

## ROCHELLE KAINER

### Identification with the Ideal Self in Art and the Analytic Encounter

Three parts of the self concern us in the analytic encounter: the non-pathological, the pathological, and the ideal self. In our analytic work, what is brought to us and what is prominently sought is the patient's need for help with their *pathological self* often based on an identification with unsatisfactory early objects. The *ideal self* is also at play in our process of falling in love with works of art. There, we *identify* with the *ideals* of the artist that have been both consciously and unconsciously projected into the artwork. In art we love that which projects our *ideal self*.

In the course of successful analytic work, the *ideal self* may also come into play insofar as the patient identifies with the ideals projected by the analyst. The obverse can be seen in less successful or failed analytic work: there, the ideals of the analyst (expressed both overtly and unconsciously) can be discordant (ranging from a lack of empathic connection to the patient all the way to the pathological and destructive projections of the analyst). In these latter cases a disturbing but necessary dis-identification takes place. Depending how severe, dis-identification can range from disappointments that can be worked through, to a collapse of the entire work. The conditions of identification and dis-identification that hold true in art seem to also be at play in analytic therapy and supervision as well. The paper will illustrate these concepts with brief clinical examples and reference to Woody Allen's latest movie.

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