

Narcissus ab ovo

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Thus, the task is, not so much to see what no one has yet seen, but to think what nobody has yet thought, about that which everybody sees.

ERWIN SCHRÖDINGER

The study *in latissimo sensu* is dedicated to the phenomenon of continuum in respect of what has been known from the time of Aristotele as *phúsis kaí technê* alongside *idéā* of the evolutionary/revolutionary development of creation in its broadest sense and in its opposition to *creator* and *creata*, and aims to, through a multidisciplinary approach - for which we believe to be the most proper one to provide continually develop of universal new ideas and theories to occur in any area of human thoughts, and based on different material and available data. It actually presents a segment of the wide scholarly area networked two-part study conceived to be in its integral form a unique "anthropo-philosophical and linguacultural reflection" of the specified phenomenon that appeared through the prism of relationship between polysemes and homonyms *via exemplum* of the designation Narcissus and its denotata. One of them is the naming unit which is recorded in the codex *Liber de simplicibus Benedicti Rinii, medici et philosophi veneti* (cod. Marc. Lat. VI, 59 = 2548); namely, it is about the plant which is included in this pharmacopoeia regardless of its known toxic properties; that this fact is not a simple mistake of *manuscriptor*, the onomasiological analysis of the confirmed (syn)onyms for this plant in the South-Slavic languages up today (e.g., Sln. *jurjevka*, *bedenica*), completely reveals that "behind" these names "lie" the linguistic picture(s) of the world which is directly in connection with the philosophical thoughts whose *praesentantes* have lived in the area that is supposed to be the place where the manuscript was created during the late medieval and Renaissance Neoplatonism "timespan". *Hoc sensu*, the first part of this study is mostly dedicated to the literary-linguistic analysis and interpretation of the relevant records from the circle of reference works - literature and art that belong to the Greek and common

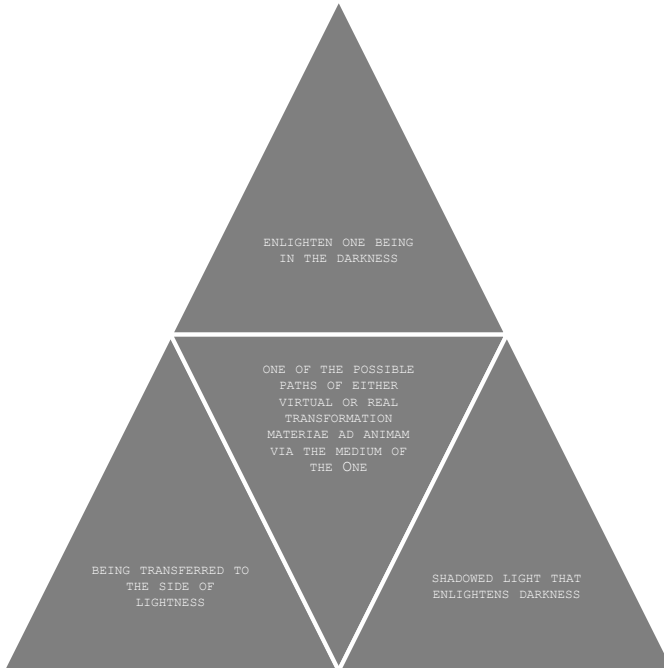
¹ This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, GRANT No 1554, Project title: *Assessing Neoplatonism in the 14th and 15th Balkans* - ANEB.

Balkan cultural heritage. It actually presents particular text etymological-, and anthroponymic essay, in which an applied semasiological-onomasiological analysis of *data referrentia* made it possible to re-create the process(es) of composing the relevant naming units as well as to re-construct concrete lexical fund that appear from one's own thought or as a common imagination of one community creating or causing Narcissus "to come into being/or life-form". Thus, the second part of the study² set apart the rebuilt fund formed by items previously confirmed to be predefined/or determined by certain socio-ideological tendencies which were deeply encoded in the iconic structure of *nomina refferentia* in order to illuminate some of unique ways of structuring the pre-Linnaean botanical nomenclatures and pharmacopoeias and consequently to clearly show the presence of the basic metaphysical concept of the so-called Renaissance (end/or "any other") Neoplatonism at the center of which is a hierarchically determined dichotomy of *animae/materiae* (which *in ultyma analysi* has been presented in this research primarily in textual and linguistic codes derived from dualistic concept: the One that illuminates with light/Darkness that is born where the light of the One is extinguished) and to concretely identify those language and linguistic entities that are in the line with this dualistic metaphysic(s) of Renaissance Neoplatonism. As for hypothesis, we expect that the same dualistic concept might be found when analyzing many other similar linguistic items and "pre-scientific" systems/*disciplinas* that appeared in the same period and at the same geographical coordinates, but *in ultima analysi* that does not mean that we had an intention to offer a final or general interpretation of all those individual linguistic entities or "pre-scientific" disciplinarum; on the contrary, we thought that it could simply just increase the number of their possible etymological interpretations.

Due to the economy of written study provided space, numerous interpretations, details and other issues regarding this *théma* have to be put aside; however, the most relevant of them are discussed in details in the second part of this study. Nevertheless, let us start with the prism that we have mentioned above, whose design created by linguistic tools genuinely represents a simple device being more like morphisms net which could connect *a posteriori* enlighten dots in order to understand,

² The second part of the study is the paper entitled *Venēnum Narcissus: an insight into the realm of poison through the Neoplatonist keyhole for identifying venēnum in 15th century's South-Slavic nomenclatures* which is in print. However, both part of the study can be easily read as an independent one.

first, the unique connection between the origin (in the sense of the etymological prototype) of the Graeco-Roman myth about young man named Narcissus and the plant Narcissus, and second, to present a newly interpretation of the myth about Narcissus primary based and consequently confirmed by etymology of the reference texts and names which have never been discussed thoroughly in the relevant etymological literature until today:



Dot number 1: Being in the darkness:

It was, or better to say, it is still obvious to everyone who faced with Narcissus face while doing the research no matter the approach or the methodology which has been applied in reference analysis - that all the versions of the myth about Narcissus can be divided into two groups (v. <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/searchresults?q=narcissus>). To the first one belongs the versions that rely on the mention of the Narcissus plant in Homeric Hymn 2 to 1 ff as well as on Pausanias' version(s) of the myth (v. cit. above). They belong to the period of classical Greek literature from the 7th and 6th century BC to the 2nd century BC. The second group includes adaptations of the myth about Narcissus as the one presented by Ovidius in his *Metamorphoses*. By the end of the 5th

century AD the myth about Narcissus almost faded away. It should be emphasized here that the versions of the myth belonging to the first group were created in the ancient era dominated by Greek philosophical schools. Most notable among the schools influenced by Socrates' teachings were certainly Plato. However, certain influence made by pre-Socrates' teachings, such as tribes' agricultural polytheism/or simply pagan thoughts, beliefs, cults and rituals cannot be neglected at all. With the rise of the Roman empire, Greek philosophy was increasingly discussed in Latin by Romans such as Cicero and Seneca. As for Medieval philosophy (5th–16th centuries), it took place during the period following the fall of the Western Roman Empire and was dominated by the rise of Christianity; it hence reflects Judeo-Christian theological concerns while also retaining a continuity with Greco-Roman thought. So, let us return to the first group that unites similar versions of the myth about Narcissus. Even at first glance, it is evident that we are dealing here with the main character who is a young man, or rather a boy in his early youth age. He is in a certain weird way surrounded by completely strange characters settled together with him somewhere or at some place that seems to be isolated from the objective world and this is something that it is not usually expected to be visualized in the mind of the story reader regarding the fact that the main character is actually a vivid boy or very young man for whom it is not even interesting to be involved in a situation like this. Namely, next to this lonely, young and handsome man who is standing by the shore or on the very edge of the shore next to the water, there is Tiresias on one side, who, although being blind, had once predicted to this young man parents that their son could've become known for its longevity just under the one condition: non to be in a state to get to know himself. The boy, of course, knew about this prophecy, but remained a little bit conspicuous because for him it is almost beyond any logical order that someone who is blind can see someone's future in the sense of reveling the date of his death in the moment when he is almost at the beginning of his life. On the other side, the statement that someone could only remain alive until the very moment he eventually succeeded to get to now himself implies such completely bizarre external or physical world in which people live only if they are not able to get to know themselves at all. Opposite to Tiresias, next to Narcissus, appears the figure of blossom-nymph Echo who seduces this young man only with her voice, even though she stutters during a speech. However, there is no mention of her astonish-looking appearance as one would naturally expect to see for the young nymph. Furthermore, total in contrast to her almost disappearing voice, this

nymph spits out such terrible anger due to the young man's rejection of her innocent girlish love. As the story goes, a young man falls in love with the reflection of his own image which he saw while putting accidentally his head beyond the water, although it is completely irrational, as even Pausanias himself notices - that the young man which is old enough to realize what reflection on the surface of the water is, can even imagine that he saw a figure in the water that is not his own, but the figure of someone else, with whom he begins to be enchanted. For someone who reads the myth about Narcissus just for pure fun, the only thing that such reader can conclude is that either this myth is just another fantastic story full of miraculous elements, almost magical, no matter the fantasy regards characters themselves or natural phenomena or he can conclude that the protagonist himself is in a state of altered consciousness because only in that state of mind he could have such visions that almost turn into hallucinations. On the other side, for someone who is involved in researching pagan beliefs, rituals and cults, the myth about Narcissus is just another fantastic "picture" of mutual relations and permanent aspirations of the members of the patriarchal pagan community, and such a picture is also for sure a good reflection of physical and biological phenomena that explain continuous changes of forms and stages of human physical body and mind in the world of eternal life (cf. Eliade's and van Genepp's opp. on this top.); so, in this sense, Narcissus is just a boy who are in the state of initiation. Being in that state means in general that suddenly there is no more those harmonious vibrations either external or internal that he used to feel. It looks like they do not exist anymore; actually, there are only disturbances that left behind besides such extremely unusual turbulences because of which all new coming life circumstances *ad hoc* recognized as difficulties that must be overcome, are almost a mortal burden for one who is in the process of initiation. Those who resist the challenges move into a new biological phase of life in which they are to be ready to show skillfulness in wartime, but also various kind of virtues when the time comes to create a family and leave descendants who will ensure an endless cycle of life, which both the *modus vivendi* and the *modus operandi* of the pagan community are directed to. Those who cannot bear the burden of this temporary chaos choose death, but in pagan belief it is rather a kind of virtual death like it was in the case of Tiresias'. Namely, Tiresias is not just an ordinary shadow of the mortal body in its underworld habitat, he is actually a blind man whose *NOYΣ* enables him to see beyond the *ΦΥΣΙΣ*, or much far away than ordinary human eyes can see. This interpretation of myth also supports the etymological

reconstruction of the name of Narcissus which has not been discussed in the relevant etymological literature until today, as far as we know. By the reconstruction of the onomasiological procedure, we succeeded to establish the IE prototype of the name which basically means ‘the man deprived from its man strength’ with its further different semantic realization in different IE languages that could be easily derived from the basic meaning:

Narcissus → Compositum: From Proto-Hellenic **anēr*, from Proto-Indo-European **h₂nér* ‘power, force, vital energy; virile strength’ (cognates include Sanskrit नृ (nṛ), नरा (nára), Greek ἄνθρωπος (ánthrōp) m ‘man (adult male), husband, human being, a hero as opposed to a god’) + reflexes from IE (s)k(h)ed-, (s)k(h)end – ‘to crush’ (Pokorny, 918-919), Mallory/Adams 1997, s.vv).

As for the second group of other similar versions of the myth about Narcissus, they are actually nothing else but different adaptations of Ovidius’ myth about Narcissus which is generally defined as aetiological legends (as the others in his *Metamorphoses*) which ultimately have the purpose of moral lessons of *sui generis* determined or supported by the ancient Indo-European warrior ideology on which is based so-called *pax Romana* and which is, on the other side, reflected in the example of the transformation of the *virī imperatoris Augusti* into the image of the *divi Augusti*.

Respecting the dot number 2: shadowed light that enlightens darkness and dot number 3: being transferred to the side of lightness, their “field of content” are *per naturam* discussed in the second part of this study; nevertheless, it should be underline here that reference analysis of the names for the plant Narcissus and etymological analysis of the reference and relevant texts on this plant presented in the next part of the study is primary dealing with the hypothesis of an invisible *animae* of Narcissus which has found medicine as well as refuge in the plant Narcissus after his failed initiation – the hypothesis in which could be found a starting point for explanation of most arguable details regarding the possibility to find in one bioentity the appearance of *materiae et animae* to be almost in balance or at least in accordance and not in disturbance or in adversary even measured by the hierarchy of scale in the field of ΦΥΣΕΩΣ or META THN ΦΥΣΙΝ, when being in the same place and at the same time.

Instead of the conclusion and of the resume:



ARTIST: ATTRIBUTED TO FRANCISCUS DE NEVE I

Linguistically hidden narrative instances as well as the so-called linguistic codes almost often in the same or in the similar way illuminate the elements of numerous thought concepts (having been predominated in different times and in different places) in such a way that they constantly remind us that the analytical minds of antique scholars, the inventiveness of medieval alchemists, the education of Renaissance philosophers, the first steps of the predecessors of modern masters of sciences – are “presenters” of the constant human aspiration to bring under its control the manifestations of the key phenomena which undoubtedly hid and evidently continues to hide the very essence of ΦΥΣΕΩΣ in general. By revealing the traces of such human aspirations like those for inventing and producing as well as for creating and performing that were embodied in various customs, rituals, beliefs, in folk art as well as in the so-called rational applications of knowledge – we actually discover the roots of world cultural heritage. Either required

by social opportunities or having been in balance with them, human actions have been appeared and subsequently, have been transformed in the course of time so increasingly, or better to say – in that extent that they have reached us in a kind of the coded forms, thus hiding the coordinate map of their ancient origin.³

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³ This research was supported by the Science Fund of the Republic of Serbia, GRANT No 1554, Project title: *Assessing Neoplatonism in the 14th and 15th Balkans* - ANEB.

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