

# The I Becomes the Other: The Phenomenology of Projected Self

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Abstract

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## Why I Becomes You: The Phenomenology of Projected Self

### Abstract

There appears a common ubiquitous tendency towards a denial of one's self as is expressed by the use of the second-person in casual conversational interaction. The current tendency is proposed as a lack of acceptance of the individuated self leading one to cast off the ability to integrate the first-person experience. This embodies more than just the Jungian shadow, but it represents fully a dianoetic split between first- and second-person reality, cognition, and experience of the world-as-is. This discursive tear in one's sense of self is proposed to be symptomatic of a generalized existential disease. It also goes to say that habit and colloquialism play a major part in the expression of ideas, and that fear and a lack of confidence may precede that choice in vocabulary. The me-ness that each of us identifies as our Self momentarily phase shifts into an expression of Other. It is also posited that this reflective self phenomenologically affects our perception of art, in general, and specifically in the mother of the arts, architecture. As our sense of self becomes more oculocentric, our sensual self is too cast off as an extension of the real self. The experience of the essence of perception and consciousness, and of space and place, manifests as a dimensional concurrence of the inside world of dreams, imagination and memory with the outside world of things. Ultimately, we isolate ourselves from our actual perceptual nuances of self-generation.

Keywords: memory, phenomenology, art, architecture, psychology, perception, self, first- and second-person methodologies, introspection.

### Introduction

Juhani Pallasmaa summarizes in The Eyes of the Skin:

*"An embodied memory has an essential role as the basis of remembering a space or place. We transfer all the cities and towns that we have visited, all the places that we have recognized, into the incarnate memory of our body. Our domicile becomes integrated with our self-identity; it becomes part of our own body and being."*

One identifies on a basic level when another person uses the second-person narrative to describe their first-person experiences or ideas. Though both the first and second forms imbibe the narration with a discernible "feeling" and a subtleness of meaning, the memory of that experience ultimately resides in darkness – on the dusty shelves of our past - as an experience we are unable to recover. Our memory skews to allow us the social pleasure of story-telling, but the internal introspective experience disguises itself as indifference.

More than semantics or a play on words, it is a psychological aberration that transcends our own experience. We want the Other to take the blow of our treachery as we hide shirking behind the illusion of invulnerability. The statement "I am afraid of the dark when I am alone" has richness and

authenticity. It is a simple, straight-forward exclamation of a real existential fear. Phenomenologically, it's essence is genuineness. On the other hand, the use of the ubiquitous "you" in the statement "You know, it's really scary when you're alone in the dark" lacks the singularity of ones own experience, generalizing and minimizing the feeling as a shared absolute. It is as if we step outside of our selves to talk about our selves so that we do not have to accept that part of us. This occurs randomly, as one can slip in and out of this state of mind on cue within the same conversation or sentence. I presume it is a reluctance to integrate these dark parts of our being - a safety catch of our subconscious, so to say. Life naturally abhors pain.

Existentially, we no longer remain in the now-ness of being. Memories are no longer real and convert to an image about which we describe rather than experience. As a second order experience, memories are as real as the reality of the original event. The memory is not the original event, nor is it a simulation of the original event; it is a thing-in-itself with its own power and its own reality and ability to effect us. It is second order to the original event, but it is first order as it is played over and over in our mind; each time, an original event in itself; each time subtly changed by our current state of mind, and our current influential environment.

### Reflection – The Other

Jung argued that it is only the psyche that can ask questions about the psyche, and that what the psyche shows of itself is always in a sense a reflection of the psyche that is asking the question. (as quoted in *Jung and Phenomenology* by Roger Brooke, p. 63)

Marie-Louise von Franz in *Projection and Re-Collection in Jungian Psychology* says that "*what we see in the mirror held up to us by the Self is hence the only source of genuine self-knowledge; everything else is narcissistic ruminations of the ego about itself*". (von Franz, p. 187) She goes on to say that "*it is only from the standpoint of the Self that the ego can be seen as object and, vice versa, that the ego can obtain in every dream, for example, a clearer notion of the nature and existence of what it is looking at*". (von Franz, p. 187)

To Sartre, there were two kinds of reflection. First, there is that immediate reflection of the Self to itself that is termed "introspection" or intuitive reflection. It is a pure reflection. Second, there is a more deliberate and, therefore, a more cognitive reflection that is directly related to the ego, a positional, or impure reflection.

### Shadow

*"The psychological rule says that when an inner situation is not made conscious, it happens outside as fate. That is to say, when the individual remains undivided and does not become conscious of his inner opposite, the world must perforce act out the conflict and be torn into opposing halves."*

— DR. CARL GUSTAV JUNG

In [Jungian psychology](#), the **shadow** or "**shadow aspect**" —also known as psychodynamic repression or the disowned self— is when an individual literally splits off and dissociates some aspect of his or her I-ness. The shadow is a part of the [unconscious mind](#) consisting of [repressed](#) weaknesses, shortcomings, and instincts. It is one of the three most recognizable [archetypes](#), the others being the [anima and animus](#) and the persona. "Everyone carries a shadow," Jung wrote, "and the less it is embodied in the individual's conscious life, the blacker and denser it is." <sup>[9]</sup>

He made the suggestion of there being more than one layer making up the shadow. The top layers contain the meaningful flow and manifestations of direct personal experiences. These are made unconscious in the individual by such things as the change of attention from one thing to another, simple forgetfulness, or a repression. Underneath these idiosyncratic layers, however, are the archetypes which form the psychic contents of all human experiences. Jung described this deeper layer as "a psychic activity which goes on independently of the conscious mind and is not dependent even on the upper layers of the unconscious - untouched, and perhaps untouchable - by personal experience" ([Campbell](#), 1971). This bottom layer of the shadow is also what Jung referred to as the collective unconscious.

Jung also exclaimed that "in spite of its function as a reservoir for human darkness—or perhaps because of this—the shadow is the seat of creativity." <sup>[11]</sup>

By making the Other an inferior being, we maintain control and over our own selves. This explains the lack of depth and aesthetic beauty in modern architecture, and the arrogance of the modern architect, as the building becomes an inferior projection of our own unconscious feelings of inadequacy. We can not but feel the listlessness of our frail unconscious sifting away from us to poise upon another. We seek perfection but are flawed from the inside; so too is our architecture as it is nothing less than the projection of those fears and inadequacies. We seek to hide the truth of our being to the world, as we seek to hide the truth that our architecture is meaningless. We dress up our buildings as we dress up our bodies. Haughty loneliness escapes the thin walls of our being undermining our shored reality – a soft menagerie of hollow images, our lives lived in cinematic social scrutiny. We yearn for approval since we can not provide that to ourselves. We yearn to be endeared, to be validated on the grand stage. They allow us to pretend our inadequacies don't exist, as if we even could discern their existence, for if we could, they would seep out into the light and become one with our conscious selves. We act with the delusion that we are the masters of our creative spirit, that it is the I that penetrates to the depths, but it is not; it is the shadowy aberration that dwells in our depths and rises up to consciousness hauling the idea with it to the surface. We believe it is us who are the magicians of art, when truly it is the not us, the retched cast-off our being. Can we take credit for the work done by the orphans of our soul? It is no wonder that our contemporary structures are mere dressing for our ocular bedazzlement. The masks we use to hide our own selves are as material and real as the masks we use to clothe our building facades. This hidden aspect of our buildings is not so much a commentary on the inadequacy of their existence, but in as much as they only reflect that which is in us. The conjoined images are not substantially similar, they are only superficially analogous. We can not gaze upon their depth just as we

can not be seen by ourselves, however, they gaze upon us in return and “know” of that which they perceive as real. Truth hides within them as they reveal back to us that which we want to see in them as a reflection of our selves. And the know twists.

## Projection

According to Jung, the shadow, in being instinctive and irrational, is prone to project: turning a personal inferiority into a perceived moral deficiency in someone else. Jung writes that if these projections are unrecognized "The projection-making factor (the Shadow archetype) then has a free hand and can realize its object--if it has one--or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power." <sup>[10]</sup> These projections insulate and cripple individuals by forming an ever thicker fog of illusion between the ego and the real world.

Our projected self which we take to be an authentic Other is reflected back to our self as distorted representations of that other object. We are not seeing the other; we are seeing our projections of our self reflected in them. Since each person sees himself in terms of their own projections they are not able or have not learned to see the other person as an authentic Other.

Psychological projection (or projection bias) is the unconscious act of denial of a person's own attributes, thoughts, and emotions, notably the shadow, which are ascribed to the outside world. Projection is one of the most profound and subtle of human psychological processes, and extremely difficult to work with, because by its nature it is hidden. It is the fundamental mechanism by which we keep ourselves uninformed about ourselves.

Paleo-anthropologically speaking, this faculty probably had survival value as a self-defense mechanism when homo sapiens' intellectual capacity to detect deception in others improved to the point that the only sure hope to deceive was for deceivers to be self-deceived and therefore behave as if they were being truthful.

A modern view of projections is that they are prerequisites for normal social functioning. A person incapable of ascribing their own feelings to other people has great difficulties in understanding them.

In classical psychology projection is always seen as a defense mechanism that occurs when a person's own unacceptable or threatening feelings are repressed and then attributed to someone else.<sup>[1]</sup>

Projection reduces anxiety by allowing the expression of the unwanted unconscious impulses or desires without letting the conscious mind recognize them.

The theory was developed by [Sigmund Freud](#) and further refined by his daughter [Anna Freud](#); for this reason, it is sometimes referred to as "**Freudian Projection**"<sup>[2][3]</sup>

[Peter Gay](#) describes it as "the operation of expelling feelings or wishes the individual finds wholly unacceptable—too shameful, too obscene, too dangerous—by attributing them to another."<sup>[4]</sup>

The philosopher [Ludwig Feuerbach](#) based his theory of religion in large part upon the idea of projection, *i.e.*, the idea that an anthropomorphic deity is the outward projection of man's anxieties and desires<sup>[5]</sup>.

Here are three types of projection (G. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice*):

- *Complementary projection* is explaining and justifying our own state of mind by reference to the imagined intentions and behavior of others. (Allport, p.390)
- *Mote-Beam projection* is exaggerating qualities in others that we both possess but that we do not know we possess. (Allport, p.389).
- *Direct (Neurotic) projection* is perceiving others as operating in ways we find objectionable in our self. (Allport, p.388).

[Marie-Louise Von Franz](#) extended the view of projection to cover phenomena in *Patterns of Creativity Mirrored in Creation Myths*: "... wherever known reality stops, where we touch the unknown, there we project an archetypal image".<sup>[7]</sup>

The concept was anticipated by [Friedrich Nietzsche](#):

*"He who fights with monsters should look to it that he himself does not become a monster. And when you gaze long into an abyss the abyss also gazes into you."*<sup>[8]</sup>

The I relationship with the Other is not an AND relationship for they are one and the same as their infinite reflections recedes in a silent eternal death dance. All else is ego. These projections represent the narcissistic desires we can not accept about ourselves; about ourselves and about our culture. What we see is the "Thou", which unbeknownst to us is really our own "I" but since we are unfamiliar with this aspect of our being we perceive it as separate from who we essentially are, and as Martin Buber exclaims, becomes an *It* outside of the unity between our selves and the *Thou*. Separate, unique, singular. We identify this as the Other, because the dark dweller in our own house retains remarkably similar features.

### Mirrors of the Other

We all do it when we are first in love: idealize 'the other,' seeing them as both 'the I and the Thou'... not keeping much of a personal self, but somehow merging with an over-idealized vision of beauty and perfection we project onto this other soul...

That flush of enormous feeling, in actuality, upon investigation, appears to be an unrealistic image, as though from a slide projector...an image projected over the loved one, an image that contains all of one's hopes and dreams, and yes, one's own unrealized gifts... all this projected you might say, onto the wall, hoping someone will walk by who fits its outlines exactly....

Thus, the loved one not only shines with their own gifts, but takes on double, triple, quadruple sheen... for they are carrying an odd optical illusion that comes from a projection of magnitude...

all this can be caused by us unconsciously dreaming 'Wondrous Perfection' aloud, and draping it over another person... and then, expecting them to live up to the unlivable (for humans) divine projection.

We see in architecture that what we can not see in us. Our projections determine what is reflected back to us. We can only see ourselves through the eyes of the Other. In Sartre's No Exit, Estelle needs to apply her make-up as she is arrogant in her vanity. Since there are no mirrors in the room, she uses Inez' eyes to reflect herself as if they were a mirror. The passage goes:

*ESTELLE: I feel so queer. [She pats herself.] Don't you ever get taken that way? When I can't see myself I begin to wonder if I really and truly exist. I pat myself just to make sure, but it doesn't help much.*

*INEZ: You're lucky. I'm always conscious of myself--in my mind. Painfully conscious.*

*ESTELLE: Ah yes, in your mind. But everything that goes on in one's head is so vague, isn't it? It makes one want to sleep. I've six big mirrors in my bedroom. There they are. I can see them. But they don't see me. They're reflecting the carpet, the settee, the window--but how empty it is, a glass in which I'm absent! When I talked to people I always made sure there was one near by in which I could see myself. I watched myself talking. And somehow it kept me alert, seeing myself as the others saw me. . . . Oh dear! My lipstick! I'm sure I've put it on all crooked. No, I can't do without a looking-glass for ever and ever. I simply can't.*

*INEZ: Suppose I try to be your glass? Come and pay me a visit, dear. Here's a place for you on my sofa.*

*ESTELLE: But--[Points to GARCIN.]*

*INEZ: Oh, he doesn't count.*

*ESTELLE: But we're going to--to hurt each other. You said it yourself.*

*INEZ: Do I look as if I wanted to hurt you?*

*ESTELLE: One never can tell.*

*INEZ: Much more likely you'll hurt me. Still, what does it matter? If I've got to suffer, it may as well be at your hands, your pretty hands. Sit down. Come closer. Closer. Look into my eyes. What do you see?*

*ESTELLE: Oh, I'm there! But so tiny I can't see myself properly.*

*INEZ: But I can. Every inch of you. Now ask me questions. I'll be as candid as any looking-glass.*

Likewise, it is this relationship that shows us how the Other is the vessel within which we store our Selves. So it is true with Architecture. We store our dreams and memories in the object as imaginary being outside the spatio-temporal field. Each object holds these dreams and memories for future dialogue with the internalized image which has been reflected back and identified with the Self. For Freud, the ego was the mediator between the interior subject and the external object. Its sense of unifying power triggers a gestalt which "fills in" the missing pieces of the fragmented recollection. Its only function, then, is to maintain a sense of self as a discernment of duality.

*ADD Pallasmaa quote: about all the places we have been are contained in our memory.*

"I am **so small** I can barely be seen, how can this great love be inside me? Look at your **eyes**. They are **small**, but they see enormous things." - Rumi, Masnavi

Symbolic interactionism is derived from American [pragmatism](#) and particularly from the work of [George Herbert Mead](#), who argued that people's selves are social products, but that these selves are also purposive and creative. Another pioneer in the area was [Charles Cooley](#).

[Herbert Blumer](#), a student and interpreter of Mead, coined the term "symbolic interactionism" and put forward an influential summary of the perspective: people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them; and these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation.

Herbert Blumer (1969), who coined the term "symbolic interactionism," set out three basic premises of the perspective:

1. "Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings they ascribe to those things."
2. "The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that one has with others and the society."
3. "These meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters."

Blumer, following Mead, claimed that people interact with each and other by interpret[ing] or 'defin[ing]' each other's actions instead of merely reacting to each other's actions. Their 'response' is not made directly to the actions of one another but instead is based on the meaning which they attach to such actions. Thus, human interaction is mediated by the use of [symbols](#) and [signification](#), by interpretation, or by ascertaining the meaning of one another's actions (Blumer 1962).

Created by [Charles Horton Cooley](#) in 1902 (McIntyre 2006), the **looking-glass self**<sup>[1]</sup> is a [sociological](#) concept that a person's self grows out of society's interpersonal interactions and the perceptions of others. Cooley clarified it in writing that society is an interweaving and interworking of mental selves which subsequently develops our identity (Self).

We develop our self through the judgments of others. – Charles Horton Cooley's looking glass self, *Human Nature and the Social Order*, New York: Scribner's, 1902, pp. 152:

*'Each to each a looking-glass  
Reflects the other that doth pass.'*

[George Herbert Mead](#) described self as "taking the role of the other," the premise for which the self is actualized. Through interaction with others, we begin to develop an identity about who we are, as well as empathy for others. This is the notion of, 'Do unto others, as you would have them do unto you.' In respect to this Cooley said, "The thing that moves us to pride or shame is not the mere mechanical reflection of ourselves, but an imputed sentiment, the imagined effect of this reflection upon another's mind." (Cooley 1964)



The rudiments of Cooley's sociological theory can be reduced to three facets.

- One imagines how they appear to others.
- One imagines the judgment that others may be making regarding that appearance.
- One develops a self-image via their reflection; that is, the judgments or critique of others.

Heteroglossia = polyphonic = dialogic

Mikhail Bakhtin expressed his belief in a mutual relation between meaning and context involving the author, the work, and the reader, each constantly affecting and influencing the others, and the whole influenced by existing political and social forces.

Bakhtin once explained that,

*"In order to understand, it is immensely important for the person who understands to be located outside the object of his or her creative understanding—in time, in space, in culture. For one cannot even really see one's own exterior and comprehend it as a whole, and no mirrors or photographs can help; our real exterior can be seen and understood only by other people, because they are located outside us in space, and because they are others".*

*New York Review of Books*, June 10, 1993.

In *Jacques Lacan*, Sean Homer explains the following (p. 26): *"According to Lacan, from the moment the image of unity is posited in opposition to the experience of fragmentation, the subject is established as a rival to itself. A conflict is produced between the infant's fragmented sense of self and the imaginary autonomy out of which the ego is born".*

Furthermore, he goes on to say *"...to exist one has to be recognized by an-other. But this means that our image, which is equal to ourselves, is mediated by the gaze of the other. The other, then, becomes the guarantor of ourselves. We are at once dependent on the other as the guarantor of our own existence and a bitter rival to that same other".*

In other words, prior to the mirror stage, the infant has no self-identification beyond that of the fragmented awareness of its various parts, the totality of which is not realized until it identifies with the mirror image of the (m)other. The development of the self only emerges with the child's recognition that its image is mirrored back in the desire of another. For Lacan, the infant's sense of totality is an imaginary autonomy. The individual's sense of self is initially internalized as a false image as an incomplete mirrored image and not a totality of its actual self. Its parts are imagined to be the whole and its sense of existence is only recognized in the other and reflected by the other back to form and reinforce its burgeoning ego identity.

For Lacan, the mirror stage establishes the ego as fundamentally dependent upon external objects, on an other. The mirror stage sets up an image of the ego as an Ideal-I for the subject. This Ideal-I becomes an *"other"* within the subject's experience of his or her *"I"*, a component of a *"self"* that is internally

divided. The infant identifies with the image, which serves as a gestalt of the infant's emerging perceptions of selfhood, but because the image of a unified body does not correspond with the underdeveloped infant's physical vulnerability and weakness, this [imago](#) (For Jung, the individual forms a personality by identifying with imagos that emerge from the collective unconscious, a shared reservoir of mythical figures and scenarios. Lacan takes up the term to refer to the image the infant sees in the metaphorical mirror and with which the infant identifies) is established as an Ideal-I toward which the subject will perpetually strive throughout his or her life. Lacan does not put a positive spin on this observation: while the mirror stage allows human individuals to come to know themselves as "I", by establishing a permanent split within the subject's self-image, this process also lays the foundation for forms of psychic distress such as anxiety, neurosis, and psychosis. Lacan stresses that in the [mirror stage](#) the image the infant sees in the mirror does *not* correspond to the actual physical reality the infant experiences.<sup>[12]</sup>

The child's mistaken identification of self with its own reflection in this metaphorical mirror is the initial step in the mirror phase, signaling the start of the child's entry into the realm of language. It is here that the dialogue between the internal and external self, the *I* and the *It*, flourishes.

As the so-called "individual" matures and enters into social relations through language, this "other" will be elaborated within social and linguistic frameworks that will give each subject's personality (and its psychic disturbances) its particular characteristics.

One wonders that within this egocentric dialogue created between the internal and the external manifestations of the self, who is the narrator in the story between subject and object (man and architectural dialogue)? Let us review the characters in this tragic drama. We have an *I*, a *Me*, an *It* and a *Thou*. No thing beyond these terms exist beyond our perceptions of them, as they come into existence whence they partake in the dialogue. The *I* identifies with the *Thou*. These are terms of self-ness. The *Me* identifies with the *It*. These are terms of the other. The *I and Thou* are illusionary, while the *Me* and the *It*, though mental, are of the realm of existence. The ergo, cogito sum, the "I think, therefore I am" hovers above the reality of the actual *Me*-ness of who *It* is that actually thinks. The voice I identify with exerts itself somewhere near my third eye, slightly behind my forehead. The narrator, the banal self, the identifier, the judge, and the discriminating voice, occurs deeper in the back of my mind near the spinal column. It lives in darkness in a state of imprisonment, alone, outside of social etiquette. Who is this aberration? Is this my shadow, is it possible the shadow is a form that carries itself across the boundaries of our lives both inside and outside?

**Lacan** says: "what I seek in speech is the response of the other."

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