

The Temptation of Exteriority: Paradigmatic and Dramatic Examples of the Narcissistic-Paranoid Structure of the I, as a Structure of Exteriority

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Abstract

The argumentative approach of the present article is built around a pillar idea – that of the *exteriority* of the human I. This exteriority, far from being a vague, abstract or speculative one, is, on the contrary, a concrete, well articulated one, being, therefore, a well “structured” exteriority. I have shown that the essence of this structure of I’s exteriority is the *projection* or *projective identification* with an *image* from *outside*. For this reason, I called this structure of the exteriority, the *narcissistic-paranoid structure* of the I, while the *outside* projection of the image represents the very specifics of the *paranoid* mechanism, and the attachment, identification or *falling in love* with these images/projections from the outside represents the very specifics of the *narcissistic* mechanism. Using a key of psychoanalytic interpretation, I highlighted that the *primary* or *intrapsychic identification*, that is, the identification with one’s own image reflected in the mirror, as it appears in the Myth of Narcissus, constitutes the pattern on which the *secondary* or *interpsychic identifications* with the reflected images of *things* will be grafted, so as it appears in the “prisoners” of the Allegory of the Cave. The Allegory of the Cave and the Myth of Narcissus, seen in analogy, therefore represent the paradigmatic and dramatic exemplifications of the narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I, as a structure of exteriority or *ex-centricity*. I then reported the two allegories to “The Mirror Stage”, Jacques Lacan’s most important psychoanalytic contribution to the constitution of the I. I have thus shown that the I is formed by *doubling in the external mirror*, that is, by identifying with one’s own image from the outside, which is an *ideal* image. This ideal image of the I is based on the conflict, *duality* and asymmetry between the *motor* system (bodily reality) and the *visual* system (the projection of bodily reality into an idealized and illusory image, in a *gestalt*). This very identification with an image in the mirror, from the outside, through which the subject believes that he “spots” himself, he “sees” himself and thus establishes himself (“I see myself, therefore I exist”), will constitute the *genesis* of the I. It is about the genesis of a “*mask*”, that is, of a false, external

and illusory identity. This *intrapsychic identification* with one's own image from the outside, having rivalry and aggression with oneself as a specific feature, will constitute the *pattern of intersychic identifications*, rivalry and aggression with other people. Finally, I have shown that in this identification with an outside image resides the *drama of the exteriority* of the human I. I have illustrated this drama through the *Allegory of the Cave*, the *Myth of Narcissus*, the *Myth of Original Sin*, as well as through the Romanian poem, *The Boar with Silver Fangs*, showing that the price paid for this ancient and dangerous temptation of exteriority is always death.

Keywords: the I, structure of exteriority, narcissist-paranoid structure, projective identification, image, intra and intersychic identification, allegory of the cave, myth of Narcissus, mirror stage, drama

1. Exteriority as a projective-paranoid structure of the I in the “Allegory of the Cave”

No one has ever seen themselves. For this reason, everyone looks *elsewhere*, projecting themselves on the *outside*, in a strange and radical *exteriority* or *ex-centricity*. Therefore, we can state that a certain form of *paranoia* characterizes the entire human species, humans being tempted to see more outside than inside. The specificity of this paranoid form consists of the notorious fact of “not taking the beam out of one's own eye, before attempting to take the speck out of the other's eye”. It seems, indeed, that our own “beam” stuck in our eyes so blinds our inner vision that it suddenly triggers our outer one. Blind within, here we are pointing the finger outward, our paranoid “pointer” becoming, paradigmatically, the ignorant and reflexive compensatory gesture, always outwardly oriented from the inability to see the reality within.

But it is not this paranoid form of ignorance that Plato was referring to in the “Allegory of the Cave”, when he stated that the human being suffers from a fundamental blindness, that of not seeing the world of reality, allowing to be captivated, “enchanted” or hypnotized by the world of shadows, that is, of mental images projected outwards and confused with reality? It is in this ignorance that the drama of the “prisoner” in Plato's cave actually resides – in the inability to “see” or distinguish between mental images and reality, these mental images thus ending up being confused with reality and replacing it.

I will further show, by using a psychoanalytical interpretation key, that the name of this ignorance is *paranoid projection*, whereby the I of the human or the “prisoner” in the cave always projects the light outside of himself, as a shadow or mental image that obscures reality, thus projecting, for thousands of years from the cave of history, false lights, false tracks and false solutions to a single problem, which is basically the human himself, respectively his I – the *projective mechanism* behind these projections/images.

This projective-paranoid mechanism, so specific to the I or the “prisoner” in the underground, was therefore referred to 2400 years ago by Plato in the “Allegory of the Cave”, when he showed that the *fundamental*, respectively *mental* disease that the human being suffers from is ignorant imagination, whereby his I projects onto the walls of the mind cave the images/copies of things, mistaking them for reality. Plato can therefore be considered the first philosopher in the European space who talks about the *crucial confusion*¹ *between the mental image and reality*, respectively between the *imaginary* (mental) realm and the *real* one (See Ardelean 2019, 107), confusion through which the individual becomes sick of imagination, taking the images of things as reality, just as in the cave the prisoners, tied by the neck, hands and feet, so that they could only look/project *ahead*, confuse the shadows/the images projected by the fire in the cave with reality.

“Behold! human beings living in a underground den [...] Here they have been from their childhood, and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move, and can only see before them, being prevented by the chains from turning round their heads. Above and behind them a fire is blazing at a distance, and between the fire and the prisoners there is a raised way; and you will see, if you look, a low wall built along the way, like the screen which marionette players have in front of them, over which they show the puppets”. (Plato 2010, 1)

In this scam or “enchantment” resides the blindness of the human being, captivated by the projections or projected images that he confuses with reality. The “disenchantment” would then, for Plato, consist of the “unchaining” of the prisoner's gaze so that they no longer look/project only ahead, on the wall of the cave, but can turn or “twist” their gaze behind the cave, towards the light source or projection of

shadows/images from the cave. There would be two twists, the first being the twisting of the gaze towards the fire behind the images. This fire or artificial light, equivalent to mind or intellect, does not represent the real light of true/"intelligible" knowledge, but only the projection of phenomenal/"sensitive" or illusory knowledge, i.e. that "speleological truth" or cave truth of which Heidegger spoke. Therefore, only the second turning of the gaze, towards the Sun behind the fire, equivalent to the exit from the cave, "would mark the transition from the 'speleological truth' to the 'heliological truth', i.e. the transition from the level of shadow, image or conditioning of the prisoner at the level of light, reality, freedom, unconditioning or unchaining". (Ardelean 2019, 108)

If the light of the Sun is natural, not produced by humans, the light of the fire in the cave is artificial, produced by the human mind, reason for which he must at least know the "projection" of the fire in the cave, *turning/twisting the gaze towards this fire that is our mind - the source of all projections, shadows or reflected images of things*. Through this, Plato refers to something essential, namely that before knowing what we call "reality", it is important to see *who* the one behind reality is, who the one that knows the reality is. Thus, the "disenchantment" primarily targets knowledge of self, for which it is mandatory to start with the "disenchantment" of our I; that is to say with "unchaining" the prisoner so that he can turn/twist his gaze to what resides behind the "sensitive" eyes, behind the eyes which are "enchanted", captivated and hypnotized by their own projections or images confused with reality (See Ardelean 2019, 109). In the absence of this "disenchantment", any knowledge, even the so-called objective one, is vain, blind and useless, Nietzsche clearly affirming in this sense:

"We are unknown to ourselves, we knowers, we ourselves, to ourselves, and there is a good reason for this. We have never looked for ourselves – so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves? [...] We remain strange to ourselves out of necessity, we do not understand ourselves, we must confusedly mistake who we are, the motto 'everyone is furthest from himself' applies to us for ever – we are not 'knowers' when it comes to ourselves." (Nietzsche 1994, 3-4)

And this because, like the prisoners in Plato's cave, enchanted by the projections of the reflected images of things

that they confused with reality, placing themselves in the sphere of illusion, we, in turn, “enchanted, hypnotized by the projections or reflected images of our I, end up confusing it with reality, instituting one of the greatest illusions, the illusion that the I could have its own identity or reality, that ‘I’ could be identical with ‘I’, that ‘I’ could be identical with me” (Ardelean 2019, 110).

Therefore, the “disenchantment” or “disentanglement” of our I consists in seeing that the I is not a structure of identity or reality, but an *imaginary projective-paranoid structure*, based on identification with an image of reality, Plato's great merit being to emphasize this crucial confusion between image/projection and reality, whereby the projective-paranoid structure of the I tends (1) to *confuse* the mental image/projection with reality, (2) to *attribute* reality to the mental image, and then (3) to *replace* reality with a mental image.

In this blindness lies the specificity of the projective-paranoid structure of the I - in the replacement of reality with a mental image/projection that becomes more important than it, the I being, in Platonian terms, no more than a “copy”, a “shadow” or an “image” of reality, i.e. a confusion between mental image and reality, through which *the paranoid I, the “enchanted” I, and the hypnotized I presents itself as reality, when actually it is no more than an image*. This projective-paranoid structure of the I, together with the *narcissistic* one, which I am going to approach, circumscribes not only a *blindness*, but also a *drama* at the level of the entire human condition or the entire condition of the “prisoner”. It is about the *drama of exteriority*, that highlights the *radical exteriority or ex-centricity of the I*, as projective-paranoid structure, this exteriority being, as I will show, the source of all misunderstandings, conflicts, and dramas in the intra and intersubjective space.

Given that this projective-paranoid structure of the I always projects the light outside, towards something or someone else, it can be seen, according to the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan², as a “site of contestation”, in the meaning that the I does not recognize what is inside him, but sees it outside, projected in the other. In another words, the I projects, sees or recognizes outside, in the other, what it does

not see or recognize in himself. The I has thus “a paranoiac structure because it is the site of a alienation” (Lacan 2006, 137) through which “an internal desire/thought/feeling is displaced and located outside the subject, in another subject” (Lacan 2006, 154).

2. Exteriority as a narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I in the “Myth of Narcissus” and the “Allegory of the Cave”

No one has ever seen their own face. This terrible truth makes everyone look for it somewhere else, projecting its shadow outside, where it is more “visible” and more “light”, trying to “catch” or immortalize its image/reflection and thus, on the basis of that image, to establish itself and postulate: “I see myself, therefore I exist”.

Who does not recognize themselves in the myth of Narcissus, the one who, seeing his face reflected in the mirror of a lake, falls in love with his own image? What we know less, however, is the significance of Narcissus's drama, closely related to the illusion of the image which he allowed himself to be seduced by and which, *doubling him in the external mirror*, alienated and imprisoned him in an image that had become a tomb, intimately connected to the tragic end of Narcissus, to which I shall return.

In order to better understand the projective-paranoid structure of the I, we must complete it, by referring to its hard core, with the *narcissistic structure of the I*, highlighted by Jacques Lacan in his famous study on the *mirror stage*. This narcissistic structure, the “subject” of all paranoid type projections, refers, of course, to Narcissus, the one who falls in love with his own reflected image/projection, confuses himself, and identifies with it, and becomes the “Other”, this very *self-alteration*, constituting the genesis of the I (cf. Ardelean 2019, 117), in the sense that the “Other”, i.e. *the Image, respectively the Exterior creates the I*, alienating it in the shell or “mask” of a false and illusory identity.

Thus, the I, as a narcissistic structure, is constituted, according to Lacan, by identifying with its own reflected image, which produces it. We are talking here, from a psychoanalytical point of view, about the *primary/intrapsychic identification*, i.e. the unconscious identification within the space of one individual's mind. This primary/intrapsychic identification will represent the pattern of the *secondary/interpsychic identifications*, which refers to the identification in the space of the intersubjective relationship between people. (cf. Nasio, 1992, 110-133). If Freud's intrapsychic identification refers to the unconscious identification of the I (A) with an image/object (B) in that unconscious space, A (the I) identifying itself and becoming B (the image/object), in Lacan the perspective is reversed, B (the image/object) producing A (the I), intrapsychic identification meaning in Lacan's conception that the image/object with which the I identifies, becomes the cause of the I (cf. Nasio 1992, 111-112).

The Myth of Narcissus can thus be seen in analogy with the Allegory of the Cave due to the *mechanism of identification with an external image*, i.e. the confusion between image and reality. The difference is that if the myth of Narcissus it is about *identifying the subject with his own reflected image*, i.e. *primary* or intrapsychic identification, then, on a retrospective analysis, we can say that the Allegory of the Cave it is about *identifying the subject with the reflected images of things*, i.e. *secondary* identification, grafted onto the pattern of primary or narcissistic identification.

How in both allegories it is the projective identification of the I with something outside of it, either with its own reflected image (the case of Narcissus in the primary identification) or with the reflected images of things in the cave (the case of the "prisoners" in the secondary identifications), we can therefore affirm that the *narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I is a structure of exteriority and ex-centricity par excellence*, as long as *the outside projection of the image* represents the very *quintessence of the paranoid structure*, and the attachment, identification or *falling in love with one's own*

images or mental projections represents the very quintessence of the *narcissistic structure*.

Thus, the I, i.e. “Narcissus” or the “prisoner” in the cave, is nothing but the result of the primary identification (from the “mirror”) and secondary identifications (from the “cave”), being simultaneous: 1) the one who unconsciously projects his own images outside, 2) confusing them with reality, by erasing the border between mental and real, in order to finally 3) identify, fall in love or attach to these images, as if they were real, objective, the I assuming them and saying: “I am the image”, that is, the “Other” who thinks he “*looks like*” him. Therefore, the projective identification of the I, based on the confusion between the mental image and reality, can also be seen in the form of the confusion between what is similar (the image) and what is different (reality), *the I being the result of the confusion between the similarity at the level of the imaginary and the difference at the level of reality*.

From here also derives the mistrust in the possibility of knowing of the I, situated, for example, by Plato at the level of ignorance of the “prisoner” in the cave, and by Jacques Lacan at the level of narcissism or the imaginary in the mirror stage. Thus, the confusion between image and reality, initially established, in the space of European philosophy, by Plato, is taken up in psychoanalysis under the name of projective identification, whose mental or intrapsychic pattern is projection, “psychoanalysis showing that the structure of the I is not a structure of identity of the type I=I, but a structure of identification with an image from outside, the I becoming a structure of exteriority and alterity par excellence, of the type I=Other” (Ardelean 2019, 111), in which the “Other” produces the I.

3. Exteriority as a narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I from the “Mirror Stage”

What becomes extremely relevant in the context of *projective identification* with an image, through which the I becomes the “Other”, by virtue of the fact that the “Other”

produces the I, is *the Mirror stage*³, Jacques Lacan's most important psychoanalytic contribution, which accounts for the narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I, validates both the allegory of the cave and the allegory of narcissism on a scientific as well as on a clinical level.

Considered the reference point of the entire Lacanian work, the mirror stage (*stade du miroir*) represents a solid and scientific argument in the sense of the “disenchantment” of the I, through which Lacan reveals its imaginary, illusory and external structure, named by him “the paradigm of the imaginary order”⁴, in which the subject, like Narcissus, is “permanently caught and captivated by its own image” (Evans 2006, 118). It is, therefore, enough to see one’s self once to become captivated, blinded and hypnotized by one’s own mirrored image, as constitutive moment of self-alterity, which represents the *cause of imaginary alienation or alteration in the mirror*. The mirror stage refers thusly to the drama of Narcissus in its deepest sense. That sense of helplessness, of vital insufficiency of the child, of prematurity, which will constitute the cause of Narcissus's dual, dialectical or conflictual relationship with himself, respectively the cause of the *duality and conflict between his own image and the reality of his body*. (cf. Lacan 2002, 76). But what duality or conflict is it more precisely about?

Lacan refers here to the conflict between the child's *motor* and *visual* system. Given that the child’s visual system is more advanced than the motor one, this allows the child to see his image in the mirror as a whole, as *gestalt*, before reaching control of body movements. From here follows a contrast between the uncoordination of the body, experienced as a fragmentary body, and his own image, seen as a whole. This contrast then creates a *duality, a rivalry, an aggressive and dialectic tension between subject and image*, tension which is “solved” by identifying the subject with the image (cf. Lacan 2002, 76).

This discrepancy between the specular image, which reflects the body as a unit, as a whole and coordination, and the reality of the body, in which there is no unity and coordination of movements, will be felt dramatically and aggressively. It is this asymmetry “which *lies at the basis of the first form of discrepancy*

between image and reality” (Ardelean 2017, 10). In other words, the asymmetry between the imaginary, as a whole image of the body, and reality, as fragmentation, uncoordination of body movements, will generate for the first time the conflict between *what should be* (the ideal I) and *reality, what is*, the I being the result of this discrepancy, asymmetry, and conflict, “resolved” by the identification with the reflected image – the “Other”, as origin of the I (cf. Lacan 2002, 76).

The constitution of the I takes place, therefore, through the process of identification with one’s own reflected image (*image spéculaire*), moment described by Lacan as being one of gleefulness, in the sense that “the child’s jubilation is owed to his imaginary triumph in anticipating a degree of muscular coordination which he has not yet reached in reality” (Lacan 1988, 79). Thus, the temptation of doubling in the imaginary and external mirror is for Lacan of a negative nature because of the hypnotizing and captivating effect of the reflected image. This reflected image, perceived as a whole, as *gestalt*, as a unit, in contrast with the fragmented body, is considered by Lacan a simple illusion of integrity, having as main effect the alienation of the subject in its image. Furthermore, this alienation constitutes the basis of the subject’s aggressiveness towards and rivalry with his own self. (cf. Lacan 2002, 79). Thus, *the constitution of the I through identification with an image from outside of itself, brings to life a structure of rivalry of the subject with itself*, which presupposes, then, aggressiveness and alienation.

The I is formed through identification with the reflected image, named by Lacan “primordial identification with an ideal image of the I” (Lacan 2002, 76). Through this identification the I and the reflected image, form the *prototypal dual relation*, which is fundamentally narcissistic. The child identifies with the ideal image of himself and fixes himself in it as into a frame or “stature”, by saying: “the image is me”, even if this image is situated outside of him, in his exterior (cf. Ardelean 2017, 12). This is what Lacan calls the primordial identification with the ideal image of the I; image which, unable to ever be reached, will trigger aggressiveness and rivalry with one’s self, which is narcissism.

Narcissism, defined as “the erotic attraction to the specular image” (Evans 2006, 123) is an *ambivalent* formation, which has a double nature, *erotic* and *aggressive*, as it appears in the myth of Narcissus. The erotic nature is given by the attraction or the falling in love of the subject with the image or the *gestalt*. The aggressive characteristic is given by the contrast, the duality, the rivalry, or the conflict between the whole of the reflected image and the fragmented body. Aggressiveness is thus constitutive of narcissism, in the sense of that continuous rivalry with one’s self. It is the subject’s attempt to maintain the identification formed in the mirror stage, when “the infants sees its reflection in the mirror as a wholeness, in contrast with the uncoordination in the real body; this is experienced as an aggressive tension between the specular image and the real body” (Evans 2006, 6). Hence, this narcissistic identification with the reflected image implies the ambivalence of the erotic and aggressive elements, “*erotic aggressiveness*” being considered by Lacan the fundamental ambivalence of narcissism, which all the other forms of identification will later fix onto. Given this ambivalence, narcissism can easily glide from the extreme pole of self-love to the opposite pole of self-destruction – “narcissistic suicidal aggression” (cf. Evans 2006, 6), as it is found in the myth of Narcissus.

The narcissistic identification with the reflected image represents at the same time, in Lacan’s conception, the fundamental cause of the subject’s alienation within a shell of foreign, false and illusory identities through which the I becomes the “Other” from its very origin. In this sense, the I does not represent more than a mere sum of successive identifications, which is an “Other” for himself, because the subject will find himself primarily in the “Other”, be it his own image in the mirror, or his image in the “Other”.

The mirror stage shows, therefore, that the *I is the result of a misunderstanding (méconnaissance)*, because it introduces the subject into the imaginary order, as a radical exteriority in rapport with the subject. Thus, in the imaginary order, says Lacan, “self-knowledge (*me connaissance*) is synonymous with misunderstand (*méconnaissance*)” (Evans 2006, 112), because the process by which the I is formed in the mirror stage is at

the same time the institution of alienation from the *symbolic* determination of being. *Méconnaissance* is also “the structure of paranoiac delusions”, which are described by Lacan in terms of a “*méconnaissance systématique de la réalité*” (Evans 2006, 112). Operating solely in the register of the imaginary, which is that of images or “luminous shadows”, the I cannot have and cannot receive any *real ontological status*, but only an imaginary one, of appearance, delusion and illusion, the main illusions of the imaginary being “wholeness, synthesis, autonomy, duality and, above all, similarity [...] so the order of surface appearances which are deceptive, observable phenomena which hide underlying structure” (Evans 2006, 84).

Elaborating his theory on the formation of the I between 1932 and 1953, in close connection with his research on narcissism, paranoia and aggressiveness, Lacan establishes the following conclusion: the I is reduced to narcissism, as an imaginary order. The constitutive of the imaginary order is, as we have seen, the primary identification with one's own image, as the basis of secondary identifications with other images, through which the I becomes the “Other”, thus making possible the narcissism, the aggressiveness and the self-rivalry. All these constitutive elements of *narcissism* highlight, according to Lacan, a *universal feature of the I*, closely related to the phenomenon of *paranoia*. It is about that misunderstanding (*méconnaissance*) or “misrecognition” by which the I does not recognize what is inside it, but sees it outside, projected into the “Other”. Through all these narcissistic and paranoid elements, we can therefore affirm that the I appears as a narcissistic-paranoid structure.

The mirror stage thus represents not only the most important Lacanian contribution, but equally the most important psychoanalytical contribution within the framework of the “disenchantment” of the I. By proving the I to be no more than *an image, a projection or a narcissistic-paranoid structure*, Lacan deconstructs the claims of knowing the I and reveals in this way something of extreme significance, which is that the I *is not compatible to knowledge within the “conscious-perception” framework* (cf. Lacan 2002, 80).

4. The drama of exteriority: the I as a “montage” around a “black hole” or a perforated glance

After the 1960s, considered the third period of the Lacanian conception⁵, the French psychoanalyst resumes the dialectic from the mirror stage, observing that it is not enough for the subject to see his image reflected outside, respectively in the mirror or in the “Other”. Thus, what matters is the existence of a *hole* in this image: “I can see my image in the mirror, but what I cannot see is my own gaze” (cf. Nasio 1992, 71).

The existence of this hole refers to the existence of a *libido* that remains hidden from view. For this reason, libido breaks, perforates or holes the image, and in front of this hole, says Lacan, anguish arises. On this hole in the image will be grafted the “impulsive desires”, which the narcissistic-paranoid I will project outside, investing them. The I thus appears composed of a set of invested images that circulate around a hole, around a void, or around an *absence*; it is a “*montage*” around a hole. This real hole is the cause of the narcissistic montage, and the invested images allow accommodation to this void (cf. Nasio 1992, 72).

Reframing the Lacanian argument, we can say that the subject sees his image reflected outside, in the mirror or in the “Other”, but *what he does not see*, “*blinded*” by his own image, is the very central point - the source of his own gaze or projection, which is Desire. The desire that is projected from an existential void or vacuum is, therefore, this very “real hole”, this very “black hole”. It is the source of projection or gaze, and what the subject does not see, blinded by the light of his own image, is this very void, this very “*black hole*” of his gaze – Desire.

This can take a tragic turn, as it appears in the Myth of Narcissus, the character who best accounts for the narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I. Thus, looking at his face reflected in the mirror of a lake, Narcissus falls in love with his own reflected image and, consumed by longing, desire and pain that he could not reach the young man in the image, throws himself into the water that reflected him, thus dying. The drama and tragedy of the human condition illustrated in the Myth of

Narcissus resides in the fact that *the human cannot see himself directly*, but only indirectly, through means of the reflected image, fact which implies an alienation, an alteration, a “split” or a splitting of the human being, on the basis of which aggression and self-rivalry become possible.

The fact that *he sees but does not see himself*, does not see his void or “black hole” from which he looks, will make human to identify with an image, with an “Other”, and say “I am That”, in the desperate attempt to come into being, to establish itself through the reflected or ideal image. This ideal image gives the human the illusion of unity with himself, this very illusion of unity making possible the “capture” in an ideal image from outside, which hides from him the void or “black hole” of Desire, as the source of the images/projections.

It is useful to remember in this regard the significance of an almost forgotten aspect – the fact that in the Greek world it was forbidden *to look ahead*. Taking this aspect into account, we can then truly understand the prophecy made by the Greek sage Teiresias at the birth of Narcissus, according to which Narcissus will have a long life *if he never looks at himself* (cf. Biedermann 1992, 235), prophecy which came true. The interdiction that Narcissus, tempted, disregarded – that of looking at himself or mirroring himself, basically represents the interdiction to look outside ourselves, any exterior, through its lack, being deceptive, seductive and tempting – thus altering and alienating us. The prophecy also represents the interdiction to look at ourselves through the “sensitive” eyes, or mirror, i.e. through external images, because they hypnotize us, inoculating *the belief that reality is placed outside*. For this reason, the human will always tend to run outwards, in an attempt to “catch”, to capture or to establish himself inwardly, resulting in a conflict between inside and outside, between subject and image. This conflict will be “solved” by confusing the subject with the image outside of himself, this confusion causing Narcissus to end tragically in his exasperated attempt to unite in reality with the chimera of the image outside of himself, which was obviously an impossibility. Hence the drama, the tragedy of Narcissus, derived from the helplessness,

the impossibility to unite with oneself or to immortalize oneself through the “sensitive” image/mirror.

Similarly, the original interdiction from the Garden of Eden, that of *not* tasting the fruit of knowledge except at the price of death, anticipates the same dangerous temptation: the temptation of exteriority, the trap through which the human, tasting the fruit, *goes outside of himself*. Thus, “original sin” means nothing more than the “*sin*” of *changing or modifying our perception, that is changing the inner perception into the outer perception of things, the price paid for this temptation of exteriority being death*.

Therefore, the temptation of exteriority, that is, the temptation of the human being to look at or know himself from the outside, is the oldest temptation, reiterating the same dangerous temptation of the I: the temptation of doubling in the imaginary or external mirror of things, in which to see (one’s self) is actually equivalent to dying, since the price paid for this temptation always seems to be the same - death. From this temptation of exterior doubling ultimately derives the drama of the human I, for we cannot die definitively except in our exteriority.

Finally, this ancient and dramatic temptation of the I’s exteriority can be illustrated by referring to a famous Romanian poem, “*The Boar with Silver Fangs*”, written by Ștefan Augustin Doinaș⁶, which is another paradigmatic and dramatic illustration of the narcissistic-paranoid structure of the I’s projections.

The Silver fanged Boar

*A Levantine prince quite enamored with hunting,
some dark-hearted forest was travelling through
and making his path with great effort and grunting,
he said, while on bone-flute he merrily blew:*

*– Let’s hunt through these forests, untrodden and
daunting,
the silver-fanged boar who’s ferocious and wild,
who changes his fur every day, as he’s molting,*

and changes his hooves, and his glass eye reviled....

*– Oh, master, the servants with trumpets would say,
that bloodthirsty boar does not travel through here.
It's better to chase down the antlers to slay,
or red colored foxes, or hares that are near....*

*But smiling and certain the prince passed ahead
and carefully gazing at trees and their hues,
he left in his lair the young deer full of dread,
and the sparkly eyed lynx who'll smile for a ruse.*

*Through beech woods he'd trample old weeds to the
ground:*

*– Just look how he turns! We have closed in for good
on this silver-fanged boar, not too far, hear his sound:
come over, let's hit him with arrows of wood!...*

*– My lord, it's the stream through the woods, tall and
lush,
the smart servant said, as he laughed with a roar.
But the prince turned around and replied only: – Hush...
And the water did shine like the fang of a boar.*

Under elm trees he'd hasten his scattered old train:

*– You see how he's puffing alone and unreal,
the silver-fanged boar over meadow and plain:
come over, let's hit him with arrows of steel!*

*– My lord, it's the grass that with boots we would brush,
the bold-looking servant would say like before.
But the prince turned around to reply only: – Hush...
And the glistening grass seemed like fangs of a boar.*

Under firs, he would cry pushing them to the peak:

*– You see where he's finding his lair and his shire,
the boar from old tales, of whom old people speak:
– come over, let's hit him with arrows of fire!...*

*– My lord, it's the moonlight which night fears can't
quash,
the servant said laughing, despising and sore.
But turning around the prince only said: – Hush...*

And the moonlight shone bright, like the fangs of a boar.

*Alas! under rays of the pale stars at dusk,
as he crouched for a drink, his knees slowly sagged,
there charged a huge boar with his piercing sharp tusk
and the prince through the red dust he savagely dragged.*

*– What strange looking beast so bloodthirsty and vicious,
is stopping the hunt for my silver-fanged boar?
What black bird is crying in moonlight so listless?
What wilted old leaf shakes my soul to its core?...*

*– My master, that boar with the fangs as of silver,
that same had you pierced, and with blood you're awash.
The dogs chase it now – can't you hear? by the river... But
turning, the prince whispered quietly: – Hush.*

*You take the old horn, and just blow without pause
to sound till I'm dead, to the sky clear and prime...
Right then from the ridges a big moon arose,
and the horn made its sound for a very short time.*

(Doinaş 2020; translated by Daniel Ioniță)

Beyond the classical and insufficiently questioned interpretation of the poem, that of the aspiration towards the ideal, I would propose another interpretation, through which Ștefan Augustin Doinaş seems to realize the fact that this aspiration towards the ideal in the absence of an “initiation” that makes you see not only what is in *front* – usually a beautiful, bright image, which belongs to the narcissistic-paranoid projection of the I –, but also what is *behind* – danger, risk, death –, every human attempt is doomed to failure. Doinaş surprises, therefore, in his famous poem this idea of the *exteriority or ex-centricity of the narcissistic-paranoid I*, whose fundamental vice – the projection of its faculties and searches only externally – also becomes the fundamental drama of the I, that of being, sooner or later, crushed by the very projection and materialization of one's own chimeras. Thus, blinded by the projection of his own images that obscure his reality and refusing to hear the voice of reality, in the symbolic form of lucid “servants” who warn him that he has fallen into the net of the

image, the prince of the Levant, the poetic equivalent of Narcissus and the “prisoner” in the Cave, ends tragically, crushed by the “hoof” of the materialization of his own chimeras.

The poem also suggests something very symptomatic of our human condition, related to the meaning or direction of the search. Thus, if all people are searching, in one form or another for something, the question is whether they are searching in the right direction. The anecdote about a man who loses his key and is asked by a passerby if he lost it there, in that place, is extremely significant in this sense, to which our man honestly answers: “*No, but there is light here*” (cf. Carrière 1998, 354). This answer indicates the symptomatic tendency of human to search and orient his faculties only externally, i.e. where it is more “visible”, “easier” and more “light”, thereby missing the essential, the “key”, which is himself. For the human being, who seeks knowledge only externally and has not sought within, so that by not knowing oneself, how could one find what one seeks? Avid to conquer the universe, the world, the outer space, the human being does not realise that in the meantime they have lost the “key”, the inner space. Blind and without knowing, the human being is actually searching for oneself.

NOTES

¹ This issue, the Gordian knot of all issues, was actually intuited and approached, in various ways, by all major world philosophies and religions, in permanent attempts to reach reality and become free from the “spell” of image or illusion.

² Jacques Lacan is considered the most loyal, but also the most nonconformist interpreter of Freud’s work. A man of great culture, Lacan widened the horizons of psychoanalysis, by introducing concept from the spheres of philosophy, linguistics and mathematics.

³ The term of mirror stage was initially formulated by the psychologist Henry Wallon, as a stage between six to eight months in which the child perceives its “I” in space. Donald Winnicott, Henri Wallon, Paul Schilder, René Zazzo, Françoise Dolto, Jacques Lacan are among the most important psychologists, psychiatrists and psychoanalysts who highlighted in their research the role of specular reflection in the configuration of the “I”.

⁴The psychological life has, according to Lacan, three dimensions: the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The imaginary order is related to the images of the “I” in the mirror stage. The symbolical order, specific to humans, is related to the function of speech/language, to the law which

governs the unconscious – the unconscious being seen as a structured language. The real order is more difficult to name, because it goes beyond the imaginary order, and the symbolic order, it being similar to the Kantian object itself.

⁵ The first period of Lacanian psychoanalysis is between 1932-1935, and the second period between 1953-1958.

⁶ If it is true, according to several testimonies, that the poem was written in 1945 (the year the Second World War ended), then we cannot exclude the symbolic connection, at least, with the atrocities committed by Hitler's war "hunt" in pursuit of his "ideal", "ideal" which, materializing, ended up becoming one of the most monstrous and terrifying dramas and traumas in the history of humanity.

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