Hello this is your friend Ken. Here I am in Northern Ireland, heading to Derry from Coleraine(Ko 瑞嗯) the nearest city to Giant’s Causeway. Travelling on the train, one short story crowded into my mind. It’s from the Alchemist, written by Paulo Coelho.

…when Narcissus died, the goddesses of the forest appeared and found the lake, which had been fresh water, transformed into a lake of salty tears.

“Why do you weep?” the goddesses asked.

“I weep for Narcissus,” the lake replied.

“Ah, it is no surprise that you weep for Narcissus,” they said, “for though we always pursued him in the forest, you alone could contemplate his beauty close at hand.”

“But . . . was Narcissus beautiful?” The lake asked.

“Who better than you to know that?” the goddesses said in wonder. “After all, it was by your banks that he knelt each day to contemplate himself!”

The lake was silent for some time. Finally, it said:

“I weep for Narcissus, but I never noticed that Narcissus was beautiful. I weep because, each time he knelt **beside** my banks, I could see, in the depths of his eyes, my own beauty reflected.”

“What a lovely story,” the alchemist thought. (Prologue)

What does the story means, according to Ms. Pauline Hawkins.

The original story of Narcissus has been used as a lesson in the dangers of vanity. Narcissus cannot stand the attention he receives from the people who adore his beauty; therefore, he is unable to accept their adoration. Once he sees his reflection in the water, Narcissus falls in love with himself and cannot tear himself away from his reflection. Although the ending varies depending on the source, the ultimate conclusion is that Narcissus dies because of his vanity, creating the beautiful narcissus flower in his death.

The first thought that transformed my life is that vanity is not evil. It is not wrong to believe in myself and my self-worth; it is, however, wrong to despise someone for having that confidence or be envious of what another person has, but vanity itself is not wrong. That misconception has led me to participate in false modesty, which is definitely annoying when I see it in others. I am free now to believe in myself, to place value on my intelligence, skills, and abilities and to accept, without false modesty, the praise I receive for those things.

My feelings about my daily experiences are a reflection of who I am. If I am negative and complaining, then I have negative feelings about myself. On the other hand, if I see the beauty in the world, despite the difficulties I have in my life, then I see the world as a reflection of the beauty I have in my heart.

But here is the twist: When I allow myself to see my beauty in the reflection of the world around me, I allow the world to do the same. If Narcissus allowed those who adored him to get close, he would have enjoyed his reflection in their eyes. His appreciation of his own beauty would have allowed others to appreciate their beauty as well. If the people who chased after Narcissus had self-love instead of a desire to take from Narcissus to make themselves feel whole in some way, they could have seen their own beauty reflected in Narcissus’ eyes—or anyone’s eyes for that matter. That is the gift Narcissus gave the lake; the lake gave Narcissus the same gift in return. What a beautiful cycle that is! Love, then, is a gift that can only come from self-love. Because I love myself, I reflect that love for others when they see me. There is no greater gift I can give myself or others.

So, let go of the false modesty; shine without restraint; and allow others to find their beauty in your reflection!