

Schwartz

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Narcissism—psychological oneness excluding love of the other

Word count--4876

Narcissism—psychological oneness excluding love of the other

Dream of a man-- There is a red stockinged lady outside the bookshop in Zurich, where earlier in the day I had bought Jung's 'Modern Man in Search of a Soul.'

As Jung wrote, "the image is a condensed expression of the psychic condition of the whole"(1971, p. 442). This quote addresses the problem in the dream of a man who faces the challenge of going from oneness to twoness, from singularity to relationship. For him the paucity of love from family became the lack of self-love and instead learned to fold in on himself becoming insulated and excluding. Psychological growth was halted and the questing and ardent self diverted. This presentation examines his psychological inter and intrapersonal relationships compromised though a variety of addictions to food, drink and sex.

The composite example is a man called Daniel whose personality early in life went into secret. The other defined as that which is distinct, different, or opposite to him self was so overwhelming he could not acknowledge it. Feeling unacceptable and anxious, he donned the mask of a performer. So encased in his carefully manipulated world, he did not realize the extent of the damage for many years. Daniel introduced himself by writing an email saying he thought he was sexually addicted and had to do something about it. Would I see him?

This presentation is a linking of Jungian analytical perspectives with French psychoanalyst Andre Green's concepts of the dead mother and narcissism and Hester

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Solomon, British Jungian analyst writing on the 'as-if' personality. For Daniel, the early childhood of unprocessed and unbearable emotions were managed as an adult with compulsive and addictive behaviors. In the grip of the unconscious enacting his the addictive behaviors attempted to mask the melancholy and fragile self that was lacking self-animation. What is the psyche trying to compensate and why in this way?

the patient who comes to us has a story that is not told, and which as a rule no one knows of... It is the patient's secret, the rock against which he is shattered'. --C.G. Jung, 1963, p. 117

'As-If' Personality

One does not become enlightened by imagining figures of light, but by making the darkness conscious. The latter procedure, however, is disagreeable and therefore not popular." --Carl Jung, Alchemical Studies, par. 335

The 'as-if' personality described by Hester Solomon is characterized by performance, fraudulence and vulnerability, surrounded a wall of impenetrability, defensive against self and other. There lingers an absence of passion from the noxious experiences that originally forced the self into hiding. The early physical and psychological loss formed into disillusionment and withdrawal. Internally, the refusal of otherness impoverishes the self. The feeling is that any possibility of relating to a good object is denied. Daniel was arrested in development rejecting the instinctual, physical, earth and time. Eventually a psychological crisis occurred as the outer facade and the inner reserves collapsed, revealing the void at the center

The personality described here has an unlinked up quality, cold. Daniel knew he was fraudulent, a forgery, reacting from pseudo affectivity and living a sham existence. The cover up is his survival suit although he blends in and seems normal enough with nothing to suggest any kind of disorder. A series of identifications and internalizations with external sources of environmental nourishment were needed to substitute for and constructed around the original sense of internal emptiness (Solomon, 2004, p. 642). He did not know otherwise, as he was without the tools for intimacy with anyone, most of all with him self.

Every attempt to understand the way of feeling and manner of life of this person impresses on the observer the impression that the individual's whole relationship to life has something about which is lacking in genuineness and yet outwardly seems 'as-if' it were complete. It was 'as-if' Daniel was his image and that took prominence over being real. Lacking resources to nourish the self, the adaptation of mimicry, the protective fictions and the sense of falsity began early. He does not emotionally invest in people, places, or objects from the anticipation of being unsafe and uncared for. As a result, when things are good Daniel destroys. Love remains unknown. Instead, adaptation substituted for authenticity and Daniel watches the world alone from his secret place.

There also is the issue of damaged connection to the body as the instincts are off, the spirit dampened and Daniel without genuine connection. Daniel's addictive behaviors were acts of isolation although they also contained the unconscious goal of self-creation.

Because parents were unconscious or depressed Daniels' object cathexis was disturbed. The self became buried within and cannot summon the energy to make a full attempt at life. He developed a distrust of the world, exacerbated with the cult-like nature of the family church. From both, the roots to his self became lost. Daniel was a portrayal of the person whose unfolding of the self early on "met a blank and hostile environment so misattuned that the person felt unseen and/or noxiously related to" (Solomon, 2007, p. 198).

Daniel distances from others, lies to make them happy, deceiving them but but most of all deceiving him self. His emotions, angers and frustrations disappear into the daily rituals of masturbation, drugs and excesses of drink and food. He could not control his tendency for sexual boundary breaking and tried to get every woman he encountered. Driven by nagging insecurity his desire in the guise of lust represented the need for love that was early unavailable and by now felt unattainable. Even when Daniel got the objects he craved, the feeling remained of them disappearing or being taken away. As a result, he had become a talented actor, but never really believing in the role or the stage on which he found himself. In effect, he was hardly present.

Daniel dreamt, "I apologize to the Black woman housekeeper I ran out on when I discovered there was work to be done. I ask her if she will help me be responsible and

she says she will. As I awaken I am struck by the fact that I am a liar and that the truth is not in me. I wonder if I have become a compulsive liar, and if there is any hope for me since I have been untruthful for so long. I am struck by how much I lie and deceive for fear of being found out for who I really am”.

The dream illustrates the complexity to Daniel’s emotional distancing. It also commented that he was not doing the work to be responsible or accountable. Like the ‘as-if’ personality, Daniel lived in “a solitary confinement of the self...There was fear of opening to another at the risk of psychological annihilation” (Solomon, 1998, p. 228). Having felt so different from others as a child, his isolative routines kept him under the hegemony of facade and the singularity of omnipotence.

This person goes through the world ‘as if’ life were real when they feel it is not. The dissociation from self circumvents psychological movement and thwarts internal union. Life has no permanence or meaning while its impermanence is also denied. The seeking after glitter and accomplishments attempts to waylay mourning or acknowledging the losses. The self has finally to face a long repressed but often suspected, underlying internal reality, a hauntingly ever present background sense of living in a void or facing a vast emptiness” (Solomon, 2004, p. 636). The psychological residue denies time and makes change unimaginable. For example, Daniel had a reminder on his apple watch that he would die, sent 5 times a day. This was to remind him of life.

Andre Green and the Deadened Parent

Andre Green, French psychoanalyst, described a void characterized by feelings of misery and lack from internalizing emotionally inanimate and deadened parents. What has been internalized includes not just the conscious attributes of the caregiver but more their absence and deadness. Incorporated is the internal representation that Andre Green depicted as the void, emptiness, futility and meaninglessness (Kohon, 1999, p. 290). The traumatization, loss and melancholic identification with the parent who was already internally destroyed, negatively impacts the child’s experience of life. The child remains submerged in the emotionally dead, blank and absent space. Daniel formed attachment to

what was missing, the gap, the absence and what remains is “an essentially conflictual, ambiguous nature of desire, which is conceivable as the desire of the desire of the Other” (Green, 1979, p. 69). The defenses against relatedness arise from fears of replicating the original object losses and their associated emotional pain. Through the addictions Daniel avoids conflict and feels unlovable. Emotionally, all remains a wasteland and a war against the self, the body and the affects that are like a bulwark against desire and emotion.

The split in the self, occurring early in childhood leaves no inner harmony nor is there an understanding of self and other because it was not known (Kohon, 1999, p.101). The thing that endures is a dull psychic pain, characterized by the incapacity to attach. Andre Green described “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).

Maternal loss

“The meeting with oneself is, at first, the meeting with one’s own shadow. The shadow is a tight passage, a narrow door, whose painful constriction no one is spared who goes down to the deep well. But one must learn to know oneself in order to know who one is.”

Carl Jung, Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 2

Daniel was intelligent and learned the expected male activities, like hunting, but it was not his nature. He was close to neither parent but as the first child and boy he was to adopt their small fundamentalist, cult like church and pledge its beliefs as his. But from young he could not. With no one to ask, and in his aloneness and singularity he determined he must be bad. Daniel denied any resentment or feelings of anger or frustration, mostly to himself. He developed an image to his parents who by now represented the not self. The ongoing identity fusion remained with the parents, often impairing ego development. Daniel identified with his emotionally deadened mother and unconsciously adopted the way her attachment to the church became experienced as void.

To hide this inner reality, he pleased others to hide his sins of non-belief. Soon the façade became necessary more and more of the time. Andre Green, wrote, “Arrested in

their capacity to love, subjects who are under the empire of the dead mother can only aspire to autonomy. Sharing emotion remains forbidden to them. Solitude is now sought after” (Green, 1983, p. 156).

Daniel dreamed he had a tray of small cakes and is handing them out to others at a party. One has a bite out of it and one is damaged and he turns each around so no one sees. He associated the cakes to his mother and the madeleine that Marcel Proust so thoroughly described. However, the dream he interpreted as also showing that what he received from his mother was just empty secrets and rules and he left with the damaged goods while the better food was for others. The dream illustrated the early unmet needs for warmth and love was the lack that sent him into a life of isolation, fears and separateness run by addictions.

As the conflict becomes internalized, Green noted that feelings of impotence result. Daniel was numb to the early disappointments and losses but they surfaced as his addictive behaviors. The conflict was that the parents and church were to be idealized, worshipped and godlike. Daniel became like the deadened mother who does not experience her own mourning and presents with blankness. Daniel cannot find an emotionally related mother, as she represents the absence of meaningful reference points. The identification is attached with the vacuum left behind.

Daniel said he does not know how or why he was drawn to the addictions. Lost so long ago, he does not realize what he is trying to resurrect. Consciously, Daniel only felt guilty. He presented with a mild demeanor yet there was a voracious side. Or, perhaps this was the desire for the self, hidden within the fear to be real. The women he pursued were in their 30's, mother was 31 when he was born and his sexual escapades with his 30 year old cousin were obviously against family, church and definitely taboo in all arenas. The danger is that when the projection is not recognized as such, it remains unconscious. Daniel targets others with adoration or derision, not recognizing the object is reflecting unknown aspects of him self.

Addicts can become enamored of fantasy images of themselves and others, their addiction providing a distorted mirror. The image of himself as someone extraordinary was the only way Daniel could defend against the tide of shame. He resorted to grandiose

fantasies to anesthetize the decimation of his self. Yet these are the very wounds that can propel the search for understanding and eventual meaning.

Daniel was not an experiencer of life nor had he learned to be an internal observer of his mental life. He came into Jungian psychotherapy because he felt something missing; he cannot name it, a malaise, corrosive but imprecise, alienating him from himself. He had low self-esteem, fears of competency of being male, unacceptable and a sinner. His sexual addictions remained secret, a space reinforcing his perceived need for separation from others. Even though the secret also carries the hope that one day he can emerge, be found and met, he could not feel this as he was so subsumed in it (Khan, 1983, p. 105). There was no other within who spoke or objected, but there was the one inside that looked at, accused and felt guilt. He had to escape that one and he did so with the women he bought, not only for sex but telling himself he wanted to be friends and liked by them.

As in the stories, *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* the integrity of the self was gradually eroded through his increasing self-destructiveness. Andre Green noted, “More and more lost the reference is to the non-existence, the void, the emptiness, the blankness...even if the object appears later its realness is related to its non-existence” (Green, 2005, p. 218).

Daniel’s veneer of sophistication and confidence could complicate the transference that he established as intellectual. This was to reassure that he would not break the boundaries, as he was wont to do. “Behind the defenses were a terrified infantile part of the self, a devious and cunning tempter and seducer” (Colman, 1991, p. 360). Initially, the seduction pulled him from his affectual sphere in order to hide the chaos and emptiness from both himself and the therapist. A glass wall between him and the world had been there as long as he could recall. But, behind it also contained the pent up wish to merge. At the core is hidden dependence, the loss of affect, loneliness, depersonalized, resulting in his psychic retreats. Meanwhile, Daniel through his addictions was seeking the feminine, the mother, the other. But he also was controlling, as he felt insecure, diminished as a person and as a man. Much later in therapy Daniel said he went on chat rooms disguised as a woman because he felt more comfortable than upholding what he held as the male image.

The addictions were a defense against separation, loss and offered the illusion of omnipotence and manic excitement (Knox, 2011, p. 147). Delusion is the word he could not remember in a session. He said the affair with his cousin 30 years his junior was a delusion. What he called evil thoughts, enacting the narcissistic self-destruction kept telling him he was bad even as they lured him in. He cannot give up the fantasy of fusion as this means he is separate. Mixed with it is a desire to destroy. This defensive/aggressive dynamic in his internal world came out as well with food and drink as he did not know what was ever enough. When he divorced, quit the church, took a mind-altering substance and retired the ties to his former life were severing and his addictions simultaneously ramped up. Feelings of being fake, unseen and worthless were tangled up with a sense of entitlement and a need to suppress a dimly felt despair.

Narcissism

“As individual attention is habitually and excessively focused on the façade of the persona, the deeper, neglected aspects of the personality continually sabotage the individual’s conscious intentions”

--Jung, The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious, p. 123

In the myth of Narcissus, it is the hunger to be loved and recognized by him self that ultimately brings about his tragic end. One might argue that having never known adequate mirroring from any other, Narcissus remained searching for his own image rather than seek an outer relationship. Daniel’s narcissism results in avoiding being seen and unmasked and keep him alone.

Daniel’s personality from early on could not come to terms with the love of self and love of the other that is both mutually exclusive and intertwined. This became even more impossible when in the throes of the addictions, as he was lost from himself. His sense of not being present promotes the continual search for the ideal rather than the real. A punishing core of "I don't deserve" creates an ever-present tension that cuts off pleasure in both mental and physical activities. This derives from the narcissistic wounds that create inertia, stifle life and harken to a form of narcissism that has to do not with self-love but self-hate (Schwartz-Salant, 1982, p. 24).

Narcissism is associated with ‘solipsism, egoism, ipseity, a pathological self-return, a phantasmatic circularity. It can unleash a moral and psychological violence on both the other and the self. Narcissism in its singularity can occlude finding a relationship to the unconscious. Jungian psychology is founded on the recognition that the dissociated parts, the unknown and the splits in the psyche can lead to and/or obstruct knowledge of self and other. A question is can the narcissist learn really engage with the other?

To be freed from his narcissistic shackles requires a significant working through of his deep-seated vulnerabilities. The encounter with the other is crucial for overcoming the entrenched narcissistic defenses. A man seeking to shed his narcissistic armor must recognize not only that subjectivity can be limiting, but also that he can be enriched and challenged by the subjectivity that is distinct from his own. This occurs only as he takes time to pause and reflect, rather than rushing to cover and defend.

The narcissist feels anxiety and apprehension, covered by a perfected and idealized persona, hiding what is considered the fissures underneath. The narcissistic tendency towards self-absorption, narrowness and subjectivity can prevent growth, become ossified with the aging process and the person becomes increasingly impenetrable. The walls are so high and well defended that no one gets in nor does he get out. The reality is a person like Daniel with low self-regard, nagging comparison with others and feelings of inadequacy leave him unaware of his effect on others. The I can never become truly present and spins away from itself in a process of continual self and other alienation. “The narcissistic omnipotent object relations are partly defensive against the recognition of the separateness of self and object” (Colman, 1991, p. 359). Arrival and erasure, promise and excuse constitute two sides of one and the same oscillating aporia of self-canceling. Daniel is punctuated by the intolerance of difference and change and lost in the narcissism of small things while a sense of powerlessness plagued his mind.

Cut off and fearful of defeat, the shadow, representing the other, is hidden and deemed unacceptable and Daniel avoids the process of life (von Franz, 2000, p. 151). There is death or stagnation in holding the opposite aspects of the personality separate and in secret. Jung recognized the shadow as part of the individuation process and that it involved coming to terms with the body (Jung, 1975, p. 338). However, Daniel was

uncomfortable in his body, never feeling male enough, strong enough, fit enough and needing constant reassurance that he was noticed and valued. For example, Daniel, hiding in a crafty imitation of others, drank or ate what was considered the best.

James Hillman, archetypal psychologist, conceptualized 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 the physical connection with psyche. Then the personality becomes a rich, multidimensional canvas. (Slater, 2012, p. 30) One cannot individuate, that is, cannot become the person he is meant to be, without relating to the shadow. And it was the shadow to which Daniel was addictively drawn and from which he fled. Jung commented, “The shadow is a living part of the personality and therefore wants to live with it in some form. It cannot be argued out of existence or rationalized into harmlessness. This problem is exceedingly difficult, because it not only challenges the whole man, but reminds him at the same time of his helplessness and ineffectuality” (Jung, 1959, p. 20-21).

Andre Green described what he called death narcissism composed of the void, emptiness, self-contempt, destructive withdrawal, and permanent 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 that support the self, but without any involvement with living objects (Green, 2002, p. 644). Neither brings one into connection with self, soul or world.

In the alcove of his mind Daniel’s grandiose phantasies were based on feeling inferior, depending on outer approval, the need to be admired and be a millionaire by a certain age. Daniel lived in dread of the ordinary as if to say, ‘If I am like everybody, then I must be nobody’. This fostered a frenzy of activity compensatory to the internalized depletion accompanying the self and other alienation. (Jacoby, 2016, p 156) Although Daniel portended that he cared about others, superficial social adjustment, chronic uncertainty, dissatisfaction, exploitative and envious describe Daniel wrapped in his narcissistic cloak. He can appear shy and over-adaptive but underneath is highly critical of his glaring deficiencies. His self-image was in a distorted negative way, reflecting little of his true being (Jacoby, 2016, p. 158).

His impenetrability also signals estrangement from the unconscious. The idea of seeing ourselves, both literally and metaphorically and finding ways to reflection includes the ability to imagine beyond ourselves. However, Daniel's mirror narrowly reflected him as unlovable and anticipating hurt from hostile intruders, images derived from early shame, self-doubt and feeling wronged. To compensate, there was the need for never failing, but never able to be filled narcissistic gratification.

Daniel wanted notice from others but does not know intimacy. Although now in a monogamous relationship, the dreams of women he was with sexually continue. In one dream he is with his 30 year old cousin who seems to be with a man in a corridor. The man leaves. Daniel says he will help her. She says no, I will help you. He puts a hand on her arm and this feels good. She puts her arm on his. "To recognize desire for what it is, dependent on others and also disallowed reveals him as unacceptable to himself, to be in conflict, too much in danger, disturbed by his own" needs (Philips, 2013, p. 35).

Daniel has begun to comprehend that this situation indicates when he goes unconscious. In the dream he has no idea how or why he is there. He has decided he will not lie to his partner and often in dreams like this realizes he must tell her. Yet, years into the relationship he has not revealed to her the full extent of his vulnerable and easily rejected self. The conundrum is that the emotional feelings are there but so submerged he hardly notices his sensitivities.

Daniel has spent his life denying, avoiding anxiety and now realizes how rapidly he leaves his body, like in the dream. He said he needs conscious intention to remain present, as he only knew sneaking and hiding. The current emotional intimacy with his partner brings up the entrenched narcissistic defenses as he realizes it is worse than he thought. Daniel inhabited what he calls separate mind compartments populated with his numerous stories. The sexual encounters like in the dream are in his mind frequently. This represents the solitude of the narcissist filling his world himself and no room for anyone else.

Daniel dreamt of a woman in the back of a bus who had rough sex with a guy. Daniel was in the front of the bus looking at the woman next to him and her lips. He felt no concern for the one in the back who was with the edgy guy. In the next dream that

night he is with people and trying to find a place but does not know why is he with them or where he is going and just seems to be floating along. He feels empty in both dreams. He said the compulsive thoughts are there a lot; self-doubt tears him down, drawing him to the lewd and the despicable. So driven by his actions to erase the pain, all he could register was a sense of difference unfavorable to the self (Colman, 1991, p. 364) making the addictions more insistent to escape such feelings.

Daniel's addictions substituted for the natural and instinctual self as neither his spirit nor soul were in harmony. This alienation or splitting off of the self results from the repression of feelings determined as unbearable. "The narcissist strives to keep everything of value within the compass of himself because, paradoxically, he is plagued by doubt as to whether there is anything of value within himself" (Colman, 1991, p. 365). Andre Green surmised that it is "because of the lack of the object and the drives seeking satisfaction that the mind is activated... a destruction of the psychic activity of representation which creates holes in the mind, or feelings of void, emptiness etc. a failure of symbolization" (Kohon, 1999, p. 290). The sexual addiction does not fill but perpetuates the lack of self worth. The pull to women, drink, food represents the split-off negative or shadow reactions. Secretly hidden, they remain unconscious until the person is compelled to delve into the situation.

When people are suffering in some kind of complex, or when they are lonely, they need someone to notice them, simply to recognize them. In the absence of adequate internal and external containers it becomes necessary to resort to increasingly forceful projective attribution in the desperate hope of relief from what in the moment is felt to be unbearable.

"The transition from one psychic condition to another by means of the mutual confrontation of opposites" described Jung's concept of the transcendent function (Jung, 1969, par. 780). It brings the psyche from oppositional defensive states through symbol formation. Such is the nature of change and integration occurring internally and between self and other, evolving in the analytic relationship. This means listening to the language of the unconscious as it meets up with consciousness and attempts to restore balance.

Summary

“when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposing halves.”

--Jung, Aion, par. 126

Daniel throws the I Ching and emails it before sessions so we can discuss the meaning. He says he is starting to value the inner world. In the psychological work and through the transference and countertransference the former sterility, lack of intimacy to self and others gradually has come alive. Accepting the disowned and split off others secreted in the shadows and the previous clinging to oneness is opening to twoness as an internal couple within him emerges. This represents the phoenix rising from the ashes, the nigredo of the narcissian melancholy explored rather than denied.

The subjective relation to and with the interior world and its symbols informs the capacity to create meaning, connect to people and engage with life. The relation to interiority evolved over time as for Daniel the restlessness of the psyche led to recovery of his spirit. Through the therapeutic relationship he began to trust and become consciously embodied, intentional and with self-awareness.

How old is the habit of denial? We keep secrets from ourselves that all along we know.... For perhaps we are like stones; our own history and the history of the world embedded in us, we hold a sorrow deep within and cannot weep until that history is sung.

Susan Griffin, Chorus of Stones, p. 48

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