

How to Love a Narcissist

Susan E. Schwartz

The privilege of a lifetime is to be who you truly are—Carl Jung

This presentation is a partial exploration about why it is hard to love a narcissist. And, it poses the question if it really is possible. There are many reasons the narcissist has challenges in love and difficulty in any relationship including with themselves. This person circles around but does not get into the intimacy, feelings and emotions of love. They seem to live out raw archetypal energies in order to feel alive and to avoid collapsing into the void of their own interiority. Various examples of the inner conflict experienced by these people are presented, including dreams, influence of early parental absence and misattunement, the formation of the 'as if' personality and the Jungian concept of puella/puer. The problem of this eternal child has been of growing interest and puzzlement. Interest has grown in proportion to a striking increase in the incidence of this kind of personality that also reflects the narcissistic problem of impenetrability to self and others.

Narcissism has been named as a grandiose sense of self, exhibitionism, and severely disturbed object-relationships as the predominant symptoms. This is marked by a struggle in establishing an integrated sense of 'I'. The capacity to kid oneself is huge. Living on illusions or delusions, and the re-establishing of these illusions or delusions requires a big effort to keep them from being seen through. Trying to defend so strongly is a symptom of the decay sensed beneath the surface. The question within this includes, if I am not exceptional, what am I?

Love is basic. A need? An instinct? A life force? Spirit? Yes, love is all of these and more. Our lives involve us in a series of images that we carry individually and collectively about love. These images afford a myriad of pathways for integrating unconscious material with our conscious life.

Jung called the contents of the collective unconscious archetypes referring to a prototype or a first model after which other things are patterned. Love itself can be viewed as an archetype with its movement towards uniting spirit and instinct. The archetypal love patterns are endless and endlessly intriguing and catalyze numerous and unexpected encounters, differently constellated for each person.

The mythology and psychology of love reveal the conscious and unconscious elements of all relationships. Whether recognized or not, narcissism is an archetypal dimension prevalent in Western culture. Archetypal patterns endure because they give expression to the perennial dilemmas enacted in the personal and collective. The psyche is a process--we could say a verb rather than a noun--that is partly conscious and partly unconscious, containing repressed experiences and other personal-level issues as well as transpersonal, i.e. collective, non-I and archetypal energies.

Each of us is drawn to different forms of love, for different reasons from our unique wounds and needs. This is much like how the newborn relates to the mothering figure, because both mother and baby contain the concept of each other set in place for emotional and physical nourishment and survival.

Recognizing the mythic dimensions at the basis of our personal experiences unites us in the universal nature of what it is to be human. Myths are the metaphorical representations and following their narratives allows us to gain insight into the sources of our own reactions, behaviors and perceptions. Myths illustrate the blueprints for handling the situations that we experience at each stage of our

lives. As Jung (1963, p. 195) exhorted, find your myth and live it to fullest. Today we explore that of Narcissus and the difficult side of love and narcissism.

Love constellates positive, negative and challenging elements to the personality. Love opens us to the truths about the human condition, and particularly the pain and confusion often occurring in relationships. Love leads us down the alleyways we might otherwise avoid. It takes us into ourselves. It shakes our foundations. It is rude, shocking and enlightening. Love rocks our world and sets us on the path of the unexpected.

Love is transformative. Yet, this is the fear of the narcissist who does not like change. Anything touching on the area of love and relationship forces unknown issues to become apparent. We are left facing places where we thought we would never go and grapple with them. We come up against the many insufficient and sufficient ways we give, receive and need love. And, love and the search for love keep us on an edge of self-development that can both feel like a precipice into which we might fall as well as a dark cave for emergence into renewal.

A one-sided attention devoted solely to the psychopathology of narcissism runs the risk of neglecting or obscuring the deeper individuation urge embedded in this frustrating personality. The wider relevance of the narcissist's suffering and disillusionment apply to the conundrum of relatedness in our time where the inability to include anything outside ourselves in our love seems to be an increasingly prevalent. It is too simple to merely say narcissism is bad because the person is not only self-involved but beyond reach. This is too pessimistic and negates the considerable effect that inner work can bring. It is these very situations that open us to self-discovery.

Jung said (1956, par. 187), “to the degree that he does not admit the validity of the other person, he denies the other within himself the right to

exist—and vice versa. The capacity for inner dialogue is a touchstone for outer objectivity”. While Jung makes few references to narcissism in the Collected Works, his thinking about how people can fall into states where they avoid embracing life pertains to this very concept.

As well as being a study in self-deception, narcissism as defined by its singularity occludes finding a relationship to the unconscious, or the other. For the narcissist, love is a difficulty not a pleasure as all relationships carry threat and anxiety. This is a type of oneness that cannot integrate or expand to include twoness. The insistence on sameness becomes a defense against the feelings of inferiority and shame. The narcissist cannot see the other. Jungian psychology is founded on the recognition of these dissociated parts, the unknown and the splits in the psyche leading to and/or obstructing knowledge of self and other. The central question is can the narcissist learn to engage with the other?

Jung said (1973, p. 33), “Your vision will become clear only when you can look into your own heart, Who looks outside, dreams: who looks inside awakes”. In the myth of Narcissus, it was told to his parents that Narcissus would not live if he got to know himself. The tragic message in this myth is present in the unconscious of all people to some extent. After all, narcissism is a seeking for validation, to be seen and when made conscious is also healthy.

Healthy narcissism facilitates feelings of adequacy and self-worth. The person who speaks enthusiastically about his latest project may not be bragging or asking for undue praise as much as trying to share a process that is meaningful to him. He is not driven by self-interest, but rather by a social interest in communicating something important about his inner world. He is talking *to us*, *not at us*, and he will be only mildly disappointed, not violently enraged, if we interrupt, disagree, grow bored, or change the

subject. We are neither at the mercy of his self-adoration nor captive to his envy and rage. He is seeking an empathic response. We can feel the difference between this kind of exchange with a person and one driven by a person's compulsive need for admiration and confirmation of his own reality.

Persona

The narcissist feels anxiety and apprehension about life. This is covered over by developing a perfected and idealized surface or persona to hide what is considered the fissures underneath. The narcissistic tendency towards self-absorption, narrowness and individual subjectivity can prevent growth, become ossified with the aging process and the person increasingly impenetrable and walled off. Preserved, suspended in time, can she realize what is happening to her? How can she find her ground of being when this is the very thing she so assiduously avoids?

It is perplexing when a person appears verbal and pleasant, enchanting and highly functioning, often taking the limelight. What is unnerving is the yet to be discovered layers behind the veils, mirrors and empty cheer, lying like a silent fault in the earth. Like today's diagnosed narcissist, Narcissus sees only an idealized likeness, one that ignores the warts and blemishes that are part of being human—what Jung would call the shadow. His self-identity is inflated, unrealistic, and incomplete. To become whole complex human beings, according to Jungian analytical psychology, means accepting the disowned and split off energies secreted away in the shadows of the unconscious.

Yet we commonly view the narcissist as confident, assured, self-centered and satisfied. The pose is a cover for the fragile and vulnerable ego of one who cannot grow up, accept one self or let others in and who exists in

stasis and unease, insecure. The reality is a person with low self-regard, continual and nagging comparison with others, feelings of isolation and inadequacy that are so strong they drive the person into unawareness. This person is cut off, frightened, fearful of defeat. The shadow is unacceptable. He might express laziness and lack of doing enough when it seems he is doing so much. The outer striving is insufficient, unrealistic because based on lack of connection to the total personality. Little or no inner world can develop with such rigidity. It is the acknowledgement of incompleteness that marks an end to the flight from oneself. The self-love of an immature psyche begins to transform with the discovery of otherness.

Early attachment deficits

This personality type originates from insufficient parental images and experiences that remain alive within. Often these images are of the dead yet idealized parent who was emotionally dead when alive. Narcissism as a defense against relatedness arises from the apprehension of replicating these earlier and painful object losses. The image of a living and loving parent was transformed into a distant figure; a toneless, practically inanimate, dead parent. Internal dead object relationships are characterized by feelings of misery, lack of satisfaction and despair. The fading of the good internal representation expresses itself in terms of a void, emptiness, futility, meaninglessness (Kohon, 1999, p. 290).

The person yearns for experiences of attunement that were formerly missed. The word, yearn, poignantly lays in contrast to the early noxious experiences that forced the self away and into hiding. There remains the feeling that any possibility of relating to a good object is denied. The early physical and psychological disappointment forms into cycles of disillusionment and withdrawal. He is arrested in development, adopting an attitude that rejects the

instinctual, the physical, earth and time. Jung referred to this as associated with inertia, low self-worth and depressive moods. He said (1959, par. 185), “She started out in the world with averted face...and all the while the world and life pass by her like a dream—an annoying source of illusions, disappointments, and irritations”.

The person tries to make up for what should be alive and genuine but comes across as inauthentic, vacant and ungraspable. The words are right but the feeling off. The shell is attractive and fascinating but something is missing. As you move closer, the essence becomes elusive and you cannot feel the real. This cover remains desperately and solidly in place, especially because the encounter with another puts us face to face with feelings of vulnerability (Kristeva, 1992, p. 55). A defensive fear and denial of vulnerability causes the narcissist to ignore or even exploit the vulnerability of others.

Envy

Criticism is assiduously avoided. The narcissist experiences separateness and difference from others in feelings of envy, adoration, competitiveness, low self-esteem and inadequacy along with fears of being envied. This belief system serves as a safety net and as the attempted remedy against the underlying chaos and void (Britton, 1998, p. 181). The ravages of envy and jealousy foster the unconscious projective identifications and the corrosive nature of envy denudes the inner world (Stein, 2017, p. 94). Schwartz-Salant (1982, p. 105) describes envy as the ego’s rejection of the self. The inner envious condition is projected out to the world. It will require the self turning inward as a way out the destructive dilemma and onto the path of individuation.

With envy appears selfishness, greed, anger or rage that often are projected onto others. An envious attack, and it is an attack, is an attempt to redress the sense that internally I have little or nothing and the other person has it all. In other words, I so want it and for her to not have it, that I will destroy what she has.

Interestingly enough, *Invidia*, the Latin for envy, translates as nonsight. In 'The Inferno' Dante depicts the envious plodding along under cloaks of lead and their eyes sewn shut with leaden wire. They are blind to what they have and must turn inward to what find is guiding from within.

The outer arrogance and omnipotence hide the very real feelings of emptiness, formless terror and dread (defenses of the self, Fordham, p. 159). A false maturity hides an infantile state of being. "The world is empty only to him who does not know how to direct his libido towards things and people, and to render them alive and beautiful. What compels us to create a substitute from within ourselves is not an external lack, but our own inability to include anything outside ourselves in our love" (Jung, 1956, par. 253).

A shadow is cast over the fragile ego, leaving a person absent to her emotional and physical self. Depression is the hidden face of Narcissus: that countenance which - although it carries him off into death - remains unperceived by him as, marveling, he contemplates himself in a mirage (Kristeva, 1992, p. 5). A woman dreamt of a child dying whom she is trying to save and cannot. Unable to revive herself, she verbalized an impoverishment of soul.

"Perhaps all the dragons in our lives are princesses who are only waiting to see us act, just once, with beauty and courage. Perhaps everything

that frightens us is, in its deepest essence, something helpless that wants our love” (Rilke, 1993, p. 92).

As if

The ‘as if’ person is trapped in the barriers of persona masks and narcissistic grandiosity arising from the incessant need to be filled and to prove worth through achievement—to be seen and validated. The fear is that if anyone got close the truths and flaws would be seen. To respond for real, or be real shows a dependency that had to be early checked with the parental figures. To compensate, there is a pressure to have complete success, every day, even in the smallest details, no slips allowed. He plummets if there is a mistake and life is like riding on narrow rails. He feels fraudulent, a forgery, reacting from pseudo affectivity and not living with full emotion. The present is a look into the imagined future that will be better and brighter.

The concept of the ‘as if’ personality reflects split selves, partially engaged but remaining emotionally hidden, mostly to themselves, unable to commit, to find their internal roots, meaning or fulfillment. The talents are there, the dedication to life curtailed. There continues a “haunting repetition...of those traumatizing situations that created the original dissociative responses” (Solomon, 2004, 642). The ‘as if’ person will avoid the pain of being exposed, abandoned and re-traumatized, the very feelings that cry out to be known. The persona is used as a mask and narcissism the illusion to protect the fragile psyche.

When vulnerable and terrified, physical existence is a trial. A non-nourishing self-absorption arises as a defense against intimacy, be it self to self or self to others. The psyche feels shattered. The defense, as traumatogenic as

the original trauma, focuses on survival while attempts to grow and individuate seem dangerous. The protective mechanisms preserve rather than permit the fearful ego to be annihilated altogether.

Therapy is a journey into the strangeness of the other and also oneself (Kristeva, 1994, p. 182). A woman describes feeling a self that is other than what she knew. In a dream she relates, “I am lost. I find myself on a street with many openings. People on the street do not help. Where do I belong? I wander around increasingly disorganized. Where is the path? I am so upset and panicky. I remind myself that things will work out. It seems I have to go up and down some stairs. This seems familiar. Yes, now I remember I was here before. But this time I have to find the exit”. The dream illustrates the delays, hesitations and the questions when there is little sense of cohesion. It denotes a feeling of being rudderless, without guidance, direction or connection. However, the dream ends with determination to find the way out.

“The more extreme traumatically engendered condition is that in which any capacity to represent self-experience is ruptured: a state of paralysis in which even the blank impress is lost within a void” (Connolly, 2011, p. 5). The emotional issues this woman suffered as an adult most probably replicated events in childhood that were disremembered. She described childhood with a mother poorly attuned to her, unable to empathize accurately with her internal experiences. Her father related to her mind and intelligence, but not as part of the feminine. Nothing really goes away but there comes a time when the old defenses become unbearable, unchanging and no longer controllable (Singer and Kimbles, 2004, p. 85).

To comprehend the psychological includes exploring differences, lack of belonging, loneliness and the sense of isolation (Singer and Kimbles, 2004, p. 125). In instances where the ability to distinguish self from other are impaired, attempts at self-protection may create the painful and damaging conditions that the system attempted to avoid in the first place. For her, a shadow was cast over the vulnerabilities and wounds. Her unconscious memories formed an estranged and melancholic language in her psyche and body that now were a crucible for mourning. Jung commented (1970, par. 195), "The spirit is the life of the body seen from within, and the body the outward manifestation of the life of the spirit--the two being really one".

This woman represents the predicaments of many in the 21st century, the dislocation, alienation and internal divisions. These personal, cultural and historical processes appear in therapy (Singer and Kimbles, 2004, p. 201). She expresses a gap or lack within, an open wound, a blow to the heart. Her traumatic memories were commanding enormous energy to maintain the self-deception and denial of emotional needs.

Trauma

Psychic trauma occurs when reality overwhelms with a brutality and speed that exceeds the capacity to experience. The word *traumatic* is from the Greek referring to a piercing of the skin, a breaking of the psychological and physical envelope. It intrudes through the protecting shield and overwhelms the defenses against anxiety in a form that also provides confirmation of those deepest anxieties. Trauma is the story of a wound that cries out in the attempt to remember and to tell.

Trauma leaves loss connected to feeling unlovable. Julia Kristeva (2009, p. 186) explains trauma as follows: “I hate it, because I love it, and in order not to use it, I imbed it in myself; but because I hate it, that other within myself is a bad self, I am bad, I am nonexistent, I shall kill myself. The complaint against oneself would be a complaint against another, and putting oneself to death but a tragic disguise for massacring an other”. The suffering arises as a consequence of something missing. One experiences shame, smallness, vulnerability and fear. From the psychological pain one can become an observer of life, removed, standing outside oneself, gazing but not connected. The impoverishment of the self is attributed to the early traumatizing experiences with the longed for and idealized other (Solomon, 2004, p. 639). This tragedy to the entire system may also be so subtle but devastating that the distressing ramifications are unaddressed for years. What compensates is the compulsive filling of activity to erase any gaps, even those so slightly felt in the psychic space. This creates a split off and unrealistic reflection that leaves the person without access to joy or pleasure.

Much psychic energy is spent hiding the overwhelming aspects of early deficient experiences occurring before the child could process the onslaught that was both too high and too low in physical and psychological arousal (Solomon, 2004, p. 646). The feeling of irreparable damage indicates the person cannot afford to experience reality, as it is expected to be devastating and horrifying. This is expressed through refusing either complete introjection or projection of the other (Britton, 1998, p. 61). The internal and external world becomes separated, poised between what they fear in their minds and what they fear in the outside world. Although seeming to be inventive and unusual, over time it becomes evident that these people are stuck on a treadmill of predictable responses, repetitive and self-deprecating behaviors and thoughts. They remain

in what is called the ‘resting place of illusion’ and they try to make this place their home (Britton, 1998, p. 61). However, when used as permanent areas of refuge and retreat from life, it becomes pathological and addictive.

These people proceed as-if they are fine, satisfied and needing nothing. However, the center cannot hold due to the lack of early satisfying experiences of attachment. The core cannot be accessed and this creates part of the maladaptive life response. They are living in never land, a place of infinite postponement and half-identity (Solomon, 2004, p. 639). Again, the dissociation develops as a survival attempt along with a need for illusions to compensate the weight of the depressive anxiety.

This is not a simple story as a complexity of intricate challenges confronts the narcissist. The body and psyche are bombarded with the defeating thoughts that there is no point anyway—because nothing will be perfect enough. The dissociation between body and psyche can be seen as the blocking of love. The ‘as if’ personality has internalized the absence, emptiness, a lifeless void and blank experience that is without access to the true self (Solomon, 2004, p. 641).

A woman did not understand, for years, about the rage, originating from not being mirrored adequately by her father and how she turned it against herself. She was uncomfortable in her own skin. But it was more than that. The soul seemed to be crying out but she did not know how to listen and nothing was ever enough. The narcissistic wound was impossible for her to symbolize or name. The emotional and physical losses and subsequent grief suffered from the beginning affected her imaginary realm and the symbolic entry so early that she cannot name what it has lost or what it mourns. Early on the unfolding of the self “met a blank and hostile environment so misattuned that the person felt unseen and/or noxiously related to” (Solomon, 2004, p. 641). He is dream-like,

about to perform but then does not. In dreams he is not appropriately dressed or adequately rehearsed. Without the possibility of developing secure self-identity or attachment, the adaptation of mimicry and the sense of falsity take over. The roots to the self seem lost.

Parent Loss

“Narcissican melancholy is fundamental sadness bound with immemorial loss” (Kristeva, 2009, p. 129). Detrimental effects occur when the child has to please or save the parent to obtain a semblance of parenting for herself. The loss of the parent's love develops into the loss of meaning in life. Defensive postures erected against the fear of collapse and this is linked to the depression experienced in early development. British psychoanalyst Donald Winnicott said, “the (parent's) adaptation is not good enough. The process that leads to the capacity for symbol-usage does not get started or else it becomes broken up... in practice the infant lives, but lives falsely” ... “Through this False Self the infant builds a false set of relationships, and...even attains a show of being real” (Winnicott, 1960, p.146). However, the person feels that he or she is not really living or is sleepwalking through life.

This psychological constellation from the trauma and dissociations indicates the void at the center. It can manifest in various forms of self-attack, despair and narcissistic hatred. It feeds an internalized cycle of oppression, parental neglect, abandonment and emotional rigidity making it difficult to love or care for oneself. In effect, there is a paralysis of the self. This creates an internal situation limiting the capacity of integration, individuation and development.

Julia Kristeva, French psychoanalyst, refers to the notion of alienation, or splitting off, of the self that comes about as the result of the

repression of feelings. She comments (Kristeva, 1992, p. 267) that the secret and unknown wounds can drive one to wander. She says that when instinct turns self-destructive, the ego, from early in life, lacks cohesion and falls into bits (1992, p. 19). A woman wrote in her journal: “This morning I once again glanced over what I had written a few years ago and it made me shiver. Something in this piece terrifies me. I feel it may open up some venues to the discovery of my own self-selves”.

“The self--wounded, incomplete, empty, is felt to have a fundamental flaw, a congenital deficiency. Such logic presupposes a severe super-ego and a complex dialectic of idealization and devalorization, both of self and other. It is an identification with the loved/hated other - through incorporation, introjection, projection - that is effected by the taking into oneself of an ideal, sublime, part or trait of the other and that becomes the tyrannical inner judge” (Kristeva, 1992, p. 6).

Sorrow became her only object, a substitute to which she clung, cultivating and cherishing it, for lack of any other. Now the psychological pain from the old events, the mourning and losses are upon her. This is “the inertia of libido, which will relinquish no object of the past, but would like to hold it fast forever...a passive state where the libido is arrested in the objects of childhood” (Jung, 1956, par. 253).

The events of the former experiences exist although it is no longer happening. It returns, repeated through memory. The remembering is of a “lifeless void and what the psyche does to survive this bleak and often life threatening experience” (Solomon, 2004, p. 642). The result consists of a grieving, empty and sad self, separated from the image presented to the world as gay and happy.

Closer observation reveals that at the heart of this disorder there is a lack

of warmth. The genuine inner experience is missing and becomes especially apparent in love. He has become too closed, too adept at cover up, avoiding the void, yet full of sorrows. There lingers an absence of passion and solidity especially when life abruptly halts, and the person encounters what seems like emptiness.

While the as if personality might strive for acclaim, even recognized as being cutting edge, the real person often is lost behind the facade. The internal reality, anguish or panic, absence and void, reveal that life is no longer sustainable as it was. Jung recalled that especially in the second half of life we are faced with the challenge and responsibility to acquire a religious, ie, spiritual attitude. This function requires a psychological turn inward, to what lies in the depths, and towards what is transcendent and meaningful. This is what is most difficult for the narcissist, the puella/puer and yet it holds the key for transformation and increased consciousness.

As the personality seeks self-regulation, the analytic process collects the dissociated fragments and brings them into relationship. Jung commented about the propensity of the psyche to heal through dialectical procedures. "A psychological theory...must base itself on opposition; for without this it could only re-establish a neurotically unbalanced psyche. There is no balance, no system of self-regulation, without opposition" (Jung, 1972, par. 92).

'It doesn't happen all at once,' said the Skin Horse. 'You become. It takes a long time. That's why it doesn't happen often to people who break easily, or have sharp edges, or who have to be carefully kept. Generally, by the time you are Real, most of your hair has been loved off, and your eyes drop out and you get loose in the joints and very shabby. But these things don't matter at all, because once you are Real you can't be ugly, except to

people who don't understand.”

— Margery Williams, *The Velveteen Rabbit*

Puella/Puer

The As If Personality, Narcissism and what Jung calls the puella/puer archetype signal the necessity of the interior journey, especially in our ego driven, superficial, fast Western society. This is a personality characterized on the one hand by a poor adjustment to the internal quotidian demands, a failure to set stable goals, to make lasting achievements in accord with these goals, and a proclivity for intense but short-lived attachments. On the other hand, noble and often remarkable talent is also characteristic of these people.

James Hillman (1989), Jungian analyst described the puer as ‘narcissistic, inspired, effeminate, phallic, inquisitive, inventive, pensive, passive, fiery and capricious, addressing the call to the spirit. This is a call that involves not just the beginnings but requires staying power. The problem is that the puer representing the excitement of the beginning soon peters out. He gives up and cannot manage indirection, reality, the slow plodding of development. The puer does not age and as Hillman said (1989, p. 25), “the puer spirit is the least psychological, has the least soul’. Caught in activity; an eternal becoming is not realized and then reduced to possibility and promise only (Hillman, 1989, p. 27). The task is to find connection to the continuum of life rather than living in ageless, timeless one-sidedness.

A woman says she wants to be the empress of the world. The phrase expresses an extreme of aloofness, being untouchable and avoiding hurt. The

unlinked up quality, coldness and guardedness is distancing and although off-putting, is based on fragility and vulnerability. It is a denial of the need for others and based on what seems like self-adoration. On outer appearances those identified with the puella/puer are often regarded as successful performers and high achievers while their inner life remains hidden, its tumult often split from their own awareness. The creative potential for rebirth of the personality must contend with the forces that otherwise can destroy. The look within means going through the emptiness and deadness to transformation.

Although often highly creative, the puella/puer can be deficient in introversion and imagination. There is a lack in the interior support system and no confidence. Little real enjoyment in life is felt by this person, appearing happy but run by a hungry empty self. To hide this desperate internal state, the person attaches through demanding sameness, a fusion allowing for no differences and that blocks transformation.

What remains is “an essentially conflictual, ambiguous nature of desire, which is conceivable as the desire of the desire of the Other” (Green 69). The need for social acceptance gets in the way of the ego to be sufficiently separated from the persona. A fragile inner cohesion makes her unable to connect intimately or empathize with others. She is too busy worrying about being unlovable and feeling that her love is false (Hillman, 1989, p. 57). She feels disintegrated underneath so the hurt, or its anticipation becomes devastating. She does not really risk much and holds back emotionally (Hillman, 1989, p. 69). It is the one-sided, the surface and ego that gain attention while the inner life stays undeveloped. This makes it

hard to take the time to reflect or balance the conscious and unconscious or be open to the personality with its shadow aspects. The process of individuation challenges bringing with it chaos, uncertainty and anxiety. Working with the shadow brings engagement with the foreign, the repressed and the projected material that formerly separated self from other. “Relationship to the self is at once relationship to our fellow man, and no one can be related to the latter until he is related to himself” (Jung, 1966, par. 445). Narcissism is a portrayal of that psychic state which speaks of life without feeling alive and in which the feeling of the self is divorced from the body. The foundation is insecure and they view themselves in the mirror that demands perfection, stasis and meeting inhuman demands.

Her presence lights up a room as she performs for the adulation and praise of others. He does not like being restrained, enslaved to rules or convention, or inhibited in any way, particularly by reality. There is difficulty taking oneself seriously when he or she identifies as a youth and resists age. Although one feels vitalized by their electricity and easy infatuation there follows disappointment. For the narcissist, the fantasy of the ideal beloved has crumbled into the reality of a living person. This needs to happen but is what the narcissist fears. The unwillingness to be understood or be human creates behaviors of evasions and untruths and avoidance of self.

“We discover, indeed that we do not know our part, we look for a mirror, we want to rub off the make-up and remove the counterfeit and be real. But somewhere a bit of mummery still sticks to us that we forget...” (Rilke, 2016, p.194)

The Mirror

The myth goes:

He knows not what he sees, but what he sees
invites him. Even as the pool deceives
his eyes, it tempts them with delights. But why,
o foolish boy, do you persist? Why try
to grip an image? He does not exist—

—Ovid, *Metamorphoses* (Allen Mandelbaum translation)

Despite his frustration and suffering, Narcissus cannot leave the spot. He lies beside the pool and wastes away. In the poem's concluding stanza, Ovid tells us that even in the underworld, after death, Narcissus continues to stare into the pool of Styx, fixated forever on his own image.

Narcissism as we talk about it here reflects the difficult and often traumatic places where the wounds were. To avoid the void and the suffering the person splits to arrest the process of life (von Franz, 2000, p. 151). The effort is against becoming depressed, sinking into despair and its loss of control. Jung stated (1963, par. 190), "If you contemplate your lack of fantasy, of inspiration and inner aliveness, which you feel as sheer stagnation and a barren wilderness, and impregnate it with the interest born of alarm at your inner death, then something can take shape in you, for your inner emptiness conceals just as great a fullness if only you will allow it to penetrate into you".

The natural ebb and flow of emotional life is anxiety provoking and she is easily bruised. Turning harshly on her self there is a war against body and affects, a bulwark set up against desire, emotion and change. The thing that endures is a dull psychic pain, characterized especially by the incapacity to attach.

A woman came to therapy but resisted self-knowledge. She engaged in therapy but defensively. It was difficult to let in anything new. Rigidity and one-sidedness reigned. The defense was to support her rightness and no one could influence her. Early on the creation of self that needs the correct mirroring was denied and she did not feel loved or enough. She was unable to accept her self-image and banished mirrors from her home. All except the small mirror in which she daily examined her face, spending hours looking for flaws, unable to shake the need to be alone and look at her skin, somewhat destroy it, repair with make-up and ultimately after hours had gone by, often stay home. Here was enacted the morbid need for an endless mirroring, but this mirror held the image of her face only, no body, and she lost in it without finding herself. Her reaction describes a form of narcissism that also illustrates a defense of the self, one that protects but will not lead to self-knowledge (Schwartz-Salant, 1982, p. 107). The body becomes the betrayer even as it signals the necessary return of the repressed melancholia, alienation and loneliness and reveals the internalized conflicts.

Like Narcissus peering into the lake, looking into the mirror can be a metaphor of searching for the self. Yet, like for this woman, the look in the mirror reflects negation and self-annihilation. Jung stated: 'The contents of the neurotic unconscious are strange bodies, not assimilated, artificially

split-off” (In the seminar on dreams of 14 November 1928 ‘*On psychic energy*’. CW 8).

For her, each day evaporates as the process of aging takes over, a natural process but one that horrifies. While the mind may divide the self in not liking what it sees, it can also project a false self devised to protect but actually disallows the self from being known. Jung said (1970, p. 23), “The body is a most doubtful friend because it produces things we do not like; there are too many things about the body, which cannot be mentioned. The body is very often the personification of this shadow of the ego”.

To perceive one’s self in a reflecting surface like in a mirror is to recognize the shadow, or dark underside that opposes yet is part of the shine on the surface. The shadow challenges the ego-persona. There is death or stagnation when holding these aspects separate and apart. One is stunted and thought becomes fixed (Solomon, 2007, p. 29). While the body is a catalyst for deeper reflection, investigation, analysis and imagination, those who feel disembodied, who dislike or hate their shape and go to dire lengths to change it, require the assimilation of the shadow for the self-blame and despair to give way to the dynamism between self and other.

To become conscious of the shadow requires moral effort and brings recognition to aspects of the personality remaining unknown. Jung commented, “the unconscious man, that is his shadow does not consist only of morally reprehensible tendencies, but also displays a number of good qualities, such as normal instincts, appropriate reactions, realistic insights, creative impulses etc “ (1981, par. 422-423).

The shadow encompasses more than the repressed material and includes the unconscious, both personal and collective. The shadow can feel destabilizing, disrupting to self and relationships in ways that are unfamiliar,

unsettling and difficult. Narcissism refuses the shadow and portrays a psychological state that speaks of life without feeling alive, the self divorced from the body, and a nagging sense of depersonalization. The body of the woman in the mirror seems undefined, her face portrayed as melancholic and impersonal. The end of the poem, *Mirror* by Sylvia Plath reads, “In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman / Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish” (Plath, 1981, p. 173).

The mirror reveals the narcissistic needs, the tight defenses and also singularity. It shows the impact and inevitability of time, age, and the waste of obsessions with superficial vanity. The emphasis on the persona looking a certain way can signify the disconnections. Perfection rather than wholeness becomes the goal; the persona a mask set up for hiding and orchestrated for the sake of public convention.

There's a part of us which we never cross.
I'm too scared to bring up our history,
and too scared to suffer another loss
of you; another rejection of me.
So I keep it hid under blundering
pauses and stilted movements—I only
show half of me; then, I'm left wondering
who wants half a person? Acting coldly?
Half a dialogue that's left unopen
(although you can read me fully, I'm sure)
gives no resolution—a broken
off communion, expressions not spoken...
Oh fine. I know, okay? I know the cure.

But can make no move that might stub the spark.

Roland Barthes, *Lovers Discourse*

Life is narrowed into the number of calories, how her skin looks, the inner rules that tightly bind her to a narrow and rigid structure. This woman remained angry with her father, upset that he did not respect her ways or her mind. He tells her what to eat and she is angry again as she says he has no right because he was absent earlier in her life. He cannot push into her life now. More, he did not formerly give the affection she desired. He is bitter, she as well. Fearing object loss and being betrayed and left like happened earlier with her father, she disparages that she can find anyone to trust for more than a sex partner. Under all this lies her self-doubt. Highly critical, much like her father, she is compulsive about many things and feels vulnerable about her capabilities in the world. Although she tries to remain uninvolved, she is seduced into seeking value from others.

She has a dream in which she walked into a room with no windows and only one door. After sitting in the room for a while she decided to leave. Stepping up to the door she left the room and entered another. There were mirrors everywhere and all she could see was herself looking at herself looking at herself.

What is it that she sees in these mirrors that keep her coming back, obsessed day after day, even though she is so upset by it? Each morning she goes to the mirror to examine the wounds, looking to see what is wrong with her. She covers them so no one else sees the hurts, the wounds. The body speaks psychosomatically and she becomes cruel, turning on herself. She unconsciously took on her father's language of internal destruction and self-hate, failure and inadequacy, in the expression of an unhealthy narcissism. The validation that she seeks continues to be lacking, eventually she may

give up trying, and, disconnected from her self, she may become progressively more alienated, isolated and lost.

“My being is first the shadow of despair cast on the fragile self by the loss of the essential other” (Kristeva, 1992, p. 5). For a long time she seemed unable or resistant to get in touch with “the reality of these interior places distinguished by their lack of structure or organization” (Green, 1997, p. 37). Being receptive to the contents of the unconscious requires an attitude of incompleteness, rather than striving for perfection. This means the ability to accept the tiny narcissistic disappointments when attunement is lacking. Leaving a diffuse sense of discomfort, anxiety and apprehension, and a shaky sense of self, she learned to distrust her own feelings, shifting the point of reference outside her self. The wounds remain raw, unresolved, as if timeless and unmoving. She describes an absence, a vacuum at the center of her being, feelings of loneliness and solitude—a sense of absence in the presence of the other.

This leads to either the growth, when the disappointment is small enough, or pathology when the disappointment is more than what can be born. He wishes for what sounds like specific psychological understanding and relatedness and he anticipates that his inner spaces will be wrongly broken into. Early in life, his inner world became the only place of self-preservation, not an uncommon occurrence when the outer world is lacking the necessary protection and guidance. The failure in the parental holding environment and the loss of contact with an authentic self can result in closing off from others. To expose what seems as the tattered shards of his self to others feels like endangering the safety of his world. Safety of the self initially depends on the loving experience with another but because this did not occur he feels little sense of self and often inadequate.

Jung said (1991, par. 126), “Until you make the unconscious conscious, it will direct your life and you will call it fate”. The puella/puer type has an undefined sense of self due to the repression of shadow aspects. The person lives with feeling ethereal and without a psychological home. Time is fungible, anything always possible in the rebellion against the imposition of limits. Defined by a wandering nature, personally and psychologically without attachments, life with others is very difficult. It means taking the other in, being seen and vulnerable and this is overlaid with shame.

The one-sidedness of narcissism is a tragedy of changelessness, stuck in psychological rigidity. She has a coldness that seems insensitive to deeper feelings and is defensive against emotions. Or, she is so reactive that all remains on the surface, expressed but not reflected upon. The underlying sensitivity exists but not the internal psychology, because that takes time (Hillman 1989, p. 25-26).

The realities, limits and mortality can hardly be faced. The sparkling appeal is a cover, fostering idealizing projections but meant to keep distance. She is too hurt, cut off, afraid and damaged in this area, too lonely. So, she engages in flights from reality into dreams of grandiosity. This preserves her from unmanageable disappointments. If there is always a tomorrow she escapes the reality of today. And then, quite suddenly, the bottom drops off and the meaning of it all becomes dust (Hillman, 1989, p. 26).

The puella/puer needs love and attention yet engages in deception to her self and deflection with others, putting on a performance and acting ‘as if’ (Solomon, 2004, p. 639). Inordinately identified with the persona suggests that a significant part of the personality exists beneath the layered facade. The split from roots results in arrested development, an attitude that rejects the

instinctual, the physical and earth. She describes feeling like a ghost, without substance and unseen.

Unable to access the psychological foundations, she feels flawed, making the changes required of life more daunting. Desire is depleted and libido devitalized. This is a narcissism that has to do not with self-love but self-hate (Schwartz-Salant, 1982). The internal emotional distance forms a vacuum, the feeling unlovable brings emotional and physical alienation, escalating into various forms of numbing out. Frantic and unable to be present fuels the search for the ideal rather than the real. Jung said about maintaining balance of the psyche, “This is how you must live—without reservation, whether in giving or withholding, according to what the circumstances requires. Then you will get through. After all, if you should still get stuck, there is always the enantiodromia from the unconscious, which opens new avenues when conscious will and vision are failing” (Jung, 1987, p. 156).

Forays into the past impose themselves on the present and reach back to the original wounds; the lack, estrangement or disintegration of selfhood, the conflict between ego and self, surface and shadow in a fundamental search for identity. As life unfolds, so does confrontation with the shadow, erupting through chaos and melancholy. The mourning can feel like the darkest time, one of disillusionment and no exit and signals the necessity to reorder the psychological elements.

Puella/puer represents one of the dis-eases of our era--she does not breathe deeply and fears being emotionally touched. She can no longer simply rely on outer adulation or putting on of masks, but access the spark within. She also can no longer split the archetype of youth from age but learn to use the movement of youth into aging with honor and respect, inclusive of life's entirety. This involves engaging with the wounds, reclaiming the damaged parts and

integrating the shadow. By breaking down the need for the ideal, she accesses the self, not only the ego, and can engage with being who she is rather than only with outer achieving and doing.

As Jung said (1969, p. 1), “we carry our past with us, to wit, the primitive and inferior man with his desires and emotions, and it is only with an enormous effort that we can detach ourselves from this burden...we invariably have to deal with a considerably intensified shadow. And if such a person wants to be cured it is necessary to find a way in which his conscious personality and his shadow can live together” (Jung, 1969, p.1).

The Illusions

Jung (1963, p. 187) speaks about the process of stripping off the veils of illusion as painful. He noted it takes much patience in therapeutic work because the unmasking of reality can be tricky due to the vulnerability and repression. The false image, damming access to the natural instincts kept the real walled off and silenced. The psychological process means stripping away the very mechanisms on which the person seems to survive. She enters therapy because; “there is something (she) cannot forget, something she cannot stop telling (herself), often by (her) actions, about (her) life. And these dismaying repetitions create the illusion of time having stopped” (Phillips, 1994, p.15).

55. The person feels the pressure of an unbearable coexistence of opposites and the themes of terrible insecurity of the self, a cold indifference and lovelessness. These present images of self-loss, an alienation compensated by extreme self-involvement, resulting in the self not as emergent but fragmented. Even more, her life is defined by attempts to evoke the illusion of unity. Donald Winnicott said (1960, p. 144), “The world may observe academic success of a high degree, and may find it hard

to believe in the very real distress of the individual concerned, who feels 'phoney' the more he or she is successful. When such individuals destroy themselves in one way or another, instead of fulfilling the promise, this invariably produces a sense of shock in those who have developed high hopes of the individual".

Selves are radically divided between the agonized and self-lacerating aspects and the external upbeat facade, often expressed in relation to the same events. This dichotomy expresses the dissonance between the bright, buoyant, high achievement with ideals of success, social status in contrast with the despairing loneliness. The lack of intimacy, the isolation from others and the discomfort of being real promote the defenses to withdraw, compartmentalize, segregate one part of the mind from another.

The puella/puer represents the young spirit and the beginnings, the start up. They embody immediacy, wandering, invention, idealism, and thrive on fantasy and creativity. Taking the time to understand, to be realistic about capabilities and establish or sustaining deep and lasting relationships is difficult. Instead of turning into the emotional soul-life, the puella/puer aeternus turns outward.

The puella/puer character is not easy to pin down, as the ethereal is part of the appeal. She hardly notices who or what she is, floating through life. Daily she dresses a mannequin, selecting a part, or the effect, or the image set for the occasion. Needing approval from others drives her competitive nature while she also fears being hated or excluded. Lacking a capacity for realistic self-reflection, the mirror image is distorted by the inability to connect with her core.

A quote from Sylvia Plath personifies the inner world of this person.

“God, is this all it is, the ricocheting down the corridor of laughter and tears? of self-worship and self-loathing? of glory and disgust? Frustrated? Yes. Why? Because it is impossible for me to be God--or the universal woman-and-man--or anything much....But if I am to express what I am, I must have a standard of life, a jumping-off place, a technique--to make arbitrary and temporary organization of my own personal and pathetic little chaos. I have the choice of being constantly active and happy or introspectively passive and sad. Or I can go mad by ricocheting in between. (Kukil, 2000, p.)

James Hillman (1989, p. 25) said the puella in any complex gives it its drive not only from the oral hunger and omnipotence fantasies but that the world can never satisfy the demands of the spirit or match its beauty. A man comes to therapy questioning the meaning of his life. He says the structure is wrong. Although an accomplished professional, he feels cut off at the knees and proceeds to recount an actual experience of falling and skinning his knees. Taken by surprise, he feels unprepared, needs to learn more, read more books and take more courses. But, once completed, he does not use what he learns, unable to feel competent in it and all remains half done. He keeps his special possessions hidden in case something happens, thinking perhaps he will be robbed. This action expresses how he enacts the dispossession of his self.

He is caught by the personal and cultural pressures that worship the unattainable, unrealistic and inhuman, the youthful ideals that contribute to the lack of mature models in our society. She chases an ideal through rituals around cosmetics, body re-shaping, and other compulsive, negative thoughts and behaviors. But, she does not really partake--be it food, love, emotion, anything to do with feeling and gusto. Basic instincts are blocked, as she is perpetually

moving but not internally listening or developing. The complex in this person is manifested in depressive moods, constant dissatisfaction with herself and the whole of reality (von Franz, 2000, p. 126).

Although self-absorbed, she needs others to reflect and to witness her life. She wastes time and avoids the thing that is always going to occur in the future, when it will finally be the right moment. A hallmark of puella/puer is living provisionally, hiding in the shadows of disconnection, self-loathing and disavowal of self-expression. These shadows envelop creativity and expressiveness and when the potentiality of the psyche is not used it becomes perverted (Leonard, 1983).

In therapy she seems uncomfortable and too slick. Where is the shadow in this perfectly appearing persona? Here is the indication that the transference, like her other relationships, could remain still-born, the connection not fully taken and unknown. Sensing her flair for the dramatic is to hold people off, it might also signal a deflection from deeper work. She seemed preoccupied, as if inhabiting a place no one was to enter. She brought to therapy favorite passages from books including poems by Adrienne Rich, a woman who wrote: “An honorable human relationship ... in which two people have the right to use the word ‘love, is a process, delicate, violent, often terrifying to both persons involved, a process of refining the truths they can tell each other” (1979). It is this very naked and bare intimacy that she backs from.

Her pose was an accommodation to outer demands, protecting a terrified and precarious self. Each moment of life was to be gotten through to the next thing. She commented that she did not want to grow up as adults appeared to have no light in their eyes and were deadened by conformity to the average. She expressed apprehension about committing to space and time, avoiding being caught in any situation in case it was

impossible to slip out.

Yet, she was also creative, artistic, drawn to portray the quirks of life. But, her creations went nowhere. Her carefully structured world was to protect and she feared moving out of the stasis and into the depths. In her insulated world, she flees the shadow and the descent to earth necessary for actualizing what can make her whole (von Franz 2000).

The puella/puer reaction to life has both the potential and the wounded originate from early traumas. Jung commented that, “some are overflowing with feelings of their own importance...others give up all sense of responsibility, overcome by a sense of powerlessness” (1966, par. 222). Living in fantasy worlds like those of video games, online pornography, reading and fashion can be misguided efforts towards development. Perhaps the pursuit of fantasy is a defense emerging during periods like ours of uncertainty and lack of psychological focus.

James Hillman (1989, p. 25) describes this person as unable to find belonging, place, or the right niche, feeling precarious. The images of youth limit and adversely affect achievements, intimacy and promote idealization of others. Lacking an inner holding place they are the shallow breathers of life, unable to grasp their value or essence. The shadow exerts itself in the puella woman who looks a part and functions well according to others, yet feels nothing is meaningful and without meaning the experiences of her life are nothing (von Franz, 2000, p. 148). Her enlivening qualities are continually countered by the deadening ones and she feels internally bombarded and harassed. It signals estrangement from the unconscious and the shadow elements.

The crime

For years a man had a repetitive dream that he committed a crime. The dream bothered him. In time the dream escalated from his being an accomplice to becoming the main robber or killer. The reasons for this were never given in the dream. The shock upon awakening was the acknowledgement that he had indeed done the crime. Oh, no, he would exclaim in dismay. He was not conscious the crime was still going on and became upset by the dream message. The dream image portrays his avoidance of self-responsibility and self-knowledge and shows the self-betrayal.

However, rather than listening and reflecting, he tried to escape from it, often not talking about the dream recurrence and its upset to him. He resisted understanding his actions and attending to his conscience, not listening to the voice from within. This is also part of the dream crime.

And then the dream stopped. Now he associated the dream to the harshness of his work, the devious nature of it, the deception and high-powered force he had to muster that was not really who he was. When he stopped being under the gun of this part of his personality, the dreams desisted. A false self had been covering his real self. Over time he became what he called softer, more open, more a yoga person and less the politico. He liked the yoga part but said it does not make money nor manifest in the aggressive push that he needed to make money, even though these aspects were better for forming relationships. He remained separated from love, fearful of intimacy and needing control.

When in a relationship this man is subject to losing the Psyche side of him self. Eros turns into solely the erotic, a narcissist who needs undivided attention. He is aware enough to realize that love for him has translated to loss of self. He jumps into the other person and from anxiety ends up being demanding, possessive, manipulative. It feels like the bottom goes out of his

personality and he turns distrustful, sending frantic messages to whomever he is dating, loading that person with expensive presents, all set up to convey that he needs attention and love, but on his terms.

These actions are typical of the narcissist who fears love. For this man, once his feelings are aroused he reacts by feeling vulnerable that love will disappear. The feeling is so uncomfortable and panicky that he avoids it. And, here is part of the significance of the crime dream. He does not like who he becomes in a love relationship, as he cannot manage the intensity of feelings or closeness. He cannot give up control and kills the connection between self and other. For him love means an absence of a secure self, possessing the other and calculating how he can get the person to respond, as he wants. He must be at the center for the other, yet no matter what kind of attention he receives it never satisfies the gnawing insecurity. He describes falling in love by saying he is addicted and can turn on or off the sex switch. He does not differentiate the love switch as love and sex are blurred for him. Confidence and trust, Psyche and Eros, Narcissus and Echo remain apart too close and too undifferentiated.

In another dream the pharmacy will not give him the prescription for pain. He does not have the correct government id. In the end he wonders if he has ever been himself, what his self is, who he is. Behind him is voice saying the shadow knows and repeats this phrase. The dream is quite direct about what he needs—an identity that includes the shadow.

The narcissistic response to life is often based on denial and attempts to defend youth oriented self-images. The narcissist ages without compassion or grace and much sorrow. He stares in disbelief and rage at what he considers cruel mirrors and he is maladapted to life's trials and

tribulations. Andre Green, French psychoanalyst describes this as an example of what he called death narcissism or the void, emptiness, self-contempt, destructive withdrawal, and self-depreciation with a predominant masochistic quality. He called another attitude life narcissism, a way of living—sometimes parasitically, sometimes self-sufficiently—with an impoverished ego that is limited to illusory relationships but without any involvement with living objects (Green, 2002, p. 644). Neither brings one into connection or intimacy with self, soul or world.

These attitudes can escalate into hatred or attack upon life. There is a crushing of personality and impulses to self-annihilation combined with a guilt-inducing refusal of autonomy. This arouses a disturbing netherworld of psychological oppression and need for release from its mutilations. These people have acute conflicts with those who are close...an impotence to withdraw from a conflictual situation, impotence to love, to make the most of one's talents, to multiply one's assets, or when this does take place, a profound dissatisfaction with the results (Green, 1986, p. 149).

Various modes of emotional protection and avenues of psychological escape are sought. Since life does not tolerate standstill, a damming up of energy results. This leads to the tension of the opposites and produces a new, uniting function that transcends them. As Jung (1963, par. 145) called it this is the transcendent function and arises quite naturally from the regression of libido caused by the blockage. It comes from holding the tension between consciousness and the unconscious while creating a union between them. The conflict between ego and self, surface and shadow is part of a fundamental search for identity in which the selves co-exist in some

balance. Part of the necessity is to bridge the paradox between what was and what will be. The transcendent function is basic both to the regulation of the psyche and the emergence of new attitudes.

For the narcissist to grow, the inner sterile space that was formerly fraught with self-inflicted doubts and devoid of intimacy gains a sense that it can gradually come to life. The conjunctions of various sorts can begin to happen, where, it might be said, the internal couple could be allowed to come together and generate conception and rebirth (Meredith-Owen, 2007, p. 389).

The personality aspects that tend to surprise and shame are essential for personal development and connection. The inner dilemmas heighten in intensity, creating upset leading to the demise of the false covers to access the authentic and real. These are the very ones the person turns from yet paradoxically exacerbates as a chance to abandon the narcissistic attitudes, confront the shadow and find love for self and other.

The hope...

“Love the world as your self; then you can care for all things,”

Tao Te Ching, Lao Tsu, (Verse 13)

James Hillman addresses the idea that what actually individuates is not us, but our passions, talents and places of wounding. Our complexes need to shake off their infantile associations and find maturity, reality and connection between psyche and body. Then the personality becomes a rich, multidimensional canvas. (Slater, 2012, p. 30)

The journey is not aimed at happiness, but has a wider perspective. The world opens if we do and likewise narrows as we refuse or turn away.

The search for psyche requires being exposed and also distraught, stripped to the core of our nature.

The process of individuation means becoming all one is meant to be. The narcissist has the potential, the charm, the energy and the possibility, if they can open to being vulnerable, real and accept the shadow and what it means to be human with others. This is part of the task in learning to love. This is the crossroads for growth and development, the phoenix rising from the ashes, the narcissian melancholy explored rather than denied. It is living in the moment by gaining the connection to self and other.

“In many cases in psychiatry, the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of. To my mind, therapy only really begins after the investigation of that wholly personal story. It is the patient's secret, the rock against which he is shattered. If I know his secret story, I have a key to the treatment. The doctor's task is to find out how to gain that knowledge . . . In therapy the problem is always the whole person, never the symptom alone” (Jung, 1963, p. 116).

There is an oscillation between longing for transformation, escape from constriction and engulfment and need to remain behind the images presented to the world. Casting off outgrown selves and overused facades leads to nakedness 74. and renewal. Dreams, the natural occurrences of the night, facilitate this process and bring clues about what is needed for love, self-acceptance and accessing the psyche's recuperative powers. How to love means unwrapping the personality layers to live in its raw truths.

“The beginning of conscious life was the end of illusion, the illusion of non-being, and the eruption of the real” (McEwen, 2016, p. 2-3).

At the end of the myth Narcissus is undone by unattainable love for

the image of his self and withers away by the pool gazing after it longingly. The dramatic moment is one of sorrow and grief. Where Narcissus died is found a flower, its yellow center circled by white petals. Known as a narcissus or daffodil, the flower blooms in spring, often around Easter, and is associated with rebirth or resurrection. This might suggest that even if stuck in stasis we are capable of transformation and change. Current neuroscience and research on brain plasticity reflect the growing awareness that our identities, woes, generational patterns and even the neural grooves are not fixed, but more fluid and shifting than we consciously recognize. This is called the process of individuation...

Love brings to our awareness the promise of a depth of feelings and propels a unity beyond our personal self. As the following poem of Rumi notes,

Listen to the story told by the reed flute
of the partings whose lament it breathes
Since I was cut from the reed-bed
my cry has made both men and women mourn their lot
Whoever is parted far from his native place
longs to return to the time of union
My secret and my cry are one
but both eye and ear lack light

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