# Review of: "Who Am I Really? – Illusions and Splits in the Mirror"

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Potential competing interests: No potential competing interests to declare.

This is a very interesting article addressing a major characteristic of our contemporary mentality. It has the merit of stimulating discussion and reflection. I appreciated the references to the mythical figures of Echo and Narcissus, and their telling differences to form the basis on which the author's arguments are articulated. It's a convincing germinal idea. Having said that, the article would benefit from more clarity and more discerning analysis from this reviewer's viewpoint: such as the reference to the "true self" that "as if" personalities should try to connect to. How does the author define a personal "true self" that seems to be inherently rooted in one's personality?  Is it Echo with her search for interconnexion, attention and admiration reaching out to Narcissus who just wants sameness and denies validity to others and even the right to exist? But then how is this individualized or customized? Would it be possible to clarify, for an average reader, this apparent contradiction: if for the "as if" personality, the issue is loss of self-connection, how is it close to narcissism which is characterized, on the contrary, by an excess of self-center connection? Why do we need two different words if they cover the same psychological reality? If they define subtle differences, then clarifying them would be more appealing to a wider audience.

The bibliography might also be a bit extended and include at least the classic *Culture of Narcissism* by Christopher Lasch which is surprisingly missing. To me the references to French scholars in the field are quite welcome and pertinent, since the French have indeed extensively studied this dimension. The bibliography should even include more updated references such as some books by Marie-France Hirigoyen, who looks at the abusive, manipulative and harassing side of malignant narcissism, since narcissistic and con personalities are truly dangerous to others at work, in society at large or within a family's workings or a couple's life.  Hirigoyen's latest book is on pathological narcissism when it is taking power in politics like it happens in our world (See Trump, Putin and the likes)  (*Les Narcisse. Ils ont pris le pouvoir,* 2019). From a clinical perspective, it would be interesting to review some concrete cases of negative effects of a narcissistic behavior internalized by an "as if" personality on interactions and to suggest some possible practical healing solutions, not only for the "as if" personality but also for their victims who are suffering from being in a relationship with such a malignant narcissistic person.

Further, I would recommend a consultation with some contemporary French thinkers such as Vincent Cocquebert who recently published a brilliant book on this very topic: *Unique au monde. De l'invention de soi à la fin de l'autre,* 2023.

The reference to social medias would need more development. If the wave of hyper-narcissism that we are witnessing is collectively concerning and can be explained by an exacerbated individualism, it has also been fueled by the social

medias, with their focus on the self of users and the progressive reconstruction of their individual personalities by marketing algorithms. With a collection of preferences, these algorithms sketch a specific profile for each user that sets their taste and desires in stone, once and for all. One result may be summarized with this marketing formula that has become a repetitive motto: "Be yourself." Could this be the vague individual "becoming oneself" or connecting to one's "true self" that the author refers to? Would it be useful to try to call in the Sartrian notions of genuineness or authenticity at the basis of the existentialist philosophy to clarify that "true self"? Finding the "true self", would it be simply being authentic or genuine?

But then in the realm of social medias, don't these contribute to create streams of "as if" personalities since the artificially constructed so-called "self" is a product of an algorithmic patchwork of likes and clicks picked in a limited moment in time of one's evolution (while, thankfully, we all do change over time)? One possible source of the high volume of "as if" personalities may be there, and be a result of frequent exposure to the virtual illusions, especially for the younger generations who were born in this culture of narcissism.  The algorithm might even drive a user to believe that the social media knows them better than themselves and that their "true self" has at last been identified by the program.  We could then argue that the current hyper-valorization of self-center narcissistic personalities is clearly emphasized by consumerism. " Be yourself" means then : " Don't buy just any perfume, but the one your deserve, that fits your personality, one that is a clear self-reference, buy the new YSL perfume "Myself."

This reviewer would like to suggest digging into the social medias impact on the creation of "as if" personality. Social medias users are so locked, early on, into themselves that they become uncomfortable in presence of other live people: teens today do not call on their phone and do not answer their phone calls, but used SMS instead, because they feel that calls are too intrusive, make them vulnerable and shy, and that talking means getting involved in a live interaction that takes times and may require small talk, which they feel is useless (while it is important to create a friendly connection). By cutting off calls and verbal interaction, they became handicapped at social events and at creating new friends. Actually, they don't have "friends", but just "followers." With their narcissistic tendency, they want to mold the world at their image and not be molded by the world and others' ideas. They will not vote for a political representative because they don't "recognize themselves" in them (whatever that means). In fact, they are losing their humanity, they lack empathy, they are losing, it seems, the capacity to feel what another person feels, the capacity to put themselves in other shoes, which might explain why violence explodes easily when they are hidden behind a pseudonym. Their solitude is therefore amplified, to a level of epidemic proportions, especially in large cities. Of course, this has an impact on their physical and mental health.

A new pragmatic approach seems necessary to address treatment of those disorders. Could this article provide some concrete healing solutions? This would add much value to this essay, which indeed opens a deep reflection on a major contemporary issue.