

INTRODUCTION

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The self has become a major contemporary concern of both the academic and lay communities. Over the past several decades, a great deal of theory and research has been directed at this difficult-to-define concept. The professional interest in the self is reflected by the large number of published studies on some variant of the self and self-related processes, as well as by the dozens of academic books on the subject.

Concurrently, the “person in the street” has come to be preoccupied with self, identity, and related constructs. There seem to be several reasons for this historical trend (e.g., Baumeister, 1986, 1987; Cushman, 1990). Preoccupation with the self is easily seen in the number of popular “self-help” books, the multimillion-dollar “self-help” business, and the frequency of self- or identity-related maladies associated with problems of adjustment, psychopathology, and social problems (Levin, 1987; Rosen, 1987; Starker, 1989; Zilbergeld, 1983).

While the academic knowledge providers labor at identifying the factors involved in changing the self and the usefulness of various techniques designed to facilitate that process, dramatic (and often exaggerated and unsubstantiated) claims are made by the merchants of self-change (Gambrill, 1992; Gross, 1978). For the intelligent consumer of the latest self-related information, there are two choices. On the one hand, one can leaf through the un-

documented, overgeneralized, cheerleaderlike claims made in the mass market paperbacks. On the other hand, one can trudge through the massive scientific literatures on the self that are often so abstruse as to resemble a foreign language.

A clearer consideration of the issues related to changing the self is in order. How do we know when change in the self has occurred? Measuring change of any kind is not an easy thing, and it is especially difficult when what it is that is alleged to have changed is so elusive a concept as the self. The present collection of essays takes a much-needed step toward linking the concerns of the academic self-researcher and the consumer of research pertaining to changing the self. It is organized around the related themes of the philosophies, techniques, and experiences of changing the self.

Developmental psychologists have long been interested in change in the self. When, how, and why the self develops as it does has been a major part of most theories of personal development (Lipka & Brinthaup, 1992). But there are other ways to think about the self and self-change. In addition to taking a developmental perspective, we can consider the intentional—or inadvertent—changing of the self. The purpose of this volume is to examine the varieties of self-change and the factors that can influence it.

When we speak of changing the self, many questions arise. For example, what exactly must be changed? Must the individual change, or will changes in the environment bring about changes in the self? Why should the self change, and why is it that we conceive of the self as changeable? How is self-change brought about? How do we know when changes in the self have occurred? Does volunteering to change one's self differ from being forced to change the self? The contributors do not purport to be able to answer all of these questions. They each do, however, address one or more of them.

Interest in changing the self is so prevalent across differing disciplines that there is an almost unlimited number of content areas from which to choose. We have assembled contributions from many disciplines with the hope that a clearer idea about the usefulness of the self construct would emerge. In the process, we also wanted to clarify how different disciplines consider what is involved in changing the self.

In Part 1, the contributors address the issue of what self-change is and introduce some of the explanations and philosophies for the

process of changing the self. In Part 2, specific techniques and strategies of changing the self are discussed. In Part 3, some of the results and experiences of changes in the self are presented.

PART 1. PHILOSOPHIES OF CHANGING THE SELF

There are many issues involved with the notion of changing the self. Among the most basic of these issues are questions such as: How does the self change and what happens to it as it changes? How are poor or unhealthy changes in the self prevented or reversed? As the self has come to assume increased importance in Western culture, what approaches to changing the self have emerged? In addressing these questions, the first section of the book considers some of the different philosophies of changing the self.

What does it actually mean to change the self? In the first chapter of this section, Hamachek plots the developmental trajectory of the self by following the framework provided by Erikson's (1963, 1980) stages of psychosocial development. As he notes, for those who are interested in changing the self, a knowledge of its development is crucial. After differentiating among the concepts of self, self-esteem, and self-concept, Hamachek presents a detailed model of how the self develops. As he does this, he illustrates the importance of mental health professionals being aware of the specific functions and characteristics of the self as they plan strategies for change. For example, behavioral problems involving one stage of the self's development may be influenced by unresolved issues in some other developmental stage.

The psychosocial developmental framework provides useful guidelines for considering the question of changing the self. One of the points stressed by Hamachek is that problems with the self should be seen as an imbalance or as an unfavorable ratio of negative to positive self-attributes. This means that the ideal self is not one that is free from mistrust, self-doubt, guilt, or feelings of inferiority. Rather, for proper development to occur, these characteristics need to be experienced and incorporated into the self along with their opposites of trust, autonomy, or industry.

Especially interesting is Hamachek's argument that the various therapeutic approaches in psychology may be more appropriate for specific stages of the self's development. For instance, when a

person is suffering from a lack of basic trust, a Rogerian therapist may be most effective. On the other hand, excessive feelings of shame, self-doubt, or guilt—which are associated with a different developmental stage—may be more easily and appropriately changed by means of a cognitive-behavioral therapeutic approach. For persons in the later stages of development, an eclectic strategy to changing the self may be most appropriate. Thus a key theme that comes through Hamachek's chapter is the importance of recognizing that how the self can—or should—be changed depends upon the person's level of self-development, not only in childhood or young adulthood but throughout the life span. This is important to keep in mind when examining the recommendations of the other contributors.

One of the areas in which concern with the self has had a very strong impact and a relatively long history is the schools. How have schools addressed issues pertaining to changing the self? In the next chapter, Beane details the past and present efforts of schools to enhance the self-perceptions of students. As indicated by the title of his chapter, these efforts have been far from systematic and sensible. Historically, the emergence of the humanistic branch of psychology led to an increase in attention to the individual and to the self in the schools. As Beane documents, this attention has waxed and waned over the past several decades and has garnered its share of criticism, with recent attacks on the practice of using schools to change the self. He shows how political and social agendas have always affected efforts to enhance self-perceptions.

Beane identifies three basic arguments for why the schools have been concerned with changing the self. These include providing skills to students in order to cope with life's problems, enhancing school-related achievement outcomes, and playing a role in the development of feelings of personal dignity and social efficacy. As he notes, these arguments involve prevention, in the sense of providing students with feelings of self-esteem or self-worth and other tools for living in contemporary society. That is, they are primarily means rather than ends.

In the latter part of his chapter, Beane describes some of the specific approaches used by schools to enhance self-perceptions and some of their advantages and disadvantages. Among these approaches are exercises in self-disclosure and self-affirmation,

structured self-esteem programs, and “ecological” views that take into account aspects of the school as a whole, including institutional features and characteristics of teaching and curriculum. Beane closes his chapter by addressing the current controversy over the proper role of schools. As he notes, the claim that the schools’ purpose is to foster the economic competitiveness and future of the country minimizes the importance of and need for a focus on the self. However, he finds little reason to think that this is more important than the historically “child-centered” impulse to mold and change the self by establishing human dignity and personal and social efficacy.

In the question of changing the self, it is important to distinguish between development (the occurrence of change in a structured, predictable manner), prevention (inhibiting the occurrence of abnormal or pathological changes), and rehabilitation (fixing something that’s “broken”). In his chapter, Hamachek describes the developmental implications of changes in the self. In his chapter, Beane reviews the efforts of the school to mold or alter the self primarily for purposes of society. In the next chapter, Gold describes some of the implications of the self gone awry. He presents a self-related perspective on juvenile delinquency that begins with a discussion of how the self is implicated in this problem behavior and ends with suggestions for rehabilitating the delinquent self.

For Gold, a crucial aspect of the self is its agentic property, or its connection to feelings of competence and volition. Tying the self to the experiences of intimacy, identification, and alienation, he reviews previous theory and research on delinquency as providing a way to defend against the threat of a derogated self. Concerns with such a derogated self and the need for restoring self-esteem can explain why delinquent behavior is embraced. An important part of this process is the development of a “delinquent subculture” that provides an appreciative and esteem-enhancing audience for delinquent performances.

In the latter part of his chapter, Gold describes some of the self-related educational interventions that might be effective in preventing delinquent behavior and rehabilitating those individuals who have found it to be rewarding. The problem is to replace delinquent with nondelinquent behavior that is esteem-enhancing. He describes alternative school programs, similar to those discussed by Beane, that lessen feelings and experiences of failure and pro-

vide a warm and supportive relationship. These programs alter normal role relations between teacher and student, permit greater flexibility in classroom rules and norms, and focus more on the agentic selves of students than traditional educational programs. Thus Gold's philosophy of changing the self is to provide healthy alternatives to the unhealthy external circumstances of young people. In this way, a positive sense of self-agency might be acquired.

Since the fall in importance and prevalence of religion as a cultural institution, one of the most popular and influential philosophies of changing the self has come to be psychotherapy. With this shift in emphasis, the relationship between psychotherapy and religion has been an intimate and controversial one over the years. In the final chapter in this section, Watson addresses what is probably the most important aspect of this relationship—how each thinks about the self and changing the self. As he notes, both religion and psychology deal with similar problems and issues, providing ideas and technologies designed for the “ordering of the internal life.” However, to the extent that the two areas conflict with one other about what it means to be psychologically healthy and about the nature of the person, different philosophies of changing the self are offered. Should psychology and psychotherapy address religious issues, and if so, how? To examine this question, Watson contrasts the religious self with the psychological self and discusses the social construction of each. Which camp is correct? Is the “religious self” a fundamental and positive aspect of the person, or is it tangential and potentially damaging?

In his chapter, Watson addresses the clash of belief systems that arises when the religious self is the topic. He discusses the claim made by some psychologists, especially Albert Ellis, that certain religious belief systems are associated with psychological maladjustment and mental health problems. For Ellis, effective therapy serves to rid a client of the religious self by supplanting irrationality with rationality. Individuals should thus be directed towards a psychologically healthy ideal self which consists of the characteristics of tolerance, flexibility, self-acceptance, and so on.

For Watson, however, the issue is much more complicated. There are times, for example, when the religious self lessens rather than increases emotional distress, such as when it uses the concept of sin to promote constructive sorrow or personal responsibility instead of feelings of guilt or self-punitiveness. He also points to

the importance of carefully defining and measuring the religious self and notes that, when this is done, claims that the healthy self is incompatible with religiousness do not receive strong empirical support.

Throughout his analysis, Watson points out that therapy (and any effort to change the self) raises basic ideological issues. One of these issues is the difference between the philosophy and practice of religious ideas as they apply to changing the self. Another issue concerns the role of therapy in changing a person's belief structure versus accepting or working with those beliefs. Can this be done when one is attempting to help bring about positive change in another person? That is, should the religious self be abandoned or fostered? As Watson demonstrates, such questions are too infrequently addressed by those whose job it is to help others change themselves. When it comes to changing the self, psychotherapy and religion are not necessarily incompatible in theory or practice.

PART 2. TECHNIQUES OF CHANGING THE SELF

What happens when people are dissatisfied with something about themselves? What can they do about it? In the second section of this book, some of the many specific techniques of changing the self are described. If individuals are sufficiently motivated or their behaviors sufficiently dysfunctional, there are several options available to them. A person might, for example, seek (or be given) professional help, receive guidance from friends or acquaintances, read a book relevant to the problem, or perhaps even do nothing at all. Another option is to try to change a problematic aspect of oneself by escaping from it. It is this latter option that is the focus of the first chapter in this section.

In their chapter, Baumeister and Boden consider the costs associated with the excessive self-attention accompanying modern identity. They propose that a major way to escape from the discomfort of this self-awareness is to reduce the size and scope of that part of the self that is present in awareness. One can, as they put it, try to focus on a "narrow and unproblematic slice of the self-concept." Baumeister and Boden discuss the circumstances that might give rise to such an attempt, including calamitous or distressing events, chronic everyday life stresses, and even efforts to achieve ecstasy. These can bring about the motivation to shrink or

escape from the self in an effort to provide at least temporary relief from the burdens of modern selfhood.

As Baumeister and Boden note, in practice, people cannot completely rid themselves of their selves. Short of making permanent changes (which are often quite difficult, as other contributors note), the best people can do is to direct their attention to a small and safe part of the self-concept. This can be accomplished through a process that the authors call “cognitive deconstruction” or “mental narrowing.” They note that one of the most effective ways to accomplish this is to think of oneself as a mere biological specimen, in essence escaping from identity into body. This is attractive because it can remove normal inhibitions, reduce the need to plan or think about personal responsibilities, and perhaps also create a state of emotional numbness.

In the remainder of their chapter, Baumeister and Boden describe several of the major ways that individuals shrink the self. These include alcohol use and abuse, suicide, sexual masochism, binge eating, and religious mysticism. All of these can be thought of as attempts to change the “phenomenal” or experienced sense of self by reducing awareness of it. Unlike the changes in the self considered by other contributors to this collection, however, the changes here take the form of temporary—though often repeatable—escape. Baumeister and Boden are showing that there is a whole new range of behaviors through which the self and issues pertaining to changing the self can be implicated. We might include delinquency as described by Gold and mysticism as conceived by Hood (in a later chapter) as also being consistent with the analysis of Baumeister and Boden.

In the next chapter, Zastrow describes a specific technique designed to bring about positive changes in the self. This approach to changing the self, based on Ellis’s (1979) rational-emotive therapy, is concerned with the interesting tendency we have to “talk” to ourselves. For Zastrow, faulty (that is, irrational) self-talk accounts for many of the problems people encounter in their lives. By “self-talk,” Zastrow means the evaluative thoughts that we have about our behavior and the things that happen to us. He argues that such internal conversations are the key element of our self-concept and how it is developed and maintained. The major implication of this view is that when we talk about changing the self, we need to look toward changing the self’s talk.

According to Zastrow, the way to get around the problems created by dysfunctional self-talk is through the rational management of the thoughts people tell themselves. The basic principle revolves around the notion that, whereas people cannot change the unpleasant events that have occurred, they can change what they tell themselves about those events. The approach is essentially an effort to change the self by restructuring thinking. Much of Zastrow's chapter is an attempt to illustrate how this can be accomplished in a controlled and systematic manner.

As a self-change technique, this cognitive-emotional approach tries to get a person to become his or her own therapist or counselor, in a sense bringing the external change agent "inside." Thus the person is encouraged to identify conclusions or interpretations that are irrational or illogical, actively consider alternatives, and come up with counterexamples, much as a therapist might do when working with that person. Zastrow uses examples of interpersonal problems and criminal rehabilitation to illustrate how the approach can be used. However, there are some possible difficulties with the successful utilization of this self-talk approach. For example, some self-talk may be "automatic" or difficult to recognize by the person. In the final part of his chapter, Zastrow discusses this and other potential limitations of the approach.

Not surprisingly, most of the interest in and attention to changing the self has been shown by psychotherapists. In fact, it is probably accurate to describe the trained psychotherapist as a "change expert." The role of the therapist is usually to provide the client with insight about his or her problem and with techniques to change the problem for the better. Of course, the emphasis of a therapist can be quite varied. For example, insight-oriented approaches, such as psychoanalysis or client-centered therapy, might require a good deal of time devoted to the client's "ego" or "self" and the things that have led to its current characteristics. On the other hand, a cognitive-behavioral therapist might spend more time considering a client's behavior and how the self affects that behavior or vice versa.

Some approaches to change focus almost entirely on behavior, without any necessary reference to the "self" or related constructs. The next chapter in this section, by Grimley and her colleagues, represents an example of this latter approach. They describe the transtheoretical model of change that primarily deals with how

and when change occurs in the therapeutic setting, especially as applied to addictive behaviors, such as smoking. Their model consists of five stages of change—precontemplation, contemplation, preparation, action, and maintenance.

Grimley and colleagues emphasize different change processes at different stages. For example, during the precontemplation stage, individuals have no intention of changing their maladaptive behavior. Such persons can move to the contemplation stage of change through “consciousness raising,” or by having their awareness of themselves and their problem increased through observation, confrontation, interpretation, and so on. Grimley and colleagues also discuss the pros and cons of specific problem behaviors and the effects these have both within and across the different stages of change.

Throughout their chapter, Grimley and her colleagues argue that to talk of changing the “self” is not particularly useful. Instead, to bring about lasting personal change, particularly with regard to maladaptive or harmful behaviors, the behaviors themselves are what need to change. To the extent that the self is involved in this process, it seems at most a distant observer. Thus they propose that most problematic behaviors are not intimately tied to the self and its reverberations, as Baumeister and Boden argue. In fact, they suggest that when the levels of change are “self-related,” the determinants of the problem behavior are increasingly removed from individual awareness. They report an impressive array of research on problem behaviors that is consistent with their transtheoretical model.

Does this mean that changes in behavior do not bring about changes in the self? Even if behavioral changes do affect the self, Grimley and colleagues suggest that this is not an important issue. However, for the next contributor, when and how behaviors change the self is a very important issue. Tice is especially interested in specifying those conditions that lead to changes in the self and the processes that produce such changes. She proposes that our self-concepts will change in order to incorporate the results and implications of behaviors into our private sense of self. This process, which she calls internalization, rests on the notion that persons are unlikely to change their selves unless they actively cooperate in the process. This is normally a gradual rather than a sudden process. However, as she notes, changes in the self might

occur more quickly if a person fails to recognize or resist pressures to change or if facets of that person's self are in flux or are not clearly defined.

Tice illustrates some of the cognitive and interpersonal factors that seem to influence the process of behavioral internalization. For example, through self-perception processes, individuals may change their self-views based on the way they have behaved and the circumstances surrounding their behavior. Much of her discussion concerns situations in which behavior has implications for the public and private aspects of the self. One of the most common of those situations arises when behavior is performed in the presence of other people. Tice describes several studies that support the idea that public performance tends to magnify the effects of certain behaviors in changing the self.

Part of the reason for this effect is that when we behave in front of other people, such actions cannot easily be ignored, forgotten, or covered up. An important implication, therefore, is that behavior performed in the eyes of important other people (that is, behaviors involving the "public self") may be an especially effective way to change the internal, private self. Other people can provide valuable data in the form of social comparison information, allowing standards on which changes in the self can be based. Thus, for Tice, the interpersonal context can be very influential in bringing about changes in the self. This is less consistent with the primarily intrapersonal, self-talk approach advocated by Zastrow than it is with the behavioral approach described by Grimley and her colleagues. Tice's analysis also helps to give a clearer account of the ways that the "delinquent subculture" discussed by Gold can provide the conditions for changes in the self-concepts of young people.

PART 3. EXPERIENCES OF CHANGING THE SELF

In Part 2 of this book, our contributors describe some of the ways that changes in the self might be brought about. Given the assumption that such changes in the self (or in behavior) do occur, what happens to the "self"? What are the conditions that bring about self-change, and what are the effects of such changes? How such questions are answered depends on factors like why the change occurred—was it voluntary or involuntary, planned or unplanned?—

and whether it came about on one's own or with the help or coercion of others. In the third section of this book, we present some alternative perspectives on these issues.

In the first chapter, Norcross and Aboyou examine the self-change efforts of the change experts themselves. How do those who are professionally trained to help others change—that is, psychotherapists—change themselves and deal with their own personal problems and distress? How are these self-change efforts related to the therapists' efforts to help others to change? Are there differences in approaching a particular problem when it is presented by clients as opposed to when the therapists themselves are experiencing it?

Among the issues addressed by Norcross and Aboyou are the experiences and handling of personal difficulties by therapists (often concerning interpersonal problems or experiences of loss) and the success of their efforts to change themselves. One of their many interesting findings is that therapists tend to rely on a wider variety and more complete repertoire of self-change techniques and strategies than laypeople, meaning that therapists are more successful in changing themselves. Laypersons seem to be “caught up in themselves” and depend more on self-focused activities and internal cognitive approaches than do therapists. Thus it seems that the “change experts” are good not only at helping others to change but also at helping themselves to change.

Another interesting finding concerns the many different schools of therapeutic change. Norcross and Aboyou point out that when they are working with their clients, psychotherapists tend to employ techniques that are consistent with their particular theoretical orientation. However, when it comes to their own efforts to change themselves, therapists apparently are not strongly influenced by the theories in which they were trained. Norcross and Aboyou spend some time speculating about what might account for this disparity. For example, actor-observer effects may be operating, therapists may make less favorable assumptions about their clients' problems than their own, there may be differential expectations for the success of self-change efforts, and so on. By examining these and other issues, Norcross and Aboyou give us additional insight into the experiences of self-change shown by those who are most closely tied to helping others change themselves.

When we talk about changing the self, the issues usually involve moving from a negative to a more positive state. After all, if the characteristics of the self were positive, what would there be to change about the self? Of course, the nature of the self is such that there are probably always parts of it that can, should, or must be changed. Despite this emphasis, there is another way of looking at changing the self. In particular, is it actually possible to lose or get rid of the self? What does this mean, and what is the experience when this happens?

In fact, there are some traditions that advocate a loss of the self. In their chapter, Baumeister and Boden describe some of the techniques through which we can shrink or escape from the self. In the next chapter in this section, Hood discusses one of the most prominent of these traditions, religious mysticism, and the implications this has for changing the self. He begins by comparing and contrasting the traditional religious and social scientific views of the self. From the religious perspective, the “egoless” state or the state of “nonself” is a desired end. That state is what commonly accompanies the mystical experience.

Relying on empirical research based on his own scale of mysticism, Hood attempts to analyze the nature of the mystical experience systematically. An important distinction in the realm of mysticism is that between extrovertive and introvertive experiences. In both cases, the self is “lost.” With extrovertive experiences, the self seems to be expanded as the person becomes “one with the entire field of perception.” With introvertive experiences, the self seems to shrink into an undifferentiated, contentless reality of pure consciousness. Hood describes the frequency of these experiences and the characteristics of the persons who report them. One of his findings is that mystical experience seems to be a capacity of many healthy, normal persons and is not necessarily something that falls into the realm of the pathological.

In the latter part of his chapter, Hood describes some of the conditions that can trigger mystical experiences. Among these triggers are sexual experiences, sensory isolation, and the use of drugs. Some of these triggers give rise to extrovertive mystical experiences, and some of them lead to introvertive experiences. A common attribute of these triggers is the presence of what he calls “incongruities.” These refer to circumstances in which the person is aware of unusual, atypical perceptions or in which there is a

transcendence of routine information processing. By describing these triggers and the resulting experience of loss of self, Hood provides a picture of the self changed in the extreme. In so doing, he also suggests a possibly fruitful link between self psychology and religious mysticism.

Those who study the self often point out the importance of group and ethnic identification to the establishment of a clear, positive sense of identity. Our social groups clearly play a powerful role in defining who we are. It is common to think of and define ourselves as members of specific groups, and we are often quick to respond if these groups are attacked by others. Our culture has strong links to our self-perceptions and self-identifications. What happens to the self when this culture goes through changes? Baumeister and Boden touch on some of the implications of historical change on the self. In the next chapter of this section, Dodd, Nelson, and Hofland focus directly on this issue by considering the effects of social, cultural, and historical changes on the self and identity of a specific group that has been much discriminated against—Native Americans.

What have been the effects of the long-term repression and neglect of the Native American people on their sense of self and identity? What is the result of externally imposed and involuntary changes in self forced upon this group? Dodd and his colleagues address this question by describing the present-day experiences of Native Americans, including their experiences with language, cultural conventions concerning time, school experiences and outcomes, family structure and attitudes toward children, and the problems of disability and suicide. They finish their chapter by addressing the issue of what can be done to clarify the self-concepts of Native Americans and to enhance their feelings of self-esteem. Given the nature of the changes in self that have occurred over the decades, this issue is not one that is easily resolved.

Underlying Dodd and colleagues' discussion is the notion of a clash of cultures, one of which values community and strong ethnic identity, the other of which values extreme individualism and the rejection of ethnic identity. The latter view, advocated by the larger American culture, conceives of a self that clashes with the traditions of the Native American. The nature of this clash is well illustrated by the authors' very interesting analysis of how differences in behavior can be interpreted in completely opposite ways

by the two cultures. More generally, Dodd and colleagues illustrate how changes in one's group can lead to changes in the sense of self that is so intimately tied to that group. As history has shown with Native Americans, simply changing the self will not change the situation of the group. If anything, the opposite approach seems warranted, given the importance of the group to one's personal identity and sense of selfhood.

What it is like to have changed the self? Dodd and colleagues give a detailed answer to this question for Native Americans. The changes in the self experienced by most people (and discussed by most of the contributors to this book) involve either positive or negative shifts in behavior, personality, social behaviors, physical appearance or capabilities, ideas and values, and so on. Most of these shifts are likely to be gradual and small but cumulative. If positive, changes in the self can bolster a person's self-esteem and feelings of accomplishment and success. If negative, a person may suffer from a negative self-evaluation and seek to reverse the change, often with the help of other people. When the changes are negative, we nonetheless assume that the opportunity to change for the better is always available to us, even if we do not immediately take advantage of that opportunity or see the circumstances for change to be favorable.

In either the positive or negative case, changes in the self are often thought to be attributable to something the person has done correctly or incorrectly. That is, when we talk about changing the self, we often give credit or blame to the person who has experienced the change. There are times, however, when the self is changed suddenly, dramatically, or irreversibly. As Dodd and colleagues note in their discussion of Native Americans, similar attributions will often be made in these cases as well. When a change is chronic, permanent, or outside of one's control, the self is presented with a unique challenge. If the possibility of reversing a negative personal change is taken away, as in the case of a disabling physical condition, what effect does this have on the self?

In the final chapter of this section, Toombs provides a powerful discussion of the experience of physical disability and its effects on the self, made more compelling by her own personal experiences. Fundamental to her discussion is the notion that disability brings about a profound transformation of the self. Based on the ideas of the phenomenologists concerning the bodily self, Toombs illus-

trates how, with a disability, the body is more closely tied to consciousness than usual and becomes much more of an “insistent presence.”

It is typical for a person to take his or her body and its orientational and intentional contributions for granted with minimal awareness. For example, we do not often think about our ability to maintain our balance as we go about our daily lives. As Toombs shows, however, with the loss of motility comes an increasing awareness of that which we take for granted most of the time. With a disability, she argues, we come to show a new bodily perception which she calls a “seeing-through-the-body.” As she puts it, the body becomes “thematic to consciousness.” Toombs highlights how the experience of the self changes with the loss of motility. This includes changes in the perception of time and effort, feelings of at-homeness in one’s own body, disruptions in the interpersonal and social arenas, the accompanying threats to life goals, and so on.

In the later parts of her chapter, Toombs addresses the failure of the nondisabled to recognize the changes wrought by a disability. She focuses especially on those in the medical community whose approach to disability has been to ignore the changes in the lived body (and the self). As she puts it, “To ignore the transformation of the self is to discount the major impact of disability.” Toombs describes several implications of her analysis (and her personal experiences) for medical practice, including recognizing that disability represents a total disruption of one’s being-in-the-world, and the need to acknowledge the effects of disability on one’s sense of the present and the future.

Unlike the cases described by Baumeister and Boden, a disability forces an involuntary shrinking of or “escaping” from the self. Here is a case where, because the body has changed for the worse, the self must also change. However, as Toombs notes, the changes in the self need not necessarily also be for the worse. She proposes that disability does not so much diminish the self as it leads to the acquisition of a new identity, with the possibility that the self can be newly and continuously defined. She asks for the understanding and support of the helping professions in recognizing this possibility.

In summary, we have brought together in this book a collection of individuals who have concerned themselves with the theme of

changing the self. Although that theme is common to the effort of each contributor, its expression is quite varied, and their conclusions do not necessarily agree with one another. Where there is consensus, however, is that understanding and accounting for change in the self is vitally important across a wide range of human experience.

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