

Deconstructing *Hermann Hesse's Narcissus and Goldmund* with a cross-cultural lens

Faizullah Jan*¹ | Syed Irfan Ashraf¹ | Azmat Khan²

1. Department of Journalism & Mass Communication, University of Peshawar, Pakistan.
2. Scripps College of Communication, Ohio University, Athens, United States.

*Corresponding Author Emails: faiz.jan@gmail.com | faiz.jan@uop.edu.pk

Abstract

This paper is a qualitative thematic analysis of Hermann Hesse's novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* with a cross-cultural theory framework, buttressed with concepts from Jungian psychology. The novel narrates the story of two medieval priests who are the exact opposite of but emotionally attached to each other. The paper demonstrates how various cultural themes that Hesse has engaged can shed light on the ways Western and Eastern societies make sense of the Self, the Other, and the everyday existential dilemmas. Based on Jungian psychology, we argue that *Narcissus and Goldmund* are not two distinct characters; instead, they are two aspects of the Self. The social construction of these two characters is the symbolic representation of the struggle to attain the deeper meanings of the Self. This struggle, what Jung called individuation, is the journey of the human soul into its own deepest spheres. Moreover, we note that the matrix of Hesse's thought is the European interest in the Orient. *Narcissus and Goldmund* represent the anima and animus or the Yin and Yang of the conflict of self-realization. We conclude that a synthesis of Eastern and Western philosophies can offer both a fertile avenue and a rich toolkit for seeking deeper self-knowledge.

Article History

Received:
January 22, 2022

Revised:
March 18, 2022

Re-revised:
May 18, 2022

Accepted:
May 28, 2022

Published:
July 3, 2022

Keywords: Jungian psychology, Gemeinschaft, Gesellschaft, self, orient, self and the other, culture, high/low-context culture, cross-cultural communication, individuation.

How to Cite: Jan, F., Ashraf, S. I., & Khan, A. (2022). Deconstructing *Hermann Hesse's Narcissus and Goldmund* with a cross-cultural lens. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)*, 6(1), 70-88. <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/6.1.6>

Publisher's Note: IDEA Publishers Group stands neutral with regard to the jurisdictional claims in the published maps and the institutional affiliations.

Copyright: © 2022 The Author(s), published by IDEA Publishers Group.

Licensing: This is an Open Access article published under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

Intellect and love are made of different materials, he said “Intellect ties people in knots and risks nothing, but love dissolves all tangles and risks everything. Intellect is always cautious and advises, ‘Beware too much ecstasy,’ whereas love says, ‘Oh, never mind! Take the plunge!’ Intellect does not easily break down, whereas love can effortlessly reduce itself to rubble. But treasures are hidden among ruins. A broken heart hides treasures.

Elif Shafak “The Master” in *The Forty Rules of Love*

Hermann Hesse (1877-1962) was a German-Swiss literary figure who lived most of his secluded life in Switzerland. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature (not for the novel discussed in this paper) in 1946. *Narcissus and Goldmund* is regarded as Hesse’s greatest novel which was first published in 1930 His earlier novel, *Siddhartha*, published in 1922, won him original fame and a large readership. *Siddhartha* is the story of a prince who becomes an ascetic to find the ultimate truth—a signature theme found in Hesse’s novels. According to his biographer Gunnar Decker (2018), Hesse was inspired from Buddhist and Indian philosophies and, throughout his literary artefacts, has engaged the typical Eastern philosophical ascetic approach to the spiritual journey, quest for truth and self-fulfilment.

In this paper, we employ several theories from cross-cultural studies (Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1983, 1997; Weaver, 2000; Tönnies, 1971) and Jungian psychology to analyze this novel and tease out the various cross-cultural meaning and themes Hesse has embedded in its text. Hesse primarily engages the Cartesian dualism of the body and mind and, in a compelling literary way, represents the various other collective and individual attempts at coming to terms with the deeper meaning of existence and its profound moral challenges found across the Western and Eastern cultures. We aim to investigate how the various cultural themes found in Hesse’s novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* can shed light on how members of these respective societies make sense of the self, the *other*, the everyday moral dilemmas, and the purpose of life. Besides contributing to the academic scholarship on the intersection of literary and cultural studies, our purpose is also to demonstrate how Hesse’s literary work can help us find a cross-cultural grey area for coexistence in the increasingly contemporary polarized world. As the quote from Elif Shafak symbolizes, we hope to create a lively conversation between the ‘intellect/reason’ (Western) and ‘the love’ (Eastern) aspects of the approach that members of the two societies take to untangle the messy question of life’s ultimate purpose, though we remain vigilant and resistant to any East-West determinism and “love-intellect” essentialism.

2. Literature review

In this section, we review relevant literature from cross-cultural studies and Jungian psychology and intersperse it with the novel’s story. Instead of offering a summary of the novel, as is customary in similar studies (Boulby, 2003; Johansson, 2020), we intertwine the relevant

literature and the novel's story, characters, and exemplar fragments from its plot. In so doing, we hope to create a holistic and culturally embedded account of the literature review and the novel itself. This, we hope, will not only make the review an engaging experience (otherwise considered as boring) but will also help us identify the research gap, which, as White (1988) stressed, reveals itself when seen in its contextual totality rather than in singularity.

Narcissus and Goldmund present the story of two mediaeval priests who are the exact opposite of—but emotionally attached to—each other. Narcissus is the bearer of a *low-context* culture which is a manifestation of clear, explicit, and overt rules of behaviour (Tönnies, 1971). In contrast, Goldmund comes from a *high-context* culture (Hall, 1989). Hall (1989), in his path-breaking book "*Beyond Culture*" divided cultures into *low-* and *high-context* forms. In low-context cultures, he maintained, relationships (associations) begin and end quickly; privacy is important, time is a commodity, and thinking proceeds from specific to general. On the other hand, he continued, in high-context culture, relationships begin slowly and last long; space is communal, time is a process, and thinking proceeds from general to specific. In the case of communication, in *low-context* cultures, messages are explicit; the words carry most of the information. In *high-context* cultures, less information is contained in the verbal part of a message since more is entailed in the context. Asian, Arab, Latin American, and Chinese cultures are generally considered to be high-context cultures, while the United States and European cultures are understood as low-context cultures (Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1997; Tönnies, 1971). In addition, Hofstede (1997) contended that people of high-context cultures look for meaning and understanding in what is *not* said in communication or interactional context. For example, in silences and pauses, body language and facial expression.

Similarly, the attitude of the bearers of both cultures differs towards handling *uncertainty*. Members of low context culture feel threatened by the unknown situation and try to avoid ambiguity, while followers of the high context culture accept uncertainty in their daily lives (Hofstede, 1997). Narcissus is high, while Goldmund is low on avoiding uncertainty. Goldmund, in fact, revels in uncertainty, and makes a career out of it. According to Hofstede (1997), people who come from a culture of *uncertainty avoidance* are made nervous by situations they consider unclear or unpredictable. To avoid such situations, he added, people (like Narcissus, in this case) adopt strict codes of behaviour and a belief in absolute truths. On the other hand, Hofstede (1983) held, that cultures with weak uncertainty avoidance are generally contemplative, unemotional, relatively tolerant, and, at times, take personal risks. Goldmund, who has a low sense of avoiding uncertainty, comes from a *high-context* culture in which rules of behaviour are often vague, implicit, and tacitly learned simply by growing up in that culture (Tönnies, 1971).

Furthermore, Goldmund comes from a traditional, homogenous, rural community, which Tönnies (1971) called *Gemeinschaft*, while Narcissus represents the 'civilized' *Gesellschaft*. Much like Hall's (1989) *low-* and *high-context* cultures, Tönnies (1971) divided human society into *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*. *Gemeinschaft*, according to him, is exemplified by the

family, community, and neighbourhood, while *Gesellschaft*, is characterized by the city or the state. Tönnies (1971) further explained that in *Gemeinschaft*, intellectual life is rooted entirely in the imagination, while in *Gesellschaft*, it is dependent upon thinking. “In *Gemeinschaft*, all is centred around the belief in invisible beings, spirits and gods; in *Gesellschaft*, it is focalized on the insight into visible nature” (Tönnies, 1971, p. 37).

Goldmund, as a young boy, is brought by his father to *Marriabronn* monastery where Narcissus, a handsome prodigy, teaches. Inside the monastery, Goldmund finds a new world and does not know how to reconcile with it. He was brought there to fulfil his father’s vow of expiation for something about which the young Goldmund knew nothing—at least in his conscious mind. The young Goldmund did not know that his father wanted to avenge himself on his mother, and his father did not know that his son would be guided by the image of his mother for the rest of his life—the image Goldmund’s father had taken pains to erase from his memory. Little did Goldmund’s father know that the images repressed from consciousness, return from the unconscious in new garbs and haunt the person for the rest of her/his life (Freud, 1991). This is what happens to Goldmund in the novel.

Goldmund dozes in his first class at the monastery (that happened to be of Narcissus, his young teacher) for which his class-fellows try to make a fool of him. They, perhaps, do not know that he is suffering from a *culture shock*. Culture shock also called disorientation anxiety is a form of complex emotional stress that happens when people move from one cultural setting to another (Oberg, 1960). Oberg (1960) stated that when the newly moved person becomes aware of the fact that some or many of the most basic assumptions, they made about life in their native culture no longer seem appropriate in the new environment, it results in a culture shock. In the case of Goldmund, the loss of familiar cues and signs and the breakdown of non-verbal, high-context interpersonal communication as practiced in an organizational unit in contrast to an abstractive rules-based community (monastery) must also have resulted in him feeling a culture shock. Oberg (1960) further explained that culture shock moves through four stages, though every individual may experience these stages differently, the impact and order of each stage may also vary considerably. One of the initial reactions to culture shock, Oberg (1960) held, is *flight* when the person rejects the environment by, for instance, going to sleep most of the time. This psychological flight manifests itself in several ways during Goldmund’s stay at the monastery, eventually leading to actual flight from the place.

Goldmund then finds himself in a *fight* or irrational behaviour, which is the second stage of culture shock (Oberg, 1960). He enters a brawl with some of his class fellows. But soon after the fistfight, he mends fences with them, i.e., he accepts the new environment. Based on Oberg (1960), this is the final stage (known as *flex*) in his struggle to adjust or adapt to a foreign culture. Before *flex*, however, comes *filter* stage—if a person fails to adjust to a foreign culture—in which case the person rejects the new cultural values and place and “the home environment suddenly assumes a tremendous importance” (Oberg, 1960, p. 121). Once he comes out of culture shock, Goldmund gets closer to Narcissus, but cultural differences

between them come to the fore on their very first detailed encounter. As the novel (hereafter, N&G) puts it, "Narcissus was analytical, a thinker; Goldmund, a dreamer with the soul of a child" (N&G, p. 23). Raspberry (1993) asserted that analytics and thinkers epitomize the Western thought pattern that emphasizes precision, universal meaning, and focus on things, while relational people, like Goldmund; he held, feature approximation, contextual meaning and focus on people.

Similarly, another category Apollonian vs Dionysian (Cohen, 1969) looks at the personality as a cultural construction from a different perspective. Cohen (1969) explained that Apollonian and Dionysian or analytic and relational are two mutually incompatible conceptual styles. An analytic person, he claimed, looks at the problem in isolation from its environment, selecting relevant facts while leaving out others. On the other hand, Cohen contended that a relational person looks at an object as part of its environment and nothing is irrelevant. Similarly, Piaget (1969) believed that *abstractive* or *analytic* thinking was more qualitatively mature than *relational* thought. However, Weaver (1990) argued that if Piaget's model is applied to Einstein, he would be categorized as a preadolescent thinker. Einstein did not think in words; "instead, he had physical images coupled with visual images that represented complete entities which then had to be laboriously broken down and translated into mathematics and words" (Hall, 1989, p. 57).

In the same vein, Brooks (1995) identified the *melodramatic* vs *tragic* typology of personalities. According to him, the *melodramatic* or escapist perspective sees the world in black and white, good and bad, and right and wrong with no grey area in between. For the melodramatic, Brooks (1995) added, it is always the good guy that wins, just like in the old American cowboy movies. The bad guys are often dehumanized and portrayed as ignoble animals. The *tragic* or realist perspective, he explained, does not look at things in such sharp divisions, and it is not certain that 'good guy' will win; it is likely for the 'good guy' to taste defeat at the hands of the 'bad guy' (Brooks, 1995).

We understand that many scholars consider personality as a product of the various contesting cultural forces (Joas, 1985; Mead, (2015 [1934])). The cross-cultural perspective, which we reviewed above, appreciates this point of view. However, personality dynamics are also considered to be influenced by other, more personalized, forces. Freud and those who followed him have specifically focused on this aspect. But Freud's theories are said to have over-emphasized the childhood experiences at the cost of underappreciating the broader cultural forces (Cherry, 2020a, 2020b; Farah, 2015; Joas, 1985. Jung, on the other hand, with his theories of the *collective unconscious*, *archetypes*, *anima/animus*, and *individuation* are considered to have attended to the factors which Freud had set aside. Therefore, in this paper, we supplement the cross-cultural analysis with concepts from Jungian psychology. Moreover, Hesse was a close friend of Jung and a European thinker and writer (Decker, 2018). Therefore, we believe that applying Jung's concepts to the themes in the novel can yield interesting insights.

As against the id, ego and superego model of Freud, Jung developed a model of the *Self* of his own composed of three components: The ego, The personal unconscious, and The collective unconscious (Jung, 1952; 1960; 1961). He also rejected the concept of *tabula rasa* or the notion that the human mind is a blank slate at birth to be written on solely by experience. He believed that the human mind retains our ancestors' fundamental, unconscious, biological aspects. These primordial images, or *archetypes* as he dubbed them, serve as the basic foundation of how to be human. Adler and Hull (1966) held that Jung's theory of the collective unconscious distinguishes between the personal, Freudian unconscious, filled with sexual fantasies and repressed images, and the collective unconscious encompassing the soul of humanity at large. According to Jung (1952), the human collective unconscious is populated by instincts, as well as by archetypes. He considered the collective unconscious to underpin and surround the unconscious mind. Archetypes, an important construct developed by Jung (1952), are universal, inborn models of people, behaviours, or personalities that play a central role in influencing human behaviour. Jung (1960) later suggested that these archetypes were archaic forms of innate human knowledge passed down from our ancestors. He believed that we inherit these archetypes much in the way we inherit instinctive behaviour patterns. Archetypes exist in the collective unconscious and contain all of the knowledge and experiences that humans share as a species (Cherry, 2020b).

One of the four Jungian archetypes is the *anima* and *animus*. According to Jung (1960), women have contra sexuality which is masculine in nature and is called the *animus* while men have contra sexuality which is feminine in nature and is called the *anima* (also see Farah, 2015). The combined *anima* and *animus* are known as the *syzygy* or the divine couple. The *syzygy* represents completion, unification, and wholeness (Cherry, 2020). Jung believed that archetype as *anima/animus* is a transpersonal psychic structure, which means that it transcends the personal psyche. Farah (2015) noted that an archetype is like a Platonic Ideal and exists as a universal image or an idea which is common to all of mankind and evident across multiple individual psyches.

Finally, the concept of *individuation* holds centre stage in Jungian psychology. For Jung, individuation is the process by which we can fulfil our potential to become all that we can be (Schmidt, 2020). Individuation and self-actualization are sometimes used as synonyms but according to Jung (1952; 1961), individuation is a deeper quest to integrate the conscious and the unconscious. Individuation could therefore be understood as the drive of the *Self* to consciousness. While Freud (1991) postulated that the *Self* is a by-product of the ego, Jung (1960; 1961), on other hand, challenged this idea and stated that the *Self* is primary while ego develops from it. However, according to Jung (1952, 1961), we can never understand the *Self* because we have to rely on the relatively inferior ego to reach the *Self*. For Jung (1961), the *Self* was a teleological agency, a god image which pilots the individual on his/her journey. *Individuation*, or in Jung's terms, a quest for wholeness, can be seen as a process that is never fully completed but is one that can generate experiences which feel, momentarily, as if it has been attained (Schmidt, 2020).

The above literature review shows that a combination of the cross-cultural theories and Jungian psychology will be helpful in revealing the diverse themes in Hesse's novel, which in turn, will enable us to appreciate the cultural richness of Hesse's thoughts. Moreover, it also seems a good way to observe how an intersection of the Western and Eastern philosophies produces, contests, and complements the themes of the self, life's meaning, truth, and self-fulfilment.

3. Theoretical and methodological approaches

3.1. Theoretical framework

The two theoretical frameworks guide the analysis of the paper: first, a chosen set of sub-theories from within the broader Cross-cultural Studies framework (Hall, 1989; Hofstede, 1983; Weaver, 2000; Tönnies, 1971); and second, Jungian psychology (1952; 1960; 1961), specifically, his concept of *individuation*. The rationale behind choosing this framework is to optimally extract the rich intercultural meaning and personal symbolism from Hesse's literary text.

3.2. Data source

As mentioned in the introduction and literature review sections, our data source is Hermann Hesse's classic novel *Narcissus and Goldmund*. We chose this novel because in our opinion, it, on the one hand, symbolizes the tensions over the meaning of the *Self* and life among the Eastern and Western cultural traditions. On the other, it reflects how members of these societies individually make sense of these themes. Second, as compared to Hesse's other novels, *Narcissus and Goldmund* has received little cross-cultural academic commentary (Boulby, 2003). As we show in the discussion section, the novel satisfactorily serves as a one place rich in literary and symbolic artefacts, best suited for our study.

3. Analysis procedure

In this study, we employ thematic textual analysis (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Riessman, 2013). According to Riessman (2013), thematic analysis focuses exclusively on the "content" of the data to discern the various pattern of meaning and signification (exemplars) embedded in the text. She further claims that thematic analysis aims at untangling the "what" of the data, i.e., what is said or unsaid. Similarly, Lindlof and Taylor (2010) argue that meaning is relational and associative, i.e., they are patterned and always arise from a cultural context. Hence, thematic analysis, they propose, is a well-suited method to appreciate the embeddedness and contextual nuances of collective and individual meaning-making.

Following Lindlof and Taylor (2010) and Riessman (2013), all of us first individually read the novel and identified as many as possible, number of themes containing similar chunks of cultural meaning. Then we sat over multiple joint conversations and exchanged our themes and

other important cross-cultural ideas that we found in the novel. Finally, we agreed upon those themes for which all of us had noted exemplars (Riessman, 2013), i.e., maximally representative paragraphs, voices, anecdotes, or sub-plots in the novel. Finally, we analysed these themes (exemplars) through the theoretical lenses of our chosen frameworks, trying to embed them in the larger socio-cultural and spiritual philosophies of the East and the West. In the discussion section, we cite these exemplars to make inferences and substantiate our claims.

4. Findings and discussion

Qualitative textual thematic analysis usually combines *findings* and *discussion* because it is usually hard or impractical to report the results/finding as an independent candidate (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010; Riessman, 2013). Following this method, we also proceed with a simultaneous/parallel findings and discussion-based analysis.

After some time, Narcissus notices that a repressed memory from his unconscious drives Goldmund's behaviour. On a little struggle, he finds out that the memory is the image of Goldmund's mother. Narcissus now wants to restore Goldmund to his true nature. For this, he uses a psychoanalytic technique to make him aware of his repressed memory. Goldmund had been raised in the shadow of his strong father, who had tried to erase an essential aspect of his personality from his life: the shadow of his mother. It is this *Oedipal conflict* that has characterized Goldmund's personality by looking at his father as a rival in his attraction to his mother (Freud, 1991). Narcissus knows it because he knows "how to read people more clearly than most" (N&G, p. 41). It sounds like a self-conceit on the part of Narcissus, but later events prove him right. His father had filled Goldmund's soul with dreams that were so alien to his soul. Goldmund has rich and perceptive senses but has been set by his father on leading the ascetic life of the mind, i.e., a conflict of mind/body dichotomy has arisen in his personality. That's why at one point he says, "I am inclined to regard all things of the mind as father-things, as un-motherly, and mother hostile, and to feel a slight contempt for them" (N&G, p. 90).

Next, the novel reveals that Goldmund was the son of a dancing woman who, after many escapades, had left her house forever, leaving her husband emotionally injured who wanted to expiate his wife's 'sins' by enlisting Goldmund as a future priest. But, the repressed image of mother keeps haunting Goldmund, who himself is unaware of it. His stealing away from the monastery one night into a nearby village where a girl kisses him re-ignites his lost half, which unsettles him emotionally and deep in his spirit. Narcissus knows that Goldmund epitomizes his mother's personality, but his father tried to impose a different destiny on him. This imposition created a strain in his personality, taking him away from his friends and bringing him closer to Narcissus—his exact opposite. Narcissus sees an artist in Goldmund, which seems to be the result of his feminine psychological dynamics in the complex connection with his mother figure (Freud, 1991).

When Narcissus and Goldmund one day sit for a long conversation, differences in their thought

pattern (cultural outlook) emerge. Narcissus is analytic, like any modern Western man, therefore, he talks in the dichotomy of things: separating *mind* from *body*, and his arguments are steeped in inductive, Apollonian logic (Cohen, 1969). Goldmund, being relational and Dionysian, does not believe in differences; he believes in holism and thinks in images which Narcissus says is unlike *thinkers*. Narcissus argues that thinkers deal with ideas which are different from images. Hall (1989) posited that an Apollonian tends to develop established lines to perfection, and a Dionysian is more apt to open new lines of research. According to him, the former belongs to *low-context* culture and the latter to *high-context* culture. Dionysian, like Goldmund, knows only the direction in which he wants to go out into the unknown; he/she has no idea what they are going to find there and how to find it. Narcissus avoids uncertainty of the outer world while Goldmund wants to storm out of the monastery without giving a thought to what is in store for him there. At this point, Narcissus spills the beans by saying, “No road will bring us together” (N&G, p. 59). But he respects the diversity in personality without labelling one wrong and the other right. His plea is to recognize each other as opposite and complementary—a union of the opposites which has been symbolized since ancient times in the Orient by the *yin* and *yang* in a circle, the Chinese mystical symbol. Narcissus wants Goldmund to be himself, in other words, to know thyself by not forgetting “your childhood.” Here, Narcissus brings home the point that artists and poets like Goldmund take their being from their mothers, while thinkers like him live in the desert of ideas (Cohen, 1969; Cherry, 2020a).

Narcissus is verbal in interaction which is the hallmark of *Gesellschaft* or the ‘civilized’ abstractive society in which overt law and rules produce a schizoid or fragmented personality. According to Weaver (2000), modern mass societies are characterized by abstractive culture (unlike associative culture of *Gemeinschaft* societies) in which “what a person *is* becomes irrelevant to the system—only what a person *does* is important” (p. 64). He further asserted that bureaucracies operating in *Gesellschaft* turn employees into schizoids because they discard the totality of a person for the sake of taking up a specialized fragment of his/her whole being which, he claimed, leads to a sense of alienation among members of *Gesellschaft* societies. This dynamic surfaces in a dialogue between the Priest Abbot, a member of *Gesellschaft* society, and Narcissus. Priest Abbot once told Narcissus that he had followers but no friends. Weaver (1990) argued that verbal or abstractive language is superficial and like a memo, communicates little feelings, though, it is eminently rational, logical, practical, and simple.

Narcissus could decipher the personality of Goldmund with such accuracy because Goldmund is the other half of his own (Narcissus’s). This is why it seems that Narcissus wants Goldmund to go to his *Gemeinschaft*, which is the world outside the monastery. *Gemeinschaft* is a homogenous community in which rules and regulations are internalized and communication is more in context and less verbal (Tönnies, 1971). This is so because people, who have been raised in the same community, share the same collective unconscious, have similar values and perceptions. In a *Gemeinschaft*, people come together in groups because they either trust each other or because there is mutual predictability, because all share the same collective values and

behaviour patterns. There is no need for written rules to govern behaviour since what is proper is unconsciously known (Tönnies, 1971). For Goldmund, the monastery was a *Gesellschaft*.

Gesellschaft is a modern abstractive society which is made up of groups of people who do not know each other well enough to trust one another spontaneously. People in a *Gesellschaft* come from different value systems, perceptual systems, and ethnic backgrounds. They haven't grown in and grown together by way of bonds, outlook and culture as in closely knit rural societies. "Status ideally is generally achieved in economic terms, and social trust is maintained through a system of explicit rules, which every member of society must learn, and which must be enforced to protect the rights of all" (Tönnies, 1971, p. 65). However, *Gesellschaft* is generally perceived to be 'humane' because a person's colour, creed or ethnicity etc. does not block his/her upward movement—socially, economically and politically—as what matters is what a person does rather than *who* a person is. In *Gemeinschaft*, on the other hand, life is human but inhumane in the sense that individual upward mobility is restricted, because a person's social status is more important than what a person does. Outsiders are not easily assimilated in *Gemeinschaft* societies. This statement can be applied to the Pakistani cultural context where people, when confronted with a social conflict, most often ask: do you me know who I am? Or "*hum khandani log hain*" (I hail from a kin/fief).

Goldmund wants to live in relation with his world, not in competition with others, while Narcissus is goal-oriented—and finally achieves his goal by becoming head of the monastery. Goldmund believes in cooperation, while Narcissus believes in competition with others. Narcissus is future-oriented and follows overt rules and regulations; Goldmund is bathed in his *past* and lives in his *present*. He has internalized rules of his community and lives by instincts i.e. he makes little use of *extensions* unlike Narcissus. Language, tools and institutions, according to Hall (1985), are human *extensions*, and as a consequence of them, humans err in judgment and become alienated from and incapable of controlling these monsters they have created. "In this sense, humans have advanced at the expense of that part of themselves that has been extended, and as a consequence, ended up repressing human nature in many forms" (Hall, 1985, p. 123). Therefore, man's goal from this point on Hall (1985) argued, "should be to rediscover that lost, alienated natural self" (p. 123).

Narcissus has a long-term orientation and believes in delayed gratification. Therefore, he has adopted a strict code of behaviour and a belief in absolute truth. He would think that the core and meaning of his life is to serve the mind. That's why he would say, "Science is my vocation" (N&G, p. 57). To restore Goldmund's confidence, however, he would remark that dreamers and lovers are almost always superior to creatures of the mind. Narcissus thinks his goal is certain which is there in the monastery, but Goldmund's goal is not certain. "My goal is this: always to put myself in the place in which I am best able to serve, wherever my gifts and qualities find the best soil, the widest field of action. There is no other goal" (N&G, p. 95). Goldmund believes in the quality of life and is strongly associated with the degree of satisfaction of material needs, while Narcissus tries to subdue or reduce his material needs.

Since Goldmund has weak uncertainty avoidance, he accepts personal risks. Narcissus with strong uncertainty avoidance feels adjusted to the life of a clergy in the monastery. Goldmund, unlike Narcissus, was spontaneous who believed in immediate gratification. He was not contemplative and lived in the *present*. Power drives and instincts had become his masters. He would confuse his feelings with thoughts, and Narcissus, in their first encounter, had told him that he could not become a thinker; he can be an artist or a poet because he lived in a world of imagery.

Narcissus also deciphers that Goldmund has confused his father's orders with his own wishes and thus, he cannot realize himself in the monastery. Goldmund's soul was guided by his mother's image, but he had subjected himself to his father's rules. The world outside the monastery is full of opportunities for him to realize himself and get closer to his Creator. Narcissus's dialogue works as psychoanalysis for Goldmund, who, for the first time in life, admits how much he loathes his father and longs for his mother. Narcissus wants Goldmund not to waste his potential in the monastery and step into the outer world—and he does exactly the same. After a chance meeting and courtship with an unknown woman in the fields outside the monastery, Goldmund visits Narcissus and tells him about his intended flight from the monastery. The unknown woman made him into a man from an innocent boy and ignited the flames of his mother's image into his personality.

One night, Goldmund leaves the monastery and melts in the wider as a wayfarer. Narcissus may not have faith in his potential, but he had already recognized his journey towards his goal. "Perhaps I did ruin a future monk in you, but in exchange, I cleared the path inside you for a destiny that will not be ordinary" (N&G, p. 96). His journey is in fact a search for the mother figure. He had the first taste of it when he found his head in the lap of Lise, a stranger woman. Goldmund moves from place to place and wherever he goes, women find solace in his embrace and he in their company. But he proves a true vagabond with a restless soul. He does not stay in a single place and never thinks about tomorrow. He lives in today, the *present*, without giving a second thought to *tomorrow*. "It was better not to think too much, [but] to take things as they came" (N&G, p. 129).

Goldmund is sensual in contrast with Narcissus's denial of it. The latter values those senses that extol the intellectual and spiritual. Goldmund longs more for *body* than *soul*, more for senses than thoughts. If this were his fate, he thought, he would try to "become an animal, a bear or a stag, even if it meant forsaking the salvation of his soul. To be a bear and love a she-bear would not be bad, would at least be much better than to keep one's reason and language and all that, and vegetate alone, sad and unloved" (N&G, p. 132). In the process of wandering from place to place and sleeping with different women, Goldmund commits two murders which weigh heavily on his conscience. Then he visits a church and there he confesses to his sins, including the murders. He attends the mass and then spots the statue of *Madonna*, which

touches his soul. He asks about the sculptor and sets out with a new zeal to meet him. When they meet, the sculptor once again reawakens the mother figure in him.

Goldmund possessed something he had not possessed before, something he had so often mocked or envied in other: a goal! He had a goal now. He realizes that the greatest pain and the most intense ecstasy have almost the same expression. He learns that art is a union of the father and mother worlds, of mind and body; every obviously genuine work of art had this dangerous, smiling double face, was male/female, a merging of instinct and pure spirituality. He starts working with the sculptor of *Madonna*, carves a statue of St. John, but when the master offers him a membership of his guild, he leaves towards an uncertain goal once again. This time, he sees many deaths in a plague and is much tormented by it. He returns to the sculptor's home only to know that he has died while his charming daughter was already married. He knew that his road leads to his mother, to desire and to death. The father side of life—mind and will—were not his home. Goldmund meets another woman, the wife of a count, but this time, he is caught almost red-handed with her. He is put in a dark cellar. In the morning, before he is to be hanged, a priest comes in to hear his confession. The priest turns out to be none other than Narcissus—now John after he had taken his vows. Goldmund is spared and he sets out with Narcissus on a long journey, yet again. His opposite once again rescues him. It was a reunion of the twin souls. Goldmund tells him about his foray into the world of sculpture and many other things.

Goldmund asks him about many things in the Marriabronn monastery and is amazed that Narcissus has every detail for him. Goldmund's horse, the one he rode on to the monastery with his father and then had been gifted to the monastery, had already died; so had Abbot Daniel, Father Anselm and Father Martin. On entering the monastery after so many years, Goldmund realizes how Narcissus—despite his knowledge—could not realize himself, though he always asked him to be himself. He saw that how the learned Narcissus on becoming Abbot John resembled the mediocre Abbot Daniel. "They were as similar as their priestly robes" (N&G, p. 381). For Narcissus, the order of the monastery was a melting pot, or even a cookie-cutter mould, while Goldmund still had a free soul. Narcissus and Goldmund still had a clash of perceptions and their value patterns differed. For example, Narcissus, as a father confessor, did not take Goldmund's "actual sins" (murders, promiscuity) seriously but reprimanded and punished him unsparingly for his neglect in praying, confession, and communion (the monastery's values).

Narcissus is more *melodramatic* and *escapist*, while Goldmund is more the *tragic* and *realist* (Brooks, 1995). This perspective, Brooks (1995) argued, brings the *tragic* like Goldmund closer to reality. Since Narcissus lives in a monastery, he has experienced very few real-life problems, while Goldmund has been through many ups and downs. For this reason, the novel shows him to be overcome by feelings instead of thoughts. This needs to be balanced by things like art since Goldmund thinks that art makes the transitory eternal—in essence a longing for life which is transient. Ironically, Narcissus shows his qualities of leadership, quite

uncharacteristic of his order, by exhorting Goldmund to hone his capabilities in the outer world instead of subjecting himself to the law and order of the monastery. "You no longer know what law and order mean. Surely you would make a very bad monk," he tells Goldmund, but without rejecting him. He recognizes, respects and appreciates his differences.

At the monastery, which Narcissus now runs, Goldmund establishes a workshop for his artwork. He gets an apprentice and settles down to carving statues, while Narcissus facilitates him in his creative endeavours. They still differ from each other in the realm of *thinking*: Goldmund says one thinks in images and Narcissus says thinking is beyond images, but nobody imposes his opinion on the other. Narcissus still believes in the dichotomy of mind and body; for Goldmund, they are one and the same, just like "a *relational model* of the self, which is quite different from the individual model of the post-Enlightenment West" (Kakar, 1991, p. 115).

Literature on the concept of *Self* engages with the question of how persons seek to achieve self-definition, self-representation, and self-interpretation (Brewer & Gardner, 1996). But, according to Weaver (2000), the sense of the *Self* is influenced in profound ways by the culture in which one has born and grown up. Most of this debate centres on the East-West or Collectivist vs Individualistic Culture (Weaver, 2000). In collectivist cultures, people shape their identities on the basis of their interconnectedness with, and dependency on, others. The needs and desires of individuals are shaped by, and follow, the goals and needs of the group. Selflessness, self-sacrifice and being generous, helpful and dependable are considered as great virtues. Individualistic cultures, on the other hand, are those that stress the needs of the individual over the needs of the group as a whole (Cherry, 2020b). In such culture, individuals are trained and encouraged to be strong, independent, self-reliant and assertive and stand out of the group. So, the *Self* in a collectivist society is considered to be relational while in the individualistic culture, it is conceptualized as independent. For the relational *Self*, knowledge about the *Self* is linked with knowledge about significant others. Moreover, "an individual's repertoire of relational selves is a source of interpersonal patterns involving effect, motivation, self-evaluation, and self-regulation" (Andersen & Chen, 2002, p. 619). For the individual *Self*, the greater good of the larger society is served if the individual achieves his/her own goals. Thus, self-sufficiency and uniqueness are of paramount importance.

Similarly, the comparison of these two cultural systems also takes into account the epistemological differences. In collectivist cultures, intuition is considered to be the highest and dominant approach to reaching truth (Ghimire, 2014). In contrast, individualistic societies, specifically the post-enlightenment Western culture, are considered to primarily rely upon science, rationality and rigid methodological conventions (Gill, 2001). Furthermore, while both intuition and science can be appropriated for totalitarian purposes or made cult out of it, the former epistemological approach, however, is said to offer more diverse ways of pursuing truth than the narrow, exterior-focused and mechanistic traditions of science (Andersen & Chen, 2002; Weaver, 2000).

This difference in epistemological outlook plays out in one conversation between Narcissus and Goldmund. One day, in Goldmund's workshop, Narcissus tells Goldmund: "Only now do I realize how many paths there are to knowledge and that the path of the mind is not the only one and perhaps not even the best one," adding: "It is my way, of course; and I will stay on it. But I see that you, on the opposite road, on the road of the senses, have seized the secret of being just as deeply and can express it in a much livelier fashion than most thinkers are able to do." Adler (1983) calls it *equifinality*: the belief that there are many ways of achieving a particular goal; it is the understanding that there are many, equivalent ways to reaching a final goal. *Equifinality* assumes that our way is not the only way. There are many culturally distinct ways of reaching the same goal, or of living one's life. This coming to truth of life shows cross-cultural management skills of Narcissus—in the modern parlance. He helps Goldmund to reach his goal in *his own* way instead of subjecting his personality to the cookie-cutting mould of the monastery.

After a few years at the monastery, Goldmund once again sets off on a long journey, and when he returns, he is already wilted and weak. But Narcissus finds him content and ready to embrace death happily, which makes him envy Goldmund by saying: "My life has been poor in love; I have lacked the best of life" (N&G, p. 427). Goldmund, who lived a sensual and senseful life, finds contentment by living in the world without subjecting himself to abstinence and tough spiritual exercises. Narcissus, who bathed himself in non-sensual and non-senseful life, still gropes in the dark. It was Narcissus who through psychoanalysis restored Goldmund to his lost half, but before his death Goldmund played the same trick on Narcissus: "But how will you die when your time comes, Narcissus, since you have no mother? Without a mother, one cannot love. Without a mother, one cannot die" (p. 435). This conversation shows that Goldmund wanted to make Narcissus realize his lost half, i.e., the sensual, senseful, artistic, feminine, and dreaming aspect of his being.

Narcissus and Goldmund are basically two states of human life, the *Self*, which cannot be separated from each other. One is analytic and the other is relational. This is a struggle between associative and abstractive cultures, relational and analytic thought, or a struggle between members of a *Gemeinschaft* or community and members of a *Gesellschaft* or more complex society (Weaver, 1990). This dichotomy is ostensibly spelled out in the novel as a conflict between father and mother, church and world, analysis and synthesis, concept and image (Johansson, 2020). Narcissus makes upward movement in his *Gesellschaft* by becoming Abbot. This is how he could realize himself and find contentment, which for him, was a continuous struggle. Had Narcissus stepped into Goldmund's *Gemeinschaft*, he might have realized himself in a different way. However, he was not made for the world of Goldmund's much like Goldmund was not made for the *Gesellschaft* that monastery was. Goldmund, in his *Gemeinschaft* gets no personal identity but realizes himself and dies as a content man. Monastery, being humane, could take in people like Goldmund, but the world outside the monastery would not accept people like Narcissus because of its inhumane nature and because of Narcissus's *low-context* cultural orientation.

The symbolic struggle between Narcissus and Goldmund can be conceptualized as the struggle for *individuation*. As we stated earlier, the concept of individuation holds a central place in Jungian psychology (Evans, 1979, Jacobi, 1983). For Jung, as Schmidt (2020) notes, individuation is the process by which we can fulfil our potential to become all that we can be. From Jungian psychology (1952; 1960; 1961), it is obvious that the individuation process is shaped by an array of cultural, transcultural, and personal dynamics (also see Jacobi, 1983). Further, we can infer that the Jungian archetypes that exist in the collective unconscious can represent these forces. These primordial images, as Jung referred to them, constitute our basic humanity. According to Cherry (2020b), Jung believed that archetypes contain all of the knowledge and experiences that humans share as a species and that we inherit them much in the way we inherit other instinctive behaviours. In the novel, we see that the mother and father archetype is one of the main themes Hesse has worked through. Towards the end, we notice that he stresses the need for recognizing the balance of both these aspects of our personalities, what Jung (1952) calls the *syzygy*. Jung (1952) believed that the *syzygy* represents completion, unification, and wholeness. Jung (1962) also held that the anima/animus is a transpersonal psychic structure that transcends the personal psyche. *Individuation*, then, is a deeper quest of integrating all the personal and cultural forces and could therefore be understood as the drive of the *Self* to the consciousness but which never reaches completion.

5. Conclusion

In this paper, we analysed Hermann Hesse's 1930 novel *Narcissus and Goldmund* by employing a combination of cross-cultural theories and Jung's concept of individuation. Our purpose was to examine how the various cultural themes that Hesse has engaged can shed light on the ways members of the Western and Eastern societies make sense of the *Self*, the *other*, and the everyday existential dilemmas. We argue that the social construction of *Narcissus and Goldmund* is the symbolic representation of the deeper meanings of the *Self* and its achievement, which Jung calls *individuation*. In Jungian psychology, *individuation* is the journey of the human soul into its own deepest spheres, the "marriage of reason and passion" as Kahlil Gibran (2007, p. 17) aptly put it. We further note that the matrix of Hesse's thought is the European interest in the Orient, something that is present even in the works of Goethe (seen as inspired from Kali Das's ancient play *Shakuntala*). We also indicated that the Jungian *anima* and *animus* are similar to the Chinese philosophical concepts of *Yin* and *Yang*, which are not simply cosmic symbols, rather represent the individuals' effort at unveiling the mysteries of the *Self*. *Individuation* is an eternal quest for self-knowledge, from "know thyself" by Socrates to "mind, self, and society" by George Herbert Mead (2015 [1934]). In their psychological quests, Freud and Jung looked deep into the human unconscious and archetypical recesses of our collective heritage. The same quest can also be seen in Hesse's this masterpiece. Putting the *Self* in the centre of the debate, we argue, society needs to be interpreted through its (*Self*) medium. *Narcissus and Goldmund* are therefore, better understood as two states of the human psyche, constantly fighting for supremacy and control over the medium of the *Self*. However, none wins; the struggle between them persists. The ending and the image might give

a person one or other persona, but the eternal struggle continues. And this is the reason we all remain humans. As Shafak's quote, cited at the beginning of this article, illustrated, Hesse's plea is to recognize each other as being opposite and complementary—a union of the opposites which has been variously symbolized in both the Western thought as *Equifinality* (the union of art and science, Adler (1983) and as *syzygy* (Jung), and in the ancient Orient mystical philosophies of *yin* and *yang*. With this, we hope to have demonstrated that Hesse's literary work can help us find both a personal and a cross-cultural grey area for a tolerant, peaceful, and fulfilling coexistence.

Declaration of conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest(s) with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

References

- Adler, G., & Hull, R. F. C. (1966). *Collected works of C.G. Jung, Volume 7: Two essays in analytical psychology*. Princeton University.
- Adler, N. J. (1983). Domestic multiculturalism: Cross-cultural management in the public sector. In W. B. Eddy (Ed.), *Handbook of Organization Management* (Spring, 25, pp. 481–499). McGill University.
- Andersen, S. M., & Chen, S. (2002). The relational self: An interpersonal social-cognitive theory. *Psychological Review*, 109(4), 619–645. <https://doi:10.1037/0033-295x.109.4.619>
- Boulby, M. (2003). Narziß and Goldmund. In H. Bloom (Ed.), *Hermann Hesse*. Chelsea House.
- Brewer, M. B., & Gardner, W. (1996). Who is this “we”? Levels of collective identity and self representations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 71(1), 83–93. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.71.1.83>
- Brooks, P. (1995). *The Melodramatic Imagination: Balzac, Henry James, Melodrama, and the Mode of Excess*. Yale University.
- Cherry, K. (2020a, May 02). *What are the Jungian archetypes?* Very well Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-jungs-4-major-archetypes-2795439#:~:text=By,passed%20down%20from%20our%20ancestors.>
- Cherry, K. (2020b, December 11). *How Do Individualistic Cultures Influence Behavior?* Verywell Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-are-individualistic-cultures-2795273>
- Cohen, R. A. (1969). Conceptual styles, culture conflict, and nonverbal tests of intelligence. *American Anthropological Association*, 71(5), 828–856. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1969.71.5.02a00040>
- Decker, G. (2018). *Hesse: The wanderer and his shadow*. Harvard University.
- Evans, R. I. (1979). *Jung on elementary psychology: A discussion between CG Jung and Richard I. Evans*. Routledge.
- Farah, S. (2015, February 4). *The Archetypes of the Anima and Animus*. Centre for Applied Jungian Studies. <https://appliedjung.com/the-archetypes-of-the-anima-and-animus/>
- Freud, S. (1991). *Civilization, Society and Religion* (Vol. 12). Penguin.
- Ghimire, S. (2014, October 16). Comparing ‘East’ and ‘West’ on the Basis of Epistemological Paradigms. *Social Science Research Network*. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2510960>
- Gibran, K. (2007). *The collected works*. Everyman’s Library.

- Gill, A. (2001). *In search of intuitive knowledge: A comparison of eastern and western epistemology*. PhD Dissertation, Simon Fraser University. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/56370049.pdf>
- Hall, E. T. (1989). *Beyond culture*. Anchor Books.
- Hofstede, G. (1983). Dimensions of national cultures in fifty countries and three regions. In J.B. Deregowski, S. Dziurawiec and R.C. Annis, (Ed.), *Expiscations in cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 335-355). Swets and Zeitlinger.
- Hofstede, G. (1997). *Cultures and Organizations*. McGraw-Hill.
- Jacobi, J. (1983). *The way of individuation* (R. F. C. Hall, Trans.). Plume.
- Joas, H. (1985). *GH Mead: A contemporary examination of his thought* (R. Meyer, Trans.). MIT Press.
- Johansson, N. (2020). Beyond Narcissism: The multi-layered narcissus reference in Hermann Hesse's *Narziss Und Goldmund*. *German Life and Letters*, 73(2), 270-296. <https://doi.org/10.1111/glal.12263>
- Jung, C. G. (1952). *The integration of the personality* (S. Dell, Trans.). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1960). *The undiscovered self* (R.C.F. Hull, Trans.; First). Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Jung, C. G. (1961). *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* (A. Jaffé, Ed.; R. Winston & Clara Winston, Trans.). Vintage Books.
- Kakar, S. (1991). *The analyst and the mystic: Psychoanalytic reflections on religion and mysticism*. University of Chicago.
- Lindlof, T. R., & Taylor, B. C. (2010). *Qualitative communication research methods*. SAGE.
- Mead, G. H. (2015 [1934]). *Mind, self, and society*. University of Chicago.
- Oberg, K. (1960). Cultural shock: Adjustment to new cultural environments. *Practical Anthropology*, 7(4), 177–182. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009182966000700405>
- Piaget, J. (1969). *The child's conception of time*. Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Raspberry, W. (1993, October 8). The brighter side of American schools. *Washington Post*. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/1993/10/08/the-brighter-side-of-american-schools/2ed9cfc9-6078-447b-b339-6d7e386f0708/>
- Riessman, C. K. (2013). *Narrative methods for the human sciences*. SAGE.

- Schmidt, M. (2020, May 26). Individuation and the Self. *Society of Analytical Psychology*. <https://www.thesap.org.uk/resources/articles-on-jungian-psychology-2/about-analysis-and-therapy/individuation/>
- Shafak, E. (2010). The Master; in *The Forty Rules of Love*. Viking Penguin.
- Tönnies, F. (1971). *On sociology: Pure, applied, and empirical: Selected writings* (Vol. 392). University of Chicago.
- Weaver, C. (1990). *Understanding whole language: From principles to practice*. Irwin Pub.
- Weaver, G. R. (2000). American Identity Movements: A Cross-Cultural Confrontation. In *Culture, Communication and Conflict* (pp. 60–65). Pearson Publishing.
- White, H. (1988). Historiography and Historiophoty. *The American Historical Review*, 93(5), 1193-1199. <https://doi.org/10.2307/1873534>