

BOOKS BY *Christopher Lasch*

- The American Liberals and the Russian Revolution (1962)
The New Radicalism in America (1965)
The Agony of the American Left (1969)
The World of Nations (1973)
Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged (1977)
The Culture of Narcissism (1979)
The Minimal Self (1984)
The True and Only Heaven: Progress and Its Critics (1991)

THE CULTURE OF
NARCISSISM

R American Life in an Age of
Diminishing Expectations

Christopher Lasch

Knihovna FSS MU Brno



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mode of analysis makes all radicalism, all forms of politics that seek to create a society not based on exploitation, automatically suspect. In spite of its idealization of the public life of the past, Sennett's book participates in the current revulsion against politics—the revulsion, that is, against the hope of using politics as an instrument of social change.

Sennett's eagerness to restore a distinction between public and private life, moreover, ignores the ways in which they are always intertwined. The socialization of the young reproduces political domination at the level of personal experience. In our own time, this invasion of private life by the forces of organized domination has become so pervasive that personal life has almost ceased to exist. Reversing cause and effect, Sennett blames the contemporary malaise on the invasion of the public realm by the ideology of intimacy. For him as for Marin and Schur, the current preoccupation with self-discovery, psychic growth, and intimate personal encounters represents unseemly self-absorption, romanticism run rampant. In fact, the cult of intimacy originates not in the assertion of personality but in its collapse. Poets and novelists today, far from glorifying the self, chronicle its disintegration. Therapies that minister to the shattered ego convey the same message. Our society, far from fostering private life at the expense of public life, has made deep and lasting friendships, love affairs, and marriages increasingly difficult to achieve. As social life becomes more and more warlike and barbaric, personal relations, which ostensibly provide relief from these conditions, take on the character of combat. Some of the new therapies dignify this combat as "assertiveness" and "fighting fair in love and marriage." Others celebrate impermanent attachments under such formulas as "open marriage" and "open-ended commitments." Thus they intensify the disease they pretend to cure. They do this, however, not by diverting attention from social problems to personal ones, from real issues to false issues, but by obscuring the social origins of the suffering—not to be confused with complacent self-absorption—that is painfully but falsely experienced as purely personal and private.

II

The Narcissistic Personality of Our Time

Narcissism as a Metaphor of the Human Condition Recent critics of the new narcissism not only confuse cause and effect, attributing to a cult of privatism developments that derive from the disintegration of public life; they use the term narcissism so loosely that it retains little of its psychological content. Erich Fromm, in *The Heart of Man*, drains the idea of its clinical meaning and expands it to cover all forms of "vanity," "self-admiration," "self-satisfaction," and "self-glorification" in individuals and all forms of parochialism, ethnic or racial prejudice, and "fanaticism" in groups. In other words, Fromm uses the term as a synonym for the "asocial" individualism which, in his version of progressive and "humanistic" dogma, undermines cooperation, brotherly love, and the search for wider loyalties. Narcissism thus appears simply as the antithesis of that watery love for humanity (disinterested "love for the stranger") advocated by Fromm under the name of socialism.

Fromm's discussion of "individual and social narcissism," appropriately published in a series of books devoted to "Religious Perspectives," provides an excellent example of the inclination, in our therapeutic age, to dress up moralistic platitudes in psychiatric garb. ("We live in a historical period characterized by a sharp discrepancy between the intellectual development of man . . . and his mental-emotional development, which has left him still in a state of marked narcissism with all its pathological symptoms.") Whereas Sennett reminds us that narcissism has more in common with self-hatred than with self-admiration, Fromm loses sight even of this well-known clinical fact in his eagerness to sermonize about the blessings of brotherly love.

As always in Fromm's work, the trouble originates in his

misguided and unnecessary attempt to rescue Freud's thought from its "mechanistic" nineteenth-century basis and to press it into the service of "humanistic realism." In practice, this means that theoretical rigor gives way to ethically uplifting slogans and sentiments. Fromm notes in passing that Freud's original concept of narcissism assumed that libido begins in the ego, as a "great reservoir" of undifferentiated self-love, whereas in 1922 he decided, on the contrary, that "we must recognize the id as the great reservoir of the libido." Fromm slides over this issue, however, by remarking, "The theoretical question whether the libido starts originally in the ego or in the id is of no substantial importance for the meaning of the concept [of narcissism] itself." In fact, the structural theory of the mind, set forth by Freud in *Group Psychology* and in *The Ego and the Id*, required modifications of his earlier ideas that have a great deal of bearing on the theory of narcissism. Structural theory made Freud abandon the simple dichotomy between instinct and consciousness and recognize the unconscious elements of the ego and superego, the importance of nonsexual impulses (aggression or the "death instinct"), and the alliance between superego and id, superego and aggression. These discoveries in turn made possible an understanding of the role of object relations in the development of narcissism, thereby revealing narcissism as essentially a defense against aggressive impulses rather than self-love.

Theoretical precision about narcissism is important not only because the idea is so readily susceptible to moralistic inflation but because the practice of equating narcissism with everything selfish and disagreeable militates against historical specificity. Men have always been selfish, groups have always been ethnocentric; nothing is gained by giving these qualities a psychiatric label. The emergence of character disorders as the most prominent form of psychiatric pathology, however, together with the change in personality structure this development reflects, derives from quite specific changes in our society and culture—from bureaucracy, the proliferation of images, therapeutic ideologies, the rationalization of the inner life, the cult of consumption, and in the last analysis from changes in family life and from changing patterns of socialization. All this disappears from sight if narcissism

becomes simply "the metaphor of the human condition," as in another existential, humanistic interpretation, Shirley Sugerman's *Sin and Madness: Studies in Narcissism*.

The refusal of recent critics of narcissism to discuss the etiology of narcissism or to pay much attention to the growing body of clinical writing on the subject probably represents a deliberate decision, stemming from the fear that emphasis on the clinical aspects of the narcissistic syndrome would detract from the concept's usefulness in social analysis. This decision, however, has proved to be a mistake. In ignoring the psychological dimension, these authors also miss the social. They fail to explore any of the character traits associated with pathological narcissism, which in less extreme form appear in such profusion in the everyday life of our age: dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings. Nor do they discuss what might be called the secondary characteristics of narcissism: pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous, self-deprecatory humor. Thus they deprive themselves of any basis on which to make connections between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture, such as the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women. For these critics, narcissism remains at its loosest a synonym for selfishness and at its most precise a metaphor, and nothing more, that describes the state of mind in which the world appears as a mirror of the self.

Psychology and Sociology Psychoanalysis deals with individuals, not with groups. Efforts to generalize clinical findings to collective behavior always encounter the difficulty that groups have a life of their own. The collective mind, if there is such a thing, reflects the needs of the group as a whole, not the psychic needs of the individual, which in fact have to be subordinated to the demands of collective living. Indeed it is precisely the subjection

of individuals to the group that psychoanalytic theory, through a study of its psychic repercussions, promises to clarify. By conducting an intensive analysis of individual cases that rests on clinical evidence rather than common-sense impressions, psychoanalysis tells us something about the inner workings of society itself, in the very act of turning its back on society and immersing itself in the individual unconscious.

Every society reproduces its culture—its norms, its underlying assumptions, its modes of organizing experience—in the individual, in the form of personality. As Durkheim said, personality is the individual socialized. The process of socialization, carried out by the family and secondarily by the school and other agencies of character formation, modifies human nature to conform to the prevailing social norms. Each society tries to solve the universal crises of childhood—the trauma of separation from the mother, the fear of abandonment, the pain of competing with others for the mother's love—in its own way, and the manner in which it deals with these psychic events produces a characteristic form of personality, a characteristic form of psychological deformation, by means of which the individual reconciles himself to instinctual deprivation and submits to the requirements of social existence. Freud's insistence on the continuity between psychic health and psychic sickness makes it possible to see neuroses and psychoses as in some sense the characteristic expression of a given culture. "Psychosis," Jules Henry has written, "is the final outcome of all that is wrong with a culture."

Psychoanalysis best clarifies the connection between society and the individual, culture and personality, precisely when it confines itself to careful examination of individuals. It tells us most about society when it is least determined to do so. Freud's extrapolation of psychoanalytic principles into anthropology, history, and biography can be safely ignored by the student of society, but his clinical investigations constitute a storehouse of indispensable ideas, once it is understood that the unconscious mind represents the modification of nature by culture, the imposition of civilization on instinct.

Freud should not be reproached [wrote T. W. Adorno] for having neglected the concrete social dimension, but for being all too untroubled by

the social origin of . . . the rigidity of the unconscious, which he registers with the undeviating objectivity of the natural scientist. . . . In making the leap from psychological images to historical reality, he forgets what he himself discovered—that all reality undergoes modification upon entering the unconscious—and is thus misled into positing such factual events as the murder of the father by the primal horde.*

Those who wish to understand contemporary narcissism as a social and cultural phenomenon must turn first to the growing body of clinical writing on the subject, which makes no claim to social or cultural significance and deliberately repudiates the proposition that "changes in contemporary culture," as Otto Kernberg writes, "have effects on patterns of object relations."† In the clinical literature, narcissism serves as more than a metaphoric term for self-absorption. As a psychic formation in which "love rejected turns back to the self as hatred," narcissism has come to be recognized as an important element in the so-called character disorders that have absorbed much of the clinical attention once given to hysteria and obsessional neuroses. A new

*"On . . . its home ground," Adorno added, "psychoanalysis carries specific conviction; the further it removes itself from that sphere, the more its theses are threatened alternately with shallowness or wild over-systematization. If someone makes a slip of the tongue and a sexually loaded word comes out, if someone suffers from agoraphobia or if a girl walks in her sleep, psychoanalysis not merely has its best chances of therapeutic success but also its proper province, the relatively autonomous, monadological individual as arena of the unconscious conflict between instinctual drive and prohibition. The further it departs from this area, the more tyrannically it has to proceed and the more it has to drag what belongs to the dimension of outer reality into the shades of psychic immanence. Its delusion in so doing is not dissimilar from that 'omnipotence of thought' which it itself criticized as infantile."

† Those who argue, in opposition to the thesis of the present study, that there has been no underlying change in the structure of personality, cite this passage to support the contention that although "we do see certain symptom constellations and personality disorders more or less frequently than in Freud's day, . . . this shift in attention has occurred primarily because of a shift in our clinical emphasis due to tremendous advances in our understanding of personality structure."

In light of this controversy, it is important to note that Kernberg adds to his observation a qualification: "This is not to say that such changes in the patterns of intimacy [and of object relations in general] could not occur over a period of several generations, if and when changes in cultural patterns affect family structure to such an extent that the earliest development in childhood would be influenced." This is exactly what I will argue in chapter VII.

theory of narcissism has developed, grounded in Freud's well-known essay on the subject (which treats narcissism—libidinal investment of the self—as a necessary precondition of object love) but devoted not to primary narcissism but to secondary or pathological narcissism: the incorporation of grandiose object images as a defense against anxiety and guilt. Both types of narcissism blur the boundaries between the self and the world of objects, but there is an important difference between them. The newborn infant—the primary narcissist—does not yet perceive his mother as having an existence separate from his own, and he therefore mistakes dependence on the mother, who satisfies his needs as soon as they arise, with his own omnipotence. "It takes several weeks of postnatal development . . . before the infant perceives that the source of his need . . . is within and the source of gratification is outside the self."

Secondary narcissism, on the other hand, "attempts to annul the pain of disappointed [object] love" and to nullify the child's rage against those who do not respond immediately to his needs; against those who are now seen to respond to others beside the child and who therefore appear to have abandoned him. Pathological narcissism, "which cannot be considered simply a fixation at the level of normal primitive narcissism," arises only when the ego has developed to the point of distinguishing itself from surrounding objects. If the child for some reason experiences this separation trauma with special intensity, he may attempt to reestablish earlier relationships by creating in his fantasies an omnipotent mother or father who merges with images of his own self. "Through internalization the patient seeks to recreate a wished-for love relationship which may once have existed and simultaneously to annul the anxiety and guilt aroused by aggressive drives directed against the frustrating and disappointing object."

Narcissism in Recent Clinical Literature The shifting emphasis in clinical studies from primary to secondary narcissism reflects both the shift in psychoanalytic theory from study of the id to study of the ego and a change in the type of patients seeking

psychiatric treatment. Indeed the shift from a psychology of instincts to ego psychology itself grew partly out of a recognition that the patients who began to present themselves for treatment in the 1940s and 1950s "very seldom resembled the classical neuroses Freud described so thoroughly." In the last twenty-five years, the borderline patient, who confronts the psychiatrist not with well-defined symptoms but with diffuse dissatisfactions, has become increasingly common. He does not suffer from debilitating fixations or phobias or from the conversion of repressed sexual energy into nervous ailments; instead he complains "of vague, diffuse dissatisfactions with life" and feels his "amorphous existence to be futile and purposeless." He describes "subtly experienced yet pervasive feelings of emptiness and depression," "violent oscillations of self-esteem," and "a general inability to get along." He gains "a sense of heightened self-esteem only by attaching himself to strong, admired figures whose acceptance he craves and by whom he needs to feel supported." Although he carries out his daily responsibilities and even achieves distinction, happiness eludes him, and life frequently strikes him as not worth living.

Psychoanalysis, a therapy that grew out of experience with severely repressed and morally rigid individuals who needed to come to terms with a rigorous inner "censor," today finds itself confronted more and more often with a "chaotic and impulse-ridden character." It must deal with patients who "act out" their conflicts instead of repressing or sublimating them. These patients, though often ingratiating, tend to cultivate a protective shallowness in emotional relations. They lack the capacity to mourn, because the intensity of their rage against lost love objects, in particular against their parents, prevents their reliving happy experiences or treasuring them in memory. Sexually promiscuous rather than repressed, they nevertheless find it difficult to "elaborate the sexual impulse" or to approach sex in the spirit of play. They avoid close involvements, which might release intense feelings of rage. Their personalities consist largely of defenses against this rage and against feelings of oral deprivation that originate in the pre-Oedipal stage of psychic development.

Often these patients suffer from hypochondria and complain

of a sense of inner emptiness. At the same time they entertain fantasies of omnipotence and a strong belief in their right to exploit others and be gratified. Archaic, punitive, and sadistic elements predominate in the superegos of these patients, and they conform to social rules more out of fear of punishment than from a sense of guilt. They experience their own needs and appetites, suffused with rage, as deeply dangerous, and they throw up defenses that are as primitive as the desires they seek to stifle.

On the principle that pathology represents a heightened version of normality, the "pathological narcissism" found in character disorders of this type should tell us something about narcissism as a social phenomenon. Studies of personality disorders that occupy the border line between neurosis and psychosis, though written for clinicians and making no claims to shed light on social or cultural issues, depict a type of personality that ought to be immediately recognizable, in a more subdued form, to observers of the contemporary cultural scene: facile at managing the impressions he gives to others, ravenous for admiration but contemptuous of those he manipulates into providing it; unappeasably hungry for emotional experiences with which to fill an inner void; terrified of aging and death.

The most convincing explanations of the psychic origins of this borderline syndrome draw on the theoretical tradition established by Melanie Klein. In her psychoanalytic investigations of children, Klein discovered that early feelings of overpowering rage, directed especially against the mother and secondarily against the internalized image of the mother as a ravenous monster, make it impossible for the child to synthesize "good" and "bad" parental images. In his fear of aggression from the bad parents—projections of his own rage—he idealizes the good parents who will come to the rescue.

Internalized images of others, buried in the unconscious mind at an early age, become self-images as well. If later experience fails to qualify or to introduce elements of reality into the child's archaic fantasies about his parents, he finds it difficult to distinguish between images of the self and of the objects outside the self. These images fuse to form a defense against the bad representations of the self and of objects, similarly fused in the form of

a harsh, punishing superego. Melanie Klein analyzed a ten-year-old boy who unconsciously thought of his mother as a "vampire" or "horrid bird" and internalized this fear as hypochondria. He was afraid that the bad presences inside him would devour the good ones. The rigid separation of good and bad images of the self and of objects, on the one hand, and the fusion of self- and object images on the other, arose from the boy's inability to tolerate ambivalence or anxiety. Because his anger was so intense, he could not admit that he harbored aggressive feelings toward those he loved. "Fear and guilt relating to his destructive phantasies moulded his whole emotional life."

A child who feels so gravely threatened by his own aggressive feelings (projected onto others and then internalized again as inner "monsters") attempts to compensate himself for his experiences of rage and envy with fantasies of wealth, beauty, and omnipotence. These fantasies, together with the internalized images of the good parents with which he attempts to defend himself, become the core of a "grandiose conception of the self." A kind of "blind optimism," according to Otto Kernberg, protects the narcissistic child from the dangers around and within him—particularly from dependence on others, who are perceived as without exception undependable. "Constant projection of 'all bad' self and object images perpetuates a world of dangerous, threatening objects, against which the 'all good' self images are used defensively, and megalomaniac ideal self images are built up." The splitting of images determined by aggressive feelings from images that derive from libidinal impulses makes it impossible for the child to acknowledge his own aggression, to experience guilt or concern for objects invested simultaneously with aggression and libido, or to mourn for lost objects. Depression in narcissistic patients takes the form not of mourning with its admixture of guilt, described by Freud in "Mourning and Melancholia," but of impotent rage and "feelings of defeat by external forces."

Because the intrapsychic world of these patients is so thinly populated—consisting only of the "grandiose self," in Kernberg's words, "the devalued, shadowy images of self and others, and potential persecutors"—they experience intense feelings of emptiness and inauthenticity. Although the narcissist can function in

the everyday world and often charms other people (not least with his "pseudo-insight into his personality"), his devaluation of others, together with his lack of curiosity about them, impoverishes his personal life and reinforces the "subjective experience of emptiness." Lacking any real intellectual engagement with the world—notwithstanding a frequently inflated estimate of his own intellectual abilities—he has little capacity for sublimation. He therefore depends on others for constant infusions of approval and admiration. He "must attach [himself] to someone, living an almost parasitic" existence. At the same time, his fear of emotional dependence, together with his manipulative, exploitive approach to personal relations, makes these relations bland, superficial, and deeply unsatisfying. "The ideal relationship to me would be a two month relationship," said a borderline patient. "That way there'd be no commitment. At the end of the two months I'd just break it off."

Chronically bored, restlessly in search of instantaneous intimacy—of emotional titillation without involvement and dependence—the narcissist is promiscuous and often pansexual as well, since the fusion of pregenital and Oedipal impulses in the service of aggression encourages polymorphous perversity. The bad images he has internalized also make him chronically uneasy about his health, and hypochondria in turn gives him a special affinity for therapy and for therapeutic groups and movements.

As a psychiatric patient, the narcissist is a prime candidate for interminable analysis. He seeks in analysis a religion or way of life and hopes to find in the therapeutic relationship external support for his fantasies of omnipotence and eternal youth. The strength of his defenses, however, makes him resistant to successful analysis. The shallowness of his emotional life often prevents him from developing a close connection to the analyst, even though he "often uses his intellectual insight to agree verbally with the analyst and recapitulates in his own words what has been analysed in previous sessions." He uses intellect in the service of evasion rather than self-discovery, resorting to some of the same strategies of obfuscation that appear in the confessional writing of recent decades. "The patient uses the analytic interpretations but deprives them quickly of life and meaning, so that

only meaningless words are left. The words are then felt to be the patient's own possession, which he idealizes and which give him a sense of superiority." Although psychiatrists no longer consider narcissistic disorders inherently unanalyzable, few of them take an optimistic view of the prospects for success.

According to Kernberg, the great argument for making the attempt at all, in the face of the many difficulties presented by narcissistic patients, is the devastating effect of narcissism on the second half of their lives—the certainty of the terrible suffering that lies in store. In a society that dreads old age and death, aging holds a special terror for those who fear dependence and whose self-esteem requires the admiration usually reserved for youth, beauty, celebrity, or charm. The usual defenses against the ravages of age—identification with ethical or artistic values beyond one's immediate interests, intellectual curiosity, the consoling emotional warmth derived from happy relationships in the past—can do nothing for the narcissist. Unable to derive whatever comfort comes from identification with historical continuity, he finds it impossible, on the contrary, "to accept the fact that a younger generation now possesses many of the previously cherished gratifications of beauty, wealth, power and, particularly, creativity. To be able to enjoy life in a process involving a growing identification with other people's happiness and achievements is tragically beyond the capacity of narcissistic personalities."

Social Influences on Narcissism Every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology, which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure. In Freud's time, hysteria and obsessional neurosis carried to extremes the personality traits associated with the capitalist order at an earlier stage in its development—acquisitiveness, fanatical devotion to work, and a fierce repression of sexuality. In our time, the preschizophrenic, borderline, or personality disorders have attracted increasing attention, along with schizophrenia itself. This "change in the form of neuroses has been observed and described since World War II by an ever-increasing number of psychiatrists." According to Peter

L. Giovacchini, "Clinicians are constantly faced with the seemingly increasing number of patients who do not fit current diagnostic categories" and who suffer not from "definitive symptoms" but from "vague, ill-defined complaints." "When I refer to 'this type of patient,'" he writes, "practically everyone knows to whom I am referring." The growing prominence of "character disorders" seems to signify an underlying change in the organization of personality, from what has been called inner-direction to narcissism.

Allen Wheelis argued in 1958 that the change in "the patterns of neuroses" fell "within the personal experience of older psychoanalysts," while younger ones "become aware of it from the discrepancy between the older descriptions of neuroses and the problems presented by the patients who come daily to their offices. The change is from symptom neuroses to character disorders." Heinz Lichtenstein, who questioned the additional assertion that it reflected a change in personality structure, nevertheless wrote in 1963 that the "change in neurotic patterns" already constituted a "well-known fact." In the seventies, such reports have become increasingly common. "It is no accident," Herbert Hendin notes, "that at the present time the dominant events in psychoanalysis are the rediscovery of narcissism and the new emphasis on the psychological significance of death." "What hysteria and the obsessive neuroses were to Freud and his early colleagues . . . at the beginning of this century," writes Michael Beldoch, "the narcissistic disorders are to the workaday analyst in these last few decades before the next millennium. Today's patients by and large do not suffer from hysterical paralyses of the legs or hand-washing compulsions; instead it is their very psychics that have gone numb or that they must scrub and rescrub in an exhausting and unending effort to come clean." These patients suffer from "pervasive feelings of emptiness and a deep disturbance of self-esteem." Burness E. Moore notes that narcissistic disorders have become more and more common. According to Sheldon Bach, "You used to see people coming in with hand-washing compulsions, phobias, and familiar neuroses. Now you see mostly narcissists." Gilbert J. Rose maintains that the psychoanalytic outlook, "inappropriately transplanted from analytic

practice" to everyday life, has contributed to "global permissiveness" and the "over-domestication of instinct," which in turn contributes to the proliferation of "narcissistic identity disorders." According to Joel Kovel, the stimulation of infantile cravings by advertising, the usurpation of parental authority by the media and the school, and the rationalization of inner life accompanied by the false promise of personal fulfillment, have created a new type of "social individual." "The result is not the classical neuroses where an infantile impulse is suppressed by patriarchal authority, but a modern version in which impulse is stimulated, perverted and given neither an adequate object upon which to satisfy itself nor coherent forms of control. . . . The entire complex, played out in a setting of alienation rather than direct control, loses the classical form of symptom—and the classical therapeutic opportunity of simply restoring an impulse to consciousness."

The reported increase in the number of narcissistic patients does not necessarily indicate that narcissistic disorders are more common than they used to be, in the population as a whole, or that they have become more common than the classical conversion neuroses. Perhaps they simply come more quickly to psychiatric attention. Ilza Veith contends that "with the increasing awareness of conversion reactions and the popularization of psychiatric literature, the 'old-fashioned' somatic expressions of hysteria have become suspect among the more sophisticated classes, and hence most physicians observe that obvious conversion symptoms are now rarely encountered and, if at all, only among the uneducated." The attention given to character disorders in recent clinical literature probably makes psychiatrists more alert to their presence. But this possibility by no means diminishes the importance of psychiatric testimony about the prevalence of narcissism, especially when this testimony appears at the same time that journalists begin to speculate about the new narcissism and the unhealthy trend toward self-absorption. The narcissist comes to the attention of psychiatrists for some of the same reasons that he rises to positions of prominence not only in awareness movements and other cults but in business corporations, political organizations, and government bureaucracies. For all his inner suffering, the narcissist has many traits that make for success in

bureaucratic institutions, which put a premium on the manipulation of interpersonal relations, discourage the formation of deep personal attachments, and at the same time provide the narcissist with the approval he needs in order to validate his self-esteem. Although he may resort to therapies that promise to give meaning to life and to overcome his sense of emptiness, in his professional career the narcissist often enjoys considerable success. The management of personal impressions comes naturally to him, and his mastery of its intricacies serves him well in political and business organizations where performance now counts for less than "visibility," "momentum," and a winning record. As the "organization man" gives way to the bureaucratic "gamesman"—the "loyalty era" of American business to the age of the "executive success game"—the narcissist comes into his own.

In a study of 250 managers from twelve major companies, Michael Maccoby describes the new corporate leader, not altogether unsympathetically, as a person who works with people rather than with materials and who seeks not to build an empire or accumulate wealth but to experience "the exhilaration of running his team and of gaining victories." He wants to "be known as a winner, and his deepest fear is to be labeled a loser." Instead of pitting himself against a material task or a problem demanding solution, he pits himself against others, out of a "need to be in control." As a recent textbook for managers puts it, success today means "not simply getting ahead" but "getting ahead of others." The new executive, boyish, playful, and "seductive," wants in Maccoby's words "to maintain an illusion of limitless options." He has little capacity for "personal intimacy and social commitment." He feels little loyalty even to the company for which he works. One executive says he experiences power "as not being pushed around by the company." In his upward climb, this man cultivates powerful customers and attempts to use them against his own company. "You need a very big customer," according to his calculations, "who is always in trouble and demands changes from the company. That way you automatically have power in the company, and with the customer too. I like to keep my options open." A professor of management endorses this strategy.

"Overidentification" with the company, in his view, "produces a corporation with enormous power over the careers and destinies of its true believers." The bigger the company, the more important he thinks it is for executives "to manage their careers in terms of their own . . . free choices" and to "maintain the widest set of options possible."*

According to Maccoby, the gamesman "is open to new ideas, but he lacks convictions." He will do business with any régime, even if he disapproves of its principles. More independent and resourceful than the company man, he tries to use the company for his own ends, fearing that otherwise he will be "totally emasculated by the corporation." He avoids intimacy as a trap, preferring the "exciting, sexy atmosphere" with which the modern executive surrounds himself at work, "where adoring, mini-skirted secretaries constantly flirt with him." In all his personal relations, the gamesman depends on the admiration or fear he inspires in others to certify his credentials as a "winner." As he gets older, he finds it more and more difficult to command the kind of attention on which he thrives. He reaches a plateau beyond which he does not advance in his job, perhaps because the very highest positions, as Maccoby notes, still go to "those able to renounce adolescent rebelliousness and become at least to some extent believers in the organization." The job begins to lose its savor. Having little interest in craftsmanship, the new-style executive takes no pleasure in his achievements once he begins to lose the adolescent charm on which they rest. Middle age hits him with the force of a

* It is not only the gamesman who "fears feeling trapped." Seymour B. Sarason finds this feeling prevalent among professionals and students training for professional careers. He too suggests a connection between the fear of entrapment and the cultural value set on career mobility and its psychic equivalent, "personal growth." "'Stay loose,' 'keep your options open,' 'play it cool'—these cautions emerge from the feeling that society sets all kinds of booby traps that rob you of the freedom without which growth is impossible."

This fear of entrapment or stagnation is closely connected in turn with the fear of aging and death. The mobility mania and the cult of "growth" can themselves be seen, in part, as an expression of the fear of aging that has become so intense in American society. Mobility and growth assure the individual that he has not yet settled into the living death of old age.

disaster: "Once his youth, vigor, and even the thrill in winning are lost, he becomes depressed and goalless, questioning the purpose of his life. No longer energized by the team struggle and unable to dedicate himself to something he believes in beyond himself, . . . he finds himself starkly alone." It is not surprising, given the prevalence of this career pattern, that popular psychology returns so often to the "midlife crisis" and to ways of combating it.

In Wilfrid Sheed's novel *Office Politics*, a wife asks, "There are real issues, aren't there, between Mr. Fine and Mr. Tyler?" Her husband answers that the issues are trivial; "the jockeying of ego is the real story." Eugene Emerson Jennings's study of management, which celebrates the demise of the organization man and the advent of the new "era of mobility," insists that corporate "mobility is more than mere job performance." What counts is "style . . . panache . . . the ability to say and do almost anything without antagonizing others." The upwardly mobile executive, according to Jennings, knows how to handle the people around him—the "shelf-sitter" who suffers from "arrested mobility" and envies success; the "fast learner"; the "mobile superior." The "mobility-bright executive" has learned to "read" the power relations in his office and "to see the less visible and less audible side of his superiors, chiefly their standing with their peers and superiors." He "can infer from a minimum of cues who are the centers of power, and he seeks to have high visibility and exposure with them. He will assiduously cultivate his standing and opportunities with them and seize every opportunity to learn from them. He will utilize his opportunities in the social world to size up the men who are centers of sponsorship in the corporate world."

Constantly comparing the "executive success game" to an athletic contest or a game of chess, Jennings treats the substance of executive life as if it were just as arbitrary and irrelevant to success as the task of kicking a ball through a net or of moving pieces over a chessboard. He never mentions the social and economic repercussions of managerial decisions or the power that managers exercise over society as a whole. For the corporate manager on the make, power consists not of money and influence but of "momen-

tum," a "winning image," a reputation as a winner. Power lies in the eye of the beholder and thus has no objective reference at all.*

The manager's view of the world, as described by Jennings, Maccoby, and by the managers themselves, is that of the narcissist, who sees the world as a mirror of himself and has no interest in external events except as they throw back a reflection of his own image. The dense interpersonal environment of modern bureaucracy, in which work assumes an abstract quality almost wholly divorced from performance, by its very nature elicits and often rewards a narcissistic response. Bureaucracy, however, is only one of a number of social influences that are bringing a narcissistic type of personality organization into greater and greater prominence. Another such influence is the mechanical reproduction of culture, the proliferation of visual and audial images in the "society of the spectacle." We live in a swirl of images and echoes that arrest experience and play it back in slow motion. Cameras and recording machines not only transcribe experience but alter its quality, giving to much of modern life the character of an enormous echo chamber, a hall of mirrors. Life presents itself as a succession of images or electronic signals, of impressions recorded and reproduced by means of photography, motion pictures, television, and sophisticated recording devices. Modern life is so thoroughly mediated by electronic images that we cannot help responding to others as if their actions—and our own—were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for close scrutiny at some later time. "Smile, you're on candid camera!" The intrusion into everyday life of this all-seeing eye no longer takes us by surprise or catches us with our defenses down. We need no reminder to smile. A smile is permanently graven on our features, and we already know from which of several angles it photographs to best advantage.

* Indeed it has no reference to anything outside the self. The new ideal of success has no content. "Performance means to arrive," says Jennings. Success equals success. Note the convergence between success in business and celebrity in politics or the world of entertainment, which also depends on "visibility" and "charisma" and can only be defined as itself. The only important attribute of celebrity is that it is celebrated; no one can say why.

The proliferation of recorded images undermines our sense of reality. As Susan Sontag observes in her study of photography, "Reality has come to seem more and more like what we are shown by cameras." We distrust our perceptions until the camera verifies them. Photographic images provide us with the proof of our existence, without which we would find it difficult even to reconstruct a personal history. Bourgeois families in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Sontag points out, posed for portraits in order to proclaim the family's status, whereas today the family album of photographs verifies the individual's existence: its documentary record of his development from infancy onward provides him with the only evidence of his life that he recognizes as altogether valid. Among the "many narcissistic uses" that Sontag attributes to the camera, "self-surveillance" ranks among the most important, not only because it provides the technical means of ceaseless self-scrutiny but because it renders the sense of selfhood dependent on the consumption of images of the self, at the same time calling into question the reality of the external world.

By preserving images of the self at various stages of development, the camera helps to weaken the older idea of development as moral education and to promote a more passive idea according to which development consists of passing through the stages of life at the right time and in the right order. Current fascination with the life cycle embodies an awareness that success in politics or business depends on reaching certain goals on schedule; but it also reflects the ease with which development can be electronically recorded. This brings us to another cultural change that elicits a widespread narcissistic response and, in this case, gives it a philosophical sanction: the emergence of a therapeutic ideology that upholds a normative schedule of psychosocial development and thus gives further encouragement to anxious self-scrutiny. The ideal of normative development creates the fear that any deviation from the norm has a pathological source. Doctors have made a cult of the periodic checkup—an investigation carried out once again by means of cameras and other recording instruments—and have implanted in their clients the notion that health depends on eternal watchfulness and the early detection of symptoms, as verified by medical technology. The client no

longer feels physically or psychologically secure until his X-rays confirm a "clean bill of health."

Medicine and psychiatry—more generally, the therapeutic outlook and sensibility that pervade modern society—reinforce the pattern created by other cultural influences, in which the individual endlessly examines himself for signs of aging and ill health, for tell-tale symptoms of psychic stress, for blemishes and flaws that might diminish his attractiveness, or on the other hand for reassuring indications that his life is proceeding according to schedule. Modern medicine has conquered the plagues and epidemics that once made life so precarious, only to create new forms of insecurity. In the same way, bureaucracy has made life predictable and even boring while reviving, in a new form, the war of all against all. Our overorganized society, in which large-scale organizations predominate but have lost the capacity to command allegiance, in some respects more nearly approximates a condition of universal animosity than did the primitive capitalism on which Hobbes modeled his state of nature. Social conditions today encourage a survival mentality, expressed in its crudest form in disaster movies or in fantasies of space travel, which allow vicarious escape from a doomed planet. People no longer dream of overcoming difficulties but merely of surviving them. In business, according to Jennings, "The struggle is to survive emotionally"—to "preserve or enhance one's identity or ego." The normative concept of developmental stages promotes a view of life as an obstacle course: the aim is simply to get through the course with a minimum of trouble and pain. The ability to manipulate what Gail Sheehy refers to, using a medical metaphor, as "life-support systems" now appears to represent the highest form of wisdom: the knowledge that gets us through, as she puts it, without panic. Those who master Sheehy's "no-panic approach to aging" and to the traumas of the life cycle will be able to say, in the words of one of her subjects, "I know I can survive . . . I don't panic any more." This is hardly an exalted form of satisfaction, however. "The current ideology," Sheehy writes, "seems a mix of personal survivalism, revivalism, and cynicism"; yet her enormously popular guide to the "predictable crises of adult life," with its superficially optimistic hymn to growth, development, and "self-ac-

tualization," does not challenge this ideology, merely restates it in more "humanistic" form. "Growth" has become a euphemism for survival.

The World View of the Resigned New social forms require new forms of personality, new modes of socialization, new ways of organizing experience. The concept of narcissism provides us not with a ready-made psychological determinism but with a way of understanding the psychological impact of recent social changes—assuming that we bear in mind not only its clinical origins but the continuum between pathology and normality. It provides us, in other words, with a tolerably accurate portrait of the "liberated" personality of our time, with his charm, his pseudo-awareness of his own condition, his promiscuous pansexuality, his fascination with oral sex, his fear of the castrating mother (Mrs. Portnoy), his hypochondria, his protective shallowness, his avoidance of dependence, his inability to mourn, his dread of old age and death.

Narcissism appears realistically to represent the best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and the prevailing social conditions therefore tend to bring out narcissistic traits that are present, in varying degrees, in everyone. These conditions have also transformed the family, which in turn shapes the underlying structure of personality. A society that fears it has no future is not likely to give much attention to the needs of the next generation, and the ever-present sense of historical discontinuity—the blight of our society—falls with particularly devastating effect on the family. The modern parent's attempt to make children feel loved and wanted does not conceal an underlying coolness—the remoteness of those who have little to pass on to the next generation and who in any case give priority to their own right to self-fulfillment. The combination of emotional detachment with attempts to convince a child of his favored position in the family is a good prescription for a narcissistic personality structure.

Through the intermediary of the family, social patterns repro-

duce themselves in personality. Social arrangements live on in the individual, buried in the mind below the level of consciousness, even after they have become objectively undesirable and unnecessary—as many of our present arrangements are now widely acknowledged to have become. The perception of the world as a dangerous and forbidding place, though it originates in a realistic awareness of the insecurity of contemporary social life, receives reinforcement from the narcissistic projection of aggressive impulses outward. The belief that society has no future, while it rests on a certain realism about the dangers ahead, also incorporates a narcissistic inability to identify with posterity or to feel oneself part of a historical stream.

The weakening of social ties, which originates in the prevailing state of social warfare, at the same time reflects a narcissistic defense against dependence. A warlike society tends to produce men and women who are at heart antisocial. It should therefore not surprise us to find that although the narcissist conforms to social norms for fear of external retribution, he often thinks of himself as an outlaw and sees others in the same way, "as basically dishonest and unreliable, or only reliable because of external pressures." "The value systems of narcissistic personalities are generally corruptible," writes Kernberg, "in contrast to the rigid morality of the obsessive personality."

The ethic of self-preservation and psychic survival is rooted, then, not merely in objective conditions of economic warfare, rising rates of crime, and social chaos but in the subjective experience of emptiness and isolation. It reflects the conviction—as much a projection of inner anxieties as a perception of the way things are—that envy and exploitation dominate even the most intimate relations. The cult of personal relations, which becomes increasingly intense as the hope of political solutions recedes, conceals a thoroughgoing disenchantment with personal relations, just as the cult of sensuality implies a repudiation of sensuality in all but its most primitive forms. The ideology of personal growth, superficially optimistic, radiates a profound despair and resignation. It is the faith of those without faith.

VII

The Socialization of Reproduction and the Collapse of Authority

The "Socialization of Workingmen" The survival of any form of human society depends on the production of the necessities of life and the reproduction of the labor force itself. Until recently, the work of reproduction, which includes not merely the propagation of the species but the care and nurture of the young, took place largely in the family. The factory system, established in the nineteenth century, socialized production but left other functions of the family intact. The socialization of production, however, proved to be the prelude to the socialization of reproduction itself—the assumption of childrearing functions by surrogate parents responsible not to the family but to the state, to private industry, or to their own codes of professional ethics. In the course of bringing culture to the masses, the advertising industry, the mass media, the health and welfare services, and other agencies of mass tuition took over many of the socializing functions of the home and brought the ones that remained under the direction of modern science and technology.

It is in this light that we should see the school's appropriation of many of the training functions formerly carried out by the family, including manual training, household arts, instruction in manners and morals, and sex education. "Social, political, and industrial changes," announced a pair of leading educators in 1918, "have forced upon the school responsibilities formerly laid upon the home. Once the school had mainly to teach the elements of knowledge, now it is charged with the physical, mental, and social training of the child as well." These words reflected a consensus among the "helping professions" that the family could no

longer provide for its own needs. Doctors, psychiatrists, child development experts, spokesmen for the juvenile courts, marriage counselors, leaders of the public hygiene movement all said the same thing—usually reserving to their own professions, however, the leading role in the care of the young. Ellen Richards, founder of the modern profession of social work, argued: "In the social republic, the child as a future citizen is an asset of the state, not the property of its parents. Hence its welfare is a direct concern of the state." Experts in mental health, seeking to expand their own jurisdiction, deplored "the harm, often well-nigh irreparable, which the best intentioned parents may do their children." Many reformers despaired of instilling in parents the principles of mental health and maintained that "the only practical and effective way to increase the mental health of a nation is through its school system. Homes are too inaccessible."

Opponents of child labor argued along the same lines. Convinced that poor immigrant parents exploited their children's labor at every opportunity, they demanded not only state prohibition of child labor but the placement of the child under the custody of the school. Similarly, those who dealt with juvenile delinquency saw "broken" or otherwise flawed homes as the breeding ground of crime and tried to bring the juvenile offender under the protective custody of the courts. Parents' rights in their children, according to the new ideology of social reform, depended on the extent of their willingness to cooperate with officials of the juvenile courts. "To the competent parent all aid should be given," wrote Sophonisba P. Breckinridge and Edith Abbott, but "to the degraded parent no concessions should be made." By the same logic, as another spokesman for the helping professions explained, refusal to cooperate with the courts and other welfare agencies proved that a parent "has a warped view of authority and is thereby unable to make use of social resources," thus forfeiting his right to his children or at least raising strong doubts about his competence as a parent.

Reformers conceived of the "socialization of workingmen" as the alternative to class conflict. "If men of any country are taught from childhood to consider themselves as members of a 'class,'" wrote Edwin L. Earp, characteristically addressing himself to the

"professional man" as well as to the lower orders, ". . . then it will be impossible to avoid social friction, class hatred, and class conflict." A spokesman for the social gospel, Earp went on to explain that the church could socialize the worker more effectively "than the labor unions, for they are class-conscious and . . . selfish, while the Church, on the other hand, is conscious of a world-kingdom of righteousness, peace and joy, and, in most cases at least, is hopefully altruistic."

Almost everyone agreed that the family promoted a narrow, parochial, selfish, and individualistic mentality and thus impeded the development of sociability and cooperation. This reasoning led inexorably to the conclusion that outside agencies had to replace the family, especially the working-class family, which so many reformers nevertheless wished to preserve and strengthen. If the school was reluctantly "taking the place of the home," according to Ellen Richards, this was because "the personal point of view, inculcated now by modern conditions of strife for money, just as surely as it must have been by barbarian struggle in pre-civilized days, must be supplanted by the broader view of majority welfare." The iron laws of social evolution dictated the subordination of the individual to "the destiny of the race."

The Juvenile Court The movement to bring youthful offenders under special jurisdiction illustrates in their clearest form the connections between organized altruism, the new therapeutic conception of the state, and the appropriation of familial functions by outside agencies. When penal reformers and humanitarians established a new system of juvenile justice at the end of the nineteenth century, they conceived of it as a substitute for the home. In their view, the reformatory should contain "essential elements of a good home." In Illinois, the law establishing the juvenile court (1889) announced that the act would ensure "that the care, custody, and discipline of a child shall approximate as nearly as may be that which should be given by its parents." If parents "virtually orphaned" their children "by their inadequacy, neglect, or cruel usage," the parental powers of the state—*parents*

patriae—entitled it to remove children from their parents' custody without a trial and to bring them under its own care. According to Miss Breckinridge, the juvenile court "helped to rescue the child from irresponsible parents and . . . pointed the way to a new relationship between the family and the community." Because the new courts treated youthful offenders as victims of a bad environment rather than as criminals, they eliminated the adversary relationship between the child and the state and made the prevention of crime, not punishment, the chief object of the law—in reformers' eyes, a great advance toward a more humane, more scientific system of justice. "The element of conflict was absolutely eliminated," wrote Jane Addams, "and with it all notions of punishment."

An early history of the juvenile court movement noted that after the abolition of adversary proceedings, "the relations of the child to his parents and other adults and to the state or society are defined and adjusted summarily according to the scientific findings about the child and his environment." Magistrates had given way to "socially-minded judges, who hear and adjust cases according not to rigid rules of law but to what the interests of society and the interests of the child or good conscience demand." Juries, prosecutors, and lawyers had yielded to "probation officers, physicians, psychologists, and psychiatrists. . . . In this new court we tear down primitive prejudice, hatred, and hostility toward the lawbreaker in that most hidebound of all human institutions, the court of law."

As so often happens in modern history, reforms that presented themselves as the height of ethical enlightenment eroded the rights of the ordinary citizen. Conceiving of the problem of social control on the model of public health, the "helping professions" claimed to attack the causes of crime instead of merely treating its consequences. By converting the courts into agents of moral instruction and psychic "help," however, they abrogated the usual safeguards against arbitrary arrest and detention. Their reforms empowered the courts to pry into family affairs; to remove children from "unsuitable homes"; to sentence them to indeterminate periods of incarceration without proving their guilt; and to invade the delinquent's home in order to supervise the

terms of probation. The probation system, according to one reformer, created "a new kind of reformatory, without walls and without much coercion"; but in fact the establishment of this reformatory without walls extended the coercive powers of the state, now disguised as a wish "to befriend and help," into every corner of society. The state could now segregate deviants for no other reason than that they or their parents had refused to cooperate with the courts, especially when refusal to cooperate appeared as *prima facie* evidence of a bad home environment. Judges who considered themselves "specialists in the art of human relations" sought to "get the whole truth about a child," in the words of Miriam Van Waters, in the same way that a "physician searches for every detail that bears on the condition of a patient." One judge prided himself on "the personal touch" with which he approached delinquent boys: "I have often observed that if I sat on a high platform behind a high desk, such as we had in our city court, with the boy on the prisoner's bench some distance away, that my words had little effect on him; but if I could get close enough to him to put my hand on his head and shoulder, or my arm around him, in nearly every case I could get his confidence." In effect, the court now certified the "patient" into what Talcott Parsons has called the sick role. Once the boy admitted his need of help—the real meaning, in this essentially therapeutic setting, of giving the judge his "confidence"—he exchanged his legal rights for the protective custody of the state, which in practice often proved to be as harsh and unrelenting as the punishment from which the new system of judicial therapy had delivered him in the first place.

Occasionally a judge with old-fashioned ideas insisted that "the true function of a court is to determine judicially the facts at issue before it"—and that "investigations of the lives, environments, or heredity of delinquents, the infliction of punishment, and the supervision of probation institutionalize the courts and are repugnant to every tenet of the science of law." Such reasoning, however, ran against the current of sociological jurisprudence, which appeared to justify a vastly enlarged role for the courts. By the mid-1920s, Van Waters argued that the state had an obligation to "protect" children not merely against broken

homes, which bred crime, but "against parents whose treatment results in a crippled or warped personality." Her book, *Parents on Probation*, listed in one chapter "nineteen ways of being a bad parent," which included "perpetual chaperonage," a "warped view of authority," and failure to become "oriented in the modern world." Van Waters admitted that most children of "bad parents," given a choice between the custody of the juvenile court and the custody of their parents, preferred to return even to homes in shambles. This "incurable loyalty of children to unworthy adults," although it was "the despair of the social worker," nevertheless suggested that a child's "own home gave him something that the mere kindness and plenty of the foster home could not furnish, and that all the social workers in the world would fail to supply." But these considerations did not prevent Van Waters from arguing that not only broken homes but "normal" homes often produced broken children and that the social worker's duty to interfere in other people's domestic arrangements logically knew no limits. "As our case descriptions in clinics and conferences pile up, the wealth of evidence that the 'normal' home, as well as the broken home, fosters malnutrition, physical and spiritual, that sordid habit-settings and moral maladjustments occur in the 'best' families, the conclusion grows, not that parents need education, but that a specialized agency had better take over the whole matter of child rearing."

Parent Education Those who resisted such a sweeping formulation of the state's powers *in loco parentis* clung to the hope that "parent education" would improve the quality of child care and make more drastic attacks on the family unnecessary. Reformers like Washington Gladden, well known as an exponent of the social gospel, accepted most of the principles associated with the new humanitarianism—with school reform and the new sociological jurisprudence in particular—yet questioned their more extreme applications. Gladden endorsed the view that "punishment must be ancillary to reformation" but wondered whether the "reaction against the retributive severities of the old penol-

ogy" had not eroded "fundamental ethical principles" and "weakened, perceptibly, the sense of moral responsibility." Many "sentimental prison reformers," he noted, talked about prisoners "as if they were wholly innocent and amiable people." Although Gladden accepted the prevailing view that "the actual work of education is now largely done outside the family" and that this arrangement, moreover, represented an efficient division of labor, he accepted it only with misgivings. He agreed with Dewey that "the school must find a way to cultivate the social temper, the habit of cooperation, the spirit of service, the consciousness of fraternity"; yet while assenting to this unprecedented expansion of the school's responsibility for socialization, he nevertheless wanted education to remain "fundamentally, a parental function."

From the beginning, the movement to improve the home—the only alternative, it appeared, to bypassing or replacing it—floundered in such contradictions. Teachers of "domestic science," academic experts in "marriage and the family," marriage counselors, family therapists, and many social workers tried to strengthen the family against the forces that tended to undermine it. One social worker, Frank Dekker Watson, objected to the "deceptive philosophy that turns the back upon parents as hopeless and proposes to save the children. We cannot save the children separately," he insisted. "We must reach and save the family as a whole." Yet all these experts, in their very eagerness to "save" the family, accepted the overriding premise that the family could no longer provide for its needs without outside assistance. In particular they distrusted the immigrant family and saw the parent-education movement as part of a wider effort to civilize the masses—that is, to Americanize the immigrants and impose industrial discipline on the working class. The urban masses, wrote Gladden, "must be civilized, educated, inspired with new ideas." Florence Kelley, a noted socialist, complained that a typical Italian girl, even when exposed to years of schooling, forgot everything she learned as soon as she married and proceeded to bring up "in the most unreasonable manner the large family which continues to the second generation in the Italian colonies. She will feed her infants bananas, bologna, beer and coffee; and

many of these potential native citizens will perish during their first year, poisoned by the hopeless ignorance of their school-bred mother." Such reformers, despairing of the school, hoped to make the family itself one of the chief agencies of enlightenment—but only by overhauling it according to the latest principles of marital interaction and child care.

These principles, of course, underwent continual elaboration and revision, as professional fashion dictated. If we consider the literature on childrearing alone—leaving aside the equally voluminous literature on the problems of marriage, which consisted mostly of conflicting speculations about the attraction of opposites or the importance of similar backgrounds and tastes—we find that expert opinion evolved through four stages, each claiming to represent a notable advance over the last. In the twenties and thirties, behaviorism held sway. Such authorities as John B. Watson and Arnold Gesell stressed the need for strict feeding schedules and carefully regulated child-parent contacts. In their initial revulsion against home remedies, rule-of-thumb methods, and "maternal instinct," baby doctors and psychiatrists condemned "maternal overprotection" and urged parents to respect the child's "emotional independence." Many mothers, according to Ernest and Gladys Groves, thought it "the most astonishing thing that mother love has been found by science inherently dangerous, and some of them grow panicky as they let the significance of the new teaching sink into their thoughts." In the long run, however, the new teaching would enable parents to confer on their offspring the inestimable blessing of "freedom from emotional bondage to their parents:"*

* Groves and Groves were not alone in noting, even at this early date, certain disturbing effects of professional teaching on parents. Miriam Van Waters wrote: "So much alarming popular literature has been written about defective children that a diagnosis of defect, or serious handicap, like epilepsy or neurotic constitution, freezes the parents into despair." Such observations, however, seldom prompted those who made them to question the wisdom of professional teaching, which by its very nature—even when it seeks to reassure—holds up a norm of child development, deviations from which necessarily give rise to parental alarm, to further demands for professional intervention, and often to measures that intensify suffering instead of alleviating it.

Those who noted that the attack on maternal instinct undermined maternal

Permissiveness Reconsidered In the late thirties and forties, the popularization of progressive education and of debased versions of Freudian theory brought about a reaction in favor of "permissiveness." Feeding schedules gave way to feeding on demand; everything now had to be geared to the child's "needs." Love came to be regarded not as a danger but as a positive duty. Improved methods of birth control, according to the progressive creed, had freed parents from the burden of raising unwanted children, but this freedom in practice seemed to boil down to the obligation to make children feel wanted at every moment of their lives. "The common error of psychological advice," wrote Hilde Bruch in 1952, "is teaching parents techniques of conveying to the child a sense of being loved instead of relying on their innate true feelings of love."*

confidence felt no reservations about this development, because in their view the confidence destroyed by medicine rested in the first place on ignorance and complacency. According to Lorine Pruette, "The severe criticism of the average mother's way with her children coming from social workers, psychiatrists, and educators has helped to destroy a great complacency which was formerly the young mother's protection. . . . The dictum that mother knows best and the dogma of the natural instincts of motherhood have so fallen in disfavor as to be available refuges only for the ignorant or the stubborn." A writer in *Good Housekeeping* observed in 1914: "Souls full of love bring also heads full of ignorance. . . . 'Instinct tells a mother what to do.' Oh, it's an old chant, and it is as scientific as the classic statement that an upstanding fork means a caller, or that the moon is made of green cheese. Instinct forsooth!"

* In Lisa Alther's *Kinflicks*, the heroine's mother, a product of the permissive period, complains: "If anything had been drummed into her in her years of motherhood, it was that you mustn't squelch the young. It might stunt their precious development. Never mind about your own development."

The importance of "wanted" children attained the status of dogma as early as 1912, when Mary Roberts Coolidge argued that organized education for motherhood, together with improvements in contraception, would soon make motherhood "something more than a blind obedience to nature and mankind." Motherhood would soon become "a high vocation worthy of the best preparation and the profoundest devotion," according to Coolidge. Freed of the burden of raising unwanted children, women would confront childrearing not as a burdensome biological duty but as a challenging career requiring careful study and the application of rational technique. "We are rapidly passing from a purely instinctual to conscious and voluntary motherhood."

Permissiveness soon produced its own reaction, an insistence that parents should consult their own needs as well as the child's. Maternal instinct, much derided by earlier experts, made a comeback in Dr. Spock's *Baby and Child Care*, first published in 1946. "Trust yourself," Spock announced at the outset. "What good mothers and fathers instinctively feel like doing for their babies is usually best." Often blamed for the excesses of permissive child-rearing, Spock should be seen instead as one of its critics, seeking to restore the rights of the parent in the face of an exaggerated concern for the rights of the child. He and other experts of the forties and fifties had become somewhat belatedly aware of the way their own advice undermined parental confidence. They began to suggest, tentatively at first, that parents should not be held responsible for all their children's faults. "The deepest roots," wrote one pediatrician, "lie not in the mistakes of the parents but in cultural attitudes of which the parents are merely the purveyors." Another expert found that faulty approaches to parent education aroused irrational "hostility toward family experts and counsellors." Exposed to counselors who stressed "problems instead of theories," many parents "felt somehow that they had failed to do for their children what their parents had done for them, and yet, they did not know why, or wherein they had failed, or what they could do about it." Such considerations did not lead experts to withdraw, however, from the business of parent education. On the contrary, they now widened the scope of their claims, setting themselves up as doctors to all of society.

Even the more penetrating critics of permissive dogmas countered them not with a more modest statement of what medicine and psychiatry could hope to accomplish but simply with new dogmas of their own. The limits of psychiatric self-criticism emerged most clearly in Hilde Bruch's *Don't Be Afraid of Your Child*, the work of a humane and sensible psychiatrist who nevertheless left matters no better than she found them. At times, Dr. Bruch departed from her attack on permissiveness and attacked psychiatric imperialism itself, which had inhibited "spontaneity" and brought about in many parents a "state of superimposed anxiety." Afraid of repeating the mistakes of their own parents, modern parents repudiated the serviceable practices of the past and

embraced the "routinized half-truths of the experts as the laws of living." Better than almost any other commentator on American psychiatry, Dr. Bruch understood its massive assault against the past and the devastation left by this demolition of older forms of authority.

It has become fashionable in the whole world of psychiatry and psychology, not only in its immediate relation to child-rearing practices, to speak in sweeping, dramatic terms of the crushing effect of authority and tradition. The failure to recognize the essentially valid and sustaining aspects of traditional ways and of differentiating them from outmoded harmful and overrestrictive measures has resulted in a demoralized confusion of modern parents and thus had a disastrous effect on children.

Dr. Bruch went even further. She grasped the social and cultural transformation that has made science the handmaiden of industry—in this case, psychiatry the handmaiden of advertising, which enlists psychiatry in the attempt to exploit "parents' desires to do right by their children." By keeping parents in a state of chronic anxiety, psychiatry thus frustrates desires that advertising can then claim to satisfy. It lays the emotional foundation for the insistence of the advertising industry that the health and safety of the young, the satisfaction of their daily nutritional requirements, their emotional and intellectual development, and their ability to compete with their peers for popularity and success all depend on consumption of vitamins, band-aids, cavity-preventing toothpaste, cereals, mouthwashes, and laxatives.

Having confronted or at least glimpsed all this, Dr. Bruch betrayed her own perceptions by attributing the troubles she identified not to the inherently expansionist ambitions of modern psychiatry but rather to the misuse of psychiatry by a few irresponsible practitioners. Too often, she wrote, parents consulted "self-appointed, unlicensed experts" when they should have gone to a "medical psychiatric expert" working in close conjunction with a physician. For all the barbs she launched against her own profession, she subscribed to most of its clichés: "parent education is here to stay"; "there is no going back"; "what was 'common sense' in a past century is apt to be useless and hopelessly out of step in our time." Her attack on permissive childrearing boiled down to a criticism of psychiatric malpractice. Al-

though she urged parents "to recognize their own inner resources and capacity for judgment," her book, like Dr. Spock's, abounded in dire warnings of the damage ignorant parents could inflict on their offspring. Spock undermined his own plea for confidence by reminding parents that failure to give children love and security could lead to "irreparable harm." Similarly Bruch condemned permissiveness on the grounds that it could produce "deep emotional disturbance" in the child. Such pronouncements had the effect of weakening parental confidence in the very act of trying to restore it.*

* The same thing holds true of the critique of permissiveness that runs through a group of psychiatric essays collected in 1959 by Samuel Liebman, *Emotional Forces in the Family*. These essays contain the same mixture of sense and pseudo-sense. In "The Development of the Family in the Technical Age," Joost A. M. Meerloo analyzes, with great discernment, the "invasion" of the family by mass culture and by half-assimilated psychiatric ideas, which then become tools of sexual and generational combat. An "imposed intellectualization of the emotions," according to Meerloo, has become "a substitute for mature action." The "delusion of explanation replaces the appropriate act. Words, words, and mere words are produced rather than good will and good action. Sex itself is expressed in words instead of affection."

In the remaining essays, however, analysis of "psychologizing" and "the delusion of explanation" gives way to criticism of a single form of psychologizing, the dogma of permissiveness. Bertram Schaffner writes, in the same vein as Hilde Bruch and Dr. Spock, that "the so-called 'human relations' school of thought," both in childrearing and in industrial management, has gone too far in the direction of permissiveness and has too readily assumed that the "child could do no wrong." "In the recent confused picture of parent-child relations, some parents have taken the concept [of providing security for the child] to mean that the child should have every wish and need met, should not have the experience of being refused." Schaffner's attack on the "abdication of authority in the family and at work" recalls Bruch's plea for "a father or mother who can say 'No' without going through an elaborate song and dance."

The contributors to the Liebman volume, like other critics of permissiveness, write as if parental authority could be restored by professional exhortation, at the same time that they repeat the conventional injunction against leaving childrearing to instinct. "It is our responsibility," concludes Lawrence S. Kubie, "to re-examine critically everything which used to be left to mother's or father's uninformed impulses, under such euphemistic clichés as 'instinct' and 'love,' lest mother-love mask self-love and father-love mask unconscious impulses to destroy." Psychiatrists have the last word after all.

Gilbert J. Rose has criticized "global permissiveness in child development" along the same lines, but with more sensitivity to the evil of psychologizing as

The Cult of Authenticity Since the critique of permissiveness seldom challenged psychiatric orthodoxy, it soon hardened into a new dogma of its own—the dogma of authenticity. Earlier experts had advised the parent to follow one or another set of prescriptions; now the experts told him to trust his own feelings. Whatever he did was right as long as he did it spontaneously. “Children are not easily fooled about true feelings,” warned Dr. Bruch. “Parent effectiveness training,” the latest vogue in child-rearing, has popularized the cult of authenticity that began to emerge in the fifties. Like other forms of psychic self-help, parent effectiveness training teaches the need to “get in touch with your feelings” and to base everyday intercourse on the communication of these feelings to others. If parents can understand their own needs and wishes and convey them to their children, encouraging children to reciprocate in the same fashion, they can eliminate many sources of friction and conflict. Objective statements should be excluded from discourse with the child, according to this reasoning, in the first place because no one can argue rationally about beliefs and in the second place because statements about reality convey ethical judgments and therefore arouse strong emotions. “When a child says, ‘I never have good luck,’ no argument or explanation will change this belief.” “When a child tells of an event, it is sometimes helpful to respond, not to the event itself, but to the feelings around it.” Since “all feelings are legitimate,” their expression should be greeted neither with praise nor with blame. If a child does something to annoy the parent, the parent should express his annoyance instead of condemning the child or the action. If the child expresses emotions that seem

such. The “analytic tendency to look with suspicion upon action as possible acting out, . . . inappropriately transferred from analytic practice,” encourages passivity in everyday life, according to Rose. “Some parents, for example, are incapable of such things as putting their child to bed in the face of protest or of curbing the children’s aggression. . . . The avoidance of being judgmental in analysis is sometimes generalized into a moral detachment in everyday life. This suspension of the moral sense, often combined with a hypertrophy of the therapeutic attitude, leads to calling something ‘sick’ where there is no clinical evidence and not calling it ‘bad’ though such is obvious. The naive idea that sickness accounts for badness and that badness necessarily results from being misunderstood is the prejudice of a therapeutic morality.”

The Socialization of Reproduction and the Collapse of Authority : 167
incommensurate with the occasion, the parent, instead of pointing out this discrepancy—instead of making an objective statement about reality and the emotions appropriate to it—should indicate to the child that he understands the child’s feelings and acknowledges his right to express them. “It is more important for a child to know what he feels than why he feels it.” The child needs to learn “that his own anger is not catastrophic, that it can be discharged without destroying anyone.”*

The cult of authenticity reflects the collapse of parental guidance and provides it with a moral justification. It confirms, and clothes in the jargon of emotional liberation, the parent’s helplessness to instruct the child in the ways of the world or to transmit ethical precepts. By glorifying this impotence as a higher form of awareness, it legitimizes the proletarianization of parenthood—the appropriation of childrearing techniques by the “helping professions.” As John R. Seeley noted in 1959, the transfer of parental knowledge to other agencies parallels the expropriation of the worker’s technical knowledge by modern management—“the taking over from the worker of the sad necessity of providing himself with the means of production.” By “helpfully” relieving the worker from “such onerous responsibilities” as the provision of his own and his children’s needs, society has freed him, as Seeley wrote, “to become a soldier in the army of production and a cipher in the process of decision.”†

* The contention that parent effectiveness training and other enlightened techniques of childrearing originated in the fifties will surprise those commentators who can remember nothing more ancient than the latest issue of the *New York Times News of the Week in Review*, and who regard the fifties, accordingly, as the Dark Age of “traditional” parenthood—a period, for example, in which “sex education usually didn’t amount to much more than a brief embarrassed conversation.” Nancy McGrath, a free-lance journalist, belatedly discovered the cult of spontaneity in 1976 and jumped to the conclusion that it represented a complete reversal of the “permissiveness” encouraged by Dr. Spock. In fact, Spock anticipated recent writers in his insistence that parents had rights as important as the child’s—one of the principal dogmas of parent effectiveness training. He and Hilde Bruch condemned permissive styles of childrearing on precisely the same grounds that Nancy McGrath now condemns Fitzhugh Dodson’s *How to Parent* and Lee Salk’s *How to Raise a Human Being*—that such teaching mistakenly instructs parents to “adapt to a baby’s needs, not expect the baby to adapt to theirs.”
† As a result of the invasion of parenthood by the health industry, Seeley concluded, “One finds parents convinced of their impotence, clinging to doctrine in

The revolt against behavioral and progressive dogmas, which exaggerated the parent's power to deform the child, has encouraged society to hold the parent "only marginally accountable," as Mark Gerzon has recently observed, "for his child's growth. . . . Obstetricians take charge at birth, pediatricians are responsible for a child's ailments and cures; the teacher for his intelligence; . . . the supermarket and food industry for his food; television for his myths." Ironically, the devaluation of parenthood coincides with a belated movement to return to the family functions it has surrendered to the apparatus of organized therapy and tuition. Rising rates of crime, juvenile delinquency, suicide, and mental breakdown have finally convinced many experts, even many welfare workers, that welfare agencies furnish a poor substitute for the family. Dissatisfaction with the results of socialized welfare and the growing expense of maintaining it now prompt efforts to shift health and welfare functions back to the home.*

the face of confronting fact-at-hand, robbed of spontaneity (or, equivalently, forcing themselves as a routine to 'be spontaneous'), guilt-ridden, dubious about their own discriminatory capacity, in double tutelage—to the child himself and to his agent, the 'expert'—penetrable, defenseless, credulous, and sure only that, while it doth not yet appear, the day of salvation is at hand." In another essay in the same collection, Seeley noted that modern society presents "a social division of labor in which the burden of rationality is . . . externalized, thrust upon a body of professionals, and hence set beyond one's own capacity to mismanage. In effect, one is to become rational, not by some internal and personal struggle, but by setting in motion a public process that, once started, one cannot resist—a process in which one selects an elite to procure for oneself and others that environment that is most conducive to rational behavior."

* In 1976, the Center for Policy Research (New York) organized a conference on dependency, based on the premise that "traditional public responses have lost much, if not all, legitimacy" and that institutionalization and professional care have become widely "suspect." Both in its attack on asylums and in its suspicious attitude toward the "motive of benevolence," this conference accurately reflects the current revulsion against socialized welfare and the revisionist scholarship which supports that revulsion by disparaging the motives of reformers and depicting asylums as "total institutions." The work of Erving Goffman, Thomas Szasz, Eliot Freidson, David Rothman, and others has helped to shape a new orthodoxy, which criticizes institutionalization and "professional dominance" but fails to see the connection between these developments and the rise of modern management or the degradation of work. In practice, the critique of professionalism seldom

Psychological Repercussions of the "Transfer of Functions"

It is too late, however, to call for a revival of the patriarchal family or even of the "companionate" family that replaced it. The "transfer of functions," as it is known in the antiseptic jargon of the social sciences—in reality, the deterioration of child care—has been at work for a long time, and many of its consequences appear to be irreversible. The first step in the process, already taken in some societies in the late eighteenth century, was the segregation of children from the adult world, partly as a deliberate policy, partly as the unavoidable result of the withdrawal of many work processes from the home. As the industrial system monopolized production, work became less and less visible to the child. Fathers could no longer bring their work home or teach children the skills that went into it. At a later stage in this alienation of labor, management's monopolization of technical skills, followed at an even later stage by the socialization of childrearing techniques, left parents with little but love to transmit to their offspring; and love without discipline is not enough to assure the generational continuity on which every culture depends. Instead of guiding the child, the older generation now struggles to "keep up with the kids," to master their incomprehensible jargon, and even to imitate their dress and manners in the hope of preserving a youthful appearance and outlook.

These changes, which are inseparable from the whole development of modern industry, have made it more and more difficult for children to form strong psychological identifications with their parents. The invasion of the family by industry, the mass media, and the agencies of socialized parenthood has subtly

rises above the level of a consumers' movement, while in theory, it has already hardened into a cliché. For historians, "social control" serves the same purpose in the seventies that "status anxiety" served in the fifties. It offers a comprehensive, all-purpose explanation that fits every case and contingency and can now be manipulated with little thought. Even the best of the social-control studies tend, in the words of Richard Fox, "to exaggerate the novelty of nineteenth-century perceptions of disorder, to reify the 'controllers' to the point where they become either a homogeneous elite or, as in Rothman's case, indistinguishable from society as a whole, and to assume that institutions are imposed by that elite or that society upon passive, malleable subjects."

altered the quality of the parent-child connection. It has created an ideal of perfect parenthood while destroying parents' confidence in their ability to perform the most elementary functions of childrearing. The American mother, according to Geoffrey Gorer, depends so heavily on experts that she "can never have the easy, almost unconscious, self-assurance of the mother of more patterned societies, who is following ways she knows unquestioningly to be right." According to another observer, the "immature, narcissistic" American mother "is so barren of spontaneous manifestation of maternal feelings" that she redoubles her dependence on outside advice. "She studies vigilantly all the new methods of upbringing and reads treatises about physical and mental hygiene." She acts not on her own feelings or judgment but on the "picture of what a good mother should be."

The woman who came to a psychiatrist after reading books on child development from which she "felt that she had not been able to learn anything" dramatizes, in heightened form, the plight of the modern parent. She pursued such information, her psychiatrist reported, "as if she were interested in passing some kind of examination or in producing a child that would win some contest. . . . She had to become a perfect mother." Yet her relations with her child suffered from "a striking lack of affect." Tormented by "a feeling of inexperience and clumsiness in handling tasks with which she had no previous acquaintance," she compared herself to someone who had never seen or ridden in a car and was trying to learn to drive it from a mechanic's manual. Another mother "felt she knew nothing about mothering, literally. . . . She could go mechanically through the motions of looking after her child's needs, but she never really understood what her daughter required and she felt she was responding completely without empathy as one would automatically follow instructions from a manual."

Narcissism, Schizophrenia, and the Family Clinical evidence documents the frequently devastating effects of this kind of mothering on the child. The "shallowness and unpredictability of

his mother's responses," according to Heinz Kohut, produced in one of his patients the pattern of narcissistic dependence so often found in borderline conditions, in which the subject attempts to re-create in his unconscious fantasies the omniscience of early infancy and seeks to shore up his self-esteem by attaching himself to "strong, admired figures." The mother-child connection, in the view of Kohut and many others, ideally rests on "optimal frustrations." As the child begins to perceive his mother's limitations and fallibility, he relinquishes the image of maternal perfection and begins to take over many of her functions—to provide for his own care and comfort. An idealized image of the mother lives on in the child's unconscious thoughts. Diminished, however, by the daily experience of maternal fallibility, it comes to be associated not with fantasies of infantile omnipotence but with the ego's modest, growing mastery of its environment. Disappointment with the mother, brought about not only by her unavoidable lapses of attention but by the child's perception that he does not occupy the exclusive place in her affections, makes it possible for the child to relinquish her undivided love while internalizing the image of maternal love (through a psychic process analogous to mourning) and incorporating her life-giving functions.

The narcissistic mother's incessant yet curiously perfunctory attentions to her child interfere at every point with the mechanism of optimal frustration. Because she so often sees the child as an extension of herself, she lavishes attentions on the child that are "awkwardly out of touch" with his needs, providing him with an excess of seemingly solicitous care but with little real warmth. By treating the child as an "exclusive possession," she encourages an exaggerated sense of his own importance; at the same time she makes it difficult for him to acknowledge his disappointment in her shortcomings. In schizophrenia, the disjunction between the child's perceptions of his mother's shallow, perfunctory care and her apparently undivided devotion becomes so painful that the child refuses to acknowledge it. Regressive defenses, "loss of the boundaries of the self," delusions of omniscience, and magical thinking appear, in milder form, in narcissistic disorders. Although schizophrenia can by no means be considered simply as an exaggerated form of narcissism, it shares with narcissistic dis-

turbances a breakdown in the boundaries between the self and the world of objects. "The contemporary psychoanalytic position," according to one psychiatrist, is that "schizophrenia is above all a narcissistic disorder." It is not surprising, therefore, that studies of the family background of schizophrenic patients point to a number of features also associated with narcissistic families. In both cases, a narcissistic mother lavishes suffocating yet emotionally distant attentions on her offspring. The narcissist, like the schizophrenic, often occupies a special position in the family, either because of his real endowments or because one of the parents treats him as a substitute for an absent father, mother, or spouse. Such a parent sometimes draws the whole family into the web of his own neurosis, which the family members tacitly conspire to indulge so as to maintain the family's emotional equilibrium. In "the family caught in this way of life," according to a student of narcissism, each member tries to validate the others' expectations and projected wishes. "This family tautology, together with the work needed to maintain it, is an identifying feature of the family held together by the narcissistic way of life." According to Kohut, such families suffer more from one member's character disorder than from an overt psychosis, since the psychotic parent is confined to an asylum or at least gets less support from his immediate social environment.

Narcissism and the "Absent Father" Families of this type arise in America not just in response to a particular member's pathology but as a normal response to prevailing social conditions. As the world of business, jobs, and politics becomes more and more menacing, the family tries to create for itself an island of security in the surrounding disorder. It deals with internal tensions by denying their existence, desperately clinging to an illusion of normality. Yet the picture of harmonious domestic life, on which the family attempts to model itself, derives not from spontaneous feeling but from external sources, and the effort to conform to it therefore implicates the family in a charade of togetherness or "pseudo-mutuality," as one student of schizophrenia calls it. The

mother in particular, on whom the work of childrearing devolves by default, attempts to become an ideal parent, compensating for her lack of spontaneous feeling for the child by smothering him with solicitude. Abstractly convinced that her child deserves the best of everything, she arranges each detail of his life with a punctilious zeal that undermines his initiative and destroys the capacity for self-help. She leaves the child with the feeling, according to Kohut, that he has "no mind of his own." His idealistically inflated impressions of the mother persist unmodified by later experience, mingling in his unconscious thoughts with fantasies of infantile omnipotence.

A case reported by Annie Reich shows in exaggerated form what the absence of the father does to the relations between mother and child. The patient, a bright young woman who had embarked on a successful career as a teacher, "wavered between her feelings of grandiosity and an awareness that she was not as grandiose as she wanted to be." Secretly she believed she was a genius, who in her own words would "suddenly reveal herself and stand out as an obelisk." The girl's father had died a few months after she was born. Her mother's brother had also died young. The mother refused to remarry and showered the child with attentions, treating her as someone rare and special. She made it clear that the child was to substitute for the dead father and uncle. The daughter, putting her own construction on this communication, "imagined that the mother had devoured the father in the sexual act, which was equated with having castrated him through biting off the penis. She (the patient) was the father's penis—or the dead father or uncle come back." Like many narcissistic women, she directed her interest "to an enormous degree upon her own body," which she unconsciously equated with a phallus in the fantasy of "standing out like a tremendous obelisk," admired by everyone around her. Yet her awareness of her femininity, which contradicted this phallic fantasy, combined with "a relentless superego" (derived in part from the "megalomaniac id") to produce feelings of unworthiness and violent "oscillations of self-esteem."

The most striking features of this material, as with so many cases concerning narcissistic patients, are the persistence of ar-

chaic fantasies, the regressive character of defenses against loss, and the inability to sublimate—for example, by finding pleasure in the work for which the patient had already shown considerable aptitude. We have seen how an exaggerated dependence on the mother, encouraged by the mother herself, makes it difficult for the child to reconcile himself, after a period of mourning, to her loss. In the present case, the father's death, combined with the mother's use of the child as a substitute for the father, allowed the girl's fantasy of a grandiose, phallic father to flourish without the correcting influence of everyday contact. "The normal impact of reality on this fantasy subject, which would have helped to achieve some degree of desexualization [as the child came to understand that her father had other qualities besides sexual ones] and also to reduce to normal size the figure of the father that was seen in such supernatural dimensions, was absent in this case—hence the unsublimated phallic character of the ego ideal and its megalomaniac scope."

Women with "otherwise well-integrated personalities," according to Dr. Reich, unconsciously seek to please a narcissistic mother by replacing the missing father, either by elaborating grandiose fantasies of success or by attaching themselves to successful men. One patient said that "during intercourse she felt as though she were the man with the phallus-like body making love to herself, the girl." Another achieved minor success as an actress and described the euphoria of being admired by the audience as "an intense excitement experienced over the entire body surface and a sensation of standing out, erect, with her whole body. Obviously she felt like a phallus with her whole body." In such patients, the superego or ego ideal consists of archaic representations of the father unmitigated by reality. The identification of themselves with a sexual organ, their grandiose ambitions, and the feelings of worthlessness that alternate with delusions of grandeur all testify to the primitive origin of the superego and to the aggressiveness with which it punishes failure to live up to the exaggerated ideal of an all-powerful father. Behind this image of the phallic father stands an even earlier attachment to the primitive mother, equally untempered by experiences that might reduce early fantasies to human scale. Narcissistic women seek to replace

the absent father, whom the mother has castrated, and thus to reunite themselves with the mother of earliest infancy.

On the assumption that pathology represents a heightened version of normality, we can now see why the absence of the American father has become such a crucial feature of the American family: not so much because it deprives the child of a role model as because it allows early fantasies of the father to dominate subsequent development of the superego. The father's absence, moreover, deforms the relations between mother and child. According to a misguided popular theory, the mother takes the father's place and confuses the child by assuming a masculine role ("Momism"). In the child's fantasies, however, it is not the mother who replaces the father but the child himself. When a narcissistic mother, already disposed to see her offspring as extensions of herself, attempts to compensate the child for the father's desertion (and also to conform to the socially defined standards of ideal motherhood), her constant but perfunctory attentions, her attempts to make the child feel wanted and special, and her wish to make it "stand out" communicate themselves to the child in a charged and highly disturbing form. The child imagines that the mother has swallowed or castrated the father and harbors the grandiose fantasy of replacing him, by achieving fame or attaching himself to someone who represents a phallic kind of success, thereby bringing about an ecstatic reunion with the mother.

The intensity of the child's dependence on the mother prevents him from acknowledging her limitations, which in any case are concealed beneath an appearance of continual solicitude. The father's emotional absence from the family makes the mother the dominant parent; yet her dominance makes itself felt chiefly in the child's fantasies (where the father too plays an active part), not in everyday life. In this sense, the American mother is an absent parent also. Outside experts have taken over many of her practical functions, and she often discharges those that remain in a mechanical manner that conforms not to the child's needs but to a preconceived ideal of motherhood. In view of the suffocating yet emotionally distant care they receive from narcissistic mothers, it is not surprising that so many young people—for example, the alienated students interviewed by Kenneth Keniston and Herbert

Hendin—describe their mothers as both seductive and aloof, devouring and indifferent. Nor is it surprising that so many narcissistic patients experience maternal seductiveness as a form of sexual assault. Their unconscious impressions of the mother are so overblown and so heavily influenced by aggressive impulses, and the quality of her care so little attuned to the child's needs, that she appears in the child's fantasies as a devouring bird, a vagina full of teeth.

The Abdication of Authority and the Transformation of the Superego The psychological patterns associated with pathological narcissism, which in less exaggerated form manifest themselves in so many patterns of American culture—in the fascination with fame and celebrity, the fear of competition, the inability to suspend disbelief, the shallowness and transitory quality of personal relations, the horror of death—originate in the peculiar structure of the American family, which in turn originates in changing modes of production. Industrial production takes the father out of the home and diminishes the role he plays in the conscious life of the child. The mother attempts to make up to the child for the loss of its father, but she often lacks practical experience of childrearing, feels herself at a loss to understand what the child needs, and relies so heavily on outside experts that her attentions fail to provide the child with a sense of security. Both parents seek to make the family into a refuge from outside pressures, yet the very standards by which they measure their success, and the techniques through which they attempt to bring it about, derive in large part from industrial sociology, personnel management, child psychology—in short, from the organized apparatus of social control. The family's struggle to conform to an externally imposed ideal of family solidarity and parenthood creates an appearance of solidarity at the expense of spontaneous feeling, a ritualized "relatedness" empty of real substance.

Because these family patterns are so deeply rooted in the social conditions created by modern industry, they cannot be changed by prophylactic or "educational" reforms designed to

improve the quality of communication, diminish tensions, and promote interpersonal skills. Such reforms, by extending the sway of the health and welfare professions, usually do more harm than good. The injunction to feel spontaneous emotion does not make it easier to feel. In any case, the psychological patterns promoted by the family are reinforced by conditions outside the family. Because those patterns seem to find their clearest expression in the pathology of narcissism, and ultimately in schizophrenia, we should not jump to the conclusion that the family produces misfits, people who cannot function efficiently in modern industrial society.* In many ways it does a good job of preparing the child for the conditions he will encounter when he leaves home. Other institutions—for example, the school and the adolescent peer group—merely strengthen earlier patterns by satisfying expectations created by the family. As Jules Henry writes, "There is a constant interplay between each family and the culture at large, one reinforcing the other; each unique family upbringing gives rise to needs in the child that are satisfied by one or another aspect of the adolescent-and-school-culture."

According to Henry and other observers of American culture, the collapse of parental authority reflects the collapse of "ancient impulse controls" and the shift "from a society in which Super Ego values (the values of self-restraint) were ascendant, to one in which more and more recognition was being given to the values of the id (the values of self-indulgence)." The reversal of the normal

* Kenneth Keniston, Philip Slater, and other Parsonian critics of American culture have argued that the nuclear family, in Keniston's words, "produces deep discontinuities between childhood and adulthood." The critique of "privatism," which has emerged as one of the dominant themes in recent cultural radicalism, finds an obvious target in the nuclear family, which ostensibly encourages a predatory and anachronistic individualism and thus cripples children for the demands of cooperative living in a complex, "interdependent" society. Often associated with the radical psychiatry of R. D. Laing and Wilhelm Reich and with urgent calls for a cultural revolution, this criticism of the nuclear family merely updates and clothes in the latest liberationist jargon an indictment of the family first articulated by social workers, educators, penal reformers, and other social pathologists, and used by these experts to justify their appropriation of familial functions. By associating itself with psychiatric criticism of the family, the "cultural revolution" thus reaffirms one of the strongest tendencies in the society it claims to criticize.

relations between the generations, the decline of parental discipline, the "socialization" of many parental functions, and the "self-centered, impulse-dominated, detached, confused" actions of American parents give rise to characteristics that "can have seriously pathological outcomes, when present in extreme form," but which in milder form equip the young to live in a permissive society organized around the pleasures of consumption. Arnold Rogow argues, along similar lines, that American parents, alternately "permissive and evasive" in dealing with the young, "find it easier to achieve conformity by the use of bribery than by facing the emotional turmoil of suppressing the child's demands." In this way they undermine the child's initiative and make it impossible for him to develop self-restraint or self-discipline; but since American society no longer values these qualities anyway, the abdication of parental authority itself instills in the young the character traits demanded by a corrupt, permissive, hedonistic culture. The decline of parental authority reflects the "decline of the superego" in American society as a whole.

These interpretations, which lucidly capture the prevailing styles of parental discipline, their impact on the young, and the connections between the family and society, need to be modified in one important detail. The changing conditions of family life lead not so much to a "decline of the superego" as to an alteration of its contents. The parents' failure to serve as models of disciplined self-restraint or to restrain the child does not mean that the child grows up without a superego. On the contrary, it encourages the development of a harsh and punitive superego based largely on archaic images of the parents, fused with grandiose self-images. Under these conditions, the superego consists of parental introjects instead of identifications. It holds up to the ego an exalted standard of fame and success and condemns it with savage ferocity when it falls short of that standard. Hence the oscillations of self-esteem so often associated with pathological narcissism.

The fury with which the superego punishes the ego's failures suggests that it derives most of its energy from aggressive drives in the id, unmixed with libido. The conventional oversimplification which equates superego and id with "self-restraint" and "self-

indulgence," treating them as if they were radically opposed, ignores the irrational features of the superego and the alliance between aggression and a punishing conscience. The decline of parental authority and of external sanctions in general, while in many ways it weakens the superego, paradoxically reinforces the aggressive, dictatorial elements in the superego and thus makes it more difficult than ever for instinctual desires to find acceptable outlets. The "decline of the superego" in a permissive society is better understood as the creation of a new kind of superego in which archaic elements predominate. The social changes that have made it difficult for children to internalize parental authority have not abolished the superego but have merely strengthened the alliance of superego and Thanatos—that "pure culture of the death instinct," as Freud called it, which directs against the ego a torrent of fierce, unrelenting criticism.

The new permissiveness extends largely to expression of libidinal instincts, not to aggression. A bureaucratic society that stresses cooperation, interpersonal give and take, cannot allow many legitimate outlets for anger. Even in the family, which is supposed to allow expression to feelings denied expression elsewhere, anger threatens the precarious equilibrium that members of the family try so hard to preserve. At the same time, the mechanical quality of parental care, so notably lacking in affect, gives rise in the child to ravenous oral cravings and to a boundless rage against those who fail to gratify them. Much of this anger, fiercely repressed by the ego, finds its way into the superego, with the results described by Henry and Yela Lowenfeld.

The inhibiting, controlling, and guiding function of the superego, which largely merges with the ego, is weakened through the weakness of the parents, through indulgent education which fails to train the ego, and through the general social climate of permissiveness. . . . But the severe superego of early childhood still lives in the individual. The controlling function of the superego which draws its strength from the identification with strong parental figures, and which can protect the individual from conscious and unconscious guilt feelings, functions poorly; its punishing and self-destructive power still seems to affect many. The result is restlessness, discontent, depressive moods, craving for substitute satisfactions.

In Heller's *Something Happened*, which describes with such a multitude of depressing details the psychodynamics of family life today, the father believes, with good reason, that his rebellious adolescent daughter wants him to punish her; and like so many American parents, he refuses to give her this satisfaction or even to recognize its legitimacy. Refusing to be maneuvered into administering punishment, he wins psychological victories over his daughter, on the contrary, by giving in to her wishes and thereby avoiding the quarrels she seeks to provoke. Yet both his children, notwithstanding his desire, in his son's case at least, to adopt the part of the "best friend," unconsciously regard him as a tyrant. He muses in bewilderment: "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." The parent's abdication of authority intensifies rather than softens the child's fear of punishment, while identifying thoughts of punishment more firmly than ever with the exercise of arbitrary, overwhelming violence.*

The Family's Relation to Other Agencies of Social Control : Society reinforces these patterns not only through "indulgent education" and general permissiveness but through advertising, demand creation, and the mass culture of hedonism. At first glance, a society based on mass consumption appears to encourage self-indulgence in its most blatant forms. Strictly considered, however, modern advertising seeks to promote not so much self-indulgence as self-doubt. It seeks to create needs, not to fulfill them; to generate new anxieties instead of allaying old ones. By

* In the school studied by Jules Henry, an eleven-year-old boy wrote gratefully that his father "teaches me [baseball and] other sports [and] gives me as much as he can," but complained that "he never gives me a spanking when I've done wrong." Henry observes: "What this child seems to be saying is that the father . . . cannot give what the child feels he needs in order to make him a person: just punishment for his wrongdoing. It is startling for people in a permissive culture to learn that *not* to be given pain can be felt as a deprivation. Yet it is more painful for some children to bear guilt unpunished than to get a spanking."

surrounding the consumer with images of the good life, and by associating them with the glamour of celebrity and success, mass culture encourages the ordinary man to cultivate extraordinary tastes, to identify himself with the privileged minority against the rest, and to join them, in his fantasies, in a life of exquisite comfort and sensual refinement. Yet the propaganda of commodities simultaneously makes him acutely unhappy with his lot. By fostering grandiose aspirations, it also fosters self-denigration and self-contempt. The culture of consumption in its central tendency thus recapitulates the socialization earlier provided by the family.

Experiences with authority—in school, at work, in the political realm—complete the citizen's training in uneasy acquiescence to the prevailing forms of control. Here again, social control promotes neither self-indulgence nor the guilty self-criticism formerly inflicted by a moralistic superego but anxiety, uncertainty, restless dissatisfaction. In the school, the business corporation, and the courts of law, authorities conceal their power behind a façade of benevolence. Posing as friendly helpers, they discipline their subordinates as seldom as possible, seeking instead to create a friendly atmosphere in which everyone freely speaks his mind. Jules Henry found that high school teachers actually feared quiet and restraint in their classrooms, justifying their failure to enforce order on the grounds that imposition of silence interferes with spontaneous expression and creates unnecessary fears. "A quiet classroom may be an awfully fearful situation for someone," said one teacher, whose classroom grew so noisy that the students themselves clamored for quiet. According to Henry, the classroom teaches children "their first lessons in how to live in the 'friendly,' 'relaxed' climates of the contemporary bureaucracies of business and government."*

* When Ann Landers advised a high school student to complain to the principal about other students who carried on sexual activities in the cafeteria, she was told that the "principal is probably a gutless wonder" and that "the teachers know what goes on and who the offensive kids are, but they don't want to stir up any trouble so they keep quiet." The same column carried a letter from a sixteen-year-old girl who insisted that adolescents complaining of "being under [their] parents' thumb" should consider themselves lucky not to have "parents who take the easy way out and don't stand up to their kids because they hate the hassle."

The appearance of permissiveness conceals a stringent system of controls, all the more effective because it avoids direct confrontations between authorities and the people on whom they seek to impose their will. Because confrontations provoke arguments about principle, the authorities whenever possible delegate discipline to someone else so that they themselves can pose as advisers, "resource persons," and friends. Thus parents rely on doctors, psychiatrists, and the child's own peers to impose rules on the child and to see that he conforms to them. If the child refuses to eat what his parents think he ought to eat, the parents appeal to medical authority. If he is unruly, they call in a psychiatrist to help the child with his "problem."* In this way, parents make their own problem—insubordination—the child's. Similarly at school, the child finds himself surrounded by authorities who wish only to help. If one of the students gets "out of line," they send him to a counselor for "guidance." The students themselves, according to Edgar Friedenberg's study of the American high school, reject both authoritarian and libertarian measures and regard social control as "a technical problem, to be referred to the right expert for solution." Thus if a teacher finds an unruly student smoking in the washroom, he should neither "beat him calmly and coolly and with emotional restraint" or publicly humiliate him, on the one hand, nor ignore the offense, on the other hand, as a minor infraction that should not contribute to the student's reputation as a troublemaker. The teacher should refer him instead to the school psychiatrist. Beating him would make him more unmanageable than ever, in the students' view, whereas the psychiatric solution, in effect, enlists his own cooperation in the school's attempt to control him.

Human Relations on the Job: The Factory as a Family Experts in personnel management have introduced similar tech-

* "The community has expressed its concern for childhood by creating institutions," wrote Van Waters. "It is increasingly common for births to take place in hospitals, infant feeding has become an esoteric rite few parents would attempt

niques into the modern corporation, ostensibly as a means of "humanizing" the workplace. The ideology of modern management draws on the same body of therapeutic theory and practice that informs progressive education and progressive childrearing. Recent efforts to "democratize" industrial relations bring to a full circle the development that began when experts in scientific management began to study group dynamics in the office and factory in order to remove friction and raise output. Social scientists then applied the ideas first worked out in the study of small groups to study and treatment of the family, arguing that most domestic conflicts originated in the attempt to impose outmoded authoritarian controls on an institution that was evolving from an authoritarian to a democratic form. By the 1950s, almost all psychiatrists, social workers, and social scientists condemned the values associated with the traditional or authoritarian family. "Our textbooks," wrote one team of experts, "discuss the 'democratic' family system and the sharing of authority."

In the late fifties and sixties, industrial relations experts began to extend these ideas to the problems of management. In *The Human Side of Enterprise* (1960), Douglas McGregor urged corporate executives to accept the "limits of authority." Defining authority, too crudely, as command sanctioned by force, McGregor argued that authority represented an outmoded form of social control in an age of "interdependence." Command remained effective, he reasoned, only so long as workers occupied a debased, dependent position in the industrial hierarchy and found it difficult to satisfy even their material needs. The psychiatrist Abraham Maslow had demonstrated that as soon as human beings satisfy the basic need for bread, shelter, and security, they devote their attention to satisfying the need for "self-actualization." Yet industrial managers, McGregor complained, still took a "carrot and stick" approach to the worker, unscientifically assuming that people hate work and have to be coerced into performing it or enticed with material rewards.

without expert assistance; when children are ill, they are cared for by specialists far better equipped than parents. . . . At every stage in the child's life some modern organized agency will say to the parent: 'We can do this better than you can.'

McGregor made it clear that he did not wish to see an abdication of managerial responsibility. Like Dr. Spock and Dr. Bruch, he rejected the "permissive" approaches of his predecessors, which had allegedly contaminated early experiments in "human relations." Experience had overturned the assumption that "employee satisfaction" led to greater productivity or that "industrial health [flowed] automatically from the elimination of . . . conflict." The worker still needed direction, but he had to be approached as a partner in the enterprise, not as a child. The enlightened executive encouraged his subordinates to participate in group discussions, to "communicate" their needs and suggestions to management, and even to make "constructive" criticisms. Just as marriage counselors had learned to accept conflict as a normal part of domestic life, so McGregor tried to impress a similar point of view on corporate managers. He told them that they made a mistake in regarding the interests of the individual as opposed to those of the group. "If we look to the family, we might recognize the possibilities inherent in the opposite point of view."

Research into small groups, according to McGregor, showed that groups function best when everyone speaks his mind; when people listen as well as speak; when disagreements surface without causing "obvious tensions"; when the "chairman of the board" does not try to dominate his subordinates; and when decisions rest on consensus.* These precepts, which by this time had be-

* McGregor's influential book, so characteristic an expression of the culture of the fifties, not only complemented the psychiatric attack on the authoritarian family, which came to fruition in that decade, it restated many of the themes of the Parsonian sociology of the family. In 1961, Parsons criticized David Riesman's analysis of the abdication of parental authority (in *The Lonely Crowd*) on the grounds that modern parents best equip the young for life in a complex industrial society when they encourage them to become self-reliant, instead of attempting to supervise every detail of the child's upbringing. Like Parsons, McGregor argues that what looked like an abdication of authority—in this case, managerial authority—represented instead a transition to a more effective, scientific, therapeutic form of control. Just as reactionary alarmists (sometimes in common with well-meaning but misguided social theorists) prematurely deplored the collapse of parental authority, so reactionary businessmen predictably denounced the new softness imported into business by industrial relations experts, demanding a crackdown on unions, a reversal of the New Deal, and a return to the good old days of industrial

come the common coin of the social sciences, summarize the therapeutic view of authority. The growing acceptance of that view, at all levels of American society, makes it possible to preserve hierarchical forms of organization in the guise of "participation." It provides a society dominated by corporate elites with an antielitist ideology. The popularization of therapeutic modes of thought discredits authority, especially in the home and the classroom, while leaving domination uncriticized. Therapeutic forms of social control, by softening or eliminating the adversary relation between subordinates and superiors, make it more and more difficult for citizens to defend themselves against the state or for workers to resist the demands of the corporation. As the ideas of guilt and innocence lose their moral and even legal meaning, those in power no longer enforce their rules by means of the authoritative edicts of judges, magistrates, teachers, and preachers. Society no longer expects authorities to articulate a clearly reasoned, elaborately justified code of law and morality; nor does it expect the young to internalize the moral standards of the community. It demands only conformity to the conventions of everyday intercourse, sanctioned by psychiatric definitions of normal behavior.

In the hierarchies of work and power, as in the family, the decline of authority does not lead to the collapse of social constraints. It merely deprives those constraints of a rational basis. Just as the parent's failure to administer just punishment to the child undermines the child's self-esteem rather than strengthening it, so the corruptibility of public authorities—their acquiescence in minor forms of wrongdoing—reminds the subordinate of his subordination by making him dependent on the indulgence of those above him. The new-style bureaucrat, whose "ideology and character support hierarchy even though he is neither paternalistic nor authoritarian," as Michael Maccoby puts it in his study of

autocracy. McGregor had no patience with this outmoded outlook. It rested, in his view, on a misunderstanding of authority and a simplification of the alternative modes of exercising power. "Abdication is not an appropriate antithesis to authoritarianism. . . . Only if we can free ourselves from the notion that we are limited to a single dimension—that of more or less authority—will we escape from our present dilemma."

the corporate "gamesman," no longer orders his inferiors around; but he has discovered subtler means of keeping them in their place. Even though his underlings often realize that they have been "conned, pushed around, and manipulated," they find it hard to resist such easygoing oppression. The diffusion of responsibility in large organizations, moreover, enables the modern manager to delegate discipline to others, to blame unpopular decisions on the company in general, and thus to preserve his standing as a friendly adviser to those beneath him. Yet his entire demeanor conveys to them that he remains a winner in a game most of them are destined to lose.

Since everyone allegedly plays this game by the same rules, no one can begrudge him his success; but neither can the losers escape the heavy sense of their own failure. In a society without authority, the lower orders no longer experience oppression as guilt. Instead, they internalize a grandiose idea of the opportunities open to all, together with an inflated opinion of their own capacities. If the lowly man resents those more highly placed, it is only because he suspects them of grandly violating the regulations of the game, as he would like to do himself if he dared. It never occurs to him to insist on a new set of rules.

VIII

The Flight from Feeling: Sociopsychology of the Sex War

Suddenly she wished she was with some other man and not with Edward. . . . Pia looked at Edward. She looked at his red beard, his immense spectacles. I don't like him, she thought. That red beard, those immense spectacles. . . .

Pia said to Edward that he was the only person she had ever loved for this long. "How long is it?" Edward asked. It was seven months.

DONALD BARTHELME

I think more and more . . . that there is no such thing as rationality in relationships. I think you just have to say okay that's what you feel right now and what are we going to do about it. . . . I believe everybody should really be able to basically do what they want to do as long as it's not hurting anybody else.

LIBERATED BRIDEGROOM

The Trivialization of Personal Relations Bertrand Russell once predicted that the socialization of reproduction—the supersession of the family by the state—would "make sex love itself more trivial," encourage "a certain triviality in all personal relations," and "make it far more difficult to take an interest in anything after one's own death." At first glance, recent developments appear to have refuted the first part of this prediction. Americans today invest personal relations, particularly the relations between men and women, with undiminished emotional importance. The