

Levels of Identity and Their Development

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Abstract

This article describes a key theoretical concept developed by Carlo Moiso, one that reflects significant continuity with Berne's thinking about script identities. The authors reexamine Moiso's contribution and offer reflections, analyses, and references to theory. The article describes the development of script identities as well as how individuals create different identities in their script at both social and personal levels in response to significant existential questions and how they live in the hope of closing the gestalt created by an unmet archaic need. The authors also discuss how various script and nonscript identities may coexist dynamically in individuals as they adapt to the context in which they live.

Keywords

script identity, the Frog, the Mask, the Dumbfounded Prince/Princess

In the late 1990s, Italian psychiatrist and transactional analyst Carlo Moiso (1998a, 1998b) began his reflections on script identities, highlighting their diagnostic value and identifying them as important elements in defining therapeutic intervention strategies. His work spelled out and gave a more focused shape to concepts that were already present in Eric Berne's thought. Among those were the Mask, which Berne (1972) used to refer to the *social personality* enacted by individuals to adapt to their social milieu. Moiso (2007, pp. 21-30) talked about the *Mask*, the *Frog*, and the *Dumbfounded Prince/Princess* (p. 3), describing them as script identities through which individuals live out their script under the influence of an old unmet need or an unrecognized personality characteristic (natural disposition).

In this article we illustrate the development of script identities by examining the relationship between the individual and the environment into which he or she is born. We first articulate and analyze three script identities and their function in maintaining the script and then describe the healthy and scripty development processes. We end by suggesting how to overcome the dichotomy between pathological and healthy scripts or life plans that remains in Moiso's approach.

The Natural Child

According to Moiso (2007), each person is born not as a blank slate but with the contents of his or her genes and his or her fate. He viewed individuals as genetically predisposed to develop their identity

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and organize their self by integrating their natural strengths and natural disposition with rational reflection processes in interaction with the environment. According to him, this initial identity is what in transactional analysis we call the *Natural Child*.

The individual's potential identity, beyond its origin (physical and metaphysical), changes and evolves, and specific personal characteristics develop shaped by our relationship with the surrounding world (environment) and the broader sociocultural milieu in which we live (context). The actual sense of identity, and its transformation into different levels, is built up and shaped throughout life, evolving as the individual processes the crises that characterize each developmental step from birth to old age.

With the development of perception and cognitive skills, children's understanding of the environment with which they interact expands, and their exchanges, which become interactive, increase. As they develop, children move from a perceptive-affective to a cognitive-affective reading of reality so that representation and symbolic skills take on increasing importance in attributing meaning to experiences. Whereas Berne (1961) stated that the fundamental time for the development of an individual's identity is the first 3 years of life, during which the environment is represented by his or her parents and family context, Moiso (2007) emphasized that development continues throughout life, thus departing from deterministic theories centered mainly on childhood. In his definition of script (Moiso & Novellino, 1982), Moiso emphasized that script can be based on decisions made at any stage in the developmental process. This is consistent with developments of Berne's theory articulated by Allen and Allen (1997), Levin (1982), and Erskine (1980).

If, as Novellino (2004) emphasized, the Bernean mind is dyadic (structured in a relationship)—unlike the monadic Freudian mind as suggested by Mitchell (1988)—then Moiso was closely in line with Berne's thought in relating behavior to the development of identity within the family and social milieu. When children's OKness is undermined in these relationships, they develop a script identity at conscious and unconscious levels that will help them to overcome their suffering and anguish and to be recognized and accepted by significant others.

The motivational system proposed by Moiso (1998a) is based on three existential drives that are present throughout life: the drive to individuate (being), the drive to belong (belonging), and the drive to develop (evolving). This not only expands Berne's theory of the three hungers (stimulus, structure, and recognition), but it shifts the axis of the motivational system toward development and thus the script toward relationship and psychodynamic phenomena within a relational matrix. Moiso intended these drives to be primary drives underlying relational needs that shape the person's identity. For example, the need to be physically touched, embraced in a teleological sense, is useful to the drive to belong (because I feel I am in a relationship), to the drive to individuate (because I build my existential position on the basis of who embraces me and how he or she embraces me), and to the drive to develop (because that embrace provides me with the strokes I need to grow in a healthy manner at the physical level also). By proposing these three primary needs as drives, Moiso intended to highlight the biological and bodily root of vital drives that influence the psychic sphere. In particular, these drives underlie the child's relationship with his or her caregivers, and when unmet, they are the foundation of script identities.

According to Moiso (2004), drives determine needs experienced as feelings when there is a lack of something that is vital for enabling us to be psychologically and/or biologically alive. Instead, we feel desire when something we like and that makes us feel good is missing. Children, either because of neurophysiological immaturity or because they follow the pleasure principle, experience desires as needs. This leads them to prefer what makes them feel good rather than what is good for them (meaning what is psychologically and biologically adaptive for the child). As children grow, it is important for them to experience social relationship that will meet their needs—needs created by the three fundamental drives—and to learn to differentiate between needs and desires, which change at different stages of development. This process, which occurs through relationships, makes it possible

for children to initially learn constructive modalities for expressing their needs and later modalities for satisfying those needs through relationships, the family milieu, and the broader social context using their natural predisposition to social relationships. From this potential core, the child starts to build his or her self through interaction with caregivers and the environment.

When symbiotic mother-child dyads are not well attuned, children are not adequately supported in their self-regulation processes and that capacity for self-regulation lacks indispensable elements. Thus, the content of the Child ego state (emotions, thoughts, and behaviors) comes into conflict with the containing function of the introjected Parent. Consequently, they will tend to repress all conflicts and contents that are not accepted by the outside world. In doing so, they develop ideas about self, others, and life that justify such repression. After repressing his or her aggressive part, the child will continue to feel anger as a deep urge without having learned how to transform it into powerful adult behaviors. For instance, someone who repressed the childhood anger he felt as a result of jealousy toward his younger brother may, as an adult, feel it toward his peers; he may thus want to act it out in a sadistic manner instead of processing it, making it constructive, and transforming it into assertiveness.

Ultimately, natural characteristics (e.g., gender, vitality, spontaneity, etc.) develop through a process of thoughts and feelings that lead the child, according to Moiso, to conclusions that are either functional and constructive or limiting and destructive.

The development of the child's potential identity (NC), based on his or her innate characteristics and relationship with the outside world, may proceed in either of two directions as illustrated in Figure 1. The first (on the left) regards contexts in which the child's needs are met, and the result is the achievement of autonomy. In this case, the person comprises the Free Child (FC) + Adult (A). The A + FC entity leads to the formation of an autonomous individual who can be seen at the structural level as an integrated Adult (Berne, 1961) who also takes into account the development of the Parent ego state.

The second direction (on the right in Figure 1) evolves in contexts in which legitimate needs and desires are frustrated. The individual builds up his or her identity on different levels and attributes meaning to his or her life around the frustration he or she experiences. The result is that he or she creates a pseudo-identity for himself or herself. The child gives up the characteristics that make him or her a person and gives life to a character developed from the protocol scene (Berne, 1964, p. 57). In this case, the individual's script identities are determined, to varying degrees, by the extent to which the environment does not know how to respond to the needs of the Natural Child or when it rejects the expression of some of the child's characteristics (e.g., existence, gender, relationship modality, level of intelligence, some basic feelings, etc.).

If the individual moves toward the left in Figure 1, he or she will build himself or herself as a person; if he or she goes toward the right, he or she will build a character. The person has a life plan, the character has a script. The plan is flexible, the script is rigid.

The Dumbfounded Prince/Princess

Moiso's theory of the construction of script identities developed from Berne's theory of script construction and offers an interesting presentation because it puts together the various elements of the script (injunctions, beliefs, decisions) and views them as converging toward well-defined and specific identities. Presenting the self in an integrated manner, clearly showing how its construction occurs, and using easily understood metaphors provides the transactional analyst with a way to help clients understand and use TA theory.

A number of phenomena emerge in the development of script identities, represented on the right side of Figure 1. Initially, the child is born and moves in the world with his or her basic needs. Generally, the caregiver(s) provides for the child's basic needs in a sufficiently good manner or

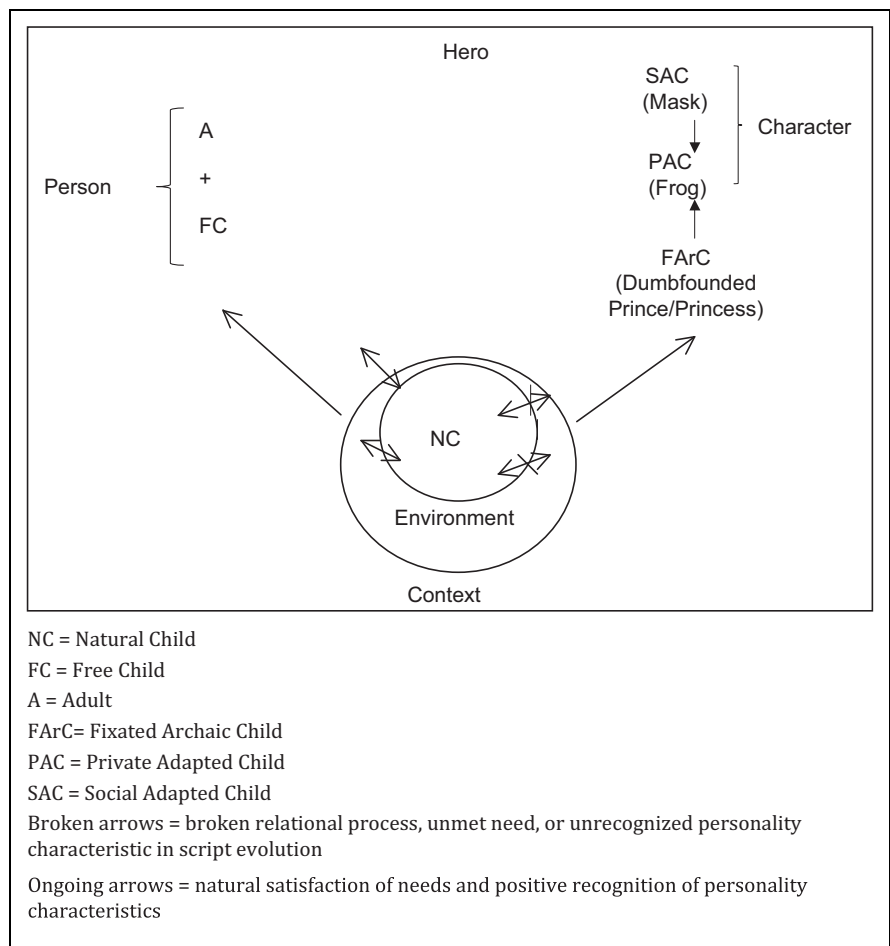


Figure 1. Two Developmental Paths of Identity.

creates the normal frustrations that enable the child to grow in a healthy manner. If the context does not meet a need or does not accept certain of the child's inborn characteristics, a block may be created and the construction of an identity starting from the real self may be prevented. At the time of the block, according to Moiso, the child becomes fixated and confused. The first script identity that is formed is called the *Dumbfounded Prince/Princess*.

Thus, a first level of script identity, called the *Fixated Archaic Child* (FARc) or *Dumbfounded Prince/Princess*, leaves a natural need unaddressed and pushes it into the background, sometimes along with the underlying personal characteristics. The child will continue to feel this interruption and may try to have it resolved later, confusing archaic needs with the needs and desires of the here and now. For instance, in the oedipal phase, little girls want to monopolize their father's love out of the need to view themselves as attractive and sexual females. In this case, we are speaking about a desire of the child experienced as a need but one that should not be actually met. The father responds adequately when he rejects/refuses to turn the relationship with his daughter into an erotic one but at the same time gives her permission and the necessary protection so that she may appreciate and experience sexual desire in the future with awareness and in an intimate, joyful, and ethical manner.

If father does not acknowledge his daughter's femininity and that she is a "beautiful woman," then she will lack permission to be attractive in seductive situations with likely partners because she has a Fixated Archaic Child.

The Frog

When children's needs are not adequately addressed, to avoid being blocked, dumbfounded, and unable to give meaning to what is happening to them, they cognitively seek closure to the gestalt that opened at the time of the unmet existential need. They ask why they cannot be as they feel they are and cannot act as they feel like acting. As they grow up, they structure the answers to these questions by signifying them as beliefs about the self, others, and the meaning of their life and fate. Reflections about the self prompted by these questions will determine those answers that in transactional analysis are referred to as *script beliefs* (Berne, 1972).

Fearing conflict with parental figures, children give up a need or parts of the self in order to adapt to the environment. Ultimately, the fixation of frustrated needs, and of the relevant personal characteristics that were rejected, leads them to elaborate a set of script beliefs and opinions that contribute to shaping their identity. This second level of identity was referred to by Moiso as the *Private Adapted Child* (PAC) or *Frog*. Berne (1972) wrote about the Frog in *What Do You Say After You Say Hello?* (p. 37), and Moiso later showed how this identity is formed.

The term *Frog* shows metaphorically that this script identity is unpleasant and thus usually kept private, even hidden from the self as well as from others. Children need to find an explanation for the frustration they endure and thus often form a negative view of the self in order to maintain confidence in their caregiver(s). This second script identity is called the Frog; it offers important understanding, but an unmet need or an unrecognized personal characteristic will continue to demand attention. The individual often tries to obtain such attention by replaying old patterns, but these usually do not lead to the results he or she seeks and thus confirm his or her script identity (the Frog).

In describing the two levels of identity detailed so far here (Dumbfounded Prince/Princess and Frog), Moiso seemed to be looking for continuity between Berne's (1972) initial, more deterministic approach, according to which injunctions are introjected into the electrode, and subsequent developments by transactional analysts such as Goulding and Goulding (1979), Holtby (1973), Romanini (1999), and Erskine (1980), who put greater emphasis on the child's contribution to the making of script decisions. Indeed, Moiso suggested that the child feels the need to form an identity that accounts for (makes sense of) the frustration he or she endured. This idea of identity, which is colloquially defined as the Frog in this case, highlights the active part of the child. It offers a broader vision of self and other in relationship and shows how the various opinions and script beliefs are structured within the person and how they define the features of his or her identity.

The Mask

Driven by their need to belong, individuate, and evolve, children seek the best way of behaving and presenting themselves so as to give social meaning to their lives and to obtain the strokes they need to survive. Driven by this quest, they ask themselves what they need to do and how they need to be for others, that is, how they need to appear in order to be. The answers to these questions generate the operational decisions for survival that will constitute the third level of identity, which is called the *Social Adapted Child* or the *Mask*. Berne (1972) introduced the idea of the Mask and related it to the Frog by speaking about the metaphor of the front and back of sweatshirts (pp. 176-178). Moiso took up this idea and used it to formulate the third script identity, describing the process that is implemented in the construction of the script identity. The Mask is structured out of the individual's natural characteristics, those that are appreciated on a social level, used in the script process, and

maintained mainly through rackets and games (Moiso, 2007). As the manifestation of a pseudo-identity, the purpose of the Mask is to meet substitute needs.

For example, Paolo came to therapy at a complex moment in his life, after having become a top manager in the company where he worked. He described himself as being overly absorbed in his career and rigid in his role and the way he managed his colleagues. That was the Mask or social image that he presented to the world. He thought only about work in order to defend himself against a tragic destiny established in his script (e.g., "I will end up broke and alone"). His basic attitude was to be dedicated to his work, obtain career recognition so as to obtain strokes, and thus demonstrate to himself and the world that he was OK. In this way, he avoided coming into contact with his Frog identity as a lonely, failed person. With the enacting of this role, Paolo felt an overall anxiety deriving from his underlying negative private identity, and he ran the risk of making mistakes in terms of places or times or choice of people or in the way in which he furthered his actions. When a mistake occurred, he would reconfirm his identity as a lonely person and a failure (Frog), and his natural positive personal characteristics (his commitment to his job and his ability to be authoritative) would again go unrecognized.

According to Moiso, the transition from a scripty to an autonomous use of the skills acquired by the Mask may occur if the individual recognizes the positive nature of these skills and expresses them using constructive modalities, thus finding more direct and suitable ways to obtain recognition. Paolo, for example, succeeded in recognizing his managerial skills and was thus able to realize major achievements and to recycle those skills by expressing them constructively in an authoritative rather than an authoritarian way. He learned how to use them in a flexible manner in other activities as well, without having the maintenance of his identity depend on them. Berne (1972, p. 57) talked about a positive script, which Moiso elaborated as the Mask that is built to cover a negative hidden script (the Frog). The Mask may evolve and enable the construction of an autonomous person.

In summary, fixation gives rise to the Fixated Archaic Child (the Dumbfounded Prince/Princess), which, together with script beliefs, shapes the Private Adapted Child (the Frog) that the person represses or tends to hide. The script decisions the person makes give shape to the Socially Adapted Child (the Mask). When the Mask can no longer be kept up because of personal changes or changes in context, the individual confirms script beliefs that are always active at the intrapsychic level.

The Character

The Character is the set of different script identities that find meaning and completeness in identifying with a stereotypical expression of the self. It is the sum total of the Frog and the Mask that give life to the Character, whose identity and life events will further the script. For instance, returning to Paolo, his dedication to his career expressed his Mask, and he consequently identified with the Character of the ambitious manager. If he did not receive recognition, he perceived himself as being envied and/or misunderstood (the Frog).

The search for individual identity through the construction of the Mask and the Frog is performed as a sort of repetition compulsion (Freud, 1914/1975). Moiso associated his thoughts on this with a song by the Italian singer Battiato (1981), who tells of his search for a permanent center of gravity so that he will never change his mind about things and people, an attempt to make his or her sense of self constant and relationships with others predictable. This perception of self and of self-with-others offers personal and interpersonal stability.

For Moiso, the individual seeks a permanent identity in order to meet six inescapable aspects of life: the unpredictability of the future, the irreversibility of the past, the injustice of life, the inevitability of death, the inadequacy of the human being, and overarchingly, the senselessness of everything (Moiso, 2007, p. 27). Regarding these six elements, the individual feels the need for a stable point of reference and a deep identity, even a negative one, that will be maintained through script

stratagems or games. This offers stability and concreteness to the person's self and fate. This need for stability leads people to try to balance the different levels of identity that operate in a comprehensive system because they need an identity in which they can recognize themselves. What is dramatic about this is that these script identities are seen as an objective reality, not an internal perception determined by interpretations and personal life experiences.

Script identities are negative adaptations that comprise a deep discounting of the self and others (Frog) or conditional behaviors that allow the person to be accepted (Mask). However, these limit the full expression of the self and converge in a specific and stereotypical expression of self (Character).

Further development of the levels of identity, according to Moiso, may occur if the characteristics of the Mask are enhanced and stroked from the outside. Not everyone succeeds in structuring this additional level, but in some it is active at the fantasy level such that the personal characteristics and those of the Character are idealized as the *Hero*. The formation of the *Hero* identity corresponds to the process by which the false social self is transformed and idealized. It is a summary of the characteristics of the Natural Child (Moiso, 2007, p. 28) and the glorious solutions invented by the child in the context of the protocol (Berne, 1972, p. 36). We might say that the *Hero* forms through identification with the typical and representative characteristics of a socially recognized role, characteristics that are idealized and placed as the foundational and unifying element of the person's script identity. For individuals whose permanent identity is centered on the *Hero*, their stability and psychological equilibrium will depend on the possibility of implementing the idealized conditions. At times, the *Hero* may be so perfectly defined that the therapist can easily link it to a character taken from literature, cinema, or mythology. The symbolic use of this character offers a significant metaphor for the dramatic experience of the patient, the context in which he or she is staging it, and the various players with whom he or she comes into contact.

Here we offer another case example to show the identification of various script identities. Anna came to therapy depressed, complaining that she had neither friends nor a stable relationship. During individual therapy, and later in group sessions, she became aware that she had no real friends and/or a stable relationship because she had lived her life as if she were constantly on stage. She was engaged in an incredible number of activities, and in practice, she had the Mask of a sparkling person whom many people envied and wanted to contact, although these connections were never very deep. In group, the metaphor of the stage gradually took shape, and in one particular session she realized how much she wanted to step off of that stage. She decided to test out expressing herself authentically, but the following week she returned and confessed that she had been unable to do so. Even the idea of stepping off of the stage made her terribly anxious, as if she would no longer be recognized or exist, that she would be marginalized. Returning to the origins of this negative identity, Anna reexperienced when, at a very young age, she was sent to live with her aunt and uncle. Her father had never taken care of her, and her mother died of cancer when she was 5. She never felt she belonged to her new family and always felt marginalized, not recognized, and not considered equal to her cousins. Luckily, in school she was the brightest in her class, which made her feel at ease, and she developed an idea of herself as a smart person.

In summary, Anna developed a script identity whereby her marginalized self was the Frog, the smart girl was her Mask, and the smart marginalized girl was her Character. There were no traces of a heroic script identity, probably because the bright girl mask was not appreciated by her relatives, who tended to value relational and affective aspects in people. Therefore, Anna did not receive specific stimuli that led her to idealize her identity as a smart girl.

Reconstructing her authenticity was a complex process for Anna. With great effort, she identified and developed other constructive and desirable aspects of her self. Irony proved useful because it helped her to play down and cope with difficulties and the aspects with which she struggled.

Functional and Dysfunctional Aspects of Script Identities

Although the Hero level of identity is created only in some cases, the Mask is always created because the child, in order to belong, individuate, and evolve, is compelled to follow social models and build adaptations that enable him or her to be socially recognized and accepted. A distinction needs to be made, however, between the defensive Mask and the constructive Mask. The former is built to avoid contact with a sadist or masochistic Frog and with a hurting Dumbfounded Prince/Princess. The latter is built and can be maintained for good social adaptation and is a source of mutual strokes. Consequently, for Moiso, the project of a healthy life also implied the presence of a Mask (or role) that provides strokes and recognition. The constructive Mask represents the individual's ability to freely use positive social adaptive models. When an individual is in script, he or she seeks positive strokes, but in relationships, he or she unconsciously acts out rackets and games.

If a person's primary identity is maintained by answers given at the pseudo-positive level as a result of acting out the Mask, sooner or later there will be a moment of crisis, and the collapse of the Mask may lead the individual to feel deep existential anxiety. To paraphrase, Moiso would often say: In the evenings when we are alone, we are not someone else. In the evenings when we are alone, we are what we are. By this he meant that the collapse of our social identity inevitably leads us to come to terms with self-perception at the private level and to the confirmation of our script beliefs in order to discover and build new alternatives. When people lose the context in which they keep alive the heroic character with which they have identified, they may also lose their identity. The collapse of the context may be experienced, therefore, in a way that is simply painful or even pathological depending on how deeply the person has identified with the Hero. A severe pathological process occurs when the loss of context coincides with a loss of identity. The individual will then have to go through a process of deep reflection in order to reconstruct a new global and full sense of self.

Integrating the Dichotomy in Identity Development

This article has allowed us to further integrate Moiso's thoughts with our vision of the development of a healthy identity versus a script identity (Allamandri et al., 2012). Figure 1 suggests a totally pathological view of script, but in our view, this does not correspond with Moiso's ideas because he understood script development as the individual's life plan. We propose a version of individual identity in which these two dimensions coexist as two developmental processes that are parallel rather than opposed to one another and that can be modified at any time in life. The drives to individuation, belonging, and evolving are a motivational system that, within interpersonal relationships, push and stimulate the individual to proceed in his or her individual and relational growth.

Indeed, to accomplish developmental tasks and solve conflicts, children may look for affective/behavioral attitudes that are accepted in the context in which they live and operate, hence allowing them to adapt to their family milieu and maintain creative, constructive attitudes. The positive image of self-with-other and the functional integration of life experiences are formed on the basis of primary relational experiences, starting from which the child is more or less ready to deal with the inevitable changes required by various situations in his or her life. These foundations are determined both by the extent to which the environment is capable of accepting the child's vulnerability and/or impotence and by how he or she reacts to this environment and life events. From their earliest years, children engage in understanding and interacting with reality—discovering, measuring, and refining their possibilities and skills in order to adapt to reality and be able to move in it, thereby overcoming frustrations, obstacles, conflicts, and difficulties. In the same person, therefore, there coexist areas of life with flexible and constructive perceptions of self and other and areas of rigid behaviors and attitudes that are in conflict with the natural parts of the self.

When the individual uses his or her Character in a defensive manner, the developmental task (perhaps with the help of therapy) is to soften rigidities and offer alternative viewpoints and new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting. The possibility of becoming aware of the content of one's Character and its specific dynamics and of understanding one's Frog by bringing into awareness underlying needs and processing them enables one to go from a rigid, scripty intrapsychic and relational modality to an alternative modality.

To illustrate these ideas, we offer another case example. Carla could face the difficulties in her life, but whenever she reached a professional or personal goal, she had mild panic attacks and was suddenly unable to face situations that became "too frightening" for her (flying, heights). She unconsciously restricted her identity to a negative sense of self in her relationships when she was successful, maintaining dependent relationships with her attachment figures (employers, boyfriends, friends) and engaging in passive-aggressive behaviors.

Carla began therapy because she wanted to get over the panic attacks that had appeared at the end of her studies when she was beginning internships and waiting to find a job. By analyzing how she related to others and obtained social strokes, she became increasingly aware that she was showing herself to be a competent and heroically available person who was willing to share her skills (Mask). However, when she did not receive strokes for her social identity, she concluded that people around her were unfair and unwilling to understand, recognize, and appreciate her skills and needs. She would feel used and misunderstood (Frog) and view others as incompetent and selfishly lazy.

In therapy, Carla recalled early childhood memories in which, up to a certain point, she felt full of vitality and spontaneity and received many strokes from her father. Her basic mood changed when her parents started to quarrel and open conflict between them broke out. Carla described one episode when, as a little girl, she was learning to ride a bike, and her father was cheering for her. Her mother suddenly appeared and started shouting at both of them and then quarreling furiously with her father. Carla recalled that although one second she had felt safe because she was reassured by her father's presence, when her mother intervened she felt in danger (Dumbfounded Princess), especially when she saw her parents quarreling over her.

As therapy proceeded, the various levels of Carla's identity emerged:

- Dumbfounded Princess: blocked in her expression and frightened
- Frog: I am unappreciated, the outside world neither defends nor protects me
- Mask: competent, reserved, and humble in order not to find herself in situations in which she is not seen or valued
- Hero: exploited and unappreciated heroine, obstructed and unappreciated by others who exploit her intelligence

Through therapy, Carla came to understand that, because of the lack of validation of her success and the conflict between her parents, she could not maintain a sense of safety and protection when she accomplished her goals unless she was under the wing of some authoritative personality on whom she was initially dependent but later came into conflict with. Her survival strategy involved maintaining an idea of herself as capable but hiding underneath humility and shyness that would protect her from conflict. In this way, Carla found a balance: feeding the Mask with healthy and functional aspects that she had in terms of skills and intelligence and blocking any real autonomy through the passive-aggressive dependence of the Frog.

Another element that led us to go beyond the healthy/pathological dichotomy in terms of script was the reality of individuals' experience from birth of the frustration inherent in relationship. The development of identity as portrayed in Figure 1 suggests that having one's needs met or achieving autonomy can occur in such a natural way that painful contact with external and internal reality can

be avoided. However, this is not possible because the individual inevitably must come to terms with the inescapable facts of life, something Moiso believed as well. The view represented by Figure 1 highlights idealized paths toward the construction of two distinct and extreme forms of identity: a healthy one and a pathological, scripty one. In reality these are not nearly so distinct.

From the beginning, the individual interacts with the environment, developing sensory-affective processes and then mental-affective processes that reflect both positive and negative responses to his or her needs (lower circle in Figure 2). In this way, people gradually build their identity by experiencing typical and inevitable obstacles and moments of crisis during development. This involves exchanges that can contribute to building healthy, positive elements of identity as well as clashes and frustrations that lead to the fixation and the construction of negative aspects of identity. Some of these negative aspects may be processed and even overcome, thus leaving the person feeling OK in terms of the solution to relational and existential problems. The individual is formed of both integrated, flexible parts and fixated, rigid parts that balance each other out in a unified process that is the outcome of personal processing, thereby overcoming the initial dichotomy. This occurs because human beings have a vital drive that requires them to face developmental tasks and conflicts with affective and behavioral resolutions that lead them toward the construction of a comprehensive and relational self. The script, therefore, involves the presence of both positive and negative elements that intertwine with one another to determine the essence of the person's identity in a dynamic, flexible manner. We thus suggest that they be integrated throughout development as shown in Figure 2.

As presented in Figure 2, the grown person is represented by the Natural Child integrated with its natural potential, the Adult, and script identities that develop in the encounter/clash with the environment (bottom circle). The person tends to find a personal balance between functional parts and script parts, both of which are created when something obstructs development or when there are unmet needs (represented by the ongoing and broken arrows in the center going from the bottom circles to the top circles). If the adaptation of the script identities are rigid and fixed, individuals are unable to independently change their behavior. Both obstacles to development and unmet needs lead to script identities, and when the negative identity of the Frog prevails on OKness and on the Adult and Natural Child creative skills, the person may develop symptoms and discomfort and need help to alter his or her dysfunctional adaptations.

Ligabue (2011, pp. 9-23) noted that various transactional analysts have theorized the presence of positive and negative elements, including English, Cornell, Erskine, Allen, and Stuthridge, all of whom suggested that it is important not to separate the pathological and creative aspects of individuals. It is interesting to note the interdependence of the healthy and scripty parts in this comment from Ligabue: The tension between limits and aspirations cannot be healed, in my view. It can become a means of resilience and of transformational processes, in the never-ending—from birth to death—negotiations between restraints and possibilities, between predictability and certainties and aspiration toward novelty and change (p. 15). According to this view, the more individuals identify with their script, the more they are dependent on context and the less autonomous they are. Conversely, the more individuals identify with their self, the less they are dependent on context and the more autonomous they are.

Final Thoughts

The innovative ideas about script identities described in this article lead to seeing the individual as a comprehensive whole in which there are no longer positive or negative aspects but rather characteristics that integrate and coexist in a constructive manner. In this way, in the individual's definition of himself or herself, he or she will tend toward the best balance between self, other, and the environment through the use of personal resources available throughout life. For instance, in the

experience in terms of vitality and positivity as she worked to construct her competence in a therapeutic relationship centered on the present (Summers & Tudor, 2000).

This view of the person has interesting clinical implications: In the therapeutic relationship the focus will no longer be on processing the negative script elements but on promoting and monitoring a therapeutic relationship that allows new integration and equilibrium that are useful for the individual's current life, with full respect for his or her natural potential.

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