

Narcissism and Sexuality

Narcissism and Sexuality:

A Self Inflicted Wound

By

Ken Silvestro

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing



Narcissism and Sexuality: A Self Inflicted Wound

By Ken Silvestro

This book first published 2017

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2017 by Ken Silvestro

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN (10): 1-5275-0318-6

ISBN (13): 978-1-5275-0318-2

For my dear friend, Phil Lutes,
who lives on in my heart and soul

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	xi
---------------	----

Part I

Chapter One.....	3
Narcissism and Narcissus	
Understanding Narcissism	3
Overview of the Narcissus Myth	4
Origins of Narcissistic Wounds	5
Specifics of the Narcissus Myth.....	6
Segments with Symbolic Relevance	9
Overview.....	15
 Chapter Two	 17
The Wounded Self	
Jung's Psychic Structure	17
Michael Fordham's Model.....	18
Donald Winnicott.....	19
Heinz Kohut.....	20
Erich Neumann	21
The Narcissism Archetype	22
The Necessity for Mirroring	23
A False-Self	23
Sexual Acting-Out as Reflection.....	24
 Chapter Three	 29
Living-Out the Wound	
Don Juan's Sexual Narcissism	30
From Fictional Drama to Human Drama	33

Part II

Chapter Four.....	41
Case Study	
Introducing Sam.....	41
Chapter Five	47
Early Analytical Experiences	
Some Initial Dreams	48
Dream #1	49
Dream #2	49
Dream #3	50
Dream #4	52
Dream #5	53
Dream #6	54
Dream #7	55
Summary of the Analysis.....	55
Chapter Six.....	57
Expressions of Longing	
The Anima	61
Commentary.....	63
Chapter Seven.....	67
Shattering the Psychic Mirror	
Sam in Brief.....	67
Dream #8	68
Dream #9	69
Dream #10.....	71
Dream #11.....	71
Dream #12.....	72
Dream #13.....	73
Dream #14.....	74
Dream #15.....	76
Dream #16.....	78
Dream #17.....	80
Summary of the Analysis.....	81

Chapter Eight.....	83
Meeting the Multifarious Anima	
Sam in Brief.....	83
Dream #18.....	85
Dream #19.....	86
Dream #20.....	87
Dream #21.....	89
Dream #22.....	89
Dream #23.....	90
Dream #24.....	91
Dream #25.....	92
Dream #26.....	93
Dream #27.....	94
Dream #28.....	95
Dream #29.....	96
Dream #30.....	98
Summary of the Analysis.....	100
Chapter Nine.....	105
The Wheel Goes Round'n Round	
Dream #31.....	105
Dream #32.....	108
Dream #33.....	108
Active Imagination.....	110
Dream #34.....	110
Journal Entries and Dreams	111
Fragment #1	111
Fragment #2.....	112
Fragment #3	112
Fragment #4.....	113
Fragment #5	113
Dream #35.....	113
Fragment #6.....	113
Dream #36.....	114
Dream #37.....	114
Dream #38.....	115
Verse #1	115
Verse #2.....	116
Verse #3	116
Verse #4.....	116
Verse #5.....	117

Verse #6	117
Verse #7	118
Thought #1	118
Verse #8	119
Chapter Ten	121
Restructuring the Ego	
Dream #39	122
Dream #40	123
Dream #41	125
Dream #42	126
Dream #43	127
Dream #44	128
Dream #45	129
Summary and Conclusions	131
Chapter Eleven	133
Emergence of the True Self	
Dream #46	133
Dream #47	134
Dream #48	136
Dream #49	137
Dream #50	137
Dream #51	138
Dream #52	139
Dream #53	140
Dream #54	142
Dream #55	143
Dream #56	144
Dream #57	145
Summary and Conclusions	145
Chapter Twelve	147
Reflection of a Different Nature	
Reflection as Instinct and Archetypal Expression	149
Archetypes and Instincts	152
Closing Comments	153
Bibliography	155
Index	157

PREFACE

Many authors present Carl Jung's psychology, but few present a Jungian analytic process. Symbols, fairy tales, dreams, myths, synchronicities, active imagination and more are found between the covers of books written by scholars and analysts, but an actual account of an analytic process that includes each of these dynamic qualities often remains elusive. I believe many people are interested in psyche's mysteries and dynamic expressions; therefore, in the final two-thirds of this book I present a case study that exposes three years of an analytic process.

Both unconscious and conscious dynamics intermix, influencing us in our daily lives, e.g., decisions, expressions of emotion, our sense of identity and every other human characteristic. Becoming aware, or conscious, of these dynamics lies at the heart of Jungian analysis, which assists a person to heal and undergo a meaningful transformation. Since the analytic process is not linear, presenting these essential details introduces a number of challenges.

Respectively, narcissism and sexuality are intriguing psychological and psycho-biological functions. Entire volumes have been written describing each function. Repeating the contents of these informative writings is not my goal. Rather, my primary intention is to present the synergistic interaction of the two functions, which results in a rather common, Western social wound.

Perhaps the reference to synergy requires further explanation. Typically, the dynamic exchange between two functions, e.g., systems, introduces new, emergent properties. That is, a synergism forms. In this case, the synergism between narcissism and sexuality produces an emergent psychopathology, or wound, that expresses an insatiable reflective need and longing through sexual motivation and objectification. Although these two functions are not often considered "bed partners," I believe this oversight needs rectifying.

Even though the individual destruction associated with narcissistic and sexually related wounds is more or less familiar, the qualities and characteristics of the synergistic wound remain unknown. Revealing and healing the wound through the analytic process requires following psyche's lead, which takes time, effort, insights and expanded consciousness. By using legends, fairy tales, research findings and a case study, which

includes the description and analysis of fifty-seven dreams, both the symbolic and literal unconscious ground-plane that defines narcissism and this particular type of narcissistic wound are revealed. The reader will discover that the analytic process moves with twists and turns, cycling through many unconscious and early childhood influences.

Since the collective roots of this wound extend from many centuries past, fairy tales, legends, myths, symbolic images and creative expressions are relevant to our theme. Of course, there are no better psychic expressions to illuminate our theme than dreams, which efficaciously introduce human nature, the synergistic wound and the psychic transformations.

The reader is asked to absorb the essence of Jung's remarkable analytic process, which to date remains more obscure than not. Why Jungian analysis continues to be an alternative psychological process, rather than a mainstream choice, remains a mystery. Jung's psychological understanding of human nature is one of the most profound, therapeutic approaches offered in the Western world. It holds the greatest promise for healthy transformations at both individual and collective levels.

With deepest gratitude, I extend my appreciation to my former client, Sam (a pseudonym), for permitting me to reveal three years of his analytic process. His dreams, journal entries and his personal poetry are invaluable. My gratefulness cannot be overstated. His willingness to reveal part of his analytic process and his desire to promote Jung's psychology are inspiring.

In addition to Sam, there are far too many other people to thank for their contributions to the editing and development of this book. To everyone who assisted me, I express my sincere appreciation.

Now, I must ask the readers to please open their eyes, their minds and their hearts to the psyche's mysteries.

PART I

CHAPTER ONE

NARCISSISM AND NARCISSUS

Narcissism and its characteristic expressions surround us daily, or in many cases, fill us daily. It can be hurtful, even devastating, when narcissism infiltrates our lives, but recognizing narcissism can free us from its influence. Certainly, there must be many ways to intellectually and emotionally understand narcissism. We could use a straightforward definition or an example, but I believe stories, images and interpreted dreams¹ are more useful to describe this highly pervasive aspect of human nature.

Understanding Narcissism

Currently, the clinical description of narcissism presents as a character disorder. This implies a deeply rooted disorder, one associated with an individual's sense of identity. Within a therapeutic setting, varying degrees of narcissism with different characteristics are encountered. Although a simple definitive description of narcissism is difficult to provide, the one common element persisting throughout this complex psychic condition is that of identity. Metaphorically, there is a forest of narcissistic characteristics and expressions and each branch of each tree represents a different quality. Everyone carries narcissistic tendencies and qualities. Some of us carry the weightier, less flexible limbs, while others carry the more manageable, flexible branches.

Stories and images, on the other hand, function as powerful symbols for the unknown, the unfamiliar. An image provides potential to imagine further into the unknown. Stories, myths and images help us to understand

¹ Dreams are interpreted and understood from a Jungian perspective, which includes a conscious and unconscious psyche. In addition, the unconscious has two levels: a personal level, where personal complexes are found, and a collective level, where archetypal symbols are found. Archetypal symbols represent common collective experiences throughout time.

previous cultures and view their perspectives and to see how our present-day concerns are as old as our ancestors'².

The myth of Narcissus provides a symbolic understanding of narcissism. The mythical images and story-line display the main theme of this book: narcissistic sexual expression. The myth also discloses the complexities underlying this prevailing social and personal characteristic.

Overview of the Narcissus Myth

When Narcissus first saw his reflection in the pond, his self-love was immediately established. Prior to this, he painfully longed for this reflective self-love, tirelessly searching from one person to the next. Though many loved him, he remained aloof and without enduring feeling for anyone. His destructive inability to love and commit to another person was compounded through his sexual encounters with people who loved him. These lovers were used by Narcissus as objects for self-gratification and self-indulgence.

Narcissus's partners, experienced by him as objects, act as mirrors, providing him with a reflection of himself in the same manner that the pond reflects his image. The self-love of which he became aware, as he gazed at his reflection in the pond, is the same self-love he experiences without awareness during his "love-making" with others. In actuality, his "love making" with another person is an unconscious expression of making love with himself.

The self-gratification which Narcissus achieves through sexuality is, in fact, a temporary means of receiving a reflection of the true Self—a Self³ for which he longs (Self is capitalized for emphasis, indicating the central force in the psyche). This transient experience provides him with a feeling of completeness that is, otherwise, missing due to the damaged or non-existent relationship between his ego and the Self. This is the crucial psychological dysfunction of a narcissistic wound.

2 Myths and stories provide symbols from one time period to another, from one culture to another. The symbols become expressions from the collective unconscious (see below) for the current and future generations.

3 Jung provided a deep understanding of the Self, which he described as the center and peripheral of the psyche. Clearly the Self (capitalized for emphasis) is not Freud's ego, nor is it the self describe in self psychology approaches to therapy. As the center and peripheral of the psyche, it is individual to a person's psyche and, simultaneously, a collective element, which connects and relates to everyone else. It can be considered a "blue print" of a person's individual life, i.e., a person's direction and meaning in life, and a critical social commentary for humanity.

Narcissus must continue to seek, with an almost desperate longing, the one person with whom love includes no bounds. Unconsciously, he longs for a permanent relationship with the Self, which is symbolically evident when Narcissus finally meets his own reflected image in the pond.

This brief overview exposes but one important “branch” of the Narcissus myth: the sexual encounter experienced as a “mirror” for Narcissus’s Self-reflection and the painful longing associated with the underlying narcissistic wound. This behavior, more appropriately this psychic wound, destructively affects everyone involved. By restructuring the ego and forming a relationship with the Self, the wounded individual can move beyond the experience and feelings of emptiness and longing.

Origins of Narcissistic Wounds

The narcissistic lesion is commonly understood to originate within the child-parent relationship, when parents purposely or unintentionally withhold healthy reflection from the child. The lack of healthy reflection interferes with the child's ability to form a relationship with the Self. Instead, a relationship with a false-self forms. The term false-self signifies a lack of relationship with the true Self and emphasizes that a relationship with a surrogate complex psychic structure develops. An otherwise healthy ego-Self development does not occur and the developing ego becomes enmeshed with the false-self, resulting in a narcissistic wound.

Because the false-self lacks the natural content of the Self, an innate longing for the true Self persists. This longing is ever so briefly satisfied in various narcissistic behaviors and expressions of a reflective nature. A specific sexual behavior, under scrutiny in this book, is an example. This form of sexuality, associated with reflective gratification, must be understood in terms of a Self inflicted wound.

Another important understanding of the origins of narcissism follows from Carl Jung's⁴ description of the collective unconscious. Each of us is endowed with this level of the unconscious psyche and its contents by virtue of our birth. Residing within the depths of this unconscious layer are psychic structures which Jung referred to as archetypes. These are universal potential forms that owe their psychic existence to ancient and historic human experiences. Archetypes are the subjects, objects and processes underlying most of our lives, expressions of which are found in artistic images, legends and myths and in almost any consequential human

4 Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology of Religion: West and East* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1969a), vol. 10.

experiences. Since narcissistic characteristics naturally follow from the human condition, a narcissistic archetype must exist within the collective unconscious of the psyche.

The Narcissus myth provides a viewing screen for our theme, informing us that narcissism is not a recent introject in society or personality development. Narcissism has a history, a long-standing, archetypal-based existence. You and I carry this narcissistic element, the Narcissus archetype, within our psyches. When this archetype is active, narcissistic expressions follow.

Specifics of the Narcissus Myth

Reviewing mythical details helps to illuminate and emphasize the importance of the archetype and the symbolic meaning of our theme. The myth, as presented by Ovid in *The Metamorphoses* and translated by Horace Gregory⁵ follows in its entirety.

Throughout the cities of Boeotia Tiresias had become a famous man; Those who came to him for advice could not Deny the power, his wit, in prophecy; The first test of his power to tell truth Came from Liriope, a water-lady Whom Cephisus raped within a winding brook And nearly drowned her. Then in her due time The pretty girl gave birth to a sweet child, A son so charming even as a baby, That he inspired girls with thoughts of love-She called the boy Narcissus. When she asked Tiresias how long her child would live-To great old age? the prophet answered, "Only If never he comes to know himself." Then for A long time after this his prophecy Seemed vain, and yet what finally happened Proved it true: Narcissus's death, the way he died, And his odd love. For when Narcissus reached His sixteenth year he seemed to be a boy As much as man; both boys and girls looked to him To make love, and yet that slender figure Of proud Narcissus had little feeling For either boys or girls. One day when he Had shied a nervous deer into a net, A girl with a queer voice stood gazing at him-Echo, who could not check her tongue while talking, Nor could she speak till someone spoke to her. In those days Echo was far more than voice; She had a body and, though garrulous, No further gifts of speech than now: in short, The art of taking, from much said, the last Few words. Juno had made her so; in time Gone by when Juno might have startled Jove in the arms of girls on mountainsides, Echo kept Juno in long

⁵ Ovid, *The Metamorphosis*, trans. Horace Gregory (New York: Signet Classics, 2001).

conversations Until the girls had run away. When Juno Discovered this, she said, "That tongue which has Deceived me shall make nothing but the poor Brief noises of the fewest words." Therefore It came about that Echo's speech was cut, Yet she retains the last sounds that she hears, And says them back again to those around her. The day she saw the wandering Narcissus Stroll through the forest, secretly she glided, Fired with love, to follow him; and as she Came closer to his side, the very source Of flames increased her heat; she was as sulphur At the tip of torches, leaping to fire When another flame leans toward it. She longed To lure him with soft words, with girlish prayers. But being what she was she could not make Sounds come; she had to wait until she heard Words said, then follow them in her own voice. Meanwhile Narcissus, strayed from all his friends, Began to shout, "is anybody here?" "Here," Echo answered, and the wondering boy Looked far around him and cried louder, "Come." "Come," she called after him. He glanced behind, Saw no one there, then shouted, "Why run from me?" And only heard the same words follow him. Then he stood still, held by deceptive sounds; "Here we shall meet," he said, and Echo never Replied more eagerly-"Here we shall meet." To make those words come true, she slipped beyond The shelter of the trees to throw her arms Around the boy she would embrace. Yet he Ran from her, crying, "No, you must not touch-Go, take your hands away, may I be dead Before you throw your fearful chains around me." "O fearful chains around me," Echo said, And then no more. So she was turned away To hide her face, her lips, her guilt among the trees, Even their leaves, to haunt caves of the forest, To feed her love on melancholy sorrow Which, sleepless, turned her body to a shade, First pale and wrinkled, then a sheet of air, Then bones, which some say turned to thin-worn rocks; And last her voice remained. Vanished in forest, Far from her usual walks on hills and valleys, She's heard by all who call; her voice has life.

The way Narcissus had betrayed frail Echo, Now swift, now shy, so he had played with all: Girls of the rivers, women of the mountains, With boys and men. Until one boy, love-sick And left behind, raised prayers to highest heaven: "O may he love himself alone," he cried, "And yet fail in that great love." The curse was heard By wakeful Nemesis. Deep in the forest Was a pool, well-deep and silver-clear, where Never a shepherd came, nor goats, nor cattle; Nor leaf, nor beast, nor bird fell to its surface. Nourished by water, grass grew thick around it, And over it dark trees had kept the sun From ever shedding warmth upon the place. Here spent Narcissus, weary of the hunt And sick with heat, fell to the grass, charmed by The bright well and its greenery. He bent To drink, to dissipate his thirst, yet as he Drank another thirst rose up: enraptured Beauty caught

his eyes that trapped him; He loved the image that he thought was shadow, And looked amazed at what he saw-his face. Fixed, bending over it, he could not speak, Himself as though cut from Parian marble. Flat on the grass he lay to look deep, deeper Into two stars that were his eyes, at hair Divine as Bacchus's hair, as bright Apollo's, At boyish beauty of ivory neck and shoulder, At face, flushed as red flowers among white, Enchanted by the charms which were his own. Himself the worshiped and the worshiper, He sought himself and was pursued, wooed, fired By his own heat of love. Again, again He tried to kiss the image in the well; Again, again his arms embraced the silver Elusive waters where his image shown; And he burned for it while the gliding error Betrayed his eyes. O foolish innocent! Why try to grasp at shadows in their flight? What he had tried to hold resided nowhere, For had he turned away, it fell to nothing: His love was cursed. Only the glancing mirror Of reflections filled his eyes, a body That had no being of its own, a shade That came, stayed, left with him-if he could leave it.

Neither desire of food or sleep could lure Him from the well, but flat upon the grasses There he lay, fixed by the mirage of his eyes To look until sight failed. And then, half turning, Raised arms to dark trees over him and cried, "O trees, O forest, has anyone been cursed With love like mine? O you who know the ways Of many lovers in your shaded groves, Was there at any time in that long past, The centuries you knew, one who is spent, Wasted like this? I am entranced, enchanted By what I see, yet it eludes me, error Or hope becomes the thing I love; and now With every hour increases sorrow; nor sea, Nor plain, nor city walls, nor mountain ranges Keeps us apart. Only this veil of water. So thin the veil we almost touch each other, Then come to me no matter who you are, O lovely boy, why do you glide from me, Where do you vanish when I come to meet you? My youth, my beauty cannot be denied, For girls have loved me and your tempting glances Tell me of friendship in your eyes. Even as I reach, your arms almost embrace me, and as I smile, you smile again at me; weeping I've seen great tears flow down your face; I bend My head toward you, you nod at me, and I Believe that from the movement of your lips (Though nothing's heard) you seem to answer me. Look! I am he; I've loved within the shadow Of what I am, and in that love I burn, I light the flames and feel their fires within; Then what am I to do? Am I the lover Or beloved? Then why make love? Since I am what I long for, then my riches are so great they make me poor. O may I fall Away from my own body-and this is odd From any lover's lips-I would my love Would go away from me. And now love drains My life, look! I am dying at life's prime. Nor have I fear of death which ends my trials, Yet wish my lover had a longer life, If not, we

two shall perish in one breath. "He spoke and half mad faced the self-made image. Tears stirred the pool to waves, the wavering features Dimmed in darkest waters. As he saw them flicker He cried, "Where are you going? Stay with me; O cruelest lover come, nor leave me here; It may be fate for me to look at love And yet not touch it, but in that deep gaze Increase unhappy love to misery." Then in his agony he tore his dress And beat his naked breast with his pale hands. As apples ripen, some parts white, some red, As growing grapes take on a purple shade, Narcissus's breast put on these darkening colours; And when he saw them-for the pool had cleared-He could endure no more, but as wax turns To liquid in mild heat, as autumn frost Changes to dew at morning, so did Narcissus Wear away with love, drained, fading in the heat Of secret fires. No longer were his colours Gold, white, and red and that vitality His beauty showed, but something less, scarcely The boy whom Echo loved too well. Yet when She saw him, and though still annoyed, resentful, She felt a touch of pity at the sight, So when he sighed "Eheu," "Eheu," said she, And as his hands struck at his breast and shoulders, So she repeated these weak sounds of grief. As gazing down the well, his last words were: "O darling boy whose love was my undoing," And all the grove resounded with their saying. Then with his last "Good-bye," "Good-bye," said Echo. At this he placed his head deep in cool grasses While death shut fast the eyes that shone with light At their own lustre. As he crossed the narrows Of darkest hell he saw the floating image Of his lost shade within the Stygian waters. His sisters of the rivers bear their breasts And shaved their heads in sorrow for their brother, Nor were the sisters of the forest silent, But filled the air with grief which Echo carried. As they built up his pyre and waved their torches Across his bier, they searched; his body vanished. They saw a flower of gold with white-brimmed petals.

Segments with Symbolic Relevance

... The first test of his power to tell truth Came from Liriope, a water-lady Whom Cephisus raped within a winding brook And nearly drowned her. Then in her due time The pretty girl gave birth to a sweet child ...

We read that Narcissus is the son of Liriope and Cephisus and that he is conceived out of chaos and aggression from the destructive act of rape inflicted upon Liriope. Narcissus is conceived out of dysfunction. This significance brings us to the origin of a narcissistic wound. If an infant does not receive healthy mirroring, e.g., parental gestures reflecting the infant's behaviors and sounds, or if the parents unconsciously use the

infant to satisfy their own narcissistic needs, then a narcissistic wound within the child forms. Narcissus conceived during a traumatic event—a rape—is an expression of sexual acting-out, power and narcissistic entitlement.

... When she asked Tiresias how long her child would live-To great old age? the prophet answered, "Only If never he comes to know himself." ...

Tiresias's answer seems perplexing. When Narcissus sees his reflection ("comes to know himself") he falls into a fatal self-love. But is this really knowing himself?

Narcissus receives transient experiences of the Self through his self-reflections and his many sexual experiences. Continuing to truly know only the false-self, however, he is fated to live his entire life, to old age, immersed in his narcissistic wound, repeating his sexually destructive patterns. Although Narcissus typically relates to the false-self, he longs for the true Self. The fatal quality of his self-love results from not being able to embrace the true Self.

Tiresias's warning foretells the powerful experience that reflection of the Self carries for Narcissus or any narcissistically wounded person. Narcissus must symbolically die in order for a reformation of the psychic structures to occur, in order for the ego to relate to the true Self, forming an ego-Self axis. This can only occur when the ego-false-self axis transforms, that is, when a symbolic death occurs.

... When Narcissus reached His sixteenth year he seemed to be a boy As much as man; both boys and girls looked to him To make love, and yet that slender figure Of proud Narcissus had little feeling For either boys or girls ...

Narcissus presents as a composite image of boy and man, attracting the desire of both genders. Although he is too unconscious to realize it, his involvement with others remains superficial. He cannot genuinely relate to his lovers. Living as both boy and man suggests the psychology of the "eternal youth." In analytical psychology, this is known as *puer aeternus* (for males) or *puella aeternus* (for females). An inability to adhere to long-term commitments is but one common characteristic. This inability often represents a faulty connection to the psychic principle known as Eros—the principle of relationship. Narcissus's inability to feel much emotion for anyone with whom he "makes love" (sexually engages), or attempts a meaningful relationship, indicates a lack of Eros.

... A girl with a queer voice stood gazing at him-Echo ... The day she saw the wandering Narcissus Stroll through the forest, secretly she glided, Fired with love, to follow him ... "Come," she called after him. He glanced behind, Saw no one there, then shouted, "Why run from me? Here we shall meet." To make those words come true, she slipped beyond The shelter of the trees to throw her arms Around the boy she would embrace. Yet he Ran from her, crying, "No, you must not touch-Go, take your hands away, may I be dead Before you throw your fearful chains around me ...

Echo immediately falls in love with Narcissus. As we read, she can only echo (reflect) the verbal cues spoken by Narcissus. This is more than enough to heighten his curiosity (due to the reflective nature of her echoes). Narcissus's noncommittal attitude is clearly stated in his proclamation of death should Echo hold him in a committed and loving relationship—in her "fearful chains." Here again, the lack of Eros shows its face.

... So she was turned away To hide her face, her lips, her guilt among the trees, Even their leaves, to haunt caves of the forest, To feed her love on melancholy sorrow Which, sleepless, turned her body to a shade, First pale and wrinkled, then a sheet of air ... "O darling boy whose love was my undoing,"

The destructive quality of Narcissus slashes through those who foolishly love him. Each unknowing victim receives the effects of his wound. When he invites Echo to join him after hearing her reflective words, she receives the destructive quality of his nature. Narcissus, unable to connect to Echo through the Eros principle, denies her existence as someone worthy of empathy and emotion. She, in turn, falls apart and vanishes.

The sexual acting-out of a narcissistically wounded individual follows this destructive path. The sexual partner is nothing but an object for reflection and is inevitably hurt by the missing Eros connection.

... The way Narcissus had betrayed frail Echo, Now swift, now shy, so he had played with all: Girls of the rivers, women of the mountains, With boys and men ...

Clearly, the need for sexual reflection plays all comers as objects. Like all unconscious maneuvers, Narcissus remains unaware of his ability to inflict pain. The narcissistically wounded "lover" has little choice. The interplay is one of flirtation and sexuality—sexuality with an object, not a human being—for the purpose of self-gratification.

... Here spent Narcissus, weary of the hunt And sick with heat, fell to the grass, charmed by The bright well and its greenery. He bent To drink, to dissipate his thirst, yet as he Drank another thirst rose up: enraptured Beauty caught his eyes that trapped him; He loved the image that he thought was shadow, And looked amazed at what he saw-his face ...

The common understanding of narcissism originates within this segment. Narcissus sees his own reflection and falls in love with himself. Reflection is the key word. With reflection, Narcissus receives the splendid nectar of life—a brief connection to the Self.

Sexual encounters also provide the reflection and the opportunity to experience this transient connection to Self. One sexual encounter after another must be experienced in order to continue to taste the nectar of the Self. The partners' reflective sexual responses briefly fill the wound.

The search for sexual objects must be described as a hunt. For Narcissus, and someone with the same wound, the hunt for the nectar that flows from the reflective encounter is a necessity. The transient nature of this gratification always leaves Narcissus empty, longing for a deeper and more lasting connection. Though seldom spoken, a pining for love and permanency of relationship are desired. A yearning for the primary relationship with the Self underlies this desire. The great weariness of the hunt proves endless and unfulfilling.

Now, through his own reflection and transient connection to Self, Narcissus tastes the nectar once again. His desire to hold on to the Self is overwhelming. In the myth, Narcissus is the final victim of his destructive quality, which symbolically represents the eventual experience of a narcissistically wounded person.

Enchanted by the charms which were his own. Himself the worshiped and the worshiper ... Again, again his arms embraced the silver Elusive waters where his image shown ... Why try to grasp at shadows in their flight? What he had tried to hold resided nowhere, For had he turned away, it fell to nothing: His love was cursed. Only the glancing mirror Of reflections filled his eyes, a body That had no being of its own, a shade That came, stayed, left with him ...

Narcissus's futile attempts to permanently embrace the Self, through reflective encounters, reveal the powerful drive behind this wound. Through self-indulgence and sexual acting-out, the narcissistically wounded individual desperately attempts to relate to the Self but falls short, remaining connected to the false-self. The false-self stands fast. The

true Self is experienced as nothing but a "shade That came, stayed, left with him."

**... Neither desire of food or sleep could lure Him from the well ...
"O trees, O forest, has anyone been cursed With love like mine? ...
Was there at any time in that long past, The centuries you knew, one
who is spent, Wasted like this? ... enchanted By what I see, yet it
eludes me, error Or hope becomes the thing I love ...**

The obsessive quality associated with the misdirected desire for the loved-one is all encompassing. Neither food nor sleep, two primary instinctual needs, can release Narcissus from the grip of this passion. In true narcissistic form, Narcissus asks questions that reveal his wound. For only he, above all others, has suffered so intensely and loved so deeply. "Has anyone been cursed with love like mine?"

Symbolically, the depth and breadth of the wound from which Narcissus suffers become evident. Anyone caught in this form of narcissism invariably expresses weak sentimentality rather than authentic emotion. The false-self prevents Eros from genuinely engaging. Sentimentality is the only available expression.

"Is it hope that is actually loved?" questions Narcissus. Is it the hope of finding perfect love, that long-term relationship, **the** person who will continually reflect him? Such a hope is impossible to realize, so the hunt continues with ever increasing fatigue. Eventually, hope diminishes; it may even vanish. Narcissus's hope represents the unconscious longing for the ego-Self axis.

Slowly Narcissus is dying from his own longing and despair. Death need not be literal to be frighteningly experienced as real. Death can be experienced as a clinical depression, a loss of vitality for life, or a helplessness that feeds the false-self and enhances insecurities and low esteem. As described earlier, a symbolic death of the false-self is necessary for the ego-Self axis to emerge.

**... Nor plain, nor city walls, nor mountain ranges Keeps us apart.
Only this veil of water. So thin the veil we almost touch each other,
Then come to me no matter who you are, O lovely boy, why do you
glide from me, Where do you vanish when I come to meet you?...**

Each sexual encounter provides another opportunity for that ever so brief experience of the missing healthy reflection. Yet this process remains capricious, limited to the pangs of "seeing," yet not embracing, the Self. However thin the veil might be that reveals the Self, it is impenetrable through the reaches of a sexual outlet. Though Narcissus almost "touches"

(relates to) the Self, it is nothing but a tease, a taste of the nectar which cannot be obtained in this manner. The tears and deep mysterious questions arise once again: "Where are you my love? Why do you vanish so quickly? When will I ever meet my true love?" Underlying these soul searching questions lay the wound and the longing to relinquish the false-self.

... Even as I reach, your arms almost embrace me, and as I smile, you smile again at me; weeping I've seen great tears flow down your face; I bend My head toward you, you nod at me, and I Believe that from the movement of your lips (Though nothing's heard) you seem to answer me ...

Here, the gifts of reflection are emphasized, gifts that can be experienced during a sexual encounter. This reflection proves to be a "fix"—a momentary touch of the transcendent Self and its spiritual nature.

... Am I the lover Or beloved? Then why make love? Since I am what I long for, then my riches are so great they make me poor. O may I fall Away from my own body-and this is odd From any lover's lips-I would my love Would go away from me ...

Narcissus appears insightful, if only for a moment. Asking if he is the loved or beloved, he realizes the fatality of his "love" without the Self relationship. "Then why make love?" he asks. Why indulge in sexual love-making since the lover and loved are one and the same. Here is the first flash of consciousness. The potential to stop using others as objects lay within this awareness. The seeds of a transformative process or the reformation of the ego-false-self connection to the ego-Self axis is available. This insight is imperative, if a change is to occur. The realization that the sexual reflection, though providing a touch of Self ("the riches"), is, in fact, the very destructive force (that "makes me poor") that underlies the personal misery and suffering, and the pain inflicted upon the love object, must be achieved. Breaking free of the prison, the confining wound, in order to experience true relationship—to love without emptiness and to genuinely share without the thirst of reflection—and resolve these painful dilemmas begins with this newly found awareness or consciousness.

... He spoke and half mad faced the self-made image. Tears stirred the pool to waves, the wavering features Dimmed in darkest waters. As he saw them flicker He cried, "Where are you going? Stay with me; O cruelest lover come, nor leave me here; It may be fate for me to

look at love And yet not touch it, but in that deep gaze Increase unhappy love to misery."...

Forgetting his insightful vision, Narcissus becomes mesmerized by the reflection of the "self-made image," falling victim, once again, to the expression of his wound and the false-self. Longing for the seemingly unattainable love—love of Self—Narcissus speaks of being fated to unhappiness and unattainable love. The anger and rage that often accompanies a narcissistic wound presents, as Narcissus feels the hand of fate press so forcefully against him.

... so did Narcissus Wear away with love, drained, fading in the heat Of secret fires. No longer were his colours Gold, white, and red and that vitality His beauty showed, but something less, scarcely The boy whom Echo loved too well ...

Narcissus is a depleted and debauched individual. The vital energies of life are withdrawn from his body. The shell of an un-dead figure persists. When the sexual outlet reigns, especially during the second half of life⁶, the wounded individual languishes from lack of Eros and relationship with the Self and others Life is no longer fluid or creative. Others, such as Echo, who once knew the wounded, yet vital person, can do no more than pity the shell which remains.

Overview

The Narcissus myth provides a rich symbolic meaning of the psychological complexities, the lack of relational authenticity and the pain and longing afflicting everyone touched by this dynamic. The narcissistic symptomatic expressions, occurring in sexual encounters, form the central theme under scrutiny in this book. We need only look to our neighbors, our friends, perhaps ourselves, for additional evidence. Narcissism dominates our Western culture. Using other myths, legends and dream imagery, I hope to provide a fuller and more complete picture of the personal and social implications that follow from this condition.

⁶ The second half of life refers to midlife. Of course, there isn't a well-defined age or year associated with midlife. It occurs for each of us but remains unique to each person. A psychological midlife crisis initiates the second half of life.

CHAPTER TWO

THE WOUNDED SELF

Often it helps to understand how or why a situation, or set of circumstances, manifest. Looking through the lens of reason for cause and effect relations can help. This chapter attempts to satisfy the causal aspect of our curiosities. Views provided by four clinicians and authors: Heinz Kohut, Michael Fordham, Donald Winnicott and Erich Neumann, establish means for understanding the origins of narcissistic wounding. Their models provide a substantial foundation upon which to stand, but even their collective contributions fall short of a complete explanation. The complete process remains a mystery. Accepting the mystery allows us to follow Carl Jung's¹ lead to not ask why or how, but for "what meaning?"

Jung's Psychic Structure

Children are not born as "empty" shells without content. Each is born with complex biochemical processes and psychological predispositions. The tabula rasa notion no longer holds credence. The inner-world of an infant's psyche, Jung's objective or archetypal psyche, is inherently present. It accounts for an infant's foremost psychic content prior to ego formation. Since the archetypal psyche closely aligns with the creative process, an infant's creative expression follows quite naturally. Children are continuously imaginative, prolific in their expression of creative energy.

A child's ego develops through a conjoining of experiences with the outside environment and the inner-world of psyche. Ego-consciousness is an "outgrowth" of a child's unconscious inner-world, in particular, the collective or archetypal unconscious. Jung² states that an: "... individual conscious psychology develops out of an original state of unconsciousness and therefore of non-differentiation ..." Ego-differentiation from the

1 Carl Gustav Jung, *Two Essays on Analytical Psychology* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1966b), 196.

2 *Ibid.*, 206.

archetypal realm is a natural and necessary process. Initially, the ego's structural formation, influenced by the archetypal nature from whence it originates, soon receives additional influences from the outside world.

Michael Fordham's Model

Michael Fordham, a Jungian analyst, observed very young children scribbling circular figures or mandala images. Fordham³ states, "The self indeed could be represented very early on, and those representations are directly related to ego growth". Before his observations, mandalas were considered symbolic representations central to the archetypal psyche and the Self. His observations provide additional evidence for the archetypal presence of the Self and its influence upon the developing ego.

The Self must be considered both the center and periphery of the psyche. As such, it represents the deepest, and most superficial, psychic layers. Though paradoxical, the Self presents in all aspects of psyche, whether conscious or unconscious. The primary psychic unity from which a child's consciousness, and ego, develops is the Self.

Fordham⁴ describes this unity as "an integrated state" of being. Imagining this unity as a process of integration places the Self in the role of integrator. Regardless of our understanding of the primary unity, the Self remains essential.

Formation of ego-consciousness requires differentiation from this primary unity, or integrated state, resulting in what Jung⁵ labeled an ego-complex. Eventually, a developmental threshold is reached. A conscious barrier, or filter, forms in association with the ego at which time, the deeper Self and the collective unconscious are subjugated to a secondary role by ego-consciousness. Nevertheless, an axis, or connection to the Self, remains, during and after ego-complex formation.

Fordham⁶ describes ego-complex formation as a process of repeated integration and deintegration. During deintegration, the child receives stimulation and influences from the outer world. These experiences are integrated as the child enters a state of withdrawal and introversion, reinforcing the ego-Self axis.

3 Michael Fordham, "*The Infant's Reach: Reflections on Maturation in Early Life*," *Psychological Perspectives* 21, no. 1 (1989): 74.

4 *Ibid.*

5 Carl Gustav Jung, *Experimental Researches* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 246.

6 Fordham, "*The Infant's Reach*."