


A Psychoanalytical Attempt at the Emergence and Interpretation of Narcissism in Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's Epistolary Novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther*

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Abstract

Narcissism is an intriguing psychological phenomenon depicted in a variety of literary forms and manifestations. The 1774 publication *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is an exceptional example. In this novel, the protagonist Werther is portrayed as a typical example of narcissistic traits that lead to his tragic end. Based on this state of mind, this paper will determine Freud's interpretation of narcissism in Goethe's Werther. Some texts on melancholy, mourning, and narcissism will be consulted for this purpose. In his works, Freud describes various phases of narcissism formation, which are all illustrated and described in greater detail. This process was depicted in a diagram, and its stages were broken down. In his career, life, and work, the protagonist Werther will undergo the various phases of Freudian narcissism formation. Consequently, it will be investigated if the psychology that flourished decades later can also be applied to Werther and how the development of narcissism can be analysed letter by letter. Moreover, critical situations were identified and analysed in which narcissism and its origin, effect, and consequences can be depicted in an especially accurate manner.

For these reasons, the psychoanalytic interpretation of the work is predominantly founded on Sigmund Freud's theory of melancholy and mourning and secondarily on the development of narcissism. In this regard, both texts *Das Ich und das Es* (1975) and *Der Untergang des Odipuskomplexes* (1989) by Sigmund Freud were selected for narcissism development as a theoretical framework.

Keywords: *Werther, Sorrow, Narcissism, Freud, Melancholy.*

Öz

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe'nin Epik Romanı "Genç Werther'in Acıları"nda Narsisizmin Ortaya Çıkışı ve Yorumlanması Üzerine Psikanalitik Bir Deneme

Narsisizm, çeşitli edebi formlarda ve tezahürlerde tasvir edilen ilgi çekici bir psikolojik fenomendir. Johann Wolfgang von Goethe'nin 1774 yılında yayımlanan *Genç Werther'in Acıları* adlı eseri bunun müstesna bir örneğidir. Bu romanda başkahraman Werther, trajik sonuna yol açan narsisistik özelliklerin tipik bir örneği olarak tasvir edilir. Goethe, narsisistik davranışın olumsuz etkilerini göstermek için Werther'i kullanır. Werther'in aşırı duyguları ve narsisistik düşünceleri onu kontrol eder. Reddedilme ve kayıplarla başa çıkamaz ve intiharı sefaletinden kurtulmanın tek yolu olarak görür. Bu ruh halinden yola çıkarak, bu makale Freud'un narsisizm yorumunu belirleyecektir. Bu amaçla melankoli, yas ve narsisizm üzerine bazı

metinlere başvurulacaktır. Freud, eserlerinde narsisizm oluşumunun çeşitli aşamalarını anlatır ve bu aşamaların hepsi daha ayrıntılı olarak resmedilir ve açıklanır. Bu süreç makalede bir diyagramda tasvir edilmiş ve aşamaları ayrılmıştır. Ana karakter Werther, kariyeri, hayatı ve çalışmaları boyunca Freud'ün narsisizm oluşumunun çeşitli aşamalarından geçecektir. Sonuç olarak, onlarca yıl sonra gelişen psikolojinin Werther'e de uygulanıp uygulanamayacağı ve narsisizm gelişiminin mektup mektup nasıl analiz edilebileceği araştırılacaktır. Ayrıca, narsisizmin kökeni, etkisi ve sonuçlarının özellikle doğru bir şekilde tasvir edilebileceği kritik durumlar belirlenmiş ve analiz edilmesi amaçlanmaktadır.

Bu nedenlerle, eserin psikanalistik yorumu ağırlıklı olarak Sigmund Freud'un melankoli ve yas teorisi ve ikincil olarak narsisizm gelişimi üzerine kurulmuştur. Bu bağlamda, narsisizm gelişimi için Sigmund Freud'un *Das Ich und das Es* (1975) ve *Der Untergang des Oedipuskomplexes* (1989) adlı iki metni kuramsal bir çerçeve olarak seçilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Werther, Acı, Narsizm, Freud, Melankoli.*

EXTENDED ABSTRACT

The intriguing psychological phenomenon of narcissism is depicted in a vast array of literary genres and forms. The novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, which was first published in 1774, is a notable example. In this work, the primary character, Werther, is presented as a paradigmatic example of narcissistic traits that ultimately contribute to his tragic downfall.

The fact that Werther engages in an excessive quantity of self-reflection exemplifies his narcissistic behaviour. He believes he has a unique and remarkable personality that is on a different level than the average person. He refers to himself in his correspondence as a patriotic individual who is misconstrued by the rest of the world. The personality disorder, narcissism is characterized by an excessive need for adulation and self-promotion. Another indicator of Werther's narcissistic tendencies is his inability to understand and respect the emotions and needs of others. He is so preoccupied with himself that he is oblivious Lotte is already dating Albert. Because Werther believes that Lotte is his one and only genuine love, he is unable to embrace the fact that she does not express all of her emotions to him. Another characteristic of narcissistic personalities is their inability to embrace and respect reality as well as the needs and expectations of others. In addition, Werther demonstrates his dependence on the adulation of others. He constantly seeks Lotte's approval and affirmation in the hopes that it will improve his self-esteem. He is entirely oblivious to the needs and emotions of others, focusing exclusively on his own desires and impulses. Moreover, having a self-centred worldview and a desire for admiration, narcissistic personalities also have this need.

Two statements from the work Werther serve as the basis for the epistolary novel: "How glad I am that I am gone!" and "[w]hat a relief it is to me that I am settled" (Goethe 2006: 227). This is because the novel's discourse focuses primarily on the protagonist's fluctuating mental state. Commenting on these phrases in light of the theme of the curse and death, one might say something along the lines of: "How glad I am that I am gone" *to flee*, and "[w]ith pleasure I am resolved" *to die* (Goethe 2006: 227). Thus, the reader is able to conclude that not only does the suicide theme play a significant role in the Werther novel, but it has also been a leitmotif from the very beginning.

Goethe uses Werther to illustrate the negative consequences of acting in a narcissistic manner. Werther is governed by his excessively histrionic emotions and egocentric way of thinking. Because he is incapable of processing his feelings of rejection and loss, he believes that committing suicide is the only way to end his suffering.

This analysis will establish Freud's mental state-based understanding of narcissism. The concept of narcissism will be defined. In order to achieve this objective, we will examine a few texts on melancholy, grief, and narcissism. Freud describes numerous phases of narcissistic development in his writings, which are all broken down into more specific categories and accompanied by diagrams and explanations below. This procedure was broken down into its component elements and illustrated with a flowchart to better illustrate its steps. Throughout his existence, Werther will experience the various phases of Freudian narcissism development, both professionally and personally. Consequently, it will be investigated whether the psychology that flourished decades later can also be applied to Werther and how the development of narcissism can be evaluated letter by letter. In addition, it will be determined if Werther's behaviour is indicative of narcissism. In addition, critical scenarios were selected and evaluated in which narcissism, as well as its cause, effect, and consequences, can be demonstrated in an especially realistic manner. This was done in order for the findings to be applicable in a variety of settings.

The structure of the paper is prepared accordingly in order to present the above-mentioned in depth, an attempt was made to examine Werther's biological parents in the analytical portion, followed by Lotte as Werther's imaginary mother, and culminating with Werther's narcissism. In order to present this in detail, the structure is organized accordingly. It has been assumed that this triple constellation is interdependent, since Werther's disease seems to be ultimately anchored in his interior, isolating world as a result of his self-love, also known as narcissism.

1. Introduction

Narcissism is an intriguing psychological phenomenon depicted in a variety of literary forms and manifestations. The 1774 publication *The Sorrows of Young Werther* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe is an exceptional example. In this novel, the protagonist Werther is portrayed as a typical example of narcissistic traits that lead to his tragic end.

Excessive self-reflection highlights Werther's narcissistic behaviour. He views himself as a one-of-a-kind and extraordinary individual who transcends the average person. In his letters, he describes himself as a patriot who is misconstrued by the world. This exaggerated self-promotion and need for admiration are narcissistic personality traits. Another symptom of Werther's narcissistic tendencies is his inability to recognize and respect the needs and emotions of others. He is oblivious to the fact that Lotte is already with Albert and is entirely preoccupied with himself. Werther considers Lotte to be his one and only genuine love, and he cannot accept that she does not express her emotions to him completely. Another characteristic of a narcissistic personality is this inability to acknowledge and respect reality and the requirements of others. Moreover, Werther demonstrates his dependence on the admiration of others. To boost his self-esteem, he seeks Lotte's approval and affirmation incessantly. He is only concerned with his own needs and desires, ignoring the demands and emotions of others. Additionally, narcissistic personalities have a need for admiration and a self-centred perspective.

"How glad I am that I am gone!" and "[w]hat a relief it is to me that I am resolved" (Goethe 2006: 227) are two quotations from the novel *Werther* that serve as a framework for the epistolary novel, as the discourse is primarily concerned with the protagonist's fluctuating inner world. If one were to elaborate both statements in light of the curse and death motif, the following could be said: "How glad I am that I am gone" *to flee* and "[w]ith pleasure I am resolved" *to die* (Goethe 2006: 227). This allows the reader to conclude that the suicide motif not only plays a pivotal role in the Werther novel but has also been a leitmotif from the very beginning.

Goethe employs Werther to illustrate the negative effects of narcissistic behaviour. Werther's excessive emotions and narcissistic thinking control him. He is unable to cope with rejection and loss and sees suicide as the only way out of his misery.

Based on this state of mind, this paper will determine Freud's interpretation of narcissism. Some texts on melancholy, mourning, and narcissism will be consulted for this purpose. In his works, Freud describes various phases of narcissism formation, which are all illustrated and described in greater detail below. This process was depicted in a diagram, and its stages were broken down. In his career, life, and work, the protagonist Werther will undergo the various phases of Freudian narcissism formation. Consequently, it will be investigated if the psychology that flourished decades later can also be applied to Werther and how the development of narcissism can be analysed letter by letter. In addition, critical situations were identified and analysed in which narcissism and its origin, effect, and consequence can be depicted in an especially accurate manner.

2. A Brief Introduction to Freud's Psychoanalysis

In this section, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis - or to be more precise, the psychosexual phases of development - are presented in greater details, as the focus of the work is limited to those theories that will be significant for interpretation in the subsequent course. In addition, the psychoanalytic interpretation of the work is predominantly founded on Sigmund Freud's theory of melancholy and mourning and secondarily on the development of narcissism. In this regard, it is especially useful to examine both texts as a theoretical framework in advance. In addition to psychology encyclopaedias (Hillig 1996), *Das Ich und das Es* (1975) and *Der Untergang des Odipuskomplexes* (1989) by Sigmund Freud were selected for narcissism development; therefore, all dates and quotations are to be derived from the respective literature references. The author of the given paper himself translated the German text verbatim into English.

2.1. The Libido Development and Oedipus Complex of Freud

The introduction to psychoanalysis is essential because the theory is still regarded as an indispensable foundation for psychology research. In addition, Sigmund Freud's works and theories appear frequently in inter-disciplinary works, particularly in the humanities and philology.

With the aid of psychoanalysis, the early childhood experiences that were repressed are reintroduced into the patient's consciousness so that they can process the previously repressed experiences. Due to certain psychological defence mechanisms, certain formative experiences remain ingrained in the mental consciousness, proving certain behavioural patterns, which can lead to a variety of undesirable actions, thoughts, and developments in later years, such as fantasies, dreams, melancholy, loss of reality, narcissism, etc.

The oral, anal, and phallic phases are the three fundamental stages of libido development, according to Freud. The oral phase is the first and earliest stage of juvenile development. This phase continues until the neonate reaches one year of age. In this phase, the mouth plays a central role as neonates suckle their mothers' breasts to satiate their hunger. According to Freud, this phase is characterized by significant changes, including self-perception (potentially non-self), trust and mistrust, sensitivity, and attachment to the mother or a maternal figure.

If this phase of development does not proceed normally, it can result in severe psychological disorders in later life, such as hypersensitivity and the desire to be recognized and admired by others in order to receive more attention. This phase is characterized by an egocentric pattern of behaviour, which makes it difficult for an individual to integrate into society at that time.

In contrast, the anal phase occurs between the second and fourth years of a child's existence. No longer are we discussing a neonate, but rather a child. In the anal phase, gratification of pleasure occurs in the anus region, first through the process of excretion

and then through the mastery of the anal musculature. This phase's maldevelopment can result in obsessive-compulsive neurosis and excessive perfectionism. For instance, a child with a strong sense of hygiene and precision would check the door or lock more frequently to ensure that it is locked or secured.

The final stage of psychosexual development is the phallic phase, which occurs between the ages of three and seven. This stage is also known as the "oedipal stage". The etymology of the term can be traced back to the myth of Oedipus. In Sophocles' tragedy *Oedipus Rex*, for example, the protagonist falls in love with his biological mother unconsciously and only realizes the truth in the so-called anagnorisis scene. The central meaning and desire, according to this theory, are the sexual aspects, such as the male sex organ, the phallus, and the sexual impulse to know the opposite-sex parent better. This mental state a person experiences is also known as the Oedipus complex. In order to presume optimal development in this phase, a child should be in the so-called "mature genital phase" during its later years of development. In other terms, this indicates that the infant must overcome the Oedipus complex. In a heteronormative worldview, the child experiences a psychologically conditioned sexual attraction to the parent of the opposite sex, while the parent of the same sex is viewed as a rival. The sensations of delight induce castration anxiety in males, causing them to resist the sensation. As a consequence, the child can identify with the father and adopt his perspective on the universe and man. If the "demise of the Oedipus complex" cannot occur, undesirable developments such as neurosis, narcissism, and unanticipated tendencies causing, for example, the display of sexual organs in the presence of others, and the obsessive fixation on a mother figure are observable during this phase (cf. Fromm 1979: 46ff).

2.2. On Melancholic Concepts in Literature

"Do I need to tell you this, you who have so often borne the burden of seeing me pass from sorrow to debauchery and from sweet melancholy to pernicious passion?" (Goethe 2006: 16). Goethe's words introduce the dual concepts of passion and melancholy in *Werther*. Already at the beginning of the novel, it is stated, "[a]lso I hold my sweet heart like a sick child, all its will is permitted to it" (ibid.). Thus, it is evident that the concepts of passion and melancholy are closely related, and that passion is frequently equated with "mental illness" (cf. Ponzi 2011: 290). *Werther* himself characterizes the insurmountable nature of his illness on August 12th, as well as a psychological, physical, and physiological transformation in the patient.

Human nature', I continued, 'has its limits: it can endure joy, suffering, pain to a certain degree and perishes as soon as that is exceeded. So, here the question is not whether one is weak or strong, but whether he can endure the measure of his suffering, be it moral or physical. And, I think, it is just as wonderful to say that the man is a coward who takes his own life, as it would be unseemly to call him a coward who dies of a malignant fever.'
[...]

Look, Albert, this is the story of many men! And say, is not this the case of disease? Nature finds no way out of the labyrinth of confused and contradictory forces, and man must die. Woe to him who could look on and say: 'The fool! If she had waited, if she had

let time work, the despair would already have subsided, someone else would already have found her to comfort her'. - That is just as if someone said: 'The fool! Dies of fever! (Goethe 2006: 98ff.)

Even in antiquity, melancholy was primarily understood as a psychological condition. At that time, people believed in the four-fluid doctrine, which states that the behaviour of the spirit or the mental conception of an individual emanates from the harmonious proportion of the elements of nature, such as water, air, earth, and fire, with the elements of the human body, such as phlegm, blood, yellow and black bile, and causes a sad and depressive disposition (cf. Ponzi 2011: 291). In the *Corpus Hippocrates*, black bile is used for the first time to explain the medical term melancholy from a Greek-ancient perspective (cf. Bader 1990: 20).

The Enlightenment philosophers described melancholy as an irrational exaltation and a world-weary sorrow during the 18th century (cf. Klibansky 2006: 59ff.). Sensibility adherents, on the other hand, view melancholy as positive and assert that melancholics, through their spiritual and mental state, maintain the noble mood of the soul that only sensibly-emotionally driven people are capable of experiencing. In exchange, they exclude themselves from all social demands and defy all behavioural conventions. The transition in the 18th century can be identified by the change in epoch or the concomitant development of the literary periods from the Enlightenment to Weimar Classicism (cf. Valk 2002: 2).

Given that the epistolary novel to be analysed corresponds to the Storm and Stress period in literary history, the following will provide a concise overview of the concept and interpretation of melancholy during this time period. Accordingly, melancholy was no longer regarded and evaluated negatively in the Storm and Stress, but positively. Thus, melancholy is granted unrestricted freedom, and its significance as a literary motif increases. In Storm and Stress, the concept of melancholy is closely associated with the concept of genius. People express their melancholy more openly, and the exercise with melancholy thoughts has become quite passionate. The terminologies of mortality and the afterlife are central to melancholy in Storm and Stress, as melancholics believe in a joyful afterlife through an euphoric imagination. Melancholics derive enjoyment from their sombre mental disposition. Individuals possess contradictory characteristics and emotions (cf. Mattenklott 1968). This state of mind would be referred to as melancholy today. Consequently, depressively ill individuals or, to be more daring, melancholics are able to disengage from reality and the real world and turn inward or even to nature. Other characteristics of the melancholic in Storm and Stress include isolation from society and an obsession with the past (cf. Schings 1977).

2.3. Freud's *Trauer und Melancholie*

This section of the paper discusses Sigmund Freud's essay *Trauer und Melancholie* (1946). This section is included in the theoretical framework because it provides the interpretive foundation for the analytic chapters and facilitates comprehension. In addition, it should be noted that only passages that aid in the interpretation of the concept

of melancholy are presented here. The term “mourning” is omitted in its entirety at this juncture.

Sigmund Freud defines the concept of melancholy in a stylistically lengthy sentence in the aforementioned essay. Freud’s definition of melancholy specifically highlights five characteristics. These items are:

1. The intensely agonizing discontent
2. Disinterest in the outside world
3. Loss of the capacity to adore
4. The suppression of all accomplishments
5. A diminished sense of self-worth

Freud expands on characteristics such as self-reproach and self-abuse of the ego, as well as the delusional expectation of punishment, under the final point of self-worth degradation. In addition, he mentions that melancholics are unable to leave the object of their affection. In Freudian terms, this would indicate that individuals are unable to leave their libido position. This would result in turning away from reality to the point of losing touch with it and adhering to the object of affection through hallucinatory wish delusion. This is most evident in the novel through Werther’s attachment to Lotte and his fanciful fantasies. In other words, even though the libido has been suspended/retracted and it is no longer attached to the love object, despite the loss of the love object, “the existence of the lost object continues psychically” (Freud 1946). In this state, on the one hand, the sick person is aware of who he has lost, but on the other hand, the sick person is unable to comprehend precisely what has been lost.

Other characteristics of melancholics include an extreme diminution of one’s sense of self and profound self-poverty. This indicates that the ego is deficient and void. It is meaningless, contemptible, incapable of performance, and morally repugnant. Based on this view of melancholia, Freud discusses mania and differentiates it from melancholia. According to this, melancholics are prone to mania, which includes wrath, hysteria, delirium, and insanity. The distinction resides in the fact that maniacs are able to surmount the loss of the object. This is also why a manic patient can experience happiness.

Freud also mentions three fundamental preconditions of melancholy near the conclusion of his essay. These include the loss of the object, the ambivalence a.k.a. the ill individual experiences, and the regression of the libido. Regression is the implicit return of an adult to the experiences and behaviours of childhood. Due to the fact that melancholy can only be caused by “the loss of reality, the death of the object,” (Freud 1946: 9) the first two conditions presented here are deemed sufficient for mandatory accusations of death.

3. “Die Krankheit zum Tode”

The analytical section of this paper is the third chapter. Here, among other things, Werther's health is analysed with an emphasis on the development of narcissism. At the forefront of the analysis are Werther's social environment, including his relationship with his parents and/or siblings, his failure in the workplace, the various phases of narcissism through which he passes, and the unsuccessful attempts at a potential therapy to cure him. The parents and their three-way relationship are introduced initially. At this juncture, it is essential to determine whether Werther had a healthy relationship with his parents, and if not, to what extent Werther's illness can be traced back to earlier periods. The relationship between the protagonist and Lotte is then analysed. In this section, it is investigated whether Lotte contributes to Werther's suicidal impulses and, if so, to what extent. This is followed by an exploration of Werther's interior world, during which it must be determined whether narcissistic traits are present, how they develop, and what psychoneurotic phases the protagonist must endure with narcissism. In addition, some approaches to therapy are presented, which can be interpreted as such in the work, in order to preserve and protect Werther's psychological plight despite everything and thus also to aid in his healing, which was, however, doomed from the start - as is evident from the discourse.

3.1. Werther's Early Life

In both Werther's and Lotte's lives, family members are absent, unmentioned, or have passed away, so the family portrait is incomplete. Werther's family is only mentioned in the novel's introduction. Consequently, the novel only features the mother and the aunt. Very early on, the reader is informed that the father has passed away. This is also the occasion for Werther's “dear confidential place [to leave] to shut himself up in her town”; (i.e., his mother's town) (Goethe 2006: 151). Werther views the relocation negatively, as he is forced to accompany his mother to Wallheim, a place he detests. According to the novel, the relationship with the mother does not appear to be wholesome either. The mother typically displays dominant characteristics, maternalizing her son, i.e., patronizing him in his decisions and statements and instructing him on how to live his life. This could be illustrated by Werther's mother's advice to be gainfully employed.

On the contrary, Lotte has numerous siblings. She resides with her father and eight siblings. She is without a mother. Lotte undertakes the responsibilities and duties of a mother in the home at a young age, caring for her younger siblings, assuming control of the household, and performing maternal duties. The fact that Lotte is assigned the role of mother and is required to fulfil it would not be expected of Werther in the performance of his paternal responsibilities to provide for the financial support of the family. Thus, Werther's boyhood abruptly comes to an end, he is exposed to the harsh realities of life at a young age, and consequently must work. He seeks contact with children in order to experience some relief and solace from what he perceives to be a miserable emotional state. This is especially evident in the incident involving Lotte, her siblings, and Werther:

The day before yesterday, the Medicus arrived [...] and discovered me on the ground with Lotten's children, some of whom were crawling on me and others were tormenting me, tickling them, and making a tremendous racket with them. (Goethe 2006: 58)

The quotation provides insight into Werther's temporary happiness. However, this image does not depict the general condition of happiness and harmony within and among his family. As a result of his observations and perceptions, Werther's familial relationships become strained, and he loses his mother's affection. The libido setting has been forcibly severed, and it is unknown to what extent Werther has adopted his father's ideas and whether he has been able to psychologically escape the so-called Oedipus complex, since the absence of his father has left a psychological void in his developmental phase (cf. Schöffler 1938: 177f.). To fill this paternal void, one could consult the following letter of Werther, in which the parent instance is supplied with Jesus, the Christian father:

Father, whom I do not know! Father, who used to fill my whole soul and now has turned his face from me, call me to you! Be silent no longer! Your silence will not stop this thirsting soul - And would a man, a father, be able to be angry, if his unexpectedly returning son fell around his neck and shouted: 'I am back, my father! Do not be angry with me for interrupting the wanderings that you wanted me to endure longer. The world is the same everywhere, to toil and labour, reward and joy; but what is that to me? I am only well where thou art, and before thy face I will suffer and enjoy.' - And you, dear heavenly Father, should reject him from you? (Goethe 2006: 190)

According to the Christian understanding of religion, Christ's agony represents the suffering of all humanity. Consequently, all human suffering is merely "after-suffering" (cf. Meyer-Kalkus 1989: 136ff.). Werther misinterprets Christ's suffering on the cross – which is actually passion in the highest and most insurmountable sense – by equating his suffering with that of Jesus through the loss of the Father, as well as the loss of and withdrawal from the world. He even justifies suicide, which is rigorously forbidden and considered a transgression according to Christian religious doctrine (cf. *ibid.*). Psychoses's desire to unite with God in the afterlife can be interpreted at this juncture as one of the earliest signs of suicidal ideation, since he yearns for the celestial Father. According to the psychoanalytic interpretation of religion, God is "formed after the Father [...], fluctuates and transforms with him, and is fundamentally nothing more than an elevated Father" (cf. Freud 1947: 177).

Now that the heavenly sphere remains closed to Werther for the time being and blasphemous traits are forming in his thoughts and words, as no expected intervention by the "upper hand" is evident to him, he continues to seek interior spiritual peace. This time, Werther turns to another family and expects to be welcomed as a member by Lotte and her circle.

3.2. The Imaginary Mother of Werther

Werther does not receive the anticipated devotion from his mother and, later, Lotte in the novel. Thus, the libido is liberated and the object occupation in the familial and divinely religious realms is absent, leading us to believe that the protagonist is in a highly perilous "free" state. The encounter with Lotte is crucial to the psychoanalytic interpretation in

order to precisely occupy the attachment object's place in the aforementioned psychological state and to attach his libido to a person so that he can ultimately autonomously choose his love object. In his infantile state, Werther "needs a mother who frees his love from its narcissistic isolation and opens the door to the outside world," (cf. Engel 1986: 67; Schmiedt 1989:156) and the most suitable person for this in the present case is the character Lotte, because Werther sees "every angel" who exhibits motherly behaviour immediately after their first encounter:

In the antechamber, six children, from eighteen to two years old, swarmed around a girl of beautiful figure and medium height, who wore a simple white dress with pale red ribbons on her arms and chest. – She held a black loaf of bread around her little ones, giving each one a piece in proportion to their age and appetite, giving it to each one with such kindness, and each one called out so unaffectedly: Thank you! (Goethe 2006: 40)

Lotte is exalted to the ideal image in which "all desire [...] [is] silent in her presence" based on the given quotation. Furthermore, Werther's subjective perception reveals that Lotte reciprocates his affection:

I found so much character in everything she said, I saw in every word new charms, new rays of spirit bursting from her features, which seemed to unfold little by little in pleasure, because she felt in me that I understood her. (Goethe 2006: 42ff.)

The preceding quotation not only demonstrates Werther's profoundly rooted narcissistic disorder, but it also demonstrates the mono perspective of the novel's narrative, as the reader does not experience any implicit or explicit commentary from other characters, in this case Lotte. In other words, Werther's view that Lotte is equally adored is not evident from the text, despite his assertions to the contrary. Rather, subsequent events demonstrate that it is in fact the opposite, i.e. since she is betrothed to Albert, Lotte has no sentiments and affection for Werther. The position of love is rejected by Lotte, who emphasizes that the extent of her affection cannot exceed that of platonic love: "What shall I deny them, she said [...], Albert is a good man, to whom I am as good as betrothed!" (Goethe 2005: 50) Werther refuses to accept reality and continues to live in narcissistic wishful psychosis:

No, I am not deceiving myself! I read in her black eyes true participation in me and my fate. Yes, I feel, and in this I may trust my heart, that she - O may I, can I speak heaven in these words? - that she loves me! (Goethe 2006: 76)

Werther perceives Lotte's participation in his life as a restoration of his affection. Given Werther's condition, it is wholly predictable that Lotte's confession of love will paradoxically come from his own mouth. The following lines are particularly illustrative of the sheer fantasy and imagination emanating from his narcissism:

When she held out her mouth to the little animal, it pressed its sweet lips as sweetly as if it could have felt the bliss it was enjoying. He should kiss her too, she said, and handed the bird over, [...] I turned my face away. She shouldn't do it! She should not excite my imagination with these images of heavenly innocence and bliss, and should not awaken my heart from the sleep into which the indifference of life sometimes lulls it! - And why not? - She trusts me so! She knows how I love her! (Goethe 2006: 167)

The reading of Ossian signifies the culmination of what Werther perceives to be a love affair. Werther recognizes Lotte as his soulmate due to the fact that he feels understood by her and they both shed emotions while perusing the letter. The situation will soon worsen. Since Lotte also allows herself to be kissed, thus returning the kiss *nolens volens*, Werther feels confirmed in his love for Lotte, and no one – not even Lotte – can persuade him otherwise from this point forward. Werther’s belief that Lotte truly adores him causes him to idolize himself, demonstrating his extreme narcissism to the greatest and most obvious degree. Then he worships himself (cf. Meyer-Kalkus 1989: 107):

Loves me! – And how valuable I have become to myself, how I – if I may tell you, you have a sense for such things – how I venerate myself now that she loves me! (Goethe 2006: 77)

The concept of self-love and self-worship can be justified by pronounced narcissism because it is at this juncture that self-reflection occurs (cf. Evans 2002). Werther sees himself in another individual and “loves” him. Psychoanalysts refer to this as “passion narcissism” (Meyer-Kalkus 1989: 100).

Over time, the act of self-reflection acquires dangerous and self-destructive characteristics, as Werther’s dependence on Lotte grows with each passing day: “I have so much, and my feelings for her devour it all; I have so much, and without her, I have nothing” (Goethe 2006: 177). Consequently, Werther’s demise results from the loss of his beloved (cf. Meyer-Kalkus 1989: 109). Due to the aforementioned cause, Werther and Lotte’s relationship endures a significant shift, from that of a romantic companion to that of a mother figure. Since Lotte’s rejections can guarantee Werther’s demise, Werther’s instinct for self-preservation compels him to pursue alternative means of approaching and forming a relationship with Lotte. The most appropriate alternative would be the mother figure, given Werther’s profound spiritual deficits in familial matters. Thus, Lotte assumes the role of the nurturing mother and Werther becomes the juvenile who can afford to make errors. The following verses provide support for this psychological reinterpretation of Werther:

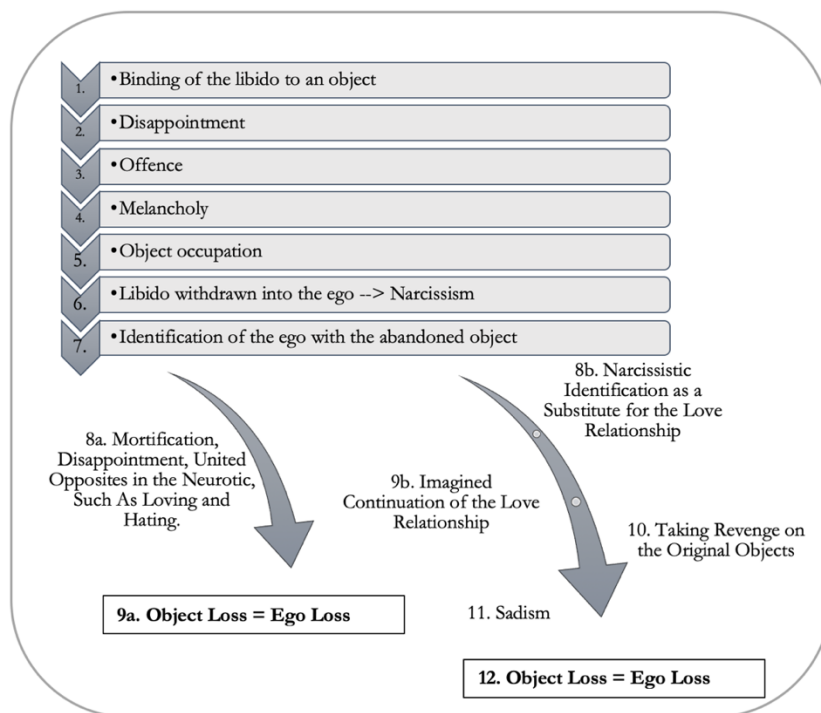
Where do I want to go? [...] I just want to get closer to Lotten again, that’s all. And I laugh at my own heart - and do its will. (Goethe 2006: 156)

In order to avoid misunderstandings, it is crucial to note at this juncture that Werther’s attachment or adhesion to Lotte is not to be understood exclusively on the basis of the faltering love affair, as Werther is incapable of establishing any form of social contact. The only explanation for his attachment to Lotte as an imaginary mother is the psychological condition he has carried since infancy. This is further supported by the following lines, which reveal Werther’s desire to be reduced to an infantile state even before he encounters Lotte. This libidinous state may be the result of an unresolved maternal bond (cf. Jäger 1984: 18): “I also hold my heart like a sick child, and every desire is permitted” (Goethe 2006: 16).

The narcissistic motive for Werther’s suicide and Lotte’s share of the blame should be presented here. This approach to interpretation will be examined in greater detail in the upcoming chapter.

3.3. Werther's Aloneness

This section of the paper discusses Werther's solitude. On the one hand, the incapacity to integrate into society is analysed, and on the other, the return to oneself. The final aspect should be understood as a psychoanalytical examination of Werther's egocentric and narcissistic characteristics. Following is a comprehensive account of Freud. In order to comprehend the rather complex structure of narcissism formation as described by Freud, the stages of narcissism formation are explained and illustrated in the diagram below. These also serve as the theoretical foundation for this endeavour. The various phases of formation of narcissism can be compared to Werther's life; the protagonist experiences each stage of the formation. The objective is to demonstrate how well Freud's theory of narcissism construction applies to Werther.



Dia. 1: Schematic Representation of the Formation of Narcissism According to Sigmund Freud²

According to the diagram, the construction of narcissism begins with the attachment of the libido to an object (step 1). In this instance, the first binding object would be the biological mother, and secondarily – and more appropriately in hindsight – Lotte as the love object. As stated previously, Lotte rejects Werther and does not reciprocate his affection. Both the mother and Lotte exhibit a troubled relationship with Werther throughout the plot. They fall short of Werther's anticipations. In addition to the troubled mother-son relationship, Werther's love for Lotte is reinforced as a form of platonic character by the fact that she is engaged to another man. Consequently, Werther is dissatisfied (step 2) and consequently offended (step 3). The protagonist is aware of his own condition of illness, just as he is subsequently able to preserve the health of others. The first encounter with Lotte is so significant because she is surrounded by children,

² Created by the author.

which implies the role of a mother, because Lotte and the encircling children establish the ideal image of a mother. In this fashion, Lotte serves not only as his companion but also as a surrogate mother. This prospect of a libido relationship also fails, as Lotte cannot assume Werther's motherly role or become his lover. As a result, the object-occupation is cancelled (step 5) when Lotte rejects him in the roles of mother and lover, and the libido is redirected to the ego (step 6) due to the instinct of self-preservation. In other terms, Werther's libido is no longer restrained. As soon as the libido is connected to the ego, narcissism can begin to develop. Thus, affection for Lotte becomes love for oneself. From this point forward, all love in the universe is predicated solely on self-love; he loves Lotte because he loves himself, and he loves nature because he loves himself (cf. Graber 1989: 75). Thus, reality is overformed, because "Werther loves himself into his imagination and loses touch with reality" (Engel 1986: 61). Simultaneously, an identification of the ego with the abandoned object (step 7), i.e., a loss of touch with reality, occurs. Lotte takes place inside Werther's mind. Along the journey, Werther becomes conflicted due to the effect of the object's shadow on Werther's personality. This results in the object's loss (step 12), which also signifies the loss of the ego. In more direct terms, Werther falls in love with himself because his affection for and relationship with Lotte has failed, and he ultimately views suicide as the only way out of his psychological narcissistic neurosis. In the discourse, however, Werther's desires and expectations are not fulfilled, as he does not give up his affection. According to his illness, the object continues to exist in his imagination. This would then represent the second phase of Freud's psychoanalytical process, in which the progression of the illness is slowed and the suicidal calamity that preceded it degenerates. Consequently, after the formation of narcissism and the identification of the ego with the abandoned object, a narcissistic identification occurs as a substitute for the romantic relationship with Lotte (step 8b). The present love continues to exist, but its form alters. The previous unsuccessful love and maternal connection with Lotte are transformed into a self-love that Werther strives to preserve. Therefore, love only alters form. From this point forward, the protagonist's mental consciousness perceives love, which signifies the next psychoanalytical step (step 9), the imagined continuance of love. In these two phases, step 8b and step 9, there is an inner conflict between two extreme emotions, one of love and the other of hatred, which can result in melancholy in the affected individual. This "[m]elancholic complex [is] like an open wound" that "draws occupation energy to the sick person from all sides and [drains] the ego to the point of complete impoverishment" (Freud 1946: 3). The source of his torment and distress is his incapacity for object attachment, which leaves him with an exposed wound. Therefore, the act of vengeance takes place on the initial objects (step 10). Werther's act of revenge is essentially suicide, as he believes he has taken vengeance on Lotte by committing suicide. This train of thought will be analysed in greater depth in the following chapter, so it is only mentioned briefly here. For the sake of completeness, it should also be noted at this point that the act of revenge has two essential functions: Lotte functions as Werther's object of love, and Werther is placed in the stage of sadism (step 11), which provides the discourse-internal psychological prerequisite for Werther.

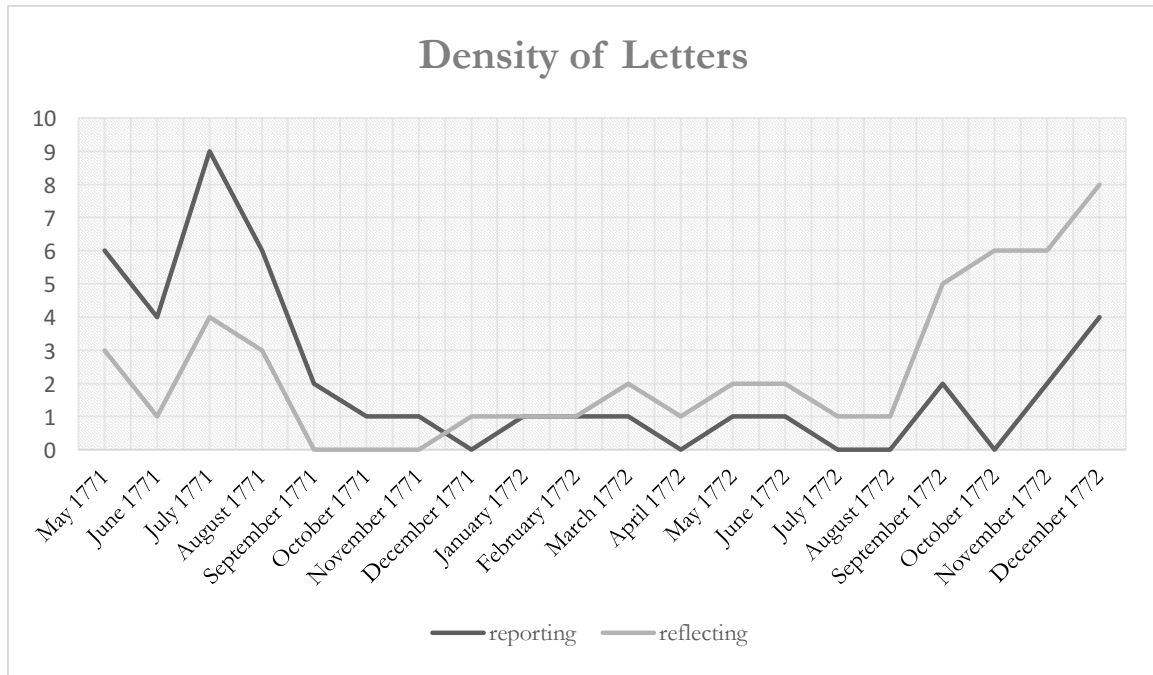
In order to avoid open and unconsidered aspects of narcissism formation, it is necessary to discuss an alternative approach to Werther's narcissism formation at this time. According to Feise (1989), narcissism also stems from an individual's distorted self-image. This means that neurotics exhibit, on the one hand, significant inferiority complexes and, on the other, an inflated sense of personality.

At the beginning of the development of neurosis, the feeling of insecurity and inferiority stands threateningly and powerfully demands a guiding, securing, reassuring purpose in order to make life bearable. This neurotic purpose is the elevation of the personality feeling, whose simplest formula can be recognised in the exaggerated 'masculine protest'. This formula: 'I want to be a whole man!' is the leading fiction, the 'fundamental apperception', so to speak [...] in every neurosis, for which it claims reality values to a greater degree than for the normal psyche. [...] The feeling of the weak point dominates the nervous person to such an extent that, without noticing it, he manages the protective superstructure by exerting all his forces. In this way his sensitivity sharpens, he learns to pay attention to connections which others still miss, he exaggerates his caution, begins to anticipate all possible consequences at the beginning of a deed or an affliction. (Adler 1992: 75)

Werther's existence is characterized by recurrent inner conflict and enduring tension. His incapacity is exemplified by a variety of personality traits and actions, including the inability to integrate into society, to love with common sense, to remain in one place in peace, to work and build family relationships, and to form relationships with others who are not narcissistically inclined. The protagonist can no longer access his outer world, so he must revert to his inner world. The only hope and redemption for recovery would be a calm and serene afterlife. The fact that Werther loses his sanity and commits suicide is also mentioned at the conclusion of the second book of the novel in the editor's commentary.

3.4. Werther's Loss of Reality: Ineffective Therapeutic Interventions

As a result of Werther's narcissism, he is also incapable of adapting to his given and extant social environment. His loss of reality and the associated psychological perspective are also formalized at the linguistic level. Even at the outset of the task, for instance, letters tend to report rather than reflect. As the novel progresses, however, the trajectory changes and the proportion of reporting letters decreases while the proportion of reflective letters and the letter density increases. In the reflective letters, which disclose more about the protagonist's interior world, the loss of reality becomes more apparent: "In their entirety, [the letters] demonstrate Werther's oscillation between the world of reality and the world of appearances" (Engel 1989: 44). The ratio of reporting letters to reflecting letters is depicted in the following diagram.



Tab. 1: Density of Letters in the Werther Novel³

Within the discourse, 18th-century therapeutic measures were used to combat Werther’s loss of reality in the novel *Werther*. The initial measure dates back to the ancient world and consists of a change of location, a voyage, or “productive varied activity” (Valk 2003: 18). This includes rehabilitative methods like poetry and music. In addition to Werther’s artistic failure, the therapeutic potential of a change of location also fails. Werther does not feel content in Wallheim either.

The second therapeutic option presented in the novel is the endeavour to integrate Werther into society. Here, Werther’s companion Wilhelm assumes the role of confidant, which can be viewed as the third therapeutic option, and assumes the position of legation secretary. Werther initially enjoys his new work, but “the best thing is that there is enough to do; and then, the many people, the many new figures form a colourful panorama before [his] soul” (Goethe 2006: 126). After a conflict with his superior, Werther abandons even this attempt at therapy shortly thereafter (cf. Valk 2003: 14 ff.).

Additionally, engaging with music and poetry is an additional therapeutic possibility. Werther provides an example of a cause while Lotte plays the piano and discusses the aesthetic curative effect of music:

[...] how the simple song attacks me! And how she knows how to apply it, often at the time when I would like to shoot myself a bullet! The confusion and darkness of my soul is dispersed, and I breathe more freely again. (Goethe 2006: 78)

The final therapeutic option discussed is the one utilized in the novel *Werther*. The reading of Homer has been novelistically integrated with a story within a story. Against

³ Created by the author.

this backdrop, however, it is of the uttermost importance that “with the wrong selection or clumsy dosage” (Valk 2003: 15ff.), the combination of poetry and music can exacerbate the already-present melancholy. The textual premise for this argument is a reading of Ossian, which evokes a gloomy mood in the novel, which is especially reflected in Werther’s spirit. Consequently, one can conclude that none of the therapeutic interventions intended to rehabilitate Werther are effective, and that the protagonist must therefore commit suicide in order to escape his narcissistic illness.

3.5. The Solution to Werther’s Narcissism

Shortly before the suicide scene, Werther’s suicide determination and interior serenity are depicted. One finds the character of extremes in his serenity now: “All is so still around me, and my soul is so at peace; I thank thee, God, who gives me these last glimpses of this dignity, this strength.” (Goethe 2006: 260).

Before discussing the suicide scene and its subsequent analysis, we will examine how suicide is viewed in various cultures, religions, and civilizations. According to Christian theology, a suicide victim is viewed as “inhuman, Antichrist, and lower than an animal” (Jäger 1984: 21). The religion condemns suicide categorically as a transgression. This is to be understood for three reasons: it is first and foremost a “sin against oneself”; through the act of murdering, the killer “adds harm to the community [...]” (Aquino 1987: 94ff.); and only the Lord has the authority to determine life and death. However, from a melancholic perspective, suicide suits the concept admirably. The opinions of Enlightenment thinkers on this matter are controversial. Because Montesquieu (1947) asserts that man has the right to self-determination, he can and may determine his own existence and terminate it whenever he chooses. Rousseau (1844: 295), on the other hand, believes that self-abnegation is only conceivable when suicide liberates the individual from his existence of suffering. Kant is a staunch opponent of suicide in any form.

Two passages from the novel will be used to demonstrate the extent to which suicide can be justified textually. The first is the scene in which Albert and Werther discuss suicide, and the second is the novel’s final suicide scene. The suicide motif reaches its apex in the letter dated August 12 in the discussion of suicide between Albert and Werther. Albert is a representative of the Enlightenment’s reasonable position (cf. Buhr 1998: 255), and he considers suicide to be a weakness, because “it is admittedly easier to die than to endure an agonizing life with fortitude” (Goethe 2006: 96). Moreover, he is unable to explain “how a man could be so foolish as to shoot himself” (Goethe 2006: 94); he finds the very notion repugnant. But Werther discovers:

[human nature [...] has its limits: it can endure joy, suffering, pain to a certain degree and perishes as soon as it exceeds it. So here the question is not whether one is weak or strong, but whether he can endure the measure of his suffering, whether it be moral or physical. And I think it is just as wonderful to say that the man is a coward who takes his own life, as it would be unseemly to call him a coward who dies of a malignant fever. (Goethe 2006: 98)

The above quotation illustrates the controversial position regarding suicide. In addition, physical mortality is merely the result of the emotional death of the psyche. Werther is also aware that he is afflicted with a severe ailment, which he likens to a fever. It should also be noted that Werther has recently increased his alcohol consumption to hasten his physical demise (cf. Goethe 2006: 178f.). The final scene culminates the entire suicide discussion by depicting a suicide attempt. In 1772, just a few days before Christmas, Werther shoots himself in the head.

Suicide is interpreted in this work in terms of the emergence and impact of the advancing and enormously spreading narcissism (cf. Graber 1989: 81). However, there are also research approaches that interpret suicide as an act of revenge. The letter Werther wrote on Christmas Eve reveals that he committed suicide due to Lotte: "That I could have been blessed to die for you! Lotte, to give myself for you!" (Goethe 2006: 262). In addition, Werther attributes his mental illness to Lotte in his letter: "I do not shudder to grasp the cold, horrible cup from which I am to drink the dizziness of death! You hand it to me, and I do not tremble" (Goethe 2006: 262). This analysis of the strategy of vengeance can also be traced back to Werther's narcissistic personality. It is his distorted perception of himself and his inability to accept responsibility for past or future actions. Consequently, he is compelled to maintain a safe distance. As indicated in the introduction, we must also consider Lotte's complicity in the crime. Lotte has had a positive impact on Werther from the start; the character of mother was ascribed to her, from whom Werther had hoped for familial acceptance. "Loved by the old man [...] like a son, by the little ones like a father, and by Lotten!" (Goethe 2006: 90). Integration into Lotte's family, however, is impossible because Werther cannot function as "son, brother, and lover at the same time" (Meyer-Kalkus 1989: 118) because the role of spouse has already been filled (Dumiche 1995: 283ff).

Another plausible interpretation of the suicide scene and Lotte's involvement is that there is circumstantial evidence of Lotte's affection for Werther in the revised Werther version. From the letter of 20th December, it can be inferred that Lotte would like to marry Werther off to one of his friends, but there is no one "to whom she would have grudged him" and she realizes that it is actually "her heartfelt, secret desire [to] keep him for herself" (Dumiche 1995: 283). From this point on, Lotte realizes that Werther's feelings pose a significant threat to her, so she behaves increasingly aggressively as the novel progresses "Go away! I beg you, calm down". (Goethe 2006: 192).

4. Conclusion

The present reading makes it abundantly clear that the protagonist of the epistolary novel is suffering from a life-threatening illness. Repeated attempts at suicide are made throughout the entirety of the drama. The leitmotiv is bolstered by a multitude of different elements. In addition to the pattern of fleeing that was illustrated in this passage, another one of the most important motifs is the motif of the double value of every feeling. The phrase "either-or" is often used to describe oppositions. However, in this epistolary novel, it is "both united," which makes it impossible for the union to continue in its natural state.

The story is written in the form of letters. While Werther's psychotic fears and insanity are brought on by Lotte's presence, Werther's narcissism emerges as a direct result of Lotte's absence.

In addition, the psychoanalytic excursion into Werther's infantile state has made it possible to interpret the more specific experiences more precisely, to establish links between the young and later ages, to establish reasons and hypotheses as to why Werther is ill, and to ultimately establish the diagnosis of what the protagonist is ultimately afflicted with. All of these things have been made possible by the establishment of links between the young and later ages. Werther's inability to overcome the true challenges he faced was due in large part to his family, Lotte, and himself.

The structure was prepared accordingly in order to present this in depth, as an attempt was made to indicate Werther's biological parents in the analytical portion, followed by Lotte as Werther's imaginary mother, and culminating with Werther's narcissism. In order to present this in depth, the structure was organized accordingly. It has been established that this triple constellation is interdependent, since Werther's disease is ultimately anchored in his interior, isolating world as a result of his self-love, also known as narcissism. This interdependence was demonstrated by the fact that it has been demonstrated that this triple constellation is interconnected.

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