What is Narcissism?

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"*...the fact that the meanings of words change, not only from age to age, but from context to context, is certainly interesting; but it is interesting solely because it is a nuisance" .* – Owen Barfield, Poetic Diction, p.61

"Nonetheless, it is true that a single term conceals a variety of meanings". - Pope John Paul II, Fides et Ratio, p.11

A comprehensive account of narcissism is beyond the knowledge and skill of any one person (Kohut, 1971). When a subject is that big and complex, the more one learns about it, the harder it becomes to define (James, 1982/1902). Narcissism is self-love –so, what is the self and what is love? Here we are up against the limits of language. Psychology alone has at least seven operational definitions of the self (Westen, 1990) all of them inadequate in one way or another. One could also look for definitions of the self in other disciplines such as philosophy or religion. Western tradition recognizes four kinds of love (Lewis, 1960; May, 1969), but again, the reality is too big to be neatly captured in a definition. It is a useful exercise, if one has the time and interest, to collect definitions of self and love and try to go through all possible combinations. For now, we will take Wittgenstein's advice, and look at how the term is used and how it came to have those uses (Wittgenstein, 1922).

The Myths

In some versions of the myth (Bulfinch, 1959; Graves, 1990; Ovid, 2009), Narcissus was so gifted that he believed himself to be one of the gods. He was admired for his gifts, but his arrogance and coldness won him enemies. He proudly rejected lovers of both sexes. For such a person, self-knowledge would be so guilt producing that the seer Teiresias foretold that Narcissus would live to a ripe old age, provided that he never knew himself.

The nymph Echo's constant talking and need to always have the last word incurred the wrath of the goddess Hera, who decreed that henceforth Echo would only be able to repeat what others said. One day Echo saw Narcissus in the forest and immediately fell in love with him. She offered herself to him, but Narcissus said that he would rather die than lie with her. Devastated, Echo ran away into the woods to hide her blushes, living from then on in caves and among cliffs. Pining away from grief, she faded until only her voice was left, still replying to those who call, and having the last word.

When the goddess Artemis heard the pleas of Narcissus' heartlessly rejected lovers, she decreed that he would fall in love, but be denied love's consummation. Narcissus fell in love with his own reflection in a pond. He repeatedly tried to embrace his reflection, but each time it fragmented. His grief was unbearable, and yet he rejoiced in the knowledge that, whatever happened, his love would remain true to him, being himself. Eventually, Narcissus committed suicide (Graves, 1990) or pined away and died (Bulfinch, 1959), while Echo, not forgiving yet still grieving for Narcissus, repeated his final words. Nymphs later found a flower, the Narcissus, growing on the spot where Narcissus' dead body had lain. This flower is a narcotic, and narcissism is extremely prominent in addictive personalities (R. B. Baumeister & Vohs, 2001; Carter, Johnson, Exline, Post, & Pagano, 2012; Goldman & Gelso, 1997).

Narcissism and Love

In the above versions of the myth there are two protagonists, Narcissus and Echo, both completely incapable of giving or receiving love, and in that sense completely alone and not fully human. Since this is the traditional description of hell, the traditional interpretation of the myth (Jorstad, 1995) is that Narcissus and Echo represent two paths ultimately leading to the state in which love is impossible, or hell.

Narcissus is very gifted, but he exaggerates the gifts that he does have, and denies his limitations and faults. In this way, Narcissus builds up a <u>false</u> self, which is perfect, godlike, exactly what he wants, and does not need anyone else - but which exists only in his fantasy or imagination. It is this <u>false</u> self which Narcissus "loves" – and by "loves" he means ruthlessly defends against any and all threats, real or imagined, including the truth, love and other selves, no matter what the cost to himself or anyone else. Whatever the true self ultimately is, by definition it is not the false self, and nobody who has ever known love experientially would ever mistake this for real love. His true self, however gifted, is not what exactly Narcissus wants (or thinks he wants), and if Narcissus can't have life on his terms he won't have it at all, so either he kills himself or his true self dies of neglect.

Equally, woe unto anyone who mistakes the pathetic clinging and manipulation which Echo calls "love" for real love – and those to whom she tries to give this "love" are not deceived. However much Echo protests that she "loves" others, she is only interested in them as a means of regulating her extremely fragile self-esteem and distracting her attention away from her own problems and responsibilities. This too is a long ways from Aquinas's definition of love as willing the good of the other as other (Aquinas, 1948), or M. Scott Peck's definition of love as the willingness to extend oneself for one's own or another's spiritual growth (Peck, 1978).

A useful feature of Peck's definition of love is that it includes self-love. Peck emphasizes that love requires effort and courage, and therefore if an act does not involve either work or courage it is not an act of love. Echo too ends up with no true self that can give or receive love, because she is unwilling to do the hard work of loving her true self, which involves facing her fears about herself. Lest anyone think this is rare, how many of us who happen to be Catholic do not like going to confession because really honest self-examination is painful and frightening and doing something about what we find is a lot of work? As Dostoevsky puts in the mouth of Father Zossima:

"I am sorry that I cannot say anything more comforting, for active love is a harsh and dreadful thing compared with love in dreams. Love in dreams thirsts for immediate action, quickly performed, and with everyone watching. Indeed, it will go so far as the giving even of one's own life, provided it does not take long but is soon over, and everyone is looking on and praising. Whereas active love is labor and perseverance, and for some perhaps a whole science"(Dostoevsky, 1990).

One thread running through the psychological literature on narcissism (Wink, 1991) is an intellectual descendent of this interpretation of the myth. There are a number of arguments in the literature for two kinds of narcissism, variously called "overt" and "covert" (Wink, 1991), "exhibitionistic" and "closet" (Masterton, 1993), "oblivious and hypersensitive" (Gabbard, 1989), or "grandiose and vulnerable (Pincus & Roche, 2011). Whatever they are called, the basic idea is that these two personalities *look* as if they could not possibly be more different, but are really just two sides of the same coin: the inability to *really* love one's *true* self leading, through one path or the other, to the inability to love anyone, people often being deceived and self-deceived about what love and their true selves really are, and the true self not being something which exists in complete isolation from other selves or which we create ourselves. In the Christian tradition, the true self is a gift from God, who alone creates *ex nihilo* (out of nothing).

A variant of this view (Wink, 1991) holds that both conditions can and do coexist within the same person: that at least some narcissists are like the Roman god Janus, having two faces: one facing outwards of grandiosity and arrogance, but another facing inwards or inferiority, and it is the fear of their inadequacy being exposed which is constantly fueling their outward self-inflation. There is empirical support for this view: Wink's principal components analysis of six Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (MMPI) narcissism scales found two independent dimensions. One was associated with extraversion, aggression, and self- assurance, the other with introversion, anxiety and

defensiveness, but both were associated with conceit, self-indulgence, and disregard of others.

Narcissism and Power

In other versions of the myth (Graves, 1990), Narcissus is called "Antheus", a surname of Dionysus, the god of sex, drugs and rock and roll, whom Nietzsche identified as the source of "Will to Power" (Nietzsche, 1973/1872). Nietzsche proposed that all psychology be viewed as the morphology and development of the Will to Power:

"All psychology has hitherto remained anchored to moral prejudices and timidities: it has not ventured into the depths. To conceive it as morphology and the development-theory of the will to power, as I conceive it, has never yet so much as entered the mind of anyone else: in so far as it is permissible to see in what has hitherto been written a symptom of what has hitherto been kept silent."

"Granted finally that one succeeded in explaining our entire instinctual life as the development and ramification of one basic form of will - as will to power, as is my theory -; granted that one could trace all organic functions back to this will to power and could also find in it the solution to the problem of procreation and nourishment - they are one problem - one would have acquired the right to define all efficient force unequivocably as: will to power. The world seen from within, the world described and defined according to its "intelligible character" - it would be "will to power" and nothing else (Nietzsche, 1973/1886)."

Power is surely *not* the *only* important human motive, but it is certainly *one* motive – a very important motive at that - and, for better or worse, the above theory had a profound influence on psychoanalysis and its offshoots (Chapman & Chapman-Santana, 1995; Golomb, Santaniello, & Lehrer, 1999) which is where most of the theorizing on narcissism has come from. Another thread running through the psychological literature (Fromm, 1965; Kohut, 1986) traces virtually all human initiative, creativity and goodness to healthy narcissism, and virtually all psychopathology to unhealthy narcissism. In contrast to the first thread, in which there are two kinds of narcissism, both pathological, the central issue is love, and the take-home message is that, ultimately, self-love and love of others cannot be completely separated, on this view we will never be able to count how many kinds of narcissism there are; they are not all pathological or even avoidable; the central issue is power, and the take-home message is that "will to power" (or whatever else you want to call the power motive) is ontologically prior to good and evil.

Sex, Development, Relationships and Self-Esteem

Havelock Ellis and Paul Näcke usually share the credit for introducing the term "narcissism" into psychology (Ellis, 1898; Nacke, 1899). Ellis and Näcke used the term, in the first instance, to describe patients who treated their own bodies as sexual objects, and went on to generalize to self-regard. Others were soon applying the term to other sexual phenomena (Millon, 1981). Freud considered it a component in all perversions

(Freud, 1986/1914). Today, these uses of the term to mean a sexual phenomenon are rare, but in the early psychoanalytic literature they are the dominant uses of the term (Pulver, 1986).

"Primary narcissism" (Freud, 1986/1914) is a phrase some writers use to describe the earliest developmental phases of life, before there is any distinction between self and other. According to this view, a newborn baby experiences the world as part of itself. When a caretaker does not immediately respond to an infant's needs, from the infant's perspective, it is as if its own arms and legs were refusing to obey it. This kind of narcissism, where other people are not considered separate individuals with their own lives to lead, merely as extensions of oneself, whom one is supposed to have complete control over, is normal for an infant. It is not normal or healthy in an adult; in fact, the temptation to subsume psychopathology under narcissism (Fromm, 1965) arises from the observation that an insane person can be described as being in the same state as an infant, approached, so to speak, from the opposite side: in psychosis, one loses touch with reality. Whereas for the infant the outside world does not yet exist, for the psychotic it no longer exists (Fromm, 1965). Others object to this use, but apply the term to other developmental phases where there is an increase in self-focus. Neumann (Neumann, 1954) applies the term to adolescence. Edgcumbe argues that the Freudian "phallic" phase (around ages 3-6) is divided into two stages, the first being the "phallic-narcissistic phase" (Edgcumbe, 1975). The term "narcissism" has also been used with respect to interpersonal relationships, and as a synonym for self-esteem (Pulver, 1986).

Psychopathology

The official classification system for psychiatric disorders – the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) - has, since its third edition in 1980, included narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). The criteria for this disorder have changed with each successive revision of the DSM. We have already mentioned arguments for at least two kinds of narcissism, overt and covert, and an uncountable number of narcissism types. Between two and uncountable one can find arguments for three (O'Brien, 1987), four (Bursten, 1973/1986), and five (Baker & Baker, 1987) types of narcissism.

Thus, there are a lot of complaints in the literature that the term "narcissism" is overused (Kernberg, 1975; Neumann, 1954; Pulver, 1986; Westen, 1990). When psychologists use the term "narcissism", they could be talking about the self, love, power, will, sex, phases of development, psychopathology, psychological strengths and assets, interpersonal relationships, self- esteem, drives, defenses, fantasies, needs…and in anything from extremely specific to extremely broad and general terms. Many have complained that, if we want the term to mean anything at all, we have to stop using it, a la Humpty Dumpty, to mean anything we like.

This complaint seems to conflict with either psychology's claim to be a science, or the notion that science is parsimonious (McBurney, 1994). The most parsimonious theory of all the above psychological phenomena is that they are all simply different ways in which a self can relate to itself and others; or an organism can interact with its environment; or a

linguistic subject can take itself as the object. Physicists would love to develop a unified field theory that can account for all forces in nature as manifestations of one force. If psychologists object that it is too confusing to call things that seem different by the same name so that they can be explained in the most parsimonious way possible, is this not just more proof that psychology is merely pretending to be a science?

This "complaint about the complaint" is not beyond criticism. The more general a theory becomes, the less it applies in specific instances. Following Heidegger, many have disputed the validity of the subject – object distinction (Heidegger, 1962/1927). A related issue is that many people have written about narcissism and called it something else. Among famous psychologists cited in this vein are Jean Piaget (Westen, 1990), Karen Horney (Akhar, 1989); see especially her description of the "pride system"(Horney, 1950); and Alfred Adler (Akhar, 1989; Ansbacher, 1985). Seen from the perspective of relationships between subject and object, Jung's Psychological Types (Jung, 1971), cited by Costa and McCrae as a "landmark book that offered a way to integrate the insights of depth psychology with the psychometric methods of differential psychology" (Costa & McCrae, 1992), might have been called "Narcissistic Types". Jung said that the book "was an effort to deal with the relationship of the individual to the world, to people and things" (Jung, 1961). Volume 10 of Jung's Collected works, Civilization in Transition (Jung, 1970), is a collection of essays on the relationships between the individual and society. Concepts in Analytical Psychology, such as inflation, one-sidedness (Jung, 1961) and centroversion (Neumann, 1954) are simply different names for what has often been called "narcissism".

The upshot is that narcissism *has to do with* the relationships between the part and the whole, self and other, subject and object, organism and environment - and that these relationships inevitably raise issues of love (what am I willing to do for what is other?) and power (how do I get what I what from the other?). Empirical research on narcissism remains, as does much of psychology, in what Kuhn called the "pre-paradigm" phase (Kuhn, 1970): there are no widely accepted agreements about basic issues, such as definitions, the range phenomena to be explained, the acceptable forms of explanations to those phenomena, or the appropriate methods and tools of investigation. As Kuhn said, when a field of study is in the pre-paradigm phase, data collection is a nearly random activity, restricted to whatever is easily accessible, and tends to produce a morass of facts that all seem equally relevant and can only by courtesy be called "scientific". We should not expect to get very far in the empirical study of narcissism without drawing some boundaries, however temporary and revocable. Finally, if Dostoyevsky (Dostoyevsky, 1972/1864) is right in asserting that the human will is the one thing science can never possibly hope to classify, narcissism is one puzzle that will never be completely solved: *"His own will, free and unfettered; his own untutored whims; his own fancies, sometimes amounting almost to a madness - here we have that superadded interest of interests which enters into no classification, which forever consigns systems and theories to the devil. ...what man most needs is an independent will - no matter what the cost of such independence of volition, nor what it may lead to. Yet the devil only knows what mans will ----"*

Narcissism and Human Evil

Clearly there are many forms of narcissism. One must be very careful not to simply equate narcissism with evil or maladaptive behavior. It has, however, been extremely widely held that certain aspects of *pathological* narcissism (under whatever name) play a central role in human evil and destructiveness, at both the individual and collective levels. The professor whose ethics course I took argued that all of Western Ethics had been derived from the attempt to develop tools to help us compensate for our inevitable tendency to see things from our own point of view. From the Ten Commandments, which reflect the minimum requirements for community, through Socratic dialogs, in which objective truth is sought by having each side argues its position as strongly as possible, through Kant's categorical imperative, what are each of these things if not a quest for an omnipotent, omniscient judge or judging point, from which moral questions can be decided from a vantage point which takes into consideration how a decision affects all concerned parties, not simply from our own points of view?

In literature, individual villains are invariably portrayed as profoundly self-serving characters, unconcerned if others are hurt or great destruction wrought so long as they get what they want, and evil in general is brought about by runaway one-sidedness and excess (Franz, 1974). The world's religions, both east and west, are full of exhortations against the illusions of self-centeredness - illusions blamed for all that is unendurable and hinders progress. Christianity regards pride as the primary sin (Lewis, 1952); Confucianism and Taoism provide the complementary functions of first (Confucianism) forcing the developing individual to fit into the social order and later (Taoism) restoring and developing the inevitable loss of spontaneity (Watts, 1957); Buddhist enlightenment concerns insight into the true nature of the self being more than just one's own ego (Graham, 1963; Kadowaki, 1980; Suzuki, 1964; Watts, 1957), as do Hinduism, Brahmanism, Tantrism and Yoga (Eliade, 1958). While this does not mean that all religion is the same, surely they must have all had to address the complex questions of relationships between the part and the whole.

To the extent that modern behavioral, social and human sciences have addressed the problem of evil, they seem to be pointing to the same conclusions. Erich Fromm was the first to propose a psychiatric classification for an evil individual (Fromm, 1965) and wrote extensively on the role of group narcissism in nationalism, hatred, destructiveness and war (Fromm, 1965, 1973); to illustrate his point, Fromm went on to insist that although Hitler, Stalin and Himmler had very different overt personalities, all were classic examples of a particular kind of narcissist (Fromm, 1973). Kernberg, one of the major theorists on narcissism, argues that virtually all patients with Antisocial Personality Disorder exhibit a Narcissistic Personality Disorder plus deterioration of their object relations ("object" being an unfortunate term for a one's psychological or emotional representation of a person) and moralities, and that the prognosis for antisocial behavior is favorable in a non-narcissistic personality and becomes progressively pessimistic in direct proportion to the degree of pathological narcissism. Kernberg proposes a dimension of destructive behavior linking the narcissistic and antisocial personalities,

with an intermediate syndrome he calls "malignant narcissism" characterized by such endearing personality traits as paranoia, pathological lying and sadism (Kernberg, 1989).

The psychiatrist Michael Stone used the biographies of notorious British and American murderers to compare various examples of Kernberg's malignant narcissism and construct a scale of evil personalities, adding that he believes it is important to acknowledge what we are dealing with here as "evil"(Stone, 1989). The central characteristics of pathological narcissism - self-centeredness and self-absorption, immense pride (not in the healthy sense of satisfaction in a job well done, but in the sense of having an unduly inflated opinion of oneself that must be defended at all costs, which is what Christians mean when they call pride first among sins), pathological lying, lack of empathy, sadism, envy - are conspicuously prominent in the personality of the classic psychopath (Harpur & Hare, 1994) and mythologically associated with the devil.

Group narcissism has been blamed for genocide, war and other forms of social conflict (Fromm, 1965, 1973; Peck, 1983). Organizational psychologists have pointed to narcissistic currents within organizations as having highly undesirable tendencies, and urged that highly narcissistic individuals be excluded from positions of authority (Symington, 1993). Studies of Nazi SS mass murderers have concluded that all of the perpetrators, from early adulthood on, had suffered from severe personality disorders, with a predominance of narcissistic, antisocial and paranoid disorders - all of which, according to some theorists (e.g. Bursten, 1973), are narcissistic disorders - but that they only committed their worst crimes with the facilitation of the [extremely group-narcissistic] SS environment (Kernberg, 1989). As with religion, literature and philosophy, there seems to be impressive agreement that evil has something to do with pathological relationships between the part and the whole, self and other. Since those relationships can be extremely complex, it is not surprising that there are disagreements about exactly which kinds of relationships are healthy or pathological and to what extent, but there is little doubt that it has something to do with what is here called narcissism. The "dark triad" of narcissism, psychopathy and Machiavellianism is a current focus of research (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

M. Scott Peck on Evil

There have been a number of calls for serious scientific study of evil (Baron-Cohen, 2012; Bartlett, 2005; R. Baumeister, 1996; Peck, 1983; Staub, 1989; Stone, 2009; Zimbardo, 2007). The 1983 call by Peck included a highly sophisticated analysis, along with several specific proposals for empirical study: biochemical, medical and genetic research on the relationship between evil and schizophrenia (p.128), research on interracial and intercultural differences in nonverbal behavior (which possibly are related to the likelihood of atrocities being committed in war, p.245), anthropological research on possession and exorcism (p.200), research into the "early warning radar" mechanism that seems to cause people to experience revulsion in the presence of evil (p.65), research on the relationship between individual and group evil, historical research on atrocities (their frequencies in different wars or under different circumstances, failures to report atrocities, whether or not atrocities are equal at all points of a war, whether or not certain

instances are unique, when and where they are more likely, etc., p.237), and inclusion in the DSM (p.129) of an evil variant of the narcissistic personality disorder:

"...the time is right, I believe, for psychiatry to recognize a distinct new type of personality to encompass those I have named evil. In addition to the abrogation of responsibility that characterizes all personality disorders, this one would specifically be distinguished by:
(a) consistent destructive, scapegoating behavior, which may be quite subtle.
(b) excessive, albeit usually covert, intolerance to criticism and other forms of narcissistic injury.
(c) pronounced concern with a public image and self-image of respectability, contributing to a stability of lifestyle but also to pretentiousness and denial of hateful feelings or vengeful motives.
(d) intellectual deviousness, with an increased likelihood of a mildly schizophrenic like disturbance of thinking at times of stress."

The suggestion for anthropological (and physiological) research on possession is part of a highly controversial (Klose, 1995) chapter on demonic possession and exorcism. Peck also insists that the only legitimate reason for the research he proposes is to heal evil wherever we can and, where we cannot, to study it further in the hope that it might be healed in specific instances in the future (p.44). This emphasis on healing led Peck to say that any legitimate psychology or science of evil must be a psychology of religion, not in the sense of rigidly adhering to the doctrines of a particular faith or denomination, but in the sense that it cannot be value free.

A criticism of Peck's account of evil (Klose, 1995) has been:
- its stated principal thesis (p.10) is that if we really want to do something about human evil, we are going to have to study it not just philosophically and abstractly but scientifically: "not merely Rorschachs but the most advanced biochemical procedures and sophisticated statistical analyses of hereditary patterns";
- it presents an analysis in terms of narcissism, laziness, scapegoating, lying, and self-deception which is amenable to empirical study; and
- by including demon possession and religion, the author causes his sophisticated analysis to be ignored by the scientific community, which is largely hostile to religion.

One book review, for example, complained that the chapter on demon possession is not clearly related to the rest of the book, but then said virtually nothing about the entire rest of the book (Klose, 1995). More seriously, other book reviewers have inaccurately said that demon possession fits into Peck's scheme as the extreme point on a continuum along which people move from good to evil (Klose, 1995). Serious scholarly discussion of the work has been restricted to religious and philosophical journals.

Objections to the inclusion of religion and other controversial subjects in Peck's account of evil must be addressed together with other issues and potential objections (foreseen and addressed by the Peck):

- that research on evil violates the value-free status of science;
- warnings that scientific study of evil that is not based on a system of values is extremely dangerous; and
- the issue of naming.

People of the Lie (Peck, 1983), opens with a chapter "Handle With Care", which opens with the sentence "THIS IS A DANGEROUS BOOK" (capitals in original). The Jungian analyst M.L. von Franz emphasizes that there are certain behaviors that tend to invite evil. One of these is "*Frevel*" or infantile daring (von Franz, 1974, p.173ff). Addressing the objection that scientific study of evil violates the "value-free" status of science, Peck (1983) replies that in an age where the majority of scientific research is funded by governments and special interest groups, value-free science is untenable, and that the end result of value-free science is the Strangelovian lunacy of the arms race. The central point of Nietzsche's much misunderstood and maligned perspectivism (Nietzsche, 1973/1887) is that value free scrutiny of the world is impossible. The value-free status of science has also been taken to task by work in the "strong programme" in the Sociology of Scientific Knowledge (Barnes, Bloor, & Henry, 1996).

If science cannot be value free, the best we can do is to be explicit about what our values are. Perhaps the most serious charge against Sigmund Freud is that he was not a healer. Freud disliked being a physician, and placed a higher value on the advancement of scientific knowledge and precise theoretical formulations (particularly psychoanalysis) than on healing (Wolf, in Siegel, 1996). Evil is a value judgment, as is the judgment that healing must have priority over knowledge. If advancement of knowledge or special interests is given more value than healing, the study of evil will do great harm. At the same time, if, as Peck says, the only hope of healing evil is to study evil, I think we must call it by name. Naming something correctly can give power over it. Naming identifies. We will not heal a disease that we do not even acknowledge with a name. Even when we do not currently have an effective treatment for a disease, it is of great value to know its name (Peck, 1983).

One can easily make a *prima facie* case for a connection between pathological narcissism and evil or destructive behavior. If one is extremely self-centered, does that not imply that everyone and everything else is far less important than the self? That in turn seems to make it far too easy to justify doing whatever one wishes, regardless of the consequences for others, especially for the kind of narcissist characterized by the belief that what he/she wants is more important than considerations of right or wrong, true or false. As Fromm (1973) illustrates in his discussion of Hitler, when one is extremely self-absorbed, one's perception of other people can become so distorted that others do not seem real in the same sense that the oneself is real- in which case what does it matter what happens to them? That the central characteristics of pathological narcissism are associated with the devil does not mean that narcissists are demonically possessed, but is not this what has been called "evil" throughout human history and across cultures?

The morass of facts that all seem equally relevant which has resulted from our lengthy pre-paradigm phase study of evil all indicate that evil has something to do with

pathological narcissism. As Kuhn says, the only way we can move beyond the pre-paradigm stage and obtained detailed knowledge about specific cases is to address the problem scientifically. If the sciences are going to study human evil – and it is not clear that they should - narcissism provides a logical construct with which to start. Such an endeavor does require recognition of the fact that science is not and cannot be value free, and that future science, especially psychology and medicine, must value healing more than the advancement of knowledge or theoretical formulation. In the words of an anonymous medieval mystic (Johnston, 1973):

"I charge you with love's authority, if you do give this book to someone else, warn them (as I warn you) to take the time to read it thoroughly. For it is very possible that certain chapters do not stand by themselves but require the explanation given in other chapters to complete their meaning. I fear lest a person read only some parts and quickly fall into error. To avoid a blunder like this, I beg you and anyone else reading this book, for love's sake, to do as I ask."

- The Cloud of Unknowing

Malignant Narcissism and Militant Ignorance

Malignant narcissism is the result of an unsubmitted will (Peck, 1983). All moral people subordinate their personal desires to something more universal and important than any isolated individual's desire. When there is a conflict between what is right and what they want, moral people do what is right; when there is a conflict between the truth and what they want to believe, moral people accept the truth. For the malignant narcissist, it is the other way around: they do what they want, regardless of what is right or wrong; if there is a conflict between their fantasies and reality, it is reality that must give. As in Douglas Adams' The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, *"The guide is authoritative. Reality is frequently in error" (Adams., 1980)*.

Now, among malignant narcissists, the subset comprising the specific variant of narcissistic personality disorder Peck proposes as "evil" (public lecture, circa 1992) are characterized by "militant ignorance." If merely doing evil things made a person evil, all people would be evil; there would be no point in proposing a separate diagnostic category for the evil among us. What distinguishes people with evil character structures is being so unwilling to tolerate the discomfort of honest self- evaluation and criticism that, faced with a threat of narcissistic injury - in the form of evidence that what they want to be true about themselves or their group might not be true, or that their ideology might not be true - they try to exterminate the evidence. This leads to the pervasive pattern of destructiveness, scapegoating, self-deception, other-deception, denial, bizarre thinking patterns (particularly under stress) and excessive concern with issues such as power, image and status mentioned earlier. A parallel account is offered to explain group evil.

This view of evil draws support from thousands of years of moral teaching, across cultures. The emphasis on deception, both self- and other- deception, connects with an extremely long tradition in philosophy, literature and theology that, directly or indirectly, evil usually (perhaps always?) involves lies. The co-emphasis on destructiveness

conforms with the view that evil is "live spelled backwards" - evil is that which destroys life, not only physical life, but spiritual and emotional life as well. It is compatible, for example, with Kant's analysis of the human will (Kant, 1976/1934), which concluded that the difference between good and evil people lies in the order of subordination of their wills: is it to the moral law or personal incentive? The evil person subordinates the demands of the moral law to his or her desire.

One interesting consequence of this definition is that it distinguishes an "evil" personality from the psychopath, who on this view remains outside of evil (Klose, 1995). It is based on the view that we hold as morally responsible only those who accept morality (Fingarette, 1967). Psychopathy - the notion of an individual who theoretically has no conscience and accepts no morality - is fundamentally the absence of morality (Fingarette, 1967; Klose, 1995). Evil is rather a perversion of morality; evil comes about in the effort to escape responsibility and guilt, not in the absence of it. Since it is painful self-examination that is being avoided at all costs, the deception involved must extend to self-deception. This leads to another criticism of Peck's account: self-deception is one of the most difficult and controversial problems in philosophical psychology. Can one really deceive oneself? The distinction between Peck's evil personality and psychopathy would seem to hinge on the answer to this question.

I think it is not necessary to accept that psychopathy is outside evil in order to accept that there is a useful distinction between the personality disorder proposed by Peck and psychopathy. Perhaps there are different kinds of evil. Nietzsche (1973/1887) devotes a third of Genealogy of Morals to distinctions between "bad" and "evil" and between different kinds of evil. Ricoeur proposes a morphology of evil tracing four different conceptions of evil to different mythological accounts of the origin of evil (Ricouer, 1967):

1. In myths such as the Babylonian creation epic Enuma Elish, evil is identified with original state of chaos that is heroically overcome in the establishment of order that constitutes creation.

2. In myths such as the Judeo-Christian Adamic myth, evil results from an irrational event in an already completed creation. The separation of the problems of creation and evil leads to a transition to a new "type", in which evil is no longer identical with chaos.

3. Intermediate between the above, Greek tragedy traced evil to a god or gods who tempt mortals and lead them astray. The solution can only come from understood necessity.

4. Myths of the exiled soul, such as Plato's *Phaedo*, establish a sharp cleavage between the body and soul, and try to solve the problem of evil by concentrating on the destiny of the soul.

On this view, there is a valuable distinction between the kind of evil that is identified with primordial chaos - the psychopath, who rejects the order offered by the morality of

society, and the kind of evil associated with myths of The Fall. So – let's have a look at self-deception.

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