

The Mirror That Devours vs. the Mirror That Restores



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The Nature of Reflection

It always begins with reflection. Human beings are reflective beings—we look inward, we examine, we search, we try to understand who we are, what we are, why we hurt, and what our lives mean. But reflection is never neutral. The mirror into which we look determines the truth we find. If the mirror is distorted, the image becomes distorted. If the mirror is empty, the soul encounters only itself. Reflection without transcendence becomes a self-referential loop, where the wound examines the wound, and despair deepens itself into the abyss.

Nietzsche and the Collapse of Meaning



Few thinkers understood the danger of reflection more profoundly than Friedrich Nietzsche. Born in 1844 in Röcken, Germany, the son of a Lutheran pastor, Nietzsche's childhood was framed by faith, tradition, and a God who was near. But when his father died while Nietzsche was still young, something inside him fractured. The God of his childhood felt silent. Grief became the interpreter of reality. By the time he became a professor in Basel, Nietzsche had abandoned the faith that once formed his world.

Nietzsche held to the ancient idea that “the unexamined life is not worth living”—a statement originally spoken by Socrates—but Nietzsche attempted to examine life without God. And when reflection has no transcendent anchor, the mirror collapses inward. The self becomes both judge and subject. Meaning is extracted from isolation rather than relationship, and so the meaning collapses with it.

Nietzsche longed to be loved. He yearned to be understood. His unrequited love for the brilliant Lou Salomé reopened the wound first carved by his father’s death—the wound of being unheld, unseen, unchosen. Without a God who could reinterpret that pain, the pain became the interpreter. Reflection became torment. His brilliance calcified into despair. His descent into interior darkness did not lead to insight—it led to disintegration. His final decade was lived in near silence, a great mind sealed behind unresponsive eyes. Reflection had become the abyss.

Camus and the Absurd

Albert Camus, the French existentialist, traced a similar line from a different angle. Camus insisted that life was inherently absurd, that there is no inherent meaning, only the courage to live without it. Love, he believed, could be noble precisely because it was temporary and without eternal grounding. But love without transcendence becomes fragile, because without God, love has no permanence beyond death.

In the end, Camus’ life concluded exactly as his worldview predicted, suddenly, abruptly, without narrative or closure. At age forty-six, he died in a violent car accident, a symbol of the very absurdity he taught. The philosophy wrote the ending.



The Modern Psychological Mirror

The same pathology of reflection appears in modern psychology. Early psychology sought to explore the nature of the soul and the mystery of consciousness. Its founders recognized suffering as a call toward meaning. But much of contemporary psychology has drifted from understanding the human person to engineering the human persona. The discipline has been absorbed by ideology. The mirror once intended to reveal truth has become a device for social conformity.

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The modern therapist rarely holds a neutral frame. Every mirror reflects an interpretive system, and many of today's systems are shaped by materialism and post-Marxist social theory. The individual is no longer viewed as a soul, but as a bundle of intersecting identities defined by trauma, desire, and power relations. The person is pathologized, not as one who suffers within meaning, but as one who must be reconstructed according to collective ideology. In this construct, trauma becomes identity, emotion becomes epistemology, and autonomy becomes absolute. The result is psychological fragmentation disguised as liberation.



This distortion has infiltrated the structures of care. The child who feels confusion is not guided toward integration, but redirected toward medicalization. Normal developmental distress is redefined as disorder. Hormonal manipulation replaces attunement. Pharmacology substitutes for presence. The clinical language of “affirmation” often conceals a deeper abdication of responsibility, the surrender of discernment to ideology. The psyche is no longer healed; it is managed. The body becomes an experiment in self-definition, and the mind a field for chemical intervention.

This is not compassion. It is the colonization of human suffering by commercial and political interests. It

replaces the moral language of dignity and healing with the mechanistic language of compliance and stabilization. It numbs rather than restores. It does not integrate the soul; it anesthetizes it.

True psychology, rightly practiced, recognizes that pathology often arises from disconnection—from self, from others, and from transcendence. It seeks to bring coherence between body, mind, and spirit. Ideological psychology, by contrast, deepens disconnection by redefining the human person as a self-invented construct. It offers

medication in place of meaning, affirmation in place of transformation, and social approval in place of spiritual truth.

Reflection without transcendence becomes pathology without healing.

My Own Descent and Return

I know this path, not just from study, but from experience. Twenty years ago, when the pressures of life became greater than my capacity to hold them, the deeper wounds of my childhood rose to the surface. Developmental trauma had formed core beliefs in me, beliefs I did not consciously choose but had absorbed: that I was not enough, that my voice did not matter, that safety was uncertain, that belonging could be withdrawn. These beliefs became the mirror through which I interpreted myself and the world around me. And when stress intensified, that mirror turned inward with force.

The reflection that emerged was not true, but it felt true. The wound began speaking louder than the Spirit. I came close to being taken by the lie of abandonment and insignificance. The reflection grew dark and self-reinforcing. It almost consumed me.

And while God brought deep healing in the years that followed, healing does not erase the history of the wound; it changes our relationship to it. Recently, in the midst of leadership conflict, those same core beliefs resurfaced—not because others wronged me, and not because my concerns lacked merit, but because the old mirror tried to interpret the moment for me again. I wanted to be heard. I wanted to be seen. And when that desire rose faster than my grounding in Christ, the reflection began to distort.

The problem was not the situation. The problem was the mirror I was using.

Christ met me there again. Not to shame the fracture, but to stand inside it with me. Not to silence my longing to be understood, but to answer it with His presence. Not to demand I rise above the abyss, but to step into it and lead me out, as He always has.

The True Mirror: Christ

The question is never whether we will reflect. We are reflecting creatures by design.

The question is: Which mirror are we using?

Nietzsche's mirror led to collapse. Camus' mirror led to absurdity. Modern psychology's mirror leads to fragmentation and exhaustion.

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But the mirror of Christ leads to restoration.



“See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God—and that is what we are.” (1 John 3:1)

“You did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry, Abba,

Father.” (Romans 8:15)

“And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into His image from one degree of glory to another.” (2 Corinthians 3:18)

Identity is not something we invent. Identity is something we receive.

We reflect Christ, and in reflecting Him, we become whole.

In His gaze, our wounds are acknowledged, but they are not allowed to define us. Our story is not erased, but it is reinterpreted in love. Christ does not observe from a distance. He enters the story and transforms it from within. His reflection does not pull us into the abyss. His reflection brings us home.