The Deconstruction of Primary Narcissism

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The author examines Winnicott's contribution to Freud's concept of primary narcissism. In "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud laid the foundations for this contribution, but it was Winnicott who turned it into a clinically useful concept. There are three of Winnicott's ideas that can be seen as preliminary stages to his theory of transitional phenomena and illusion. They serve as an introduction to thinking about the analysis of the analysand's primary narcissism, and the theoretical prerequisites that make the interpretation of primary narcissism possible. Through the exploration of three main points in Winnicott's writings the author shows how Winnicott’s conceptualisations are both new and a continuation of Freud's thinking. His ideas are thus part of the overall theoretical pattern of Freud's metapsychology. The three main points are as follows:

1. In bringing maternal care and the presence of the psychic environment into the construction of primary narcissism, Winnicott made it possible to analyse narcissism. His ideas enable us to stand back from the characteristic solipsism of narcissism, which holds that everything comes from the self and only from the self. The latter concept tends to eliminate the role of the object and environment in the construction of the self. At the same time, by deconstructing the way in which the self is infiltrated by a certain number of narcissistic postulates, Winnicott made it possible to interpret the theory of narcissism itself.

2. Between the individual and the sense of self, Winnicott inserted the maternal object and her function as a mirror of affects who acts as a medium for the organization of self-identity. Primary identity is established through the construction and elimination of a narcissistic identification that becomes meaningful in the context of a primary homosexual relationship functioning as a "double".

3. A process of differentiation that governs the discovery of the object is in a dialectical relationship with narcissistic identification. That process can be understood only in terms of the responses made by the primary psychic environment to the baby's primary aggression.

Keywords

Narcissism, creativeness, destructiveness, reality-testing, illusion, the double, primary narcissistic illusion, subjectification, objectification, messenger-drive, found-created object, negative illusion

1. Dissecting primary narcissism

Freud's contribution focused particularly on the analysis of different mental states (neurotic, narcissistic, psychotic). This was based on his exploration of the effect on the vagaries of identity related to how the difference between the sexes and generations is structured in the mind, as well as the changes in the organization of the differences that both unites and separates infantile sexuality from the sexual sphere within their adult counterparts. Winnicott invites us to extend Freud's ideas by thinking about the impact of the primary construction of the me / not-me distinction in narcissistic states and their adjustments. His contribution is crucial to the analysis of narcissistic states of mind and of pathological forms of the ego's
defence processes when the self has to contend with the risk of trauma in early childhood.

For Winnicott, primary narcissism cannot be conceived of in any solipsistic way. How it develops should be thought of within the context of the primary psychic relationship that is set up with the specific features of any given environment. A kind of primitive illusion, however, tends to obliterate that particular aspect of its construction. Analysing primary narcissism thus implies reintroducing what the primary narcissistic illusion has erased, i.e. the role played by the primary object in its foundation because narcissism involves two and perhaps three people.

In cases where narcissistic and self-identity issues are uppermost, the individual remains a prisoner of that primary illusion. The subject deludes her-self that she is exclusively formed. That is the impasse: the individual forgets that she is not self-generated, whether as a flesh-and-blood creature or as far as her mental apparatus is concerned. That is what Winnicott meant in his paper on the use of the object, where he states that narcissism cannot be thought of exclusively in terms of the self. (Winnicott, 1972) The self cannot be thought of without taking into account the object considered as "another-self", i.e. a distinct self that has its own mental life and wishes. That other self who may be present has now become an important element since there has been a definite attempt to acknowledge that the counter-transference reveals hidden aspects of the transference. Historically it is the 'other' with which the individual constructed herself in the past. To understand fully the implications of Winnicott's ideas, we must first of all remind ourselves of Freud's original position.

In "Mourning and Melancholia", Freud wrote that "the shadow of the object fell upon the ego" [1917e (1915): 249]. This is an essential element in thinking about the blending of ego and object, and it suggests a fundamental direction for analysing narcissism. If suffering involves the shadow of the object that has fallen on the ego, the analyst will have to help the patient give that shadow back to the object, break free of the blend brought about by her narcissistic defences and deconstruct the basic narcissistic postulate of the self-generation of the mind.

Freud went on to emphasize the fact that one of the characteristic features of narcissism is not simply that it brings everything back to the self -- all cathexes are aimed at the ego -- but also that it erases or attempts to erase anything that comes from another individual. In The Ego and the Id (1923)-- and even more so in Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926) -- Freud showed how the ego assimilates and takes as its own what it cannot remove. Narcissism assimilates the object and takes in the shadow of the object that has fallen on the ego. At the
same time, it erases the fact that there is a shadow that has fallen on the ego and is henceforth mixed up with it. The "lost" object does not have to be mourned by the ego. In bringing the cathexis of the lost object back onto itself, the ego incorporates the traces left by that object. Later I shall come back to the meaning of the idea of "the shadow of the object" that has also become much clearer thanks to Winnicott.

The narcissistic process does not simply erase all trace of the object, it wipes out the process by which that erasing occurs; it erases for the individual that by which she developed and what she owes to the object thanks to which the self came into being. Moreover, it erases the process by which the self assimilated what came from the other person in its own organization. These processes go to make up the primary narcissistic illusion.

2. The primary mirror-object

We can now examine in more detail the ideas that Winnicott contributed to the above concepts. How do his hypotheses help us in the practice of psychoanalysis to locate and identify retroactively those traces that have since become mute, silenced, assimilated ie: the traces of the object's primary responses, the first human mirror reflecting the self's drive-related impulses and primary needs?

When the clinical presentation seems to involve only the relationship between the individual and her own self, Winnicott recommends that we try to reintroduce the historical aspect of the primary object and reconstruct what must have occurred between the individual and the object that gives rise to the narcissistic pattern we see before us.

Winnicott's main hypothesis is that the individual expects the primary object to be an emotional mirror that offers a representation of the self. In the relationship between the individual and her self, Winnicott reintroduces the gap, the fork in the road as it were, generated by the primary mirror of the object. He restores the paradox of an identity that is constructed through internalising the reflection sent out by another person. Identity is the precipitate of primary narcissistic identifications, those that incorporate an object that is a mirror and the self's double. Later, the theoretical model that this implies will be explored but for the moment the focus is on clinical matters.

One concrete clinical consequence of Winnicott's hypothesis is that, when the individual is defined inherently as identical to her self, that identification and the identification of her internal states of mind include something of the other person ie: some degree of otherness brought
about by the ‘reflection’ carried out by the other person, through identification with what those primary objects reflected.

Any attempt at psychoanalytically restoring that ‘otherness’ aspect and deconstructing the solipsistic narcissistic postulate of self-identity, means that the objectification function of the drives is made possible or perhaps restored. This implies the possibility of rediscovering traces of the lost object in the ego. These traces represent the shadow that has been assimilated.

The following clinical sequence, from the standard form of treatment with a female patient who had suffered from severe anorexia nervosa, will serve as an illustration of this problem and the kind of analytic clinical work that is required.

Echo¹ was a woman patient of mine whose clinical anorexia nervosa gradually diminished as the analysis proceeded. Her social life, however, was still extremely limited in scope. She was economizing, convinced that she could slow down the passing of time or even bring it to a complete halt. She limited her social contacts to what was strictly necessary. She herself toned down whatever faint drive-related impulses she did have and repressed her affects. In her sessions, she was often immobile and silent. It was only very sparingly that she talked of some aspects of her inner thoughts and feelings. I had the impression that she was treating the work of the analysis as she did food in her anorexic state, as well as the rest of her life, including her mental functioning: she neutralized everything. That impression of mine was not particularly useful on a practical level. The idea that, in a kind of transference reversal which was an attempt to share her internal world, she evoked in me an experience -- and therefore was communicating to me -- what she herself had gone through. This was useful only insofar as it helped me to tolerate the specific features of the transference without retaliating too much.

It was in another aspect of the transference that we had to find the wherewithal to revive her drive-related processes. When Echo became able to break free of her ‘from self to self’ defences – in other words her narcissistic defences -- she brought those issues into the transference, so that the analytical process could start to become meaningful. I helped her to externalize the shadow of the object by drawing attention to the fact that she seemed to be treating herself and treating me in much the same way as her primary environment had treated her.
As the work of the analysis progressed, the following intersubjective pattern began to emerge in the transference. Echo gradually began to express in words what was going on inside her when she came to her sessions. Initially she would feel pleased and want to explain something that she had been able to formulate and understand between sessions. But as soon as we were both together, as soon as she came into my consulting-room, the source of that pleasure and the wish to share something dried up immediately. She remained cold, with no vital spark to her. What she had intended to say suddenly seemed insipid to her, devoid of any interest whatsoever -- and she felt this before she even opened her mouth. The vigour she had felt before finding herself in my presence just melted away. That transformation sometimes occurred as soon as I entered the waiting room to welcome her -- as soon as I opened the door, in fact, as soon as she caught sight of me.

Gradually the incidental thought that came into her mind at that point could begin to be put into words. When she looked at my consulting-room full of books and files, she thought that I must be a very busy person, and probably not particularly available, whereas she herself was just a tiny little thing of hardly any importance to me, the "great professor". Gradually, these transference elements could be linked to certain specific features of the patient's relationship with her mother. When her sister was born, Echo suddenly felt de-cathected, because her mother gave all her attention to the new baby. Mother's mind was elsewhere, and she was unable to think simultaneously about both of her children. As we worked through that time in her past, there was some warming-up of her drives, but basically her relationship to the outside world remained much as before.

It was necessary to work through the everyday aspects of her life as a child, over and beyond the specific event that was the birth of her sister, because what then appeared could be seen as running through the whole of her relationship with her mother. Day by day, in the ordinary life of the family, Echo's mother gradually showed herself to be a hyperactive woman, always running around; there was no way to make contact with her. At meal-times, for example, she would rush around, serving one person then another, eating while she was still on her feet or at the edge of the table without sitting down, without ever stopping for a rest. She would serve someone and then start to clear everything away before the meal was over; she was a kind of 'household tornado'. Whenever Echo tried to get close to her mother

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1 I call her "Echo" in memory of the way in which Narcissus treated Echo's love and affection, causing her to feel ashamed, to become anorectic and to wither away.
in an upsurge of emotion, it would all fall flat because her mother was already elsewhere -- she had turned away, busying herself with something else. Echo would simply slide off a smooth-surfaced object that could never be reached, and whose attention could never be captured. The upsurge of emotion fell flat, disappeared; the drive broke down, withdrew, retracted. At the same time, life itself became more restricted. No ‘use’ could be made of the object and Echo's drives could not keep up their momentum; she had to neutralize everything as much as she could. She had to repeat that kind of sequence very many times in her sessions -- and I had to formulate, just as often, my transference interpretations in terms of the ‘nullifying’ effect of her mother's responses on her drive-related and emotional impulses -- before any significant change in the way she related to her drives and her affects could be integrated.

No such clinical pattern can be understood in terms of solipsistic thinking because it implies an intersubjective conception of the life of the drives, as well as an intersubjective conception of their organization. The idea of a "messenger" drive -- one that is addressed to another person and is dependent for its development on the response of that other person -- is one that all clinicians must come to acknowledge as a key concept. It widens the scope of what the psychoanalyst can take in and expands clinical thinking in psychoanalysis.

In my work with Echo, I was initially confronted with a ‘from herself to herself’ kind of behaviour as the focus of the clinical picture at that time. That behaviour was solipsistic in nature, it was purely self-related. It participated in her narcissistic economy, and did not appear to be aimed at anyone in particular. Even when she was not in her sessions, Echo behaved in much the same way. The shadow of the object had fallen on her ego, which had assimilated its impact and the problem then became an internal one, one that was self-related. However, since it was after all brought into the psychoanalytic sessions, it began to take on an interactive dimension and had an impact on the analyst within the analysing space. Thus it became a kind of enacted message, a transference communication. In the end, I acknowledged it to be (or endorsed it as) a particular form of the transference, a transference Agieren. Insofar as it affects the analyst, insofar as another person feels involved and can think about such a behaviour pattern in terms of an enacted message addressed to the other, then the idea that there is an intersubjective dimension to that behaviour which has an impact on

\[2\] All of the children in that [large] family were in trouble of some kind or another: drug addiction,
the other person can be explored.

By taking melancholia as the fundamental model of narcissistic impasse, Freud gave a certain direction to psychoanalysis. The vector he thus introduced was taken up and put to extremely good use by Winnicott. Thanks to the latter's hypothesis of the object as the self's emotional mirror, Freud's intuition was made operational for the analysis of the psychopathological aspects of narcissistic and identity-related states of mind.

This question will be discussed more fully later, with reference to Lacan's 'mirror stage' and to the change in emphasis that Winnicott brought to it. Before doing so, another aspect of Winnicott's hypotheses should be pointed out concerning the various complementary features that he introduced which makes it possible to deconstruct the theory of narcissism itself.

The narcissistic theory of the drives simply involves the tendency to discharge; the object is looked upon merely as being the instrument through which drive-related discharge can take place. The object in this position is not experienced as another person. If the object is present, the drive can be discharged, released. If the object is absent, the self is threatened with loss of some kind, and has to set up palliative auto-erotic measures in order to deal with that threat and await the beneficial return of the object. Putting the emphasis on the object's function in the construction of the self and on the object's responses to the self's libidinal impulses introduces a new dimension into the life of the drives, one which implicitly contains the idea that drives also carry a message addressed to the object, a message that is waiting for some kind of response. Drives are constructed through the interplay that is set up between self and object. A brief example will help us to understand the issues that this kind of hypothesis raises in our clinical work.

In one of his sessions, a male patient said that he felt 'empty' and that his mind had 'gone blank'. The classic interpretation of that state, the one that I was taught when, in supervision, I was learning my craft as a psychoanalyst, was to link that inner emptiness to the feeling that, given the drive-related avidity of the patient, something was experienced as missing. The analysis would then attempt to explore the all-or-nothing processes that are typical of primary avidity. Later, I learned that this feeling of inner emptiness could be linked also, in a complementary manner, to thought processes such as negative hallucination. The empty feeling could then perhaps be seen also as a hollow space, an awaiting, a potential space for receiving something. Thanks to Winnicott, another complementary interpretation became available, one psychosis and antisocial behaviour were some of the "solutions" that they had implemented.
which, without in any way nullifying the previous two, points them in a new direction. The feeling of emptiness can be looked upon as the effect on the ego of the shadow of an unresponsive object that remained silent in the face of the self’s entreaties, indifferent to the self’s urges, perhaps even turning away in hostility. As Albert Camus put it in his *Myth of Sisyphus*: ‘The absurd is born of this confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world’ [2006: 21]. The emptiness of the object's response is then incorporated, leaving in the ego a trace of the echo of that silence and of the way in which it may have shattered the self's drive-related urges. The previous patient Echo is a good example of that process.

When Winnicott said to his patient Margaret Little\(^3\) that her mother was chaotic, he was not attempting to designate the mother as "the bad object" -- that would have been neither apposite nor psychoanalytically helpful. The notions of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ objects have to do with infantile definitions of the object and do not correspond to the kind of categories that are useful to psychoanalysts in their attempt to think about the patient’s past. In describing the mother as ‘chaotic’, Winnicott helped the patient to move away from the idea that her inner chaos was simply the outcome of an anarchic and disorganizing drive or the result of an avid and limitless libido. The patient was able to grasp the intelligibility of an inner impulse that came up against a chaotic and disorganizing response from the environment. The analytic space illuminates the relationship with the self, and revives the impact and the form of the response made by the primary mirror-object in the past. This means that the initial impulse can also be rediscovered in the present analytic relationship, and the message addressed to the object via that drive-related impulse might have a better chance of meeting with a different kind of response. The following clinical example will serve as an illustration of these ideas.

This patient from time to time had breakdowns that were melancholic in nature: loss of all liveliness and probably a disintegration of his immunological defences. His overall condition improved significantly during an initial period of analysis with a female analyst. However, when he asked me to help him carry on exploring psychoanalytically his inner mental states, he was still suffering from a generalized depressive state and major inhibition of his potential. He had attended some of my lectures on narcissistic states and felt that I might be able to help him in a different manner from that of his previous analyst.

\(^3\) For a fuller discussion of this particular example, see Roussillon [2002].
I shall skip the initial part of the analytical process, devoted to his working through in the transference the relationship with his father who was a man showing little emotion, was unyielding and not very often present. Processing his intense hostility towards a paternal figure who disappointed the love that his son had for him and who showed little interest in his son did indeed impact on the patient's depressiveness, but not in any really decisive way. The transference relationship began to show signs of how the patient and his mother related. She suffered from manic-depressive psychosis with delusional aspects, and this had a significant effect on the patient. When the analysis of that relationship came to the fore, the patient had two severe depressive breakdowns with major melancholic features. On each occasion, a psychosomatic disorganization ensued, with the patient 'falling apart' as his immunological defences collapsed. The decisive phase in his processing of these depressive breakdowns occurred when it became possible to link the collapse of all liveliness in the patient, when he was falling apart, with the response made by the maternal object to the impulses of the child he had then been. Very slowly we had to reconstruct the characteristic features of the primitive conversation between the baby i.e: the infant the patient was at that time and a mother who oscillated between melancholic and manic phases.

From the perspective opened up by Winnicott extending Freud's comment on the shadow of the object, the work of analysis enables the reconstitution and processing of the effects of the chaotic and erratic aspects of the mother's emotional responses. From time to time the patient's mother would accept her son's affection towards her, exaggerating it until it became too powerful to keep in check, then her attitude would suddenly change and she would reject it. Most of the time the mother's sole response to any affect-based impulse was to turn her face away, close in on herself or even reject it as though she felt she was under attack. Her son was left in complete confusion -- confusion between love and hate, between affectionate and aggressive impulses. At that point, all forward movement came to a halt; his liveliness weakened and collapsed and at that point he fell apart. His affectionate impulses towards the object were experienced by the child he then was as highly destructive. The paradoxical position in which he found himself, that had been created by the confusion between his affectionate impulses and his experience of being destructive, tended to paralyse all mental activity on his part. If, in the baby, the good (love) and the bad (destructiveness, according to the mother's interpretation of the impulse) are no longer opposable -- with each creating the other -- the pleasure-unpleasure principle and its transformation into the reality principle are paralysed, to such an extent that all
mental activity tends to stop.

In the various clinical situations that are described here, the really crucial part of the clinical work was to facilitate a return of the patients' mental dynamics through highlighting the specific nature of the primary object's responses and reactions to the infant's drive-related impulses and urges. When the clinical picture gave the impression that the patient was in an impasse and that her mental processes were repetitively going round in circles, I reintroduced the specific element that had been the object's response. I tried to reconstruct that response on the basis of the transference indications that the patient evoked in each session.

There are two phases to that process. The first has to do with the present and it takes place in the transference. It is initially perceived and worked on at that level. Since the process is insistent by nature, historical reconstruction becomes possible in the second phase which enables the process to be stabilized and means that change is sustainable.

Naturally enough, this leads us to delve deeper into Winnicott's ideas concerning the process of subjectifying identification on the one hand and, on the other, the hypothesis that he put forward concerning what he called the use of the object.

3. The process of subjectification: subjectifying identification

The reading of Winnicott with Freud that describes the context in which mother and baby first come into contact with each other, leads to the suggestion of the concept of a primary homosensual relationship that is 'double' in nature. This context brings about the process of subjectification that lies at the heart of the organization of the primary narcissistic / self-identity pattern.

French-speaking psychoanalysts differentiate between the sexual sphere and sexuality as such. The term 'sexuality' is used to designate behaviour, while the 'sexual sphere' refers to the pleasure-unpleasure issues that infiltrate all mental processes. From that point of view, the 'sensual dimension' has to do with the sexual sphere. French-speaking psychoanalysts would therefore argue that, although everything is not sexual, there is a sexual element in everything, insofar as drive-related cathexes always accompany mental processes or intersubjective encounters. To describe that relationship as 'primary homosensuality' or 'primary homosexuality' emphasizes the fact that pleasure and unpleasure have to do with the movement in which the other person is either encountered or lost as a 'double' of oneself.

Three of Winnicott's ideas could be seen as making this point more explicit: the found-
created object, the mother’s mirror function and the experience of interaction in the early feeding situation. (Winnicott, 1953; 1967; 1969; 1971)

The idea of the found-created object is that the maternal environment which presents the breast at the proper time and in a manner suited to the infant enables the latter to have the productive illusion of being able to ‘create’, via hallucination, the breast that he or she actually ‘finds’ through apperception. Contrary to the usual metapsychological description of mental functioning, which emphasizes the contrast between hallucination and perception, Winnicott describes a paradoxical – ‘transitional’ -- metapsychological dimension in which that contrast no longer holds. The apperceived breast meets up with the hallucinated one, and is superimposed on it as a real substantive double. This process lies at the heart of the infant’s invention of the subjective illusion of being able to create the satisfaction that he or she finds. Maternal adequacy transforms that primitive hallucination into a positive illusion that supports the infant’s belief in her capacity to produce a satisfactory world. Object-cathexis and narcissism are therefore not necessarily opposed to each other; they combine their effects and produce a specific kind of subjective state -- one that is ‘transitional’ -- in which the hallucinated representation of the object and the ‘objective’ object come together in such a way that pleasure is obtained. Self-preservation and drive-related cathexes thus go hand in hand and auto-eroticism and object-cathexis converge. Pleasure comes about from that merging together and is a signal of that encounter and blending.

This conception of Winnicott’s takes us beyond the metapsychological impasse that is caused by the opposition between drive theory and object-relations theory. Here, due to space limitation, it is not possible to discuss everything that follows on from a conception of the mental apparatus which sees it as capable, under certain specific circumstances, of simultaneously hallucinating and perceiving, without becoming confused in the process.⁴ Rather, I shall focus on describing the kinds of double relationship to which Winnicott drew our attention.

A further aspect of Winnicott’s theory concerns his conception of the mother’s face as ‘mirroring’ her infant’s internal states. Winnicott argued that his hypothesis was a development of Lacan’s intuition about the function of the mirror stage. It involves the point at which issues concerning identification are uppermost, and when narcissistic identification and the sense of self are joined together. The main thrust of Winnicott’s hypothesis is that what infants see when they look at their mother’s face is a reflection of their own internal and emotional state. Some

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⁴ For more details on this point, see Roussillon [2001].
comments and complementary ideas would be useful here.

The first point is that the idea of the ‘good-enough’ mother is implicit in this hypothesis. The mother, together with her surrounding environment, which in particular includes the father, adapts her movements, facial expressions and physical posture to those of her infant. She attunes emotionally to her infant, with whom she identifies and whose internal states she shares in her own way. (Winnicott, 1958). The infant sees in the mother’s face a reflection of this supportiveness as a double, which is aesthetic, sensory and emotional. (Winnicott, 1967) I would nevertheless argue that we have to go beyond Winnicott’s hypothesis and see this first ‘mirror’ as being not only the mother's face but also her entire body and her behaviour.

This mirror, personified by the mother’s body when she is sufficiently adapted to her infant’s needs, sufficiently malleable [Roussillon 1991] and sensitive towards her infant's internal states, has the effect of producing a narcissistic double. A ‘double’ is something that is both ‘the same’ -- similar to the self -- and also ‘another’. No double can ever be simply the same because that situation would create confusion, rather than a reflection of the self. The mother must therefore show that she is different, an-other, through the way in which she reflects to her infant her sharing of emotions. The emotions and internal states that she reflects are similar, but not identical, to those of her infant. They have the same basic components, the same matrix, but not the same form. The maternal reflections are identical to those of her infant, except as to their mode: they are homomorphic but not isomorphic. Maternal adjustment is intermodal. Gergeli [2003] has pointed out that, beside this intermodal accompanying ‘double’, the mother indicates also that the emotional states she reflects back to her infant are not her own emotional states but rather those of the infant. The message or metacommunication that the mother receives means that she is able to take on the role of a simple ‘mirror’ of her infant's internal states. She can think of herself as a reflecting mirror. It is obvious that if one is to be able to mirror the internal states of another person, one must be able to empathize with that person's emotional states, identify them, acknowledge them and therefore share them, at least to some extent.

The concept of the mother as the infant's primary mirror implies that a primary relationship is set up and cathected as a movement reaching out towards the other person in an attempt to construct a relationship with that person as a potential double of the self. Here too satisfaction and pleasure depend on the capacity of the two partners to come together and see the other as a double -- as a separate person, yet the same as the self. It is that movement, that ballet as it were, which governs pleasure and unpleasure. That interplay between mother and infant initiates
the construction of a rudimentary form of symbol, i.e. what represents their initial encounter and what is shared between them and the union for which it strives. If a manifestation of the infant's mind-set can be echoed by the mother, it is no longer simply a discharge: it begins to take its place in a primitive system of communication, taking the form of a 'shared sign' i.e. of a message that can be addressed to the object. Sharing is the first prerequisite for the emergence of symbols, conceived of as a sign that meeting and coming together is taking place. Both infant and mother acknowledge and recognize themselves in such symbols, and the symbols carry traces of their encounter and their coming together.

These comments on Winnicott's hypothesis must, if they are to be complete, mention another implicit element of that conception. If we say that the mother's face is her infant's mirror, this implies not only that the mother must behave in such a way that she offers herself as her infant's mirror, but also that, whatever transpires, the infant treats what is expressed in the mother's face and body as a reflection of herself. In other words the infant identifies with what reverberates through the manner in which the mother and other significant persons in the environment are present for him. 'Whatever transpires' means that the infant treats the substance of what the mother expresses as a message that, in effect, concerns her, as a kind of response to the infant's own impulses directed towards the mother. Whether the mother's response is an accurate reflection of the infant's emotions, the effect of her own internal state, or the way in which she feels and interprets the signals addressed to her, her infant will receive these messages as reflections. This point is of particular relevance for our understanding of the pathology of narcissism, which can then be seen to involve the specific features of the way in which the primary mirror has carried out the role potentially allotted to it. Either the primary parental mirror may have reflected only very little material for the infant to be able to identify her internal states, which then may become blanked out in the absence of any 'double' response, or the reflection may have distorted them to such an extent that they have become warped.

Thinking along these lines enables us to hypothesise how Freud's enigmatic formula 'the shadow of the object' can be better understood. In Mourning and Melancholia, Freud argued that, in melancholia, the source of the feeling of loss of the object derives from a disappointment emanating from the object. The hypothesis suggested here is that the shadow of the object arises from that which the object did not reflect back to the self as regards the latter's emotions and internal states. In other words the object failed to fulfil its role as a mirror, and the primary narcissistic expectations of the self were thus disappointed. To go beyond both Freud and
Winnicott, I would say that the self then tries to incorporate the object and the part of the self felt to be confiscated by the object when nothing is reflected back. The self sticks to the object in what some post-Kleinian analysts have called adhesive identification. Esther Bick’s term ‘adhesive identification’, more accurately describes it, and it lies at the root of an area of non-differentiation between self and object. This is a shared area that, in fantasy, holds self and object stuck to each other as if they were Siamese twins. The process of mourning the loss of the object is thus paralysed from the outset and trapped within a paradox because giving up the object implies giving up also the part of the self that is sequestered inside the object. Yet, letting go of the object, for example in the process of mourning, is carried out in the name of preserving the self or the self’s wholeness and consistency (as in castration anxiety, for example).

The third point I wish to make concerns something that appeared later in Winnicott's writings. The most explicit indication of it that I have been able to find dates from a paper he wrote in 1969 (and published in 1970), although it is quite possible that what was being formulated clearly at that point was already implicit in his earlier work. In that paper, Winnicott emphasizes the importance of the two-way movement, the mutuality that is typical of the early feeding situation and, over and beyond that, of the mother-infant relationship as a whole. He comments on the fact that infants try to put their fingers into their mother’s mouth, and so ‘feed’ the mother. Here again is the idea of ‘double’. Winnicott emphasizes the importance of this reciprocity for a positive integration of the experience of being fed. The maternal mirror is no longer simply an effect of the illusion derived from the found-created dimension, it is not simply an effect of an emotional or sensory reflection, rather it implies also a two-way process of reciprocity, a mutual feeding, and perhaps, also a mutual transformation. Once again, the maternal mirror contributes to the emergence of a form of symbolic dialogue.

4. The process of objectification and the discovery of the object's otherness

The concept of a primary homosensual relationship that is ‘double’, which entails the gradual construction of an encounter with the object as a ‘double’ of the self, is tenable only if it comprises a theory of the discovery of the object's otherness and maintains a dialectical relationship with that theory. (Winnicott, 1969) The process is two-fold: identify with the other person and through that other person; differentiate oneself from the other person and differentiate that other person from oneself. Differentiation is meaningful only insofar as it is based on the construction of the other person as the self's double. It is because the other person
is initially conceived of as a double that the difference can be constructed in a manner that is not simply a form of splitting or repudiation. On that point, too, Winnicott was an innovator: he complemented Freud's hypotheses and in so doing compelled us to dig more deeply.

For Freud, reality is a primary ‘given’ of perception. There exists from the outset a reality-ego that is in a dialectical and conflicting relationship with the pleasure-ego. Reality-testing makes use of perception and the perception-motor pairing in doing its work and in maintaining active, during wakefulness ie: in consciousness. This is the difference between hallucination and perception. Nonetheless, at certain points in his theory, Freud did seem to hesitate as to where his ideas were leading him. The sense of reality is not just a matter of perception, it entails conception. Similarly, the relationship with the object is not just a matter of perception; it too entails conception. When Freud wrote in 1915 that, at the very beginning, ‘the external world, objects, and what is hated are identical’, adding: ‘If later on an object turns out to be a source of pleasure, it is loved, but it is also incorporated into the ego; so that for the purified pleasure-ego once again objects coincide with what is extraneous and hated’ [1915, p. 136], this goes much further than a mere perception of the object. As we can imagine, what complicates the question is the fact that hallucinatory cathexis of the object becomes mixed with the simple perception of it. Hallucination and perception may be in a dialectical relationship, in conflict, one with the other, or threaten to merge together.

Winnicott suggested that hallucination and perception could be superimposed on each other, a hypothesis that Freud himself seemed about to accept in his paper "Constructions in Analysis" [1937] in order to solve the problem of psychosis. Although Winnicott opened up a new way of looking at this issue, he did add a further complication.

When perception is cathected and the hallucination of a previous trace becomes mixed in with it, the result is an experience of illusion that carries with it a potential threat of confusion. Freud emphasized that in Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety (1926 [1925]) and discussed the topic again in his "Constructions" paper [op. cit]: there is no point in trying to ‘prove’ anything concerning the unreality of an illusion or a hallucination. An illusion does not contradict the reality principle, rather it is part of the relationship with reality and expresses the wish which structures that relationship. Reality-testing cannot have, as its basis, perception or muscular activity when these are libidinally cathected; experiences of pleasure cannot provide such a basis either, because from the outset they have their source in the superposing of hallucination and perception, and in the ‘double’ encounter between these.
Illusion may give rise to unpleasure and lead to a lack of satisfaction, but such an experience does not bring about a disillusion which offers the possibility for some differentiation between internal and external reality. That is the essence of Winnicott's position. The experience of unpleasure gives rise to what the author has suggested should be called a ‘negative illusion’ [Roussillon 1991]. This is not disillusion but a negative form of illusion based on the subjective impression that the individual has destroyed her capacity to produce satisfaction. It triggers wounds, anger and destructiveness which, eventually and in the face of the disorganizing character of these states, incite the individual to restrict her cathexis of the outside world, withdraw from all contact, shut everything down, move towards dis-objectification and away from any discovery of the otherness of the object.

Winnicott's hypothesis makes the problem more complex in that it introduces, between the experience of unpleasure and the discovery of the reality or of the otherness of the object, an additional phase, a structural level that includes the part played by the environment and its response to the individual's drive-related impulses.

The object is ‘encountered’ in an atmosphere of hate, it is pre-conceived in the experience of unpleasure and in the individual's reaction to that unpleasure. The object is potentially perceived in an experience of unpleasure that triggers destructive impulses. Destructiveness does not bring about a disillusion directly; it gives rise to a negative illusion, the illusion that one is the source of all the evil that inhabits the world. (Roussillon, 1991) According to Winnicott, what then happens depends on the way in which the object responds to the infant's destructiveness. That is when the veil that surrounds the mirror of the object will darken, become cloudy, and burst; it will harden or harden its reflection.

If the object retaliates, mirroring or doubling the infant's drive-related impulses, if it counter-attacks, if it withdraws from the relationship, these responses will give substance to the negative illusion and anchor feelings of badness in the individual, a deep malaise, a nucleus of primary guilt that is pre-ambivalent because it is not in a dialectical relationship with love. Destruction takes place -- it is no longer a message of unpleasure, an internal signal, a potentiality for differentiation; it has turned into a fact, and the destruction is real. The result is that narcissism remains locked in solipsism.

Conversely, if the object survives the destructive impulses and impotent anger, if it appears to be wounded but does not retaliate, if it does not withdraw either perceptively or emotionally from the relationship, if it keeps alive the link with the self, then destructiveness does not break.
anything; it remains potential. Reality-testing then becomes possible, and differentiation between internal and external objects may begin to take place. The object is ‘discovered’ in its externality; it is no longer simply ‘perceived’ as external -- as we now know, this is achieved very early on in life -- but ‘conceived of’ as being external, as an external object cathected libidinally, as another being, not simply as the self's double or reflection. The experience of differentiation between the internal object -- the fantasy object destroyed by the self's destructiveness and impotent anger -- and the external object, the other person, the object which survives, can then start to become meaningful. At that point, the topography of the mind can begin to organize itself. It is when there are two or three participants that it becomes possible to move beyond primary narcissistic solipsism; it is when we think about the object's responses, the questions these raise and the forms they take, that we can break free of the primary narcissistic negative illusion and its existential impasses.

The object cathected as the self's ‘homosexual double’, which is the present object in its function of reflecting the self, is cathected and loved. The absent object, i.e. the object that does not take on that role, the object that becomes different and is not present as the self's double, the non-narcissistic object, is hated because it is absent and because of the gap that it leaves in its wake. That gap takes the place of negative illusion such that the conflict of ambivalence can begin to be set up. The object is loved because it is present or hated because it is absent -- i.e. its presence is elsewhere -- and because it is opening up to some third party.

The object's response seals the fate of destructiveness and its role in psychical economy. On the one hand, it can withdraw into itself and turn away or turn its effects against the mind and its cathexes; on the other, it can enable differentiation between the internal world -- that of mental representation and fantasy -- and the external world of perception cathected but maintained outside of the self's omnipotent creativeness.

**Conclusion**

In his exploration of the construction of primary narcissism and the ordeal that is its deconstruction, Winnicott argued that there is a gap between the individual and her self. He widened the gap that makes narcissism and breaking free of narcissism analysable and thus able to be symbolized. He introduced the element that demolishes self-identity and forces psychoanalysis into an impasse. By bringing in this additional phase, that of the object's reflection and its responses to the self's drive-related impulses, that of the specific role the object plays in the construction and deconstruction of narcissism, he ‘de-narcissized’ psychoanalytic
theory. With the help of a theory in which solipsism is analysed and deconstructed, Winnicott explored -- and made thinkable -- how narcissism is organized or becomes disorganized, puts itself into an impasse or finds a way out through organizing what is lacking and through the discovery of the objects that go to make up narcissism.

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