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MIKE TYSON

A PSYCHOBIOGRAPHICAL STUDY



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**CAPITA SELECTA B - PSYCHOANALYTIC PSYCHOTHERAPY
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1. Introduction

This essay comprises of a psychobiography of Mike Tyson in which the analytical psychology of Heinz Kohut is applied as a theoretical model. The aim is to understand Mike Tyson and to uncover the private motives behind his public acts, and more specifically to use Kohut's psychoanalytic model to understand Tyson's biographical history which lead to his aggressive attack where in a blind rage Mike Tyson bit chunks out of Evander Holyfield's ear in a boxing showdown on the night of June 28, 1997. This essay thus considers aspects of Tyson's life that assist in the generation of a coherent and valuable psychological understanding of the man.

2. The life of Mike Tyson

2.1. Early days

The mid 1960's were a period of severe black discontent. Just about a year before Mike Tyson was born rioting escalated which contributed to a climate that transfigured the United States of America's cultural landscape, resulting in wide spread poverty, unemployment and crime suffered by blacks, affecting not only Tyson and his family, but most African Americans (Cashmore, 2005). Tyson was born to Lorna Tyson née Smith on June 30, 1966; Lorna Smith, born 1930, had joined the great migration north after the second world war and settled in Brooklyn, New York City, where she met and married Percel Tyson (Cashmore, 2005). They later divorced, although Lorna kept the name Tyson. Lorna met and fell in love with Jimmy Kirkpatrick, a heavyset man who had fathered sixteen children with a number of woman. The couple never married but had three children, Rodney born in 1961, Denise in 1964 and Mike arrived two years later. By the time Mike arrived Kirkpatrick had already moved on, abandoning Lorna and their three children, leaving them to grow up in poverty in one of the most dangerous neighbourhoods, Brownsville, Brooklyn (Oliver, 2011).

Lorna Tyson worked intermittently as a nurse-aid but relied desperately on welfare to support her female-headed single parent family. She was briefly involved in an relationship with Eddie Gillison, but, his income did not ease their financial burden and his abuse on her often resulted in the children ganging up on Gillison to protect their mother. The family moved four times before Tyson's eighth birthday and each move resulted in further degradation of living conditions (Cashmore, 2005). Tyson recalls with disdain that the family home in Brownsville, always had a putrid smell, a combination sewerage and weed (Toback & Bingham, 2009). In the documentary of his life, Tyson describes his mother as being crude,

promiscuous and mostly inebriated. He recounts how his home was always inhabited by intoxicated, abusive pimps and prostitutes. Tyson also mentions without emotion that his mother was an addict and a prostitute. He further illustrates her abusive behaviour stating that as a toddler, his mother would give him liquor and drugs so that he would go to sleep and not bother her. Later in the documentary, he discusses his mother's disinterest in his whereabouts, behaviours and achievements, believing that he was never given the basic tools to function adaptively (Toback & Bingham, 2009).

2.2. 'Fairy boy' to bully

Tyson, as a small child was overweight, had pimples, was softly spoken with a high pitched voice and a lisp, this resulted in him being victimised and bullied, he was taunted by the elder children who called him 'fairy boy', he was picked on, robbed and humiliated (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011; Toback & Bingham, 2009). A lonely Tyson retreated from the streets to avoid confrontation and built a coup in the yard for pigeons as he found comfort in taking care of birds. He recalls with affection and sadness that the birds he cared for were the first thing that he loved in his troubled childhood and that they provided him with a love and comfort that he could not get elsewhere (Discovery TV, 2011). On returning home from school one day he was devastated to find the coup destroyed, the pigeons released and an older gang member from the neighbourhood standing in the coup with a pigeon in hand. Out of spite, the gang member then killed the pigeon in front of Tyson. This action completely enraged the previously timid Tyson, who set upon the older, larger boy and beat him into submission. Tyson had stood up for himself, he had fought back, he had been victorious and he liked it (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011). Tyson reflects on this event in his documentary, saying that he'd been afraid to fight, but when he realised he was good at it, he knew he would continue to fight so that he would never again be humiliated or shamed (Toback & Bingham, 2009).

At the age of 11, Tyson was drinking, smoking and committing petty crime, the gangs had become his surrogate family, with pimps and drug dealers being his role models. He advanced to mugging and robbery and took great joy and pride in outsmarting his victims. By the time Tyson was 12 he had been arrested 38 times and was frequently held in Brooklyn's juvenile detention centres where hierarchy was based on respect, and respect was earned through fighting. It was common knowledge that doing crime and enduring the punishments gained respect in the ghetto. Tyson felt empowered by the respect and upped the ante by

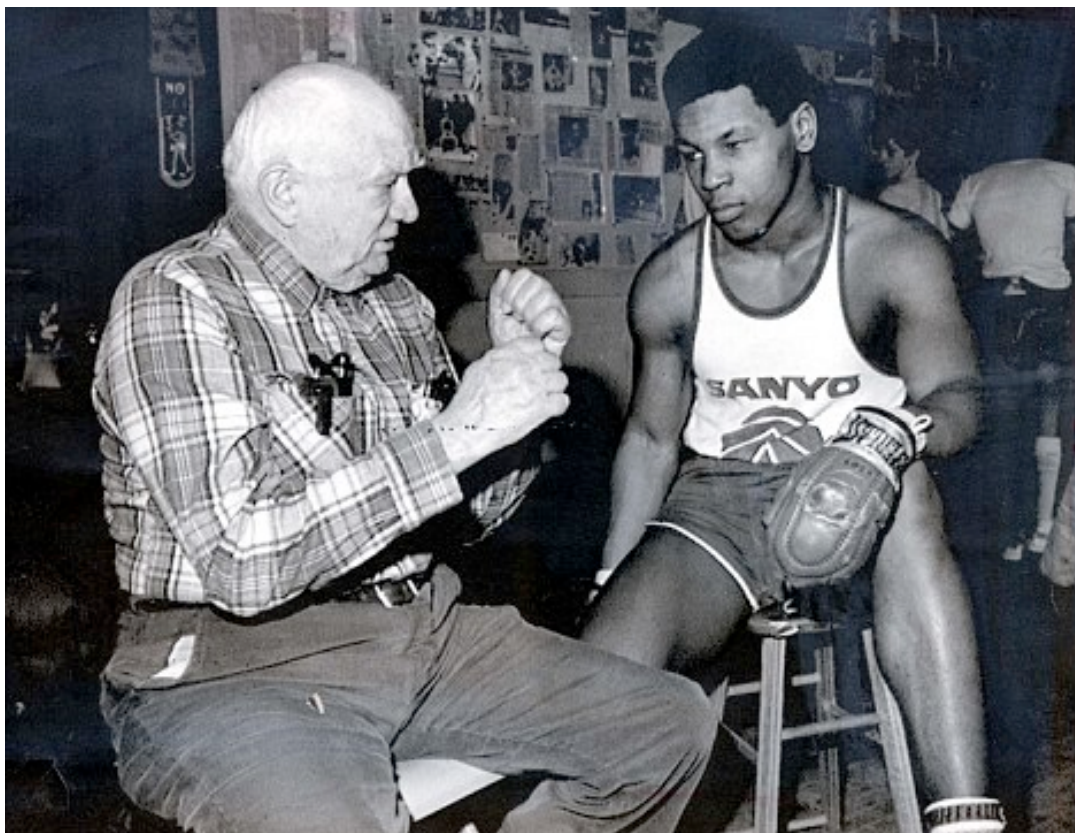
acquiring a weapon and getting involved in more serious crime. As a result Tyson found himself at the Tryon Reform School for Boys in upstate New York where he encountered Bobby Stewart, a former professional boxer who worked at the school. In a deal where Tyson was to improve his behaviour and grades, he was rewarded with boxing lessons by Stewart. Tyson, with his natural strength and aptitude for boxing had so impressed Stewart, that he introduced him to a trainer named Cus D'Amato (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011; Toback & Bingham, 2009). It is noteworthy, that from the time Tyson was sent to the reform school, 200 miles from home in upstate New York, he had little communications with his mother and received no gifts, correspondence or even birthday cards from her.



2.3. The road to excellence

D'Amato was a legendary trainer who had coached Floyd Patterson and Jose Torres to world titles (Oliver, 2011). D'Amato was amazed that, at the age of 13, Tyson weighed 200 pounds and was stronger than most adult men; after watching him spar three rounds with Stewart, D'Amato concluded that if he wanted it, Mike Tyson could be the heavy weight champion of the world (Oliver, 2011). Shortly thereafter, Tyson was released into D'Amato's permanent care and custody, where he stayed in D'Amato's home in Catskill and worked and

trained at the gym during the day absorbing boxing wisdom and acquiring vast amounts of knowledge of the sport and great fighters. It was in D'Amato's care, protection, discipline and guidance that Tyson found his first and only positive and reinforcing relationship, one that would grow and develop into an affectionate father-figure connection. It wasn't long before D'Amato entered Tyson into amateur tournaments, which he dominated with knockout victories. It seemed to D'Amato a complete anomaly that the confident and dominant displays of Tyson in the ring could be contrasted with low self-esteem, confidence and self-worth outside of the boxing arena. Tyson required constant reassurance and often broke down in tears before important fights, needing to be consoled and supported. Later, instead of allowing the fear to consume him, Tyson learnt to use the fear of failure to drive him harder in training so that he had nothing to fear when he entered the ring (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011).

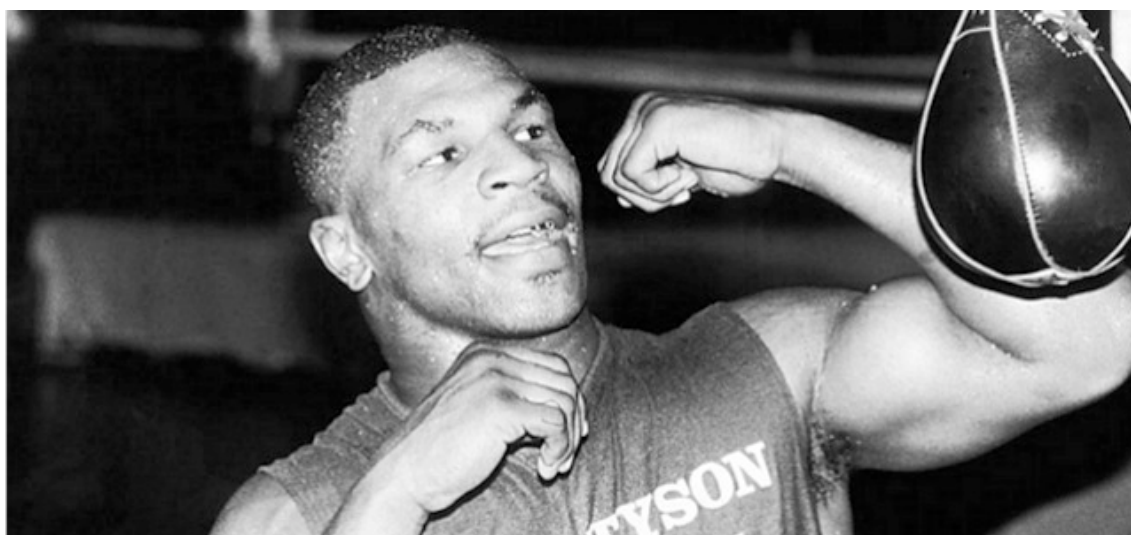


Tyson's behaviour outside of boxing was still creating serious issues, he was truant and in trouble at school, broke rules at home and was disrespectful to D'Amato and other trainers. Atlas, one of Tyson's trainers felt strongly that banning Tyson at the gym as a method of punishing him, would give him the discipline he required and positively influence his

behaviour. However D'Amato, not in good health and desperate to achieve a title with Tyson, allowed him to get away with poor behaviour and chose rather to remove Tyson from school and arrange a personal tutor thereby focussing on schooling but also creating more time for training. Despite Tyson's maladaptive behaviours he was 18 when he turned professional in March 1985. He fought to destroy, and annihilated 15 opponents in nine months, mostly ending the fights with knockouts in the first round (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver).

Tragedy struck the camp and hit Tyson hard when on the 4 November 1985, Cus D'Amato, Tyson's mentor, his teacher, his 'father' and his role model died suddenly in hospital after a long period of illness. In his documentary, Tyson reported emotionally that this loss was immeasurable; D'Amato had broken Tyson down to rebuild him, he had taken a hysterical, vulnerable, scared and lonely boy and transformed him, he had completely changed Tyson's life, he had been the father that Tyson never had and a loss that Tyson feels he will never come to terms with (Toback & Bingham, 2009). However, the loss of D'Amato made Tyson even more determined to become the heavyweight champion of the world, the dream that D'Amato had had for Tyson and for himself.

Tyson made his television debut in 1986, fighting Jesse Ferguson and winning with a technical knockout in the sixth round. With every fight, Tyson gathered momentum, and in November 1986 at the age of twenty Tyson became the youngest ever heavyweight champion, a win and title that he dedicated to his late mentor Cus D'Amato (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011). In 1987, he went on to win the remaining belts and unify the title, in so doing he became the undisputed champion at the age of twenty one. As Tyson's success and fame escalated, so did reports on his personal life and troubles started coming to the fore (Oliver, 2011).



2.4. Trouble in paradise

Tyson became obsessed with actress Robin Givens and the pair had a whirlwind romance followed by a sudden marriage on February 7, 1988. The relationship was turbulent and ended in divorce just over a year into the marriage. Tyson reflects on the relationship, saying that they were two far too young kids who should never have been married in the first place, however, the divorce left him feeling like half a person, abandoned and ashamed (Toback & Bingham, 2009).

In spite of difficulties in his personal life, Tyson was on a winning streak in the ring and continued to dominate his opponents, he reigned as the heavyweight champion for three years, defending his title on 10 occasions. His record stood at 36 wins and no defeats and he looked destined to become the most successful heavyweight of all time (Oliver, 2011). However, in his documentary, Tyson revealed that at the time his personal life was filled with woman, drugs, parties, prostitutes, extremes and abuse on every level. He felt after the death of D'Amato and his divorce from Givens he had completely lost all belief in himself (Toback & Bingham, 2009). Whilst living in a world of abuse, Rodney King, his new manager chose to inflate Tyson's ego rather than give him sound advice. These issues coupled with the fact that Tyson regarded his next challenger, James 'Buster' Douglas, as formality and an underdog, resulted in Tyson dropping to the floor for the first time in his career in the tenth round. In 1990, Tyson's three year reign was over, with the biggest upset in boxing history (Cashmore, 2005; Oliver, 2011; Toback & Bingham, 2009).

Having beaten Douglas, Evander Holyfield was the current heavyweight champion who was set to defend his title against Tyson, however this fight was put on hold when a Miss Black America contestant alleged that Tyson had raped her. A court battle pursued in which Tyson maintained his innocence, but was sentenced to six years in prison, which was later reduced to three years due to good behaviour. Tyson was released from prison in 1995 and was back in training, by 1996 he had regained two heavyweight titles and the Evander Holyfield showdown was scheduled for late in 1996. The fight was well anticipated and a bloodbath expected; the fighters appeared well matched and both fighters exchanged blows, but in the sixth round Tyson's legs buckled from the impact of a Holyfield head butt leaving Tyson with cut above the eye, a few rounds later Holyfield caught Tyson with a second head butt, the referee declared both accidental, but the effect on Tyson was dire and the fight was stopped in the eleventh round (Eskenazi, 1996; Oliver, 2011). Tyson's camp called for a re-

match, claiming illegal head action in their first bout; the re-match was scheduled for June 28, 1997. According to Tyson, he was ahead in the fight when just as in the first match he was caught by a Holyfield head butt, again the referee declared it accidental, infuriating Tyson. Shortly thereafter, when in a clinch with Holyfield, Tyson spat out his gum-guard and bit into Holyfield's ear. The referee deducted points from Tyson and the fight continued, but minutes later Holyfield head butted Tyson again and in a blind rage Tyson bit Holyfield's other ear and the fight was stopped. Tyson was disqualified (Cashmore, 2005; Friend, 1997; Oliver, 2011).

2.5. Conclusion

From Tyson's brief biography, it is clear, that he came from troubled and humble beginnings. He was abandoned by his father before birth and his mother was unavailable to Tyson, either working as a nurse-aid, involved in abusive relationships or in self-serving activities. His mother Lorna, was unresponsive to Tyson's needs and showed no interest in his developments or achievements, in his own words Tyson reports "My mother didn't like me much. She always thought I was a braggart." (Toback & Bingham, 2009). By the age of 12 Tyson's mother had completely lost contact with her son and showed no interest or pride in his success. Despite this unresponsive and non-nurturing relationship, Tyson went on to become the heavyweight boxing champion of the world, but perhaps because of this maladaptive relationship with his mother, everything fell apart. Tyson was addicted to an abusive lifestyle, he drank too much, abused drugs, had meaningless relationships with uncountable woman and prostitutes, was convicted of rape and lost his belief in himself. In losing his discipline and self respect, he lost his passion and appetite for the sport that had driven him to success, and in a moment of insanity and rage he bit off a chunk of his opponents ear in retaliation to a head butting incident. In order to further explore the biographical history leading to this incident it is important to gain an understanding of the theoretical framework which provides a lens to view this event. Kohut's psychology of the self, and specifically his understanding of the narcissistic self will therefore be explored.

3. Theoretical understanding

3.1. The self

A definition of the self as understood by Kohut is illusive, however, it has been established that Kohut moved away from Freudian concept that the self was produced where one's innate drives intersect with the outside world embodied in the parents. In 1977, Kohut

had formulated the self to include drives (and/or defences) in its organisation, with a superordinated configuration whose significance transcended the sum of its parts and which was cohesive in space and continuous in time. With this conception, Kohut's self functions as a whole, as an organisational structure of the psyche as well as an agent of action (Kohut, 1977).

Kohut further details the bipolar self as comprising of two elements, that of the grandiose selfobject and idealised selfobject, the parental imago. The function of grandiose selfobject, "mirroring", is fulfilled when the parent confirms and responds to the child's inner sense of "vigor, greatness and perfection" (Kohut, 1978, p. 361). The idealised selfobject is fulfilled by those objects, usually a parent, whom the child can look up to and with whom he can merge an image of "calmness, infallibility, and omnipotence" (Kohut, 1978, p. 361). Therefore, specific interplay of the child with their environment and selfobjects can help or hinder the cohesion of the self in forming balanced psychic structures (Kohut, 1972). Faulty interaction between the child and their selfobjects result in arrested development, creating a weakened and vulnerable self (Kohut, 1978). One such vulnerable and fragmented self is the narcissist, whose psychic organisation will be examined further.

3.2. Narcissism

Kohut believes that healthy adults have narcissistic needs and needs for "mirroring" of the self by selfobjects throughout life; healthy narcissism occurs in relationships where one mirrors the other and may idealise certain qualities in the other. Kohut considered pathology largely in terms of failure of the functions of the bipolar self, that is "mirroring", idealisation and merging of selfobjects (Kohut, 1978). Narcissism can be seen as an inadequate fulfilment of these functions, whereby the primary source of the in-cohesive self stems from faulty interactions between the child and their selfobjects (Kohut, 1972).

Formation of the self

According to Kohut (1972), the vicissitudes and development of the early formation of the self create a crystallised cohesive or fragmented self nucleus, and determine how an individual will maintain and cope in subsequent psychological events that are analogous to this early phase. Therefore, according to Kohut, a child who was lacking in adequate "mirroring" from the environment will become unintegrated with the rest of the developing self, and form a fragmented self nucleus. The child will turn to self stimulation in order to maintain cohesion in their experiencing and acting self and their behaviour will become

increasingly pathological. The child will attempt to maintain cohesion of their endangered self through stimulation derived from an inflation of their own self worth or grandiosity and through aggression (Kohut, 1972).

Inferiority and shame

In healthy development, the child receives adequate confirming and approving “mirroring” responses from the mother which leads to the transformation of the archaic narcissistic cathexis of the child's body-self, as the child increases selectivity of the mother's admiration and approval. However, this transformation is prevented in a child whose mother does not provide acceptable “mirroring” responses. This results in the crude and powerful narcissistic cathexis of the grandiose body-self remaining unaltered, and cannot be integrated into the otherwise normally developing psychic organisation. The archaic grandiosity and exhibitionism thus become vertically split from the reality ego or separated from it through repression. Once separated from the psychic organisation, the archaic formations are deprived of the mediating function of the ego and are not modifiable by later influences, no matter how accepting and approving these influences may be. However what happens from time to time, the archaic grandiose-exhibitionistic self asserts itself and bursts through the reality ego with overwhelming exhibitionistic cathexis, neutralising the powers of the ego, which as a result becomes paralysed and experiences intense shame and rage (Kohut, 1972).

A healthy individual is driven by ambitions which are derived from a system of infantile grandiose fantasies. However, if the grandiosity of the narcissistic self remains unmodified due to traumatic onslaught of the child's self-esteem, it can drive the grandiose fantasies into repression. When this occurs, the adult ego tends to vacillate between an irrational over estimation of the self and desperate feelings of inadequacy and inferiority (Kohut, 1966). Additionally, the negative effects on a child's self-esteem as a result of traumatic frustration can be seen with children who suffer physical defects.

A child with a physical defect may as a result of a rejection from the mother develop narcissistic tendencies. The mother who spurns her off-spring for being imperfect and who does not offer positive and appropriate “mirroring” to her child regarding their qualities and accomplishments, does the child a further disavour, by enabling the child's archaic grandiosity and exhibitionism (Kohut, 1972).

Aggression and narcissistic rage

Kohut (1972), stated that human aggression is most volatile and extremely dangerous when it is associated with the “two great absolutarian psychological constellations: the grandiose self and the archaic omnipotent object” (p. 635). In displays of such extreme aggression, one finds that the destruction is executed by the perpetrator with precision, organisation and absolute conviction about their greatness, with complete devotion to their archaic omnipotent figures.

Narcissistic rage occurs on a continuum of a wide spectrum of experiences that range from minor incidents of mild irritation through to more serious outbursts and menacing fury. Kohut (1972), refers to all points on the spectrum, rather than one specific band as narcissistic rage, thereby covering most characteristics which are fundamentally related to each other. Narcissistic rage can be grouped within the psychological field of aggression, anger and destructiveness and is analogous to the fight or flight reaction in which one responds to attack. Therefore, narcissistic rage can be understood as the reaction to narcissistic injury, which is perceived as a threat to the narcissists self-esteem and self-worth. This reaction can be seen as a more favourable option to shameful withdrawal. Although narcissistic rage comes in many forms, the need for revenge, for righting a wrong and undoing a hurt through whatever means available with unrelenting compulsion, is the common thread that separates narcissistic rage from all other forms of aggression (Kohut, 1972).

Narcissist's have a tendency to respond to potentially shame-provoking situations by actively inflicting on others the narcissistic injuries that they themselves are most afraid of enduring. This narcissistic tendency can be understood as the desire to change a passive experience into an active one, as a means of identifying with the aggressor or as sadistic tensions held onto from childhood as a result of being treated sadistically by one's parents. These factors do not however fully account for the most characteristic features of narcissistic rage, as, typically the narcissist will show absolute disregard for any reasonable limitations and has a boundless desire to redress an injury and exact revenge. The need for retribution becomes even more frightening as the narcissist's reasoning capacity is often sharpened as it becomes dominated by and in service of the overriding emotion (Kohut, 1972).

Experiential content of narcissistic rage

The underlying emotional states of the individual experiencing narcissistic rage is the unyielding need for the perfection of the idealised selfobject combined with the boundless power, ambitions, knowledge and superiority of the grandiose selfobject. The never ending compulsion to obtain revenge, to destroy the offender and to take back what the narcissist believes is theirs are not attributes of the mature self, but rather the actions that serve the archaic grandiose self deployed within the framework of an archaic perception of reality. The narcissistically injured individual is unable to stop until revenge has been inflicted on the perpetrator, who dared to oppose, shame, disgrace, disagree with or outshine them. It is imperative that he wipes out all evidence that contradicts his conviction that he is unique and perfect. (Kohut, 1972).

Unlike the maturely developed individual, the shame-prone individual, as a consequence of narcissistic injuries responds to perceived attacks and setbacks with uncontrollable rage and does not recognise the other as a centre of independent initiative with whom they happen to be at cross-purposes. The perpetrator is seen by the narcissist as a flaw in a narcissistically perceived reality, a recalcitrant part of an expanded self over which the vulnerable person had expected to exercise full control. As seen by the narcissistically injured individual, the mere fact that the other is separate from the self is offensive (Kohut, 1972).

Narcissistic rage surfaces when either when the self or the selfobject does not behave in a manner acceptable to the narcissistically injured individual whose psychological organisation has matured without the concurrent development of archaic narcissistic structures. This arrested development is due to lack of selfobject idealisation and self “mirroring” by the other, that is to say that the narcissistic demands of childhood have been traumatically frustrated (Kohut, 1972).

The natural response to narcissistic injury is to react with embarrassment and shame, however Kohut (1972), states that most forms of narcissistic rage stem from the desire to have absolute control over the archaic perceived environment as a measure of protection against low self-esteem. As a consequence of deep insecurities, feelings of inferiority, low self-concept and lack of confidence, the vulnerable individual is in constant need of approving “mirroring” or idealisation merging to maintain a sense of self and avoid shame and humiliation.

Manifestations of narcissistic rage differ, but the commonality of all outbursts of rage cluster around the way in which the narcissists perceives their world, that is to say, the archaic manner in which the vulnerable individual experiences others and the environment engenders expressions of narcissistic rage. The archaic mode in which the narcissistically injured individual operates explains the lack of empathy, the desperate need to destroy the offender who threatens the grandiose self and the resultant unforgiving fury that surges in response to the loss of control over the mirroring object or availability of the omnipotent selfobject. These narcissistic behaviours are borne as a result of the archaic needs to envelop omniscience and total control remain unmet and immature due to deprivation of an omniscient selfobject or inadequate confirmation of the perfection of the self (Kohut, 1972).

3.3. Conclusion

Healthy development of the mature personality involves the successful navigation of independent lines of development combined with a healthy parental attitude and relationship with the child. A child whose archaic grandiosity and exhibitionism remains unaltered due to lack of parental “mirroring” and failure to merge with one’s omniscient selfobject, develops low self-esteem and feelings of inferiority. These feelings of inadequacy and inability are resultant of the individuals unmet needs of “mirroring”; the child becomes insecure with the lack of feedback, confirmation and praise regarding their accomplishments and qualities. In order to protect their narcissistically vulnerable self the individual responds with a superior grandiosity, narcissistic rage may result should the individual feel their injured self being threatened (Kohut, 1972). With this grounding, we are better able to understand the private motives that lead to Mike Tyson’s aggressive ear biting attack on Evander Holyfield, a discussion of Tyson’s narcissistic behaviour follows.

4. The integration - Mike Tyson and Heinz Kohut

4.1. The formation of Tyson’s self

According to Kohut (1972, 1978), a child who develops the independent psychological constellations of the bipolar self, who experiences caregivers who celebrate and admire them and who can identify unique specialness within the selfobject, will generate a healthy sense of grandiosity and omniscience. The fulfilment of early narcissistic needs allows for the development of healthy ambitions and a sense of self-confidence and self-worth. Mike Tyson was born into the world abandoned by his father and to a mother, who according to Tyson was an alcoholic, a drug addict, self-involved and a prostitute, a mother who neglected him

and showed no interest in his life developments, a mother who did not believe in his abilities and who offered no connection of love or happiness (Toback & Bingham, 2009). In Mike Tyson's early days there was no selfobject who confirmed and responded to his inner sense of vigour, greatness or perfection, and likewise no selfobject that he could look up to with whom he could merge as an image of calmness, infallibility, and omnipotence.

With this neglect and abandonment, it is clear that according to Kohut's theory, Tyson's archaic narcissistic cathexis was unable to transform, the crude and intense narcissistic cathexis of the grandiose self, therefore remained unaltered and was unable to be integrated with the remaining psychic organisation that continued on the path of development to maturity. The development of the archaic grandiosity was interrupted from transforming into healthy ambitions and motivation, and a stable sense of self-esteem and self-confidence was never established. Through Tyson's lack of idealised selfobject, an other, with whom he could identify and admire, he was unable to associate admirable qualities within himself. As a result of the incomplete development of these bipolar psychological elements, Tyson's sense of self was insecure and shame-filled, he lacked self-esteem, self-confidence and self-worth.

4.2. Tyson's transformation into the aggressor - inferiority and shame

Tyson's mother was neglectful towards her son in many ways, she did not provide a safe, healthy or happy home environment, she abused her son, administering drugs and alcohol to him in order to make him sleep, she was disinterested in his achievements and whereabouts, she did not encourage him at school or otherwise and she offered him no emotional response or affection. In her neglect, she contributed to Tyson's weak, inadequate, and inferior self-image, additionally, the young, overweight Tyson who reportedly had a face riddled with pimples and spoke with a high pitched voice and a lisp had characteristics primed to lower self-esteem.

These physical and elocutionary characteristics coupled with feelings of inadequacy and low self-confidence placed Tyson in a position for easy pickings. The older boys belonging to neighbourhood gangs provoked Tyson calling him 'fairy boy', they bullied him, they would steal his sneakers and his cash. The inadequate, vulnerable Tyson would retreat with shame-filled humiliation. The older gang members came to represent the selfobject that Kohut (1972) suggests contributes to a child's lowered self-esteem by rejecting the child for his imperfections. Tyson's overweight and pimple-faced body together with his feminine sounding, lisp inflicted speech represent the defect, the attacking gang members the

selfobject. Therefore, young Tyson with his defective self is yet again spurned by his selfobject, this time because of his imperfect physicality and elocution. The selfobject's inability to offer positive "mirroring" or confirmation, compounds Tyson's feelings of inadequacy and low self esteem.

The high levels of shame, humiliation, incompetence and deficiency that Tyson experienced are indicative of the archaic grandiosity and exhibitionism that became horizontally split, separating from the normally developing psychic organisation through repression. However, as Kohut (1972) mentions, the archaic grandiose-exhibitionistic structure can assert itself, bursting through, neutralising and paralysing the powers of the ego, resulting in experiences of intense rage and shame. When Tyson returned home to find his birds released, his coup destroyed and the perpetrator standing in his coup in the process of killing his only loveobject, the pigeon, the repressed archaic grandiose-exhibitionistic self exploded into action. In doing so it allowed Tyson the rage that he required to defeat the larger, older boy and to hide his feelings of humiliation and shame.

4.3. Identification with a positive selfobject

In D'Amato, Tyson found a father, a selfobject that offered "mirroring", giving Tyson positive feedback and appreciation of his accomplishments, behaviours and qualities. For the first time in his life, Tyson had a positive selfobject who was in pursuit of building up his self-confidence and self-belief. Tyson mentions in his documentary, that at first he did not understand what D'Amato was doing, why he was being so complimentary and full of approval, the experience was so foreign to Tyson that he had thought D'Amato might have been making advances on him. It was only as his self-esteem grew and as he started to believe in his own abilities that he understood for the first time what the parental role should be (Toback & Bingham, 2009). Further, Tyson was able to appreciate, admire and identify qualities within D'Amato's being and through this special relationship, he was able to associate and merge with these admirable qualities of success, dedication and 'killer-instinct'.

Although D'Amato succeeded in building up Tyson's fighter confidence and his belief in his strength and abilities in training, it took constant "mirroring" and confirmation to keep Tyson from his natural tendency to self-depreciate. Tyson would break down into tears of fear before certain fights, feeling completely incompetent and incapable of taking on the opponent. With much reinforcement and reassurance Tyson would build enough confidence to get into the ring and destroy his opponent. This "mirroring" and support however, did not

and according to Kohut (1972), would not be able to 'undo' the damage of the defective early selfobjects. As mentioned earlier, Kohut states that once separated from the psychic organisation, the archaic formations are not modifiable by later influences, no matter how accepting and approving these influences may be. With this in mind, it would appear that although D'Amato had a positive and life changing effect on Tyson, perhaps being Tyson's ticket out of a criminal life in the slums with no hope and no future, he was still unable to change the archaic formations that remained undeveloped from early childhood object relations.

4.4. Downward spiral - narcissistic rage

Tyson's sense of inadequacy and his low self-image were carried with him throughout his childhood and through his times of success. However, while D'Amato was alive, he served as a role model, a positive disciplinarian, and an idealisation selfobject whom Tyson could admire and with whom he could form associations of admirable qualities. Furthermore the selfobject adequately reinforced Tyson's strengths with appropriate "mirroring". This relationship enhanced Tyson's motivation and ambitions and moderated his low self-esteem and feelings of deficiency. Therefore, while D'Amato was alive and while Tyson was still working in his honour, he was able to employ his motivation and ambitions with positive effect, while managing his low levels of self-confidence with affirmative "mirroring" from the selfobject.

After D'Amato's death, Tyson once again found himself without a supportive parental selfobject, additionally, as previously noted, Tyson's bipolar psychological elements did not develop to maturity. Consequently, with archaic grandiosity and idealisation formations and no self-selfobject relationships to mirror or associate with, Tyson's levels of motivation and self-esteem slowly, but consistently decreased. In order to protect his vulnerable narcissistic self and avoid his feelings of inferiority, Tyson would behave in grandiose style with an irrational over estimation of his self. Without motivation and ambition and with the need to protect his vulnerabilities, Tyson began to train less seriously and to spend more time entertaining himself and others with grandiose performances and behaviours. The resultant failed relationships, abusive situations and later losses within the boxing ring, further damaged Tyson's self-esteem, which then needed greater protection, resulting in increased the grandiose behaviour and so the vicious cycle was perpetuated.

Kohut (1972), believed that narcissistic rage, which is associated with the “two great absolutarian psychological constellations” (p. 635) could potentially be the most tempestuous, threatening and explosive form of human aggression. He found that the narcissistically injured individual would respond to potentially shame-provoking situations by actively inflicting their most feared injury upon the perpetrator. From a young child Tyson had experienced shame and humiliation, he was vulnerable and afraid of suffering indignity and dishonour and his grandiose self protected him from this punishment. As a 10 year old in retaliation to his bird being killed, Tyson learnt aggression, he learnt to fight to defend his honour and protect himself against humiliation and shame. He enjoyed the feeling of victory and by defeating the offender he actively inflicted shame upon the vanquished.

In Tyson’s first encounter with Holyfield, he had been on the receiving end of two damaging head butts which, according to Tyson had cost him the fight. The head butts were considered accidental and the re-match was scheduled. Tyson had felt that both the head butts and the decision to rule them accidental was tantamount to cheating. Therefore, when in the rematch the same *accidental* head butt was administered with no ruling of illegal action, Tyson felt an extreme and immediate attack on the self, which resulted in sense of shame and humiliation, his vulnerable self was being threatened, and the previous injury of loss and humiliation served both as a reminder and a motivator to disallow such shame and humiliation to take claim over him. In the actions that followed, Tyson identified himself with the aggressor and changed his experience from a passive victim to an active assailant, he showed complete disregard for all rules and regulations of the boxing association and of society as a whole with his boundless need to redress the injury and exact revenge. Further Tyson’s need for revenge and his compulsion to destroy Holyfield and impose shameful humiliation on his victim serve to empower his grandiose self and to protect his vulnerabilities of inadequacy and inferiority. In biting a piece out of Holyfield’s ear, Tyson was righting the wrong, he was undoing the hurt, he was seeking revenge and he was trying to remove all evidence which would stand to contradict his own perfection and greatness, and in doing so he was reclaiming his own omniscience.

4.5. Conclusion

Kohut's theories of the self and specifically of the narcissistic self form a framework well matched to Tyson's experience of psychological organisation development and the behavioural outcomes. Tyson's psychological constellations of the bipolar self did not successfully develop into maturity and remained in their archaic form due to his mother's lack of "mirroring" and her neglectful and maladaptive mothering style offered Tyson no opportunity for the idealisation of the selfobject. These archaic formations that no longer had the possibility to develop to maturation remained with Tyson throughout his childhood and adult life, burdening him with low self-esteem and self-confidence, as well as feelings of incompetence, inadequacy and inferiority. In order for Tyson to protect his narcissistically injured self he needed to develop an irrational, superior grandiose self, as well as develop the ability to defend against perceived or actual attack with a aggressive volatility that would exact revenge and inflict his most feared injury, one of shame and humiliation, upon his transgressor. Mike Tyson developed his grandiose style, to protect his vulnerable narcissistically injured self, that became shamefully exposed in his fight against Holyfield. In order to protect his defective self, Tyson bit Holyfield's ear, reacting with narcissistic rage, actively engaging the perpetrator who dared to expose his weakness and humiliate him disgracefully.

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