Vincent Van Gogh, Son of the Manse:  
A Portrait in Self-Psychology  

Charles N. Davidson, Jr.  

Born into a dynasty of Dutch art dealers as well as the family of a Dutch Calvinist pastor, Vincent Van Gogh's turbulent and conflicted personality is the focus of a psychological interpretation beginning and ending with selections taken from the literary letters of the artist himself. The psychodynamic Self-Psychology of Heinz Kohut provides the theoretical framework for considering the tragic and redeeming aspects of this nineteenth century artistic genius and master Pre-Expressionist who painted the world as he experienced it. The reader may wish to accompany the story with a favorite collection of Van Gogh's drawings and paintings as a way of obtaining a deeper appreciation for the person known among art critics and school children alike as not only unforgetrically strange and utterly fascinating, but wonderfully profound.

1Charles N. Davidson, Jr., Presbyterian minister and writer, dedicates this essay to the memory of Charles N. Davidson, M.D., 1912-1995, beloved father, faithful husband and abiding friend, a physician's physician. For an illustrated presentation about Van Gogh, given by the author in person for the benefit of counseling centers and other audiences, contact him at 33770 Quaker Valley Road, Farmington Hills, MI 48331.
Van Gogh²
From the small town Gogh on the German frontier
Established in Holland (1500's)
Coat-of-arms, a bar with three roses

Jacob Van Gogh
Utrecht, Holland
In the Owl behind the Town Hall

Jan Van Gogh
Wine and Bookseller and Captain of the Civil Guard
In the Bible under the flax market

Many Van Goghs occupied High Offices of State in Holland (1600's)
Johannes
Magistrate at Zutphen, appointed High Treasurer of the Union in 1628
Michael Van Gogh
Consul General in Brazil, Treasurer of Zeeland
Belongs to Embassy that welcomes Charles II of England on his
ascent to the throne in 1660
Cornelius Van Gogh
Remonstrant Clergyman at Boskoop

Matthias Van Gogh
Physician at Gouda, then Clergyman at Moordrecht

The social standing of the family is somewhat lowered (early 1700's)
David Van Gogh
The Hague, a gold-wire drawer

Jan Van Gogh m. Maria Stalvius Vincent Van Gogh, Sculptor (1729-1802)
Members of the Walloon Church One of the Cent Suisses
Gold-wire drawer Practice of art & fortune came into the family

Johannes (1763-1840) m. Johanna van der Vin Left financial legacy to nephew Johannes
Gold-wire drawer & Bible teacher
Clerk of Cloister Church, The Hague

²The information in the family tree is taken for the most part directly from Johanna Van Gogh-Bonger's memoir of Vincent Van Gogh; and the key chronological dates of his life from Bruce Bernard's *Van Gogh* (p. 62).