

The **Vaknin-Rangelovska Foundation** Presents:

**Life Cycle of the Narcissist:
Parents, Partners, Children
(From Self to Objects)**

Seminar with:

Prof. **Sam Vaknin**

Our Gratitude to the **Commonwealth Institute of Advanced Professional Studies (CIAPS), Cambridge, UK** for its sponsorship.

Watch From Child to Narcissist Playlist

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsh_y_ett4o1D9iPsx9nI0ruUI4HHRz_xi

Watch Family Dynamics Playlist

https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLsh_y_ett4o321k6L9U3UjBVISvHscSzE

Thursday, May 21, 2026

17:00 Narcissist: The Inverted Human

19:00 Mark Thomas Beare's MPIT and ASR theories of narcissistic abuse

Friday, May 22, 2026

10:00-12:00 Narcissistic Parents: Covert vs. Overt

13:00-14:30 Narcissistic Parenting Styles

15:00-17:00 Long-term Impacts of Narcissistic Parenting

Saturday, May 23, 2026

10:00-12:00 The Narcissist's Shared Fantasy Cycle

13:00-14:30 Partner's Survival and Coping Strategies

15:00-17:00 Recovery and Healing from Toxic Relationships

Sunday, May 24, 2026

10:00-12:00 Narcissist as Parent: Second Childhood

13:00-14:30 Shifting Roles of Narcissist's Children

15:00-17:00 Here We Go Again! Inter-generational Transmission

Narcissist: The Inverted Human

Controversies

Gender and relationship to masculine self-concept

Heredity, brain (medicalization)

DSM vs. ICD (traits, dimensions vs. categories)

Healthy adult narcissism

Developmental pathways to pathological (secondary) narcissism

Narcissistic vs. Object cathexis

Type inconstancy: Overt vs. Covert, Somatic vs. Cerebral

Compensatory narcissism and Impostor Syndrome
(dissociative derealization, depersonalization, amnesia, confabulation)

Gaslighting vs. confabulation and fantasy
(pseudologica fantastica)

Empty Schizoid Core ([TEXT](#))

Insecure attachment (IWM)

Self and self-states

Boundary issues owing to disrupted Self-formation

The Other as a self-state (kaleidoscopic hive mind)

False Self as **Moloch**, True Self as **Human Sacrifice**,
Narcissism as **missionary distributed religion**

FALSE SELF

False Self is a hive, a colony. It is relational (Lacan, Sullivan's **Interpersonal Theory**).

False Self less about flexing and more about **fending off**, a fulcrum. It is giddy when it **scuttles the abuse** sometimes by **identifying with the aggressor**.

False self is callow (**infantile**) and callous (**antisocial**, lugubrious (prolonged grief) **sublimation** (phase transition from true to self + psychoanalytic, its contents prosocial, normative).

False Self is redolent of the fantasy of **prosocial normality** (but not normalcy). It is pseudo-sublimatory.

It confuses the **reality principle** (ego functions) with **prosocial dimensions** (efficaciously acting in and on reality is conflated with acting normatively; **self-efficacy mistaken for moral righteousness**). At the same time, it seeks to inveigle and manipulate.

False Self usurps id and ego functions but not superego.

The False Self is a **decoy**, it "attracts the fire". It is a **proxy for the True Self**. It is **tough as nails** and can absorb any amount of pain, hurt and negative emotions.

By inventing it, the **child develops immunity** to the indifference, manipulation, sadism, smothering, or exploitation -- in short: to the abuse -- inflicted on him by his parents (or by other Primary Objects in his life).

False Self is a **cloak**, a Harry Potter-like contraption, protecting the narcissist and rendering him **invisible and omnipotent** at the same time.

Narcissist misidentifies False Self as his only and true self. False Self provides all ego functions and sense of continuity.

Ego's **synthetic function, secondary process thinking.**

Narcissists have **no ego. Ego death** means narcissism.

Ego functions include: reality testing, impulse control, emotional regulation, judgment, object relations, cognitive processes, defense mechanisms, and a synthetic function.

False Self: locus of **self-concept** and **target of co-idealization.**

The **False Self** replaces the narcissist's **True Self** and is intended to **shield** him from hurt and narcissistic injury by **self-imputing omnipotence**, omniscience, and omnipresence (godlike attributes).

The narcissist pretends that his **False Self is real** and demands that **others affirm this confabulation**.

The **False Self re-interprets information** in a flattering or socially-acceptable light and also **imitates and emulates normal emotions and empathy**.

Mask [Goffman], **persona** [Jung] not False Self, which is mostly subconscious, depends on outside feedback, and is compulsive.

The False Self is an **adaptive reaction to pathological circumstances**. But its dynamics make it predominate, devour the psyche and prey upon the True Self. Thus, it **prevents the efficient, flexible functioning** of the personality as a whole.

In a full-fledged narcissist, the **False Self imitates the True Self**. To do so artfully, it deploys two mechanisms: **Re-Interpretation and Emulation**.

Borderline's False Self: different roles to the narcissist's and co-exists and conflicts with the True Self. This conflict leads to **emotional dysregulation** and other clinical features of BPD.

Identity diffusion or disturbance: not experiencing the Self, life as no one, a mask, fake. It is an impulsive attempt to fill in, counter, or distract from the emptiness or absence by experimenting with different identities and thus engendering unpredictable outcomes (trying on roles). Borderlines are obsessed with finding an organizing narrative (who am I).

Instead of a failed external constitution of the True Self (via interactions with Others, selfobjects, mother) - **external regulation via a False Self:** inauthenticity, pretend play. Borderlines recreate themselves on the fly

(grandiose fantasies) because they distrust reality to do it for them (**Helene Deutsch's "as if" personality**).

False Self is dynamic, primary and also conscious and secondary as a role, a defense.

Borderlines are capable of lying and gaslighting because, unlike narcissists, they **can tell the differences between fantasy and reality**. But this gives rise to an **impostor syndrome**.

Living via other people or experiencing other people's lives leads to chronic feelings of **incoherence**, **inauthenticity**, guilt, estrangement, dissociative processes, terror, vagueness, uncertainty (hence catastrophizing abandonment), helplessness, and stasis.

Comparable to DID: False Self coopts all the optimal or maximal resources (e.g., the intellect) and suppresses suboptimal ones (e.g., the sensorimotor or psychosomatic). This creates a disconnect, a dissociation

between the **2 classes of resources** and **identity problems**.

True Self feels real and is creative. False Self is fantasy-based and is regurgitative.

But: there is no narrative without identity! Narrative is created by an identity to maintain its sense of diachronic unity and cohesiveness and to get to know, discover itself. There is no self-knowledge and self-discovery without an antecedent Self.

However, how do the various Agents know that they belong to the same Team? In BPD, they fail to realize it!

So, Borderlines inability to generate a self-narrative is the outcome not the cause of their diffuse or disturbed identity.

Preverbal Self (Bollas's unknown thought) as tacit organizing principle or template (Laszlo Tengelyi's

archaeology of the self and dan Zahavi's minimal self). These are metaphysical speculations, not grounded in clinical or laboratory observations.

Victim develops a transient False Self as imaginary friend and transitional object to protect against the aggressor-abuser and to placate him.

TEXT

The failure in the formation of the Self/Ego via separation-individuation in early childhood results in a cascade of deficiencies in later life. The infant is unable to transition from preverbal nonconceptual mental content (unthought known, unconscious) to the conceptual, linguistic phase.

The child fails to recognize the externality of objects and to generate theories of mind (mentalize) as well as theories about relationships (IWM - Internal Working Model), and about reality. S/he is stuck in apprehensive

knowing (non-verbal) vs. comprehensive knowing (concepts borrowed from systems therapy).

Moreover: the nonemergence of a continuous and cohesive core identity generates a nonidentity problem in the dissociative, nonconceptual non-individual: an ability to conceive and imagine future selves and act to safeguard and enhance their welfare and wellbeing.

Developmental paths

Protective, micromanaged Inflation vs. Indifferent or abusive Deflation: excluding the world or negating the child (non-integrated, non-constellated views)

Co-idealization or devaluation: not being seen, no defining gaze which leads to becoming

Compensatory self-gaze fragile, **gaze hunting** (narcissistic supply)

Dead mother's absence internalized

Adolescent Narcissism: Personal Fable, Imaginary Audience, Depressive Realism, Defensive Pessimism, Hostile Attribution Bias or Intent (Adolescent Egocentrism [first described by U.S. developmental psychologist David Elkind (1931–)])

Imaginary Friend, Transitional Object, False Self

Normal psychotic hyperreflexivity in childhood

Conflating external with internal objects

If the **external object is terrifying** (abuse, trauma), the **child transitions to BPD** where **internal objects are external (psychoticism)** and with a **False Self** which **starts as external (special friend) and ends as internal.**

This **Self fragment prevents full-fledged psychosis** (a state of **no self**).

Grotstein (BPD failed NPD) and **Kernberg** (NPD defense against BPD): If **BPD False Self is attacked** and disabled by abuse and trauma, the **child attempts to transition to NPD**.

NPD is mirror image of BPD:

External objects are internal (fantasy and delusionality) and **False Self which starts as internal** (grandiosity) and **ends as external** (true self vanishes).

This solution fails when **reality intrudes** (narcissistic injury, **mortification**) and cannot be reframed and the **False Self remains internal**.

The **child then transitions to BPD or psychopathy** where **only external objects exist** and there is **no false self or any self** (unimpaired reality testing).

Decompensation reverses this sequence.

Mother's Gaze

Gaze as Trauma, Being Seen as Salve

Gaze not physical fact: it is a **caregiving attitude**.

TEXT

The infant has no conception of self, other, and world (external-internal). It is, therefore, initially unable to identify itself in the mother's gaze (symbiotic phase). When it finally does recognize itself in her gaze, the child experiences a trauma, the schism of the world, and the emergence of the other.

Initially, the child rejects the mother's traumatizing gaze. He pushes her away, thus realizing her externality. Ironically, it is precisely this rejection that leads to differentiation, the first instance of proto-separation (Lacan's apperception or self-objectification or ambivalent self-alienation).

Lacan suggested that the unconscious - the seat of repressed traumas - is a compendium of other people's gazes. Thus, the mother's gaze is the cause of the formation of the unconscious, its nucleus is this primal trauma of being seen.

Why does the unconscious emerge? To resolve the existential dissonance between the survival need to be seen - and the trauma of being seen. The latter has to be repressed in the interest of survival.

Now, the child is ready to objectify and instrumentalise the mother as its first mirror. This gives rise to primary narcissism. The mother actively reflects the child to itself, idealized and aggrandized (“hall of mirrors effect”).

This affords the child the grandiose energy to take on the world and cathect it. The mother’s proactive benevolent gaze is synonymous with her secure base and gives rise to healthy attachment.

The mother’s gaze engenders mentalizing and object relations founded on separate external objects of secure attachment.

But when the mother is “dead”, so is her gaze. The child sees only her (the mirror) and the world, not himself. He fails to develop a concept of the external and operative object relations as well as a constellated self and an ego.

Such a child is incapable of mentalizing (attributing states of mind to others). He remains stuck in narcissism. He offers to his partners the hall of mirrors effect but without mentalizing and object relations, it does not progress beyond grandiose cathexis and causes regressive infantile retraumatization.

At the same time, the partner is converted into a dead, frustrating, withholding, betraying mother who mirrors herself and the world rather than the narcissist - thus undermining the shared fantasy as a persecutory object.

Hegel's negation of the negation

Empathy: a form of healthy narcissism

We need to explore **automaticity and mentalization** (Winnicott, Lacan, Fonagy).

“**Automaticity**” is probably the wrong model for human behavior – but so is **rationality**. Even bounded rationality is an optimistic approach.

Fonagy’s teleological non-mentalizing fits insects as well as humans. It is tautological. The existence of a goal implies perforce the existence of **intentionality (Brentano)** and vice versa. What we cannot be sure of is the existence of goals (**teleology**).

Transferences occur not only in analysis – but in all human relationships. This is especially true in relationships with narcissists: they are children and the significant Other is always a maternal figure. **Dual mothership**, for example, **is a transference**. Narcissists provoke transferences in others. The Hall of Mirrors is a form of transference.

Kohut's narcissistic transferences: idealizing transference, mirror transference, and twinship transference

Memory and identity

Dissociation and confabulation

Discontinuity and diffuse identity: Ontological insecurity

Borrowed identities (mimicry) vs. **self-generating narratives** (narcissists as a fiction)

Regulation

Outsourced **ego functions**

External **regulation**

Emotions and cognitions

Affect Avoidance Model

Guilt, shame (autoplastic)

Grief

Envy

TEXT

Envy is the hallmark of narcissism and the prime source of what is known as narcissistic rage.

The schizoid self – fragmented, weak, primitive – is intimately connected with narcissism through envy. Narcissists prefer to destroy themselves and to deny themselves rather than endure someone else's happiness, wholeness and "triumph".

The narcissist fail his exams in order to frustrate the teacher he adores and envies. He aborts his therapy in order not to give the therapist a reason to feel gratified. By self-defeating and self-destructing, narcissists deny the worth of others.

If the narcissist fails in therapy – his analyst must be inept. If he destroys himself by consuming drugs – his parents are blameworthy and should feel guilty and bad. One cannot exaggerate the importance of envy as a motivating power in the narcissist's life.

The psychodynamic connection is obvious. Envy is a rage reaction to not controlling or "having" or engulfing the good, desired object. Narcissists defend themselves against this acidulous, corroding sensation by pretending that they do control, possess and engulf the good object. This are the narcissist's "grandiose fantasies (of omnipotence or omniscience)".

But, in doing so, the narcissist must deny the existence of any good outside himself.

The narcissist defends himself against raging, all consuming envy – by solipsistically claiming to be the only good object in the world.

This is an object that cannot be had by anyone, except the narcissist and, therefore, is immune to the narcissist's threatening, annihilating envy.

In order to refrain from being "owned" by anyone (and, thus, avoid self-destruction in the hands of his own envy), the narcissist reduces others to "non-entities" (the narcissistic solution), or completely avoids all meaningful contact with them (the schizoid solution).

The suppression of envy is at the core of the narcissist's being. If he fails to convince his self that he is the only good object in the universe, he is bound to be exposed to his own murderous envy.

If there are others out there who are better than him, he envies them, he lashes out at them ferociously, uncontrollably, madly, hatefully and spitefully, he tries to eliminate them.

If someone tries to get emotionally intimate with the narcissist, she threatens the grandiose belief that no one but the narcissist can possess the good object (that is the narcissist himself).

Only the narcissist can own himself, have access to himself, possess himself. This is the only way to avoid seething envy and certain self-annihilation.

Perhaps it is clearer now why narcissists react as raving madmen to anything, however minute, however remote that seems to threaten their grandiose fantasies, the only protective barrier between themselves and their lethal, seething envy.

External locus of control

Alloplastic defenses

Grandiosity and paranoid ideation

Epistemology and ontology

Real Fantasy (Paracosm) vs. Surreal Reality

Cognitive distortions at the service of self-enhancement

Injuries: narcissistic and epistemic

Object perception and relations

Narrative defenses against empathy aphantasia

Object (in)constancy vs. Introject (in)constancy: roles of introjects and imagos in narcissistic pathology, Conflation of internal and external objects

Compulsion, repetition, no agency

Hypereflexivity and extensionalism instead of intentionalism

Boundary of self/world

Denying internal reality by externalizing it (dissociative internal voices psychosis, bizarre and nonbizarre delusions including paranoia, referential ideation, erotomania, and grandiosity, DID, narcissism, identity confusion, identity alteration, flashbacks) thus **negating capacity to feel pain**.

These are all **post-traumatic** conditions, exactly like BPD.

Rejecting life (and afterlife for suicides) by **becoming one with the world** (eliminating boundary of self/world).

Alexithymia and **anankastia** (rigid, rule-bound perfectionism)

SEXUALITY

TEXT

Autoerotism (regarding oneself as one's sex object) often goes hand in hand with exhibitionism (becoming sexually aroused by another's objectifying gaze). The more

numerous the observers, the more intense the sexual excitatory state.

That is why the autoerotic - mainly narcissists and psychopaths - gravitate to group sex with total strangers even in early adolescence.

The autoerotic objectify not only themselves but also the partner, whose body they use as a sex toy, to masturbate with.

Thus, the partner's identity is utterly incidental: he or she could be anonymous strangers encountered only minutes or a few hours before the act.

Casual sex is the autoerotic's staple: in his committed relationships, s/he is typically sexless.

Sex with the autoerotic is an eerie sensation: disembodied, mechanical, non-reciprocated, infantile, and

lonely as the autoerotic partners focus exclusively on their bodies and on their self-gratification.

The intimate partners of the autoerotic invariably develop sex aversion to them. The autoerotic's solipsistic self-focus, defiance, and oblivion to the partner is also a narcissistic injury and triggers aggression in narcissists and psychopaths.

Paradoxically, precisely because the partner is a mere generic, undifferentiated prop, as long as they are sexually catered to within the relationship, the autoerotic rarely cheat on their mates. At any rate, they are actually making love to themselves.

If s/he is masochistic, the autoerotic's on the fly sex involves extreme self-trashing: sex with unwanted, little-known, or inappropriate partners in degrading circumstances or environments. Less commonly, cheating serve or even celibacy the same purpose of self-despoiling ("I am a bad, unworthy object").

The self-trashing autoerotic abuses substances with the aim of disinhibiting herself and numbing herself to her socially unacceptable conduct and possible unconscious ego dystony.

Narcissists and psychopaths are an imitative “surface” only: there is no depth, just an empty schizoid core where a person should have been. They are carbon-based simulations.

As Hervey Cleckley noted already in 1942, these mutants prefer sexual self-trashing to normal sex and to mainstream trashing (BDSM).

Sexual SELF-trashing is defiant and reckless: it is assertive and involves self-efficacious agency, even when it is ego dystonic. By contradistinction, sexual trashing by OTHERS is an entirely submissive, even self-annihilating role which involves total objectification and ritualized helplessness.

Self-trashers and subs are easily mistaken for each other. Narcissists and psychopaths can never enjoy being the bottom masochistic sub: they need to control and to defy. They self-trash to gratify their masochism.

Narcissists and psychopaths view the world, sex included, as a zero sum game.

When they regard themselves as inferior or superior to a potential sex partner, they gravitate impulsively towards self-trashing casual sex.

When the possible mate is perceived as an equal peer, they decline to have a one night stand and instead insist on grooming, lovebombing, and an ensuing shared fantasy.

As narcissism and antisocial traits and behaviors become more normative and widespread, sexual self-trashing is rendered a common practice at least in the forms of “meaningless and emotionless sex” and flagrant serial cheating.

Role-play

Roles of verbal self-acclamation:

Self-supply (anxiolytic self-soothing)

Loyalty testing

Self-justification and self-enhancement

Self-acclamation (like pseudohumility, pseudoinfantilization, and pseudostupidity): **signaling stimuli**

Signal detection theory (SDT): human performance in many tasks is limited by variability in the internal representation of stimuli due to internal or external

d prime: a measure of an individual's ability to detect signals; more specifically, a measure of sensitivity or discriminability derived from [signal detection theory](#) that is unaffected by response biases. It is the difference (in standard deviation units) between the means of the [noise](#) and signal + noise distributions.

Receiver-operating characteristic curve (ROC curve): in a detection, discrimination, or recognition task, the relationship between the proportion of correct *yes* responses (hit rate) and the proportion of incorrect *yes* responses (false-alarm rate). This is plotted on a graph to show an individual's sensitivity on the particular task: The axes are hit and false-alarm rates, points are marked to denote the different rates obtained under different conditions, and the points are connected to form a smooth arc.

TEXTS

Maternal mirroring engenders the child's self as well as introduces reality/the world.

The mirroring failure prevents the emergence of a self and impairs reality testing.

Instead, the child internalizes his mother the way a child sees a mother: perfect and godlike. This is part of the False Self.

The False Self is both an idealized counterfactual self and an idealized object (a counterfactual good mother). All the bad objects - self and mother - are aggressively projected initially (later, internalized).

Role as external regulator requires absorbing the narcissist's dysregulation (like shock absorber)

Kohut: narcissists are stuck in early stages of self-development and interact with people in archaic ways from that position. People are mere selfobjects (extensions of the self). Their role is to regulate the narcissist's self-esteem and reduce his/her anxieties

(external regulation of affective correlates of the ups and downs of daily life). Others are supposed to provide unconditional support, admiration, attention, total empathy attunement, the same way a parent provides internal regulation to a child.

Green (2001): death or negative narcissism is when death drive paralyzes the self. Void, depletion, emptiness, withdrawal of cathexis, “aspiration for nothing”.

Narcissistic gratification in this state is achieved by frustrating the desire for the object, disengagement, striving towards psychic death.

Unconscious identification with dead mother (depressed, emotionally unavailable, selfish, frustrating, etc.) who is needed but cannot be relied on or abandoned leads to denial of intimate or emotional relationships coupled with an internal sense of deadness.

Failure in ego formation allows the ego ideal to take over. The ego ideal becomes the False Self and the child merges with it.

Freud: vicissitudes in self-regard results of critical self-observations and self-reproach (harsh self-criticism) accompanied by unattainable, unrealistic ideals.

Anton Kris (1990, 1994): unconscious or externalized self-criticism. Discrepancy between entitlement and demandingness and underlying depletion and self-deprivation rooted in it.

Self-criticism contributes to need to be special and confirmed, underlying shame and guilt for narcissistic failures or vulnerabilities.

Narcissistic mortification in Freud's work (1938): early injuries to child's budding ego. Shock when faced with the discrepancy between endorsed or ideal view of self and drastically contrasting realization.

The emptiness is a result of failure in parental mirroring and parental over- or under - investment and presence in child's life.

All these dynamics recreated with the maternal substitute.

Rosenfeld (1971) who influenced Kernberg's work suggested that thin-skinned narcissism involves idealization of the self vis-a-vis the good object and destructive, thick-skinned narcissism is an idealization of the omnipotent destructive self.

Stolorow (1975): function of narcissism (as developmental line, object choice, or self-esteem regulation) "is to maintain the structural cohesiveness, temporal stability and positive affective coloring of the self-representation"

Meissner (2008): narcissism is motivational. It aims at affecting the evolution of self-organization (self-esteem, self-preservation, self-cohesion, self-valuation).

Self is primary object of narcissistic motivational investment.

Rosenfeld: Narcissism is the failure to defend against aggression and envy!

Fiscalini identify two types of narcissism. A defensive characterological type similar to self-centered centeredness that represent a mal development caused by experiences of interpersonal shaming and spoiling and or spoiling.

Shaming or spoiling lead to the same characterological problem, characterological defect or dysfunction according to Fiscalini, a defensive type and an archaic developmental narcissism, the second type that is more natural and representing early interpersonal needs.

Fiscalini also identified a set of clinical features features that form a core narcissistic constellation. Self-centeredness and lack of empathy.

Grandiosity, cyclic contempt and idealization of self and others, thick-headedness, psychological inaccessibility, thin skinnedness, abnormal vulnerability, entitlement, other directedness, search for admiration, approval, attention, and acceptance and power orientation of striving for control and coerciveness.

Narcissism according to Fiscalini is a way of protecting a fragile and narcissistically injured interpersonal self and it is formed in the interpersonal interaction between parent and child mostly the mother.

Fiscalini suggested five developmental patterns that diverge from healthy narcissistic develop and that represent interactional vicissitudes of needs and desires. That is the shamed child, the spoiled child, the special child, the spurned rejected child and the seduced child.

Interactive patterns between defensive narcissism, injured pride and or narcissism representing developmental deficits due to unmet needs, the wounded need. These interactions are very common and I may add that we find them in all narcissists combined.

All narcissists are both overt and covert, both vulnerable and grandiose, both fragile and false self-oriented. All narcissists contain all these aspects, dimensions and manifestations. The taxonomy that has emerged especially in the late 80s or in the 80s today seems less and less correct. And possibly in the future, the separate diagnosis of covert narcissism is going to disappear into the black hole that all of narcissism

Narcissist's Empty Schizoid Core ("Black Hole")

Narcissists, borderlines, paranoids, have both an empty schizoid core and phases of schizoid behavior. These are reactive to deficient narcissistic supply and collapse

(narcissism), abandonment and engulfment (borderline), or overwhelming paranoid ideation. But they do not have a schizoid personality disorder.

We are all born with empty schizoid core, compensate by introjecting Mommy (symbiosis and primary narcissism).

Borderline's introjection failure and consequent introject inconstancy is what gives rise to his/her sense of emptiness (described by Kernberg). She compensates by over-reliance on external objects (anaclitic personality).

Narcissism is compensatory and infantile: object inconstancy, ceaseless introjection and incorporation of internal object MASK the emptiness, compensate for it (introjective personality).

Like supernova: Empty schizoid core seat of pathologies and addictions which substitute for core identity.

These pathologies and addictions are persistent and misidentified with identity.

Halo personality: periphery of void (remnant of supernova) comprises what in healthy people constitutes identity or personality: beliefs, values, traits, cognitions, emotions.

The halo personality elicits external regulation and generates a hive mind. These are last ditch attempts to become, to put Humpty-Dumpty back together, to reconstitute the shattered being.

But behaviors determined by core, not by periphery – by the void, not by the halo personality. Similar to generation of elementary particles in the vacuum of deep space: potentials become fleeting realities and then vanish again.

Asking who is the void or who is the False Self or who does the observing is like asking who is your smartphone or AI bot. Nothing there but programmed reactive routines.

Maternal mirroring engenders the child's self as well as introduces reality/the world.

The mirroring failure prevents the emergence of a self and impairs reality testing.

Instead, the child internalizes his mother the way a child sees a mother: perfect and godlike. This is part of the False Self.

The False Self is both an idealized counterfactual self and an idealized object (a counterfactual good mother). All the bad objects - self and mother - are aggressively projected initially (later, internalized).

Role as external regulator requires absorbing the narcissist's dysregulation (like shock absorber)

Kohut: narcissists are stuck in early stages of self-development and interact with people in archaic ways

from that position. People are mere selfobjects (extensions of the self). Their role is to regulate the narcissist's self-esteem and reduce his/her anxieties (external regulation of affective correlates of the ups and downs of daily life). Others are supposed to provide unconditional support, admiration, attention, total empathy attunement, the same way a parent provides internal regulation to a child.

Green (2001): death or negative narcissism is when death drive paralyzes the self. Void, depletion, emptiness, withdrawal of cathexis, “aspiration for nothing”.

Narcissistic gratification in this state is achieved by frustrating the desire for the object, disengagement, striving towards psychic death.

Unconscious identification with dead mother (depressed, emotionally unavailable, selfish, frustrating, etc.) who is needed but cannot be relied on or abandoned leads to denial of intimate or emotional relationships coupled with an internal sense of deadness.

Failure in ego formation allows the ego ideal to take over. The ego ideal becomes the False Self and the child merges with it.

Freud: vicissitudes in self-regard results of critical self-observations and self-reproach (harsh self-criticism) accompanied by unattainable, unrealistic ideals.

Anton Kris (1990, 1994): unconscious or externalized self-criticism. Discrepancy between entitlement and demandingness and underlying depletion and self-deprivation rooted in it.

Self-criticism contributes to need to be special and confirmed, underlying shame and guilt for narcissistic failures or vulnerabilities.

Narcissistic mortification in Freud's work (1938): early injuries to child's budding ego. Shock when faced with

the discrepancy between endorsed or ideal view of self and drastically contrasting realization.

The emptiness is a result of failure in parental mirroring and parental over- or under - investment and presence in child's life.

All these dynamics recreated with the maternal substitute.

Rosenfeld (1971) who influenced Kernberg's work suggested that thin-skinned narcissism involves idealization of the self vis-a-vis the good object and destructive, thick-skinned narcissism is an idealization of the omnipotent destructive self.

Stolorow (1975): function of narcissism (as developmental line, object choice, or self-esteem regulation) "is to maintain the structural cohesiveness, temporal stability and positive affective coloring of the self-representation"

Meissner (2008): narcissism is motivational. It aims at affecting the evolution of self-organization (self-esteem, self-preservation, self-cohesion, self-valuation).

Self is primary object of narcissistic motivational investment.

Rosenfeld: Narcissism is the failure to defend against aggression and envy!

Fiscalini did a lot of work in the interpersonal relational school (intersubjectivity school) of psychology.

According to Ronningstam, Fiscalini identified two types of narcissism:

A defensive characterological type similar to self-centeredness that represents a maladaptive development caused by experiences of interpersonal shaming and spoiling (a defensive type); and an archaic developmental

narcissism that is more natural and represents early interpersonal needs.

Fiscalini also identified a set of clinical features that form a core narcissistic constellation: self-centeredness and lack of empathy, grandiosity, cyclic contempt and idealization of self and others, thick-headedness, psychological inaccessibility, thin-skinnedness, abnormal vulnerability, entitlement, other-directedness, search for admiration, approval, attention and acceptance, and power orientation of striving for control and coerciveness.

Narcissism according to Fiscalini is a way of protecting a fragile and narcissistically injured interpersonal self and it is formed in the interpersonal interaction between parent and child mostly the mother.

Fiscalini suggested five developmental patterns that diverge from healthy narcissistic develop and that represent interactional vicissitudes of needs and desires that is:

The shamed child, the spoiled child, the special child, the spurned-rejected child, and the seduced child.

Interactive patterns between defensive narcissism (injured pride) and narcissism representing developmental deficits due to unmet needs (the wounded need) are very common. We find them in all narcissists combined. All narcissists are at times both overt and covert, both vulnerable and grandiose, both fragile and false self-oriented.

All narcissists contain all these aspects dimensions and manifestations the taxonomy and nosology that have emerged especially in the late 80s. Possibly in the future the separate diagnosis of covert narcissism is going to disappear.

ATEMPORAL NARCISSIST

TEXT

Peter Thiel and his ilk champion the organizing principle of the “sovereign individual” or the “bizarre genius” (which is how they see themselves).

They are confusing self-sufficiency with selfhood. All major theories of the Self posit a relational internal reality (or object): the Self is the sum total of meaningful relationships and meaning takes time and social context to process and forge.

The narcissist inhabits an eternal present.

To the narcissist – and more so, to the psychopath – the future is either of two: a hazy, abstract, merely hypothesized concept, or an anticipated certainty, the preordained outcome of his magical thinking (he believes that he determines future events merely by thinking about them.) These two misperceptions of time – diffuse time and teleological time-inversion - are cognitive deficits and are owing to a confluence of several narcissistic traits.

The sense of time is a result of the way we process experiences.

Human development is the outcome of reflection on lived experiences and their integration into a sense of personal continuity (aka the Self). The subjective perception of time is the introspective living of this developmental trajectory.

In the footsteps of Janet, Freud observed that memories are constantly reframed and imbued with narrative significance in light of later events (Nachträglichkeit or afterwardness, retroactive attribution, or deferred action).

Owing to pervasive dissociation and compensatory confabulation, the narcissist fails to maintain a contextual or temporal-chronological linkage between lived events and this leads to a hermeneutic narrative failure which is experienced as “timelessness”.

Bion called it coherence: mental integration and the generation of meaning which is time-consuming and

involves making sense of emotions (the K or Knowledge link). Sensory experiences are raw (unprocessed and unintegrated) and chaotic (beta elements). The human mind attempts to meaningfully cohere them into organized thoughts and images (alpha elements). In the Kleinian lingo, this is the transition from the paranoid-schizophrenic position to the depressive one.

Again, pathological narcissism is profoundly disruptive and impedes these dynamics. Narcissist are defensively denied access to their positive emotions and even to some negative affects such as shame. They remain permanently stuck in the primordial soup of direct experience which has no antecedents or descendants.

According to Bion, in early life the mother “contains” the child, allowing it to metabolize the raw products of its novel yet threatening experiences. Gradually, we learn to contain ourselves, introjecting the mother.

In the background of most narcissist, we find dysfunctional (“dead”) mothers who fail to provide

containment. The narcissist spends the rest of his/her life soliciting containment from others. This constant pursuit of maternal substitutes results in hedgehog day dynamics (stunted development or arrested time).

Winnicott's transitional liminal space is a "third," intermediate area of experience bridging an infant's inner psychic reality and the external, objective world. Developed through "good-enough" care and the provision of a secure base, it enables the transition from magical, omnipotent thinking to reality acceptance.

This space fosters creativity, play, and symbolization, often facilitated by transitional objects like blankets or toys. It also allows the infant to develop a theory of mind and secure attachment internal working models as well as learn to self-regulate via the mother's continuous availability and responsiveness.

Again: the narcissist's mother fails to provide these functions. The narcissist is forever trapped in an atavistic, primitive religion-like space, replete with magical

thinking, and a protective yet sadistic divinity. Time does not pass in such a frozen realm.

Instability and Lability

The life of the narcissist is inherently unstable. This makes it difficult to perceive time as a linear flow of causes and their effects. The narcissist's time is cyclical, arbitrary, and magical.

Parental Narcissism and Its Impacts

"When alarmed, the child seeks proximity to a caregiver. But proximity to a frightening caregiver increases the alarm" (**Hazen and McFarland, 2010**)

Absent Mother: Kohut, Dolto, Green

Bion, Dolto: somatic bonding and her absent mother is mostly **absent physically**.

Green: "dead mother" is mostly psychologically absent.

Terminology

Overt vs. Covert (not Grandiose vs. Vulnerable)

ETIOLOGY: The PARENT

Nature or nurture?

Parenthood is a **reenactment** of childhood vicariously

Performative parenting aimed to “acquire” both child and observers as sources of supply and ensure submission

Maternal vs. paternal caregivers (e.g., Freud, Klein, Winnicott, Bowlby vs. Cramer who emphasized paternal authoritarianism in adolescence)

Gender effects (overprotective fathers – overt sons and dead, cold, detached mothers – covert daughters; positive mothers – self-esteem)

Overt Traits: hereditary dissociality, anankastia, antagonism, agency, dominance, aggression, need for validation (agentic facets – leadership, assertiveness, self-confidence - harmless, so covert narcissism more deleterious)

Covert Behaviors: Child perceived as persecutory, Hypersensitivity, insecurity, intermittent reinforcement, introverted self-absorption, passive-aggression, negative affects (envy), distrust, emotional reactivity and reactance, guilt-based manipulation (control from the bottom, emotional extortion), withholding or withdrawal of affection

Two pathways to pathological narcissism: rejection/neglect (cold, unboundaried) vs. symbiosis/control (overprotective, over-involved, constrictive, instrumentalizing, parentifying)

Baumrind (1971) **Authoritarian** (high control/monitoring, low warmth/responsiveness, emotionally distant/high involvement, punitive, demanding); or

Permissive Parenting (anxiolytic, high warmth, low boundaries, no frustration), but not Authoritative: vulnerability reaction formation (parental sadism)

Pseudomutual and pseudohostile parenting: narrative parenting

Projected splitting

Self-enhancement: child as source of supply, trophy/extension (co-idealization, overvaluation incommensurate with effort), or as competitor for supply (narcissistic victimhood)

Conditional, performative “love”

The introjected child

Addictive Fantasy in cultlike setting, paracosms

Dead mother (no gaze, death internalized), separation-individuation, self-formation, modeling/social learning, and theory of mind (mentalization) failures

Reciprocal dependency

Dysemathy

Machiavellianism, power plays, emotional blackmail, control

Insecure attachment style and IWM (jealousy, suboptimal relationship management and regulation: hostility, coerciveness)

FATHER's ROLE

Socialization agent, skilling, scripts

Father affects the **manifestations (expression) of the pathology**:

Dead father (collapsed, narcissistic, absent-neglectful, frustrating, depressive, inadequate)

Shameful, failure, loser father

Intermittent, splitting, approach-avoidant, bipolar father (self-worth lability)

Antisocial-entitled father

Fantasy-prone father

Harsh, critical, rejecting father (people-pleaser, codependent, covert/inverted)

Unjust-sadistic father (contumaciousness, defiance)

Dysregulated father

Incestuous father

Parentifying father

Instrumentalizing father

Pedestalizing father (impaired reality testing, grandiosity)

Submissive, codependent, covert-inverted father

OUTCOMES

Unconstellated/unintegrated Self (disrupted self-concept/core identity, memory issues)

Internalized bad object (Green: rigid expectations + rejection/devaluation of emotional needs = sense of worthlessness/inadequacy/incompetence)

Emotion dysregulation and compensatory narcissistic defenses and personality structures
(superiority/uniqueness, entitlement, aggression)

No secure base

External locus of control and alloplastic defenses

Comfort zone (Winnicott, projective identification)

Shame

External regulation and externalizing

Internalization problem: anxiety and depression (grief, inner deadness owing to attachment insecurity, lost Self, and lost selfobjects)

Attachment insecurity: avoidant, anxious, dismissive, disorganized=BPO (anticipated rejection, performative, conditional love, risk of exploitation owing to unboundaried people-pleasing)

Narcissistic transferences: idealization (parental), mirror (affirmation), and twinship (sameness)

Donald W. Winnicott: Abused and traumatized children dare not hope for love. To protect themselves against disappointment, **they hate others** ostentatiously and desire to be hated in return.

It is their way of **testing the waters:** can these people or institutions hate the child without resorting to maltreatment and rejection?

Epictetus: Men are disturbed not by events, but **by the views which they take of them.**

Albert Ellis, founder of REBT, precursors to CBT: experience causes no specific emotional reaction, the **individual's belief system produces the reaction.**

Harry Stack Sullivan: people are **products of their environment.**

Boris Cyrulnik: trauma consists of the injury and the representation of the injury. **Adult interpretations of events are the most damaging post-traumatic experience for children.** Labels can be more damaging and damning than the experience.

Dorothy Rowe: when we are wrong, we **self-blame and feel guilt, shame, helplessness.**

Georg Hegel: consciousness of **self depends on presence of the Other**

Jean Paul Sartre: **perception** of the world, including of others, **changes when another person appears**, we absorb their concept of the Other into our own.

Jacques Lacan: the **unconscious** is the **discourse of the Other.**

Charles Horton Cooley's looking glass self (way we view ourselves based on how we imagine that other people view us).

Heinz Kohut: when child's needs are not met, a **fragmented self** emerges, consisting of the narcissistic self and the grandiose self.

Eric Berne and Transactional Analysis: lifelong child, adult, parental ego states.

Fritz Perls, founder of Gestalt therapy: **sense of reality created through perception**, the ways we view our experiences, **not the events themselves**.

Schizotypy and Neoteny

Schizotypy is psychological neoteny. It involves **regression** to pre-self childhood, when the self is either not constellated or not integrated, boundaries are fuzzy,

and there is a confusion between external and internal objects. **Creativity and imagination** are enhanced and predispose to **fantasy**.

When we combine the schizotypy model with the **Five Factor model of personality**, we find that Borderline, Narcissistic, Schizoid, Schizotypal, Paranoid, Secondary Psychopathy, and other personality disorders emerge naturally. It seems that **personality defenses are defenses against schizophrenia and psychosis**.

Advantages of refusing to grow up (Puer Aeternus/Peter Pan): 1. I am a child, so I am **harmless and vulnerable, don't hurt me** 2. I am still a toddler, so I am **helpless and hurting, care for me, help me, take care of my needs**. This is an extreme example of neoteny.

Relationship difficulties (mate selection as abuser/parent, trial and error, fear of intimacy/commitment, idealization-devaluation cycles, lack of boundaries, conflict resolution issues,

hypervigilance, narcissistic parent's competitive and sabotaging intrusiveness)

Elation, grief, rage when parents die (akin to hostages freed)

ADOLESCENCE

TEXT

In both childhood and adolescence, narcissism is a positive adaptation and contributes to self-efficacy. Application to shared fantasy as reenactment of separation-individuation and repetition compulsion with heightened narcissism as a positive adaptive strategy.

Adolescents are more narcissistic in general (Blos 1962, Winnicott 1965, Kohut 1977, Bleiberg 1994) and especially when they experience difficulties with separation-individuation when they construct a self-concept, ego, and identity away from their parents

(Erikson 1950, 1968; Marcia 1980; Blos 1962, Josselson 1988; Banai, Mikulincer, and Shaver 2005; Lapsley and Aalsma 2006, Lapsley, Fitzgerald, Rice, and Jackson, 1989).

Wrong choices lead to self-doubt and a sense of inadequacy. Grandiose narcissism buttresses and restores self-esteem on such occasions.

Adolescents who feel omnipotent and omniscient score higher on measures of mastery coping and have decreased depressive and self-esteem issues.

Adolescents that are covert (believe that they are so unique that no one can understand them) exhibit many pathological symptoms (Aalsma, Lapsley, Flannery 2006; Hill and Lapsley 2011).

Some clinical features of narcissism (exhibitionism, exploitativeness, entitlement) predict delinquency and problems in conduct while features related to greater self-esteem (self-sufficiency, authority) do not (Barry et al.

2003; Barry, Grafeman et al. 2007; Donnelan, Trzensiewski, Robins, Moffit and Caspi 2005).

Narcissism is conducive to setting occupational and financial life goals (Arnett 2000; Staudinger 1996); Roberts and Robins 2000). Setting goals focused on money and recognition is adaptive during college, though not necessarily correlated with wellbeing later on in life (Hill, Burrow, Brandenberger, Lapsley and Quaranto 2010).

Generally speaking: self-focus and individualism are adaptive during the adoption of new roles and expectations. Having an inflated sense of self leads towards setting goals that promote self-interest.

Narcissism can be either adaptive or maladaptive (Barry et al 2003; Barry, Grafeman, Adler, and Pickard 2007; Pincus and Lukowitsky 2010; Hill and Lapsley 2011).

RECOVERY

No contact

Social and online **support**, therapy

Present orientation (**mindfulness**)

De-introjection

Separation-individuation

From **fantasy to reality testing**

Self-parenting and self-love

Trust

From the Literature

Donald W. Winnicott, the famous paediatrician turned psychoanalyst, suggested that abused and traumatized children dare not hope for love. It is an **intergenerational transmission mechanism**.

To protect themselves against disappointment, such children hate others ostentatiously and desire to be hated in return (**projective identification**). It is their way of

testing the waters: can these people or institutions hate the child without resorting to maltreatment and rejection?

Boris Cyrulnik: trauma consists of the injury and the representation of the injury. Adult interpretations of events are the most damaging post-traumatic experience for children. Labels can be more damaging and damning than the experience.

Heinz Kohut: when child's needs are not met, a fragmented self emerges, consisting of the narcissistic self and the grandiose self. Eric Berne: lifelong child, adult, parental ego states.

“A parent’s Big Five personality traits are crucial characteristics to consider when looking at parental personality and child development.

Results from previous studies have shown that extraversion, conscientiousness, openness, and agreeableness are all linked to positive parenting styles indicating high warmth and positive outcomes in their child’s personality (Achtergarde et al., 2015).

However, parents high in neuroticism, mothers more specifically, were seen as less supportive and more power-assertive, which resulted in children with more

behavioral problems and negative personal outcomes (Achtergarde et al., 2015).

Vulnerable narcissism was significantly positively correlated with parents who were inconsistent with discipline and had poor monitoring and supervision skills (Mechanic & Barry, 2014).

Grandiose narcissism was negatively associated with subjective well-being, meaning parents with higher grandiose narcissism scores had little satisfaction with their parental and child bond resulting in a lower well-being score (Horton).

Our results showed that vulnerable narcissism is linked to a more negative sense of self in the adult child, as opposed to grandiose narcissism, which did not seem to negatively affect the adult child's self-esteem or well-being.

vulnerable and grandiose narcissism are both linked to more negative parenting styles—known as overprotection and rejection vulnerable and grandiose narcissism are both linked to negative attachment styles in the adult child. These attachment styles are known as anxious attachment and avoidant attachment, both of

which correlated with vulnerable and grandiose narcissism.

We were able to conclude that vulnerable narcissism was linked to therapy attendance and knowledge of familial mental illness, but grandiose narcissism was not.

vulnerable narcissism was linked with adverse effects of low well-being, low self-esteem, adverse parenting styles, and attachment styles. Grandiose narcissism was linked with adverse parenting styles and adverse attachment styles but did not have any link to self-esteem or well-being.”

““In the specific transition-to motherhood context, grandiose traits predicted better short-term maternal well-being postpartum through more positive body experience, stronger prenatal attachment that carried forward into bonding, and higher maternal self-efficacy, suggesting situational advantages of agentic self-enhancement in early caregiving tasks.”

“First, parenting style/tactics: lower warmth and autonomy support and higher punitive/permissive discipline mediated links from antagonistic grandiose facets to child internalizing/externalizing problems.

Second, parental cognitions/attributions: overvaluation transmitted fathers' narcissism to child narcissism, maternal perception of the child as difficult explained vulnerable-to-maladjustment links, scapegoating conveyed both maternal/paternal vulnerable-and maternal grandiose-effects to offspring anxiety/depression, and anxious attachment accounted for prospective effects of parental pathological narcissism on child depression.

Together, these findings suggest that how narcissistic parents see and use the child-overvalued extension, difficult foil, and scapegoat may be as consequential as overt tactics.

That child insecurity in close relationships is a plausible downstream mediator ...

Regarding global maladjustment, maternal vulnerable narcissism was found to predict child difficulties through maternal perception biases.

Regarding the quality of the parent-child relationship, antagonistic grandiosity co-occurred with reduced intimacy, admiration, and monitoring, alongside increased conflict and negative communication.

However, it did not drive changes over time at the population level ...

Three cross-study consistencies stand out.

First, vulnerable narcissism is the more reliable correlate of adverse child outcomes across reporters and contexts, largely via perception-, scapegoating-, and attachment-based mechanisms.

Second, grandiose narcissism is facet-sensitive: antagonistic features track poorer relationship climate and parenting, whereas agentic/leadership features can coincide with more positive tactics or short-term maternal adjustment, helping explain mixed direct associations with child symptoms.

Third, pathways are mostly indirect, emphasizing the leverage points of parenting behaviors, parental cognitions, and children's attachment security rather than strong direct effects on symptoms.

Contingencies include parent gender, with clearer direct risk linked to paternal grandiose traits in one retrospective study and father-specific overvaluation pathways in intergenerational narcissism”

LITERATURE

Orovou E, Jotautis V, Voursoura E, Koutelekos I, Rigas N, Sarantaki A. **Impact of Parental Narcissistic Personality Disorder on Parent-Child Relationship Quality and Child Well-Being: A Systematic Review.** *Cureus*. 2025 Dec 27;17(12):e100229. doi: 10.7759/cureus.100229. PMID: 41608003; PMCID: PMC12843898.

European Journal of Psychological Research Vol. 10 No. 3, 2023 ISSN 2057-4794 **THE IMPACT OF PARENTING WITH NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY DISORDER** by Atikah Dwi Fauziyah, Irawati Damanik & Alvin Mahendra

Lyons, Minna, Gayle, Brewer, Anna-Maria Hartley, and Victoria Blinkhorn. 2023. **“Never Learned to Love Properly”**: A Qualitative Study Exploring Romantic Relationship Experiences in Adult Children of Narcissistic Parents. *Social Sciences* 12: 159.

<https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci12030159>

Mirror, Mirror on the Wall: Impact of Narcissistic Parenting on their Children by Chengze Li, Ng et al.

(eds.), Proceedings of the 2025 10th International Conference on Modern Management, Education and Social Sciences (MMET 2025), Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 961, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-475-4_71

Palumbo, Amy. (2023). **Narcissistic Parenting and its Effects on Parenting Styles and Child Development.** In BSU Honors Program Theses and Projects. Item 625. Available at: https://vc.bridgew.edu/honors_proj/625

Narcissist's Object Relations

Narcissist's DEFICIENT RELATIONAL SELF

No relational Self: fragmentation, not integration

Performative Pseudoself (only narrative continuity)

Narcissist's selfobject is the False Self, an internal object. Only the False Self forms selfobject relations with external objects.

Selfobject: An object which is used in the service of the self or objects which are experienced as part of the self and provide a function for the self.

Reality-grounded narratives are threatening

Pathological narcissism is a breakdown in relating to and **managing internal objects**.

Dissonance: internal objects have a life of their own and yet are “owned” and constitute the mind (selfobjects).

When the **organizing internal object, the Self, is disrupted**, the **internal objects never fully become selfobjects**. This creates huge **anxiety** and exerts **disintegrative centripetal forces**.

The **inner experience of internal objects:** narcissist as external observer (the only way to simulate existence and experience it).

This engenders **estrangement** and, in conditions of stress and tension, **dissociation** (esp. depersonalization and derealization).

Anticipating behaviors and real-life impacts of **internal objects** (magical thinking where anticipation is causation).

To the narcissist, you are a mere object, not a love object (narcissists have both **narcissistic and anaclitic objects**).

Narcissist uses **narcissistic transferences** (idealization, mirror, and twinship) in the lovebombing/grooming phase of the shared fantasy. He coerces you to accept the **idealized snapshot (introject)** of you as the only reality.

OTHERING

TEXT

Subject initially ding an sich (preverbal and unknowable): oceanic feeling that is not the outcome of schizoid empty core or kenosis (empty nothingness) but of Anatman: 1) Lack of an essence (no introspection, just proprioception) 2) Impermanence (growth, development) 3)

Interdependence on individuals and things (symbiosis with mother-world).

Innate universal grammar is the bridge to and engine of object relations because all language is relational and object-oriented.

Then subject emerges as object to itself and to others. This emergence is mediated via language ("I").

Language allows the infant to conceptualize the mother's gaze and to other her irrevocably.

The first othering is a major terrifying trauma: the birth of the external and its schism from the internal.

The birth of the object is therefore grounded in frustration and trauma over perceived rejection, aggressive counter-rejection, and reconciliation via recognition of externality and separateness.

But Mother is still perceived as perfect and she perceives the child as perfect. It is easy to love a perfect object, it is a suspect love. So, the child renders both the mother and itself imperfect (splitting) to test the love, to make sure that it is unconditional and fully accepting indeed.

Separation-individuation is a reenactment of this rupture. It is a transformation from object to subject.

But there is always residual self-objectification (for example, in splitting or Fairbairn's moral defense).

The relationship between True Self and reality is like the relationship between symbolic objects and real ones. The self, therefore, is a part of Lacan's Symbolic Order: a conscious linguistic element+the unconscious).

ROLES OF SHARED FANTASY

When **containment** (Klein, Bion) and **holding** (Winnicott) fail in early childhood, we get an **ill-adjusted individual**, or, in extreme cases, a **narcissist**.

The narcissist is in a **compulsive search for mother substitutes** who would **hold and contain him** and thus let him separate and individuate.

Fantasy is not only a **counterfactual narrative or coercion**. It is a **regulatory mechanism**, a form of **self-supply**, a **defense against fragility and vulnerability**, a **time machine** (regression to symbiosis and womb), a **fake good object**, a **cognitive distortion**, a **pseudo-emotion** (euphoria, not elation and dysphoria, not depletion).

All fantasies are shared (incorporation, internalization, identification)

Repetition compulsion and reenactment

Narcissistic elation

TEXT

The partner is expected to recreate the overprotective parental role: firewall reality, stymie growth, prevent separation-individuation, disallow emerging boundaries, impair reality testing, foster dependency, distort IWM (world is hostile and dangerous), decouple actions from consequences (regressed partner babylike, can do no wrong, entitled), instrumentalize (partner anxiolytic, mitigates insecurities), parentify (partner responsible for their wellbeing).

Anxiolysis

Narrative continuity (negate ontological insecurity) via external memory (witnessing and audiencing)

Object and introject constancy (negate separation insecurity)

Sandboxing: safe re-enactment of early childhood conflicts (secure base)

Impaired **reality testing** neutralized

Control, mastery reasserted (expectancy theory, role play)

The narcissist's shared fantasy is a form of **lucid dreaming**, it is his lucid dream and you are just a **character in it**, manipulated according to a pre-ordained **script**.

The narcissist incorporates you into the shared fantasy by **entraining** you and this process triggers introjects and repressed memories.

You **misidentify him with the introjects** that he triggers, makes him feel real.

Assembles, on the fly, elements from your mind and psyche, makes him feel familiar.

Attribution error: behaviors attributed to inner essence, not to environmental cues and stimuli.

If he is truly empty, who is doing the acting? **A program, a code.**

NATURE OF SHARED FANTASY

Within the shared fantasy, the narcissist assigns to you the **role of a victim**. But he **sets you up for failure** because he needs to devalue you, allowing him to separate-individuate from you as a maternal figure.

The shared fantasy is a space for **interactions between two children**: the narcissist and YOU. But infantilism is narcissist's natural state while the partner is enticed or coerced to **regress to an infantile state**.

The **intimate partner's inner child is parentified** (because she sheds her adulthood) and it can then **parent (mother) the narcissist.**

The **shared fantasy is doomed to fail** because the narcissist expects his partner to act as both parent and infant. He is setting her up for failure.

Narcissist cannot tell the difference between adult and child, so he sees no contradiction in demanding the impossible and in **expecting his mate to be both** simultaneously.

Yet, he **anticipates and precipitates the partner's failure** in order to bring on **separation (devaluation-discard) and individuation.**

The narcissist enters a shared fantasy with a **maternal figure** (his intimate partner) only in order to **separate**

from her (which he **failed to accomplish with his biological mother**).

The intimate partner is expected to help the narcissist by **acting the part of a rejecting, betraying mother**. If she refuses, he tries to coerce her into this role and then devalues and discards her.

Fairy tale-like Fantasy is codified and structured **enchantment**.

Similar to **dreaming**, fantasy uses **symbolic language** and **magical spells** (wish fulfillment is one such spell) and is **nonsensical** (unreal, involves magical thinking).

Like the fairy tales that they are, fantasies are “**magic mirrors** which reflect some aspects of our inner world, and of the steps required by our evolution from immaturity to maturity”.

Like the **Heroes in fairy tales**, like Hercules, he **passes tests and accomplishes tasks** assigned to him by the gods (False Self).

The **narcissist splits**: he is all good. Witches and usurper kings in fairy tales are all bad, for example.

Initially, both he and his extension are all good and the rest of the **world is all bad** (it is a rejection of life) but then – as his intimate partner acts in and on the world – she gets “contaminated”, **she brings the world into the fantasy** as a third party, and is thus rendered all bad, frustrating, and rejecting.

The **narcissist sublimates aggression via the shared fantasy** by **displacing** it onto his intimate partner (devaluation), by acting **passive-aggressively**, or by **fantasizing** about revenge and justice restored. These are the behavioral **precursors of separation-individuation**.

The narrative of the fantasy includes **God, Death, and Life voices**.

Death voice (bad object): You are not lovable, unworthy, inadequate, failure, better off dead.

Can be **loved** and deserving of life **only if perfect** (impossible).

Terrified of failure (**performance anxiety**), the narcissist rejects, disowns, sabotages, and avoids all aspects of life, rendering himself **invulnerable by being dead** within and without as a form of rigid, proud, defiant, sadistically self-punitive and self-denying ideology. S/he acts entitled and contemptuous (e.g., celibate).

He gives up on and **denies** his body, health, sex, romance, intimacy, all positive emotions, relationships, family, academic degrees, career, country, language, success, reputation, business, social life, fans, and friends.

With nothing left to take, **death voice is appeased** and ameliorated by my proximity to actual death, its mission

accomplished and it is placated, content to let the narcissist decay and decompose inertly.

The **narcissist implants his introjects** (voices) in your mind, using abusive entrainment.

His voices, in turn, **trigger your voices**.

Here is a map of the narcissist's voices in your mind (D=Death, L=Life, G=God). **First letter is his voice in your mind - second letter is your voice** triggered by his voice in your mind:

D L (his narcissistic abuse-your survival instincts)

G G (his and your narcissistic defenses)

L D (his narcissistic abuse in order to separate-individuate, your self-sacrifice)

Death voice: You are not lovable, unworthy, inadequate, failure, better off dead.

God voice: Grandiose, magical thinking, mental illness (cruel false self) eroded by reality (injuries, mortifications).

Life voice: Creativity and cooperation are intermittent, haphazard, corroded by aging and is often too late, failing the narcissist amid cognitive decline.

Enmeshment, engulfment, merger, fusion, symbiosis

Narcissist

Recreation of symbiotic phase in dual motherhood

Instrumentalized (leads to separation-individuation)

Temporary but stable

Object inconstancy, separation insecurity (abandonment anxiety) resolved via **introjection**

Borderline

Separation insecurity (abandonment anxiety) leads to clinging

Engulfment anxiety leads to approach-avoidance repetition compulsion

Instrumentalized (leads to external regulation)

Introject inconstancy

Codependent

Control from the Bottom to allay separation insecurity (abandonment anxiety)

Instrumentalized (renders life meaningful)

Object inconstancy, separation insecurity (abandonment anxiety) lead to clinging.

PHASES OF SHARED FANTASY

Spotting

Auditioning: idealizable material, 2 of 4 Ss, maternal type, vulnerable)

Snapshotting

TEXT

As an **external object**, if you are **weak**, vulnerable, dependent, and submissive, you remind the narcissist of

his/her moribund True (unconstellated, unintegrated) Self (and, thereby, undermine his/her grandiose, fantastic False Self).

As an **external object**, if you are **strong**, resilient, agentic, independent, and self-efficacious you remind him/her of his False Self (and, thereby, challenge his uniqueness).

This is another reason for **snapshotting (introjecting) you**. While you are a threat to the narcissist's precarious balance, as an **internal object** you make him/her feels whole, elated, oceanic when reminded of his True Self - or idealized (co-idealization) when you remind him/her of his False Self.

Baiting (wounded children, safe haven, trauma resonance, escapism)

Coercive enchantment and magical thinking:

lovebombing (narcissist convinces himself!)

Co-idealization

Grandiosity is part of a fantasy defenses that involves ideas of reference, othering failure, object apophenia, social pareidolia, hostile attribution and confirmation biases, and a lot more besides.

Lovebombing

Entrainment (cult)

Hall of Mirrors Effect

Self-infatuation, **autoerotism**

Narcissist's **cold empathy and entrainment.**

Escape from reality into a shared fantasy

Second childhood (dual motherhood)

Self-infatuation with an idealized version of you, seen through the narcissist's gaze

Modeling and typing in formative years and adolescence: abuse as comfort zone, attraction to abusers

Bad object validation

External regulation: anxiolytic surrender of control

Self-punitive relationship: self-harming, self-trashing, self-defeat, and self-destruction by narcissist

Projective identification

Danger as aphrodisiac: thrills, novelty, and risk seeking, defiance, recklessness, aggression as winner strategies.

Self-confidence as aphrodisiac: external regulation, regression with parental figure (daddy or mommy issues, dual motherhood), alleviation of responsibility (deactivation of alloplastic defenses)

Shared fantasy as panacea: future faking

Fluidity: gender, sex, scripts, roles, age

Performative sex

Dual Motherhood (co-infantilization)

Mother of origin is source of frustration, hurt, shame, and rage, often unconsciously. She **mortifies** the narcissist. Mother is **illegitimate target of aggression**, so he **redirect it at mother substitutes**.

Tries to accomplish **separation by proxy** and thus become (individuate).

Individuation is not about becoming an adult, but about becoming an **individual with boundaries, self, and ego** (one of whose functions is reality testing).

Reframes primary object by splitting: she is either all good (martyr) or all bad (evil). Correspondingly, he is either all bad (grandiose monster) or all good (grandiose victim).

Margret Mahler's theory of separation-individuation.

Overprotective parents deny access to reality (firewall or filter or membrane), stymie growth, prevent separation-individuation, disallow emerging boundaries, impair reality testing, foster dependency, distort IWM (world is hostile and dangerous), decouple actions from consequences (child can do no wrong, entitled),

instrumentalize (child anxiolytic, mitigates insecurities),
parentify (child responsible for their wellbeing). In short:
child grows up to be a narcissist.

**The partner is expected to recreate the overprotective
parental role.**

This leads to **learned, feigned, dramatic, manipulative
helplessness**: control from the bottom, leveraging
dependency to manipulate, covert narcissism.

Testing (narcissistic abuse)

Devaluation (internal then external)

These will be perceived as **"soft" abandonment**:

Age gap or other **major differences**

Disappointment, ignoring, criticism, shaming and
humiliating

Emotional withdrawal and absence

Rejection (sexual, other)

Frequent **absences**

Distancing and disintimate behaviors (e.g. infidelity, triangulation)

Self-neglect and self-destructiveness

Indifference

Impatience

Narcissist **mislabeled his dopamine addiction** to the shared fantasy **as desire or love**. Having idealized you, he regards you as the best fit for his shared fantasy.

He is then motivated to pursue you through **lovebombing**. This is the **conation (conative) phase**. But, being entitled, he resents this conative phase and is frustrated by it.

This **resentment and frustration lead to aggression** (narcissistic abuse) and the stage is set for devaluation.

Discard (internal then external): separation-individuation

Performative, conditional love: the narcissist is conditioned as a child to expect **love only** subject to performance and the **suspension of the self**. So, s/he **dispenses** with what **s/he craves most** – a maternal figure - in order to **earn some love**.

False Self intended to **silence bad object introjects**.
Compensatory success measured by how silent they are.
When narcissist collapses or is mortified, introjects are revived.

False Self regards your **personality as an introject (othering failure)** and seeks to silence (dissociate) it and replace it with itself.

The **false self is a parental figure**, it is how a child views his/her parents: godlike, infallible, omnipotent, omniscient.

At the beginning of the shared fantasy, the narcissist converts you into a **maternal figure**.

This creates **competition (dissonance) between you and the false self** (same happens in therapy). One of you has to go. Since the narcissist identifies him/herself with the false self (there is no real, constellated self), he **sacrifices you**.

This process is one of the main engines of the attempted **reenactment** of the failed early childhood **separation-individuation** which leads to devaluation and discard.

But having discarded you, the narcissist still remains stuck with your maternal introject (**persecutory object**) and with his **parental false self**. The **dissonance** is never resolved.

Replace

Re-idealization

Probing

Hoovering

Everything is **role playing** intended to secure supply: cerebral, somatic, career, relationships. None of it feels real. No investment (stable cathexis) or commitment, so no grief over anything or anyone except oneself, only nostalgia for plentiful periods.

Switches between all-or-none cathexis (“**splitting cathexis**”).

Cathexis cycle: object cathexis, hypercathexis, hypocathexis, decathexis, anticathexis (countercathexis).

Narcissist's inner child is not his/her true self: it is a compendium of needs, especially the need to find a substitute mother and the need to separate and individuate.

Commentary

Idealization in shared fantasy: s/he is the **all good mother (breast)**, perfect, ideal

Secure base: safe, trustworthy, reliable, resilient, responsive

Loves unconditionally: forgiving, accepting, authentic, rewarding

Power couple fantasy

Devaluation in shared fantasy: s/he is **all-bad mommy (breast)**: imperfect, persecutory, unsafe, untrustworthy, unreliable, fragile/weak/vulnerable

Or

Manipulative, transactional, fake, denying, rejecting, frustrating, denying, absent (“dead mother”), traitor (betrayal trauma), envious, passive-aggressive

Inverted shared fantasy: starts with hatebombing, devaluation and discard (the whole point of the fantasy), mixed with negative idealization (mythological demonization). So, their fantasies are extremely short, nasty, and brutal.

Proof: if you are feeling that you are not yourself (**self-estrangement**) – then who are you and who is doing the estrangement? The narcissist’s introject.

Introjecting the entraining narcissist generates a **schizoid state (emptiness)** which mimics the narcissist's.

Schizoid state as adaptation to narcissistic abuse. Split negative internal objects become identified with the Self and the victim defends against these negative thoughts by dissociating the Self altogether.

Yet, if the narcissist's introject is in charge, takes over – why the estrangement? Owing to encounters with **repressed former self**.

Approach-avoidance repetition compulsion with an objectified, mythologized, idealized self (relic of narcissist's idealization and nostalgia).

Alienating self-consciousness and **introspection**.

NARCISSIST AND LOVE

Shared fantasy and especially idealization defense against triggering of **early childhood traumas** (hurt aversion, dread of intimacy and love): she is ideal, so will not hurt me, I am perfect, so above reproach and invulnerable.

Recreates **secure base and symbiosis** (back to womb).

Shared fantasy differs from **infatuation and limerence**:

Anomic (antisocial)-**rigid delusional** kingdom

Intensity (controlled dysregulation, like addiction)

Addiction

Immersion

Resonance, instant recognition

Divinity (invincibility)

Wholeness

Inexorability

No plateau, only **transcendence**

Impaired reality testing, fantasy, paracosm

Attribution errors, projection, splitting

Mutual infantile regression

Regression in the service of the ego: primary process and prelogical thinking.

Wish fulfillment and magical thinking.

Thought–action fusion (TAF)

Benign vs. Malignant Regression, Basic Fault (Balint: inability to form relationships owing to unresolved dependency issues).

Freuds (Sigmund and Anna), **Peter Blos** (regression in adolescence).

Anxieties (loss, abandonment, rejection), **catastrophizing**
Negative affectivity

Anxiolytic control

Sublimated aggression, frustration, abuse

In my work, the **death drive** is not a primal drive. It is internalized and inculcated – not innate. It is the dead mother's gift to her child.

Dead mother engenders death-seeking ego ideal (superego) to:

1. **Emulate the mother's deadness** (fantasy or phantasy defense);
2. **Get rid of the bad object** (fantasy or phantasy defense, Akhtar, 1991; Shengold, 1991);
3. **Re-experience symbiosis** (oceanic feeling, loss of boundaries) in self-extinguishing rather than in love

(perceives love as dissolution, merger/fusion, disappearance=death) (Lacan, 1938; Lewin, 1950; Jacobson, 1964; Mahler, 1971; Kaplan, 1978; Chasseguet-Smirgel, 1984, 1991 “nostalgia for primary narcissism”);

4. Ensure **immediate and automatic gratification** of needs **without agency, guilt, and shame/inferiority** (Stone, 1971).

Lacan, 1946: death drive is the suicidal tendency of narcissism.

The narcissist needs to hand over to you his own **suffering** and this way regain his inner peace and sense of control. **Your pain is his healing, your crucifixion - his resurrection.**

Narcissist's "love" is sado-masochistic because of early childhood conditioning to **associate love with betrayal, withdrawal, avoidance, hurt, and frustration-aggression.**

In childhood, the **aggression** is internalized (externalizing is unsafe, risky). Hence the masochism.

The narcissist needs to **coerce the partner to hurt him** within the fantasy framework role of her maternal reenactment. Hence the **abuse (projective identification and reaction formation)**.

The **narcissist's sadism is self-punitive and anticipatory**: it engenders the very **masochistic pleasure** of being punished and agonized. This is **sadistic supply**.

The partner's compliant **submissiveness or refusal** to engage in her assigned role is perceived as a **passive-aggressive denial of gratification** and leads to the escalation of abusive sadism.

Submissiveness also leads to escalation owing to growing **tolerance and desensitization**.

A reactively **abusive** (or plain abusive or predatory) **partner** is perceived as **maternally loving and caring**. This ameliorates the narcissist's abuse but creates **abandonment anxiety and infantile (regressive) dependency on masochistic supply**.

So, the narcissist is in one of **two states in the shared fantasy**: sado-masochistically **gratified** by a punitive mother figure - or sado-masochistically **frustrated** by a truly loving mature partner.

The **former** leads to **attachment, cathexis, and dependency** and then to **attempted separation-individuation** from the maternal figure via **devaluation and discard**.

The latter leads to **sadistic and coercive narcissistic abuse** and a **power play**. The narcissist must have his way or annihilate the frustrating object.

The **good enough mother** allows her child to **separate** from her, take on **reality**, and **individuate** even as she

helps it to maintain **object constancy** by always acting as a "**secure base**".

The **narcissist's mother** refuses to let him go because she is **insecure, selfish, depressed, parentifying, or dependent**.

Consequently, the **adult narcissist pendulates** between a **maternal figure in a shared fantasy and a pathological narcissistic space** (his fantastic paracosm).

As he transitions between these two states, the narcissist experiences **infantile helplessness**. While in either of these two states, he feels at **first grandiose and manic and then constricted, dysregulated, and aggressive**.

To switch from one state to another, the narcissist uses **four stratagems**:

1. **Termination** (e.g, divorce, breakup, relocation, resigning from a job);

2. **Deception** (for instance: cheating or faking);
3. **Undermining** intimacy and trust, including by withholding and indifference;
4. **Persecutory object fantasies**, rendering people around him his enemies, wardens, or adversaries best avoided.

The narcissist **outsources** his sense of existence and being, substitutes for it or displaces it.

Existence agents and narcissistic supply.

Creates **imbalance**, dependence, a sense of inferiority.

Substitutive existence is hampered by devaluation and paranoia.

Displaced existence is obstructed by passive-aggression and entitlement.

Shared fantasy: **companionate vs. submissive**.

When you misidentify sex as intimacy and mislabel love as pain - you end up having **sexless intimacy and painful loves.**

Trauma bonding is often a form of self-mutilation or self-harm, replete with the same three functions: 1. To **numb dysregulated emotions** that threaten to overwhelm us; 2. To allow us to **feel alive** through pain; 3. To **punish, defeat, and destroy** ourselves.

TECHNIQUES and STRATEGIES

Introjects are amalgams of representations of external object, affects, memories, and cognitions combined with a representation of the self.

Estranged self-gaze (as if emanating from the outside)

Environmental introjection

Environmental simulation

Object introjection

Object Mimicry

Appropriation and assimilation (merger, fusion, symbiosis, enmeshment)

Vicarious, parasitic existence (narcissistic selfobjects)

Primitive defenses (splitting, projection, projective identification, rationalization)

Contagious Snapshotting, Infectious Introjection: the narcissist induces in the victim a conflation of internal and external.

The victim reacts to the **narcissist's internal dynamics as if they were external.**

Exactly like the narcissist, the **victim** simply **conflates the internal object with the external one.**

This, in turn, is an example of the way the narcissist **imposes his internal dynamics** on his relationships (e.g., he never experienced **separation, so merges symbiotically** with his partner).

DYNAMICS

Invulnerability signaling (disintimacy)

Occult enciphered text

Mislabeling

Catastrophizing and panic

Transmutations of aggression (externalizing and internalizing): punitive and self-punitive

Intermittent reinforcement and trauma bonding

TEXT

The narcissist wanders a netherworld, suspended between apotheosis and doom, forever in quest of a redeemer, an absolver, a rescuer, and an unadulterated savior.

This especially applies to male, heterosexual narcissists: they are looking for the perfect, flawless woman, the Madonna, who will waive the magic wand of her unmitigated and unsullied devotion and thus actualize the narcissist's fantasy.

The narcissist is entitled. The fruits of hard work are common. He is a wondrous being immersed in miracles. "His" woman – never a true partner – is there to smooth his way to stardom with her ceaseless toil, influential

contacts, and monetary wellspring. She operates behind the scenes, like Santa Claus with a fount of Christmas presents.

But, above all, she is there to cosset and soothe, to shield the narcissist from foes external and internal, to gather the crucified narcissist in her lap, a sempiternal pieta, a mother to share his all-imbuing grief.

She bestows upon him forgiveness and acceptance, absolution and salvation, a second chance infinitely over, the promise of ascendance and transcendence to the very source of all supply. She is an angel: pure, incorporeal, sexless, and ethereal, a revelation on his road.

When, ineluctably, she fails to meet these irreconcilable and outlandish expectations, the narcissist's bubble universe hissingly deflates. He lashes out at her the way a frustrated toddler assails a withholding mother. Her miscarriage of her tasks is now deemed malevolent and she is thus rendered his enemy. He becomes snipingly

vengeful and sadistically punitive. She withers in his heat, he sucks her dry until she crumbles.

Having been rejected by his self-assigned maternal figure, the narcissist then resorts to an “anti-mother”: the whore, the gold digger, the femme fatale. She guarantees his self-destruction. He is leveraging her to penalize himself for having yet again failed to choose the right mother.

With this self-defeating selection, the narcissist also assimilates his own perceived spurning and validates it since “mother is always right and I am always bad”. By misbehaving, he upholds his self-assigned role of evil rogue in the morality play that is his sole existence. This dark production is also fantastic and grandiose: going down in flames into the twilight of the gods, a martyr betrayed.

People with a disorganized erratic cluster B personality disorder create simultaneous but mutually exclusive narratives of their lives intended to manage dissonance, both internal and external (with reality). These narratives

are the equivalents of self-states or “multiple” personalities (subpersonalities).

Examples of such narratives: I am normal, I have a loving family, I am promiscuous, I am a psychopath. When these narratives collapse, the disordered person allocates them to his/her nearest and dearest as if these were theatre productions or movies (e.g., the narcissist’s shared fantasy).

The role of these actors is to validate the reality of the narratives (the same function of narcissistic supply in NPD). The actors dissociate (depersonalize and derealize) within the fantasy.

Because these actors are misperceived as internal objects, offloading the narratives onto them unburdens the disordered person. The actions of the actors or agents are owned by the disordered person without the attendant risks or adverse consequences.

When the actors regain independence, agency, and personal autonomy, they become persecutory objects and the disordered person experiences narcissistic mortification. The disordered person attempts to Hoover them or to co-opt anyone new in their lives. Should this strategy fail, they try to destroy the frustrating objects.

Narcissists and Their Offspring

PARENTING THEORIES

TEXT

Kohut (1977): child's self primary dimensions are **grandiose exhibitionism and idealization**. The former requires **parental empathic mirroring**, the latter **behavioral role modelling**.

Consistent **parental support** should alternate with **specific, intermittent, and nontraumatic optimal frustrations** (no parental guidance or affirmation).

These **mini-frustrations modulate** the **child's grandiosity** and render it **grounded in reality** and aid the **internalization of parental ideals**.

Overparenting and permissiveness and over-responsiveness (indulgence) no frustration, no mitigation of the grandiose self, and no separation of self from the parents.

Under-parenting, nonresponsive, or rejecting no idealized image of parent and of self to internalize. Dependence on **interpersonal feedback in a fragile self**.

Kernberg (1975): parental coldness, strictness, hostility, harshness, unloving, covertly aggressive cause **defensive reaction to pathological organization of the self** (beliefs about the self), **ideal self** (idealized image of self), and **ideal object** (idealized image of parent). There is **no ideal object to internalize** (no stable core of self-regard).

Narcissistic children “often occupy a pivotal point in their family structure, such as being the only child, or the only ‘brilliant’ child, or the one who is supposed to fulfill family aspirations”

Such expectations foster a chronic **refuge of superiority** and lifelong inflated, illusory worth.

Kernberg: parental coldness + extremely high expectations + harsh demands = **narcissistic self**

Object relations: narcissism result of **parent's strategic use of the child** to fulfill their own ambitions, realize dreams and fantasies.

Rothstein (1979): motivational component. Parental behavior is driven by two, sometimes competing motive systems: **self-focused** (how does child meet my needs) and **child-focused** (how am I meeting my child's needs).

Empathic systems tips toward the child-focused.
Emphasis on self-focus leads to narcissistic child.

In self-focus, parental investment conditioned on child's performance up to parental standards. Child's narcissism is a defensive response or fixation to objectifying

parenting that is aimed at catering to the parent's emotional needs and not to the nurturance of the child.

Karen Horney (1939):

“Parents who transfer their own ambitions to the child ... develop in the child the feeling that he is loved for imaginary qualities rather than for his true self”

So, the child discards the true self in favor of a parent-like idealized false self (the real parent is not available to be idealized). The narcissistic self is a manifestation of the attempt to seek approval from an idealized object.

Millon's social learning (1981): children learn about themselves and others (mentalization) from their parents's behaviors. Permissive, indulgent parents who set few rules, limitations, and boundaries teach the child that it is superior and entitled.

“Children that have been exposed repeatedly to acquiescent and indulgent parents will expect comparable treatment from others, and they learn to employ the presumptuous and demanding strategies that quickly elicited favored reactions ... from their parents”.

Such parental behaviors models for the child that others are beneath it, weak, contemptible, and manipulable and these beliefs form the narcissist’s interpersonal core (IWM). The parents’s boundless worshipful adoration is information that the child uses to construct a narcissistic view of both self and others.

The **internalized mother archetype** in healthy people underpins self-nurturing and self-compassion. The narcissist failed to internalize an abusive mother and search for substitute mothers all his/her life.

Parenting dimensions: warmth, monitoring, psychological control

Warmth: emotional and material support, nurturance, involvement, acceptance, child-centredness, and responsiveness.

Monitoring: keeping track of child's whereabouts, actions, and social circle.

Psychological control: intrusive guilt-tripping, manipulation via withdrawal of love, possessiveness, overprotectiveness, disappointment and shame in the child.

Parenting styles (Baumrind, 1971): authoritative (high warmth, high monitoring, low psychological control); authoritarian (low warmth, high rest), permissive (high warmth, low rest). (Maccoby and Martin, 1983): neglectful (all low, absentee parenting).

SUMMARY OF NARCISSISTIC PARENTING

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE)

Breach of boundaries, annexation and appropriation, objectification

Appeasement or rebellion strategies (wrath of the gods vs. apotheosis: codependent people-pleasing vs. antisocial narcissism)

Splitting (child all bad, mommy all good), never integration

Projection is always **projective identification**

(because parents perceived as infallible: child identify with parts that a parent placed on them, well into adulthood)

Social isolation +Self-referential isolation (negative bad object or inflated, impossible ideal ego that transforms into bad object)= impaired reality testing

Obstructed separation-individuation via ambient emotional blackmail or emotional incest

Sibling hierarchies and competition

Cult vs. Others (they are wrong, they are enemies, they will never understand, they are evil, we must protect our secrets)

Instrumentalizing leads to adulation but unrealistic expectations and coercive snapshotting

Instrumentalizing as Flying Monkeys

Parentifying: I am never good enough, I am responsible for other people's welfare

Immaturity, regressive infantilism, imaginary friends, paracosm, fantasy as defense and shared

Ego failure (no integrated or constellated self, just fragments)

CO-PARENTING WITH NARCISSIST

Use your **personal example** to show the child that not all adults are narcissists. Provide your child with an **alternative** to his father's venomous and exploitative existence. **Trust your child** to choose life over death, love over narcissism, human relations over narcissistic supply.

BP Skinner: operant conditioning (positive and negative reinforcements)

John Dollard's frustration-aggression hypothesis
modified by **Leonard Berlowitz** (environmental cues
required for aggression to take place.)

Albert Bandura: aggression = operant conditioning +
identification (mentally rehearsing then imitating others,
models)

Attention, retention, reproduction, motivation/reward
(reinforcement)

Reciprocal determinism: person and environment affect
each other (IPAM)

Personality = environment + behavior + psychological
processes (language, image retention, etc.)

Social learning theory and social-cognitive theory

Modeling, modeling effect, modeling theory, observational learning, behavioral modeling.

Children as **mirrors** and **competitors**

TEXT

The Narcissist says: children, to me, are both mirrors and competitors. They reflect authentically my constant need for adulation and attention. Their grandiose fantasies of omnipotence and omniscience are crass caricatures of my internal world. The way they abuse others and mistreat them hits close to home. Their innocuous charm, their endless curiosity, their fount of energy, their sulking, nagging, boasting, bragging, lying, and manipulating are mutations of my own behaviour.

I recognize my thwarted self in them. When they make their entrance, all attention is diverted. Their fantasies endear them to their listeners. Their vainglorious swagger often causes smiles. Their trite stupidities are invariably treated as pearls of wisdom. Their nagging is yielded to,

their threats provoke to action, their needs accommodated urgently.

I stand aside, an abandoned centre of attention, the dormant eye of an intellectual storm, all but ignored and neglected. I watch the child with envy, with rage, with wrath. I hate its effortless ability to defeat me.

Parentification (control from the bottom, emotional blackmail, ambient incestuousness), **adultification**, **instrumentalization**

The parentified child wishes to give birth to a “**new child**” and thus secure the approval of the parental introject and parent it.

Child dreads either mother’s absence (object inconstancy) or her presence. Parentified children do not have parents (their parents are infants), so they end up having an **insecure attachment style**.

Boundary violations: isolation from reality and peers, overprotectiveness, idolizing, idealizing (“you can do no wrong”), spoiling/pampering/pandering

Defensive identification: anaclitic identification, Stockholm syndrome, Identification with the Aggressor (IWA) or Identifying with the aggressor

Prototype of shared fantasy

Autoerotism

TEXT

Precocious Adulthood Syndrome (PrAS)

Parentifying (better said: adultifying) is when a child is coerced by caregivers into assuming adult, developmentally inappropriate roles as: a surrogate parent to his siblings, a referee between his parents, or a caregiver for a mentally or physically disabled parent.

The child emulates his parents and their mental issues as it assumes parental roles. Very often the parents of parentified children are, in Andre Green's term, "Dead

Mothers”: absent, depressed, self-centred, dysempathic, capricious, dangerous, instrumentalizing, or abusive.

The child is, therefore, forced to parent itself by internalizing his parents’ disorders, dysfunctional attachment styles, and trauma bonding.

As adults, they regulate their sense of self-worth by caring for others. The parentified child grows up feeling responsible for everyone around him. He is incapable of having fun, never have had a childhood.

Parentified children grow up to be control freaks, are self-reliant, trust no one, and always get involved in conflicts as arbiters or peacemakers. They feel the need to be “good, worthy, trustworthy, and reliable” even at the expense of their own needs (they are self-sacrificial). They always feel either that their efforts are not appreciated – or that they should do more.

Consequently, some of them end up being passive-aggressive (negativistic) or even covert narcissists and “empaths”.

Parentified children resemble Borderlines in that they engage in compensatory behaviors that are not calibrated and proportionate: reckless promiscuity and substance

abuse, for examples. Some of them end up being codependent, people-pleasers, and highly sensitive people (HSPs).

Later in life, PrAs leads to compensatory infantilism (“Peter Pan Syndrome”) coupled with an impostor syndrome.

Some of the studies that were evaluated as part of a systematic review of 62 studies published in the Journal of General Internal Medicine in December 2019 suggested that up to 82% of individuals may experience impostor-type feelings.

Separation insecurity (losing the partner to the child),
loss of control, victimhood, frustration-aggression
(devaluation)

Entitlement (to compensate for **self-sacrifice**)

Control over children as **perfect sources of narcissistic supply**: micromanages, encourages dependency, infantilism

Offspring introjected (snapshot) within a shared fantasy, become extensions: expressions of independence, an inner world (emotional or cognitive), and agency are frowned upon and penalized

Bribes (money, succor, support)

Emotional blackmail (control from the bottom, manipulative helplessness)

Threats and aggression

Isolation

TEXT

Overweening, smothering, spoiling, overvaluing, and idolizing the child - are all forms of parental abuse. This is because, as Horney pointed out, the child is

dehumanized and instrumentalized. His parents love him not for what he really is - but for what they wish and imagine him to be: the fulfillment of their dreams and frustrated wishes.

The child becomes the vessel of his parents' discontented lives, a tool, the magic brush with which they can transform their failures into successes, their humiliation into victory, their frustrations into happiness.

The child is taught to ignore reality and to occupy the parental fantastic space.

Such an unfortunate child feels omnipotent and omniscient, perfect and brilliant, worthy of adoration and entitled to special treatment.

The faculties that are honed by constantly brushing against bruising reality - empathy, compassion, a realistic assessment of one's abilities and limitations, realistic expectations of oneself and of others, personal boundaries, team work, social skills, perseverance and goal-orientation, not to mention the ability to postpone gratification and to work hard to achieve it - are all lacking or missing altogether.

The child turned adult sees no reason to invest in his skills and education, convinced that his inherent genius should suffice. He feels entitled for merely being, rather than for actually doing.

Rejection of the imperfect child

Slight

Challenge to self-concept (as perfect and omnipotent): fallibility, imperfection, mortality, impotence, guilt, disgrace, and anxiety

Source of **negative supply** (constant reminder)

Victimhood

Punishing and devaluing the child and the other parent

Golden Child and Scapegoat Emergent Roles

Projected splitting: failing to integrate aspects of self or child, ego ideal, self-rejection, projection, projective identification

Scapegoat as **permanent narcissistic injury**

Sensitization and desensitization

TEXT

Children of narcissistic parents grow up to become either sensitized or desensitized to narcissistic behaviours, traits, and personalities.

In adulthood, sensitized offspring are able to rapidly discern the presence of narcissists by reading their body language and by resonating with subtle cues emitted by the narcissist even when he is on his best behavior and when he puts on a show and embarks on his charm offensives.

They experience repulsion, resentment, and rage and react by distancing themselves from the narcissistic source and, when this fails, by aggressively containing the narcissist. This "allergic" reaction remains potent even with repeated exposures to the same source.

Desensitized individuals -- a small minority - seek to recreate the experiences they have had with the narcissistic parent by becoming an Inverted Narcissist.

Both types of children of narcissists -- the sensitized and the desensitized -- conduct a lifelong dialog with the Good Mother and Bad Mother inner representations and introjects.

It consists of the Bad (narcissistic) Mother disparaging the qualities of a Good (mentally healthy) Mother and forcing her Good (read: codependent) Son/Daughter to justify and defend her destructive misbehaviour and pernicious, insidious traits.