

1.1. Class 01

The term narcissism is derived from the Roman poet Publius Ovidius Naso's (43 BC - AD 17) tale about Narcissus, a youthful son of a nymph, who falls in love with his own reflection in a pool of water: "unwittingly, he desired himself, and was himself the object of his own approval" (Ovid, trans. 1955, p. 85).

In a footnote added by Freud in 1920 to his Three Essays (1905d, Standard Ed., 7, 218 n.) he said that he was wrong in stating ... that the term 'narcissism' was introduced by Näcke and that he should have attributed it to Havelock Ellis. Ellis himself, however, subsequently (1927) wrote a short paper in which he corrected Freud's correction and argued that the priority should in fact be divided between himself (Ellis) and Näcke, explaining that the term 'narcissus-like' had been used by him in 1898 as a description of a psychological attitude, and that Näcke in 1899 had introduced the term 'Narcismus' to describe a sexual perversion. The German word used by Freud is 'Narzissmus'. In his paper on Schreber (1911c), near the beginning of Section III, he defends this form of the word on the ground of euphony against the possibly more correct 'Narzissismus'.

Auerbach (1995): Narcissism, whether normal or pathological, is therefore a relational concept that refers to a propensity to treat others primarily as objects (i.e., as narcissistic extensions of oneself) and not as subjects (i.e., not as selves with their own desires and needs). [NB, This is only a half-truth] It is additionally, in Broucek's formulation, a representational concept that entails reflexive self-awareness. For although the capacity to regard oneself as an object makes possible the eventual development of a healthy sense of identity, it is also an essential part of becoming entranced, as Narcissus did, by an idealized self-image. Thus, Broucek, like Stern (1985), rejects the notion of primary narcissism and instead sees the awareness of one's own separateness-a corollary of the ability to regard oneself as an object-as a precondition for narcissistic fantasies, whether of merger or of omnipotence.

Freud (Leonardo): The child's love for his mother cannot continue to develop consciously any further; it succumbs to repression. The boy represses his love for his mother: he puts himself in her place, identifies himself with her, and takes his own person as a model in whose likeness he chooses the new objects of his love. ... [T]he boys whom he now loves as he grows up are after all only substitutive figures and revivals of himself in childhood, boys whom he loves in the way in which his mother loved him when he was a child. He finds the objects of his love along the path of narcissism, as we say; for Narcissus, according to the Greek legend, was a youth who preferred his own reflection to everything else and who was changed into the lovely flower of that name.

Kanzer (1964): The legend of the Greek youth Narcissus, rejecting the nymph Echo and pining vainly for his own image, represents both secondary narcissism and the substitution of defensive autoerotism (scopophilia) for fulfilled alloerotism. The immediate fixation point is at the transition to sexual object choice at puberty and therefore especially appropriate to illustrate the clinical problems that Freud had in mind in connection with his discussion of Leonardo. Narcissus, originally a flower god, represented the impression made upon the Greeks by the opiate-bearing plant of this name. Worshipped in spring rituals that were probably attended by human sacrifice, the legend presumably served as a warning against the persistence of both narcissism and

autoerotism in the face of group needs for fertility which in this form were given the status of a superego injunction [Or, as Apfelbaum says, "It's bad to be narcissistic"].

De Saussure (1971): [T]he group of patients to be studied in this paper have a marked tendency to experience pain as a loss of self-esteem and so try to eliminate painful feelings, regardless of their source, by seeking narcissistic gratifications. Consequently, the scope of problems involved in establishing self valuation is greatly enlarged. It is noteworthy that the various legends about Narcissus all agree that he invested the image with substance and power. ... The patients to be discussed here are almost constantly regarding their self-images because they attempt to reduce painful tension by developing a flawless self-image. The ways in which over-estimation of the power of [these] images influences their self valuation will become more evident once the term self-esteem has been defined and the process by which it is regulated has been described.

Rangell (1982): The phenomenon of narcissism is, in my view, of the same nosological significance in its isolated form and similar in its relation to the variety of psychic states as the phenomenon of anxiety. Each is a general manifestation, universal as a human characteristic and experience, an organizer of subsequent complex psychic outcomes and interwoven into these in a kaleidoscopic number of possibilities. Narcissism alone, no more than anxiety, is not pathognomonic of any diagnostic category. In clinical experience narcissism, in what we call pathological form, can occur as well in hysteria as in borderline states ... Nor does narcissism constitute a sharp separator between the two participants in the psychoanalytic process. Problems in the countertransference can be traced to narcissistic injuries and defenses as frequently and regularly as in the transference.

Pulver: (Narcissism - The Term and the Concept): In the voluminous literature on narcissism, there are probably only two facts upon which everyone agrees: first, that the concept of narcissism is one of the most important contributions of psychoanalysis; second, that it is one of the most confusing.

Jones (The Origin and Structure of the Super-Ego): The concept of the superego is a nodal point where we may expect all the obscure problems of the oedipal complex and narcissism on the one hand, and hate and sadism on the other, to meet.

1.1.1. Self-Self

The Self-Self Relationship is the Core of Narcissism

If Narcissus is the core of the concept of narcissism, then narcissism must mean that the relationship between Narcissus and his image has been structuralized into one human mind. That means that the ego must have split and taken itself as its own object (what Freud calls the creation of a "differentiating grade" in the ego). The ego must be divided into an admirer and an admired, an active part and a passive part, a subject and an object. Narcissism inevitably entails "complementary" identifications - it can not be defined by the contents of one of these identifications (grandiose, exhibitionistic, etc.) but must be a description of the dynamic interaction between the two. It is a mode of internalized object relations. Externalized object relations will then depend on getting what Freud calls the "extraneous figure" to play one of the two internalized complementary roles.

A number of authors have noted the apparent contradiction to be seen in "narcissistic" individuals but few have been able to acknowledge the intrinsic structural bipolarity that gives rise to it and hence the intrinsic connection between the contradictions. Akhtar has underscored "the centrality of splitting mechanisms in narcissistic personalities" and highlighted "their divided self." He directs attention to "the fact that diagnostic criteria relying exclusively on manifest symptomatology fail to diagnose narcissistic grandiosity when only the defences against it are clinically apparent." Attention to splitting mechanisms "not only gives sounder theoretical underpinnings to the disorder's phenomenology but also prepares the clinician for the 'mirror complementarity' of the self that Bach (1977b) has noted. The therapist's awareness of the essentially dichotomous self in such individuals will encourage further inquiry and prevent misdiagnosis."

1. Jones (1913)

The first such hint is found in a paper by Jones (1913). Jones's paper, the "God complex" describes perhaps the first portrayal of the condition. Jones eloquently described the narcissist's grandiosity, exaggerated need for praise and search for glory. More significantly, he noted that narcissistic grandiosity is often masked by an "unusually strong series" of opposing tendencies. Prominent among these were undue humility and social reserve. Unlike the flamboyant, openly acquisitive, and assertive type of narcissistic personality, such individuals are:

characterized by modesty and self-effacement. They are happiest in their own home, in privacy and seclusion. They exert only an indirect influence on external affairs, never join in any common action, and are generally unsocial. [p. 262]

2. Tartakoff (1966)

Tartakoff's (1966) later distinction between the active fantasy of being the "powerful one" (destined to perform outstanding deeds) and the passive fantasy of being the "special one" (chosen by virtue of inherent uniqueness to receive windfalls) hinted at two types of narcissistic organizations.

3. Bach (1977)

Bach (1977) noted that narcissistic patients have a divided self in which the hidden part of themselves shows a "mirror complementarity" with their conscious complaints. To the now well-recognized phenomenon of a grandiose individual being secretly afraid of his timidity, Bach added those who feel weak and powerless on the surface but harbor a dangerously powerful split-off self image.

4. Kernberg

Kernberg's extensive writings on narcissism largely deal with the more overt type of narcissistic personality. However, he too noted that "some patients with narcissistic personalities present strong conscious feelings of insecurity and inferiority" (Kernberg, 1975, p. 229). Their unconscious fantasies of grandiosity and omnipotence emerge only after a sustained contact has been established with them.

5. Kohut

Kohut mentioned the less colorful and socially hesitant type of narcissistic personality. Such individuals have a “horizontal split” in the psyche, which keeps their grandiosity repressed and, consequently, their reality ego depleted of confidence. They present with symptoms of narcissistic deficiency including low self-esteem, diminished zest for work, and lack of initiative. They also display hypochondriacal preoccupations and a marked propensity towards shame. They feel intense discomfort about their need to display themselves and often suffer from severe stage fright (Kohut & Wolf, 1978). Not surprisingly, such individuals keep their distance from others from whom they desire narcissistic sustenance and feel painfully embarrassed upon the exposure of such needs. Alongside this prevailing symptomatology of narcissistic depletion, there are spasmodic breakthroughs of anxious hypomanic-like excitement, which give vent to their suppressed grandiosity.

6. Cooper

Cooper noted that the surface manifestations of narcissistic personality might be charm, ambition, and accomplishment or might include depression, invitations to humiliation, and feelings of failure. He emphasized that narcissistic and masochistic tendencies frequently co-exist. Indeed, narcissistic tendencies might become unconscious vehicles for attaining masochistic disappointments, and masochistic injuries an affirmation of distorted narcissistic fantasies. More pointedly, he (Cooper and Ronningstam (1992)) described narcissistic patients whose overt presentation is the mirror image of the usual description and who are “too inhibited to expose their fantasies to public view” (p. 94).

7. Gabbard (1989)

Gabbard observed that the “official” diagnostic criteria for narcissistic personality characterize only the arrogant and boastful individuals who constantly demand attention. These criteria fail to identify “the shy, quietly grandiose, narcissistic individual whose extreme sensitivity to slights leads to an assiduous avoidance of the spotlight” (p. 527). He claimed that two types of narcissistic disorder can be distinguished: “oblivious” and “hypervigilant” narcissism. In oblivious narcissism the object is ignored: the subject is oblivious to the object's reactions, preoccupied with himself, arrogant and aggressive. He constantly needs to be the focus of attention and is not responsive or sensitive to the object's vulnerability. He is occupied with cultivating and grooming himself while ignoring his surroundings. Hypervigilant narcissism expresses itself in hypersensitivity to the object and its reactions. The subject avoids being the focus of attention, is excessively vulnerable and sensitive to criticism and is occupied with grooming his relations with the object and its meaning for himself. The former is characterized by persistent attention seeking, lack of empathy for others, and arrogance. The latter is characterized by hypersensitivity to others' reactions and a self-effacing attitude that hides the “secret wish to exhibit themselves in a grandiose manner” (p. 529).

Note that while all of these authors insist that narcissism is not to be equated merely with grandiose exhibitionism, still none of them even raises the question of whether overt grandiosity is inhibited or defended against or must stay secret at the behest of some internalized superego-like function. They seem to take it for granted that no such functions operate in patients they deem “narcissistic.”

1.1.1.1. Narcissus

If an individual is constituted so that unwittingly, he “desires himself, and is himself the object of his own approval” he is prepared for two modes of relating. He may find others "along the path of narcissism" who remind him of himself (as he is, was or wishes to be) and bestow on them the love and approval he feels towards himself. Or, he may seek for others to desire him and make him the object of their approval.

1.1.1.1.1. As Parent

Think of what it would be like to be Narcissus' child. Either (and perhaps in alternation) you would be admired and loved because you were beautiful and looked like himself to your parent or you would be expected to be totally enamored of how your parent looked. If we radically simplify the complexities of the child-parent interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your image of yourself? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)? What is it like to have an internalized Narcissus as your "superego?"

1.1.1.1.2. In the Transference

Think of what it would be like to be Narcissus' analyst. Either (and perhaps alternatively) you would be admired and loved because you were beautiful and looked like himself to your patient or you would be expected to be totally enamored of how your patient looked. If we radically simplify the complexities of the analyst-patient interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your counter-transference? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance as an analyst? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)?

What if the Leonardo model becomes a transference paradigm? What if the feeling towards the beautiful boy becomes displaced onto you - as a wish to help, aid, promote and sponsor your welfare? What if Narcissus is convinced that the analysis is for you? What if he feels that everything he says is a performance to prop up your narcissistic needs? What if he believes he is entitled to be loved and praised for this act of succorance and nurture? What if you are a candidate and in need of doing well with a supervised case to make your supervisor and the Education Committee think well of you and you feel he has accurately assessed your own narcissistic needs?

1.1.1.2. The Wicked Witch

The reflecting surface of the lake is Narcissus' mirror. An alternative form of a mirror story is that of the Wicked Queen in Snow White. Her relation to the mirror image is not one of simple adoration but instead one of agonized self-doubt. She requires daily affirmation that she is still the fairest in the land. The mirror is not just a reflector but

also a judge. She reacts to a negative judgement with murderous narcissistic rage (ordering the Huntsman to kill Snow White and bring back her extracted heart as proof of the murder). Her self-esteem maintenance is tenuous and her graciousness dependent on constant "pumping up" (the term is from Annie Reich's description of the partners of submissive women).

1.1.1.2.1. As Parent

Think of what it would be like to be the Wicked Queen's child. Either you would be admired and loved because you reflected back her superiority and beauty or you would become the target of murderous rage. If we radically simplify the complexities of the child-parent interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your image of yourself? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)? What is it like to have the Wicked Queen internalized as your "superego?"

1.1.1.2.2. In the Transference

Think of what it would be like to be the Wicked Queen's analyst. Either you would be (temporarily) admired and loved because you protected her against her own self-doubts and self-criticism or you would be reacted to with accusation and anger if you did not. If we radically simplify the complexities of the analyst-patient interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your counter-transference? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance as an analyst? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)?

1.1.1.3. Dorian Gray

A third form of a mirror relationship is depicted in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray*. Here, the portrait becomes progressively more decrepit, dissolute and rotten while the subject remains young and beautiful. In the denouement Dorian Gray slashes the portrait and kills himself. The "mirror image" is a truthful and unbearable representation of the subject's inner moral corruption, self-indulgence and vice. It is hated but still closely bound because only through it does Dorian Gray retain the fair appearance he is in love with (and in need of).

1.1.1.3.1. As Parent

Think of what it would be like to be Dorian Gray's child. It would be your function to embody all the traits which your parent hated in himself and of which he could purify himself by seeing them (and hating them) in you (Freud said, in 1895, that paranoia is that which arises in the place of a self-reproach). His self-esteem would be dependent on your being labelled as loathsome. If we radically simplify the complexities of the child-

parent interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your image of yourself? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)? What is it like to have Dorian Gray internalized as your "superego?"

1.1.1.3.2. In the Transference

Think of what it would be like to be Dorian Gray's analyst. You would be unremittingly feared and loathed because your picture of him would face him with shame and guilt that would, if acknowledged, make life unbearable. If we radically simplify the complexities of the analyst-patient interaction to this one dimension, what would this do to your counter-transference? Your modes of self-esteem maintenance as an analyst? The times at which you would be critical of yourself (either thinking you had failed or had done wrong)? Would you escape by calling him "paranoid?"

1.1.2. The Narcissistic Relationship

The following discussion of narcissistic object relations is taken from Brodey, WM (1965) The Dynamics of Narcissism. It is based on a study of family therapy and is relevant to the question of "what is it like to have Narcissus as a parent?"

An intense relationship exists between Narcissus and his distanced reflection. This is not a relationship with another— it is interpersonal only as described by Narcissus. Narcissus can love only himself.

Externalization [finding an object along the path of narcissism] ... makes possible a way of life based on relationships with unseparated but distanced aspects of the self. What is perceived as reality is an as-if reality, a projection of inner expectation. ... the intense searching for what is expected dominates and forces validation. ... The restricted reality perceived is experienced as though it was the total world. [Think of Narcissus, the Wicked Queen and Dorian Gray. When working through these ideas always apply them sequentially to 1) the patient in relation to his objects, 2) the patient in relation to his (narcissistic) parent, and 3) the patient in the transference]

Externalization is ... defined by the following characteristics:

1. Projection is combined with the manipulation of reality selected for the purpose of verifying the projection.
2. The reality that cannot be used to verify the projection is not perceived [or, and Brodey does not mention this, viciously attacked].
3. When this mechanism is prominent in a stable group where people are learning from each other (as in a family [or an analytic dyad]), information known by the externalizing person but beyond the Umwelt of the others is not transmitted to these others except as it is useful to train or manipulate them into validating what will then become the realization of the projection. Reality testing is subverted in this process.

TRANSFERENCE AND EXTERNALIZATION

[E]xternalization becomes apparent to the expert therapist as he comes to realize that for the patient he has no meaning beyond the patient's expectation ... The full power of the problem envelops him as he feels the intensity of his patient's effort to manipulate him into validating projections. He feels the conflict as he struggles against this manipulation. But behavior that will be used as validation seems the only way to gain relationship.

... The therapist as a narcissistic extension has no other existence to the patient; the therapist must match the expected answering looks — otherwise, to the patient, he does not exist [or worse, think of the Wicked Queen]. Even if the therapist does not wish to conform, he still finds himself conforming to the narcissistic image. For no matter what he does, pieces of the therapist's actual behavior irrelevant to the therapist's self-identity are seized on by the patient, to whom they are predominant as-if characteristics. The identity that the patient sees may be unknown to the therapist (although it holds a kernel of truth [Freud, 1911], which is usually disturbing to the therapist). The therapist's active denial of the patient's presumption may serve as confirmation of the as-if identity, particularly because the patient, constricted to his own externalized image and expectation, does not perceive the context of other characteristics.

But if the therapist gives back only what is expected, he is merely a reflection. Although the patient's relationship with his own reflection in its as-if-therapist manifestation may be intense, he is out of contact with the existent therapist (that is, the therapist seen without the errors introduced by narcissistic perception). Therefore, the therapist of the [narcissistic] patient must become skilled at managing his congruence with the patient's projected image. This management is often intuitive and usually very demanding emotionally. Being a distorted object is much easier than being nonexistent.

THE NARCISSISTIC RELATIONSHIP

The narcissistic relationship is a reciprocal image relationship between two or more people who join in externalizing each other's projections. They are attracted [only to] another who conforms to the projected expectation.

... the world is simplified by the image mode of reality testing (i.e., the narcissist ignores all irrelevant data).

The narcissistic [patient or parent] cannot see the fallacy intrinsic in the fact that [his] logic works too well. [He] lives in a narrow corridor of reality [manufactured to be externalized]. This process saps the energy normally available for free exploration.

Escape from these operations of the narcissistic system of ... pseudo relationships becomes more difficult as the reciprocities and stereotypes become more exacting and the exploratory action of the [family or analytic dyad] becomes increasingly closed, allowing less and less incongruity with the predetermined reality.

[NB, (again) if Narcissus is your parent, what does this do to your concept of what is good and bad, allowable and forbidden, right and wrong, loving and hating?]