

Theism and Narcissism: The Problem of Omnipotence and Suffering

Ronald R. Lee Ph.D.

Although the theories of theism and narcissism may seem “experience distant,” there is a striking convergence in the problems they both face – omnipotence and suffering. Implications of this convergence will be explored theoretically and in the practice of psychotherapy, as will be illustrated by the case of The Reverend Mr. K.

Theism, the belief that an “objective” God exists “up there” or “out there,” is also called deism if it is arrived at through reason. During the last two hundred years, some theologians have reconceptualized this theistic belief of a God ‘up there’ or ‘out there’ into an “experience near” God, one the Lutheran theologian Tillich (1952) described as the “ground of all being.” In Tillich’s reconceptualization, the image of an omnipotent God with a high vertical dimension is transformed into a God who participates in the ongoing processes of creation. The danger of a transformation from a vertically conceived omnipotence to a participation in the world, is that persons experiencing an “experience near” God may lose their sense of otherness, an experience Kohut (1966) referred to as “archaic narcissism.”

Narcissism, a concept introduced into psychopathology by Freud, is where a person invests in his or her self, and archaic narcissism is where a person over-invests in the self. Psychoanalytic self-psychology theory transformed this Freudian theory of narcissism by conceiving mature as well as pathological forms. Self-psychology focuses

on the processes that transform archaic grandiosity into wholesome narcissism and mature behavior. The tragedy with persons who develop deficits in their narcissistic development, is that without a transformation of their self-importance through a relationship with “significant others,” it is susceptible to pathology from desperately clinging to destructive forms of otherness. Working with patients who manifest archaic forms of narcissism suggests that transformations along a horizontal dimension of personality development have issues similar to those connected to the changes that move down a vertical dimension of theistic theology. Both vertical and horizontal dimensions incorporate the idea of omnipotence, and both wrestle with the problem of otherness. What follows explores these issues, first within (a) theism and then in (b) narcissism.

(a) Theism

The experience of evil has always had a corrosive effect on the theistic idea of God. The Reverend Mr. K., a pastor of a large Methodist church, illustrated this dynamic when he presented for psychotherapy with a “crisis of faith.” He was conflicted because, although continuing to function as a pastor, he no longer “believed in God.” Exploration into his life history eventually revealed that the diminishing of his faith began soon after his four-year-old son was diagnosed as having leukemia, and that a further loss of faith occurred when his son died several years later. In the psychotherapy he agonized, “How could “a loving God inflict such pain and suffering on an innocent child of a family devoting itself to Christian service?” It felt so unjust.

After several months of psychotherapy, during which The Reverend Mr. K expressed his feelings of anger and hatred at a cruel God, he remembered an incident when working on an oilrig in the Texas Gulf during his own late teens. A violent explosion that killed several workers, also blew him into the sea, but he fortunately received only minor injuries. During his recovery The Reverend Mr. K made a pact. If God would protect him he would commit himself to ministerial service. Although Mr. K was not consciously aware of it then, he later realized he had sought a special relationship with God as a substitute for the lack of special experiences with his father. In this pact, The Reverend Mr. K was attempting to repair the resulting deficit in his development. Now with his own son's leukemia and death, Mr. K experienced God as breaking their agreement.

As the psychotherapy progressed, The Reverend Mr.K realized that he viewed God as all-powerful, all knowing and present everywhere. He had believed in this omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and morally good God of deism, which is a perfect God arrived at by "reason" as enunciated by Descartes and the philosophers of the Enlightenment. When the psychotherapist puzzled about the differences between The Reverend Mr. K's theistic view of God, his actions as a very caring pastor to the members of his congregation, and his lack of emphasis on intellectual preaching, Mr. K associated to his father. His father, although a successful executive of a large corporation, was personally aloof, impervious to pain and suffering, and not able to share feelings with his son or mirror his son's achievements. He had not been able to make his son feel special.

Mr. K described a model scene that illustrated his disappointment with his father. When Mr. K played baseball in the Little League (ten to twelve years of age), his father would arrive about the third inning, hang around for a couple of innings, and leave before the game ended in the sixth. Mr. K was disappointed that his father attended as a duty, and not out of interest in the game, and more importantly, in him. In his last year of Little League, when Mr. K's team managed to get into the final championship game, Mr. K was especially pleased when his father arrived before the first inning. As the game entered the bottom of the last inning, the sixth, Mr. K's team was ahead by one run, with the opposition up to bat. Tension grew as batters from the opposing team reached second and third with two outs. The next batter swung at the first pitch and drove a line drive into the gap between Mr. K, the center fielder, and the left fielder. But by sprinting hard to his right and by making a spectacular diving catch, Mr. K secured the out and his team's championship. When he triumphantly held the ball high above his head and looked towards the parent spectators to share this special moment with his father, his father had already left. Disappointed, Mr. K left the field in tears and was unable to join in the championship celebrations.

After recalling this baseball scene, Mr. K realized that he viewed God as he experienced his father - distant, impervious to what was taking place, and not there when needed. During his son's leukemia Mr. K again experienced God as distant, impervious, and not present when needed. This view was further reinforced when his father followed

his familiar pattern of paying a few token visits to his grandson before he died, but was unable to talk with Mr.K or share any of Mr. K's distress.

At the beginning of the Christmas season during the third year of the psychotherapy, Mr. K arrived for a psychotherapy session, very depressed. Xmas reminded him of children, including his deceased son, and after verbalizing this, he sobbed deeply for some time. Most of the session focused on his yearning to see his son again. He eventually connected this yearning to the trigger of the Christmas message of incarnation that he was preparing to preach in a service the following Sunday. Incarnation, of course, is the idea that God descended from his lofty realm and shared the earthly lot of man. It is an "experience near" idea. In an incarnation, God not only entered the world, but also shared its sorrows and bore its pain. Mr. K said the idea of an incarnate God helped him to believe that God in the form of Jesus had shared, as if a twin, the painful experiences Mr. K went through, especially the loss of his son to the cross of leukemia. The Reverend Mr. K's new ability to experience a twinship with Jesus opened for him an experience of a humane and merciful God, not who condescendingly forgives, but who fully participates in life. Such a God does not just "tolerate" imperfections, he understands and accepts the basic need of imperfections for life to be creative and develop.

Once Mr. K felt this profound shift from a perfect, idealized, docetic shadow of a God who dissociates from the creative struggles in life, to one who participates in human activities and is capable of error, The Reverend Mr. K experienced the lifting of an

enormous burden. He himself no longer felt the need to be perfect, with its concomitant stress, and could risk making mistakes, something his cautious self had always carefully avoided. As Mr. K struggled to find meaning for his own son's life and death, and to grasp ownership over the concept of a humane, earthbound, incarnate God, his style of church leadership shifted to encouraging increasing lay participation in key committees. He let go his need to control the members of the parish in their decisions about the church's future, genuinely shared the power of decisions with others, and focused more on the spiritual needs of his parish members.

The changes in The Reverend Mr. K's views of God and himself as a result of the suffering and loss of his son parallels an ongoing struggle in Christian churches for centuries over the problem of evil. In the 17th century, for example, the Cambridge theologian Ralph Cudworth (1678) raised the problem of evil when he said,

Either God is able but not willing to overcome [evil], or perchance he is not able though he may be willing. It may be that he is neither able nor willing to overcome evil. Or it remains that he is both able and willing. Only the last would seem worthy of a good God, and it does not happen [quoted in Birch, 1965, p.23].

A century later the philosopher David Hume (1952) said that if God is omnipotent he is responsible for the world's evil, and if he is responsible for evil, he is not morally good. Hume, therefore, divorced morality from rationalism and said it came from an inner sense, an argument that is of little comfort to those who are suffering. Sufferers

who believe in God face an inescapable choice: change to a less powerful idea of God, or change their view of God's moral consistency. Either way, suffering results in a theistic God who is less than perfect.

The choice between a powerful but immoral God, or a limited, humane, but moral God, may lead to different ways of presenting psychotherapy. Those who persist in believing God's omnipotence despite their suffering, may be susceptible to states of bitterness and alienation because they believe God is able to do something and won't. They say something like, "Why is he withholding his aid?" "Why is he allowing me to suffer?" "Why is he singling me out?" And patients with an omnipotent view of God often present for psychotherapy with the transference-based expectation that the psychotherapist will do something to prevent their suffering. When this does not happen, or not quickly enough, the same kinds of withholding feelings may be projected onto the psychotherapist. On the other hand, for those who retain a view of God as good, but impotent from lack of omnipotence, suffering may induce feelings of helplessness and despair, which contribute to feelings of depression. If God is not all-powerful, then the world is a dangerous place, which also may contribute to the feelings of paranoid personalities. Depressive and paranoid patients often present for psychotherapy with an unconscious need to make the psychotherapist feel helpless and despairing, in order to create a similar experience to their own, in effect creating a twinship experience for the therapist.

One theological solution to the issues of a deistic God and resulting feelings of evil is to shift the emphasis from an omnipotent deity to an incarnate God who shares our earthly vicissitudes and sorrows. This belief incorporates the image of twinship in which God knows suffering because he has suffered with us. With this concept of the appearances of an incarnate God, God retains goodness, but temporarily and voluntarily gives up omnipotence in a process called in the Greek “kenosis” or “self emptying,” and mentioned in the New Testament book of Philippians, 2:7. This incarnate God, according to Watson (1947), represented the christocentric position of Martin Luther during the Protestant Reformation, in contrast to the theocentric view of a natural theology derived from a God of reason. Luther, following the “revealed theology” of the New Testament, envisaged God as constantly breaking into history.

These theocentric and christocentric views of theology still assume supernaturalism. Paul Tillich (1952), who acknowledges the 19th century decline in a belief in the supernatural, thinks that this decline signaled the “end of theism.” The metaphor of a God “up there” or “out there,” who envisaged, built, and maintained the world that Descartes (Dingle, 1950) described as a machine, was rejected by persons who saw Descartes’ mechanical view reinforcing their subjective experiences of depersonalization. God was no longer to be thought of spatially. When the philosopher Nietzsche said, “God is dead,” he meant the God of deism, who took up space, who was “up there,” distant from mankind, and who was only known through reason.

Since the early 19th century, theology attempted to describe a God who is not “up there” or “out there.” Although there is substantial agreement among most theologians that a God of deism no longer suffices for modern society, there is no consensus about how to now reconceptualize God. To many, the incarnational view is inadequate because it still can allow for an aloof God who only enters the world on special occasions. The search in theology has been for a God who is intricately linked with the creative processes of life, but not identified solely with concrete manifestations, or with specific periods of time. The concept is of a God who is with us full time, who is “experience near.”

The philosopher Huxley (1960) rejects the supernatural view of God because he thinks the existence of God as a separate entity is superfluous. He thinks the world can be explained without such a supernatural being. In the naturalistic view, God is not seen as a pantheistic totality of things, but as giving meaning and purpose to nature, a view Tillich (1957) reminds us was held by the philosopher Spinoza. Religion, for a naturalist like Spinoza, consists of “harmonizing oneself with the evolutionary process as it develops ever higher forms of self-consciousness” (Robinson, 1963).

The shift from a supernatural God to a naturalistic viewpoint, involves a shift from a god who is experienced objectively to one who is experienced subjectively. For if God does not exist “out there,” he only exists in so far as he is experienced. Such an experience for humans depends on perception. A God “out there” is really a perception of a God “out there.” Once supernaturalism is discarded as an attempt to disavow the

primacy of subjectivity with a false sense of objectivity and authority, theology becomes anthropocentric (Schleiermacher, 1963), a position that depends heavily on human perception. In the naturalistic view, the issues of omnipotence that were portrayed along a vertical dimension of God above and man below are now envisaged along a horizontal dimension. The longing for the theistic God to “come down” and become human, shifts to a horizontal need for human, God-like grandiosity to be transformed into adaptive, humane functioning. In naturalistic philosophy, evil no longer arises from a God “up there” but from humans who seek to enact their omnipotent wishes without a reasonable consideration for the needs of others.

(b) Narcissism

A shift from the supernatural vertical dimension becomes a natural horizontal dimension that has the growth potential of a narcissistic line of development. Narcissism theologically may be conceived as humans attempting to live out a transformed omnipotence that was previously attributed to a supernatural God “out there.” Tragically the modern world is menaced by such narcissistic tyrants as Hitler or Stalin, who appear in the guise of saviors of disempowered nations or communities and act as omnipotent, revengeful leaders. Addressing such a problem, Heinz Kohut (1966) developed a theory that postulated a healthy and necessary narcissism for life and a view that has enabled the successful treatment of narcissistic patients.

Kohut began with Hartmann's theory of narcissism as the cathexis of the self (Kohut, 1971, p. xiii), a theory that had followed Freud's view in his paper "On narcissism" (1914). In his well-known U-tube analogy, Freud defined narcissism as the flowing of energy back into the ego [self]. Freud cited paranoid schizophrenia as an example of "narcissism," in which most of the libido is directed to the self. In object love the energy flows outward, where, for example, being in love exemplifies the libido cathected to an object. Freud also posits an autoerotic primary narcissism, where an infant blissfully experiences the world as being itself, at the beginning of its life. After reviewing the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism, Ornstein (1974) concludes, "All major psychoanalytic contributions to the concept of narcissism since Freud have largely remained locked into the 1914 model" (p. 128). That is, until Kohut.

Kohut (1966) challenged Freud's notion of a development from a narcissistic to an object libido line of development. According to Freud, there is a totally narcissistic libido in the newborn, and as the infant develops into a child and then an adult, there is a shift towards all libido being invested in objects and none in the self. Using Freud's theory, a Freudian psychoanalyst tries to replace the patient's narcissism with object love, an aim Kohut thought impossible, and even very undesirable. Kohut challenged the assumption that narcissism had to be eradicated. An eradicating solution, he argued, is itself influenced by the absolute ideas of an archaic grandiose self, and hence is a narcissistic method that reinforces what is supposed to be eradicated. Contrary to the libido dimension of Freud, Kohut conceived of object libido and narcissistic libido as

developing along separate but parallel lines of development. They both move from archaic to mature forms.

In rejecting Freud's idea that all narcissism is pathological, an idea that was adopted by modern society, Kohut (1966) expressed the conviction that narcissism had features that, if eradicated, would lead to disasters. Kohut believed that less virulent forms of narcissism made an essential contribution to modern life. The problem for human beings was not narcissism, but its primitive and archaic forms. As Wolf (1988a) wrote, "Mature selfishness is really the expansion of the self and its selfobjects to take in the whole world" (p. 130). This being so, the central question for Kohut was how to harness narcissism for constructive purposes, not how to get rid of it. He was interested in the processes that transformed narcissism into mature forms.

By 1966 Kohut formulated his bipolar theory of the self. These two poles, the ambitions and ideals of the core self, develop as a result of differentiation during primary narcissism. Of this primary narcissism Kohut (1966) explains:

The baby originally experiences the mother and her ministrations not as a you and its actions but within a view of the world in which the I-you differentiation has not yet been established. Thus the expected control over the mother and her ministrations is closer to the concept which a grownup has of himself and of the control which he expects over his own body and mind than to the grownup's experience of others and his control over them [p. 430].

To Kohut, the establishment of a narcissistic self with an idealized parent imago is not pathological per se because it represents a significant developmental achievement. Problems only arise if traumatic experiences lead to fixations at a developmental stage. For example, “premature interference with the narcissistic self leads to narcissistic vulnerability because the grandiose fantasy becomes repressed and ... inaccessible to modifying influences” (1966, p. 436). When narcissistic forms of arrested development occur, patients present with a great deal of grandiosity, expressed in a variety of ways, most often as unrealistic expectations of the self, shown through self-criticism or condemnation for not achieving impossible goals. This grandiosity is transformed only with difficulty because the patient is overwhelmed by feelings of shame for failing to fulfill unattainable expectations. An example of a fixation in the ideals pole, is a failure to reach these ideals and a self that experiences a deep longing for connection with an idealized parental imago.

If an infant is not traumatized, and has enough attunement from others in his personal environment, the grandiose and idealizing poles of his self develop from archaic to more mature forms. Kohut viewed both these poles as measures of the patient’s level of narcissistic development. On the grandiose line of development, ambitions become more realistic and goal oriented, and energy is released for activities (Ornstein, P., 1974, p. 135). On the idealizing line of development, ideals act as guides rather than as absolute controls and may be transformed into such forms as creativity, empathy, humor,

wisdom, and acceptance of death and the impermanence of life. These five transformations of the idealized pole of the self are now covered in more detail.

(i) Creativity.

Kohut maintained that creative activity, as transformed narcissism, can be seen from the creative person's relationship to his work. For a creative person, work functions as a selfobject because the work is an extension of the person's self. It is similar to a mother's love for her unborn fetus or newborn baby or the single-minded devotion to a child who is taken into her expanded self.

(ii) Empathy.

Narcissism is transformed into an ability to be empathic when appropriate. Empathy is the method of gathering data about another person through vicarious introspection. It is the process of exploring what another person thinks and feels by attempting to place oneself into the other person's shoes. At birth most infants have a built-in capacity for attunement with their mother (Stern, 1985) – I say “most” because attunement can be damaged as a result of trauma in the fetal stage. Beebe and Lachmann (1988) call this mutual influencing at the beginning of life in the extra uterine environment, a precursor to empathy. The educational processes of Western culture are designed to replace this “inferior” ability to know by attunement with an unempathic form of knowing that fosters an objective, materialistic, and mechanical view of life. In Kohut's mature person, the primitive capacity for attunement has not been expunged, but

been transformed into vicarious introspection for appropriate utilization in personal relationships.

(iii) Humor.

Freud (1927) noted: “humor has something liberating about it; but it also has something of grandeur and elevation...[and] the triumph of narcissism, the victorious assertion of the ego’s invulnerability” (p. 162). In his text, Freud is describing grandiosity that disavows the meaning of events. In contrast, Kohut (1966) described a genuinely transformed narcissism that does not deny events as the ability of the self to deflect a wound, to achieve a mastery that also accepts the unalterable realities that limit the assertion of the narcissistic self.

(iv) Wisdom

Wisdom derives from the acceptance of the limitations to one’s existence: physical, intellectual and emotional. There is recognition that the grandiose self needs to compromise with time by rating priorities and discovering what is truly important to be accomplished, what can be left until later, and what can be left for others. Wisdom is reflected in a sense of balance and proportion that takes into account the broad picture. It is generally achieved, if at all, in a person’s more advanced years.

(v) Acceptance of death

The acceptance of death, that is, the acceptance of finiteness and transience is another indication of the transformation of archaic narcissism. Freud (1916) pointed out

that persons can be reluctant to accept the impermanence of objects, whether people, institutions, or cherished values. (p. 305). The acceptance of our own impermanence – that the self is finite in time – may be more difficult. Kohut (1966) believed that the ability to accept transience “rests not simply on a victory of autonomous reason and supreme objectivity over the claims of narcissism, but on the creation of a higher form of narcissism” (p. 455). Those who genuinely accept death face it with a quiet pride in what has been achieved rather than a sense of despair and hopelessness. In this view, Kohut was heavily influenced by Goethe who said that through an acceptance of death, man can reap all that is in life.

Kohut believed that these five narcissistic transformations were dimensions of experience that enabled the functioning of mature, adaptive human beings, and were invaluable in evaluating outcomes of psychoanalytic psychotherapy. As a sign of maturity, Kohut accepted these five qualities in preference to the capacity to function autonomously, which from clinical experience, he knew, could hide a lot of archaic narcissism. As Grotstein (1983) acknowledges, “Kohut eschews the traditional notion of the increasing independence of the self from its objects” (p. 176). Kohut thought it was a sign of non-transformed, archaic narcissism to value absolute autonomy and perfect freedom as the goal of psychoanalysis. To Kohut, a person’s striving for complete independence not only sets an impossible goal, but also disavows legitimate narcissistic needs. Such persons are “counter dependent” rather than maturely adaptive in behavior. The apparent “nonnarcissism” of a person striving to be completely autonomous is a

covert form of disavowed narcissism. Making absolute autonomy the goal of psychoanalysis, only reinforces a disavowal of genuine narcissistic needs.

In refusing to accept disavowal of legitimate dependency needs, Kohut was not alone. The English poet, John Donne, said, “No man is an island, intire of it selfe.” He also joined British psychoanalysts who, commencing with Fairbairn, and including Balint, Winnicott and Bowlby, suggested that an infant grows from infantile dependence into mature dependence (Grotstein, 1983). These British psychoanalysts understood that a person feels mature autonomy by being properly “dependent-connected” to someone. In making this point Kohut referred to the technical concept of selfobject function. To maintain self-coherence, a person needs others to function as selfobjects, which are persons we experience as part of our self (Kohut and Wolf, 1978, p. 414). To Kohut then, the selfobject function, like narcissism, never completely disappears; it only undergoes transformation and maturation.

Biographical example

The life of the Cambridge professor, C. S. Lewis demonstrates how one person resolved the issue of omnipotence and suffering. While standing firm about the vertical dimension of theism, that God was both omnipotent and moral, Lewis found a solution in the horizontal dimension of human development. In the movie “Shadowlands” “Jack” Lewis gives a lecture on suffering to the Association of Christian teachers in the early 1950s. In a tragic accident, a bus had ploughed into a group of cadets and killed 24. He

asks, “Where was God that night? Why didn’t God stop it?” In his answer, he retains his theistic view of God, and claims that God uses suffering as a means of helping us to grow up. In Kohut’s language, suffering transforms archaic narcissism into mature forms.

Jack’s answer to this question, it turns out, was more based on personal experience than theory or logic. As we learn eventually from the movie, Jack lost his mother to cancer when he was 10 years of age. Now, more than fifty years of age, Jack meets Joy, an American admirer of his writings, they fall in love, and their lives are enlivened with a special quality that had long been missing for both of them. Soon after this, however, Joy discovers she has a highly malignant form of cancer and Jack is again confronted with the loss of a loved one to cancer. They make the decision to marry even though the ceremony is conducted with Joy lying in a hospital bed. They have a precious period of happiness before Joy is eventually overcome by pain and death. They then engage in a process, which Jack emotionally shares with her, instead of being shut out as he had been as a boy with his mother’s cancerous condition.

After the funeral Jack bitterly says, “Experience is a brutal teacher!” Temporarily disillusioned, he asks, “Does God care?” and then caustically comments, “We are all rats in a cosmic laboratory.” He is in despair and depressed. Also distressed is Douglas, Joy’s ten-year old son from her previous marriage. Eventually Jack and Douglas talk, bonded by the twinship experience of losing their mothers at the same age as well as Joy whom they both loved. With a tear in his eye, the boy says to Jack, “I would like to see

her again.” Jack responds with “Me too!” Then they cry together in each other’s arms. At that moment of meeting, Jack was not only reaching out to his stepson and helping to make a healing connection with him, he was reaching back into his own unresolved boyhood self, and taking another step in healing it. Jack then says, “Twice in my life I was given a precious gift of love” – his mother and his wife Joy. In coping with the loss of it he says, “As a boy I chose safety.” Now, “As a man I choose the suffering that goes with it.” Using Joy’s words he says, “That’s the deal.”

C.S. Lewis is saying that loving, even though it eventually means losing what you love, gives depth to experience, and meaning and satisfaction to life, reflected in mature forms of narcissism, that are impossible if one decides to live a safe but relatively non-loving existence. Lewis was only able to experientially solve the problem of God’s omnipotence and human suffering by moving to the horizontal, narcissistic dimension and arrived at an understanding similar to Kohut.

Final thoughts

The theologian Phillip Watson (1947) depicted the struggle between theocentric and anthropocentric views being expressed in Protestant theology fifty years ago, as a struggle over who has sovereignty, God or man? In the theocentric view God is sovereign and is the measure of man, and man is narcissistic to think otherwise. In an anthropocentric religion man is the measure of all things, and healthy narcissism is necessary for man to function adaptively. Watson depicts this anthropocentric view as

egocentric, that is, selfish, because man disavows his need for God experiences. What Watson has failed to grasp, is that there is a healthy as well as an unhealthy egocentrism. But then, his thinking occurred prior to Kohut and reveals the major difference Kohut's theory of narcissism has made.

Kohut's idea of the transformation of archaic forms of narcissism reveals the inadequacy of theocentric theology because of its inadequate anthropology. When the theocentric view criticizes the anthropocentric view, it uses a model of a pseudo-independent person, in an untransformed narcissistic state, one with an independent peripheral self but an empty undeveloped nuclear self, not a person whose archaic narcissism has been transformed and made whole. This suggests that even though a horizontal dimension replaces the vertical dimension in an anthropological view of religion, there is no escaping the issue of omnipotence or what to do with it. It occurs in both paradigms. Resorting to a horizontal dimension does not eradicate issues formerly seen in conjunction with a God "up there" or "out there" but provides another paradigm for dealing with them. The theistic God may be dead, but omnipotence is not. It and the issue of God's perfection arise in the life of humans in the form of archaic narcissism. So, it would seem that one of the reasons for an increasing need for psychotherapy for narcissistic disorders in modern society comes as one consequence of the decline of a theistic view of God. As Jack Lewis says, "that's the deal."

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