
REVIEW ESSAYS

**Narcissism: Reflections on Others'
Images of an Elusive Concept**

Review by

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Narcissistic States and the Therapeutic Process, by Sheldon Bach. New York and London: Aronson, 1985, xix + 253 pp., \$25.00.

Humanizing the Narcissistic Style, by Stephen M. Johnson. New York and London: Norton, 1987, xiii + 284 pp., \$27.95.

The Many Faces of Shame, edited by Donald L. Nathanson. New York and London: Guilford, 1987, xvi + 370 pp., \$30.00.

Of the many concepts that Freud bequeathed us, few have proved as elusive as narcissism. In his first systematic exposition of this concept, Freud (1914) stated that the term *narcissism* was coined to refer to a paraphilia in which one takes one's own body, rather than another person, as a sexual object. He proceeded, however, to redefine narcissism not as a disorder of sexual object choice but as a normal process, "the libidinal complement to the egoism of the instinct of self-preservation, a measure of which may justifiably be attributed to every living creature" (pp. 73-74). This formulation usually has been rendered as the libidinal cathexis of the ego or, as modified by Hartmann (1950), the libidinal cathexis of the self. Narcissism, according to this essentially economic definition, means self-love and self-esteem. In this framework, narcissism is depleted by libidinal investment in another and is reacquired when one receives love from another or approval from one's ego ideal, itself in turn rooted in narcissism (Freud, 1914).

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As early as 1914, however, the term narcissism already had outgrown this economic–energetic conceptualization and in fact had acquired four distinct usages (Pulver, 1970). In addition to the first two meanings, a paraphilia and self-love or self-esteem, narcissism also referred to a disturbance in object relations and to a normal developmental stage. Each of these two usages in turn had two distinct submeanings. As regards the former, disturbance in object relations, narcissism meant either a type of object choice in which the self plays a more important role than do real features of the object or a mode of relating to the environment characterized by a seeming lack of investment in objects (see Pulver, 1970). As regards the latter, normal development, narcissism meant either a stage, transitional between autoeroticism and object love, in which the ego becomes the object of libidinal investment, or a stage in which the ego, as the primary reservoir of libido, and the object world are undifferentiated (Balint, 1968/1979; Laplanche, 1970/1976).

Although historical irony has it that the meaning that inspired Freud's adoption of the term narcissism has virtually disappeared (i.e., narcissism as a specific paraphilia), the use of a single term to denote the remaining three distinct but potentially related concepts—that is, self-esteem and self-love, a disturbance in object relations, and a normal developmental stage—remains problematic. Furthermore, despite the continuing controversy over the nature of narcissistic disturbance, a simple economic definition cannot do justice to the paradoxes and contradictions of both self-esteem and object relations in this complex clinical phenomenon. As Grunberger (1971/1979) wrote, noting narcissism's dialectical character, "The narcissistic person is one who loves himself well, but also one who loves himself poorly or not at all" (p. 3).

Its ambiguities notwithstanding, narcissism, for at least two reasons, continues to haunt us and to permeate current thinking about psychological functioning. First, whatever confusions Freud may have had about this troublesome concept, he identified a fundamental human truth: That normal functioning is narcissistic (i.e., self-overvaluing); that, as Lacan (1977) later argued, self-inflation is fundamental to the ego. Research in social psychology confirms that normal self-esteem involves not accurate self-appraisal but "overly positive self-evaluations, exaggerated perceptions of control or mastery, and unrealistic optimism" (Taylor & Brown, 1988, p. 193; see also Emmons, 1987). The presence of these essentially narcissistic distortions correlates with happiness or contentment, ability to care for others, and capacity for creative productive work, in essence, psychological health and the opposite of (narcissistic) pathology; their absence correlates with low self-esteem and moderate depression. Second, as many have noted, nowadays clinicians treat patients whose problems are not the classical symptom neuroses but rather disturbances in self-esteem, identity or self-concept, and object relations, precisely those aspects of personality functioning implicated by the concept of narcissism. Because of the continuing prominence of patients with these clinical

presentations, concerns about a culture of narcissism (Lasch, 1979) are well founded indeed.

This review covers three works pertaining to narcissistic phenomena, primarily narcissistic disturbance but also, by implication, normal narcissism. Those of Bach and Johnson are discussions, more personal than systematic, of the conceptualization and treatment of narcissistic character disorders. Bach's is addressed primarily to a psychoanalytic audience; Johnson's, while leaning on psychoanalytic concepts, is addressed more to a general audience of psychotherapeutic practitioners. The third work, Nathanson's edited collection, discusses not narcissism but a closely related topic—perhaps its conceptual twin—shame. The purpose of this review, in addition to assessment of the merits of these three volumes, is to use these contributions to clarify current thinking about narcissism and narcissistic pathology.

THE PHENOMENOLOGY OF NARCISSISM

In *Narcissistic States and the Therapeutic Process*, Bach makes an original, scholarly, and compassionate contribution to the narcissism literature. In this articulate and creative work, he integrates currently popular object-relations perspectives (Balint, Kohut, Mahler, Winnicott) with those of Freud and classical analysis (Ferenczi, Jones), ego psychology (Hartmann, Rapaport), developmental psychology, both psychoanalytic (Escalona, Spitz) and nonpsychoanalytic (Piaget), semiotics (Jakobson, Lacan), studies of mythology and literature, and even, to some degree, experimental psychology. The result is a synthesis that simultaneously clarifies some of the more obscure paradoxes of the narcissism literature and, with both empathy and realism, elucidates the narcissistic patient's peculiar form of seemingly inaccessible psychic pain. This integration is grounded in Bach's evocative but rigorous use of a phenomenological perspective to delineate the narcissist's lived experience. Central to his argument is the thesis that narcissistic disturbance involves a disruption of reflective self-awareness. Using a Piagetian framework, Bach states that narcissistic patients have difficulty in establishing equilibrium between subjective awareness (i.e., the immediate, nonreflective immersion in the experience of self as a center of thought, feeling, and action) and objective self-awareness (i.e., the awareness of self, including thoughts, experiences, feelings, actions, etc., as an object among other objects and a self among other selves). As one of his patients says of her sexual experience, "I can't make the smooth transition . . . I'm either *me*, totally me and so excited that nothing else exists, or else I'm Tony's lover and I can give him pleasure but then I don't have it myself. . . ." (p. 51). Whereas neurotic patients are capable of moving smoothly from subjective to objective self-awareness and back again, narcissistic patients, as a result of profound parental failures, suffer from an inability to

integrate these two perspectives on the self. The consequences of this failure of reflective self-awareness are disruptions of both cognitive processing and bodily experience, both self and object representation, both work and love.

In narcissistic patients in particular, Bach links a heightened sense of subjective awareness with Kohut's grandiose self and mirror transference, with Balint's philobatism, with growing self-esteem, grandiosity, fears of overstimulation and of loss of objects and reality, and with the fantasy that one has absorbed the world. In contrast, he associates a heightened sense of objective self-awareness with Kohut's idealized parent imago and idealizing transference, with Balint's ocnophilia, with loss of self-esteem, feelings of depersonalization and depression, fears of understimulation and of loss or disintegration of the self, and with the fantasy that one has been absorbed by the world. All persons face the paradoxes of reflective self-awareness—namely, (a) that subjective awareness increases the sense of aliveness but decreases objective knowledge of self, and (b) that objective self-awareness, by increasing knowledge of one's place (and smallness) in the world, decreases self-esteem. Narcissistic patients do not master these paradoxes; instead, they are beset by them. Concepts like Mahler's rapprochement stage, Lacan's mirror stage, and Winnicott's stage of transitional object usage, Bach notes, provide alternative but illuminating developmental perspectives on this narcissistic dilemma, and suggest that narcissistic disturbance involves not so much a misallocation of libido as a problem in the representation of objects and object relations.

This displacement of the alternation between self and object from an economic to a representational framework is Bach's most important contribution to the theory of narcissism. Because one's capacity for libidinal investment in others is finite and because unrequited love is a profound narcissistic injury, the economic definition of narcissism retains a certain clinical relevance. It cannot, however, accommodate two important clinical observations that point to narcissism's paradoxical nature: (a) The capacity to love others requires the capacity for self-love (Kernberg, 1975; Kohut, 1977); and (b) narcissistic disturbance involves not an absence but a disruption of investment in others, not only an overvaluation but also a devaluation of self (Grunberger, 1971/1979). These clinical observations become intelligible when the seesaw between self and object is conceptualized as a disruption of the capacity to integrate subjective and objective perspectives. The representational world of a neurotic individual comprises a cohesive, vital self and cohesive, vital others, whatever distortions may be present in those representations and whoever, self or other, is the primary object of libidinal investment at a given moment. For a narcissistic individual, in contrast, the self is experienced as cohesive and vital at the cost of the object's becoming fragmented and lifeless, and vice versa. That is why one who has capacity for self-love can love others, and why narcissistic individuals are profoundly invested in others but only insofar as others are mirroring them or are capable of being idealized. Terms like part object,

selfobject, and transitional object express the narcissistic patient's representational and relational difficulties.

The strength of Bach's work rests, however, not only on his representational reformulation of the economic definition of narcissism but also on his attempt to connect this reformulation to classical drive theory. Although arguing for the primacy of an object-relations perspective in conceptualizing narcissistic pathology, he presents clinical material in sufficient detail to demonstrate that narcissistic patients have prominent drive-related concerns, and he never slight the importance of these issues in the genesis of narcissistic disturbance. Noting the developmental overlap of anality with the rapprochement stage, Bach links sadomasochism to the narcissist's shifts between grandiosity and idealization, and demonstrates this association in myth, in childhood use of imaginary companions and transitional objects, and in the writings of the Marquis de Sade. The reader should take special note of the chapter on the Marquis de Sade, written with Lester Schwartz. Disturbing because of one particularly horrific selection from the Marquis's writings, it demonstrates convincingly the connection between anality and narcissism. A discussion of the differential implications of anality for narcissism and for obsessionality (i.e., that with which anality is usually paired) would have strengthened these chapters on imaginary companions, literature, and myth. This is a small criticism, however, in view of Bach's attempt to confront such psychologically difficult material.

Ultimately, the complementarity of self and drive theories becomes a central concern of this book. Bach links the perspective of objective self-awareness to ego psychology, the classical neuroses (hysteria, obsessionality), impulse (or desire), and interpretation. In contrast, he connects the perspective of subjective awareness to self psychology, the narcissistic neuroses, identity, and empathy. Although both perspectives are essential, the shift from objective self-awareness, the language of the ego and of interpretation, to subjective awareness, the language of the self and of empathy, is what makes narcissistic and borderline states amenable to psychoanalytic treatment. Because it uncovers hidden causal sequences and seeks to reconcile repressed motives with the norms of consensual reality, interpretation benefits classical neurotics. But interpretation disorganizes narcissistic and borderline patients, most of whom experience its scrutiny, especially if accurate, as an attack upon the self, a narcissistic injury. An empathic approach, in contrast, allows narcissistic patients to play, unencumbered by the demands of realistic adaptation, in the transitional space between subjective and objective self-awareness—to construct an identity. Thus, the classical neurotic, Bach tells us, struggles to discover what the ego desires, and the narcissistic neurotic struggles to discover who the self is. The classical neurotic is concerned with problems of doing; the narcissistic neurotic, with problems of being.

As evocative as this dualism—the language of the ego and the language of

the self—may be, it is not unproblematic. Bach, like Kohut, wants to assert that subjective and objective perspectives on the self are complementary in the manner of wave and particle physics, and in a sense he is correct. Two theories are complementary if, despite being mutually exclusive, both are necessary to explain a phenomenon. And as Bach argues, each of these perspectives, subjective and objective, is necessary to understand selfhood, yet in the immediate moment, the two are mutually exclusive. Aside from certain mystical states or moments of ecstasy, one cannot simultaneously observe oneself as an object among other objects and experience the vitality of one's subjective self, any more than one can watch oneself gaze in the mirror. But this mutual exclusivity operates only in the immediate moment or at the level of lived experience.

At times of deeper self-reflection, during psychoanalytic treatment for example, it is quite possible to consider simultaneously and even to integrate subjective and objective self-awareness—to ask simultaneously the questions of identity and desire, being and doing. In so doing, one moves from a dualism or complementarity of subjective and objective self-awareness to a dialectic. According to this dialectic, this hermeneutic circle, knowledge of one's identity comes from a discovery of the meaning of one's actions and desires, and the meaning of one's actions and desires is found in the knowledge of one's identity. Similarly, in the realm of therapeutic technique, empathy with the self involves interpretation of desires, and interpretation of desires requires empathy with the self. Objective self-awareness may predominate in the understanding of the classical neuroses, therefore, and subjective awareness in the understanding of the narcissistic disorders, but a complete account of both classes of disturbance will require an integration as yet unspecified of these two perspectives. Bach in all fairness cannot be faulted for failing to supply the answer to questions, those of subject and object, of being and doing, that plague not merely psychoanalysis but Western thought, but he merits praise for having raised them in the first place.

There remains one final shortcoming to this otherwise exemplary work, and that is Bach's relative neglect of empirical research. Again, in all fairness, Bach cites Duval and Wicklund's experimental findings that a heightening of objective self-awareness lowers self-esteem, and admittedly the rebirth of psychoanalytic research is a recent phenomenon. Nevertheless, Bach's claim that psychoanalysis is the treatment of choice for narcissistic disorder, although certainly a widespread belief among clinicians who work extensively with such patients, still needs empirical confirmation. His book, however, makes no mention of this requirement. Similarly, although many share his reliance on the concept of symbiosis, he makes no reference to the challenges that psychoanalytically oriented developmental researchers (e.g., Lichtenberg, 1981; Stern, 1985), who otherwise might find themselves sympathetic to his arguments, have posed to the adequacy of that particular theoretical construct (and

of such related concepts as normal autism, autoeroticism, and primary narcissism). He need not accept the validity of these challenges, but a brief passage acknowledging the controversy and explaining his position would have helped. Finally, although this volume is above all a clinical work, Bach's far-reaching phenomenological approach has produced a rarity—a psychoanalytic theory readily amenable to empirical test. His apparent lack of interest in this possibility is an unfortunate flaw for a book that is otherwise so insightful, scholarly, and useful. Despite this shortcoming, however, Bach has written a work of theoretical perspicacity and clinical richness—one that merits the widest readership and discussion.

THE PSYCHOTHERAPY OF NARCISSISM

Whereas Bach's work attempts to extend and clarify the psychoanalytic theory of narcissism, Johnson, in *Humanizing the Narcissistic Style*, attempts to apply the insights of psychoanalysis to the more typical psychotherapeutic situation. He contends that an integration of current object-relations theories—most prominently those of Kohut, Mahler, Masterson, and Miller—with the techniques of Reichian bioenergetics, Gestalt therapy, transactional analysis, and neurolinguistic programming can result in successful treatment of narcissistic disorders without resort to an actual analysis. This claim is as much in need of empirical substantiation as are claims that psychoanalysis is the treatment of choice. Nevertheless, Johnson's work is valuable, if for no other reason than his attempt to address everyday clinical realities—namely, (a) that most practitioners are not psychoanalytically oriented and have limited familiarity with object-relations theories; (b) that most psychoanalytically oriented clinicians are not themselves analysts; and (c) that even if psychoanalysis were widely available, most patients cannot afford psychotherapy several times a week, let alone an analysis. Still he posits that a psychoanalytic conceptualization is essential to the treatment of narcissistic disturbance, and his book attempts to popularize an object-relations understanding of such patients. Despite effort to adapt a psychoanalytic approach to the constraints of economic circumstance, Johnson nevertheless has written a deeply problematic work. But before considering this book's many difficulties, the reader should be aware of Johnson's contributions.

Although little is new in Johnson's essentially self-psychological account of narcissistic disturbance, and although his writing is often awkward, his discussion is clear enough to render this viewpoint intelligible to readers who otherwise might avoid psychoanalytic perspectives. Thus, he notes that narcissistic injury occurs when parents use their children to gratify narcissistic needs or humiliate them for failure to conform to parental desires, rather than accepting their children more or less as they are. He further argues that the rapproche-

ment subphase, as the time at which one first discovers one's separateness in the larger world, constitutes the critical developmental period for the genesis of a narcissistic injury. The results are the disturbances of object relations, self-esteem, and identity typically found in narcissistic character pathology. In particular, functioning comprises alternations between a grandiose false self and a shamed, hypochondriacal symptomatic self, along with repression of a despairing and depleted but potentially vital real self. Treatment involves confronting the experiences of grandiosity and humiliation so that the real self can experience and free itself from the despair of its narcissistic injury.

These ideas are commonplace, but Johnson's attempt to integrate them with Reichian theory is unique. Narcissistic disturbance, in this framework, is a disorder not merely of the self but most fundamentally of the body self and results in certain characteristic patterns of body armor. Johnson specifies two varieties of narcissistic armor—the upwardly displaced or puffed up, and the chameleon. Weakness in the lower half of the body and overdevelopment of the upper half characterizes the puffed-up narcissist; an ungrounded and weak base supports grandiosity and exhibitionism. The chameleon narcissist shows no obvious body distortions but instead a false-self mask. In both cases, however, energy blocks impede full bodily awareness of feeling and desire. Bach, the reader should note, also makes reference to the disturbance of the body schema and bodily experience in narcissistic disorder, but Johnson makes distortion of the body central to his conceptualization. He therefore argues, given the tenacity of narcissistic character armor, that bioenergetic, Gestalt, and hypnotic techniques constitute the most efficient means of lifting grandiose and idealizing defenses and of allowing the emergence of full bodily awareness and the real self.

Because of Reich's (1949) important historical contribution to the theory of narcissistic pathology, Johnson's attempt to restore a Reichian component to current object-relations perspectives on narcissism is most intriguing. One wishes that he had clarified the relationship of Reich's concept of phallic-narcissistic character—a neurotic-level personality organization—to the more disturbed narcissistic personalities delineated by Kernberg and Kohut. Some reference to the difficulties of integrating energy models, whether Reichian or Freudian, with relational theories also would have been helpful (see Eagle, 1984; Greenberg & Mitchell, 1983). But because this is a book for practitioners and not scholars, the failure to discuss these issues constitutes a relatively minor flaw. More in need of extended commentary is Johnson's prescription of an active psychotherapeutic approach. As noted, this recommendation stands as much in need of empirical substantiation as does the more typical recommendation of a more analytic technique. But that aside, Johnson's main concern is that readers will regard bioenergetic techniques as mere human potential tricks. Despite a growing interest in integrating, perhaps reintegrat-

ing, abreactive methods into psychoanalytic psychotherapy (e.g., Appelbaum, 1982; Silverman, 1987), the use of such techniques in psychoanalytically oriented treatment remains controversial.

More important, however, is that Johnson, while arguing that bioenergetic techniques facilitate the emergence of primitive material that otherwise would emerge only after considerable analysis, never discusses the transference reactions that his narcissistic patients have to the techniques themselves. No doubt, given the typical narcissistic transferences, such patients are likely to present therapeutically challenging responses to techniques designed to elicit intense affect and primitive fantasy. These might include, for example, an adoption of a grandiose, rageful, and narcissistically invulnerable stance with regard to the material elicited and to the therapist's attempts to expose more primitive concerns, or an idealization of the therapist's all-powerful technique at the expense of a deeper therapeutic relatedness. Johnson, however, gives no clue as to when he thinks transference responses to his techniques are likely to occur, how these responses manifest themselves, and how he deals with them. This is a very serious omission in a work that otherwise pays such close attention to psychoanalytic conceptualizations.

By no means is this the only troubling feature of Johnson's approach. To his credit, Johnson provides the reader with extensive transcripts of his therapy sessions. This honesty makes possible more thorough discussion of his clinical data and inferences and permits a more direct appraisal of his therapeutic approach. Although he emerges as both compassionate and confrontive, the content of his sessions is surely an example of the culture of narcissism. Johnson makes much of his patients' growing responsiveness to their own needs, needs long denied in futile attempts to meet narcissistic parental demands or to assert an illusory, grandiose self-sufficiency. But he seems not to notice that these patients remain greatly deficient in their capacity for empathy and concern—that they continue to regard others essentially as mirrors, not as separate persons with independent needs.

This failure to address the issues of empathy and concern, issues central to Kohut's understanding of narcissism, raises two intertwined, fundamental questions, one of therapeutic values and one of theory, about this book. As regards therapeutic values, Johnson tells us in one of his later chapters that for narcissistic patients, the most difficult struggle often involves the question they ask about their narcissistic parents, "Why didn't they love me?" (p. 217). Yet the vast majority of his discussion concerns not failures of love but failures of mirroring and idealization. This is an example of a common misuse of the self-psychological paradigm. That is, in focusing on the damaging effects of inadequate mirroring or opportunities for idealization, a writer will seem oblivious to the idea that more damaging than parental empathic failures is what these empathic failures, if chronic or traumatic enough, ultimately sig-

nify—inadequate parental love. Johnson can see this psychological truth, but his vision is clouded. In taking more than 200 pages to arrive at this conclusion, he renders it an afterthought, a footnote. He thus misses the essence of the Narcissus myth. The great crime of Narcissus—that for which the gods punished him—was not his failure to mirror or to allow himself to be idealized, but his refusal to love and to allow himself to be loved.

This failure of moral vision is related to a failure of theoretical insight. Johnson believes that selfhood is a unitary experience, an immediate awareness that integrates the body–mind duality. He no doubt sees himself as opposing the traditional Western vision of the autonomous ego—of instrumental reason's domination over nature, others, and bodily feeling (see Horkheimer & Adorno, 1944/1972). A Reichian at heart, he wants instead to assert the primacy of bodily experience over instrumental reason, but this merely reverses the dialectic of narcissism without resolving it. Whereas the autonomous ego partakes of the narcissistic illusion of self-sufficiency, the unitary self that Johnson posits rests upon that other narcissistic illusion, the oceanic feeling, the wish for blissful fusion (Lasch, 1984). In contrast to the seemingly antithetical positions of instrumental reason and romanticism, psychoanalysis sees selfhood as a locus of conflict, even under the best of circumstances and no matter how unitary one's self-experience may be (e.g., Brown, 1959; Laplanche, 1970/1976).

From a psychoanalytic perspective, therefore, a true sense of wholeness—an integration of cohesive bodily experience and the larger context of meaning and purpose, as Johnson states—is never immediate and always comprises the awareness and integration of conflict, the capacity to know and live with that which is irreconcilable. In this regard, it matters little whether the conflictual nature of selfhood is understood within the matrix of drive or that of object relations. Whichever paradigm one prefers, the tragic and the ironic perspectives are fundamental to a psychoanalytic understanding of the self (see Schafer, 1976). In fact, as Bach demonstrates through his discussion of the paradoxes of subjective and objective self-awareness an allegiance to Kohut's ideas can be quite compatible with an appreciation of the tragic and ironic perspectives and an understanding that selfhood is never completely unitary.

As for Johnson, his distillation of Kohut emphasizes the viewpoint of subjective awareness—that is, the comic and romantic visions—and loses the objective perspective on the self. Thus, his work, despite its refreshing attempt to integrate psychoanalytic theory with nonanalytic techniques, is deeply flawed. Although he claims to heal narcissism and realizes that therapeutic efforts are contingent on the economic circumstances of the patient's life, his cure, through its emphasis on the restoration of subjective awareness, rather than on the integration of subjective and objective perspectives, is another form of the disease.

SHAME, NARCISSISM, AND THE SELF

The linking in the psychoanalytic literature of selfhood with narcissism begins with Freud's writings, but only recently have theorists and scholars discussed extensively the association of both concepts, selfhood and narcissism, with that of shame. Nathanson's edited collection *The Many Faces of Shame* joins a spate of recent offerings in telling us that this affect is a neglected topic in psychoanalysis. The most arresting feature of this paradox is its accuracy—that despite increasing attention, shame has had and continues to have a far smaller psychoanalytic press than do affects like anxiety, guilt, sadness, and anger. The reasons for this are many but include, at the very least, the intensity of psychological pain aroused by a sustained examination of shame and the difficulty of fitting shame, unlike the other aforementioned affects, into the drive and structural paradigms. As if to exemplify this paradox—that is, the spate of writings exposing and decrying the neglect of shame—Otto Will writes, in his chapter, “As a therapist, I have not found shame to be, in any simple form, a major topic of discussion” (pp. 313–314). Particularly striking is that this statement is presented in the context of a discussion, both lucid and sensitive, of the powerful role of shame in psychosis. Furthermore, any clinician can easily verify that shame, if not a major component of psychosis itself, is central to the experience of chronic psychiatric patienthood. Thus does shame emerge as a concept as elusive as its alter ego, narcissism, in a volume dedicated to the exposure of this affect.

Nathanson's collection, presenting contributions from virtually all major psychoanalytic viewpoints, as well as some nonanalytic ones (e.g., affect theory, field-dependence theory, family systems theory, pastoral counseling), stands forth as a welcome addition to the shame literature. From this multitude of perspectives comes a surprising unanimity of voice as shame, like narcissism, is revealed as a dual concept referring not only to self-esteem regulation but, more important, to the formation of selfhood and the development of object relations. This is not to say that these authors regard shame and narcissism as interchangeable concepts. As Lewis indicates, shame is an affect with implications both for normal functioning and for varieties of psychopathology not usually regarded as narcissistic. But as this chorus of writers makes clear, shame—by calling attention to the experiences of failure, weakness, defect, and indecency—limits self-esteem, places boundaries around the self, and regulates transactions between the self and others. In all of these cases, the lived experience of shame delimits the abstract concepts of narcissism and selfhood.

The word *shame*, these writers tell us, derives from an Indo-European root, *(s)kēm* or *(s)kam*, that means to hide or to cover (see Nathanson, the object-relations theorist Kinston, and the pastoral counselor Schneider). In many languages, shame has two antonymous forms: *unashamed*, referring to an

inner attitude or feeling and meaning modest, shy, reverent, in essence knowing when to cover oneself; and *shameless*, referring to the world of social custom and behavior and meaning brazen, impudent, lacking in decency, in essence wantonly exposing that which is private and should be covered (see Kinston, Schneider, and the ego psychologist Wurmser). In other words, the etymology of shame contains the essential duality of this word. One of its meanings, the opposite of unashamed, denotes the feeling of shame, the subjective experience of disgrace upon exposure of flaw or defect; the other, the opposite of shameless, refers to the sense of shame, an attitude preventing disgraceful exposure out of respect toward self and others. In addition, Wurmser argues that shame denotes a kind of signal anxiety, the fear of disgrace, but this usage seems to play relatively little role in the etymology of the word and in any case is little emphasized by the other writers in this volume.

Nevertheless, consistent with this etymological history, virtually all of the theoreticians of shame collected here emphasize that the central components of the shame experience are the feeling of exposure, whether in one's own eyes or those of others, and the wish to hide. That which is exposed, which elicits shame or related affect, is a failing of the self. These failings include, according to Wurmser, feelings of weakness, defectiveness, and dirtiness, as well as the wishes to expose and exhibit both oneself and others. But even though his account is framed far more in terms of classical drive themes (i.e., anality, phallicism) than are the other contributors' discussions, his exposition agrees with theirs in its stress on the centrality of exposure and covering in the shame experience. Shame may attach itself to the classical issues, but like his colleagues, Wurmser believes that shame is far more than the derivative of certain psychosexual stages.

Thus, Nathanson, following Tomkins (also a contributor to this volume), proposes that shame, like other affects, has roots that are innate and, contrary to the usual psychoanalytic account, independent of the drives. In brief, Tomkins argues that shame is an affect auxiliary, a regulator for the excitement-interest-joy affect complex. Interest and enjoyment have certain characteristic patterns of neural firing, and the sudden reduction or interruption of excitement, interest, or enjoyment—that is, of their characteristic patterns of neural firing—produces the experience of shame. Interest, enjoyment, and shame are considered innate not only because they are related to certain types of neural activity but also because the facial expressions associated with them emerge in infancy, are culturally universal, and function as regulators of mother-infant communication. Thus, according to this theory, affect, while rooted in biology, is also profoundly social, the primary means of nonverbal communication from earliest infancy. But although affects are considered innate and independent of drives, this perspective is incomplete without psychoanalytic developmental theories that explain how shame develops from a protoaffect

involving only a characteristic pattern of neural firing and a specific set of facial and bodily displays to the rich but painful phenomenological experience described by these writers.

Reviewing the literature on the development of affect in infancy, Nathanson reports that protoshame displays—the lowering of the head and eyes, the turning away of the face—can occur as early as the age of 3 months. Stimuli evoking these displays include disruptions of parent–infant interaction—particularly, failures of parental responsiveness to an excited, interested, or joyful baby—and the child’s experiences of failure or inefficacy when playing excitedly or joyfully with inanimate objects. From the beginning, then, shame means limitation, what the self cannot do or cannot communicate. The 8-month stranger anxiety, with its shyness and attempt to turn away, also can be interpreted as a case of protoshame. Shame affect proper, however, requires the ability to relate disruptions of interest or enjoyment to characteristics of the self. It therefore requires a capacity first attained between the ages of 18 and 24 months, the height of the rapprochement phase. That capacity is the ability to observe oneself and to recognize oneself as an object among other objects, in other words, objective self-awareness. Whatever their ultimate opinions of Tomkins’s affect theories and whatever differences of theoretical language they may have, the authors collected here are virtually unanimous in their agreement on these ideas—that shame is an ineluctable consequence of objective self-awareness, and that objective self-awareness, the eye turned inward to discover in the midst of interest or enjoyment hidden faults and defects, is the core of shame.

Starting with unanimity on this central point, the writers collected here fall, by and large, into two overlapping but distinguishable schools of thought. The first approach, that of those whose training, if not necessarily their current orientations, emphasizes the more classical drive and ego psychologies (e.g., Lewis, Stoller, Wurmser, and some of the French analysts discussed by Wilson), focuses on the role of shame (and of objective self-awareness) in self-esteem regulation and self-valuation, in the genesis of depression and grandiosity, and in the formation of neurotic symptoms in general. According to this perspective, shame, the consequence of exposure, leads to depression and inhibition. The concomitants of the attempt to ward off shame include, most obviously, voyeurism, grandiosity, and exhibitionism but also a sequence that includes shame, humiliated fury over having been shamed, guilt over one’s rage, and more shame, the end results being depression and a rage-fueled spiral of obsessiveness. Shame also attaches itself to anality, phallicism, and sexuality because the developmental onset of the struggles with one’s parents over these drive-related issues overlaps the rapprochement-era beginnings of objective self-awareness—because one learns that drive-related parts of the self upset one’s parents. Perverse activity is therefore an attempt to ward off the shame of being invested in these degraded matters. From these more classically

rooted perspectives, then, shame is both a central component of symptom formation of all kinds and a necessary consequence of uncovering, insight therapy. Thus, shame, a desire not to be exposed, is also at the core of the resistance to psychoanalytic psychotherapy and psychoanalysis. The handling of resistance becomes, in large part, the handling of the shame that results from uncovering.

The second approach, that of writers whose orientations tend to be associated more closely with one of the varieties of object-relations theory or self psychology (e.g., Kinston, Morrison, Schneider, and Will), focuses on the relationship of shame and of objective self-awareness to the structure and representation of selfhood and identity. As such, it complements the perspective of those who are more obviously influenced by drive theories. Shame emerges, in this second perspective, as the mediating term in the dialectic of subjective and objective self-awareness.

As argued most articulately by Kinston and by Schneider, shame is both a necessary concomitant and the ultimate guardian of selfhood and individuality. Because any true individuation, any self-formation, requires separation and difference from others, it risks exposure and therefore the feeling of shame. Psychological health, adequate self-esteem, involves not an absence of shame but a capacity to tolerate the shame that inheres in individuality. In other words, shame ensures that selfhood, no matter how well established, always remains a locus of conflict. On the other hand, the protection of selfhood and individuality requires the sense of shame, of what one must not expose, whether of oneself or of another. For the sense of shame is the awareness of what would cause embarrassment to oneself or another and is therefore a respect for privacy. Without this sense, one cannot recognize another's selfhood or allow another to be an individual, let alone guard that which is private to oneself or central to one's own individuality.

Thus, when parents by and large accept their children as they are and allow them a private zone for self-exploration without parental scrutiny, the children learn to remain relatively unashamed in the face of potential exposure and to tolerate the experience of shame when such feelings do occur. They also acquire a certain modesty about themselves and a certain respect for others—in essence, a sense of shame. In contrast, narcissistic vulnerability and shame proneness develop when parents, because of their own needs, either cannot for the most part accept or affirm—in a word, mirror—the child's authentic or spontaneous gestures or cannot allow the child a private zone. Under these circumstances, the experience of selfhood becomes painful and precarious. The assertion of individuality becomes an occasion for shame because shame attaches to any actions that bring looks of anger, sadness, distress, or disapproval to parental eyes. When the shame that results from the devaluing exposure of the child's individuality becomes too painful, the child attempts to regain parental love and approval, to establish a restitutive sense of fusion by

destroying his or her uniqueness and presenting instead a more acceptable facade. In other words, self-esteem becomes riddled with shame, and the sense of shame becomes not a respect for others but a false-self compliance, a destruction of one's own experience to avoid others' withering glares.

At a minimum, these circumstances create a vicious circle of painful individuality and low self-esteem, exposure and shame, compliance and other hiding maneuvers to escape embarrassment, and attempts, however painful, to reassert individuality and restore feelings of vitality. But as the process continues, the feelings of shame become greater, and the sense of shame deteriorates from compliance and conformity to grandiosity, exhibitionism, antisocial conduct, addiction, and paraphilia—in essence, shamelessness—all in a desperate effort to escape the alternating dangers of shame and inner deadness. At root, shamelessness, like compliance, remains an attempt to establish an illusory sense of fusion—as Bach might tell us, to thrust a malignant subjective awareness upon the world so as to blot out a malignant objective self-awareness—but this effort is doomed to failure. A shameless attitude produces not just inner deadness but shameful conduct, conduct that deeply injures self-respect and starts the cycle yet again. Completing the link between this second perspective on shame and Bach's analysis of narcissism, one notes that the malignant dialectic of subjective and objective self-awareness can fixate upon the pole of subjective awareness, in which case grandiosity and shamelessness result, or upon the pole of objective self-awareness, in which case shame proneness and inhibition result, or it can oscillate between the two and produce an unstable mixture of shamelessness and ashamedness, grandiosity and inhibition.

Nathanson's volume on shame thus returns us to and completes Bach's arguments about narcissism. Its multiplicity of voices tells us that shame, like narcissism, concerns not just self-esteem but the representation of self and others—that because narcissism comprises both self-esteem regulation and the representation of self and others, it becomes intelligible only when linked to its alter ego, shame. Furthermore, because shame and narcissism are dual concepts, neither term can be understood without reference to these two underlying processes, the evaluation of self and the representation of object relations. Nathanson and his collaborators, in other words, allow us to rediscover the central subject matter of psychoanalysis—the representational matrix of desire and relationship in human existence.

This collection of course is not without its weaknesses. Because of the centrality of neo-Darwinian affect theory in Nathanson's account of the development of shame, one wishes that literature critical of this viewpoint—for example, social constructionism, James-Lange theory, and so forth—had been discussed. In addition, although this book does provide a useful corrective to the relative dearth of attention given shame, the reader here may sometimes feel that these writers want shame to be the affective cornerstone of psychoanalytic thinking. Given the extensive historical literatures on the affects of anxi-

ety, guilt, sadness, and anger, the attempt to transform psychoanalysis into a shame psychology first and foremost would constitute a dismantling, not an expansion or restoration, of the psychoanalytic edifice. Aside from a consensus, probably justified, that shame is fundamental to guilt, these authors to their credit avoid extreme statements regarding the primacy of shame. Exceptions may include Lewis, who makes the dynamics of shame and guilt the central focus of her clinical work, Wilson, who notes that shame provides the central means by which French analysts have escaped the solipsism implied in Cartesianism, and Berke, whose Kleinian perspective argues for the primacy of shame and envy in human destructiveness. Even these more extreme positions, however, are presented thoughtfully and articulately, such that the reader cannot dismiss them out of hand and must recognize, for example, that Lewis's landmark work remains essential to an understanding of shame, or that the French emphasis on shame and intersubjectivity has relevance for all trapped in the dualism and potential solipsism of Western thought. Because even their most controversial opinions are presented with insight and eloquence, the main contribution of Nathanson and his colleagues is to show us not that all psychological conflict is rooted in shame but that shame can be found in virtually all psychological conflict.

TOWARD A UNIFIED THEORY OF NARCISSISM

For more than 20 years, commentators on narcissism have framed their arguments in terms of the Kernberg–Kohut debate—a debate usually portrayed as one of conflict versus deficit. And after 20 years, no clear resolution of this controversy has emerged, largely because it is unresolvable. Alongside psychoanalysis, experimental personality psychology has also entertained this same controversy, although in that subdiscipline the debate over primary factors in human behavior usually is termed one of motivation versus cognitive (or information-processing) biases. In experimental personality psychology, this controversy has also proved unresolvable because the motivational and cognitive positions, although divergent at the level of theory or paradigm, are not distinguishable under empirical test. That is, at the level of observable consequences (what psychologists still naively call operational definitions), motivation-based and cognition-based theories of personality can each generate hypotheses that mimic those of the rival position because, at this level, motivation-based and cognition-based theories are not themselves rigorously discriminable (Tetlock & Levi, 1982). In the language of the psychoanalytic version of this debate, unresolved conflicts are likely to cause developmental deficits or failures to achieve certain levels of psychological organization, and developmental deficits are likely to result in unresolved conflicts (see Eagle, 1984). Although, for not inconsequential reasons of therapeutic values and aesthetics,

psychoanalysis historically has preferred motivation-based explanation, neither the conflict- nor the deficit-based research program has proved to have greater theoretical and empirical power than its rival (cf. Lakatos, 1970). Under these circumstances, the conflict-deficit debate in narcissism is no more resolvable on the psychoanalytic couch than is its cousin, the motivation-cognition debate in experimental personality psychology, through laboratory studies.

Other factors influencing the irreconcilability of the Kernberg-Kohut debate are the data sources and data collection methods of the two theorists (Adler, 1986). Kernberg's narcissists are often functioning at a borderline level, and his confrontive interviewing style elicits anger from these already poorly integrated individuals. Kohut's narcissists are functioning well enough to be analysands, and his stress on empathic understanding tends to quiet rageful displays. If nothing else, empirical research can clarify matters by standardizing both the population studied and the method of assessing subjects. No doubt, advances in the narcissism field and the eventual surpassing of the Kernberg-Kohut debate will require empirical research, but because empirical science is as interpretative, perhaps even hermeneutic, as any discipline in the humanities (cf. Holt, 1981; Manicas & Secord, 1983), a simple call for research is no panacea. If anything, personality psychology's experience with the motivation-cognitive bias debate tells us that the narcissism field is still deeply in need of better theory. This better theory would attempt not to resolve this controversy in favor of Kernberg or Kohut but to achieve a *superordinate integration*.

Leaving aside, therefore, the overfamiliar terms of this argument, let us turn in the direction in which the books reviewed here, specifically those of Bach and Nathanson, point us. Narcissistic personality disorder, a pathology of shame, is a disturbance of self-esteem regulation, the use of grandiose defenses against inadequate self-regard, but it is far more than that. It is at base a disturbance in the representation of self and of the relationship of self to others. Kohut (1977) asserted this idea simply through his use of the terms self psychology and selfobject, although no doubt he would insist that these concepts are also central to normal functioning. In Kernberg's (1975) system, too, pathological narcissism results, despite a stated adherence to the economic definition of narcissism as the libidinal cathexis of the self, from a pathological self-formation. The grandiose self—a fusion of the real self, ideal self, and ideal object—and not a misallocation of libido is the core of narcissistic personality disorder. Its consequence is a set of internal object relations characterized by either a grandiose, exhibitionistic self and an empty, shadowing other or an idealized, overinflated other and a depleted, shadowing self. In pathological narcissism, the vitality of the self requires the deadening of the other, and vice versa.

There is nothing new in this account of narcissistic dynamics. These de-

scriptions come, after all, from the 1960s writings of Kernberg and Kohut, and virtually all commentators on narcissistic disturbance, whatever their theoretical stance, either parallel or reflect Kernberg and Kohut's influence. Similar conceptions emerge in the various terminologies, among others, of Bach (subjective awareness and objective self-awareness), Kinston (self-narcissism and object-narcissism), Wurmser (delophilia and theatophilia), and Blatt (introjective configuration and anaclitic configuration; see Blatt & Shichman, 1983). But whatever terminology one prefers in describing these object relations, the economic factor, the allocation of libido to self or others, if we may use provisionally that increasingly tenuous language (cf. Gill & Holzman, 1976), accounts only for which of the two classical narcissistic dynamics emerges at a given time—narcissistic grandiosity and self-sufficiency or the narcissistic loss of self in the idealized other. It is the representational factor, the disruption of reflective self-awareness, the construction of a grandiose self, that accounts for the underlying narcissistic disturbance.

A full delineation of a representational theory of narcissism and narcissistic disturbance is beyond the scope of this review. Provisionally, however, it may be stated that narcissistic personality disorder involves a disruption of evocative constancy similar to, but less severe than, that found in borderline character pathology (see Adler & Buie, 1979; Blatt & Auerbach, 1987; Blatt & Shichman, 1983). It follows that evocative constancy in narcissistic disturbance has not attained the degree of consolidation usually found in neurotic and normal levels of organization. Because the development of evocative constancy constitutes the origin of symbol formation, of the capacity to represent mentally an absent reality, it also underlies the capacity for objective self-awareness—that is, the capacity to reflect on oneself. Bach's Piagetian discussion of reflective self-awareness therefore constitutes a departure point for an exploration of the similarities and differences in cognitive-representational organization of borderline, narcissistic, and neurotic conditions. Kinston's discussion of the role of shame in the representation of self and others is also applicable in this context.

In general, the more disrupted is one's capacity for evocative constancy and, therefore, for construction of a stable representational world, the more severely impaired one's identity, object relations, and self-esteem will be. Thus, at neurotic and normal levels, where these capacities remain relatively intact, shifts in perspective on the self—from subjective to objective and back—do not destabilize self-esteem, object relations, or identity, however impaired these aspects of personality may be, in quite the same way. This representational stability, this capacity to make a smooth transition from subjective to objective self-awareness, makes possible the illusions of normal narcissism—the self-enhancement and self-inflation required for normal or adaptive human functioning (Taylor & Brown, 1988). At all levels of psychological organization, an economic factor, perhaps best conceived in systems, not energetic, terms (see

Gill & Holzman, 1976), remains a factor in determining at any given time the level of self-esteem and the relative predominance of either relational or self-definitional needs. But as Bach's work shows us, the relative intactness of representational capacities explains the paradoxically narcissistic underpinnings of certain deep depressions and intense object relations. Theories of narcissism are inadequate if they emphasize self-esteem regulation or focus on the allocation of libido among self and others without considering first the person's level of representational organization. In the final analysis, then, these books tell us that narcissism concerns not merely the libidinal investment of the self but the representational construction of such investment.

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