

Personology and the Narrative Interpretation of Lives

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ABSTRACT Personology is the science of persons. In this article we show that the concept of person presupposes the continuity of experience and that the storylike structure of lives makes narrative the most promising methodology. Researchers use first-person narratives as source material and third-person narratives in describing and interpreting lives because the temporal nature of experience makes it difficult for human beings not to attribute order, direction, and purpose to experience. It is because lives are structured through experience in a storylike manner that their study takes the narrative form. Psychologists' attempts to understand the person are traced from James and Freud, through Murray and Erikson, to Tompkins, McAdams, and Hermans and Kempen. We outline each psychologist's concept of person and show how their case studies illustrate their use of narrative methodology.

Personology is the science of persons. Its aim is to organize and interpret lives of individual human beings. Central to this science must be (a) the understanding of what we mean by the concept "person," and (b) the development of methods for understanding the lives of persons as the "long unit for psychology" (Murray, 1938). In this article we will show that the concept of person presupposes the continuity of experience, which entails beginnings, middles, and ends. With regard

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to methodology, we will argue that the storylike structure of personal lives makes narrative the most promising approach to the study of persons (Bruner, 1990; Cohler, 1982; MacIntyre, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988; Sarbin, 1986). To achieve these goals, we will review the concept of person in the history of personological psychology and consider the ways in which individual life histories have been studied. Building on the foundation provided by William James, we review the contributions of Sigmund Freud, Henry Murray, and Erik Erikson, as well as those of contemporary researchers, including Tomkins, McAdams, and Hermans and Kempen.

The Science of Persons

Personology is the science of persons, but what is a person? At least since the time of John Locke a person has been treated as a psychological category whose central concept is self-consciousness. Somewhat more precisely we can define a person as a unity that is a self-conscious agent, an intentional being. As such, it has purposes of which it is aware, and knowledge that it uses to achieve its purposes. This unity has a past it remembers as its own and a future it feels itself tending toward by its actions in the present. It feels that it has a power to act and accept responsibility for its actions. To be a person is to be aware of one's self as a person, to be able to reflect on one's past and future, and to see one's present as continuously connected to one's past and future. It is essential to one's status as a person to experience the events of which one is a part as extended in time, having beginnings, middles, and ends. One's experiences and actions in the present are seen as an embedded part of an extended representation of one's own existence through time and in relation to a world in which one acts. We experience events in terms of our intentions and purposes, our beliefs and desires, our fears, hopes, and dreams. We experience ourselves and our lives as having an ongoing storylike structure, the meaning of which constantly transforms itself, often becoming more apparent to us through time. Although we are not constantly narrating the story of our lives, we are always in the midst of storylike transformations in the structure of our experience and activities, reinterpreting the past, and anticipating further developments in a story in which we see ourselves as central figures.

In one way or another, most recent studies of individual lives make narrative central to their method. But as we will show through our

examples, narrative has become increasingly important in the history of scientific approaches to the lives of persons. Narrative appears methodologically and theoretically in three different but equally important ways: (a) Research participants are requested to write first-person narratives or autobiographies and generate imaginative narratives to materials such as the TAT; or, in the case of historical individuals, journals, letters, autobiographies, and creative products by the individual are used by the researcher in addition to detailed and accurate biographies of the individual; (b) the interpretations of the lives are written as narratives, using the coherence of narrative as an alternative to causal explanatory structures; and (c) theoretical frameworks have been developed that use narrative structures such as characters, roles, scenes, scripts, and plots as well as narrative viewpoint in order to understand the storylike nature of lives.

What is particularly important to notice and what has increasingly entered researchers' awareness about these methodological and theoretical principles is how they link together. It is more than just a matter of convenience that leads researchers to use first-person narratives as source material and to use third-person narratives to explain and interpret lives. Rather, it is because lives are structured through experience in a storylike manner that the study of lives takes the form it does (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981; Ricoeur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986). The temporal nature of experience makes it difficult for human beings not to attribute order, direction, and purpose to experience. Both the first-person narratives of the individuals themselves and the third-person narratives of others perceive life as the more or less complex unfolding of a story. Before going on to consider individual contributions to narrative methodology, let us look more closely at this general reason why narrative plays such a central role in interpreting lives.

Because personology has as its focus the human being viewed as a person, it is crucial to this science to provide an account of the first-person perspective. Since people experience their lives as a storylike structure about which they can readily provide narratives, it is natural for personologists also to study people in terms of narrative structures, though from a third-person perspective. Narrative is the natural mode of expression to match the inherent structure of personal experience. Hence, not only first-person narrative as a source of information about a person, and third-person narrative as a summary description of a life, but narrative structures themselves can also be used as theoretical tools for formulating scientific interpretations and explanations of lives.

Such narrative structures may focus on characters, roles, scenes, scripts, plots, and narrative viewpoint to develop coherent, storylike accounts of individual lives.

Personologists have been slow to fully exploit the possibilities inherent in narrative structures as a scientific tool for organizing and interpreting people's lives. This has been due in part to a general view that "telling a story" is more a humanistic than a scientific activity. However, a number of recent advances in personology, such as Tomkins's (1979) development of the concept of a script and the person as playwright, have made the theoretical and methodological use of narrative central to their approaches. But before considering these recent contributions, we trace the historical development of the science of persons, beginning with William James, whose initial contribution to the science of persons was seminal for its conceptualization and illustrative for its practice.

William James

Fundamental to James's view of a person, or personal consciousness, is the distinction between "I" and "Me." For James, the "me," or the self as known, revolves around the organism's continually present "bodily existence," with past and present feelings "deemed to belong to the same *me*" through resemblance (James, 1890/1950, p. 400). Those empirical aspects within the stream of personal life that are especially important to me are appropriated into, and so constitute, "me." This appropriation is achieved through the activity of the "I," the thought-in-process, thinking in the stream of thought. James contends that we do not need to postulate any substantive, atemporal self, no mind's "I" (Flanagan, 1992). There is no entity, no knower, no soul, no ego other than the individual organism thinking. When we speak of persons, therefore, James means no more than that the thinking function (the "I") appropriates the individual's past and future into a model, or understanding, of itself in the present (the "me").

A person's sense of personal identity, therefore, arises from this process of appropriation in the stream of thought. Over time, this sense of personal identity will change, but it remains a unity because the memories of past events are connected through the stream of thought and have been appropriated by each subsequent (including the present) thought (James, 1890/1950, pp. 371-372).

What is important about James's notion of the person is that the "me," or self-in-context, is continually being revised in response to the changing interests and needs of the organism. Under normal circumstances the result is a singular continuous stream of thought and unified self-conception that makes it possible for the individual to conceive his or her life in terms of a coherent narrative structure that links events from the past to activities in the present and to plans for the future. However, James's model of the "I-me" relation also allows for the possibility that, under some circumstances, more than a single unified self-concept may develop. Thus James's account makes room for the subconscious or hidden selves that were discovered by Janet.

In *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (1902/1958), James uses some of these ideas on subconscious selves to account for the radical transformations in self-conceptions that occur in religious conversion. In this book, James describes his method as investigating the various types and phases of religious experience through the use of personal documents, journals, letters, and autobiographies of a wide range of individuals who provide insightful and articulate expressions of their own religious experiences. He approaches these documents neither as a scientist attempting to reduce these experiences to psychological processes, nor as a clinician attempting to explain them away through medical materialism. Rather, he takes the perspective of a recorder and interpreter of the concrete psychological aspects of religious experience.

James takes the reported experiences at face value. He taxonomizes them into psychological types that relate them to similar nonreligious experiences, and looks for generalizations that connect them to, but also differentiate them from, comparable experiences of nonreligious individuals. One major generalization he adheres to is that "religious geniuses" are often psychopathological in their experiences, exhibiting automatisms, hallucinations, melancholy, and radical transformations in personality. Hence, he is drawn to interpret their experiences in terms of the concepts of subconscious thinking and alter selves that develop through incubation and appear sometimes suddenly in conversion experiences.

It is worthwhile to consider one example from this book that illustrates James's method of interpreting individual lives, that of Henry Alline (1748-1784), an evangelical minister from Nova Scotia, whose *Journal* (Alline, 1806/1982) was James's documentary source. James

was most interested in Alline's radically different self-concepts as he went through three phases of religious development. As a "divided self," the adolescent Alline is torn between a self who is popular and engages in playful activities with others and a self who is internally focused on his own sinfulness and the falseness of his public self. This is followed by a period of time when he develops into a "sick soul" in the tradition of Bunyan, who focuses incessantly and extravagantly on his sinfulness. Finally, Alline's conversion itself occurs dramatically, almost instantaneously, with an experience of joyfulness and the immediate experience of the presence of Jesus. Shortly after his conversion, Alline felt "called" to a ministerial career, which he pursued with an amazing dedication that led to an important religious movement in eastern Canada. In treating the conversion, especially, James felt it essential to hypothesize that a subconscious development of a new self was involved—otherwise the almost instantaneous transformation could not be understood.

James's contribution to the science of persons was enormous. He contributed most importantly to our theoretical understanding of the concept of person. In our view, his analysis of the "I-me" relation has not been surpassed. Although he did not focus on the process of self-narrative, his concept of the "me" as an object of self-awareness can be seen as a ground for narrative self-construction. In his empirical study of religious experience, he took first-person narratives and interpreted them in terms of these ideas. He was particularly struck by radical changes in the selves described in narratives and was drawn to the interpretation that such great transformations in self-concepts could only be accounted for by the existence of subconscious selves, which develop independently of the "I-me" relations of the conscious self. However, although James was interested in providing interpretations for first-person narratives, and especially of the radical self-transformations they sometimes presented, he did not himself develop any interpretations of a whole life. It is in Freud that we see the development of a narrative approach that can extend throughout an entire life.

Sigmund Freud

Like James, Freud was indebted to Janet as a forerunner who contributed to his understanding of individual psychology, particularly as it presented itself in hysterics (see Ellenberger, 1970; Swales, 1986). But like James, Freud also contributed new and original interpretations. He

was the first psychologist to focus attention on the role of motivation as the major dynamic principle underlying the life history of the person and to relate it to the structure and functions of conscious as well as unconscious mental activities. Moreover, he was the first to use narrative to trace the development of these conscious and unconscious motivations.

Freud's approach to the person grew directly out of his clinical practice. Once he abandoned hypnosis and adopted instead the method of "free association," he came to formulate the notions of "ego-defense" and "repression" to account for the patient's "resistance" to recalling past traumas and unacceptable motives. As a result, he rejected the conceptual structure of Janet and other dissociation psychologists who postulated multiple self-conscious states in favor of a singular notion of ego or self-consciousness. Freud's ego was a conceptual structure with motivational concerns that isolated it from other unconscious motives of the organism as a whole. For James, subconscious thoughts were beyond the fringe and inaccessible to a personal consciousness, but, because they belonged to some "me," though not accessible to the current "me," they were still (sometimes at least) conscious. For Freud there was essentially only one "me," and there was generally no overlap between conscious and unconscious mentation during waking life. Hence Freud resisted the ideas that there could be alter personalities that are conscious but not part of ego-consciousness (Freud, 1912/1959c), and that a person was restricted to the single conscious ego and an unconscious integrally tied to that ego.

To see Freud's theoretical approach to the person in action we turn to his individual case studies and psychoanalytic biographies. It was early on—already in the studies on hysteria (Breuer & Freud, 1895/1957)—that Freud recognized the storylike nature of the narratives that he developed to account for hysterical symptoms and their resolution in his patients. Nevertheless, Freud sought as much as possible to make them causal narratives, where the sequence of events in the narrative had some causal story to tell which he framed on his theoretical principles. These were not just stories of a person's developing history of purposes and motives in response to changing circumstances, but were stories of unconscious motives, of the dynamics between the ego and the unconscious, and the effects of circumstances on both conscious and unconscious levels of motivation and activity.

Take Freud's case study of Dora, for example (Freud, 1905/1959a). On the surface, we have a story of sexual advances by Herr K and their rejection by Dora, while Dora's father was maintaining a liaison

with Frau K, ultimately leading to a confrontation between Dora and her father. Because he does not wish to give up his alliance with Frau K, Dora's father uses her hysterical symptoms (primarily a cough and loss of voice) as an excuse to take her to Freud, hoping she will be convinced to give up her objections to maintaining relations with the Ks. It doesn't take Freud long to discover the complexity of relations between the families and the father's real intention, as well as to learn of an earlier seduction attempt by Herr K when Dora was only 14 years old.

At this point Freud could have made the obvious interpretation that Dora's cough was due to a feeling of disgust with Herr K and her father as well as to a sense of abandonment by her father because he was willing to give her as a toy to Herr K in order to maintain his illicit affair with Frau K. But instead of making this interpretation and taking her side in criticism of the complex situation that these adults had created for her, Freud looked for repressed sexual motives in Dora, desires he saw as going back to the Oedipal and pre-Oedipal period of childhood. Dora's oral desires, originating in infancy, were activated by Herr K's attempted seduction and her imagining of fellatio with Herr K. Ultimately, Freud argues that it is the imagining of the same activity between Frau K and her father and herself and her father that is the primary motivational cause of the symptom. She had repressed her desires for her father and Herr K and her jealousy of Frau K because her ego would not admit them to consciousness. Is it any wonder that when Freud persisted in this interpretation that this 18-year-old, quite knowledgeable and open to discussion of sexual matters, decided to terminate therapy before he had convinced her of the accuracy of his causal narrative?

Dora's was not the only case where Freud let his speculative imagination reach well beyond the evidence. In the case studies published after the turn of the century (e.g., Freud, 1909/1959d, 1918/1959b), Freud seems to be increasingly interested in generating narratives that linked infantile experiences and motivations to adult behavior and neurotic symptoms rather than using the therapeutic situation to cure his patients of their problems (Glymour, 1980). Instead of turning to other clinical cases, however, we will consider next his psychobiography of Leonardo da Vinci (Freud, 1910/1964), where he could use his story-constructing imagination without having to be concerned that a client might not agree with his narrative account of the case.

Freud's psychoanalytic biography of Leonardo is neither the first psychological analysis of a historical figure nor even the first psycho-

analytic biography. Still, it is the most well-known of the early psychological biographies and the classic source cited for the enormous volume of psychoanalytic biographies that have since been published (Elms, 1988; Runyan, 1982, 1988). As with all of Freud's cases, it is beautifully constructed, but in many ways it displays the best and worst of the genre of psychological biography.

Based on minimal evidence that Leonardo spent his early years without a father, Freud believes that he has explained Leonardo's homosexuality and attempts to explain Leonardo's artistic and scientific work from these early psychosexual developments. Leonardo's intellectual curiosity, for instance, derived from his premature sexual interest aroused by his mother's kissing. Strong repression followed, and during puberty he was able to sublimate his libidinal energy, most of it being directed toward art, but a portion being expressed, via identification with his mother, in his interest in attractive young boys. The repression could not be contained and the sublimation into artistic efforts that had characterized his early adult life gave way to renewed intellectual curiosity evidenced in his scientific investigations. He became impatient with art and showed "unyielding rigidity" in his science: "His infantile past had gained control over him" (Freud, 1910/1964, p. 83). In his 50s another regression occurred, but this one, Freud claims, was positive. In his first years his mother's intense kissing had given the mouth an unassailable importance, and, when he discovered in a model a smile that reminded him of his mother's, he was able to express this original attraction in his art. So, according to Freud's analysis, posterity became the beneficiary of the *Mona Lisa's* elusive smile, along with re-creations of the smile in Leonardo's subsequent paintings. For Leonardo, these pictures became projective screens to reexperience some of the original pleasures of his infancy. "With the help of the oldest of all his erotic impulses he enjoyed the triumph of once more conquering the inhibition in his art" (Freud, 1910/1964, p. 84).

As much as we want to applaud Freud for his efforts in explaining a whole life, there is no doubt that his case study of Leonardo is built on the most fragile of foundations. While Leonardo may have been a homosexual, Freud's explanation of how Leonardo came to be homosexual and his claims about Leonardo's creativity and scientific activity are all derived from the application of abstract psychoanalytic postulates to extremely limited evidence. Freud aimed to give a full life-history account but based his narrative web on a single memory

from infancy recorded by the aging Leonardo. Freud ignored his own advice that the psychobiographer should build his narrative on converging evidence (Elms, 1988; Freud, 1910/1964). Despite a sensitive character analysis and coherent theoretical construction of Leonardo's psychological history, the whole analysis rests on a doubtful interpretation of a fragmentary memory.

The impact of Freud on the science of persons has been enormous and unequalled by any other individual. However, in terms of the development of personology, Freud's influence has been a mixed blessing. On the positive side is his dynamic psychology that looks for deep-seated motivations that develop throughout a person's life, as well as his use of the third-person narrative method to provide a history of the vicissitudes of these motives, which he interpreted in terms of biological instincts. On the negative side is his mechanistic view and his lack of real interest in the narratives that his patients provided him, except as a source of data to interpret in terms of unconscious mechanisms. By focusing on biological instincts and structural dynamics outside of the narrative consciousness of the individual person, Freud's theoretical formulations did little to advance our understanding of the person as a narrative agent, actively participating in the construction of meaning in his or her life.

While there will always be a place for hypotheses about causal mechanisms and motivations outside the consciousness of the person, increasingly there has been a focus on what Freud would call ego activity. Even as early as Adler, who was forced to break with Freud in 1910, there was an increased (or should we say restored?) interest in the person's own narratives and story-making activities. Adler (1964) saw the patient as a self-interpreter generating narratives that gave meaning to his or her life; it might be said that he, as much as Freud, influenced the development of ego-psychology in such neo-Freudians as Horney and Fromm, as well as existential psychologists such as his student, Frankl (see Adler, 1979). It should be noted that the existentialist movement itself, especially the original work of Binswanger (1963; May, Angel, & Ellenberger, 1958), focused on the individual's self-interpretation of his or her world and the use of narrative methodology both to provide third-person interpretations, built out of first-person narrative materials, and to explicate existential theoretical concepts that have a persistent and distinctive commitment to a first-person point of view. More recent developments of narrative methodology in psychoanalysis continue to focus on getting the patient

involved in the process of generating a coherent narrative of his or her own life. Such narratives are less concerned with causal mechanisms associated with historical truth than with a narrative truth that the patient can find is an acceptable interpretation of his or her life (Schafer, 1983; Spence, 1982).

Developments in narrative since Freud have continued to show his stimulus, but the contributions of Murray and Erikson should be considered in their own right. Murray is important in the development of a science of persons, for he was one of the first academic psychologists to focus his career almost entirely on developing and using empirical methods to study and understand individual human beings (cf. Allport, 1942, 1968; Buhler, 1967). Moreover, through his influence, many others have developed and used narrative methods to study individual lives (McAdams, 1995; Runyan, 1988). Erikson's theoretical focus on ego-development throughout the life cycle combined narrative method with an appreciation of the storylike structure of personal experience, hence opening a path for contemporary researchers to combine narrative theory and method.

Henry Murray

Murray thought that personality psychology ought to focus on the full life course of the individual and was the originator of the label "personology" for this special disciplinary focus. One of his primary propositions regarding personology stated that

[t]he organism consists of an infinitely complex series of temporally related activities extending from birth to death. Because of the meaningful connection of sequences the life cycle of a single individual should be taken as a unit, the *long unit* for psychology. It is feasible to study the organism during one episode of its existence, but it should be recognized that this is but an arbitrarily selected part of the whole. The history of an organism *is* the organism. This proposition calls for biographical studies. (1938, p. 39)

Clearly, Murray's concept of person included the individual's whole life history and, accordingly, he was drawn to a narrative methodology. A later proposition elaborates an important aspect of his idea of persons and, without explicitly using the term, relates it to the idea of narrative:

Man is a "time-binding" organism; which is a way of saying that, by conserving some of the past and anticipating some of the future,

a human being can, to a significant degree, make his behavior accord with events that have happened as well as those that are to come. . . . What he does is related not only to the settled past but also to shadowy preconceptions of what lies ahead. . . . Time-binding makes for continuity of purpose. (1938, p. 49)

Murray goes on to suggest that psychologists need to recognize the individual's integration of the past, present, and future in order to understand overt behavior and mental states.

Murray's research involved student volunteers at the Harvard Psychological Clinic, who were given a battery of personality tests involving a variety of methods, and were also interviewed by different investigators who came together to discuss their results and to interpret the life. Among the methods used were two important narrative procedures. The first was to provide a detailed autobiography that was used to guide further interviews about the individual's life history. In addition, participants completed various versions of the Thematic Apperception Test (TAT; Murray, 1981) that Murray developed in order to bring depth psychology into the laboratory. The use of this test required participants to generate narratives in response to pictures involving one or several humans in an ambiguous scene. The narratives were then coded to identify the central motivations that were at least partially outside of the individual's consciousness.

One unusual student participant in this Harvard research program interested Murray so much that he published a single case study describing the individual (Murray, 1981). On the surface, Grope was an easygoing, passive, and somewhat lazy student who wasn't doing well at Harvard and was on probation. He was not very different from many other successful high-school students who went to Harvard and learned, as Grope did, that he was a "small frog in a big puddle." This manifest personality contrasts with the covert personality that Murray discovered when he looked at the stories that Grope gave to the TAT and other similar measures. Grope's covert personality outclassed all others in his dreams of power, glory, and fame. For instance,

[h]is major recurrent fantasy was one of landing on a desert island in the Pacific with a band of followers, discovering an inexhaustible spring of fresh water and an abundant food supply, and then founding a new civilization with himself as king and lawgiver. (1981, p. 542)

The covert and manifest personalities, apparently so different, are linked by Grope in the following way: "I am just biding my time waiting for

the day when my 'soul' will ignite and this inner fire will send me hurtling (two rungs at a time) up the ladder of success" (1981, p. 543).

This fantastic vision of a successful future is tied to a fear of failure, which is related to Grope's lack of industry at Harvard. Grope's response to a TAT card of a naked man hanging onto and possibly climbing a rope shows clearly why Murray referred to him as an "American Icarus": After the Fourth World War a nation of supermen overran the globe and used strength tests to select other possible supermen with whom to start a new race. In this case the man chose to go up a rope that was set on fire below him. At first he moves very quickly but then slows down. As the fire starts to catch up to him, he pushes forward again: "He finally gets about ten yards from the top, that's the last he remembers" (Murray, 1981, p. 551).

How did this American Icarus get such a fantasy life of enormous ambition but also a fear of failure? Using the autobiography and interview material, Murray showed that a rejecting mother and ambitious parents who praised him for early examples of success were important factors in his background. Grope had had some very successful periods in his past and perceived his current situation of apparent failure as temporary; the mismatch between his overt and covert personality was just situational. All he needed was some fire, internally or externally based, to get him going. Murray concludes his case study by noting that shortly after he left Harvard Grope got involved in summer theater, which partly gratified his covert personality's "cynosural narcissism" ("a craving for unsolicited attention and admiration, a desire to attract and enchant all eyes, like a star in the firmament") (Murray, 1981, p. 549).

Although the case of Grope focuses on a young man over a relatively brief period of time, Murray was especially concerned that an entire life history should serve as the "long unit" for personology. Hence it is not surprising that his most extensive project focused on a single historical individual, Herman Melville. Murray's lifelong interest in Melville was almost certainly based on a strong identification with the experiences of this author, whose overt and covert life history in many respects paralleled Murray's own. In any event, even though Murray never completed his biography of Melville, his four published studies of him represent perhaps the most successful attempt by a psychologist to delve into the mind of a creative literary genius (Bickman, 1988).

Three of the studies focused on particular works written during the period when Melville seemed to make the deepest contact with the

unconscious: *Moby Dick*, published in 1851 (Murray, 1951); *Pierre*, published in 1852; and *Bartleby the Scrivener*, published in 1853 (Murray, 1981). The fourth study (Murray, 1981) is more general and traces the development of emotional complexes associated with suicide throughout Melville's life and work. In all these studies Murray is sensitive to the time in Melville's life when a particular work occurs, and indicates the central problems in Melville's conscious and unconscious development.

At a time when Melville was deeply disillusioned with the world, he projected his resentment and anger in *Moby Dick*. A deeper self-reflection followed in *Pierre*, where Melville gave a semiautobiographical account of his life leading to the writing of a novel reminiscent of *Moby Dick*. Melville's expression of personal forces in his writings and the deeper self-understanding that this allowed continued, reaching a crisis point before he wrote *Bartleby the Scrivener*. In a novel that Melville destroyed, he came too close to revealing his private emotional life and almost pushed himself to insanity. Melville became a "burnt-out crater" (Murray, 1981, p. 489) and so in *Bartleby the Scrivener* we have a character who is a copyist, a scrivener, who refuses to write any longer and then refuses even to speak other than to say "I prefer not to." Having come so close to insanity, Melville steps back and portrays a safer character, unwilling to open himself to the self-knowledge that comes from creative projection.

It is perhaps Murray's final article on Melville that is the most original and incisive (1981). He is able to show a developmental thematic trend in Melville's works from grief and self-pity, to aggression that is outward, followed by inward aggression, guilt, and depression, then to egression and desertion, and finally to affectlessness or death to the world. He relates this sequence to Melville's early psychological life as well as to the growth of his self-understanding and his life history. In this study we see Murray struggling with the development of a new kind of analysis, where actual emotions in microsequence and in macrosequence in an individual's life are exhibited and related to universal human experience. We no longer see the construction and use of conceptual categories representing abstract psychological entities in causal relation. Rather, we see a narrative of the transformations of emotional life in the raw, unmediated by abstract interpretation. As we shall see when we consider Tomkins's script theory, such an approach has reaped rich rewards in recent narrative approaches to individual life histories.

Murray's contribution to personology was partly conceptual and partly methodological. His main conceptual contribution was to realize

that the ultimate focus of personality psychology ought to be the individual life, and he generated concepts such as "thema" and "unity-thema" that could be interpreted within a life-historical framework. He also developed the TAT as a methodology that tapped first-person imaginative narrative structures that went beyond autobiographical materials and could be used to identify motivations outside of personal awareness. However, with the exception of his work on Melville, the narrative materials that Murray generated were not used specifically to investigate the first-person point of view of the writer. Rather, under the influence of Freud, Jung, and McDougall, Murray tried to identify the "unconscious" motivations or psychobiological energetic sources of behavior, which he called "needs"; and much of his use of the TAT was to determine individual differences in these needs. Hence, there is a kind of shallowness to the multimethod portrait that he gives of "Earnst" in *Explorations* (though it should also be noted that White, who wrote the summary "psychograph" of Earnst, went on to develop extended, narratively coherent life histories of some of the other participants in this research; see, e.g., White, 1975). While his own later study of Grope is somewhat more personal, even here Murray tended to focus on the unconscious motives rather than on the conscious and imaginative life of Grope. And we still see a similar though less narrow focus on psychodynamics in his work on Melville. This tendency to follow in Freud's footsteps is also to be found in some of Erikson's interpretations of lives, though as we shall see, Erikson was able to make a further break from this heritage and in his later study of Gandhi was able to take more seriously the narrative perspective of the agent.

Erik Erikson

Although trained as a child psychoanalyst by Anna Freud, Erikson broke free from the straitjacket of traditional Freudian theory to develop a unique approach to the human life cycle that focused on ego-epigenesis through a series of eight life stages. In these life stages ego-synthetic processes played a central role connecting psychosexual and other maturational processes of the body to the sociocultural and sociohistorical processes of society (e.g., Erikson, 1950/1963, 1959/1980, 1968). Thus his ego psychology looked outward toward a social reality and toward the future as well as inward toward unconscious drives and toward the past (McAdams, 1995).

In many ways Erikson's ego-psychology harks back to James rather than to Freud, particularly in the central role that he gave to the problem of ego-identity and in the importance that he gave to social roles in the formation of an identity. In his theorizing about the adolescent ego's "identity crisis," Erikson even uses James's autobiographical materials to provide a typical case of the identity problem, and we suspect that James's study of religious conversion may also have affected the development of his theory (Erikson, 1958/1962, 1968).

In his theory of the growth and transformation of ego activities throughout the life cycle, Erikson gives special attention to the problem of time not only in the life cycle of the individual but in the history of the culture. It is the match and mismatch between fragments of identity that the individual acquires from close relationships in personal time and the stable as well as transforming aspects of the society through which the person grows in historical time that determine how easy or difficult the acquisition of a social identity will be for the individual. It was in part his attention to this problem in individuals who were marginal to a particular culture, or who went through particularly trying experiences acquiring and maintaining an identity, that led him to focus on the particular period of the life cycle in which ego-identity was normally acquired—late adolescence (Erikson, 1959/1980, 1968).

Although Erikson developed his theory of the life cycle primarily through clinical practice, working with individuals of all ages and in a variety of cultural settings, he also used autobiographical materials and biographies of well-known historical individuals either to elaborate his descriptions of phenomena or because of his particular interest in understanding the individual's personal development and cultural influence over others. Besides James, Erikson wrote fragmentary psychological biographies of Shaw, Freud, Gorky, Hitler, Jefferson, and others. However, Erikson wrote full works of psychological biography on only two individuals, both religious leaders: Martin Luther and Gandhi (Erikson, 1958/1962, 1969). Both were major historical as well as psychological studies, and the first, in particular, had a great impact on the development of psychobiography and psychohistory (Mazlish, 1971; Runyan, 1982, 1988).

The study of Luther focused mainly on the young man's identity crisis, though it referred also to earlier and later stages of his life. As an illustration of Erikson's concept of the identity crisis and how personal time and historical time meet in a great person's resolution of the identity problem, this book was an enormous success. It showed that social

history and personal psychology converge in the concrete behavior of great individuals and that one disciplinary focus could help in the clarification and interpretation of another. However, Erikson's book was criticized for making strong inferences about Luther's relationship with his parents in early childhood that were either unwarranted based on the evidence, or even opposed by the evidence. Like Freud in his analysis of Leonardo, Erikson constructed a hypothetical infancy for Luther in order to provide a psychoanalytic ground of unresolved infantile conflicts—particularly involving the father—that then could be used to account for certain aspects of adult character. Hence the book became a center for controversy over the validity and usefulness of psychological biography, while at the same time stimulated its development.

Perhaps because Erikson learned from these criticisms, his book on Gandhi was much more restricted in scope and grounded on historical material. It also involved original research on a period of Gandhi's life that had not been well investigated. He focused on the middle-aged Gandhi as he initiated his first mass action campaign in India. Gandhi had developed his *satyagraha* philosophy of militant nonviolent protest in South Africa and now used it to lead a textile strike in Ahmedabad. While Erikson traces Gandhi's past with special attention to the psychological factors that helped constitute his personality and his philosophy, his main focus is on the strike itself. He provides a detailed account of the relationships and motivations of the participants, especially that of Gandhi. By using this single event he is able to theorize in depth about Gandhi's motives, both conscious and unconscious, the meaning that *satyagraha*—or truth force—had for him, and how he would use it to reconstitute an active Indian identity that ultimately ousted the British.

Psychologically the main theme is that of generativity—the theme appropriate for Gandhi's phase in the life cycle, where special attention is given to the father-son relationship and the confrontation and displacement of fathers by sons over generations. This process is creatively reenacted between Gandhi and the mill owners. However, Erikson's biography is so richly textured that there are hardly any signs of psychoanalytic reduction or what he himself calls "originology." Instead, one sees in Erikson's Gandhi a man who uses the passionate resources of his own past and the identity he has created to steel himself for confrontations with both his disorganized and undisciplined followers and his paternalistic opponent, and to lay down the foundation for larger mass actions in the future.

With Erikson, we see the use of first-person narrative materials and third-person narratives of lives conjoined with a theoretical framework that returns to James's original focus on personal consciousness and transformations of self.

Recent Developments

Since Erikson published his study of Luther (1958/1962), there has been an upsurge of narrative accounts of lives (Runyan, 1982, 1988), most of which have been undertaken by historians, political scientists, and literary scholars, who, looking to psychology for theoretical frameworks, have seen psychoanalysis as the principal contributor to our understanding of the whole lives of individual persons. Until recently, academic psychology has largely forfeited the task of writing about the lives of individuals to other disciplines. In two devastating critiques of her colleagues, Carlson (1971, 1984) reviewed the major academic journals in personality psychology and showed that there were virtually no reported case studies of individual lives or studies of individuals that extended over more than two experimental sessions. Almost all studies of individuals categorized them on personality measures and sought correlations between these measures and behavior on various tasks and in different situations. While there were some studies of lives in other publications (e.g., Block, 1971; White, 1963, 1966), Carlson's reviews showed that short scientific studies of individual persons were no longer seen as worthy of publication in major journals of personality psychology.

The intensive study of the individual that was at the center of Murray's *Explorations in Personality* (1938) had entirely faded from view for academic personality psychologists awed by experimental method, statistical analysis, and scientific credibility. However, with Runyan's (1982) important methodological critique of approaches to life history and psychobiography, it became evident to many that valid scientific approaches were available for understanding individual lives that did not restrict personology to the methodological constraints dominant in experimental psychology.

In one way or another, most recent studies of individual lives make narrative central both to their method and to their theory, and so have advanced beyond the personologists that we have already reviewed. Much of this advance has occurred because of an increasing awareness of the intrinsic narrative structure of experience, and the resulting idea that storylike conceptual structures should be used to match the use of

first- and third-person narrative methods (see, e.g., Bruner, 1986, 1990; Carr, 1986; MacIntyre, 1981; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1984; Sarbin, 1986). As MacIntyre (1981, p. 197) has noted, "It is because we all live out narratives in our lives and because we understand our own lives in terms of the narratives that we live out that the form of narrative is appropriate for understanding the actions of others." We will now consider several approaches to the study of lives that emphasize the story-like nature of experience and that mark major progressive developments using this unified approach of theory and method.

Tomkins built his script theory (1979, 1987; Carlson, 1981, 1988) from earlier work on affects as the amplifier of experience. The power of affect to magnify the importance and urgency of some aspect of a particular situation gives meaning and direction to a situation or scene. Such scenes are happenings that are organized wholes situated in place and time, with a cast of characters, and include actions and feelings. Scripts are built out of these scenes, which are intensified and made to cohere as meaningful units by the amplifying and assembling affects.

There are various types of scripts: nuclear, commitment, ideological, and affect management (Tomkins, 1987). Especially important is the nuclear script, which has intense but ambivalent affects with analogues found repeatedly in novel scenes. Typically this script involves an intensely good situation turning into a bad one. Usually the person finds it necessary to replay the script, and although the person seeks to maintain the good situation, inevitably it turns bad. An example of a nuclear script is Freud's Oedipus complex, a scene in which the child's intensely happy relationship with the mother is transformed by the presence of a rival. In contrast to Freud's claim that this complex is central and universal to all persons, script theory is more flexible, allowing that this script may be central for some but that it may not even occur for others who have other traumatic experiences that are equally intense but have an entirely different cast of characters, setting, and affect structure. Because script theory is flexible yet centered on the actual life history of the particular individual, it provides great promise as a general approach to personology (cf. Carlson, 1981, 1988). Furthermore, the person in script theory is not a passive experimenter of scenes or scripts, but, "like Charlie Chaplin, he will try to write, direct, produce, criticize, and promote the scenes in which he casts himself as hero" (Tomkins, 1979, p. 215).

It is worthwhile to illustrate how Tomkins's theory has been applied to an individual person where that person, himself, was a constructor

of stories. Carlson (1988) applied the idea of nuclear script to understand the life and works of Nathaniel Hawthorne. The nuclear scene out of which the script was constructed was based on the move that the 4-year-old Nathaniel had to make from his parents' home to his Uncle Manning's home across the street. His sea captain father, who had died in a foreign port, was replaced by a "benign controlling scientist" whom he grew to hate. In addition, he lost his intimate relationship with his mother, who often lived elsewhere. In later life he was able to restore to some extent his relationship with his mother, but he was always haunted by a need to move on and a need to find a father figure to replace Manning.

Hawthorne also was haunted by this nuclear script in his creative work. As Carlson shows, his works can be considered under the themes of: "Who is my father?"; "Where is my Mother?"; "How can I understand this benign controlling scientist?"; and "Where do I live? Where do I belong?" (Carlson, 1988). The third theme in particular seemed to haunt him throughout all his novels, from Chillingworth in *The Scarlet Letter* to his unfinished *Grimmeshawe*, where his biographer Erlich states: "Unlike the romance hero, he finds not his true father but only a series of constantly mutating father-surrogates who . . . split . . . into complexities that cannot be contained in the format" (cited in Carlson, 1988, p. 121).

In Hawthorne we see that his fiction shows even more clearly than his adult actions how deeply he was scarred by the nuclear scene. Like dreams or a TAT, an author's imaginative literary acts can express more freely than his or her behavior the deepest region of his or her basic scripts for living. But they do so as narrative, a thinly veiled, transformed autobiography and vision of the future. However, it works the other way as well. From fiction and especially from myth, as well as from biography and history, an individual can borrow a script and develop a narrative interpretation of his or her own life or the life of another. In McAdams's (1985, 1990, 1995) attempts to extend the work of Murray and Erikson, we see this kind of script and narrative used in the understanding of individual lives.

McAdams's person is "a storyteller who narrates life while living it" (McAdams, 1995, p. 746). His focus is on the person's use of verbal narrative to organize an identity through the development of a "personal myth" in late adolescence that is refined, further developed, and possibly changed in later life. The narrative tone of optimism or pessimism is set based on early attachment, and many of the "nuclear

episodes" that are incorporated into the personal myth are selected from remembered events in order to define and valorize the self or identity that is constructed. "Beginning in adolescence we *choose* in the *present* to remember the past in a certain way. In the making of history, there is no objective bedrock of the past from which to fashion the myth" (McAdams, 1990, p. 169). However, McAdams emphasizes that the individual's story is not a fabrication but rather an attempt to construct a consistent and realistic account involving a past of "more-or-less validated facts" (McAdams, 1990, p. 169).

Indeed, it is because the person continually tries to construct an identity with unified purpose and meaning that much of the effort in identity formation involves making sense of how a single person could be the variety of characters that occur in the history of self and that must be integrated into the life story. Empirical work by McAdams focuses on the process of how the multiple characters that are aspects of the self are integrated into the life story. He interviews adult individuals to get their life stories and also uses the TAT to get other narratives that he can use to determine their motivations. In one study (1985), he assessed participants in terms of the motives of power and intimacy, which he viewed as related to the general need for "agency" and "communion." In analyzing the self-narratives, McAdams identifies the different imagoes of self—unified but relatively single-minded and narrow characters, that may conflict or, at times, collaborate with each other. For instance, an agentic imago may conflict with one desiring communion. Unification of such imagoes into a dominant character is one of the activities of mature adulthood, through a process similar to that which Jung identified as individuation (McAdams, 1985, 1990).

It is interesting to compare Tomkins's person as "playwright" (1979; Carlson, 1981) and McAdams's person as "storyteller" (1995). While both approaches to person acknowledge the intrinsic storylike structuring of experience as an essential part of human personhood, they focus on different mediums of story construction and on different eras of the life cycle. It seems to us, therefore, that McAdams (1995) may overstate the similarity between these two approaches; they may better be seen as complementary.

For Tomkins, it is in infancy and childhood that scripted images are formed that connect the past through the present into the future, while for McAdams, it is in late adolescence and adulthood that the verbal narrative provides this unity, which the person uses in an attempt to unify the whole life. McAdams's emphasis on storytelling draws atten-

tion to the narrative process evident in childhood as the first urge to develop a self-narrative with unity of purpose that extends beyond a single scene or script. We see the child also learning about scripts, plots, and myths that define characters acceptable within the culture that the child might not directly experience in personal scripts. By the age of the identity crisis, the adolescent has not only the nuclear episodes of her or his own life with which to form an identity, but the cultural cast of characters, story lines, and ideals out of which to construct a tentative personal myth. From these sources, which supply more suggestions for identity formation than can be coherently integrated into a single life, the adolescent is challenged to generate a personal myth that forms these script-structured experiences into a meaningful psychosocial identity. This challenge may be the cause of the crisis of identity that many adolescents face upon approaching adulthood.

The life story, because of its verbal narrative structure, is ideal as a medium to draw together the images of scripted selves into a whole that both explains the past and orients the individual toward the future. Such a self-conscious narrative or story is indeed a personal myth and, while it guides a life into the future, does not fully unify the past nor fully reflect the actual nature of the person. Hence others, for instance personologists and biographers, may be able to provide a better narrative of the life of the person than the person can in autobiography. And for this purpose we would emphasize that the distinction between McAdams's claim that individuals are storytellers and Tomkins's notion that individuals are playwrights is a useful one. Script theory provides one way for thinking about those aspects of the individual's character and life that may not have been appreciated by the verbal self-narrator, but yet have been scripted and lived by that person, often outside of the rational purposive activity about which the autobiographer typically informs us.

In recent years another approach to the person as storyteller has emerged, which McAdams acknowledges goes beyond his own (McAdams, 1995). This theory of the "dialogical self" (Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992) attempts to incorporate a range of views of self from William James to postmodernism. Yet its basic idea is to view James through the lens of a narrative approach to social reality. Whereas McAdams's imagoes capture the variety of Jamesian "me's," his approach fails to capture the elusive authorial "I." The assumption of this approach seems to be

that it is the person, a continuous but ever-changing self, who constantly revises her or his self-narrative throughout adult development. But what is the viewpoint of this person? Is it a viewpoint independent of the characters described in the self-narrative? Or is this viewpoint that of the dominant character of the narrative? Hermans and Kempen's reconstructed James suggests that there are distinct "I" positions to provide the authorial voice for each of the "me's" or selves. Furthermore, in keeping with postmodern concerns, there are other voices represented in the imagination of each person that speak for important other individuals and groups with whom the person is in dialogical relation. Some of these others, such as a father or grandmother, may not even be alive, yet they influence the person through their voice, which the person carries with them and uses in imagination as a monitor of their activities.

The notion of the dialogical self is a powerful metaphor where each person is engaged in social relations of distinct kinds with a large variety of individuals, social groups, and cultures, either directly or through imagination (Caughey, 1984). In this context there is no single social reality shared by all; instead there are multiple realities. Each individual, group, and culture has its own voice ready to engage in dialogue over what values are real and what facts are true. The individual person experiences this same divisiveness internally as dialogue between the different identifications that the person makes and assimilates into his or her identity. To the extent that each of these subselves has internal consistency, they have a voice that enters into dialogue with other subselves who have a different viewpoint, pulling the person in one direction rather than another. In the extreme case we get individuals described as having multiple personalities. At the other extreme is the adult self who experiences the kind of authoritarian ego described by Greenwald (1980), which is the kind of idealization and residue of "self-contained individualism" (Sampson, 1985, 1989). Between these two extremes exists the average postmodern individual, decentered and divided, with multiple and conflicting loyalties to others and with alternative narrative versions of self. It is to this latter type of individual that the metaphor of the dialogical self seems most apt as a description of the experience of personhood.

In conclusion, we must note that although James provided the purest appreciation of the relationship between the "I" and "me," his process of appropriation remained vague. Subsequent researchers have shown that it is the storied nature of experience that provides the con-

tinuity between the past and future self through the present situated experience of self. Whether it be currently conscious or not, whether it be part of an organized ego or not, this storied nature of experience makes possible the connection through time of those experiences that are joined together to form and to maintain a self. Furthermore, the storied nature of experience, and the crucial role of self-narrative in becoming and maintaining personal identity, makes a narrative methodology most appropriate to understanding persons. Self-narratives and imaginary narratives by the individuals whom we wish to understand, combined with biographical narratives of these individuals by others, must be the principal focus of narrative research aimed at understanding the whole person.

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