our actions: "Certainly mass horrors . . . are not conducted by people of whom we would say that they know perfectly well that they should not be fighting or persecuting."[4] Francis Dunlop, on the other hand, contends that "in most moral situations we already know what we ought to do. The trouble is we so often do not want to do it."[5] Thus Wilson attributes immoral behavior to inadequate (or to the absence of) moral reasoning, whereas Dunlop attributes immoral behavior to *akrasia*, weakness of will. Both explanations are plausible, depending upon the contextual details of the immoral act, including, of course, details relating to the moral agent who perpetrates the act. Wilson's interpretation is comforting to moral educators because it suggests that if people can be taught to reason more effectively about moral issues, immoral behavior will be reduced. Dunlop's interpretation, by contrast, is very unsettling because it suggests that the problem goes much deeper. A crash course on moral reasoning, *ceteris paribus*, will have no impact on weakness of will. I suspect that many moral educators are tempted to eschew Dunlop's interpretation and embrace Wilson's because if Wilson's interpretation is adopted, the problem can be "fixed" easily.

But those instances of moral turpitude which arise as a result of *akrasia* rather than as a result of flawed reasoning must be addressed if we are serious about moral education. It is my contention that *akrasia* and self-deception often co-exist in a kind of symbiosis. If a person lacks the strength

of will to do the right thing, then she may resort to self-deception to direct her focus of attention away from the onerous moral obligation. And once a person has used self-deception as a strategy to evade her moral obligations, she has little incentive to develop strength of will to resist temptation in the future; it is easier to give in to *akrasia* while deceiving herself about her motives and/or actions. Thus *akrasia* and self-deception are often mutually self-sustaining.

Two approaches for counteracting weakness of will come to mind, both of which have been widely known for at least two millenia. The first strategy is habituation of virtue as discussed by Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. The second strategy is the development of a positive self-concept as implied by Jesus in the Golden Rule (and by a veritable myriad of contemporary would-be gurus).

First, habituation of virtue. Quite simply, children must be trained to do the "right" thing as a matter of habit. As Cornel Hamm observes, "Children can and must behave appropriately long before they are able to reason morally, so it is necessary that good behavior be made dispositional."[6] Hamm emphasizes that children must do the right thing for the right reason. Although I agree with Hamm that doing the right thing for the right reason is certainly desirable, I would contend that doing the right thing for the wrong reason (or for no reason other than habit) is certainly preferable to not doing the right thing at all.[7] Hamm makes the extremely important point that "the standard moral situation is not the dilemma at all . . . but the temptation situation."[8] I

agree with Hamm: I have never had to deal with the lifeboat dilemma (nor with any of its infamous first cousins) in the course of conducting my daily life, but I have been faced with more temptation situations than I care to remember. And for temptation situations, moral agents need strength of will much more than they need skill in moral reasoning.

Consider the case of one nefarious Thane of Glamis. Macbeth, tempted to commit regicide in order to usurp the throne of Scotland, produces a veritable catalogue of reasons (some moral, some merely prudential) as to why he should not commit the crime.[9] Immediately thereafter, he informs his "dearest partner in greatness" that they "will proceed no further in this business [plotting Duncan's murder]." (I, v, 10 and I, vii, 49) And then, having assigned a utility and a probability to the moral and social consequences of his actions, and having concluded (correctly) that the murder of Duncan would result in his own (Macbeth's) destruction and in social chaos, Macbeth succumbs to temptation, murders his sovereign, and brings to pass the consequences that he so perspicaciously foresaw! At the time that Macbeth decides to kill Duncan, he (Macbeth) is not an irrational, unfeeling brute (although he becomes all of these things by the end of the play); rather, he is an intelligent, sensitive, poetic man who reasons well but who is incapable of resisting temptation. This bizarre scenario is, alas, all too familiar to an audience of fallible moral agents such as ourselves. As the play progresses, it becomes increasingly evident that Macbeth does not have a disposition to behave virtuously; quite the contrary, he responds to every new temptation by embracing it whole-heartedly.

The second strategy for counteracting akrasia is the development of a positive self-concept. Jesus naively alluded to this strategy not by name (the poor devil had never taken Psychology 101) but by admonishing his disciples to "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you." The last eight words of the Golden Rule reveal Jesus' brilliant psychological insight: the basis of respect for other people is respect for oneself. If we see ourselves as being unworthy of respect and love, we will find the notion of respect and love for other people to be utterly absurd. Our capacity for empathy, the very foundation of our moral agency, is rooted in our fragile self-concept.

Meanwhile, back on the heath, Macbeth's innermost insecurities prompt him to yield to his temptation to kill Duncan. Lady Macbeth knows her husband so well that she is able to manipulate him by employing innuendo and insinuation. (Ironically, this woman who knows Macbeth so completely is almost devoid of self-knowledge. She does not acknowledge the evil that permeates her life until she sees it mirrored, as it were, in Macbeth's horrific behavior.) She casts aspersions on Macbeths's masculinity ("No big deal" you say - but it was to Macbeth!) and goads him into killing Duncan as proof of his manhood and of his love for her. Macbeth needs Lady Macbeth's approval so desperately that he can not say no to her, even when he knows that she is wrong. He hopes to find the power and security in Duncan's crown that has eluded him within his own ego. In spite of his outward display of assurance and self-confidence, Macbeth is a man with a poor self-concept, a man plagued by self-doubt. And thus he yields to temptation.

There is a sense in which habituation of virtue and positive self-concept

go hand in hand. I have claimed, for example, that Macbeth acquiesces to Lady Macbeth's wicked plot because he has a poor self-concept. I believe this analysis to be sound. However, I also believe that we could analyse Macbeth's behavior using different language. We could say, as Kupperman probably would, that Macbeth lacks character. Kupperman's comments about character are worth considering:

> There is a running joke in the writings of Kierkegaard about people who do not have, or have mislaid, their selves; and if to have a self is construed to include having an autonomous pattern of feeling and attitude, it does appear that many people do not fully have selves. Many people appear to behave generally in a manner that is governed by what is expected of them; they are highly reluctant, as in the notorious Milgram experiments, to 'break the frame' of whatever situation they are in. Who they are then is closely governed by where they are, and in that sense one might doubt that they have selves.[10]

Macbeth, then, lacks character (a self) in the sense that he is not clear about what his self stands for, nor about what it values. Thus he is (to borrow Kupperman's phrase) unable to "break the frame" of Lady Macbeth's concerted campaign to enlist his support in an immoral venture.

Although it has been known for several thousand years that habituation of virtue and positive self-concept are vital attributes for moral agency, in the last few years moral educators have directed most of their energies to developing strategies to enhance the art of moral reasoning. Why so much emphasis on moral reasoning? Perhaps because the habituation of virtue and the development of a positive self-concept take years to foster. Or perhaps because moral reasoning is more easily taught in a school environment than is habituation of virtue and the development of a positive self-concept.

Regardless of the reason, I suggest that we need to revive our interest in these crucial but neglected aspects of moral education.

My own view is that moral education should confront the problem of *akrasia* by initiating students into a state of mind wherein there is a greatly reduced likelihood of succumbing to the temptation to do wrong. Habituation of virtue and the development of a positive self-concept are central to any such initiation because a person who feels good about herself and who is accustomed to doing the right thing *automatically* is less susceptible to temptation than is the person who has a history of giving in to temptation and who, accordingly, feels weak and defenceless in the face of temptation. I reject Michael Scriven's radical dichotomy of reason and emotion, preferring Richard Peters' model whereby the emotions have cognitive elements and cognition is not devoid of passion. As Krishnamurti puts it, "intelligence is the capacity to feel as well as to reason."[11]

Peters suggests that people operate on different levels of life, each of which is characterized by distinctive levels of awareness and feeling."[12] At the highest level, both reason and passion transcend the annoyance of temptation. I regret that I have an enormous distance to travel in terms of my own journey through the levels of life, but I acknowledge that any progress which I have made thus far has been, in large measure, the result of a positive self-concept and a disposition to behave virtuously. And I am deeply thankful to my parents for having provided me with these two treasured gifts. It would have been much easier for them to have enrolled me in a night school class in Moral Reasoning 101 for a one-semester "quick fix" moral education.

6.3 Self-Deception

This entire thesis has been devoted to arguing that self-deception is an important but neglected concept within the realms of ethics and moral education. In the second chapter, I tried to show that self-deception need not be dismissed as a logical contradiction. In the third chapter I argued that the psychoanalytic model of defense (the original Freudian version, not its more recent "improvements"), despite its shortcomings, is nevertheless a useful model for explaining self-deception, especially self-deception which is related to sexuality. In chapter four I demonstrated that some of the literature which is currently on the Alberta Education reading list for English 30 provides a rich treasure of case studies in morally hazardous self-deception. Chapter five was devoted to defending my contention that moral education is a much more complex and difficult task than is assumed by the advocates of the rational principles approach, most notably Lawrence Kohlberg. Competent moral reasoning will not necessarily lead to moral conduct, especially if the moral agent is self-deceived and/or inclined to give in to *akrasia*.

There is a third strategy for overcoming *akrasia*. If a moral agent is able to recognize his/her self-deceptions and transform them into self-knowledge, then that moral agent has greatly increased his/her likelihood of resisting *akrasia*. I now intend to argue that literature which presents students with vivid case studies in self-deception and *akrasia* (such as the literature analysed in chapter four) can be enormously efficacious in guiding students to transform their own self-deceptions into self-knowledge. However, before doing so, I feel obligated to share with the reader a nagging doubt which needs

to be addressed. Iris Murdoch articulates this doubt with characteristic clarity when she declares that "Self-knowledge . . . seems to me, except at a fairly simple level, usually a delusion."[13] Murdoch's claim seems to be a devastating one in that it suggests that whenever we feel we have eliminated a self-deception and replaced it with self-knowledge, we are in a state of self-deception! However, Murdoch's position, much like the position of absolute skepticism within the realm of epistemology, is so extreme as to be inherently self-refuting. We can refute the absolute skeptic who claims that we can never know anything for certain by posing this question: "If we can never know *anything,* how can we know that we can never know anything?" Similarly, we can refute Murdoch by asking this question: "If self-knowledge is usually a delusion, then how can you be confident that you are not deluded in your supposed knowledge that self-knowledge is usually a delusion?" (Mind you, if Murdoch claims that she learned this from others, not from herself, the point of our objection is lost.) But there is a second response to Murdoch which is much more compelling. If one moral agent (we shall call her Iris) found herself living a completely solitary existence in the universe, then Iris' self-knowledge could well be, as Murdoch would contend, merely a delusion. However, if Iris lives in a community of moral agents, then her motivations, actions *et cetera* can be observed and analysed by other moral agents who are in a better position than she is to determine whether or not she is in a state of self-deception. Conversely, Iris will be in a better position to determine whether or not one of her fellow moral agents is in a state of self-deception than will the fellow moral agent in question. What this establishes, of course,

is that one's claims to self-knowledge are corrigible. Through a community of moral agents one can come to see that one is self-deceived. This leaves Murdoch as being correct, in a sense. It probably is the case that most of our claims to self-knowledge are delusions. (Most of mine certainly are!) My point is that it is possible, albeit difficult, to eliminate (or at least minimize) these delusions within the context of a *community* of moral agents.

One of the great strengths of the Freudian model of self-deception is its insistence on the presence of a second party (called a "therapist" in psychoanalytic jargon) who sees the self-deceiver objectively (i.e. not within the prison of the self-deceiver's ego) and is able to facilitate the transformation of self-deceptions into self-knowledge. And, as I have argued in chapter three, this "therapist" need not be a medical practitioner. In fact, the "therapist" could even be an author who offers "therapy" through the medium of her fictional plots and characters. In other words, literature can serve as a "therapist" which facilitates that transformation of self-deceptions into self-knowledge. Literature can serve to initiate people into a quest for self-knowledge. It can show people that self-deception occurs within moral contexts and, therefore, that it has a moral dimension.

Perhaps an anecdote would serve to clarify my argument. One day in November of 1989, during the period just prior to the noon break, my English 30 class had been discussing "Death of a Salesman." Specifically, with some judicious prompting from yours truly, they had been discussing the self-deceptions of the Loman family, and had been speculating about all the misery that could have been avoided if Biff had acquired self-knowledge a little sooner,

or if Hap or Willy had ever transformed any of their self-deceptions into self-knowledge. During the noon hour a young man from the class came to see me in my office. When I asked him what I could do for him, he replied "Not much, I'm afraid." He elaborated on that cryptic remark by telling me (not without considerable emotional stress and several false starts) that "They [the Loman family] could be my family." This young man had been profoundly moved by Miller's fictional account of morally hazardous self-deception. He saw his own self-deceptions, and those of other family members, mirrored and magnified under the powerful spell of Miller's words. After that initial meeting, I had several long discussions with this student, discussions which eventually led him to recognize some important truths about his own sexist attitudes. Specifically, he came to realize that his sexist attitudes were 1) a product of his family environment, 2) deeply rooted in his own feelings of inadequacy, both social and sexual, 3) detrimental to himself, to his relationships, and to other persons. Most importantly, he came to realize that, having recognized his own self-deceptions, he had the power to *change* and to become knowledgeable about his self.

It would have been easier (and less time consuming!) for me to have *told* this young man about the moral dangers of self-deception rather than to have cajoled him into reading a three act play, manipulated him (and his classmates) into discussing self-deception as a motif of the play, and then spent many hours discussing how the lives of the fictional characters related to his own life. It would have been much easier! But it would have accomplished much less. This young man needed to recognize morally hazardous self-deception in

others and then *internalize* this knowledge by relating it to his own life. If I had just *told* him that self-deception was dangerous, he would probably have failed to understand me, or he might have simply not believed me. At best, he might have understood me at an intellectual level, but nevertheless failed to understand the *significance* of my comment. Almost everyone understands the statement "Pain is unpleasant," but people who have suffered extensive and serious burns understand the significance of that statement in a way that the rest of us never will.

Literature can provide us with an amazing array of vicarious experiences which we could never experience in our everyday lives, and this repertoire of fictional experiences can help us to empathize with people whose life circumstances are very different from our own. Moreover, literature can isolate and magnify the so-called ordinary experiences of everyday life so that we are able to see new meaning in the ordinary, thereby acquiring profound insights into our own psyches.

I have already alluded to the objection which is sometimes raised, the objection that literature constitutes an unnecessary intermediate step which could (and ought to be) eliminated for the sake of economy and efficiency. In fact, the Career and Life Management Program (CALM, as it is usually called, is now compulsory for all grade eleven students in Alberta schools) *does* eliminate literature. The CALM curriculum introduces students to topics which are undeniably important, sometimes controversial, and not infrequently threatening (psychologically) - *without* the benefit of any intermediary. The consequence of this supposedly efficient and streamlined procedure is that my

colleagues who teach CALM are anything but calm! The same students who come to my English 30 class and engage in interesting and thought-provoking discussions about the decisions made by fictional characters, go to their CALM class and refuse to discuss anything.[14] It is indeed a pity that the mandarins who designed the CALM curriculum in the bowels of Alberta Education Headquarters had not read (among many other things!) this illuminating and eloquent passage from Iris Murdoch:

> These arts, especially literature and painting, show us the peculiar sense in which the concept of virtue is tied on to the human condition. They show us the absolute pointlessness of virtue while exhibiting its supreme importance; the enjoyment of art is a training in the love of virtue. The pointlessness of art is not the pointlessness of a game; it is the pointlessness of human life itself, and form in art is properly the simulation of the self-contained aimlessness of the universe. . . . **We are presented with a truthful image of the human condition in a form which can be steadily contemplated; and indeed this is the only context in which many of us are capable of contemplating it at all.** Art transcends selfish and obsessive limitations of personality and can enlarge the sensibility of its consumer. It is a kind of goodness by proxy. . . . **Art then is not a diversion or a side-issue, it is the most educational of all human activities and a place in which the nature of morality can be *seen.*** . . . Art pierces the veil and gives sense to the notion of a reality which lies beyond appearance; it exhibits virtue in its true guise in the context of death and chance.[15]

Since literature is so important (according to Plato, Murdoch, and lesser mortals like me), let us return to Inverness Castle atop Dunsinane Hill in order to witness one last paradigmatic display of self-deception from the annals of literature. Macbeth ("Big Mac" to his friends), having plunged his own life and the lives of his hapless subjects into abysmal chaos, examines all

the evidence and arrives at a remarkable conclusion: "It [life] is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing." (V, v, 26-28) Having implied earlier in the play (I, vii, 7) that he does not believe in God, Macbeth now decides to believe in God so that he (Macbeth) can blame God for his (Macbeth's) heinous crimes.[16]

But Macbeth's penchant for self-deception is displayed even more blatantly in his attitude toward the witches. When he realizes that they have misled him, he declares that he no longer trusts "th' equivocation of the fiend,/ That lies like truth." (V, vi, 44-45) Yet only moments later Macbeth confidently quotes the witches to Macduff: "I bear a charmed life, which must not yield/ To one of woman born." (V, viii, 12-13) Macbeth's irrational confidence in unreliable sources (how's that for understatement?) reveals the all too human propensity to believe that which is comforting as opposed to that which is plausible or reasonable.[17] Although Macbeth has moments of brilliant moral insight, these "episodes of profound illumination are not much use [since] they merely punctuate the history of a fantasy-ridden consciousness."[18] Although Macbeth is a competent moral agent with respect to moral reasoning, his self-deception prevents him from acting in accord with reasons; he opts instead to act on the basis of delusion and wishful thinking.

The point of this discussion of Macbeth's make-believe reality (and, moreover, the point of this dissertation!) is that a repertoire of techniques for moral reasoning is of no avail unless moral agents are (relatively) free from rampant self-deception and from the *akrasia* that often accompanies such self-

deception. We moral educators must constantly remind ourselves that the *raison d'etre* of moral education is to produce moral agents who are disposed to act morally; to reason morally is not enough! Moral education is the most practical of endeavors in the sense that its *raison d'etre* is not moral thinking *per se*, but moral action. If self-deception can be transformed into self-knowledge, then there is a good likelihood that morally hazardous conduct can be reduced. If self-deception is permitted to run rampant, then moral conduct is likely to be left by the wayside.

6.4 Last Words

In the introduction to this chapter I stated that a problem might arise were moral education ever to be taken seriously in the context of public schooling. Let me say that I realize that it is highly improbable that this scenario - taking moral education seriously in public schools - will ever come to pass. But we need to anticipate the potential problem - just in case!

If moral educators were successful in getting a majority of students to think critically about moral issues and, moreover, to act in accordance with their moral convictions . . . well, just remember what happened to Socrates when he "corrupted" the youth of Athens by initiating them into a Weltanschauung which valued truth and conviction rather than self-deception and apathy. I am being neither facetious nor flippant; my concern is ingenuous. Schools are institutions established by particular societies to ensure the perpetuation of those societies. The ethos of schools is therefore antithetical to open-mindedness and critical thinking with respect to a whole range of topics which are central to the perpetuation of the society. Doris Lessing asks a very disturbing question: "What government, anywhere in the world, will happily envisage its subjects learning to free themselves from governmental and state rhetoric and pressures?"[19]

Lest you think that I am being paranoid and/or cynical, consider the following scenario. Suppose that a student from a fundamentalist Christian family (her father is a Conservative M.L.A. and a former electronics expert who worked for seven years designing delivery systems for cruise missiles; her mother is a housewife and a member of the Moral Majority who sells

Tammy Faye Cosmetics in her spare time) is initiated into thinking critically about moral issues and into acting upon her moral convictions as a result of a very effective moral education program at her high school. And suppose that this young woman, after much reflection and soul-searching, transforms some self-deceptions into self-knowledge and decides that she has a moral duty to act upon her new-found convictions as an atheist, a communist, a lesbian, a peace activist, and a militant feminist. Do you think that this young woman's parents might be just a tad displeased (or even sorely vexed) with the moral education program at the local high school? My example, of course, is extreme. Deliberately so. I concocted a case study which encompasses all three of the most controversial social issues - politics, sex and religion. But these three taboos are precisely the areas which a moral education program must address if it is to be an honest attempt to initiate students into moral reasoning and moral action. When one lives in a province in which biological information about human sexuality is regarded as controversial and in which members of the Liberal Party of Canada are suspected of being surreptitious communists, it is neither paranoid nor cynical to conclude that there is less than a widespread grass roots commitment to the Socratic quest for self-knowledge.

In the eighteen years that I have been teaching high school in Alberta, about twenty former students (representing about 1% of all my former students) have told me that the moral issues which I raised in class caused them to think and/or act differently with respect to issues like politics, sex and religion. In most cases, the change was trivial; in a few, it was profound.

Since I have not been ostracized for "corrupting" the youth of Red Deer, I suppose that one could conclude that Alberta Education and Alberta society at large are tolerant of dissenting views. Or one could conclude, more realistically, that the impact of my forays into moral education has been so negligible that I do not really pose any threat to the prevailing cultural mores. But suppose (and here I am engaging in the wildest of fantasy) that one half of my former students (approximately one thousand young Albertans) had seriously questioned their views about politics, sex, and religion as a result of my moral education program. Do you think that I would still be teaching in Alberta? More to the point, do you think that I would still be living in Alberta? (The ambiguity is systematic, not accidental.) I suspect that my future employment depends upon a continuation of my past success rate of about 1%. And this concerns me because my success rate seems to be improving slightly in recent years. Fortunately, this perception could well be attributed to self-deception on my part. In any event, I think it unlikely that my success rate would ever improve so dramatically as to become conspicuous. But if it does, can you recommend any good jobs for a defunct moral educator?

CHAPTER SIX: FOOTNOTES

1. Joel Kupperman, "Character and Self-Knowledge" in *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society* (LXXXV 1984-85), p. 219.

2. Cf. the publications of virtually any contemporary moral educator, but especially those of John Wilson, Donald Cochrane, Jerrold Coombs. Nel Nodding's *Caring* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984) presents a very thought-provoking "feminine approach" to ethics and moral education.

3. Jerrold Coombs, "Attainments of the Morally Educated Person" (unpublished manuscript), p. 11.

4. John Wilson, "A Reply to Francis Dunlop" in Cochrane *et al* (eds.), *The Domain of Moral Education* (New York: Paulist Press, 1979), p. 183.

5. Francis Dunlop, "Moral Procedures and Moral Education" in Cochrane *et al.* (eds.), *The Domain of Moral Education*, p. 175.

6. Cornel Hamm, "Moral Education as the Achievement of Virtue" (unpublished paper), p. 12.

7. Cornel Hamm admits that this is the case, yet he insists that moral reasoning is a necessary but not sufficient condition for moral behavior. I do not understand his reasoning. Apparently Hamm does not regard Iris Murdoch's virtuous peasant as acting morally.

8. Cornel Hamm, "Moral Education as the Achievement of Virtue," p. 17.

9. William Shakespeare, "Macbeth" ed. by George Lyman Kittredge, Second Edition (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1966), I, vii, 1-28. All other quotations from "Macbeth" are taken from this edition.

10. Joel Kupperman, "Character and Self-Knowledge," pp. 225-226.

11. J. Krishnamurti, *Education and the Significance of Life* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1953), pp. 63-64.

12. R. S. Peters, *Reason and Compassion* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 101. Cf. Gilbert Ryle, "Can Virtue Be Taught?" in Dearden *et al* (eds.), *Education and Reason* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1972), p. 53.

13. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good* (London: Ark Paperbacks, 1970), p. 67.

14. There may, of course, be competing explanations; the difference may not arise entirely from the curriculum

15. Iris Murdoch, *The Sovereignty of Good*, pp. 86-88. (The emphasis is mine, not Murdoch's.)

16. The literal meaning of "It is a tale/ Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,/ Signifying nothing" is that life is a meaningless story told by an insane person. However, the Elizabethan paradigm of the Great Chain of Being (which permeates all of Shakespeare's work) would certainly regard God as being the "author of life." Thus my contention that Macbeth is blaming his misfortune on God is actually more plausible than the literal meaning of the lines might suggest.

17. Lady Macbeth's talent for self-deception is even greater than her husband's. But that is another story.

18. Eamonn Callan, "Liberal Education and the Curriculum" in *Educational Studies* (Volume 10, Number 1, 1984), p. 71.

19. Doris Lessing, *Prisons We Choose to Live Inside* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1986), p. 60.

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