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narcissism, *n.*

Pronunciation: Brit. /'nɑːsɪsɪz(ə)m/, U.S. /'nɑrsə,sɪz(ə)m/

Forms: also with capital initial.

Frequency (in current use):

Origin: Formed within English, by derivation. **Etymons:** NARCISSUS *n.*, -ISM *suffix*.

Etymology: < NARCISSUS *n.* + -ISM *suffix*. Compare NARCISM *n.* and French *narcissisme* (1894).

Quot. 1822 at sense 1 apparently shows isolated use; in later use in sense 1 after sense 2, itself after German *Narcissismus* (P. A. Näcke *Die Sexuellen Perversitäten* (1899); in German now usually *Narzissmus* : see NARCISM *n.*).

The story of Narcissus was earlier referred to in a psychological context by Havelock Ellis in *Alienist & Neurologist* (1898) **19** II. 280.

1. Excessive self-love or vanity; self-admiration, self-centredness.

In later use an extended application of sense 2.

1822 S. T. COLERIDGE *Let.* 15 Jan. (1971) V. 196 Of course, I am glad to be able to correct my fears as far as public Balls, Concerts, and Time-murder in Narcissism.

1937 *Pacific Affairs* **10** 100 The hurrah-boys tone characteristic of many recent Japanese writings, a form of narcissism reminiscent of American prophets of the late New Era.

1982 B. TRAPIDO *Brother of More Famous Jack* xiii. 53 I am morbidly fascinated by his preening beauty, which borders upon the physically repulsive in its narcissism.

2000 C. BRUNSDON *Feminist, Housewife & Soap Opera* III. ii. 199 This is the narcissism and parasitism of the media themselves, the internal interest in 'a media story'.

2. Psychol. The condition of gaining emotional or erotic gratification from self-contemplation, sometimes regarded as a stage in the normal psychological development of children which may be reverted to in adulthood during mental illness.

1905 H. ELLIS *Stud. Psychol. Sex* IV. III. 187 I have referred to the developed forms of this kind of self-contemplation...and in this connection have alluded to the fable of Narcissus, whence Näcke has since devised the term Narcissism for this group of phenomena.

1915 T. S. ELIOT *Let.* 2 Feb. (1988) I. 86 I understand that Priapism, Narcissism etc. are not approved of.

1922 J. RIVIERE tr. S. Freud *Introd. Lect. Psycho-anal.* xxiv. 347 It is probable that this *narcissism* is the universal original condition, out of which *object-love* develops later without thereby necessarily effecting a disappearance of the narcissism.

1969 P. LOEWENBERG in B. B. Wolman *Psychoanal. Interpretation of Hist.* vi. 182 He regressed to the

stage of narcissism in which his only sexual object was his own ego and its fantasies.

1996 *Representations* Winter 49 These egos..were now defined according to Freud's new theory of narcissism as themselves sexually or libidinally charged.

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