THE PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF NARCISSISM

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In this chapter, we will examine the accounts of narcissism given by Freud, Melanie Klein, W. R. D. Fairbairn and Harry Guntrip, Heinz Kohut, Otto Kernberg, Bela Grunberger, and Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel. These theorists, all of whom are psychoanalysts, represent diverse theoretical perspectives. The basic disagreement is between those who hold to a conception of narcissism influenced by classical Freudian drive theory and those whose conception is more strongly influenced by object relations theory. The drive perspective sees primary narcissism as an original objectless state—the libidinal cathexis of the self. The object relations perspective denies the very possibility of an objectless state, viewing narcissism as though it were a schizoid disorder, characterized by an exaggerated attachment to archaic internal objects. Yet, these differences may be less profound than first appears. We will see that not only is there considerable agreement on the symptoms of narcissism, but that the theoretical differences can sometimes be bridged. Though drive theory and object relations theory may be incommensurable, their accounts of narcissism are not necessarily so.

The stress throughout this chapter will be upon what these theorists

share, and how they can sometimes be interpreted as building upon each other's work, even when they do not explicitly state that they are doing so. Indeed, an effort is made to theoretically bridge the differences. The goal is not theoretical reconciliation for its own sake, but to establish that there exists an account of narcissism shared by a number of theorists, even if there is no shared theory of psychoanalysis. Little in this chapter is original, except the way in which very different theorists are brought together. My goal is an account that draws together a number of widely shared assumptions regarding narcissism and that stresses the continuity between pathological and normal narcissism. This view of narcissism is similar to Freud's view of neurosis as an intensification of developmental conflicts faced by every individual.[36] It emphasizes how narcissism stands behind almost every human action, in that it connects almost every action with its consequences for self-esteem. As Grunberger puts it, "One could regard all the manifestations of civilization as a kaleidoscope of different attempts by man to restore narcissistic omnipotence."[37]

Grunberger states dramatically what should already be apparent. *Narcissism* is not merely a label for a pathology that seems to have become more common in recent years.[38] It is also a world view—an account of the meaning of human action as it affects self-esteem and the quest for human perfection generally. It is precisely because narcissism is such a rich, multidimensional concept that it lends itself to elucidation by philosophical

speculation. But in order to understand the philosophical dimension of narcissism, it is first necessary to turn to a rather detailed discussion of its place in psychoanalytic thought. To short-circuit this aspect by turning too quickly to its philosophical dimension would be to rob the concept of narcissism of its depth. The impatient reader, however, may wish to turn directly to the conclusion of this chapter, where the results of my study are summarized, and my theory of narcissism is outlined.

As with most psychoanalytic concepts, the place to begin— and to a considerable degree to end — is with Freud. But first, one point-must be clarified. Though a number of different theorists are considered and considerable effort is made to bridge their differences, this is not a universal account of narcissism. It could not be: there is simply too much divergence among the various theorists. The result is that I emphasize some themes and theorists at the expense of others. Thus, narcissism as a quest for fusion is emphasized over narcissistic rage. Narcissism as a quest for wholeness and perfection is emphasized over narcissism as an attitude toward others characterized by exploitation and devaluation. Envy is emphasized over projective identification. In general, the closeness of narcissism to schizoid phenomena is emphasized, possibly at the expense of narcissism as a particular orientation of the drives. As far as theorists are concerned, it is the object relations theorists, as well as Kohut, and the French psychoanalysts Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel who are given most attention. Less

attention is paid to the so-called Freudian Kleinians, such as Joan Riviere, Margaret Mahler, and Edith Jacobson.

It might be argued that the account of narcissism given here is biased, in that, from the beginning, it is designed to explain the most abstract philosophical expressions of narcissism. However, I am not sure that this constitutes a valid criticism. In general I stress the metapsychology of narcissism—what the theory of narcissism has to say about the human condition, what men and women most seek, what they most fear, and why. Thus, I downplay more symptom-oriented accounts.

The account of narcissism given by Kernberg possesses a somewhat anomalous status in this chapter. Because his is such a theoretically influential and profound account, it is given considerable attention. However, this attention is not fully reflected in the theory of narcissism developed at the conclusion of this chapter, which has a more philosophical orientation. Kernberg's theory stresses the great distance between normal and pathological narcissism, not the continuity that makes it possible to apply theories of pathological narcissism to "normal" cultural and philosophical phenomena. Yet, important aspects of Kernberg's theory are adopted, nevertheless, in part, by drawing on Arnold Rothstein's study (The *Narcissistic Pursuit of Perfection)* of the continuities between normal, neurotic, borderline, and psychotic expressions of narcissism.

Is the Metapsychology of Narcissism a Science?

In *The Foundations of Psychoanalysis: A Philosophical Critique* Adolf Grünbaum charges that at this point in its history psychoanalysis is a failed science. Earlier, Karl Popper argued that psychoanalysis is a pseudoscience.[39] These charges deserve to be taken seriously, especially since so many psychoanalysts still refer, sometimes in a tone of desperation, to "their science." However, my focus here is upon the most abstract, philosophical, metapsychological aspects of the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism. At this level psychoanalysis is more akin to a metaphysics, a world view, or literary account of the meaning of life. In claiming this, I am not suggesting that a "hermeneutic" account of psychoanalysis somehow bypasses the normal demands of scientific rigor, only that the metapsychology of narcissism can be fruitful even if it is not (yet) testable.

Popper never intended that the falsifiability criterion, by which he sought to distinguish science from non-science, be seen as distinguishing meaningful from nonmeaningful statements. The demarcation criterion was aimed at the Vienna Circle and sought to demonstrate quite the opposite: that the class of testable statements was not identical with the class of meaningful ones.[40] Even Grünbaum ignores Freud's metapsychology (focusing instead on the theory of repression), agreeing that Freud understood this aspect of his work as speculation rather than science.[41] It is in this spirit that the theory of

narcissism is considered here: as speculation about the deepest sources of what makes human life worth living and worth living well. Whether this speculation yields dividends will depend on whether it can illuminate more traditional philosophical accounts concerned with this issue. It is in this spirit that we now turn to Freud.

Freud

In the beginning, says Freud in "On Narcissism" (1914), the human being has two sexual objects: "himself and the woman who tends him, and thereby we postulate a primary narcissism in everyone, which may in the long run manifest itself as dominating his object choice."[42] Primary narcissism is not a perversion, of course, but the first stage of psychosexual development, in which the young child's libidinal interests are centered upon himself and his own body. Earlier, in his account of the Schreber case (1911), Freud distinguished between an even earlier stage of autoeroticism and narcissism per se.[43] Though Freud conceptualizes narcissism in various ways, calling it, for example, "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation," the underlying model is that of the amoeba and its pseudopod. The amoeba represents pure libido, the energy associated with the erotic drives. ("We call," says Freud, "by that name [libido] the energy ... of those instincts which have to do with all that may be comprised under the word 'love'."[44]) The more the amoeba extends a pseudopod of libidinal

energy out toward objects, the less is available to the amoeba itself. Narcissism can be represented by an amoeba with no pseudopod at all; it directs none of its libido outward toward objects but keeps it all for itself. The state of being head over heels in love, on the other hand, is represented by an amoeba as virtually pure pseudopod; there is no libido left for the amoeba itself, all is given over to object love.

Freud regards the development of the ego as in large measure a matter of abandoning one's primary narcissism and with it the libido's investment in the self. In place of self-love comes love of human objects, so-called anaclitic (literally, leaning-up-against) relations. However, as the amoeba model makes clear there is a cost involved: in object love the self is depleted of libido, and there is a necessary decrease in narcissistic satisfaction. While being loved in return may provide considerable narcissistic gratification, it is not sufficient to compensate for the loss. It is in this context that Freud introduces the concept of the ego ideal. "As always where the libido is concerned, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood. . . . That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood—the time when he was his own ideal."[45]

In Freud's later work the ego ideal is almost completely absorbed into the concept of the superego, but here the ego ideal is conceptualized as an

ideal standard of perfection, one that is compelling because it draws on the unconscious memory of the first, most complete state of perfection, when the infant was source and object of all the good in the world: the state of primary narcissism. As the individual matures, so too does the ego ideal, which comes to include social and cultural ideals. To the extent that the individual is able to live up to these ideals, thereby reducing the distance between ego and ego ideal, narcissistic satisfaction ensues. To be sure, the satisfaction that stems from living up to a mature ego ideal is highly modulated, or sublimated. It remains narcissistic satisfaction, however, insofar as the gratification is obtained not from external objects, but from a relationship with oneself, that is, between ego and ego ideal.

Because the mature ego ideal is modeled on ideals available in the society, it stands in a close relationship to conscience, the psychic agency that internalizes parental and societal standards. The mature ego ideal thus imposes conditions upon the gratification of libido, censoring modes incompatible with itself and thereby civilizing narcissism. Indeed, in "The Ego and the Id" (1923), Freud treats the ego ideal as indistinguishable from the superego.[46] The narcissistic aim of being loved and approved of by one's self becomes merged with the desire to be loved and approved of by the ideal internalized parent, the superego.[47]

Freud argues that the ego ideal is of great importance in understanding

group psychology. In “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1921), he says that narcissism could be an almost insuperable barrier to the formation of groups, but that if members of a group share a common ego ideal, their narcissistic self-love can be redirected toward this ideal, thereby binding them together.[48] As Freud puts it, “A primary group of this kind is a number of individuals who have substituted one and the same object for their ego ideal and have consequently identified themselves with another in their ego.”[49] It is this aspect of narcissism that Adorno describes as ‘‘among Freud’s most magnificent discoveries.”[50]

Several of the analysts whom we will consider reject key assumptions of Freud’s argument. Some reject the claim that primary narcissism constitutes an original objectless state and therefore reject the sharp dichotomy between narcissistic and object love proposed by Freud. Most also reject the hydraulic, amoeba model, in which more libido available for object love means less available for self-love. Indeed, there is probably no Freudian assumption that is more widely rejected, with the possible exception of the death drive. Nevertheless, many of the basic themes outlined by Freud continue to dominate contemporary discussions of narcissism. Prime among these is Freud’s insight that narcissism is never overcome, but only rechanneled, because it represents an especially complete and profound mode of gratification, and man is loath to abandon a pleasure once experienced. If the ego ideal is immature (which means, in effect, not well integrated with the

superego), this rechanneling will be ineffective and will lead to perversion: the quest for immediate gratification regardless of the appropriateness of the setting or the object. If the ego level is mature, on the other hand, narcissism may serve as a stimulus for the achievement of the highest ideals. For in striving to realize socially valued ideals, the ego moves closer to becoming one with its own ego ideal, thereby recapturing something of the perfection that the individual knew when he was the source and object of all the good in the world. In this formulation one sees the source of the dualism of narcissism noted by so many analysts: that it connects the most primitive and selfish desires with the highest achievements of mankind, motivating the saint as well as the sinner.

Christopher Lasch suggests that the two conceptions of narcissism in Freud's 1914 essay are not readily integrated. Narcissism as described by the amoeba model, in which libido is drawn into the self, is not the same thing as primary narcissism, which is prior to all object relations (from which libido could be withdrawn) — indeed, prior to the awareness of separate objects altogether.[51] Lasch would seem to be correct. This "blissful state of mind" in which the infant is "possessor of all perfections" seems characterized more by an oceanic dispersal of libido, than by its withdrawal. This is perhaps explained by the fact that at the stage of primary narcissism the infant has not yet differentiated itself from the world. Thus, the distinction between extension and withdrawal of libido is not pertinent. From the infant's

perspective, the infant and its libido are all that exist. This point makes a difference, we shall see, in how Grunberger's theory of narcissism is interpreted. Lasch goes on to suggest that it may have been Freud's growing interest in narcissism that led him to the nirvana principle—the longing for absolute equilibrium, for the cessation of all stimulation. This is certainly the path that Marcuse follows, transforming narcissism into the nirvana principle, thereby avoiding the theoretical problems associated with seeing nirvana as the goal of the death instinct.

Though subject to various interpretations, Freud's later work certainly evinces an increasing concern with a part of the mind that seeks rather than instinctual gratification, a primordial, oceanic contentment beyond pleasure, beyond desire. One sees this especially in Beyond the Pleasure Principle (1920) and *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930). Lasch points out that this line of thought converges with Freud's discovery of the Minoan-Mycenean stage of psychological development, preceding the oedipal stage. At this stage the fundamental issues are not the jealousy associated with a three-way relationship, but the infant's earlier dyadic relationship with its mother. As Freud puts it in "Female Sexuality" (1931):

> Since this phase [the pre-oedipal phase in women] allows room for all the fixations and repressions from which we trace the origin of the neuroses, it would seem as though we must retract the universality of the thesis that the oedipus complex is the nucleus of the neuroses. . . . Our insight into this early, pre-oedipus, phase in girls comes to us as a surprise, like the

> discovery, in another field, of the Minoan-Mycenean civilization behind the civilization of Greece.[52]

It was Freud's growing interest in the earliest stages of emotional development that seems to have led him to see separation anxiety as the prototype of all other forms of anxiety.[53] But it is not decisive for our purposes whether Lasch's interpretation attributes more coherence to the development of Freud's thought on these issues than was actually the case.[54] What is important is that it is this general line of thought that characterizes so much post-Freudian work on narcissism. In general, this line runs from narcissism as a libidinal stage to narcissism as a doorway to a range of issues concerned with separation, individuation, and a search for satisfaction that lies beyond libidinal gratification.

Melanie Klein

Melanie Klein, who was a follower of Freud, began her work in 1919, when she was nearly forty. Although she stressed the continuity between her work and Freud's, others have seen her work as profoundly revisionist. Indeed, the controversy between her and Anna Freud almost split the British Psychoanalytic Society during the early and mid-forties. The Society maintained its institutional coherence only by separating into the so-called A and B schools.[55] Today Kleinian and non-Kleinian analysts generally agree that Klein's work diverged more sharply from Freud's than she was prepared

to admit. Klein worked mostly with children, some as young as two and three-quarters.[56] She was among the very first to employ genuine psychoanalysis—as opposed to educative techniques — with children. Her method was to provide the child with little toys and to interpret the child's play to him or her. One result of her focus on young children was to push back the beginnings of Freud's psychosexual stages to earlier and earlier in life. For example, she came to set the beginning of the oedipus complex at about six months of age.

Perhaps her most fundamental difference with Freud lies in her assumption that the ego is present at birth.[57] This, of course, is contrary to the Freudian position that the ego is a later outgrowth of the id, concerned with mediating the demands of the id with the constraints and opportunities of the environment. The nascent ego, according to Klein, is terribly weak and unintegrated, with a propensity to fragment and disintegrate through anxiety. Indeed, fear of disintegration is perhaps the deepest human fear. In this regard, too, she disagrees with Freud, suggesting that because the infant possesses an ego, it is capable of fearing total disintegration—that is, death. Freud, on the contrary, argued that neither the infant nor the small child had any concept of death, and that the fear of death is a later outgrowth of the fear of castration.[58] But according to Klein, disintegration anxiety stems from the operation of the death drive within the infant. From the beginning of life, says Klein, the infant experiences a vast conflict between its life and death drives. Splitting, projection, and introjection are its first defense mechanisms. In

order to cope with the anxiety generated by its own aggression, the ego splits that part of itself off and projects the death drive outward. The libidinal (life) drive is also split off from the ego and projected outward. Klein is unique among psychoanalysts in transforming Freud's metapsychological speculations about the death drive into a working clinical hypothesis.

The infant experiences his world in a Manichaean fashion, which Klein describes in terms of the good breast and the bad breast; the latter becomes a devouring persecutor (paranoid projection). The aim of the infantile ego is to introject and identify with the good object, while keeping the devouring persecuting bad objects at bay. It is the good breast that becomes the core of the ego, the grain of sand around which the pearl that is the ego is formed.[59] While the good object is felt to be whole and intact, the bad object is generally perceived as fragmented. Why is explained by Hanna Segal, a student of Klein's. "This is so partly because it is a part of the ego fragmented by the death instinct which is projected, and partly because the oral sadism which expresses itself in biting leads to the hated object being perceived as being bitten up into pieces."[60]

The infant's fundamental anxiety is that persecutors will destroy him and his good objects. The primary defense is a series of schizoid (splitting) mechanisms, such as exaggerating the difference between the good and the bad objects. Here Klein introduces a new psychological mechanism:

projective identification, which as Segal points out, evolves from primitive projection. In projective identification it is not merely the impulse, but also parts of the baby's body, such as the mouth and the penis, as well as its bodily products, such as its urine and feces, that are in phantasy projected into the object. This is why the bad breast does not merely withhold milk, but also bites, penetrates, and soils the infant. Not only the infant's vast rage and aggression, but also those bodily parts capable of expressing aggression, are projected onto the bad breast.[61] Thus, what is involved in the paranoid-schizoid position is not only a projection of aggression outward, where it becomes the persecutor, but also splitting of the ego—a schozoid phenomenon — in which parts of the self (including the physical self, the primitive body ego) are also projected outward, in the mode of projective identification.

However terrifying—and in Klein's case studies the young child's unconscious world reads like a nightmare, filled with devouring breasts, poisonous feces, and dismembered bodies—the paranoid-schizoid position is a necessary developmental stage. It allows the infant to cope with its fears of disintegration and annihilation by projecting them outward and provides it with an entirely good object with which to identify. Obviously, however, the paranoid-schizoid position must be transcended, lest the individual remain permanently vulnerable to schizophrenia and other disorders characterized by the fragmentation of the self. To explain how the paranoid-schizoid

position is transcended, Klein introduces the depressive position. The term position is important. It suggests not only that the events characterized by a position may be contemporaneous with those associated with other positions (as opposed to the sequence of stages), but also that the positions are never entirely given up. Thus, the depressive position comes into existence very shortly after the emergence of the paranoid-schizoid position—Klein sets the emergence of the depressive position as early as the third month of life—and alternates with it, generally in quite modulated or toned-down form, throughout life.

The depressive position commences when the infant comes to realize that the good and the bad breast are one, and that they belong to an integrated object, its mother. The result is feelings of guilt that the murderous aggression against the bad breast was in fact directed at an object that is also the source of goodness and anxiety lest the good object be harmed through the infant's own aggression. Feelings of loss are also involved, stemming from the recognition that the source of goodness is outside the infant's self, beyond its omnipotent control. The depressive position is the working through of this situation, which gives rise to the desire to make reparation to the object, to make it whole again, after having murderously destroyed it in fantasy a thousand times. While the depressive position evokes sadness and mourning, it is at the same time the path to wholeness. For in recognizing that mother, father, and others are independent whole objects, the infant begins to

experience his own wholeness. Whether this is cause, effect, or both is not entirely clear from Klein's writings, but the process itself is quite clear: it is only by a splitting of the ego that the infant is able to hold the good and the bad object rigidly apart. Recognition that the object is whole, good, and bad, requires a relatively integrated ego. Although this recognition may begin as early as three months of age, it is a lifelong process, in which paranoid-schizoid and depressive elements are frequently mixed. Klein suggests, for example, that in the early stages of the depressive position the guilt experienced by the infant over its own aggression may also take the form of phantasies of persecution.[62]

If the anxiety associated with the paranoid-schizoid position is not too great, the depressive position will be entered into naturally. However, it is not only anxiety, but also envy, that constitutes a barrier to the integrative process associated with the depressive position. Indeed, Klein is the first psychoanalytic theorist to make envy—such an important experience in everyday life—a key psychoanalytic concept. For Klein, envy is an oral and anal-sadistic expression of the destructive impulses and thus has a constitutional basis.[63] Klein makes a series of careful distinctions among envy, jealousy, and greed. Envy is more primitive than jealousy. Jealousy seeks to exclude another from the source of the good, its psychoanalytic paradigm being the oedipus conflict. Envy is far more destructive, for it seeks to destroy the good itself, frequently out of sheer spite: if the envious person

cannot have all the good himself, if he cannot be the good itself, then no one else shall have it either. Envy thus serves a defensive function; for, if the good is destroyed, then there is no reason to feel the discomfort of envy. Greed, by contrast, aims at possessing all the goodness of the object, and any damage done to the object, or even a third party, is incidental.

Envy is damaging primarily because it empties the world of goodness. Excessive envy interferes with the primal split between the good and the bad breast. The building up of a good object becomes virtually impossible, because even the good is spoiled.[64] The individual finds himself alone in a world of persecutors, with no good objects to fall back on, around which to consolidate the ego. It is for this reason that Klein states:

> There are very pertinent psychological reasons why envy ranks among the seven 'deadly sins.' I would even suggest that it is unconsciously felt to be the greatest sin of all, because it spoils and harms the good object which is the source of life. This view is consistent with the view described by Chaucer in The Parsons *Tale:* 'It is certain that envy is the worst sin that is; for all other sins are sins only against one virtue, whereas envy is against all virtue and against all goodness.'[65]

Just as important, envy interferes with reparation, the process associated with the depressive position. Because envy recoils from good itself, it does not feel guilt and loss on account of aggressive impulses directed at the good-bad object. Envy is incompatible with the goal of restoring the object to a state of wholeness, for that would only enhance envy. By standing as a

barrier to working through the depressive position, envy thus stands in the way of consolidation and integration of the ego. Indeed, excessive envy gives rise to a vicious circle: the more the good internal object is spoiled, the more impoverished the ego feels, which increases envy still further.[66] Perhaps the most ironic expression of envy occurs in what is called "negative therapeutic reaction." Sometimes, says Klein, patients are unable to accept the analyst's help precisely because they see the analyst as having something good to offer. It is as though the patient must remain ill in order to deny the worth of the analyst and his technique.[67]

Although Klein does not develop the point, it appears that there is a relationship between envy and narcissism.[68] Indeed, envy is frequently associated with narcissism, as in *DSM-III*.[69] Klein sees envy as rage at the recognition that the source of good is outside oneself and that one lacks control over it. Narcissism defends against this recognition, via phantasies of omnipotence and total control which in effect deny that there is any good outside oneself. At one level, narcissism serves as a defense against the unpleasant experience of envy: but at a deeper level, it may protect the individual not just against envy, but against a total loss of goodness in the world. Since envy seeks to destroy all that is good, were it successful, it would literally make life worthless. For the individual would then live in a world filled only with bad objects, a world of his own making. By supporting the phantasy that the individual is the source of all goodness and worth,

narcissism can act as a defense against an enraged and envious self that would make life on earth a living hell. As we shall see, Kernberg seems to build on this insight. These considerations are supported by the striking similarity between envy and what is frequently called "narcissistic rage": a vast hatred and aggression directed toward persons and circumstances that fail to support fantasies of narcissistic omnipotence.[70]

The possibility that narcissism may serve as a defense against envy is not the only impact of Klein's work on the theory of narcissism. It has a more theoretical impact as well. Klein rejects Freud's view that narcissism constitutes an original objectless state.

> The hypothesis that a stage extending over several months precedes object-relations (i.e., the stage of primary narcissism] implies that — except for the libido attached to the infant's own body— impulses, phantasies, anxieties, and defenses are not present in him, or are not related to an object, that is to say, they would operate in vacuo. The analysis of very young children has taught me that there is no instinctual urge, no anxiety situation, no mental process which does not involve, objects, external or internal; in other words, object-relations are at the centre of emotional life . . . from the beginning.[71]

As Greenberg and Mitchell point out in *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic* Theory, Klein's rejection of a state of primary narcissism is of considerably more theoretical importance than might appear at first glance.[72] Narcissism has been invoked to explain a wide variety of clinical phenomena, ranging from tics (Sandor Ferenczi) to schizophrenia (Freud), and as a key to

understanding rigid resistance within the psychoanalytic setting (Karl Abraham).[73] Klein and her associates took issue with these explanations, all of which assume that narcissism reflects an original objectless state. They argued that such apparently narcissistic manifestations as tics and schizophrenia reflect, rather, an intense relationship to internal objects — namely, images and phantasies.[74] Klein thus replaces Freud's distinction between narcissistic and object libido with a distinction between internal and external object relationships. This move opened the door to the development of object relations theory, which, as we shall see, puts object seeking at the center of emotional life.

Narcissism or Schizoid Phenomenon?

Klein's reinterpretation of the relationship between narcissistic and object libido in terms of the relationship between internal and external objects allows us to see more clearly the relationship between narcissism and schizoid phenomena. Although Freud saw a connection, as noted above, he saw it almost entirely in terms of their both being characterized by a withdrawal of libido from the world.[75] Klein allows us to characterize this relationship between narcissism and schizoid phenomena more precisely. However, relationship may not be the most accurate term. Greenberg and Mitchell suggest that the difference between narcissism and schizoid disorder is less a matter of clinical differences than of terminological ones.[76] The term

narcissism, they note, despite its drastic revision in recent years by analysts such as Edith Jacobson and Otto Kernberg, suggests a particular orientation of the drives. The term schizoid, on the other hand, refers to a splitting of the ego, a response to early and later object relationships.

> The term "narcissism" tends to be employed diagnostically by those proclaiming loyalty to the drive model (Kernberg) and mixed model theorists (Kohut), who are interested in preserving a tie to drive theory. "Schizoid" tends to be employed diagnostically by adherents of relational models (Fairbairn, Guntrip), who are interested in articulating their break with drive theory. . . . These two differing diagnoses and accompanying formulations are applied to patients who are essentially similar, by theorists who start with very different conceptual premises and ideological affiliations.[77]

Klein's work stands as a bridge between these two conceptions. By in effect reformulating libidinal issues in terms of the individual's relationship to his objects, she connects narcissism (seen classically as an orientation of the drives) to schizoid phenomena (seen by Fairbairn and Guntrip as a retreat from a world of external objects to a world of internal ones).

Recognizing the essential similarity between narcissism and schizoid phenomena helps us to connect the phenomenology of narcissism with its theory. In the symptomatology of narcissism, feelings of fragmentation, diffusion, unreality, and emptiness are central. These symptoms, difficult to explain entirely in terms of libido theory, become more readily explicable in terms of the splitting of the ego from itself (fragmentation and diffusion) and

its detachment from the world of external object relations (unreality and emptiness). The latter account lends itself to theory building. Kernberg (whose allegiance to the drive model does not prevent him from drawing heavily on object relations theory), for example, goes on to characterize the turning inward associated with narcissism as a fusing of the ego (self-representation) with idealized, grandiose images of the parents, so that the self becomes defensively confused with these grandiose images. That is, narcissism is characterized in terms of a particular relationship to internal objects. In the subsequent discussion of narcissism its essential similarity with schizoid phenomena will be stressed.

Klein has been sharply criticized, especially, perhaps, by those who developed her insights into what has come to be known as object relations theory. It is frequently noted, for example, that real people often play a relatively small role in her accounts. It is not the child's actual parents, but his images and phantasies of them, that are central. The possibility that the behavior of the actual parents might vastly heighten the child's anxiety and aggression plays a surprising small role in her system. Rather, parents are screens against which a child projects his rage and love. It is also argued that Klein has no real conception of how psychic structure develops in a child. Although she presents a marvelously rich, colorful, variegated picture of a child's phantasy life, how these phantasies interact to help build psychic structure is unclear. It is often argued that these defects in Klein's system

stem from her failure to recognize how thoroughly she had revised Freud's system. In particular, while she writes of drives in much the same language as Freud, she in effect redefines them. For Freud, drives are psychic representations— ideas—of bodily stimuli: they are not the bodily stimuli themselves.[78] For Klein, however, drives are not directionless, tension-producing stimuli that only secondarily become attached to objects, which serve as the vehicle of gratification. Rather, they are object-related from the start. As Greenberg and Mitchell put it, "Drives, for Klein, are relationships."[79] Libido and aggression are aimed at particular objects in particular ways —for example, the good and the bad breast—from the very beginning. It is this ambiguity in Klein's system that makes her such a useful transitional figure; for she serves as a link to Freud, even as her work leads away from drive theory, toward a focus on relationships.

Fairbairn and Guntrip

W. R. D. Fairbairn and Harry Guntrip are the purest representatives of the British object relations school. Fairbairn's work is strongly informed by the work of Klein (Fairbairn wrote in Scotland in the 1940s and 1950s, when Klein's influence there was particularly strong), and he used her language, especially that referring to internal object relations, throughout his life. Yet, he transformed her work even more thoroughly than she transformed the work of Freud. For Fairbairn, objects are no longer screens against which the

individual projects his own impulses; they are real people. But Fairbairn never became a social psychologist; he remained a depth psychologist. Although Guntrip is perhaps better known than Fairbairn, his work is an elaboration of Fairbairn's, and we will focus here on Fairbairn.

Fairbairn makes explicit what is only implicit in Klein: namely, that drives, especially the libido, are object-seeking. The goal of the drives is not pleasure, but relationships. The erogenous zones are not ends in themselves, as Freud would have it, but what Fairbairn calls "signposts to the object," paths to relationships. Their satisfaction is not the goal of relationships, but the means to relationships.[80] Ernest Jones succinctly captures the difference between Freud and Fairbairn in his introduction to Fairbairn's An *Object-Relations Theory of the Personality.* "Instead of starting, as Freud did, from stimulation of the nervous system [due to drives and excitation] . . . Dr. Fairbairn starts at the centre of the personality, the ego, and depicts its strivings and difficulties in its endeavour to reach an object where it may find support."[81] To be sure, some individuals appear to seek only libidinal pleasure, and the relationship with the object of pleasure is strictly instrumental. Such a pursuit is a form of pathological compensation, however, a "means of mitigating the failure" in the pursuit of genuine relationships.[82]

Fairbairn sees the earliest months of life not as a state of self-absorbed primary narcissism, but in terms of the infant's merger with the mother, a

"state of identification with the object."[83] The infant is intensely involved with others, but at the same time he is not fully differentiated from them. This is the psychodynamic of infancy. In a certain sense one may say that for Fairbairn, as for Freud, the beginning is also the end or, at least, sharply influences the end. In Freud's view, the individual begins life as a narcissist, detached from all object relationships, and remains a pleasure-seeking monad all his life. While the infant quickly becomes object-oriented, objects are primarily a means for satisfying drives, even though the way in which objects are employed is brought under the control of the ego and the superego. For Fairbairn, on the other hand, individuals are born into object relationships and remain in them until they die. The fundamental issues are not the vicissitudes of the drives, but independence versus dependence, separation versus fusion. The goal is mature dependence on realistically perceived external objects.

Fairbairn stresses the continuity between his view and Freud's. He maintains that his distinction between immature and mature dependence "is identical with Freud's distinction between the narcissistic and the anaclitic choice of objects."[84] This does not seem quite right, however, for it downplays the way in which Fairbairn fundamentally transforms Freudian drive theory into a theory of relationships. Nevertheless, Fair-bairn's point is clear enough: immature dependence involves not only dependence on external objects, but dependence on internal objects as well. It is the dependence on internal

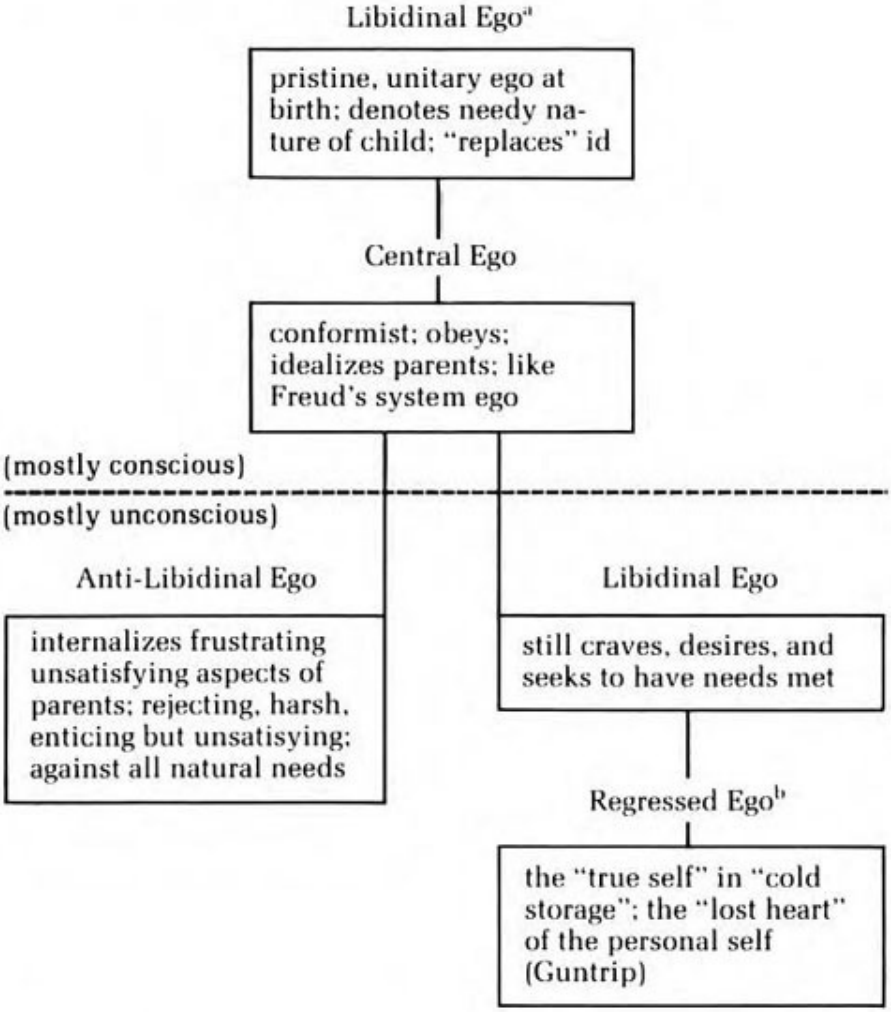
objects that Fairbairn identifies with narcissism. Why a dependence on internal objects is pathological if carried on into later childhood and adulthood will be discussed below.

Fairbairn sees the infant as beginning life with a "unitary, dynamic ego," which possesses its own libidinal energy, and seeks relationships with real objects. Were these relationships perfect, the ego would remain whole and intact. To compensate for its frustrations in actual relationships with real external objects, however, the infant and child establish compensatory internal objects. The unitary ego is split in this process, as different portions of the ego are attached to different objects. As Guntrip, Fairbairn's foremost follower and popularizer, puts it, Fairbairn's concept of the ego is not "the superficial, adaptive ego of Freud . . . formed on the surface of a hypothetical impersonal id as its adjustment to outer reality. Fairbairn's 'ego' is the primary psychic self in its original wholeness, a whole which differentiates into organized structural patterns under the impact of object relationships after birth."[85] This view of the ego closely resembles the concept of the self in the work of analysts such as Kohut.

Fairbairn's structural model of the psyche stems from his assumption, that the original libidinal ego follows a particular pattern as it splits into three parts (see figure 1). According to Fairbairn, the child has three different experiences of mother: mother as gratifying the child's need; mother as

enticing or tantalizing the child with promises of satisfaction that are never fulfilled; and mother as depriving the child. These three aspects are internalized in such a way that they are held separate in the mind (much like Klein's good and bad breast). Furthermore, since each of them has a piece of the ego attached to it—an essential principle of Fairbairn's structural system is that ego and object are always linked, or "twinned"—this means that different aspects of the ego are held separate. Thus the ego becomes fragmented. The consequence is what one might describe as a developmentally normal — or at least unavoidable—schizoid state. Psychopathology is understood by Fairbairn primarily in quantitative terms: How fragmented is the ego? How much of the original libidinal ego is given over to internal objects? As Greenberg and Mitchell put it, for Fairbairn, "psychopathology results from this fragmentation of the ego and the devotion of the resulting portions of the ego to their internal objects at the expense of relations with real people."[86] This is why excessive devotion to internal objects is bad, for such devotion is inseparable from a fragmentation of the ego. Maturity is largely a matter of an individual renouncing his attachment to the compensatory internal objects which once provided him with the security and satisfaction that he missed from his real parents but which have come to exact too great a toll on the integrity of his ego.

Figure 1. Fairbairn's System, with Guntrip's Addition



Note: All parts of the psyche are ego. This is the pure object relations theory view.

[a]Splits under pressure of reality

[b]Guntrip's addition

Fairbairn, with his focus on separation from the mother, makes the oral stage of development central. But whereas for Klein the central issues of the oral stage concern aggression and hate, for Fairbairn they concern dependence and frustrated love. The child needs parents who are responsive, fair, and reliable. If the parents do not have these qualities, the child internalizes their bad aspects in the form of internal objects, such as the enticing mother and the depriving mother. These bad objects are then repressed, along with corresponding portions of the ego. This allows the child some control over the bad aspects of the parents. In terms of long-term psychological consequences, however, the child has jumped out of the frying pan into the fire, because his parents' badness has not merely become internalized; it has become bound up with his own ego. Though this occurs in all children to some degree, much larger portions of the ego are bound up with bad internal objects in the emotionally disturbed individual. For Fairbairn, therapy becomes an even longer and more arduous process than it was for Freud, since it must promote what the individual most seeks to avoid: the release of bad internal objects. "It becomes evident, accordingly, that the psychotherapist is the true successor to the exorcist, and that he is concerned, not only with 'the forgiveness of sins,' but also with 'the casting out of devils' [i.e., bad internal objects]."[87]

Fairbairn does not make any sharp distinction between neurosis and psychosis, suggesting that schizoid phenomena—ego splitting—originating in the oral stage of infancy lie behind most neurotic, as well as psychotic, disorders. The severity of the disorder depends primarily on the degree of splitting, not on whether it occurs at all. Such a view suggests that the oedipal conflict, arising well after the oral stage, is quite secondary as a source of neurosis. Fairbairn puts it bluntly: "All psychopathological developments originate at a stage antecedent to that at which the super-ego develops and proceed from a level beneath that at which the super-ego operates."[88] We recall that, according to Freud, the oedipus conflict is the crucible of superego development, as the male child (partly in order to defend against castration anxiety) internalizes the father's authority as representative of the morality of the larger world.[89] For Fairbairn, neurosis is primarily about the conflict between dependence and independence, a conflict that becomes pathological only when attachment to compensatory internal objects is too strong.

For both Fairbairn and Guntrip, conflict over separation, particularly as it assumes the form of intense ambivalence over the desirability of maturity, is the fundamental emotional conflict.[90] At an abstract, theoretical level, this conflict can be expressed in terms of a reluctance to abandon internal compensatory objects. While Fairbairn exaggerates his continuity with Freud when he equates this reluctance with narcissism, the general idea remains valid: that what is called narcissism can usefully be seen (even if one must

switch from drive to object-oriented theories to do so) as a schizoid phenomenon, characterized by emotional withdrawal to a world of internal objects and by ego splitting. Of equal importance is the recognition that narcissistic disorders have their origin prior to the oedipus conflict, even if they sometimes find an oedipal expression, because they concern disturbances not in sexual identity, but in identity per se—that is, disturbances at the very core of what it means to be an individual person, separated from others, yet bound to them in relationships. It is this aspect of narcissism—that it is concerned, ultimately, with what it means to be a self in the world — that is taken up by Kohut and Kernberg and also by Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel, who return to a more Freudian concept of narcissism.

Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg

Kohut and Kernberg are the principal theorists of narcissism in the United States today. In a special edition of the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association* of 1974 devoted to narcissism, virtually the entire discussion focused on their work.[91] Other theorists barely figured. Indeed, not only are Kohut and Kernberg the theorists of narcissism, but the debate between them circumscribes the field of narcissism for most practitioners. Kernberg explicitly links his thinking to the tradition of object relations theory, particularly as it developed along roughly Kleinian lines in the work of

Joan Riviere, Edith Jacobson, and Margaret Mahler,[92] that is, to a strand of object relations theory that retains strong ties with drive theory, just as Klein's work does. Kohut, a past president of the American Psychoanalytic Association, has been especially concerned with accommodating the classical Freudian tradition. However, it seems fair to say that both are fundamentally theorists of the self (Kohut calls his contribution "self psychology"), concerned with how the self is formed or deformed in interaction with others.

Kohut and Kernberg are in general agreement regarding the symptoms of pathological narcissism, and they agree that one of the remarkable things about narcissism is how grandiosity and fragile self-esteem can exist side by side in the same individual. The individual may be aware of both sets of feelings, but they are never integrated, never seen as different aspects of the same experience of self in the world. Also symptomatic of narcissism are detachment and withdrawal. The narcissist is frequently morally corruptible, lacking the rigid superego of "classical" neurotics. Feelings of emptiness and isolation, of not being real, of being an observer of one's own life, are also common. The narcissist is frequently cold and detached, using his often not inconsiderable charm for strictly instrumental purposes. He frequently functions very well in social settings, such as on the job. It is in the realm of private and personal relationships that his coldness and emptiness become apparent. In a word, the narcissist is schizoid.[93] Kohut and Kernberg also agree that narcissism stands between the psychoses and the neuroses.

However, Kernberg sees it as a special version of a borderline disorder, Kohut as a somewhat less severe disturbance. In fact, it is not entirely clear how much this difference is due to their different theoretical assessments of narcissism, and how much to their different definitions of the term borderline (Kernberg stresses the maintenance of reality testing in borderline cases, whereas Kohut views these cases as unanalyzable veiled psychoses). Many commentators see the difference between Kohut and Kernberg as less a theoretical matter than a consequence of their different clienteles, in that Kernberg worked with a sicker group of patients.[94] However, we shall see that their disagreement on the diagnostic location of narcissism reflects more fundamental theoretical differences as well.

While Kohut and Kernberg agree that narcissism represents a fixation on a grandiose self, they disagree as to whether the grandiose self in question was once part of a normal developmental sequence that became frozen in time (Kohut), or whether it was always pathological (Kernberg). Kohut argues that the source of narcissistic personality disorder is a failure of empathy by the parents, who did not respond appropriately to the child's need for recognition, particularly the child's need for a "selfobject"—that is, recognition of his own nascent self. Selfobjects serve to shore up the self by acting as a virtual substitute self. It is the parents' ability to respond to the child as though he possessed a coherent, integrated self that teaches the child that he is such a self.

In Kohut's view, therapy is not primarily a matter of interpreting the analysand's feelings, for "it is not interpretation that cures the patient."[95] Nor does therapy have to do with the expansion of the realm of the ego. Rather, the empathy of the analyst for the analysand substitutes for the failed relationship with the parents.[96] However, this should not be understood as achieving a cure by love. Rather, empathy cures by "transmuting internalization," a process in which the analyst's recognition of the analysand's self creates psychic structure, building a self where none existed previously, by allowing the analysand to use the analyst as a selfobject.[97] In particular, Kohut encourages the analyst to respond empathically to the analysand's fantasies of grandiosity and splendor, thereby bringing these images out from deep concealment in the unconscious and allowing their integration into the superego, where they form more modulated images of success and achievement.

Kernberg accuses Kohut of helping the analysand only to temper his grandiosity. The basically pathological structure of such grandiosity is never fully confronted.[98] While there may be some truth in this accusation, we are dealing here with what is really a larger disagreement. Kohut stresses that individual development cannot be understood in terms of a move from narcissism to object love or from selfobjects to love objects. Narcissism follows an independent line of development, accompanying every strata of experience, giving experience additional meaning, as it reflects back on the

self. As Kohut puts it, in normal development "we see a movement from archaic to mature narcissism, side by side and intertwined with a movement from archaic to mature object love; we do not see an abandonment of self-love and its replacement by the love for others."[99]

It is this mature narcissism that gives meaning to our successes and achievements, by relating them to some of the deepest needs of the self: to be grand, sublime, magnificent, and recognized as such by all. Unsublimated, such needs lead to great unhappiness and gross perversion—pathological narcissism at its worst. The goal of maturity is not to abandon such needs, but to integrate them realistically with one's skills and talents, on the one hand, and one's opportunities on the other. From this perspective it is quite clear that all Kohut would even wish to do would be to temper archaic grandiosity. Its therapeutic elimination would be tantamount to eliminating one of the deepest sources of human fulfillment.

Little influenced by Kohut, apparently, Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel also address the continuity of narcissism. Like Kohut, each suggests that while untempered narcissism is the source of some of the most severe emotional disturbances, mature narcissism can be the source of the greatest human achievements, because it gives energy, meaning, and purpose to almost every human action, by relating such action to its consequences for self-esteem.

Kernberg argues that the grandiose self which Kohut seeks to temper is a pathological self. He supports this claim by his intriguing observation that "the coldness and aloofness of patients with pathological narcissism . . . are in marked contrast to the warm quality of the small child's self-centeredness.[100] By the age of two or three years, the future pathological narcissist often displays not only grandiosity, but also the schizoid features associated with adult pathological narcissism, which suggests that pathological narcissism is more than just fixation at a normal developmental stage. He expresses his difference with Kohut thus: "Pathological narcissism does not simply reflect libidinal investment in the self in contrast to libidinal investment in objects, but libidinal investment in a pathological self-structure.[101] He characterizes the nature of this pathological self in terms of an integrated, but pathological, condensation of three aspects of the grandiose self: (1) aspects of the real self (for example, the "specialness" of the child as reinforced by the projection of parental narcissism onto the child; (2) the ideal self (for example, self-images of power, wealth, and beauty that compensated the small child for the experience of severe frustration, rage, and envy); and (3) the ideal object (for example, the fantasy of an omnipotent and ever-giving, ever-loving mother).[102]

It is this integrated, but pathological, self that accounts for one of the most striking features of the pathological narcissist: his relatively high level of social functioning, despite his basically borderline personality organization.

The cost of such functioning is a remarkably rigid self-structure, which is most resistant to change. This obviously does not make such individuals particularly good candidates for analysis. Yet, like Kohut, Kernberg believes that analysis of narcissistic persons should be undertaken whenever possible, in large measure because of the "devastating effects of unresolved pathological narcissism during the second half of life." Basic conflicts associated with ageing, chronic illness, physical and mental limitations, and above all, separation, loss, and loneliness are heightened for most individuals during the second half of life; but for the narcissist, they are specially intense, for such experiences make it more and more difficult for the grandiose self to deny the frail, limited, and transitory character of human existence.[103]

The links between Kernberg's views and those of Klein are especially suggestive, although Kernberg rarely mentions her, but rather, those associated with her, such as Riviere, Jacobson, and Mahler. The links are seen clearly in Kernberg's discussion of narcissism as a defense. Associated with Kernberg's view that the narcissistic self is pathological is his view that this self serves as a defense against even more primitive object relations, centered around rage and envy, fear and guilt because of this rage, and yet coupled with a desperate longing for a loving relationship that will not be destroyed by hate.[104] In the analysis of persons with narcissistic disorders, it becomes apparent that the analysand's apparent aloofness and lack of involvement with the analyst is a defense against "paranoid fears related to projection of

sadistic trends onto the analyst (representing a primitive, hated, and sadistically perceived mother image), and against basic feelings of terrifying empty loneliness, hunger for love, and guilt over the aggression directed against the frustrating parental images.''[105]

Though their views are not identical, it would not be fundamentally misleading to say that Kernberg regards narcissism as a defense against the emergence of the paranoid-schizoid position described by Klein. Such an emergence would, of course, be totally psychotic in an adult. If narcissism does indeed serve as defense against the emergence of a basically psychotic organization of the self, it seems correct to label it a borderline phenomenon. Yet, severe as the disorder is, Kernberg believes that in many cases the patient can be helped by a therapy that is also Kleinian in its basic approach. The goal is to help the patient experience his own split-off contempt, rage, and envy, in the hope that the analyst's interpretation of the negative transference (as it is called) can help reduce the patient's fear of his own destructiveness and his doubts about his own goodness.[106]

Kernberg's is widely, but hardly universally, considered to be the more acute and profound theoretical account. It has been reinforced by Kohut's rather clumsy attempts to save a place for Freudian theory via the assertion of a psychoanalytic version of the "complementarity principle"—namely, that classical Freudian drive theory is the explanation of choice in the case of

neurosis, whereas “self psychology” best explains the increasingly common disturbances of the self. However, in his recent work, Kohut seems to have abandoned this salvage project, noting that in using Freudian language he was merely “attempting to make new ideas appear less radically new and more acceptable not only to my fellow analysts, but above all to myself.... I shared my colleagues’ reluctance to face openly the fact that our theories needed a radical change.”[107]

Yet, while Kohut is not as rigorous or as systematic a thinker as Kernberg, his conception of narcissism is fruitful in understanding its cultural manifestations. This is so for reasons already suggested — namely, his greater emphasis on the continuity between pathological and normal narcissism — and also because Kernberg’s view of narcissism as a borderline disorder, while powerful theoretically, lacks obvious cultural implications. Many of the patients whom Kernberg describes seem so ill that any links between them and average “cultural narcissists” are hard to see. By contrast, Kohut focuses on modern art and literature and the way in which they express the fragmentation of the self characteristic of the contemporary (twentieth-century) world. In The *Restoration of* the *Self,* he quotes from Eugene O’Neill’s *The* Great *God* Brown: “Man is born broken. He lives by mending. The grace of God is glue.”[108] “Could the essence of the pathology of modern man’s self be stated more impressively?” asks Kohut. How this view of narcissism lends itself to cultural explanation will become apparent in the

next chapter, where we consider Aristophanes' account, in Plato's Symposium, of the great god Zeus' bisection of the human race.

Although Kernberg devotes far less attention to the social and cultural implications of his account, it would be misleading to suggest that he ignores these issues altogether. In Borderline

Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, he asks whether social changes, especially the increasing alienation characteristic of modern society, could contribute to narcissistic symptoms, such as a decline in the capacity to become deeply involved with others. He answers that things like changing social and sexual mores probably do not reach this deeply into the psyche, but he speculates that fundamental changes in family structure, particularly when perpetuated over several generations, probably could reach this deeply.[109] We will see in later chapters that it is precisely this change in family structure that the Frankfurt school addresses, using such provocative language as "the end of the individual" and the "obsolescence of the Freudian concept of man."

Arnold Rothstein

In The *Narcissistic* Pursuit *of Perfection,* Arnold Rothstein argues that both Kohut and Kernberg fail "to differentiate narcissism from ego, superego, and ego-ideal development."[110] The result is that each sees narcissism as a particular disorder, rather than as an organizing principle of mental life.

Rothstein argues that Kernberg's understanding of narcissism in terms of a fused self structure—that is, a pathological condensation of real self, ideal self, and ideal object—applies to only one type of narcissist. Treating this limited understanding as a virtual definition of pathological narcissism results, according to Rothstein, in a "static conceptualization that is prone to pejorative elaboration."[111] Kohut's view of narcissism, albeit broader, as we have seen, comes in for the same criticism. Kohut regards a narcissistic *behavior* disorder as more serious than a narcissistic *personality* disorder because the former is likely to give rise to sadistic behavior, rather than just fantasy. In fact, says Rothstein, a judgment of relative health can be made only from an assessment of the subject's integration of his defensive activity, which does not necessarily correspond to the distinction between behavior and fantasy. It is frequently the sickest narcissists, particularly those with strong schizoid characteristics, who confine their narcissistic pursuits to fantasy.[112]

At issue here are not particular claims made by Kernberg and Kohut, which are mentioned only as examples, but rather, the tendency of Kohut (particularly in his earlier work) and of Kernberg to an even greater degree to transform narcissism into a unique pathology requiring special methods, theories, and assumptions. But some of their claims regarding narcissism fail to correspond to more general, widely held psychoanalytic insights. Rothstein's alternative, "investment" account avoids this extreme

specialization. Rothstein defines narcissism both more narrowly and more broadly than either Kohut or Kernberg, as the illusion of perfection, which protects the ego from fully recognizing its own finite limits and hence its lack of mastery over self and world.[113] Narrow in one respect, this definition is broad enough that it can be applied to normal, neurotic, borderline, and psychotic expressions of narcissism. From this perspective, narcissism is not itself a disorder; even entirely normal people will protect themselves by narcissistic illusions. Disorder concerns the way in which narcissistic illusions are integrated with the rest of the psyche, what Rothstein calls the "mode of narcissistic investment."

The analyzable (that is, neurotic) narcissistic patient, says Rothstein, has an image of himself, often unconscious, as perfect and vastly admired in some way. In the course of analysis, he will come to mourn the loss of both the illusionary aspect of the self-representation and the admiring object. More seriously disturbed analysands, on the other hand (generally borderline and psychotic), will not be able to relinquish and, consequently, mourn the loss of their narcissistic defenses. Narcissistic investment in an idealized self-image is required to preserve the very coherence of the self.[114] To illustrate how one might determine the mode of narcissistic investment, Rothstein asks whether the "subject's ego has developed the degree of differentiation associated with well-integrated ego-ideal and superego structuralizations" such that it can invest its narcissism in abstract ideas, rather than in concrete

images of self and object?[115] It is from this perspective that Chasseguet-Smirgel approaches the ego ideal.

Rothstein's perspective has two advantages, the second more significant than the first. First, it suggests an underlying continuity between the accounts of Kohut (narcissism as fixation at a normal developmental stage) and Kernberg (narcissism as fixation at a pathological expression of a normal developmental stage). If we assume, as many do, that their disagreement reflects their different clienteles, then the *theoretical* difference between them may be interpreted as a difference in the mode of narcissistic investment. To characterize narcissism, as Kernberg does, as the pathological condensation of real self, ideal self, and ideal object is perhaps not so much to offer a new theory of narcissism as to describe its expression in patients previously thought to be nonanalyzable, patients whose inner world is distinguished by abridged, concrete images of self and object. These patients must invest their narcissism in these images, because there is nowhere else for it to go.

This does not mean that the substantial differences between Kohut and Kernberg disappear altogether. It is rather to suggest that different modes of narcissistic investment, associated with different degrees of coherence of the self (normal, neurotic, borderline, or psychotic), are readily confused with different theoretical entities, especially if we lack hard information about

client mix. Within the discipline of psychoanalysis, as in most other disciplines, most of the rewards go to those who originate new theories, rather than to those who integrate old ones. It is possible that the proliferation and divergence of theories of narcissism belie the actual theoretical differences involved. This suspicion is supported, though of course not corroborated, by the very substantial agreement between Kohut and Kernberg over the symptoms of narcissism.

The second, greater advantage of Rothstein's perspective is the implication that it is probably not very fruitful to conceptualize narcissism as a unique disorder requiring a new psychoanalytic theory or as a disorder along the lines of compulsive hand washing, hysteria, or phobia. In fact, narcissism is not a disorder at all per se, although it may become one if it is invested by a neurotic, borderline, or psychotic ego as a defense, in which case it takes on the status of the disorder in whose service it is employed. Narcissism is more akin to a stage of development, albeit a stage that is never superseded. Like every stage of development, narcissism can be seen as posing a set of problems that the individual must confront. These problems vary according to the actual level of development. At every level, however, there remains one constant. Narcissism is concerned with how the individual integrates his libidinal needs with the needs of the self for wholeness and self-respect. It is from this perspective that both Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgal approach narcissism, thereby transforming it from a disorder into a

question about the meaning and purpose of human life.

Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel

Bela Grunberger and Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel are contemporary French psychoanalysts. Lasch turns to them frequently, and with good reason; for although they themselves do not stress the cultural aspects of narcissism, their formulations are especially well suited to explaining its cultural expression. In part this is because they stress the ubiquity of narcissism: that it is expressed in almost every aspect of human experience. Both stand closer to Freud than the other theorists we have been examining. Neither draws explicitly on object relations theory, although an object relations perspective on their work, especially on Chas-seguet-Smirgel's concept of the ego ideal, can be most fruitful. For each, narcissism functions as what one might call a drive theory version of the self, a concept more usually addressed from the perspective of object relations theory. Although Grunberger argues that his scheme can be interpreted in Kleinian terms, the links are abstract.[116] It seems best to approach his scheme, as well as that of Chasseguet-Smirgel, as a modification of classical Freudian theory, since this is how they understand their own work. Whereas Kohut and Kernberg are best understood in terms of the dispute between them, Grunberger and Chasseguet-Smirgel are best approached as complementary to one another. In particular, Chasseguet-Smirgel's use of Freud's concept of the ego ideal completes Grunberger's

speculations on narcissism by more thoroughly characterizing its puzzling duality: that narcissism at once seeks fusion and autonomy.

Grunberger

Grunberger views narcissism as having the attributes of a psychic agency (such as the ego, the superego, or the id), as well as of an instinct. Like an instinct, it is present at birth (Grunberger is operating from a Freudian perspective; for many object relations theorists the ego is itself present at birth). But like a psychic agency, it has a life of its own, pursuing its own independence line of development—for example, it may support the ego or attack it (as in depression). For Grunberger, the key feature of narcissism is its dualism. In this, he follows closely Lou Andreas-Salomé's "The Dual Orientation of Narcissism," which seeks to explain the contradictory character of narcissism: that it seeks individuality at all costs and yet cannot live apart from a state of continuing fusion with another.[117] Other key features of narcissism, according to Grunberger, are:

1. The memory of a unique and privileged state of elation, which Grunberger associates with the experience of the infant shortly before and after birth

1. A sense of well-being associated with this memory, accompanied by a sense of wholeness and omnipotence

2. A sense of pride stemming from this experience and also from the illusion of uniqueness

3. A lifelong desire to recapture this paradise lost[118]

Grunberger's phenomenology of narcissism recalls Freud's brief discussion in *Civilization and its Discontents* of that oceanic feeling that might be the foundation of religion: "a sensation of 'eternity,' a feeling as of something limitless, unbounded—as it were, 'oceanic.' " Grunberger would perhaps agree. "The superego is the Bible," Grunberger says, "but narcissism is God Almighty."[119] Like Kohut, he emphasizes the degree to which narcissism operates as an independent principle throughout life. Once more he turns to Andreas-Salomé, who states that "narcissism accompanies all the strata of our experience, independently of them. In other words, it is not only an immature stage of life needing to be superseded, but also the ever renewing companion of all life."[120] The goal of maturity is not the abandonment of narcissism for object love, as Freud maintained, but the integration of narcissism with the various stages of psychosexual development. Grunberger nevertheless agrees with Freud that narcissism represents an original objectless state.[121] Indeed, for Grunberger, the paradigm of narcissism is the womb, in which the fetus is coincident with eternity, knowing nothing outside itself. Is there any way to make this view compatible with object relations theory's insight that no objectless states exist? Margaret Mahler's "On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of

Individuation" provides a clue. Mahler defines narcissism as the cathexis of a still merged image of self and object. The libidinal cathexis of the self—Freud's definition of narcissism — is at the same time the libidinal cathexis of an object; or rather, the original narcissistic cathexis precedes the distinction between self and object. At the stage of primary narcissism the boundaries between self and object are indistinct.[122] Hence the self's feelings of grandiosity and wholeness are inseparable from the grandiosity and wholeness of the object. More precisely, the self's feelings of grandiosity and wholeness are inseparable from these feelings as they derive from an experience of merger with another who is perceived to be grand and whole. This helps to explain that key feature of narcissism: that it confuses autonomy and dependence. This confusion stems from the unconscious recollection of a narcissistic state in which the other's power is an extension of one's own to such an extent that one's dependence on it is not recognized: a contradictory state of total freedom and total dependence.

Grunberger takes pains to stress that he does not see primary narcissism in terms of fusion with the mother. "The primal narcissistic state, to my way of thinking, is not the narcissistic child-mother fusion, which in a way tends to be maintained for a while after birth, but the fusion of the child with his world, which for him is the world."[123] However, his distinction may be more subtle than is warranted, given the diffuse ego of the infant. Why should we not assume that for the infant the mother is the world? The

distinction between the infant's fusion with the mother and its fusion with his world is then superfluous. It seems reasonable to conclude that the phenomenology of narcissism that Grunberger develops can be interpreted in terms of the fusion of a diffuse ego with a not fully differentiated object, even if Grunberger does not quite see it this way. Mahler has written of the infant's symbiosis with its mother in a way that clearly reveals the continuity between her conception of narcissism and Grunberger's: "One could regard the entire life cycle as ... an eternal longing for the actual or fantasied 'ideal stage of self,' with the latter standing for a symbiotic fusion with the 'all good' symbiotic mother, who was at one time part of the self in a blissful state of well-being."[124]

For Grunberger, emotional development is about the integration of narcissism with the drives and later with the ego and the superego. In the beginning the drives are incompatible with narcissism. As Freud states in a footnote to "Instincts and their Vicissitudes," the disturbance of the primary narcissistic state is linked with the infant's incapacity to help himself.[125] The demands of the drives challenge the narcissistic principle that the infant is omnipotent, without need of anything outside himself. As Grunberger puts it, the infant is an outcast in two worlds: he is unable to satisfy his instinctual urges in a satisfactory manner, and he is unable to achieve narcissistic satisfaction. The result is a humiliating sense of powerlessness, which is frequently referred to as "the narcissistic wound," or "the narcissistic injury."

A quotation from Kafka serves as an epigram for Grunberger's discussion of this theme:

> A fine wound is all I brought into the world; that was my sole endowment.[126]

What will ultimately compensate for this injury to some extent is a sense of "object mastery": the ability to control one's environment and oneself. The goal of mastery is narcissistic wholeness, the synthesis of instinct and narcissism. What narcissistic wholeness looks like depends in large measure on the stage of psychosexual development. At the oral stage the instinctual gratification of feeding is accompanied by megalomaniacal narcissistic gratification: "I was satisfied, for I am the universe." (Obviously, says Grunberger, such an experience is virtually ineffable; words are but a crude approximation.) At the anal stage the megalomania is far more tempered. Narcissistic satisfaction typically derives from the satisfaction of having a fit body that functions well and is under the control of individual (for example, bladder and bowel control), which enhances one's sense of self-worth.[127] The goal of mature narcissism is to bring this interaction of instinct and narcissism under the reign of the ego and the superego— for example, by fulfilling one's needs in a socially acceptable manner. It is the ability to do this that helps overcome the humiliation of narcissistic injury. As Marion Oliner puts it, "The role of the narcissistic factor within psychosexual development rests on its bestowing a sense of worth on strivings that have their foundation

in biology."[128] Conversely, a neurotic, according to Grunberger, is one "who has failed to recover his lost narcissistic integrity in the different opportunities that arise at the various levels of his *instinctual development."*[129] Indeed, Grunberger interprets melancholy and even suicide as attacks on the ego by the narcissistic agency for not getting enough pleasure.[130]

Grunberger reinterprets the problem which Freud confronts in *Civilization* and *its Discontents* in a most intriguing way. Freud argues that civilization is painful because it requires far more instinctual renunciation than is ever compensated for by the creation of more secure, regular channels of satisfaction.[131] Grunberger notes that Freud ignores the narcissistic factor: "In my view, there is no doubt that the instinctual sacrifices that man must make to become civilized are painful in large part because they have the nature of narcissistic injury, which is compensated for in only very small measure by the cathexis of civilization as a value in itself."[132] This perspective is illuminating because it suggests that the cost of civilization is not the lessening of gratification per se, but the fact that the loss of gratification is coupled with narcissistic humiliation, rather than compensated for by mastery. This consideration will be central to our discussion of Marcuse's Eros and *Civilization,* for part of the reason why Marcuse is driven to such utopian extremes as to posit a society without labor is that the only alternatives he sees are instinctual satisfaction or its repression. The

possibility that in a properly organized society the narcissistic gratification available in meaningful labor might be profound allows us to revise Marcuse's ideal without trivializing it. Similarly, Grunberger suggests that the knowledge that one can fulfill a need is often more important than actually doing so. This knowledge by itself gratifies one's narcissism, by communicating that one is worthy of satisfaction and capable of achieving it. Grunberger's insight allows a reinterpretation of Marcuse's concept of nonrepressive sublimation, which is the psychological basis of his utopia. It also explains why Plato's theory of sublimation is in some respects superior to Freud's (as we shall see in the next chapter).

Like virtually all theorists of narcissism, Grunberger sees the oedipal conflict as secondary, though by no means unimportant. He writes of it as a "displacement of the subject's narcissistic wound to his conflict with father."[133] What he means by this is revealed by his argument that the incest taboo protects the child from its own inadequacy, the recognition of which would only intensify narcissistic injury. Because the young child does not wish to face the humiliating fact that he is too immature to be an adequate sexual partner for his mother, he feels guilt at his own desires as a defense. It is as if he were saying to himself, "I am not able; therefore I should not (lest the fact of my inability overwhelm me with shame and fright)."

Grunberger concludes that a pathological narcissist is not one who

becomes enmeshed in the oedipal conflict, but one who avoids it. The narcissist "shrinks from Oedipus and identification because of the visceral connotation of the process, which he sees as a penetration of his boundaries."[134] It is this retreat that is the real threat to maturity. Frequently it takes the form of the adolescent narcissist (and Grunberger suggests that all adolescents are pathological narcissists to some degree) refusing to identify with the adult world and becoming "fixated at the level of counteridentification." It is not a question of taking the father's place but of acting as if the father had never existed. By refusing all identification with the adult world, the adolescent becomes not a unique individual, but simply a carbon copy of his peers. Though to some degree a normal developmental process, this refusal of identification is exacerbated by a society that increasingly isolates its children and its adolescents from the adult world.[135] It is this theme that Lasch develops in The Culture *of Narcissism.* In the next chapter of this book, I will develop a related theme. Alcibiades' failure to internalize the lessons taught him by Socrates will be explained in terms of his narcissistic fixation at the level of counteridentification. Indeed, it will be suggested that this fixation characterized much of Athenian society.

Chasseguet-Smirgel

Chasseguet-Smirgel's concept of the ego ideal elaborates Grunberger's analysis. The ego ideal is Freud's concept. First introduced by name in "On

Narcissism" (1914), it quickly became absorbed into the superego, so that by "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1921), Freud seems to be equating the ego ideal with the superego.[136] In "On Narcissism," however, Freud treats the ego ideal as a unique entity that inherits and carries forward the individual's primary narcissism. About the ego ideal, he says:

> As always where the libido is concerned, here again man has shown himself incapable of giving up a gratification he has once enjoyed. He is not willing to forgo his narcissistic perfection in his childhood. . . . He seeks to recover the early perfection, thus wrested from him, in the form of an ego-ideal. That which he projects ahead of him as his ideal is merely his substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood—the time when he was his own ideal.[137]

As the avatar of primary narcissism, the ego ideal is projected before the individual as a hope or a promise: that one day he may recover something of the perfection and wholeness he once experienced. Indeed, Chasseguet-Smirgel sees all life as about man's attempt to redeem this promise by realizing a reconciliation between the ego and the ego ideal. This reconciliation may take two forms: one progressive, one regressive. Progressive reconciliation involves the hope that through postponement and hard work one may eventually achieve a level of mastery over self and world that approximates what the ego ideal desires— namely, the wholeness and perfection associated with the state of primary narcissism. Chasseguet-Smirgel expressly notes the similarity between her concept of progressive reconciliation with the ego ideal and Grunberger's concept of object mastery,

which acts in a similar fashion to help heal the narcissistic wound.[138] In progressive reconciliation the ego ideal becomes closely allied with the superego. Regressive reconciliation, on the other hand, seeks immediate, complete reconciliation, often via attempts at fusion with powers greater than the self.

Chasseguet-Smirgel, like Grunberger, stays close to Freudian drive theory. Yet, an interesting interpretation that would make her work more compatible with object relations theory suggests itself. Fairbairn notes that Freud's superego is an internal object, with which the individual has an internal object relationship.[139] Chasseguet-Smirgel's discussion of the ego ideal, including its relationship to the superego, suggests that one may also regard the ego ideal as an internal object. However, whereas Fairbairn would see maturity in terms of the gradual abandonment of an internal object relationship with the ego ideal, Chasseguet-Smirgel sees it as involving a change in both the content of the ego ideal and the relationship of the ego ideal to other internal objects. The ego ideal would gradually be drawn under the sway of the superego, so that *how* one achieves reunification with the ego ideal would become part of the ideal itself. Although Chasseguet-Smirgel does not seem interested in reconciling her account with that of object relations theory, the preceding considerations suggest that it would not be impossible to do so.

Like Grunberger—indeed, like virtually all theorists of narcissism—Chasseguet-Smirgel reinterprets the oedipus conflict. For her too, it becomes secondary, but not unimportant. She makes the simple, but powerful, point that there is no oedipal instinct, only a sexual instinct. It is therefore not obvious or given that the child's sexual instinct will become exclusively and intensively directed toward the mother. It happens, she says, because the child's oedipal wishes are carried along by the search for his lost omnipotence. The child directs his sexuality almost exclusively toward the mother because sexuality is a vehicle and a symbolic expression (and in this sense akin to what Fairbairn calls "signposts to the object"—that is, a means to an object relationship) of the narcissistic quest for re-fusion with what can make him whole. Chasseguet-Smirgel writes: "I do not wish to minimize here the role of sexuality in oedpial wishes. I simply want to underline that . . . the wish to penetrate one's mother also includes that of rediscovering the boundless and the absolute, the perfection of an ego whose wound, left gaping by the tearing out of its narcissism, finds itself healed at last."[140] Although she is not explicit on this point, it appears that her concept of the primary narcissistic state comes closer to that of Margaret Mahler than that of Grunberger. Thus, it is an expression of fusion with mother *qua* mother, not *qua* world.

Chasseguet-Smirgel uses the oedipal conflict, thus reinterpreted, to explain the development of the ego ideal. The ego ideal implies the idea of a

project, a hope, and a guide. But project, hope, and guide imply postponement and delay, which are characteristic of a mental state under the rule of the reality principle. The hope is that in growing up one can gain some recompense for the lost perfection of the state of primary narcissism. What at first gives this project its energy is an illusion: that in growing up to be like father one will come to deserve his privileges, including sexual access to the mother. The oedipal conflict and narcissism are here tightly intertwined. But in the course of growing up, the illusion is transformed. This transformation involves recognizing that it is reconciliation with one's own ego ideal, not re-fusion with the mother, that constitutes the best, most acceptable, and most realistic hope of narcissistic fulfillment. (At the unconscious level it appears that re-fusion with the mother may remain the "best" hope; at the conscious level, however, the reality principle holds sway, and what is most realistic comes to be equated with what is best.) Mature reconciliation with the ego ideal takes the form of object mastery, the ability to exert substantial control over oneself and one's environment and in so doing become worthy of being one's own ideal, by becoming capable of providing for one's own instinctual and cultural needs. It is object mastery that heals, or at least soothes, the narcissistic wound.

Chasseguet-Smirgel writes of the mature ego ideal as embodying "all the pregenital ego ideals in the same way, so to speak, as Hegel writes of 'going beyond yet preserving' (*aufhe*-ben)." It is, she says, "no doubt inaccurate to

say that the ego ideal becomes less demanding. The goal pursued is still equally grandiose (that is to say incest), but the subject is no longer bound by the law of all or nothing, by the necessity for immediate and total gratification."[141] This is important, for it suggests that while the ego ideal may be brought under the reign of the superego, it remains demanding and not easily satisfied. At some level it still wants it all, even if the ego is willing to accept less. In chapter 5 I will suggest that the ego ideal may be substituted for Marcuse's conception of eros, which wants complete and total gratification and wants it now. One frequent objection to suggestions like this is that they have reformist implications, in that they reveal a willingness to compromise with repression and unhappiness. It is apparent, however, that the ego ideal makes demands all its own, demands that are at least as uncompromising as those made by eros (to which the ego ideal is tightly bound in any case). Chasseguet-Smirgel may have had the demands made by revolutionary political traditions in mind as an analogy when she wrote that "in general it would seem that even a well-established superego is not sufficient to provide man with the food he requires for his narcissism. . . . Man needs both bread and roses. The ego ideal can live in friendship with the superego when it has itself acquired the maturative quality that 1 have spoken about and effected a certain number of instinctual integrations."[142]

The threat to maturity takes the form of the temptation to take shortcuts to reconciliation between ego and ideal, to seek immediate

reconciliation via regressive modes of satisfaction. The "pervert's mother," says Chasseguet-Smirgel, plays temptress when she leads the child to believe that he has no need either to grow up or to identify with his father in order to be her perfect partner. This allows the child's ego ideal to become fixated at a level at which archaic ideals of fusion and oedipal victory predominate. One sees analogs of the pervert's mother in certain ideological groups. Chasseguet-Smirgel interprets Hitler, for example, not as a father figure, but as like the pervert's mother, the promoter of an illusion, because he activated the primitive wish for instant fusion of ego and ideal. "As far as Nazism is concerned, the return to nature, to ancient Germanic mythology represents an aspiration to fusion with the omnipotent mother."[143] This observation is enriched by Kohut's claim that groups may also succumb to narcissistic rage, particularly against those who seem — or have been made to seem — to stand in the way of the fulfillment of narcissistic illusion.[144] Nor did it escape the notice of Adorno, though he did not make the argument in quite this form, in "Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda," that the appeal to regressive narcissism constituted a key element in the success of national socialism.

Although there are obviously vast, profound, and far-reaching differences between national socialism and the contemporary culture of narcissism, they nevertheless share this tendency to appeal to the regressive moment of narcissism. Indeed, one might define the culture of narcissism as

simply the cultural analog of the pervert's mother. For like the pervert's mother, the culture of narcissism suggests that there is no need to work hard and postpone gratification in order to become worthy of one's ego ideal. One can have it all right now. One can see this aspect of the culture of narcissism particularly clearly in the way that it at once encourages dependence and the demand for immediate gratification. As Lasch puts it:

> Since modern society prolongs the experience of dependence into adult life, it encourages milder forms of narcissism in people who might otherwise come to terms with the inescapable limits on their personal freedom and power—limits inherent in the human condition—by developing competence as workers and parents. But at the same time that our society makes it more and more difficult to find satisfaction in love and work, it surrounds the individual with manufactured fantasies of total gratification. The new paternalism preaches not self-denial but self-fulfillment. It sides with narcissistic impulses and discourages their modification by the pleasure of becoming self-reliant, even in a limited domain, which under favorable conditions accompanies maturity.[145]

One sees the quest for a shortcut to reconciliation in surprising places, including the experience of scientific and technological progress, according to Chasseguet-Smirgel. Scientific progress demands extensive, sophisticated methods of reality testing, an expression of secondary process (conscious) thinking under the rule of the reality principle. However, at a primary process (unconscious) level, scientific progress is frequently experienced as magic.[146] This is especially true, perhaps, for the lay public, who are presented with the results of science by the media in gee-whiz fashion, utterly divorced from any

discussion of the scientific method—that is, the reality testing—that made them possible. The outcome is that scientific and technological progress encourages the illusion that anything is possible, including immediate, effortless reconciliation of ego and ego ideal. It is not necessary to control our needs and desires, to practice self-restraint, to grow up. Science and technology can do it for us, by providing all we ever wanted right now. We shall see later that neither Adorno nor Marcuse is entirely immune to this illusion, though each succumbs in a different way. It should also be apparent how this illusion supports the culture of narcissism.

A Theory of Narcissism

Although a number of thematic continuities among the preceding accounts of narcissism are apparent, there are discontinuities as well. The primary discontinuity does not stem from disagreement over narcissism per se, but concerns the framework within which it should be studied: whether of drive theory or object relations theory. As Greenberg and Mitchell point out, these perspectives are ultimately incommensurable. Object relations theory argues that it is relationships with other people that build psychic structure, and that it is from these that people retreat in mental illness. Drive theory, on the other hand, sees pleasure seeking and aggression as central, the relationship of drives to objects being secondary. The goal of psychic development is then an accommodation between the internal demands of the

drives and the external demands of reality, an accommodation made especially difficult by the intensity of anxiety and guilt associated with early experiences of drives.[147] The incommensurability between the two theories is particularly manifest in the theory of narcissism: for drive theory sees narcissism as an original objectless state, whereas object relations theory argues that no such state exists and sees narcissism in terms of an intense attachment to internal objects.

Yet, in seeking to understand the experience and manifestations of narcissism, both accounts are useful. Indeed, they can often be fruitfully combined, as Kernberg demonstrates so well. Ultimately, the goal is neither theoretical consistency nor elegance, but an explanation of the data, in this case, the narcissistic themes in the philosophies of Socrates and the Frankfurt school. For this, it is necessary to draw on and combine several different traditions. Theoretical purists may decry such eclecticism, but my present task will have been accomplished if I can identify common themes in the various theories of narcissism and show how these are manifested in the philosophies of Socrates and the Frankfurt school.

There is, of course, no theory of narcissism as such, but only theories or partial accounts. The term *theory* is used here in an almost rhetorical sense: to emphasize the thematic continuities among the diverse accounts, for it is these continuities that constitute the theory, so-called.

Not surprisingly, Freud's "On Narcissism" is the basis of almost all subsequent discussions of the topic. The alternatives of narcissistic and object love are established by Freud. He also recognizes the similarity between narcissism and severe emotional disorders in which interest is withdrawn from the external object world altogether. An object relations theorist would add that this does not mean that the individual has withdrawn from all objects, only that he has traded external for internal objects. Nevertheless, Fairbairn states that his distinction between immature and mature dependence "is identical with Freud's distinction between the narcissistic and the anaclitic choice of objects" (see above, p. 39). Freud also establishes that narcissism is not a perversion, but a normal phase in sexual development, the "libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation." Though we have seen that theorists such as Grunberger challenge Freud's particular formulation of this assumption (stressing instead narcissism's separate line of development), Freud's remains a key assumption because it establishes the continuity of narcissism throughout life. This continuity is reinforced by his observation that the ego ideal inherits the memory of narcissistic perfection, a memory that is powerful because it recalls perhaps the greatest pleasure of all, the experience of narcissistic wholeness. We have seen what a fruitful concept the ego ideal is, for it explains the connection between immature and mature narcissism. In both, fusion with an ego ideal is involved, but in mature narcissism the ideal is tempered by its integration

with the superego. In this respect even Freud's later, somewhat casual equation of ego ideal and superego is fruitful, insofar as it suggests their extremely close connection.

Melanie Klein, who laid the foundations of object relations theory, developed the theoretical basis for the assumption that narcissism — understood as a retreat into fantasies of utter self-sufficiency— serves as a defense against a vast envy and rage, which threaten to destroy the good as well as the bad. With Klein we have the first mapping of the Minoan-Mycenean level of psychic development—the early oral stage—that Freud unearthed but did not develop. This is important because pathological narcissism is a disorder of this stage, at which the earliest relationships are established and the earliest conflicts over separation and individuation played out.

Fairbairn and Guntrip represent the purest expression of object relations theory, which is characterized by the insight that real relationships with real people build psychic structure. Although they rarely mention narcissism, they see a schizoid split in the self as characteristic of virtually all emotional disorder. It is Greenberg and Mitchell, in *Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory,* who establish the relevance of Fairbairn and Guntrip to our concerns, by pointing out that what American analysts label "narcissism," British analysts tend to call "schizoid personality disorder." This

insight allows us to connect the symptomatology of narcissism—feelings of emptiness, unreality, alienation, and emotional withdrawal — with a theory that sees such symptoms as an accurate reflection of the experience of being split off from a part of oneself. That narcissism is such a confusing category is in large part because its drive-theoretic definition, the libidinal cathexis of the self—in a word, self-love—seems far removed from the experience of narcissism, as characterized by a loss of, or split in, the self. Fairbairn's and Guntrip's view of narcissism as an excessive attachment of the ego to internal objects (roughly analogous to Freud's narcissistic, as opposed to object, love), resulting in various splits in the ego necessary to maintain these attachments, allows us to penetrate this confusion.

Kohut and Kernberg develop the insight that pathological narcissism is a disorder involving the enfeeblement and fragmentation of the self. Kohut provides the valuable perspective that narcissism represents a separate developmental principle, not destined to be superseded by object love, but rather to accompany it. Though he does not quote Andreas-Salomé on this point, he could have done so. Narcissism, says Andreas-Salomé, "accompanies all the strata of our experience, independently of them. In other words, it is not only an immature stage of life needing to be superseded, but also the ever-renewing companion of all life."[148] This is the *first of four key themes* regarding narcissism *that will appear again and again in our analysis: that* narcissism persists *throughout life and is not* superseded by *object love, but*

follows *its own developmental line.*

At first sight, Grunberger's work might seem difficult to integrate into this chapter's account of narcissism, because Grunberger appears to hold to Freud's formulation of narcissism as a pure objectless state. But by recalling Margaret Mahler's insight that for an infant still merged with its mother the libidinal cathexis of the infantile self will simultaneously involve the libidinal cathexis of an object (mother), Grunberger's work can be rendered compatible with object relations theory. It is the source of two key insights: first, *that narcissism may be* progressive *or* regressive, mature or immature, and *that it can* support humanity's greatest achievements or *its most regressive follies. A related* aspect *of this* duality *is that* because *primary narcissism does not fully distinguish self from other, it confounds opposites,* such as *freedom and dependence. This is the second key theme* regarding narcissism, one *that will also appear* again *and again in our* subsequent *discussions.* Sometimes this duality will be referred to as the bridge-like character of narcissism, in order to emphasize how narcissism connects the base with the sublime.

Grunberger also develops the insight that *narcissistic injury stems* from *the infant's recognition of his own helplessness. Much* of human *life can be explained as an attempt by individu*als to *achieve a level of mastery and control over self and world sufficient to* compensate *for their lost* omnipotence. *This is*

the third key theme regarding narcissism: that *object* mastery *helps heal narcissistic injury.* Also important is Grunberger's suggestion that his understanding of narcissism as a psychic agency is but another way (more compatible with drive theory) of talking about the self. This links Grunberger's formulations with those of Fairbairn, Guntrip, Kohut, and Kernberg.

Chasseguet-Smirgel's focus on the ego ideal as avatar of primary narcissism is valuable because it gives us a more precise way of talking about object mastery. The ego ideal also clarifies the relationship between mature and immature narcissism. Further, it allows us to understand better *the fourth key theme that characterizes* narcissism: that narcissism seeks fusion *and* wholeness by merging with *something* complete *and perfect*— namely the ego *ideal.* It is the content of this ideal (especially whether it is integrated with the superego), as well as the path taken to reach it (especially whether this path passes through object mastery), that determines whether the quest for fusion, wholeness, and perfection is progressive or regressive. The concept of the ego ideal thus helps us to distinguish mastery from what Theodor Adorno calls "wild self-assertion" (verwilderte Selbstbehauptung).

These four key themes all emphasize the continuity between normal and pathological narcissism. There are also themes common to most of these accounts concerning the strictly pathological dimension of narcissism. Prime

among these is that narcissism is a disorder of the self, stemming from difficulties with separation and individuation. Indeed, most theorists (not just those, such as Kernberg, who are strongly influenced by Klein) seem to see narcissism as a defense, a way to deny that the self needs the constant recognition of others in order to feel real and whole. Conversely, narcissistic rage, so closely associated with Klein's concept of envy, can be seen as aggression directed against those who fail to support the individual's fantasies of omnipotence and total control. Directed at those who fail to mirror perfectly the narcissist's every need, narcissistic rage is intense because it is a response to a perceived threat to the core of the self, and the very survival of the self is at stake. Thus, narcissism is concerned with pre-oedipal issues concerning fundamental distinctions between self and other. Klein's description of this stage in terms of the paranoid-schizoid position, characterized by primitive defense mechanisms such as splitting and projection or introjection, accurately captures the primitive quality of narcissistic personality disorder.

Although pathological narcissism sounds so sick, mature, healthy narcissism shares many of the same characteristics: continuity, duality, mastery, and fusion. This is explained by a presumption, sometimes tacit, shared by almost all theorists of narcissism that there is a continuum between pathological and normal narcissism, and that even the most extreme manifestations of pathological narcissism are not entirely alien to normal

narcissists. Just as Freud assumed that the study of neurosis could illuminate the psychic life of normal men and women, so pathological narcissism illuminates normal narcissism. This is so even for Kernberg. Because he assumes that pathological narcissism represents a fixation on a pathological self-structure does not mean that he sees no continuity between normal and pathological narcissism. Quite the contrary, he tells us.[149] To be sure, it gets complicated, because some theorists, especially Kohut and Kernberg, posit a category of what might be called "pseudo-narcissism," in which an apparently pathological narcissism defends against less severe disorders, generally oedipally based neurosis. But in general, it is fair to say that all the theorists we have examined, including Freud, view the distinction between pathological and normal narcissism on a continuum. Therefore it can be enlightening to focus on even quite pathological aspects in order to explain the appearance of normal—and not always normal—narcissism in the culture and in philosophy. Rothstein's "mode of investment" account serves as a metapsychological justification of this assumption of continuity.

The phrase "theory of narcissism" will be employed frequently in subsequent chapters. Unless qualified, it refers to the key themes summarized here. The less frequently employed phrase, "the psychoanalytic theory associated with the theory of narcissism," unless qualified, refers to the insight shared by many of the psychoanalysts considered in this chapter that narcissism is a disorder of the self. As such it is best understood by focusing

on the most primitive experiences of the self—those concerned with separation from the mother and the establishment of personal identity. These are the fundamental concerns of the first two years of life (although they persist throughout life), the so-called Minoan-Mycenean stage of psychological development.

Notes

36 Sigmund Freud, Five Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, p. 50.

37 Bela Grunberger. Narcissism: Psychoanalytic Essays, p. 78.

38 Considerable debate rages over whether narcissism has in fact become more common. Heinz Kohut, for example, believes that it has, as a result of large-scale social changes (see The Restoration of the Self, pp. 269ff.). However, Colleen Clements argues that the growing psychiatric attention to narcissism does not imply an actual increase in narcissistic personality orders ("Misusing Psychiatric Models: The Culture of Narcissism," pp. 288-91). This difficult issue will be addressed later in this chapter. It depends in some measure on how narcissism is defined.

39 Karl Popper, Conjectures and Refutations, pp. 34-39.

40 Popper, The Logic of Scientific Discovery, chap. 1.

41 Adolf Grünbaum, The Foundations of Psychoanalysis, pp. 4-6.

42 Freud, "On Narcissism," p. 88.

43 Freud, "Psychoanalytic Notes on an Autobiographical Account of a Case of Paranoia," p. 60.

44 Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," p. 90.

45 Freud, "On Narcissism," pp. 93-94.

46 Freud, "The Ego and the Id," pp. 28-39. Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel (Appendix to The Ego Ideal) traces the development of the concept of the ego ideal in Freud's work, from its first appearance in "On Narcissism" in 1914 through the New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis" of 1932.

47 See Hanna Segal. Melanie Klein, p. 9.

48 Freud, "On Narcissism," pp. 101-02.

49 Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego," pp. 115-16.

50 Theodor Adorno, "Sociology and Psychology," part 2, p. 88.

51 Christopher Lasch. The Minimal Self, pp. 281-82.

52 Freud, "Female Sexuality," p. 226. Immediately after this statement Freud adds that the universality of the thesis that the oedipal conflict is the basis of neurosis can be maintained by reinterpreting the conflict.

53 Freud, "The Ego and the Id," pp. 57-59.

54 Lasch, Minimal Self, pp. 281-82.

55 Segal, Melanie Klein, chap. 8. I find Segal very helpful and follow her closely at several points.

56 Melanie Klein. The Writings of Melanie Klein, vol. 2, The Psycho-Analysis of Children, pp. 3-8.

57 Klein, Writings, vol. 3, Envy and Gratitude, p. 190.

58 Freud. "The Ego and the Id," pp. 54-59.

59 Klein, Writings, vol. 3, pp. 178, 180.

60 Segal, Melanie Klein, p. 177.

61 Ibid., pp. 118-19.

62 Klein, Writings, vol. 1, Love. Guilt and Reparation, pp. 225-26. Segal, Melanie Klein, p. 128.

63 Klein. Writings, vol. 3, p. 176.

64 Ibid., p. 192.

65 Ibid., p. 189.

66 Segal, Melanie Klein, pp. 147-48.

67 Klein, Writings, vol. 3, pp. 217-21.

68 Segal, Melanie Klein, p. 153, mentions that narcissism can defend against envy but does not elaborate.

69 DSM-III, p. 316.

70 See Kohut, "Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Rage," pp. 383-85.

71 Klein, Writings, vol. 3, pp. 52-53.

72 Jay R. Greenberg and Stephen A. Mitchell, Object Relations in Psychoanalytic Theory, pp. 136-37.

73 Ibid., p. 137.

74 Ibid.

75 Freud, "On Narcissism," pp. 73-74.

76 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 385. Lester Schwartz also suggests this ("Narcissistic Personality Disorders—A Clinical Discussion," p. 295).

77 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 385.

78 Freud, Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality, p. 34.

79 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 146. These writers summarize the standard criticisms of Klein well (pp. 144-50).

80 Ibid., pp. 151-53.

81 Ernest Jones, Introduction to An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality, by W. R. D. Fairbairn, p. v.

82 Fairbairn, An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality, pp. 139-40; quoted by Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 157. I follow their discussion of Fairbairn quite closely at points.

83 Fairbairn, An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality, p. 48. Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 161.

84 Fairbairn, An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality, p. 42.

85 Harry Guntrip, Personality Structure and Human Interaction, p. 279; quoted in Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 163.

86 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, p. 165.

87 Fairbairn, An Object-Relations Theory of the Personality, p. 70.

88 Ibid., p. 99.

89 Freud, "The Ego and the Id," pp. 31-35.

90 Guntrip stresses this point in Psychoanalytic Theory, Therapy, and the Self, chap. 6-7. Greenberg and Mitchell criticize Guntrip for misrepresenting Fairbairn's position on this issue (Object Relations, pp. 215-17). Fortunately, this need not concern us here.

91 Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association 22, no. 2 (1974). The volume includes pieces by Otto Kernberg, Arnold Goldberg, Vann Spruiell, Alan Eisnitz, Lester Schwartz, Martin

Wangh, and Harold Wylie.

92 Otto Kernberg, “Contrasting Viewpoints Regarding the Nature and Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders,” p. 255. See Joan Riviere, “A Contribution to the Analysis of Negative Therapeutic Reaction”; Edith Jacobson, The Self and the Object World; Margaret Mahler, “On Human Symbiosis and the Vicissitudes of Individuation.”

93 Kernberg, "Contrasting Viewpoints,” pp. 256-57.

94 See Schwartz, “Narcissistic Personality Disorders,” p. 292; Arnold Rothstein, The Narcissistic Pursuit of Perfection, pp. 37-43.

95 Kohut, Restoration of the Self, pp. 30-31.

96 Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure?, p. 64.

97 Ibid.. p. 4.

98 Kernberg, "Contrasting Viewpoints,” p. 265. Idem, Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, pp. 307-10.

99 Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure?, p. 208.

100 Kernberg “Contrasting Viewpoints,” p. 259.

101 Ibid., p. 258.

102 Kernberg, Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, p. 231.

103 Kernberg, “Contrasting Viewpoints,” p. 265.

104 Ibid., pp. 259, 261.

105 Ibid., p. 261.

106 Ibid., p. 264.

107 Kohut, How Does Analysis Cure?, p. 193.

108 Kohut, Restoration of the Self, p. 287.

109 Kernberg, Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, p. 223.

110 Rothstein, Narcissistic Pursuit of Perfection, p. 28.

111 Ibid., p. 38.

112 Ibid., pp. 41-42.

113 Ibid., pp. 17-25.

114 Ibid., p. 114.

115 Ibid., pp. 124-35.

116 Grunberger, Narcissism, pp. 75-76.

117 Ibid., pp. 2-3.

118 Ibid., pp. 20-21.

119 Freud, Civilization and its Discontents, pp. 11-12; Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 104. On this point, see also Ghasseguet-Smirgel, “Some Thoughts on the Ego Ideal," p. 367.

120 Lou Andreas-Salome, The Freud Journal of Lou Andreas-Salomé, p. 164; quoted by Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 24.

121 Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 31. See also p. 93.

122 Mahler, "On Human Symbiosis,” pp. 77-88. See also Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, pp. 288-89.

123 Grunberger. Narcissism, p. 267.

124 Mahler, “On the Three Subphases of the Separation-Individuation Process,” p. 338.

125 Freud, “Instincts and their Vicissitudes,” pp. 134-35.

126 Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 61: from Kafka’s fable “A Country Doctor."

127 Grunberger, Narcissism, pp. 204-05.

128 Marion Oliner, Foreword to Narcissism, by Grunberger, p. xii.

129 Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 203.

130 Ibid., p. 245.

131 Freud. Civilization and its Discontents, pp. 36, 47-49.

132 Grunberger, Narcissism, p. 268, note.

133 Ibid., p. 195.

134 Ibid.. p. 290.

135 Ibid.. pp. 290-93.

136 See Chasseguet-Smirgel, The Ego Ideal, pp. 232-38. Lasch, in his bibliographic essay at the conclusion of Minimal Self, has a section on the psychoanalytic literature on the ego ideal (pp. 284-86). The key point is how much disagreement exists over the term: some see the ego ideal as more primitive than the superego, some as the highest stage of superego development, still others as identical with the superego (see Minimal Self, pp. 85). As Chasseguet-Smirgel points out in her Appendix to The Ego Ideal, Freud is of little help here (pp. 220-45). All three views can be found in Freud. Lasch concludes that the difficulty in characterizing the ego ideal reflects its dialectical character, its linking of the most base with the most sublime, the fact that it is both primitive and mature (Minimal Self, pp. 80). But it is definitely not identical with the superego, even though it may become well integrated with it. As we shall see, this is basically Chasseguet-Smirgel’s position.

137 Freud, “On Narcissism,” pp. 93-94.

138 Chasseguet-Smirgel, Ego Ideal, p. 44.

139 Fairbairn. An Object Relations Theory of the Personality, p. 154.

140 Chasseguet-Smirgel, Ego Ideal, p. 184. See also p. 8.

141 Ibid., pp. 181-82.

142 Ibid.. pp. 187-88.

143 Ibid., p. 33.

144 Kohut. "Thoughts on Narcissism and Narcissistic Kage," pp. 397-98.

145 Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism, pp. 389-90.

146 Chasseguet-Smirgel, Ego Ideal, pp. 218-19.

147 Greenberg and Mitchell, Object Relations, pp. 403-07.

148 Andreas-Salome, Freud Journal, p. 164.

149 Kernberg, Borderline Conditions and Pathological Narcissism, chap. 10.

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