Psychoanalysis, the Family and Personal Life: Narcissism and the "Relational Revolution" of the 1960s

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A life lived in public, it has been said, is a superficial one. If so, then the psychoanalytic claim to depth is well founded. Not only was psychoanalysis a theory of the private world – that is of personal life – it also took place in private. Psychoanalysis revolved around secrets, not exploits, confidentiality was its highest professional value, and one could give no higher testimony to the success of a psychoanalysis than to say that it had been forgotten. Given all this, no subject better exemplified the privileged status that private interior space occupied in psychoanalysis than its attitude toward narcissism.

The narcissist, according to the Greek myth, fell in love with his own image. Captivated by the shallow, timeless space of the mirror, he eschewed depth. Loving only himself, he did not engage with others. Caught up in an image, he lacked language and therefore had no access to sociality. A psychoanalyst might sum it up thus: lacking an inner world, the narcissist was unable to connect with others. True, there are few passages in Freud more lyrical, even rhapsodic, than those in which he describes the innocence, radiance and self-contentment of "His Majesty, the Baby." But the glory of infancy rests on its transience. Thus, for Freud, narcissism is a *stage* that has to be overcome. When it persists, it signals the absence of the relationship that made analysis possible. Overall, then, classical psychoanalysis effectively defined itself *against* narcissism, that is against that inaccessible residue of an archaic image of plenitude and perfection.

The psychoanalytic association of narcissism with superficiality and publicity was the flip side of its association of depth with interiority. In classical psycho-

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analysis, whatever went on *between* individuals was mediated by a third, inward dimension that unfolded *within* each of them. This depth or unconscious dimension intruded on the interpersonal plane, especially in the form of transference, enriching it, complicating it, suffusing our relations with mystery, warmth and intensity. The narcissist, by contrast, operated only on the superficial, interpersonal plane, without any access to either his own or another's interiority, and therefore without genuine reciprocity or recognition. Whereas psychoanalysis sought to foster interpersonal communication that included a self-reflective moment, the narcissistic emphasis on appearing, rather than communicating, lent itself to instrumental and impersonal relationships of the sort later termed "networking."

Far from being confined to the psychology of interpersonal relations, the psychoanalytic denigration of narcissism applied also to the psychology of groups. A social democrat living in "Red Vienna," whose government not only befriended analysis but prided itself on balancing the interests of many separate interest ethnic and national interests, Freud was critical of groups based on exclusive identities. In his view, the narcissistic basis of such groups lay in the mechanism of *identification*: the same skin color, the same national or ethnic origin, the same "book," such as Marx's writings, or the same charismatic leader, such as Mussolini or Hitler. As in the case of narcissistic interpersonal relations, groups based on such identifications evacuated the inner or depth dimension. Suturing the tension between the ego, on the one hand, and the superego, on the other, the group's aggression was projected outward while its internal self-esteem rose precipitously.

Finally, the analyst's negative attitude toward narcissism was linked to Freud's skepticism concerning the ability of visual images to communicate interiority. Freud's skepticism drew on two related sources. First, although psychoanalysis was born out of nineteenth century empirical medicine, with its emphasis on close observation, its deeper roots lay in German idealism, with its insistence that the contents of the mind are conceptual and not simply empirical. In addition, the Hebrew Bible influenced Freud, through its prohibition on "graven" images. Whereas Freud's teacher, Charcot, drew and photographed his patients, compiling visual atlases of hysterical postures, limning cartographies of mental illness, Freud insisted that his patients speak to him in order to open their inner worlds. Although its original subject was dreams, Freud founded psychoanalysis on the translation of iconic dream-images into words by *associating* to them, a process that led him downward into the unconscious. Like Moses, his later subject, Freud instituted a *Bilderverbot* aimed at accessing inner depths: "No images allowed here, only verbal associations, ultimately leading to a narrative." Associating images with immediacy, identity and unmediated wish-fulfillment,

Freud followed Gustave Le Bon, the police psychologist-author, in believing that masses or crowds thought in "images."

In all three respects – networking or other forms of superficial or instrumental relations, identity politics (i.e., politics based on an exclusive identification), and the substitution of images for inter-subjective dialogism – narcissism signaled the inaccessibility, or perhaps even the absence, of an inner world. But there was also another, muted strand in Freud's account of narcissism. The supposedly self-sufficient narcissist, incapable of self-reflection, was also the most dependent, the most needy of patients, someone who potentially opened psychoanalysis to a new depth of relatedness. Far from signaling inaccessibility alone, then, narcissism and its pathologies also suggested deeper and more complex levels of interpersonal, group and cultural connectivity than psychoanalysis had known earlier. In the 1960s, this second, muted strand exploded onto the scene. In one of the great turning points in the history of psychoanalysis, Freud's critical attitudes toward narcissism were rejected and narcissism was redeemed and reinterpreted. Ever since, the revaluation of narcissism has been understood in two different ways.

One analytic current, closely linked to feminism and to the familial revolution that began in the sixties, sees narcissism as a great axis of the psyche, establishing the boundary between the self and others, and closely linked to the performative and constructed aspects of identity. Comprising one half of the human mind – objects comprising the other half – this new understanding of narcissism includes a new attitude toward women and toward homosexuals (Freud took the term narcissism, let us note, from the literature on homosexuality).[1] In contrast to classical Freudian psychoanalysis, which foregrounded depth, advocates of this view have created a new "Relational Revolution" which foregrounds the interpersonal or relational plane. Analytic practice, rather than being conceived of as an assault on the patient's narcissism, presupposes a "therapeutic alliance" between the analyst and the patient, whom it understands as actively seeking self-knowledge.[2] Individual psychology, analysts of this persuasion would now say, is inseparable from such attributes of identity as gender, race and nationality. Even appearances, including the visual world, have come into their own, especially in analytically-influenced cultural studies; no longer seen as a mere "copy," they are viewed as constituting an autonomous sign system akin to language.

Other thinkers, especially those associated with the Frankfurt School tradition, have linked the redemption of narcissism to the decline of the family as a source of autonomy and resistance to capitalist culture. According to a widely held view of the nineteen sixties and seventies, one that still has such important supporters as Axel Honneth, the emergence of the narcissistic disorders was characteristic of late capitalism which, by flooding the family with unconscious

images, shrank the space for autonomy.[3] The ego, Theodor Adorno wrote, seemed "no longer capable of sustaining itself, as a self, in distinction from id and superego." In validating narcissistic demands, this school asserts, psychoanalysis abandoned the effort to tell its patients the truth about themselves and instead sought to reassure them. Relying on the positive transference, it dissolved the differences between itself and mass consumption therapies. By weakening the Oedipal authority, it released the primitive, sadistic, self-destructive superego – the lurking violence – of early childhood. As the advertising man in Joseph Heller's *Something Happened* who tried to be a "best friend" to his children complained:[4]

> I don't know why my son feels so often that I am going to hit him when I never do; I never have; I don't know why both he and my daughter believe I used to beat them a great deal when they were smaller, when I don't believe I ever struck either one of them at all.

Instead of genuine introspection, then, a "culture of narcissism" gave rise to psychologization, perhaps best captured in the self-ironizing parodies produced by Woody Allen while politics dissolved into congeries of self-referential complaints.

In this essay, I will reject both of these interpretations and situate the redemption of narcissism instead in the context of the new society that emerged in the 1960s, variously termed post-industrial, post-Fordist, the network society, the information age and globalization. In particular, and in order to foreground the role of agency, I will describe the changed attitude toward narcissism as *the expression of a new global social class based on intellectual labor, the two-earner family and transnational culture*. The redemption of narcissism, I will argue, was one means by which that class – especially its cutting edge of youth, women and gays – first revealed itself. This redemption, I will suggest, had a strong performative dimension closely related to the changing boundaries between the public and the private. I will furthermore argue that the changed attitude toward narcissism has its roots in the changed place of labor, especially manual labor, in contemporary society, that is the emergence of a "post-industrial," even "post-economic" consciousness. Before summarizing my argument, let me clarify what I mean by "the emergence of a new social class."

My idea of an emergent class is based on the study of the industrial working class in the nineteenth century. Although the emergence of the working class was both an objective and a subjective process, I am concerned in this article with the *subjective* process – the process by which the class became aware of itself as a

class. I divide this process into three parts: 1) rational, historical and sociological self-understanding, 2) inter-subjective moral and ethical understanding, and 3) phenomenological and collective emotional processes.[5] In the case of the industrial working class, Karl Marx's work, which inspired not only communism but also much of social democracy, was pivotal. The problem of the ethical stance of the industrial working class was at the center of social democracy, and has recently been reformulated by Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello who distinguish between an artistic-critique and a justice-critique of capitalism. The "artistic" critique centered on alienation and, in Marx's work, evoked communism as a realm of self-realization (positive freedom); the justice-critique centered on the theory of exploitation. Finally, the best accounts we have of the cultural (i.e., phenomenological) experience of the working class's self-formation are those of the British Marxists, such as E.P. Thompson and Raymond Williams.

In this essay, I will argue that a similar process of class-formation has been underway for a global/intellectual two-earner family class that emerged in the 1960s. Perhaps history will describe Michel Foucault as the Marx of the new global class, at least in terms of its historical-theoretical and ethical self-understandings. Putting aside such questions, I want to argue that the changed attitude toward narcissism is best understood when it is connected to the phenomenological self-constitution of the new class. The core reason for this has to do with the place that psychoanalysis occupied in the industrial era, namely that of a charismatic movement facilitating the transition to mass consumption society, a movement that can be thought of as embodying a sort of collective unconscious accompanying industrialization. In order for the new social class to emerge in the 1960s, then, it had to develop a critique not only of Marxism, that is of the theory of the industrial class, but also of Freud, the theorist of its unconscious. I will make this argument in three parts.

In Section One, I will situate Freud's approach to narcissism in the context of the particular form of family life from which it arose. The core of my argument is that psychoanalysis developed in an industrial society, and as a counterpart to planning and large-scale organization. As a result, it described moral development as a private, inward process cut off from any larger social developments. In particular, Freud assigned a key role to instinctual renunciation linked to self-reflection. For Freud, insight into one's inner life was only gained through such renunciation. For example, in understanding dreams Freud taught that one should take the energy normally devoted to self-criticism (an instinctual demand for Freud) and turn it toward self-observation. Renunciation characterized psychoanalysis and was the basis for its core conception of the individual, that of the *ego*.

In Section Two, I argue that post-Fordist capitalism turned the family into a site of consumption, networking and visual imagery, challenging the public/

private divide of the industrial epoch, throwing psychoanalysis into crisis, and bringing the question of narcissism to the fore. The New Left and the Women's Movement, seen as complementary forces, not, as they are often represented today, in opposition, spearheaded the critique of the changing character of capitalism: I see them as the vanguard of the new, global social class. Because of the centrality of psychoanalysis to twentieth century capitalism, and especially to the changing *spirit* of capitalism, these movements necessarily also criticized psychoanalysis. Small and transient though these movements might sometimes seem, their leaders, facilitated by large-scale group processes (demonstrations, teach-ins, riots) as well as smaller groups ("consciousness-raising" and operating in the glare of unprecedented media coverage), picked up on unconscious wishes in the surrounding culture and unwittingly gave them validity. In particular, they repudiated the ethic of renunciation linked to psychoanalysis and thus helped precipitate the new spirit of post-Fordist consumerist capitalism.

Section Three returns to the analytic movement itself. It argues that psychoanalysis, as a theory and practice of personal life, has always had an ambiguous relation to the society from which it arose, a relation reflected in what I have called the dialectic between absorption and marginality. Since the sixties, this dialectic has been reflected in the relation between Jacques Lacan's approach to narcissism, on the one hand, and that of the American "relational revolution", on the other. As a result, it concludes, we have still not achieved a fully critical attitude toward narcissism, which is to say toward the global/intellectual two-earner family social class that emerged in the 1960s.

Classical Psychoanalysis, Narcissism and the Ego

In his preface to the *Critique of Political Economy,* Marx defined the "economic structure" as the "real foundation" of society. The "economic structure," he wrote, is "the total ensemble of social relations entered into in the social production of existence." That this conception must include the family would have been perfectly clear in any analysis of a pre-capitalist society. Indeed, it was the association of the family with the most primary and impelling material processes that gave it its connotation of backwardness, and the association of women with this realm has been one of the most persistent sources of male supremacy. Similarly, it was the separation of the family from capitalist economic relations per se that created the modern sphere of personal life, giving rise to psychoanalysis, the first theory and practice of modern personal life.

As a charismatic movement, facilitating the separation from traditional familial and communal morality, and critiquing Puritan asceticism, Freudian analysis

resonated with modern mass consumption's orientation toward leisure, pleasure and self-satisfaction. Offering a non-instrumental conception of the self, it tended to ignore practical, economic concerns and to sanction pleasure, consumption, and passive satisfaction. Accordingly, it seemed to validate narcissism.

But this appearance was misleading. Unlike competing paradigms such as experimental psychology, psychiatry, neurology or child development, psycho-analysis had a telos. Never intended to be an empirical description of the human mind, it had a critical, which is to say normative, goal that empirical sciences lack. That goal was self-reflection. Freud's critical attitude toward narcissism resulted from his commitment to self-reflection, but that is where the second, muted strand in the theory of narcissism became relevant. Because it lacked a sufficiently robust conception of the self, Freud's critical attitude toward narcissism also impeded the pursuit of self-reflection. We can see the beginnings of this problem in *The Interpretation of Dreams*. There is a gap between that book's description of the practice of self-reflection (i.e., dream interpretation) and its picture of the psyche (the theory of the unconscious). To put the matter succinctly, the unconscious lacked both the motive and the means for self-reflec-tion. This problem has played itself out over the entire subsequent history of psychoanalysis, but during Freud's life time his search for a meaningful, deeply rooted, theoretically cogent conception of the *motive* for self-reflection gave the issue of narcissism its edge.

This is apparent if we begin with the conflict between narcissism and self-reflection. Narcissism is investment in oneself, self-reflection requires distanc-ing from oneself. Likewise, while narcissism is based on an archaic imago of unconditional perfection, self-reflection arises out of unhappiness and lack. Then, too, narcissism is specular, while self-reflection is communicative. In order to make these contrasts, one first needs a proper theory of narcissism. Freud devel-oped such a theory in his 1906-1911 debates with Alfred Adler, who argued that egoistic strivings were normal and intrinsic to human psychology. Freud agreed but he added that sexual aims sometimes operated under the guise of non-sexual egoistic strivings. His 1914 theory of narcissism, in which the infant takes the "I" as its own love-object, was his "settling of accounts with Adler." "The word 'narcissism,'" Freud explained, is intended to emphasize the fact that egoism "is a libidinal phenomenon."[6]

After 1914, Freud thought of narcissism as the first great tool of individuation, but he stressed that it nonetheless remained deeply embedded in the unconscious, primary-process identifications of the unconscious id.[7] The upshot, as we have seen, was that he envisioned narcissism as a *stage* that had to be overcome. By the 1920s, accordingly, when Freud formulated his concept of the ego, he

identified self-reflection, autonomy and object-love – in other words, the ego itself – with the renunciation of narcissism.

As Freud revised his theory in the 1920s, he situated the ego at the intersection of three great forces: the urges, impulses and identifications of the id (including narcissism), the inherited morality and punitive drives of the superego, and external reality, beginning with the parents and extending to social institutions such as education. For the ego to grow, Freud claimed, all three of these had to be resisted, but not in the sense of confrontation. Rather, the main activity of the ego was mediation. Drawing upon all the forces of its surrounding environments, it nonetheless strives to retain its independence from all of them. To attain independence, and therefore to be able to reflect upon itself, the ego had to renounce narcissism, that is, to reduce narcissism to an object of internal reflection. The renunciation of narcissism was one major implication of Freud's incantation: where id was, ego shall be. Narcissism, of course, remains a part of the adult psyche, but it is an infantile part, the part that the superego – still representing the parents of childhood – reassures when it tells the ego that the world is just a joke, nothing to worry about.

Freud's emphasis on the renunciation of narcissism had momentous implications. Self-reflection is, at its core, the ability to look at oneself objectively; it therefore involves a decentering from the egocentricity of the child. In human, interpersonal terms, the renunciation of narcissism involves the ability to take up the standpoint of the other. Situated in its historical context – the age of mass production, the age of the industrial working class, the age of the great struggles against fascism – the renunciation of narcissism in the interest of self-knowledge was socially quite significant. In cultural terms, it encouraged a capacious allegiance to the human species as a whole, rather than to particular identities. In political terms, the renunciation of narcissism involved the repudiation of racism and nationalism.[8] Ethically, the conception suggested the need to develop a non-moralistic conception of the human individual that gave priority to self-reflection rather than to egoistic strivings, altruism, loyalty, honor, piety or other competing values. Overall, the critique of narcissism in favor of self-reflection was an epochal advance.

In a way psychoanalysis arose out of the limits of the nineteenth century doctrines of rationality, utilitarianism and socialism. While such thinkers as Dostoevsky, Nietzsche and Sorel sought irrationalist or religious alternatives to those limits, Freud encouraged an ethic of moral growth through self-reflection. This ethic, was linked to a historically specific family form, one that culminated in post-World War Two mass consumption society. The ethic was captured through a term used at the time: the "maturity ethic," meaning the renunciation of narcissism. In the 1956 *Man with the Grey Flannel Suit,* for example,

the heroine overcomes the wound to her narcissism inflicted by her husband's wartime infidelity. She accepts his war baby, a triumph over narcissism that also symbolizes America's postwar responsibility for rebuilding Europe. Ego psychology, the dominant form of psychoanalysis in the 1950s, thus stood for a new ethic of "responsibility," and "adulthood," supposedly linked to a new maturity in America's global role, but also geared to the family-based, mass consumption societies then being created in England, France, and Germany. In the words of Erik Erikson, a person with a mature ego was "tolerant of differences, cautious and methodical in evaluation, just in judgment, circumspect in action, and capable of faith and indignation."[9] The maturity ethic, in turn, was the target of the new social class that emerged in the 1960s

The New Left and the Legitimation of Narcissism

The early theorists of the modern economy, such as Adam Smith or David Hume, identified capitalism with the spread of a market, and the consequent intensification of the division of labor. Karl Marx's innovation was to analyze capitalism in terms of the capital/labor relation. While Marx viewed that relation as exploitative, he also saw it as the source of capitalist dynamism. For example, *Das Kapital*, Volume I, Chapter Ten, "The Working Day," explained that the worker's struggle for lower hours leads capital to invest in new machinery, thus revolutionizing the system of production. The key point is that capitalism develops, not through the blind dynamic of greed, but through incorporating criticisms of the system. In *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello developed this idea by reference to the 1960s. According to them, two types of critique developed in the sixties: the artistic critique, against alienation and for authenticity and self-fulfillment, and the justice critique, directed against exploitation, discrimination or inequality. A new social class, in my account, was the bearer of these critiques.

The critiques of the 1960s had been anticipated during the previous decade. In 1956 David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* argued that an earlier ideal of autonomy or independence had given way to a new need for mirroring and recognition, that of the "other-directed" personality. In Riesman's metaphor, a gyroscope, an internal steering device (the ego) that keeps one on course regardless of external influences, had become a radar beam (narcissism), continuously scanning the environment for signs of approval or disapproval. Riesman's argument rested on the view that the Western world was changing from an industrial society, based on manual labor and goods production, to a post-industrial society, based on services, consumerism and information technology. Whereas ego psychology

was a defense of individual autonomy in the age of the industrial corporation, Riesman heralded a massive personality shift revolving around other-directedness, mirroring and the network society.

In the same year, Erik Erikson responded to the increasing disquiet of middle class youth by introducing the concepts "identity" and "identity crises." According to Erikson, adolescence was a historically new stage of life precipitated by the end of the family's role in production, and the accompanying break in the ties between the generations. Although Erikson did not explicitly develop the themes of narcissism and mirroring, he explained identity as the outcome of childhood *identifications* that were selectively repudiated, assimilated, and reconfigured in relation to others, not just the parents, but the community, religion, economic institutions, and the state. The goal of these interactions was inner consistency and continuity, which was what Erikson meant by identity.[10] The concept of identity presupposed that narcissism could mature and consolidate; it was a departure, then, from classical ego psychology, even as it shared the latter's stress on self-knowledge through instinctual renunciation. In addition, Erikson described the *identity crisis* of adolescence as regression in the service of the ego, that is a quasi-voluntary surrender of controls, an opening to the id, in the interest of a deeper maturity. In this way he provided the key concept through which the youth movements of the 1960s might be understood.

Riesman and Erikson's insights onto the changing character of the self were accompanied by changes in the understanding of social justice, changes that foretold the justice critique of the 1960s. Whereas mass production capitalism had generated the "distributive paradigm," i.e., the idea that justice was a matter of economic redistribution and formal equality, the struggle against imperialism and fascism brought racial discrimination, and decolonization to the fore. In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court decided the issue of segregated schools on the basis of their injury to black students' self-esteem (i.e., narcissism), not by appealing to their interests or rights. Early new leftists criticized communists for not realizing, as Octave Mannoni wrote, that objective inequalities were "embodied in struggles for prestige, in alienation, in bargaining positions and debts of gratitude, and in the invention of new myths and the creation of new personality types."[11] Poets attacked colonialism for injecting millions "with fear, inferiority complexes, trepidation, servility, despair, abasement."[12] Consequently, the focus shifted from providing material resources for formally equal and putatively autonomous individuals to what later came to be called "misrecognition," understood as an assault on the self-image, i.e., on narcissism or, in its later political forms: identity.

When the sixties dawned, the artistic critique (a cultural revolution and a sexual revolution) emerged first. Mounted by the early New Left, the artistic cri-

tique of Fordist capitalism presupposed the material security supposedly provided by mass production society. Beyond immediate needs, the artistic critique was based on intimations of "the affluent society," "cybernation," and "the conquest of space." The long post-World War II period of uninterrupted economic growth, the green revolution, the spread of electronics and mass communications, birth control: all of this made the family-centered mass consumption of the 1950s appear dowdy and the ethic of maturity repressive. In place of what began to appear as the gray, regimented order of the Fordist epoch, post-Fordism opened the way for an id-saturated world pulsating with color, vibrancy, and primal rhythms in such areas as rock music, poster design, TV, film and fashion. An explosive new utopianism, and a new sense of limitlessness, linked to narcissistic display, lay on the horizon. Sublimation – the great moral achievement of the ego – would be renounced in favor of authenticity, expressive freedom and *jouissance*.

The artistic critique was rooted in the shift to a post-industrial service and consumerist society. In that shift ideals of "independence," "integrity," "character" and "achievement" linked to the managerial ethic of goods production gave way to an emphasis on interpersonal relations, networking, "people skills." Narcissism, meaning the ability to impress others with what appeared to be special characteristics of personality, replaced colorless managerial values such as reliability or expertise. At the extreme, self-appointed pundits celebrated "do your own thing" antinomianism. Simultaneously, consumption lost its conformist, "one size-fits-all" character. Capitalism appeared less like a factory and more like an emporium, geared to endlessly diverting narcissistic wishes. Driven by such wishes, market forces consolidated a generationally-specific youth culture. Intensely commodified, demotic and antinomian, youth culture overflowed the older family form, encouraging changes in ideals of the self.[13]

As in the sixteenth century, as in the 1890s, so in the 1960s, the changing place of the family, and therefore of the public/private divide, was at the center of this change. The sexual revolution, the core of the artistic critique, meant the rejection of what was regarded as the suffocating conformity of the family, which privileged genital sexuality (the "missionary position"), and suppressed homosexuality and the so-called "perversions," the sexual terrain on which, as we saw, the analytic theory of narcissism originated. Sharp rises in divorce rates, in married women working outside the home, and in the number of people living alone, along with the emergence of explicit homosexual themes in fashion, entertainment, and the arts, all reflected and encouraged cultural revolution. In the course of this revolution, the meaning of sexuality, and so of the public/private divide, changed. In the early and mid-twentieth century imagination, sexuality meant "a man and a woman who meet in the middle of an indifferent and unknowing crowd," their love transforming "them into a couple with a personal history

and meaning." In the 1960s, by contrast, sexuality meant the merger of the couple with the "indifferent and unknowing crowd" as in "wife-swapping," swinging, pornography, explicit sex in magazines and advertising, and the singles scene ("Mr. Goodbar") with its "ever lurking violence and loss of personal identity."[14] Until the feminist justice-critique emerged, the sexual revolution challenged, exploited, and mocked the earlier line between private and public.

Riesman, Erikson and Mannoni had all been deeply ensconced in the classical analytic tradition. Their works foretold reform, not revolution. By contrast, the student movement sought to adapt psychoanalysis to revolutionary ends. This was possible because, as a church, psychoanalysis had a twofold character: it was in but not of the world. The analytic profession, with its renunciation of narcissism, adapted to reality: it accepted the modest goal of self-reflection in the private sphere. But there was also a second Freud for whom the unconscious pervaded society as a whole. The second Freud had inspired earlier heterodox analysts such as Otto Gross and Wilhelm Reich and was represented after World War Two by such New Left icons as Paul Goodman, Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse.

The difference between the two Freuds was epitomized in their respective views of the ego. For the ego psychologists, the ego was limited in its powers, having constantly to balance reality, moral demands, and internal impulses. Determinedly anti-utopian, ego psychology had meant the acceptance of limits. In Philip Rieff's description, it meant "resign[ing] yourself to living within your moral means, suffer[ing] no gratuitous failures in a futile search for ethical heights."[15] For the second Freud, in contrast, the ego gained access to the id through regression. Picking up unconsciously on profound currents in the surrounding culture, which only a few were willing to actually enact, the second Freud exploded the constraints of the maturity ethic. He became important to the student movement because he opened a pathway to infantile sexuality, but also because he opened a pathway to the grandiose, narcissistic self of infancy.

Narcissism, Lou Andreas-Salomé once wrote, has a "dual orientation": "on the one hand toward abandonment in the primal boundless state… conjugation and fusion," and "on the other toward self-assertion."[16] Eventually, both moments came to the fore, but the New Left's first step toward the revaluation of narcissism arose from its embrace of the primal, boundless experience of the loss of self, sometimes associated with mysticism. Rejecting the confining of the self to a private space, the early New Left sought instead to bring *eros* into work and politics, into the streets and into other arenas of public life. Communes, drug use, attacks on monogamy, rock music, the onstage performance of backstage behaviors, such as nudity, informal dress, and self-disclosure, an activist culture, whose only regulative ideal was "participation": these all constituted a social basis for the utopian interpretation of narcissism as merger. The New Left's

challenge to the necessity of repression, its insistence that it know the truth about everything, that there be no secrets, arose from the same impulse.

The impulse toward narcissistic merger found its most powerful expression in Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, published in 1955 but one of the most influential books of the sixties. Like Erikson and Riesman, Marcuse situated his work in the context of the rise of automation and the potential end of scarcity, developments which, in Marcuse's terms, made possible a distinction between necessary (biologically given) and surplus (historically contingent, i.e., capitalist) repression. Seeking to redeem what he called the suppressed utopian element in psychoanalysis, Marcuse argued that "the autonomous personality [i.e., the maturity ethic or the Freudian ego] appears as the *frozen* manifestation of the general repression of mankind." The ego that undertook the rational transformation of the environment, he added, was "an essentially aggressive, offensive subject, whose thoughts and actions were designed for mastering objects. It was a subject against an object." Thus, the ego was "antagonistic to those faculties and attitudes which are receptive rather than productive, which tend toward gratification rather than transcendence [and] which remain strongly committed to the pleasure principle." Nature, in particular, the ego's own internal nature, as well as the ecological world, "was 'given' to the ego as something that had to be fought, conquered, and even violated."[17]

In place of ego autonomy, which Marcuse viewed as intrinsic to the warfare-welfare state, Marcuse went back to Freud's theory of a *primary* narcissism supposedly characteristic of the earliest infant/mother relationship. That is to say, Marcuse went back to the id. There, primary narcissism existed which predated the emergence of the "I," and which reflected the ego's original, "inseparable connection with the external world."[18] The id's primary well of narcissism pointed the way, Marcuse reasoned, "from sexuality constrained under genital supremacy" to eroticization of the entire body, and from instrumental rationality to art, play and narcissistic display. Allowed free scope, it might generate "a comprehensive existential order."

Redeeming the utopian expansiveness of the infantile id, Marcuse sought to demolish the production-centered, and genital myths of the Fordist epoch. Marx, he wrote, had missed the potential of the id's early narcissism in his break with Hegel, for whom "the true mode of freedom is, not the incessant activity of conquest, but its coming to rest in the transparent knowledge and gratification of being."[19] In place of Prometheus, Marx's hero from the ancient world who stole the secret of fire and thus served Marx as a symbol of industrial capitalism, Marcuse enthroned the poet/musician Orpheus, who introduced homosexuality to human society. Like Narcissus, Orpheus rejected "the normal Eros, not for an ascetic ideal, but for a fuller Eros."

Norman O. Brown's *Life against Death*, another influential New Left text, also defended the pre-oedipal relations and "polymorphously perverse" stage of primary narcissism against the genitally based "ego of mastery." Like Marcuse, Brown valorized "feminine" motifs. Rejecting "pseudo-individuation" as "based on hostile trends directed against the mother," Brown sought to rescue what he saw as the critical aspect of Bachofen's discovery of the primal mother from "the Jungian *Schwärmerei*."[20] Giving theoretical voice to the lived experience of the communes, Marcuse and Brown provided an analytic underpinning to the New Left's critique of instrumental reason, its desire for a new connectedness with nature, and its attempt to liberate sexuality from its genital, heterosexual limits. Neither could know, of course, that the utopian energies of primary narcissism were also preparing the way for post-Fordist capitalism.

So long as the New Left had been preoccupied with issues of peace or social justice, cultural change expressed itself through alternative life styles, drugs, music, sexuality, and "communes." Beginning around 1969, however, the revaluation of narcissism shifted from "abandonment in the primal boundless state… conjugation and fusion" "toward self-assertion." The sexual and cultural revolutions associated with the artistic critique gave way to the justice critique in such forms as feminism, multiculturalism and equal rights for homosexuals. By the mid-seventies, the actors involved in the politics of the family were no longer individuals but *groups* organized around axes of subordination such as gender, sexuality and race. A few years later, a term drawn from psychoanalysis would describe these groups: *identities*.

Although the politics of identity, on the one hand, and psychoanalysis, on the other, were both engaged in a rethinking of the concept of narcissism, the paths of the two soon diverged. Before this occurred, however, the radical feminists of the 1970s, such as those associated with the volume *Goodbye to All That*, made a crucial contribution to the psychoanalytic revaluation of narcissism. As we have suggested, the psychoanalytic critique of narcissism was sometimes linked to the negative valuations of both homosexuality and women. Thus, some analysts were prone to describe the homosexual as trapped at a narcissistic stage, and as failing to recognize sexual difference (i.e., women's "castration"). For Freud, the ego matured in the Oedipal stage, characterized by the discovery of sexual difference. Whereas that discovery precipitated the formation of the male super-ego, women's development was supposedly more continuous with pre-oedipal – narcissistic – wishes to be loved and protected by a parent. In Freud's view, this helped explain women's supposedly lesser independence. The feminist and gay movements of the 1970s roundly rejected these tendentious interpretations, exposing the repulsive, sado-masochistic assumptions in which the theory of narcissism was sometimes ensconced.

Feminism, as much or perhaps more than the original New Left, was linked to the emergence and consolidation of post-Fordist capitalism. A charismatic force in its own right, feminism reflected and was based upon the destruction of the family wage and the earlier, maternally centered welfare state, and the emergence of the two-earner family. Like earlier movements connected to large-scale transformations of capitalism, feminism espoused respectability, meritocracy and hard work. Accordingly, feminists pioneered the justice critique based on identity, a critique that has long outdated the sixties. Nevertheless, the cost of pioneering this critique was the repudiation of individual self-reflection. Unmasking sexual difference as "compulsory heterosexuality," the early women's movement celebrated the "woman-identified-woman" as an alternative to the analytic subject or ego. "Individual explanations" were officially discouraged in "consciousness-raising" groups, while what had been forbidden or suspended within psychoanalysis – "acting out" – became privileged. The Oedipus complex was reinterpreted as a "power psychology." Penis envy was actually "power envy." Dora became a feminist icon because she *left* analysis.[21]

A parallel transformation occurred among homosexuals. For classical psychoanalysis, one could understand a homosexual object choice psychologically, but there was no such entity as "a homosexual." In the course of the seventies, however, efforts to understand the psychology of homosexuality began to seem bigoted, like efforts to understand the psychology of races. In that context, moreover, the last thing homosexuals needed was psychoanalysis: they needed services, community institutions and political organizations. Finally, homosexuals began to understand themselves as persons with a distinct way of life, persons who belonged to a historically specific community. Homosexuality, then, was an identity, something that is based on membership in a community. Lesbians, explained one theorist, are "women who love women, who choose women to nurture and to create a living environment in which to work creatively and independently... Lesbians cannot be defined simply as women who practice certain physical rites together."[22]

Once the principle of identity was validated as a means of organizing familial and sexual life, it was applied to politics more broadly. A major impulse came from the collapse of Communism, which released many national claims. Particularistic claims also surfaced in other regions such as Quebec, Northern Italy and Catalonia. Such claims resonated within established polities, especially the United States, where new forms of identity – new centers for the self – proliferated against a liberal backdrop. Neo-liberal globalization, which removed the issue of capitalist critique and reform from the politics of most nations, proved compatible with a multi-culturalist justice critique. Post-structuralism, with a critique of psychoanalysis at its core, further encouraged the focus on identity,

ironically by arguing against identity. According to Jacques Derrida and others, identity involves the suppression of difference and entails an endless deferral of meaning. In this form, identity politics gave way to "the politics of difference," which aimed less at establishing a viable identity for its constituency, with its accompanying rights, than at destabilizing identities, a politics that eschews such terms as groups in favor of places, spaces, alterity and subject position.

Finally, the new biological or neuroscience conceptions of the individual also encouraged the redemption of narcissism insofar as it furthered a fascination with the self as opposed to a dialogic relationship based on self-reflection. The results were ambiguous. On the one hand, the subordination of psychoanalysis to diagnosis, quantitative, comparative outcome studies, behavioral techniques, and psychopharmacology discouraged introspection and encouraged dependence on experts. As one psychiatrist noted, the 1993 *Molecular Foundations of Psychiatry* provided a "really coherent view of brain function and the way it affects speech. I couldn't believe that anyone could still believe, as [analysts] did, that stuttering was rooted in childhood conflict."[23] On the other hand, neuroscience may eventually connect up with the analytic project of self-reflection. This is because, in the course of evolution the time comes when it is advantageous for an organism "to have some kind of inner knowledge of what is affecting it… as a basis for more sophisticated planning and decision making," a knowledge that it can gain " by the simple trick of monitoring what it itself is doing." Overall, though, the revolutions of the sixties validated two fundamental aspects of narcissism: networking and identity politics. We turn now to the third aspect, the image, which has been important to the history of analysis since the sixties.

Psychoanalysis since the 1960s

The enormous eruptions of the 1960s ushered in a new society, whose cutting edge was a new social class. Within that society, psychoanalysis lost its earlier centrality. Originally, a great synthesis involving science, art and everyday life, it split apart. Analysts were humbled and at times lost their sense of having anything important to say. No longer either churches or sects, analytic societies turned inward, reinvented themselves, and developed a new eclecticism.

Nonetheless, analysis remains important to post-Fordist society as a result of its relationship to personal life. Representing the product of surplus labor, labor beyond what was necessary to reproduce the society, personal life pointed toward the utopian but increasingly realistic possibility of a society that subordinated economic considerations to human wishes – a post-economic society, and the New Left's redemption of narcissism captured this fact. Furthermore, after the

sixties the utopian character of personal life continued to affect analysis. As earlier, psychoanalysis divided between its marginal, elitist and sectarian currents, and cooptation into neo-liberal functionalist post-Fordist capitalism.

This division also reflected the uneven development of Europe and Latin America, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other. In Europe and Latin America, psychoanalysis had come by its critical stance more or less naturally: like everything "modern," it had emerged *against* an older, traditional, patriarchal order, one that persisted until the end of World War II. In the United States, by contrast, interest in psychoanalysis had reflected the ideals of self-management and "empowerment" characteristic of a mass, democratic society. The effect was to give the overall history of psychoanalysis a geographical slant: absorption in the United States, marginality in Europe and Latin America. The geographical dialectic of absorption and marginality also shaped the impact of the narcissistic revolution.

In the United States, psychoanalysis had begun to change as early as 1946 when Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris, and Rudolph Loewenstein urged analysts to replace the word "ego" in Freud's text on narcissism by the word "self." Narcissism, they argued, was not the libidinal investment of the *ego* as opposed to the id, but of the *self* as opposed to the world.[24] Nevertheless, during the 1960s, narcissism had continued to signal the dissolution of social bonds, the inability to make commitments, to engage in long-run projects, to sacrifice the self for larger purposes, that analysts discerned in the culture of the New Left. By the 1970s, however, this view went into disfavor. As analysts saw their caseloads shift from "symptom-neuroses" to issues of self-esteem and deformations of the self's structure, continuity, and ability to differentiate itself from the object world, the analytic approach to narcissism also changed. Some analysts, notably Heinz Kohut, argued that a psychology of narcissism had to replace psychoanalysis. In the classical theory of transference, Kohut explained, "the id, a repressed drive element, is seeking *satisfaction*; [whereas] in the 'borderline' patient, an injured narcissistic [self] is seeking *reassurance*."[25] Taking what he called an "affirmative attitude" toward narcissism, Kohut called narcissism "an integral, self-contained set of psychic functions rather than a regression product." Portraying the ego psychologists' "courageously facing the truth morality," their "health-and maturity-morality," as suppressing patients' legitimate needs for narcissistic sustenance, he insisted that narcissism had replaced sexuality as the defining issue of the age.[26]

Although Kohut's argument was by no means universally accepted, American psychoanalysis was reorganized around the question of narcissism in a way that allowed it to survive the upheavals of the sixties. Joining other therapies in relying on the positive transference, American psychoanalysis became more modest,

but also more effective. The "relational revolution," as the American orientation to the self-object world is sometimes called, also contributed to solving the core theoretical problem left unresolved by Freud: the motive for self-reflection. At their best, for relational analysts, self-reflection is no longer a rarified, elite pursuit, which the entire unconscious is actively involved in subverting; rather, it is an everyday survival mechanism driven by both self-preservative and narcissistic motives such as the desire for intimacy and recognition, or simply the desire to be known. Whereas Freud's conception of the ego was posed against traditional authority, it was also in tension with any political allegiance. By contrast, contemporary American psychoanalysis is self-consciously opposed to sexism, racism and homophobia. Just as, during the 1920s and 30s, many analysts built low-cost clinics, offered free or low-cost analyses, and sought to situate analysis within the popular front against fascism, so many American analysts today believe that analysis should be aligned with the justice-critique that descends from the sixties.

By contrast, Lacanianism embodies the analytic tendency toward marginality, but also toward critique. Like the American relational school, Lacan rejected Freud's theory of the ego, but rather than using that rejection to valorize narcissism, he used it to reinterpret Freud's critique of narcissism, a reinterpretation that placed the problem of the image at its center. Beginning with his famous "mirror-stage" lecture, delivered to the Marienbad Psychoanalytic Congress in 1936, Lacan argued that psychical development began not with agency (as for Freud) but with lack, terror, or the emptiness of non-existence. Narcissism, or what Lacan called "the ego of narcissism", developed, he wrote, as a defensive response to the traumatic discovery of this emptiness, an imaginary construction, a "crystallization of images."[27] Having no basis in the organism's instinctual drives, "the ego of narcissism" was better thought of as an object than an agent.

Deriving his basic orientation from surrealism, which characterized the unconscious in imagistic rather than instinctual terms, Lacan described the psyche as mediating, not between id, superego and reality as Freud thought, but between the imaginary, symbolic and real. The imaginary was the aforementioned "crystallization of images" and its basic character was that it was *visual*. Thus the "ego of narcissism," the primal gestalt of the imaginary register, arose from the infant's *specular* and *visual* misrecognition of him or herself as a unity. Misrecognition, rooted in a visual gestalt, situated narcissism "in a fictional direction."

Expelled from the I.P.A. in 1953, Lacan moved at the invitation of the Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser to the *École normale supérieure* in Paris where he identified psychoanalysis with *le champ freudien*. Associated with the slogan "the death of the subject," *le champ freudien* resonated with the broader shift

in the self-consciousness of the new class from production and the economy to ideology, culture, and the media and articulated the growing sense that it was through media-images, rather than the workplace, and through its effect on the individual personality, and not on the collectivity, that social domination was secured. Lacan's critical approach to narcissism made it possible to understand the ideological effect of a particular text not simply in terms of its content (e.g., capitalism, racism, sexism) but rather through the way it sustained an imaginary sense of individual wholeness and unity. In spite of the apparent radicalism of this stance, Lacan spoke for the detached, ironic, privatized and apolitical culture which largely characterized the new class by the end of the decade. Addressing demonstrating students in 1968, he told them: "what you as a revolutionary aspire to is a master. You will have one."[28]

Like feminism, and like neuroscience, the link Lacan made between narcissism and visuality may point toward a further critical role for psychoanalysis in twenty-first century capitalist society. As we saw, the Hebrew Bible, the Protestant attack on the sensuous and visual culture of the Church, German idealism with its critique of Lockean empiricism and Humean skepticism, all lay behind Freud's suppression of the image. At the same time, the period in which psychoanalysis developed was characterized by an enormous return of the image, linked to consumer society and mass production and typified by advertising, photography and film. Psychoanalysis, even though it was ostensibly anti-visual, rode to power on a wave of images.[29] Nonetheless, even though many of Freud's texts, such as those on hysteria and on group psychology, literally cry out for a discussion of visuality, Freud suppressed not only the image, but even any discussion of images *qua* images.[30] Lacan supplied this theory, at least in its rudiments, with his precise and delimited distinction between the imaginary and symbolic registers. Thus, if, on the one hand, the popularity of Lacan comes from the prominence that visuality (the imaginary register) plays in his work, on the other hand, he remained true to the critical moment in Freud's account of the transition from narcissism to the ego, and thus to Freud's most important point, namely that no overall moral development was possible unless it was based on self-reflection and instinctual renunciation. As we face the almost overwhelming problems of the present moment (2007), this point remains as pressing as ever.

NOTES

1. Freud did not take the term "narcissism" from the Greek myth but rather from the literature on homosexuality, and this also gave the term a negative connotation. Not that

Freud assumed that every homosexual was a narcissist; he did not. Rather, he thought of the narcissist as someone who has not gone through the struggle over sexual difference that, Freud believed, was crucial to the ability to recognize otherness in general. We shall return to this point.

2. Of course, the meaning of this term is contested. For another point of view see Jay Greenberg and Stephen Mitchell, *Object Relations Theory in Psychoanalytic Theory* (Cambridge, Ma.; Harvard University Press, 1983).

3. For contemporary expressions of this idea see Axel Honneth's work.

4. Christopher Lasch, *The Culture of Narcissism* (New York, Norton, 1978) p. 123.

5. These roughly correspond to the ego (rationality), superego (morality) and id (emotional life).

6. Sigmund Freud, *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*. Translated from the German under the general editorship of James Strachey, in collaboration with Anna Freud, assisted by Alix Strachey and Alan Tyson (New York; Norton, 1976) hereafter s.e., vol. xiv, p. 223.

7. The ego originated in the id, but developed out of it, freeing itself from primary, merged identifications by saying, in effect, to the id: "Look you can love me too, I am so like the object."

8. For this reason, psychoanalysis was intrinsic to the popular front of the 1930s and 40s, which preached universal values against the narrow obligations of the nation-state.

9. Christopher Lasch, *Haven in a Heartless World* (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 108. Lasch's brilliant work, as well as the antagonism it stirred in the post-1960s left, rests in good part on his continued loyalty to the "maturity ethic" of the 1950s. In *The True and Only Heaven* he wrote: "My generation invested personal relations with an intensity they could hardly support, as it turned out; but our passionate interest in each other's lives cannot very well be described as a form of emotional retreat. We tried to re-create in the circle of our friends the intensity of a common purpose, which could no longer be found in politics or the workplace."

10. Erikson also argued that identity was a special problem in the United States due to its disparate cultural composition, and he wrote of the difficulty in sustaining ego ideals in a land "characterized by expanding identifications and by great fears of losing hard-won identities." Erik Erikson, "The Problem of Ego Identity," *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, Vol. IV, January, 1956, pp. 56-121.

11. Octave Mannoni, *Prospero and Caliban* (New York: Praeger, 1964) pp. 8, 46-7, 63.

12. Aimé Césaire, *Discours sur le Colonialisme* (Paris : Présence Africaine, 1955).

13. For the idea that the 1970s constitute a fin-de-siècle see Natasha Zaretsky, *No Direction Home: The American Family and the Fear of National Decline 1968-1980* (Chapel Hill; University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

14. For Freud, "two people coming together for the purpose of sexual satisfaction… are making a demonstration against the herd instinct... The more they are in love, the more completely they suffice for each other." Freud, s.e., vol. xviii, p. 140.

15. Philip Rieff, *The Feeling Intellect*, (Chicago; University of Chicago Press, 1990) p. 8. Rieff praised Freud for revealing that "the secret of all secrets is not to attach oneself too passionately to any one particular meaning or object."

16. Lou Andreas-Salomé, "The dual orientation of narcissism," *Psychoanalytic Quarterly,* 1960.

17. Against Kant, Marcuse extolled the philosopher Friedrich Schiller who sought to show that reason was reconciled with sensuality in art and play.

18. Freud, s.e., vol. xviii, p. 257.

19. At the end of the *Phenomenology*, Marcuse noted, "the aspect of particularity (individuality)…passes away." All quotations are from Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston; Beacon Press, 1966).

20. Norman O. Brown, *Life against Death* (Middletown, Ct.; Wesleyan University Press, 1959) pp. 118, 123, 128-9, 132, 142. Also see Herbert Marcuse, "Love Mystified: A Critique of Norman O. Brown," *Commentary*, XLIII, 2, February, 1967, pp. 71-75.

21. The farewell of Erica Jong's heroine to her analyst in her 1973 *Fear of Flying* was emblematic: "Don't you see that men have *always* defined femininity as a means of keeping women in line? Why should I listen to *you* about what it means to be a woman? Are you a woman? Why shouldn't I listen to myself for once? And to other women...As in a dream... I got up from the couch... and walked...out.... I was free!" Erica Jong, *Fear of Flying* (New York; Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1973) pp. 20-22.

22. Shane Phelan, *Identity Politics: Lesbian Feminism and the Limits of Community*, (Philadelphia; Temple University Press, 1989) pp. 73-74.

23. Tanya Luhrmann *Of Two Minds* (New York; Knopf, 2000) pp. 173, 176.

24. Heinz Hartmann, Ernst Kris and Rudolph Loewenstein, "Comments on the Formation of Psychic Structure," *The Psychoanalytic Study of the Child*, 1946, vol. II, p.16.

25. Heinz Kohut, *The Search for the Self* (New York; International Universities Press, 1978). There may be strong, especially oral, drive elements, but just "as ego functions can become libidinized…so also can drives be used for predominantly narcissistic purposes."

26. Other analysts, notably Otto Kernberg, disagreed. The narcissist's "intense hunger for a powerful external supplier of self-esteem," Kernberg argued, should be met with analysis, not nurturance, mirroring or recognition.

27. Bruce Fink, *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, 1995) p. 84.

28. Quoted in Lawrence D Kritzman, *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture,* from *Le Magazine Litéraire*, No. 121, February, 1977.

29. This contradiction was apparent when the film, *Secrets of the Soul*, was made in 1926, purporting to explain Freud's theories. "Plastic representation of our abstractions is not possible," Freud complained weakly. "We do not want to give our consent to anything insipid."

30. This suppression is especially striking in light of contemporary MRI and PET research that suggests that more than half of the brain is devoted to creating, processing and storing specifically *visual* images.