

# Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture,  
Current Events, History, and Society

**Symposium on the Psychology of  
American Exceptionalism**

**Featured Scholar Interview**

**Volume 18 Number 1  
June 2011**

# Clio's Psyche

Vol. 18 No. 1

June 2011

ISSN 1080-2622

**Published Quarterly by the Psychohistory Forum**

627 Dakota Trail, Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

Telephone: (201) 891-7486

E-mail: pelovitz@aol.com

**Editor: Paul H. Elovitz**

**Editorial Board**

**C. Fred Alford, PhD** University of Maryland • **James W. Anderson, PhD** Northwestern University • **David Beisel, PhD** RCC-SUNY • **Rudolph Binion, PhD** Brandeis University • **Andrew Brink, PhD** Formerly of McMaster University and The University of Toronto • **Ken Fuchsman, EdD** University of Connecticut • **Glen Jeansonne, PhD** University of Wisconsin • **Bob Lentz** • **Peter Loewenberg, PhD** UCLA • **Peter Petschauer, PhD** Appalachian State University

**Subscription Rate:**

**Free** to members of the Psychohistory Forum

\$60 two-year subscription to non-members

\$50 yearly to institutions

(Add \$20 per year outside U.S.A. & Canada)

Single issue price: \$18

\$50 two-year overseas online subscription

We welcome articles of psychohistorical interest of 500 - 1,500 words and a few longer ones.

Copyright © 2011 The Psychohistory Forum

**Frank Summers  
and Paul H. Elovitz  
Symposium on the Psychology of  
American Exceptionalism**

**Daniel Rancour-Laferriere  
Featured Scholar Interview**

**Volume 18 Number 1  
June 2011**



# Clio's Psyche

Understanding the "Why" of Culture,  
Current Events, History, and Society

Volume 18 Number 1

June 2011

---

## Symposium on the Psychology of American Exceptionalism

### American Exceptionalism Symposium

A Psychoanalytic Approach to Exceptionalism in Foreign Policy. . . . . 1

*Frank Summers*

Extreme American Exceptionalism: Narcissism and Paranoia. . . . . 9

*Paul H. Elovitz*

### Psychological Insights and Critiques

Underlying Symptoms and Dynamics. . . . . 16

*Richard Booth*

The Rise of Pathological Narcissism, Political Decline, and Illusion. . . . . 21

*Hanna Turken*

Extreme Varieties of Exceptionalism. . . . . 23

*Elisabeth Young-Bruehl*

On Moral Narcissism and the Masochistic Omnipotence Syndrome. . . . . 28

*Richard Landes*

Identifying Group Processes in Psychoanalytic Terms. . . . . 32

*Philip Langer*

### Historical Perspectives

Puritan Roots of American Exceptionalism. . . . . 34

*Ken Fuchsman*

American Hubris in Action. . . . . 39

*Peter Petschauer*

### Domestic and Foreign Policy

The Myth of American Exceptionalism. . . . . 42

*Francis A. Beer*

From de Tocqueville to Baudrillard, Lasch, and Bacevich. . . . . 46

*Tom Ferraro*

A Critical View. . . . . 51

*Kurt Jacobsen*

American Exceptionalism Is Not Benign. . . . . 54

*David Lotto*

A Cover for Imperialism?. . . . . 57

*Jamshid A. Marvasti*

Delusion in Foreign Policy. . . . . 61

*Wallace Katz*

My Return to Vietnam. . . . .	65
<i>John Hellman</i>	
A Self-Defeating Idea. . . . .	69
<i>Michael Aaron Rockland</i>	

**Worldwide Perspectives**

The Role of the Individual, the State, and Religion in the U.S. and France. . . .	71
<i>Charles G. Cogan</i>	
An Expatriate Takes Exception. . . . .	75
<i>Norman Simms</i>	
A Letter from Canada to My American Cousins. . . . .	79
<i>Donald Carveth</i>	

**Symposium Authors Reply**

American Narcissism: A Much Needed Discourse. . . . .	82
<i>Frank Summers</i>	
Denial, Distraction, and Fantasy. . . . .	85
<i>Paul H. Elovitz</i>	

---

**Featured Scholar Interview**

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere: Psychoanalytic Scholar of Russia and Religion. . .	91
<i>Paul H. Elovitz</i>	

---

**Book Review Essays** (single books listed by author, title, and reviewer)

Jill Lepore, <i>The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution</i> . . . . .	103
<i>Paul H. Elovitz</i>	
Dan McAdam, <i>George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream</i> . . . . .	107
<i>Bill Peterson</i>	
Christina Simmons, Kristin Celello, and Rebecca Davis on Marriage. . . . .	110
<i>Ken Fuchsman</i>	

---

**Letters to the Editor**

The Psychohistory Forum American Family Meeting. . . . .	115
<i>Molly Castelloe</i>	
The Psychodynamics of the Family Romance Revisited. . . . .	117
<i>Tom Ferraro</i>	

---

Bulletin Board. . . . .	119
David Beisel's Blind Spots in History September Symposium. . . . .	119
Call For Papers on the Psychology of Creativity for the December Issue. . . .	121

# The Psychology of American Exceptionalism Symposium

## A Psychoanalytic Approach to Exceptionalism in Foreign Policy

**Frank Summers**—Psychoanalyst for Social Responsibility

The belief that European-settled America possesses exceptional moral and spiritual virtue dates from the famous sermon delivered aboard the ship *Arbella* in 1630 by the Puritan lawyer John Winthrop: “We are as a city on a hill. The whole world is watching.” Winthrop’s belief that the Puritan purpose was a mission from God that affected people everywhere continued in the establishment of the republic. The major political figures of the American Revolution, as well as religious and educational leaders, saw the republic they created as a “glorious task assigned to us by Providence” for the liberty of all people. This notion of America as specially chosen by Providence to create and sustain liberty not only for itself, but also for all humankind was central to the self-representation of America as it became a nation. Alexis de Tocqueville in 1835 wrote of America as exceptional (thus the 20<sup>th</sup> century term, “American exceptionalism”) to refer to the country’s belief that its exceptional virtues placed it in a singular category of spiritual and moral leadership among nations. American exceptionalism tethered American prosperity, virtue, and strength to the fate of humanity. The purpose of this essay is to examine the impact of American exceptionalism in foreign policy and provide a psychoanalytic understanding of this highly influential phenomenon.

### Shift in the Concept

Beginning with the success of the Battle of New Orleans in the War of 1812 and Francis Scott Key’s paean to the nation’s endurance, military capability increasingly became central to the definition of national strength. Newspapers described the victory in the Battle of New Orleans as “virtue over vice” and the salvation of liberty (Steven Watts, *The Republic Reborn: War and the Making of Liberal America, 1790-1820*, 1987, 266). Alexis de Tocqueville

noted that the national reverence for Andrew Jackson showed the power of military prowess on the nation's spirit.

The importance of military might to America's self-regard has resulted in politicians' fear of being labeled "weak." Lyndon Johnson, who believed the American people will forgive anything but weakness, kept expanding the Vietnam War out of fear he would be so labeled. Similarly, Richard Nixon's rationale for invading Cambodia in 1970 was to insure that America not act like a "pitiable, helpless giant." Further, the excitement of achieving control over others has helped motivate the adoption of torture as a tool of U.S. foreign policy. Lt. Col. Diane Beaver, a lawyer at Guantánamo, observed that support for the most egregious techniques was a sign of "toughness," and Beaver was struck by the excitement of the officials at Guantánamo as they discussed ideas for torture techniques such as smothering and water boarding. "You could almost see their dicks getting hard," she noted (Philippe Sands, *Torture Team: Rumsfeld's Memo and the Betrayal of American Values*, 2008, 62-3).

### **Exceptionalism, Interventionism, and Split Self-Representation**

The narrative of moral superiority, omnipotence, and a destiny of prosperity has been used historically to justify American international intervention. In the 19th century, the Monroe Doctrine implied American supremacy in the Western Hemisphere. It was a short conceptual step to Manifest Destiny, the doctrine used to justify the acquisition of all the Western territory to the Pacific Ocean on the basis of America's "goodness." President Theodore Roosevelt's belief that the U.S. was the only "civilized society" in this part of the world was the basis for his famous 1904 Corollary that the United States had the status of policeman of the Western Hemisphere.

After World War I, America's growing military might made these policies enforceable. President Woodrow Wilson adopted a foreign policy rooted in the principles of self-determination and international cooperation. Nonetheless, while assuming American superiority and purity of intention, Wilson used unilateral military force to intervene in sovereign nations such as Nicaragua, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Panama, even when that meant overthrowing democratic governments. As with Theodore Roose-



velt, Wilson's assumption that the superiority of the United States entitled it to decide what is acceptable in other countries was not questioned by either the champion of "self-determination" himself or most of the citizens he led.

From the end of World War II to the close of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the United States attempted to depose 40 foreign governments unilaterally, and on 30 other occasions tried to suppress nationalist movements organized against dictatorial regimes with little opposition from the American people. Immediately after the invasion of Iraq, 72% of Americans supported the war despite the lack of evidence of chemical or biological weapons, and 79% thought the war was justified with or without conclusive evidence of illegal weapons (Dana Milbank and Jim VanderHei, "No Political Fallout for Bush on Weapons," *Washington Post*, May 1, 2003). Furthermore, the rounding up of citizens of Afghanistan and other countries and sending them to indefinite detention, and even the use of torture, without due process rights enjoyed overwhelming public support two years after the establishment of detention centers.

Thus, interference in the sovereignty of other nations has coexisted historically with American claims of upholding the principle of self-determination for all. Despite maintaining an astounding 750 or more military facilities in 159 countries, the American self-image is of a beacon for self-determination for the peoples of the world. National self-representation is split between a conscious image of ethical purity and a disavowed omnipotence that believes in the U.S. capacity and right to control world events as it sees fit. The willingness of the American public to support this long history of interventionist exceptionalism demonstrates that a sense of superiority and entitlement is deeply ingrained in the way Americans view themselves. Widespread opposition to aggression against sovereign nations tends to surface only after the cost has become great in lives and resources, as in Vietnam and Iraq.

Attempts to conduct U.S. foreign policy on a basis other than unlimited power, such as George Kennan's "containment" policy of the Soviet Union and Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger's détente, have elicited strong counterreactions asserting American entitlement. One such reaction was the Project for a New American Century, which advocated overthrow of the Iraqi regime long

before 9/11 and became the core of the Bush Administration's foreign policy. One official of that regime told Ron Susskind, "We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you are studying that reality we act again, creating other new realities" ("Faith, Certainty, and the Presidency of George W. Bush," *Times Magazine*, 10/17/2004, 48). This official was proclaiming that America does not have to accept a distinction between its wishes and reality.

### **Reality Interferes**

The wildly unrealistic claims about the invasion of Iraq and the protracted nature of that struggle have led American social scientists and intellectuals to conclude that the U.S. has now learned it must accept the limits of its power. Critics implore the United States to adopt a more realistic foreign policy. For example, Andrew Bacevich proposes a "containment" policy of terrorism: strategic use of allies, negotiation, and diplomacy, all of which acknowledge the inability of the United States to control world events by itself (*The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism*, 2008).

The problem with this advice is that it has been given after each major post-WWII military intervention, save the Gulf War, only to be ignored as the country launched the next effort to control an area of the world. After the compromise agreement ending the Korean War, conventional wisdom was that the U.S. had to accept the limits of its power. When the Vietnam War ended, the pundits assured the public that we had learned the limitation of our power to influence other nations. If that lesson was ever learned, it was forgotten by the time of the 2003 invasion of Iraq.

This pattern demonstrates that after reality interferes with a U.S. effort to control another nation, the omnipotent illusion is not relinquished, but disavowed. The continued belief in American omnipotence despite defeat of its ambitions is demonstrated in the widespread support of the Iraq invasion as well as the nation's refusal to cooperate with international agreements, such as the Kyoto Protocol, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, Mine Ban Treaty, comprehensive test ban treaties, and the International Criminal Court. America functions as though it holds a special position in the world order that exempts it from agreements to which other countries are

subject.

### **American Exceptionalism as Grandiosity**

Historical and political analysts see the assumptions of omnipotence and exceptionalism that underlie American foreign policy, but they cannot explain why the U.S. refuses to accept constraints on its ability to control world events. It is here that the psychoanalytic viewpoint can shed light on national motivation. To understand the stubbornness of the American insistence on attempting to dominate other nations, it is helpful to see the close analogy to the grandiosity of the narcissistic patient. In 1914 Freud formulated narcissism as libido directed to the self. The narcissistic patient is organized around emotional investment in the self-image. The grandiose self is erected to protect against a sense of weakness and inadequacy that cannot be consciously admitted, and a panoply of defenses protect the inflated self-image, such as the disavowal of all failures and limitations, projection of defects onto others, and devaluation of the other. Any slight that pierces the defenses threatens to evoke shame and helplessness. If the grandiosity cannot be successfully protected against assault, the very sense of self is threatened, resulting in what Heinz Kohut called “disintegration anxiety.” Although such behavior ultimately alienates others instead of evoking the admiration the patient seeks, the narcissistically organized individual opts for immediate narcissistic gratification over long-term self-interest.

The self-representation of America as possessing exceptional virtue and capability is little different from the grandiose self of the narcissistically organized individual. Born of emotional investment in an inflated national image that admits of no blemishes, the defenses of denial, projection, and devaluation of others are employed to protect the heightened but fragile national self-image. After a confrontation with real world limitations of its capabilities, the U.S. will attempt to restore the belief in its omnipotence to fend off shame and helplessness by disavowing any defeat and eventually seeking victory or domination in another conflict. The lack of a national discourse on what went wrong in Iraq and how we became a society that practices torture, the refusal to confront the limits of American military force, and the smoldering resentment at the war’s failure all suggest that the failure of the Iraq invasion has re-

sulted in the disavowal of grandiosity rather than its relinquishment. As long as America is able to convince itself that it has "learned the lesson" of the previous conflict and deny its grandiose motivations, the sense of entitlement will remain along with vulnerability to narcissistic injury. Because the U.S. populace denies the nation's flaws, the loss of wars and invasions of other countries for perceived self-interest is disavowed. As de Tocqueville noted, the association of "failure" with the United States offends most Americans.

Just as the narcissistic individual attempts to maintain her grandiosity by behavior that ultimately undermines its maintenance, the United States, by its attitude of superiority and nativism, offends the pride of Third World nations. That U.S. foreign policy gives precious little consideration to cultural difference can be seen in the obliviousness to 1,400 years of Islamic history, Iraqi culture, and ethnic groups when the U.S. crossed the Iraqi border with armored tanks and more than 130,000 troops. The Bush Administration assumed its invasion would be welcomed by a culture of which it had little knowledge. Those who did raise concerns about the lack of sensitivity to Islamic culture were ridiculed as being "soft" for daring to question the absolute right of the United States to intervene where it sees fit. To take into account the experience of the other culture is to concede there is a reality to which the U.S. must adapt, and such a concession undermines narcissistic entitlement.

Similarly, the establishment of detention centers in which citizens of Third World countries were picked up with little or no evidence, stripped of all rights, subjected to degrading and inhumane conditions, and often tortured, provides a sense of potency in being able to subjugate others to American will. The grandiosity of the nation was reestablished by this show of strength, but the cost to the U.S. in ill will and even hatred from the countries whose citizens were subjected to this humiliation will be long-term. Like the narcissistic patient, the U.S. did not believe it needed to consider the impact on world opinion of its mistreatment of innocent individuals. Further, any American who suggested that the government should consider the long-term consequences of its abusive treatment of other nations was subject to ridicule. This belief that one need not consider the impact on others is rooted for the individual,

as for the nation, in the primacy of maintaining grandiosity.

Once American exceptionalism is seen as an ingrained grandiosity that forms the very self-image of the country, the resilience of the pattern of intervention and the futility of admonishments to relinquish it become understandable. To suggest that the U.S. should relinquish its illusions of omnipotence and superiority is analogous to telling a narcissistic patient to give up her grandiosity. Informing the patient that her self-image is exaggerated and needs to be more realistic is futile because the patient does not believe it, disintegration anxiety threatens, and the only alternative the patient sees is humiliation and helplessness. Any deflation of American grandiosity would be an abandonment of national identity, an identity that continues to provide irresistible gratification in the form of an illusion of invincibility and moral purity. No scholarly appeal to reality or common sense can convince the narcissistically organized nation to give up the giddy gratification of exalted beliefs about itself. If those admonitions could work, they would have after the Korean and Vietnam Wars. The problem has to be attacked at its roots: the grandiose self-image of the U.S. as a superior nation with a providential mission that was born with the establishment of the colonies approximately 400 years ago.

**Conclusion: The Repair of American Grandiosity**

A clue to addressing national grandiosity can be found in analytic work with narcissistic patients. Heinz Kohut pointed out that grandiosity can be gradually given up if the analyst is empathic with the patient's narcissistic longings and vulnerability. The gratification provided by empathic immersion allows the patient to yield her grandiose image in favor of realistic ambitions and ideals. The successfully treated grandiose patient finds meaning in life from the fulfillment of realistic ambitions that substitute for the illusionary grandiosity (Heinz Kohut, *Analysis of the Self*, 1971).

It may seem quixotic to expect the nation to change an identity that has endured longer than the republic itself. Nonetheless, as long as the country defines itself in grandiose terms, it will be vulnerable to humiliation and the use of violence to bring immediate narcissistic relief and the restoration of the grandiose self-image, which will eventually crash against the reality of limitations. It is imperative that the public sees that the mistakes in Vietnam and

Iraq were not simply blunders or cases of excessive zeal, but the symptoms of a stable but ultimately dangerous self-representation that leads inexorably to war, violence, and never-ending conflict. These painful consequences can be used to show the steep price paid for adhering to a national grandiose self-image. Nothing short of a decisive change in national identity can hope to effect a significant, long-term change in America's ability to accept its limitations rather than dissociate them.

The analogy to work with narcissistic patients suggests that the road to the transformation of American grandiosity is leadership that directs the nation to invest in a redefinition of American identity. The nation's pride must be fastened to the implementation of its principles of democracy, liberty, and self-determination while accepting its realistic limitations. Such a dramatic transformation of the American self-representation has the potential to create the excitement of achieving meaningful goals in concert with avowed ideals. Such achievement has the potential to stimulate an enduring form of pride, rather than the temporary relief resulting from the gratification of grandiosity.

Those attached to American grandiosity will no doubt oppose these suggestions as a program for a weak America. This objection must be confronted directly by challenging the assumption of American superiority and depicting the painful consequences the nation has suffered from it. The current expenditure of lives, money, and resources for questionable goals in Iraq provides the opportunity to challenge the Iraq war as not simply a mistake, but a reflection of a historically stable American self-representation that fosters short-term narcissistic gratification at the expense of long-term self-interest. If this critique can be made, then the national dialogue would shift from geopolitical strategy to the American self-definition that manifests itself in international policy. The argument is then positioned between those who insist on America's entitlement versus people who are willing to assess the nation's strengths and weaknesses. Such a debate will not be easy to win, but at least it is the right dialogue. If the issue of American grandiosity comes into the national discourse, the country will be well ahead of where it is now.

*Frank Summers, PhD, ABPP, author of three books and*

numerous articles on object relations theories, is associate professor of psychiatry and the behavioral sciences at Northwestern University and past president of Psychoanalysis and Social Responsibility of the Division of Psychoanalysis, American Psychological Association. He maintains a private practice of psychoanalytic therapy in Chicago, Illinois and may be contacted at franksumphd@hotmail.com.

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **Extreme American Exceptionalism: Narcissism and Paranoia**

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Psychohistory Forum

### **The Concept of American Exceptionalism**

American exceptionalism is the idea that this is a special country whose people are a model for humanity with a special mission to enlighten others. This vision has inspired both the drive to improve the lives and human rights of other people and justified a sense of national superiority, entitlement, and exemption from international standards.

There are positive sides to American exceptionalism that should not be ignored. For example, the idea fosters generously helping others in times of need, as revealed by assistance sent to Haiti after the recent earthquake. Both the League of Nations and the United Nations were established as a consequence of the actions of U.S. presidents. Since 1945 this country has played an exceptional role in the establishment of standards of human rights. Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the United Nations committee that wrote the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*—a statement of ego ideals that continues to do much to help spread freedom and human rights around the world.

However, the U.S. insistence on exemption from the standards it would like others to live up to is a less positive aspect of its policies (Michael Ignatieff, ed., *American Exceptionalism and Human Rights*, 2005, 3, 304-338, *passim*). Many on the political left cringe at the very mention of the term, since it represents to them

the type of jingoism associated with former President Bush's justification for a preemptive "war on evil" in Afghanistan and Iraq and a long American tradition of bullying smaller countries.

Of late, presidential hopefuls and political operatives Dick Armev, *Give Us Liberty: A Tea Party Manifesto* (2010); Newt Gingrich, *To Save America: Stopping Obama's Secular-Socialist Machine* (2010); Mike Huckabee's speeches; Mitt Romney, *No Apology: The Case for American Greatness* (2010); Sarah Palin; and others have forcefully embraced the concept (Karen Tumulty, "An Old Idea and a New Political Battle," *Washington Post*, November 29, 2010). Palin specifically devotes a whole chapter to it in *America by Heart: Reflections on Faith, Family, and Flag* (2010). Drawing on more academic conservatives such as Richard Lowry and Ramesh Ponnuru of the *National Review* ("The Exceptional Debate: The Obama Administration's Assault on American Identity," February 24, 2010), she argues that this country, whose workers celebrate success, is more democratic, dynamic, and individualistic—in fact, freer and more entrepreneurial—than other countries, and therefore rightly "a model to the world" (63). The problem is not the characterization of America nearly as much as that it is used as a distraction from facing up to the country's problems.

President Obama's belief that America is exceptional, that it is "a light to the world," is too modified for the Right, since he suspects "the Brits believe in British exceptionalism and the Greeks believe in Greek exceptionalism." Consequently, it is dismissed out of hand by the conservative politicians and more intellectually by Lowry and Ponnuru (Greg Sargent, "The Plum Line: What the Right's 'American Exceptionalism' Attack Is Really About," *Washington Post*, November 10, 2010). Their focus on American exceptionalism is, in part, a way to distance themselves from Obama and liberal Democrats.

### **Grandiose Fantasies amidst Economic Recession and Decline**

All nations view themselves as exceptional; however, historical reality has a way of diminishing the grandiose fantasies that abound among peoples—fantasies fed by chauvinistic historians, nationalistic politicians, and media outlets more interested in an audience than reality. Compared to most other countries in the



world, there were fewer challenges to American fantasies of being special throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. From America's leading economic position and victories in two world wars, it seemed blessed, protected from continental invasion by two great oceans. Its rapidly growing population, greatly increased life expectancy, high standard of living, and technological superiority gave it great advantages over other countries that often suffered from murderous leaders and/or devastating world wars fought on their own territories.

However, the U.S. has been living in a fantasy world, most notably since the fall of European communism in 1991. The American government pays many of its bills with money borrowed from foreign countries while exporting its manufacturing capacity abroad. Millions of its citizens drive oversized vehicles fueled by oil from countries whose people often hate Americans, and this money for oil sometimes even provides funding or shelter to anti-American terrorists. Americans have an obesity problem that will probably cost a trillion dollars in medical bills over the next 10 years. This country thinks of itself as the policeman of the world, while its military is stretched thin by wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—the costs of which were not even included in the national budget until 2009. When the American economy, built partly on a financial house of cards, dramatically slowed in 2007-2008, it was bailed out by Congress and the Fed under the Bush and then Obama administrations to avoid a repeat of the Great Depression of the 1930s. Yet in one of the great ironies of history, the Chinese communist government is focusing on future growth by overseeing vast development of its economic infrastructure. The divergence between the mythologies and realities of economic and political systems is enormous.

The younger generation is mostly concerned with the instant gratifications stemming from consumerism, entertainment, finance, and sports rather than upon strengthening the industrial base of the economy. The intense focus on consumerism and sports since World War I rather than industrial development only became a major problem for the U.S.A. when the rest of the world greatly increased its level of industrial development and stopped destroying so many of its resources in warfare. There is a winner-take-all psy-

chology that results in an undue building-up of celebrities of finance, media, politics, and ordinary people suddenly getting their 15 minutes of fame on television. The individual has been aggrandized at the expense of the good of the group.

Much of current American political discourse is based on a society that never existed, for example, the Republican Party rhetoric of *laissez faire* capitalism, which has never existed anywhere in the world, and the Democratic Party's assumption of having a monopoly on speaking for ordinary people. These ideas are held onto without regard to the facts of the given situation, much as a narcissistic patient ignores reality until and even after it comes crashing down. Liberals and conservatives often act as if there are separate realities as they get their information and "talking points" from separate sources. This was reflected in the early January, 2011 statement by the newly sworn in Speaker of the House that "no one believes that health care will lower costs," even when the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimates that it would cost \$230 billion to repeal the health reform passed in 2010. If the recent U.S. political/financial system were a patient, a diagnosis of pathological narcissism would be under consideration.

### **Psychoanalytic and Psychohistorical Reflections**

American exceptionalism has expressed itself in a variety of ways and reached its most dangerous point in the administration of the second President Bush, who felt that the country was empowered by God to fight evil in the world and spread its vision of democracy. At its worst, it results in the U.S. thinking it owns the world and has no limits. It is an extension of what Christopher Lasch called "the culture of narcissism," in which people want everything and take responsibility for nothing (*The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Era of Diminishing Expectations*, 1979). For example, while gaining enormous benefits from government and demanding additional services from it for their needs, millions of citizens view government as a socialistic evil. They ignore extensive public hearings and debates in favor of television entertainment, yet go to Tea Party protests to question why the issues have not been brought before the public and to voice their rage—Kohut's term, narcissistic rage, seems appropriate (Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoana-*

*lytic Treatment of Narcissistic Disorders*, 1971, 214n., 263, *passim*). Much of the public is geared to the fantasy, encouraged by advertising, that you can have instant gratification at almost no cost. Just as the narcissistic personality is unable to realistically view the needs of others and the situation because of the lack of internal boundaries, the narcissistic society verges on catastrophe. Their diagnoses and treatment are similar: boundaries must be established to limit the unregulated desires and grandiosity. For example, in the financial arena, the Glass-Steagall Act (Banking Act of 1933) had done a fairly good job of controlling excesses in the banking industry until it was eliminated in 1999.

Millions of people have lost their jobs, some have lost their homes, and far more are in danger of being evicted. The enormous economic costs of long-term decline for ordinary workers and the recent recession—joblessness, growing economic inequality, and the export of high-paying manufacturing jobs—are not the focus of this paper, but the human and psychological costs are enormous. People who have lost their jobs are inclined to also lose their self-respect. Alcoholism, substance abuse, and wife and child abuse increase under these circumstances, as does public displacement of anger at the federal government to the point of many seeing the single most important instrument necessary to solve societal problems as the problem rather than the solution. Optimism is often replaced by depression and despair.

Given this situation, complacency in America has given way to increased anxiety and fear that its days of dominance are numbered. Concern about losing jobs, homes, comfortable lifestyles, and fear that their children will have a lower standard of living, has led much of the country to suffer from what psychoanalyst Peace Sullivan (personal communication January 9, 2011) calls “a collective anxiety” manifested in the irrational fear of Obama’s health reform resulting in “death panels” and Americans no longer being able to choose their own doctors. Frightened people feel nostalgia for the good old days symbolized by Sarah Palin’s plain-speaking values, rhetoric, and life in our most rugged, most frontier-type state. The rhetoric of Palin and others like her frighten people into believing that government is bad.

### **Paranoia: Expectations, Popular Rage, and Enemies**

The “paranoid tradition” in American politics is alive and well in this age of Tea Party protests, as it was when Richard Hofstadter wrote about it in 1964 in *Harper's Magazine* and published *The Paranoid Style in American Politics and Other Essays* (1966). Within a month of the presidential inauguration, the Tea Party was formed and at its rallies the President was soon the subject of the wildest projections, derided as a socialist, and, to the embarrassment of the organizers, a Nazi. In what Harvard Colonial historian Jill Lepore calls a type of “antihistory,” the dumping of tea in Boston Harbor in 1773 is evoked as an inspiration to resist not a colonial power but rather a popularly elected administration (*The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party Revolution and the Battle Over American History*, 2010, 3, 8, 15, 92). (For a more detailed study of the historical memory of the dumping of tea in Boston Harbor and its uses, see Alfred Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution*, 1999.)

After the struggle to hold on to the standard of living during the Bush presidency, Obama was elected amidst powerful savior fantasies, as David Beisel wrote in “Presidential Savior Fantasies and the Election of Barack Obama” (*Clio's Psyche* Vol. 15, No. 4, March 2009, 264-270). These unrealistic expectations were bound to be frustrated, no matter what Obama accomplished. From the late spring and summer of the President's first year in office, anger exploded at public hearings over health care and at Tea Party protests, culminating in the Republican success in the 2010 Congressional elections. The Tea Party is a reflection of enormous anger, primarily of white conservative men. They are older, better educated, and economically better off than most Americans. They think that blacks and Hispanics are getting too much from Washington and that they will pay higher taxes while having some of their own benefits cut—thus their rhetoric of smaller government (Kate Zernike and Megan Thee-Brennan, “Discontent's Demography: Who Backs the Tea Party,” *New York Times*, April 15, 2010).

Sarah Palin, since becoming a media star as the 2008 Republican vice presidential candidate, has used her celebrity to make considerable money as an author, Fox News commentator, television show star, and speaker at Tea Party protest rallies rather than

by the much more difficult task of struggling to achieve her gubernatorial campaign promises and completing her term as Alaska governor. Her television program, “Palin’s Alaska,” is a mixture of reality television, family values, conservative politics, caribou hunting, climbing up mountains and over glaciers, and a travelogue displaying the natural beauty of Alaska. She lives in a gun culture with bearskin rugs on the floor and animal heads on the walls. This made it easy for her to use language like “lock and load” against the Democrats and to target on her website the congressional members she wanted to see defeated by showing their districts in the crosshairs of a rifle, as in the case of Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords, who was shot through the head on January 8, 2011 by a disturbed gunman. Amidst the carnage of six killed and 13 wounded in front of a Safeway grocery store, it is important to remember that violent rhetoric and symbols in politics have consequences as Giffords herself had specifically warned. It is not just the former Alaskan governor who uses the violent imagery of the gun. For example, the new generation of conservative congressional leaders—Eric Cantor, Paul Ryan, and Kevin McCarthy—last September put their political blueprint forth under the title, *Young Guns: A New Generation of Conservative Leaders*.

The use of enemies in politics is standard, but it is not a stance that comes readily to the 44<sup>th</sup> President of the United States with his smiling demeanor and intellectual analysis of societal problems. Conservative Republicans and their media supporters are inclined to have far fewer inhibitions on expressing anger and even rage than the President. Moreover, Obama’s history of success through compromise and perhaps his overriding personal need to compromise—it is mainly his default position—has encouraged his opposition to be much less compromising than if it feared him. Yet if one believes certain of the more extreme talk show hosts and even a few congressmen, Obama is taking the country to totalitarianism, since that is what they see as the end product of socialism. (For more on Obama’s style of compromise, see various books and articles, including Ken Fuchsman, “Obama the Conciliator,” *Clio’s Psyche* Vol. 17, No. 4, March, 2011, 356-358).

### **Conclusion**

At the moment, the future of America looks bleak, although not nearly as bad as it did when the White House was burned in the War of 1812, in the dark days of the Civil War, or during the Great Depression. The question is whether the narcissistic fantasies of specialness can be put aside to deal with the world in a more realistic manner and whether the paranoia, projections, and extreme rhetoric can be left behind to responsibly govern in a cooperative and conciliatory way. The answer will be worked out in the economic and political arenas, and those with psychoanalytic and political psychological competency can offer some special insights to help in understanding this endeavor.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD, is a historian, professor, psychoanalytic psychotherapist, psychohistorian, and editor of this journal who may be contacted at pelovitz@aol.com.*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **Psychological Insights and Critiques**

### **Underlying Symptoms and Dynamics**

**Richard Booth**—University of Maryland

The arguments of these two articles are poignant, deliberative, and compelling, and I agree with their analyses of American exceptionalism. Below, I examine some of the underlying dynamics that give rise to the fantasy of American exceptionalism. The authors suggest that one fundamental dynamic of exceptionalism is narcissism, and its primary symptoms are sufficiently delineated by both Elovitz and Summers. Also warranting exploration are etiological factors underlying narcissism and, arguably, such counterparts as arrogance, elitism, and a presumed messianic mission.

Narcissism in childhood is normal and healthy, but should decrease as cognitive and other developmental factors, such as ego-integrity, increase over time. Unfortunately, pathological narciss-

sism is apparent in many adult Americans, guiding life decisions and behavior. They engage in mirroring, egocentrism, inflation and deflation, concrete thinking with fears of flexibility, and intense rage following narcissistic injury. Given that these characteristics are pervasive in the American population individually, they can, taken *en masse*, be considered part of the American psyche itself. The constant chants about America as the most powerful, best, wealthiest, strongest, and always primary among the world's cultures, provide us with questions about the underside of our narcissistic society that are both suppressed and repressed.

Narcissism and attachment are inextricably related. In fact, many theorists have concluded that, with attachment process disturbances, a false self and the beginnings of pathological narcissism emerge. Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughn argue that "attachment is not limited to external objects or persons." They continue, "In addition to the familiar forms of attachment to material possessions, special relationships and the prevailing status quo, there may be equally strong attachments to a particular self-image, a pattern of behavior, or a psychological process. Among the strongest attachments noted in the consciousness disciplines are those of suffering and unworthiness..." The thinking is, "If I give up my attachments, who and what will I be?" ("What Is a Person?" in *Beyond Ego: Transpersonal Dimensions in Psychology*, 1993). For Americans, the attachment to the self-image of superiority, an aspect of exceptionalism, would appear to be self-evident.

Theodore Isaac Rubin, in *Compassion and Self-Hate* (1975), analyzes a multitude of behaviors and mental activities that emerge from what he calls self-hatred, ranging widely from cowardice, jealousy, snobbism, acquisitiveness, and mood disorders to envy, pathological dependence, sadomasochism, unhealthy conformity, pride, greatness, and anger. His analysis helps clarify not only narcissistic sequelae but other pathologies as well, including certain characterological displays that are often taken to be "normal" or healthy, such as the competitive nature of American society.

Consider the issue of greatness (which is associated in the minds of Americans with exceptionalism) through Rubin's perspective. He asks, "Why must we strive for greatness? Why must we zealously guard our pride, feed it, and even die for it? Do pride and

greatness make for happiness or an increasing sense of isolation, dehumanization and even paranoia?" Thus, as Walsh and Vaughn make clear, pathological attachment to anything is problematic. Rubin suggests that dysfunctional striving for greatness is antithetical to genuine happiness.

Rubin continues: "Self-hate is the strongest human anti-therapeutic agent in existence." He defines it as follows: "We engage in self-hate when we hate any aspect of ourselves and whenever we have feelings of self-contempt generally...Its potential for destructive possibility is almost limitless." He suggests that pathologies of many types flow from self-hatred. He then says, "If we are afraid of being afraid, we cover up with arrogance. If we are terrified of impending self-hate largely generated by 'not measuring up,' we project to others and become paranoid." For Rubin, this is a fundamental key to understanding what we today call exceptionalism. And, it is in this quotation that he reflects Karen Horney's principle of basic anxiety which, she argues, fuels virtually all psychopathology (*The Neurotic Personality of Our Time*, 1937). Her solution, adopted by Rubin and others, is to face the "real self" so that illusion and delusion do not rule the personality. Erich Fromm (*Escape from Freedom*, 1941; *Man for Himself*, 1947) argues that the creation of the false self is largely a result of existential isolation, and Jung suggests that the shadow self, the unexamined self, remains in shadowed darkness and may lead to all forms of defensiveness, including acting-out behaviors and inflated self-worth.

The inflated false self, then, constructed to defend against potential or imagined attack, strives to preserve its view of itself against those who have been projected as the "all bad self." In fact, it is this "all bad self," filled with self-hatred, that leads to projective identification and splitting. A manifestation of this is easily seen in phrases like "America right or wrong" as well as other clichés constantly cried out by our elected officials, along with pejorative nicknames defaming the not-self, or "the enemy."

But, the splitting occurs not only between an arrogant America and those nations "lesser" than itself; it also occurs *within American society itself*. For example, Michelle Bachmann, a vocal conservative congresswoman from Minnesota, is on a search for American "bad guys." Specifically, she proposes that Congress



be investigated to see which senators and representatives are pro-American and anti-American, according to her definition of both. Of course, we have seen this dangerous splitting before during the McCarthy hunt for communists, but it remains powerful in its implications. Another instance of the “greater-lesser” (good-bad split) among us is the widening of the polarity of the stratification system in the nation. The culture of poverty remains intact and the middle class remains pinched, while very wealthy companies and persons remain virtually unscathed.

But, is it not true that America is special and entitled to the hegemony it desperately seeks? Are we not exceptional in almost every important way? Are we not the best nation with the strongest military power the world has ever seen? Do we not deserve, are we not entitled to, the homage of those less developed than we? Both Elovitz and Summers address these issues excellently from somewhat different perspectives. In fact, both mention the grandiosity that has become engrained in our culture, and which, if not contained, may become extremely destructive. Elovitz points out that these illusions defy the reality principle, while Summers argues that Americans possess an “inflated self-image” which, if threatened, results in what Heinz Kohut called “disintegration anxiety.” In a world of limited resources, the U.S. has appropriated the tools to force others to submit, which is incongruent with democratic self-respect.

Interestingly, Rollo May’s *Man’s Search for Himself* (1953) lends further support to these ideas. He says, “This leads us to the most important point of all...condemning ourselves is the quickest way to get a substitute sense of worth.” In the spirit of Rubin, he continues, “Much self-condemnation, thus, is a cloak for arrogance.” Is the real issue, then, not self-hatred rather than exceptionalism? This question requires and deserves further examination, since many would wonder what in the world should cause us to hate ourselves and then overcompensate for that self-hatred by claiming exceptionalism?

Alfred Adler also underscores this perspective by telling the story of a wealthy woman who regularly gives to the poor. There is nothing problematic in her behavior, which may externally appear generous or even magnanimous. However, upon closer inspection,

says Adler, it becomes clear that giving *only to the poor* is the woman's way of remaining superior to those who accept her generosity. One can see that arrogance, which is congruent with exceptionalism, is a defense of the most primitive kind, manifesting in reaction formation.

The issue of generalizing from the intrapsychic to the societal is important. People, with all their collective baggage and talent, construct their realities, including their nations, and cross-cultural research teaches us that many dynamics Americans possess also inhere in many other nations. Prolonged detestations between and among nations attest to the issue of underlying self-hatred, insecurity, and anxiety. The members of all societies are people—people subject to the psychodynamics discussed here. It is helpful to remember that, after all, cultures and nations are merely experiments in survival, attempting to offset their vulnerability to other nations. A nation is but a reflection of the collective character of its people. The entire system of nations is thrown into disequilibrium when one threatens others, possesses excessive power over them, or insists that it alone possesses the only right way to think and live. America, among other nations, has a history of exactly that kind of behavior.

In sum, this essay supports and extends the work of Elovitz and Summers. Further, it focuses on some of the underlying symptoms of exceptionalism. I recommend that further work be done—not on exceptionalism itself but on the issues associated with self-hatred that play a role in understanding its underlying dynamics.

*Richard Booth, PhD, is Adjunct Professor of Behavioral and Social Sciences, University of Maryland University College; Professor Emeritus of Psychology, Black Hawk College; and a Licensed Psychotherapist (Diplomate status). Dr. Booth has published widely in professional peer-reviewed journals, including Clio's Psyche, and practiced for many years. He may be contacted at [rbooth@faculty.umuc.edu](mailto:rbooth@faculty.umuc.edu).*

## **The Rise of Pathological Narcissism, Political Decline, and Illusion**

**Hanna Turken**—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

Applying the work of some psychoanalysts to the concept of American exceptionalism and the growing problem of inequality in our society can provide some valuable insights. At the present time, we seem to be under the influence of “merchants of illusion”—those leaders who unify a group around narcissistic ideals—as described by Janine Chasseguet-Smirgel in *On Freud’s Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (2001). In reality, this unifying ideology is an illusion, since the group’s identification is based on a sense of power derived from a primitive ego ideal. For Freud, “Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego” (1922), a component of the illusion is that the individuals think they are equally and justly loved by the group leader, when in reality they are not, since the leader is involved in his or her own absolute narcissism.

Narcissistic endeavors are double-edged swords. In the words of Chasseguet-Smirgel, *The Ego Ideal: A Psychoanalytic Essay on the Malady of the Idea* (1985), the ego-ideal is the inducer of our greatest achievements and our most degrading acts. It seems to me that the concept of exceptionalism encompasses both. Many of this country’s achievements can make any American immensely proud; at the same time, many of its failures bring about a sense of shame with the same intensity. Andrew Morrison, *Shame: The Underside of Narcissism* (1989), directs us to the relationship between the ego-ideal and shame, which he refers to as the underside of narcissism. The entrenched narcissist is not a guilty person; he is entitled to the things he strives for, but failure means vulnerability and shame which he readily projects and denies. In order to understand the dynamics of exceptionalism, perhaps we also need to look at the writings of Jule Nydes, “The Paranoid-Masochistic Character” (*The Psychoanalytic Review*, 1963), on the dynamics of this character in terms of love and power. The masochistic character appears to renounce power for the sake of love, and the paranoid appears to renounce love for the sake of power. This form of masochism is what Freud, “The Economic Problem of Maso-

chism" (1924), referred to as moral masochism. Esther Menaker, "Masochism as a Defense Reaction of the Ego" (*The Psychoanalytic Quarterly*, 1953), views moral masochism as a defense mechanism of the ego that preserves our ability to hope. Without hope there is annihilation.

These two side-by-side tracks—self-development and the fulfillment of one's ideals, and the development of relationships and societal acceptance—are integral components of individual personality development. The ego ideal and the superego work together to maintain an internal balance as long as the individual's and the group's ideologies are the same. That is, the group's priority—the group ideal—is the well-being and happiness of the individuals in the group. The individual and society are inevitably entwined in a natural progression to benefit mankind, according to Erik Erikson, *Childhood and Society* (1963). The healthy narcissist feels good about himself and the society he lives in and can extend himself to others with realistic expectations and without ulterior motives. His failures do not result in paranoid-aggressive acting out. The pathological narcissist is greedy and no amount of success is enough, no amount of adulation is enough; he wants to possess all at the expense of others and wants it all his way. Freud, "Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego" (1922), indicates that it is love that checks excessive narcissism. What we seem to be experiencing more than ever in society today is not the love and care for others but the love for money and the power that it brings. The pursuit of money seems to be all-consuming; to be a millionaire is insignificant. Billionaires are in competition with one another. Unfortunately, this monetary power is directly connected to our political system. Where is the forcefulness of Theodore Roosevelt (an American exceptionalist) in passing anti-trust legislation in spite of great opposition of powerful bankers such as J.P. Morgan?

To return to the concept of exceptionalism, I would like to consider exceptionalism in terms of healthy and pathological narcissism. There *is* healthy exceptionalism. This country has been involved in meritorious endeavors, such as creating the League of Nations, campaigning for human rights around the world, and helping to raise the living and health standards of large numbers of people, which have made its citizens extremely proud. On the other

hand, it has also been involved in deleterious, shameful acts such as its treatment of Native Americans and aiding in the overthrow of democratic governments, for which it has not taken responsibility.

The damage to the economy caused by the financial industry deregulation that began in the Reagan administration and culminated in the recent collapse has not been acknowledged by the narcissists who mismanaged that industry for their own gain and to the detriment of the public. President Obama was elected on the promise of change, but in his efforts to follow through has met great resistance from special interest groups. What we are seeing today is an increase in moral masochism, which in Menaker's view is the only way to keep up hope. The middle class is hurting, the very rich are thriving, and America has become a less exceptional country, which is in need of hope.

*Hanna Turken, LPsya, LCSW, is in the private practice of psychoanalysis and psychotherapy in New York City and is a senior member of The National Psychological Association for Psychoanalysis (NPAP), as well as a Research Associate for the Psychohistory Forum and a member of the board and a supervisor in the New York State Society of Clinical Social Work. She has published and presented papers at national and international conferences on sexuality, culture, the role of the father, sexual addiction, and other subjects. Dr. Turken may be contacted at [hjlturken@verizon.net](mailto:hjlturken@verizon.net).*



## **Extreme Varieties of Exceptionalism**

**Elisabeth Young-Bruehl—Private Practice**

The notion that America “is a special country whose people are a model for humanity with a special mission to enlighten others” is a recurrent theme in American history. Frank Summers is particularly concerned with exceptionalism as it plays in foreign policy, arguing: “The narrative of moral superiority, omnipotence, and a destiny of prosperity has been used historically to justify American international intervention.” He, like Paul Elovitz, sees a “split national self-representation”: the nation that strenuously es-

pouses self-determination, consistently interferes with the self-determination of other nations.

Both authors think that what is known from psychoanalytic theory and practice about the narcissism of individuals can illuminate—by analogy—the behavior of the American society since it was elucidated by John Winthrop's famous 1630 sermon: "We are as a city on a hill. The whole world is watching." They view the idea of America as a nation assigned a task by Providence as essential to its history, connecting to the 1835 use of the term "exceptionalism" by Alexis de Tocqueville. For both, America's exceptionalism is her narcissism.

The authors use the individual/society analogy, but they operate with two differing notions of narcissism. Summers makes a case for a persistent pattern in American exceptionalist narcissism with its split self-image. He asserts that no lessons can be learned from the interventions justified by the "city on the hill" grandiosity. Criticism does arise when interventions work out badly and "the cost has become great in lives and resources" (that is, American lives and resources). A pause for reflection may come (we are actually in such a pause right now, considering what to do in the Middle East). But any "lesson" about over-reaching, as in Vietnam, is quickly disavowed, and it's on to the next staging area, the next intervention—Afghanistan and Iraq. Historical and political analysts have often noted the exceptionalism used to justify American foreign policy, but they do not, Summers argues, have the means to explain "why the U.S. refuses to accept constraints on its ability to control world events."

Summers and all clinicians know that you cannot strip away or puncture a narcissist's grandiose self-image; your "assault" will be the narcissist's exit cue or the trigger for a major counter-attacking rage. But an analyst who can empathize with a narcissist's "longings and vulnerability" can, slowly, draw the patient toward realistic ambitions and ideals. "The analogy to work with narcissistic patients suggests that the road to the transformation of American grandiosity is leadership that directs the nation to invest in a redefinition of American identity." America needs a great educator/therapist.

Elovitz, too, hopes that realistic ambitions can replace the American grandiose exceptionalist fantasy, but his description of what is needed is different and he focuses on the issue of establishing boundaries, such as the Glass-Steagall Banking Act of 1933 in the fiscal arena to control banking industry excesses. I think what Elovitz means by “lack of boundaries” is that a narcissist cannot see another as other, as not himself, and recognize the other’s feelings, experiences and culture; his grandiosity is, so to speak, cannibalizing—everything and everyone is “Mine! Mine!” because the narcissist is the entitled exceptionalist gobbler. By contrast, Summers’ narcissist is a hurt, deflated being attempting to inflate himself.

Elovitz’ narcissist is an inflated being taking up every inch of the room, excluding all others, unrelated, paranoid about being defeated. The first needs a great educator, the second a great regulator. The essayists actually identify the two sides of a pathologic narcissistic character, which are known in the psychoanalytic literature as the inflated and the deflated (or depleted). Most narcissists are both, alternating between being grandiosely perfect and grandiosely defeated. In the grandiosely perfect mode, reality disappears and the narcissist tries to substitute his reality for it, to make reality in his image—like a God. (For people operating in this mode, the “Master of the Universe” title seems appropriate.) In the grandiosely defeated mode, the narcissist shouts loudly about his victimization—he is the most perfectly victimized person ever—while trying to find a way to re-inflate himself, turn the tables, and take revenge. The idea that you and your people have been singled out by Providence, that you are the chosen people of a God who has made the world in His image, is the most inflating idea humans have ever come up with—and each and every people that has discovered this cocaine-rush of an idea has become murderous living it out, rearranging the world.

Summers seems to think that if a grandiose image is available, people will go for it and become determined by it. The theory is that an investment gives birth to a series of defenses that protect the investment, but what brought about the investment itself? Why would people go for a grandiose image? (Not all people do!) Images do not a narcissist make; narcissists make or find images to inflate themselves and deflate others.

Interestingly, neither Summers nor Elovitz look to the psychological and political situation that is crucial to why so many Americans currently subscribe to the “beacon unto the nations” exceptionalism image—and not just as an image but as an ideology. Investments in the exceptionalist image have waxed and waned over the nation’s history, but in the decades since the 1960s, political use of it has fused with a demographic shift toward the embrace of apocalyptic and evangelical Christianity, a missionary religion. This kind of Christianity now guides our political life; the “wall of separation” that the Founding Fathers were wise enough to erect has eroded. There is no boundary. The whole national culture is newly responsive to the Republican Party, which has become a dictatorial party on Christian grounds. The Republicans (and its Tea Party outliers) currently writing exceptionalist tracts are proselytizers. As anyone can see by reading the chapter on America as a “model for the world” in her *America By Heart: Reflections On Faith, Family and Flag*, Sarah Palin is a self-aggrandizing evangelical proselytizer.

It takes a cohort like the conservative Republicans to lead citizens into constituting a culture of narcissism—a precondition for narcissism to become widely woven into the citizenry over the course of a generation or two. Every narcissist takes an individual road from childhood to adulthood, but the road has typical features because it is a road through narcissistic territory. By contrast, in a culture hostile to narcissism, which rewards different ways of life and characterological types, narcissists rise up and flame out quickly.

The problem with the way Summers and Elovitz use the analogy between individual narcissists and narcissistic societies or cultures is that their sense for the macrocosm is not complicated enough. There are no one-to-one correspondences between a type of patient and a type of society. Unlike individuals, societies are big mixtures—pluralities—of people of all kinds, convictions, cultures, and characters. It is not enough to say that a culture or a society has become narcissistic and needs this or that kind of therapy, education, or regulation. A societal diagnostic needs to acknowledge that a society may have a prevailing or predominating character, but it will also have people and groups inside it that are differ-



ent—perhaps dominated, but also perhaps rebellious, critical, not allured by a given image, able to think independently. Only in a fully totalitarian society is this not the case.

However, it should be acknowledged that a society that has become predominantly narcissistic does have great power to suppress, and even to suppress other types of pathological groups, ones that have become pathologically fixated on other images, of order and discipline, for example, of America as a fortress keeping out all alien elements. It was an image of this sort—an Aryan nation—that Hitler and the Nazis promoted and proselytized for in the Weimar Germans. Create a Thousand Year Reich, a bigger fortress to eliminate all the perfidious tribes that tried to infiltrate us, whose allies had knifed us in the back in the First World War. Anti-immigrant legislation appeals to the conspiracy-minded who hold hearings designed to convince the American people that there is a perfidious tribe in their midst (Muslims) radicalizing their young, who will bring down the nation from within as “domestic terrorists.”

There are many extremes of American exceptionalism. Some people go for the exceptionalism of aesthetic greatness, charm, performance, or seductiveness. The exceptionalism of chosen-ness and moral or religious superiority suits the fundamentalists. The exceptionalism of racial purity and superiority supports hierarchicalists awaiting a Führer. That chosen-ness should be so often invoked now has required the support of elements of politicized religion perversely parading as faith.

*Elisabeth Young-Bruehl, PhD, a psychoanalytic psychotherapist and academic, has published the award-winning psychobiographies Hannah Arendt: For Love of the World (1982) and Anna Freud: A Biography (1988), as well as other books such as The Anatomy of Prejudice (1996). She took her doctoral degree in philosophy and has had academic appointments at Wesleyan University and Haverford College. Since 2007 she has lived in Toronto, Canada and is affiliated with the Toronto Psychoanalytic Society. More information can be found in the interview she gave to this journal in December 2005. A version of this response is on her blog ([whosafraidofsocialdemocracy.com](http://whosafraidofsocialdemocracy.com)) and she may be contacted at [youngbruehl@gmail.com](mailto:youngbruehl@gmail.com).*

## **On Moral Narcissism and the Masochistic Omnipotence Syndrome**

**Richard Landes**—Boston University

The essays by Summers and Elovitz offer a progressive critique of U.S. (and, presumably, by extension, Western) exceptionalism. In doing so, they not only deploy Lasch's critique of our culture of narcissism, they illustrate it as well.

The essays could have been written 10, even 20, years ago before the disastrous intellectual losses of the last decade in the cognitive warfare of radical Islam against Western progressive values. On the contrary, although not fully explicit, the articles (especially Summers') participate fully in the errors that produced these losses, suggesting one of the narcissistic tendencies the authors themselves invoke: ignoring failures and engaging in deeds aimed at appearance rather than reality.

So let me respond by identifying another narcissistic player in our culture, one I think intellectuals more than anyone need to ponder: those stricken with Masochistic Omnipotence Syndrome (MOS). This is a pathology largely specific to people who style themselves progressives (radical Christians and other social mystics have the same tendencies). MOS takes various progressive tendencies—empathy, self-abnegation and self-criticism, concern for the downtrodden—to pathological extremes.

Please understand: I'm not against any of these virtues. To my mind, nothing plays a more critical role in the moral life, good relations with others, and ultimately democratic societies and a peaceful world than empathy and the ability to be honest with oneself. In that vein, I think some of the early paragraphs of Elovitz' essay are good (if obvious). Americans are fat, not just physically (author disclosure, I am at least 20 pounds overweight), but in our lifestyle, our carbon (and energy) footprint, and the waste we generate. I think there are many ways Western democracy can improve, including religious tolerance; there is much to be learned from other cultures and many as yet unfound ways to interact with dignity and respect.

But people afflicted with MOS are moral perfectionists. They find any kind of moral complacency on the part of the West offensive. They are morally urgent, demanding people, and anything short of the highest standards offends them. Thus, whenever confronted by a conflict, those afflicted with MOS invariably choose to blame themselves. Their motto combines masochism—“it’s all our fault”—and omnipotence fantasy—“if only we were better we could fix everything.”

For the post-modern, it’s about the “epistemological priority of the [subaltern] other.” As one of the judges on the Goldstone Group reporting on Israeli treatment of Palestinians in December 2008 and January 2009 commented to a reporter (without any sense of irony), “it would have been cruel for us not to believe the Palestinian testimony.” The victim/loser, no matter how cruel or dishonest, is always right; the victorious/successful is always guilty. As Jacques Derrida himself asked shortly after 9/11: Isn’t failing to prevent starvation a form of terrorism? Our failings are as reprehensible as al Qaeda’s.

From this tyrannical superego we get a common phenomenon among progressives: moral relativism. Here (comparatively) minor flaws on our part become as big and bad as the worst of other cultures. Gitmo equals Gulag, the head of a major “Human Rights” NGO intoned. Blair is as bad as Saddam Hussein, a *Guardian* cartoonist sneered. The Israelis are as bad as the Nazis, the anti-Zionists shout and self-degrading Jews like Norman Finkelstein agree. And from there on down it’s a slippery slope to moral inversion: “We’re worse.” If they’re bad, it’s our fault. What did we do to make them hate us so?

Thus post-modern moral masochists engage in a double act of narcissism. On the one hand, they preen before the mirror as moral perfectionists, with no tolerance for any sign among their fellow progressives of what they consider intolerance or lack of compassion for the suffering of victims. They speak as prophets chastising their wayward people, convinced that if only “our side” could repent, we would truly have peace. Often, though, this is about *seems* and not *is*. As one student said to me about his opposition to the war in Iraq: “I don’t care what Saddam does to his people; I don’t want one hair on one Iraqi child’s head hurt by money paid

for by me.” Not in my name! The unspoken truth: this is all about *me* and *my* moral purity.

On the other hand, those with MOS perform the classic narcissistic dance described by Lasch: they treat those who are like them with contempt and spend all their energy courting those who dislike them. Having no real moral core, they desperately seek the approval of others, and the harder that approval is to get, the more valuable it seems. Thus Jimmy Carter prides himself on his ability to speak to everyone even though, in order to speak with the likes of Hamas and Hizbullah, of Qaddafi and Arafat, he has to avoid any criticism, to pretend they are moderate. He wins his pride at the expense of his moral integrity. Appearance trumps reality.

In its most extreme form, this kind of masochistic narcissism leads to the default assumption that “we’re always wrong and they’re always right.” Instead of the justice meme “whoever is right, my side or not,” we get, “their side right or wrong.” Thus those with MOS dismiss fellow progressives who criticize Islamists as “neo-cons,” that is, they are *not* us. They stand shoulder to shoulder with radical Muslims in a “progressive” project to eliminate hate speech by banning insults to Islam. They embrace the most ferocious of the tribal “my side right or wrong” thinkers in the name of transcending “us-them think.”

This brings us to yet a third trait characteristic of narcissists, their lack of courage. Not having a core to defend, narcissists constantly adjust to realities in ways that preserve their fantasy self-image and run from the difficulties of a messy real world. Thus, when faced with an “other” culture dominated by a savage authoritarianism that our own culture has struggled against in great pain for over a millennium, they deny there’s a clash. They fail to denounce, they fail to protect the very victims that they pride themselves on caring about—women, minorities, and slaves. They would rather demand the full measure of painful self-criticism from “us” than demand the most elemental level of self-criticism from a culture that finds any criticism unbearable and will stop at nothing to silence the voice of the “other.”

Thus Summers worries about our own narcissistic pride, and faults us for offending “the pride of Third World nations,” for

showing a “lack of sensitivity to Islamic culture.” Apparently he doesn’t factor in that that “proud” culture finds killing daughters and sisters to protect family honor laudable, that it expresses pervasive paranoia and narcissistic rage at the humiliations inflicted by history on its own notions of Islamic exceptionalism. What’s sauce for our goose is *not* for their gander.

After all, the costs of attacking fellow progressives who dare to criticize the “other” are low in comparison with the costs of criticizing a violently intolerant other whose extremists proclaim, “Butcher those who insult Islam,” and whose “moderates” blame us for that extremism. The result is a suicidal abdication of integrity: if the pope calls Muslims violent and they riot murderously in the street in protest, then the joke’s not on them for proving his point, it’s the pope’s fault for provoking them. And as a result, the cognitive war of Islamists against the West goes from strength to strength, while our progressives deny there is such a thing.

It is unclear what the moral narcissist fears more—actual physical assault from intolerant Muslims or shunning by his fellow progressives. My sense, by and large, is the latter, which explains the ease and speed with which the “other” fellow progressives dissent. Whatever the mix, their motto seems to be “better *dhimmi* [a Muslim subaltern who dare not criticize Islam] than [called] a racist Islamophobe.”

The result: the disastrous marriage of our miserable young century, between *pre-modern sadism* and *post-modern masochism*. It is a marriage guaranteed to destroy the very progressive values its post-modern participants pretend to uphold. That is, if I understand it, the very nature of narcissism: appearance over reality. The progressives as Dorian Gray, still looking good to themselves.

**Richard Landes, PhD**, is a medieval historian at Boston University and a visiting fellow at Friedrich Alexander University in Erlangen, Germany. His book *Heaven on Earth: The Varieties of the Millennial Experience* will be out in July. He maintains a website which critiques the way our mainstream media depict the Arab-Israeli conflict, and is writing a book on that theme: *They’re So Smart ‘Cause We’re So Stupid: A Medievalist’s Guide to the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*. He may be contacted at [trl.seconddraft@gmail.com](mailto:trl.seconddraft@gmail.com).

## **Identifying Group Processes in Psychoanalytic Terms Is Not a Good Idea**

**Philip Langer**—University of Colorado

My concern is not the labeling of American foreign policy using terms commonly associated with psychoanalytic theory, but with the broad interpretation of policy in terms originally derived from studies of the individual. Doing so is not only a bad idea, but it can lead to some erroneous assumptions about future policy decisions. In therapeutic sessions, the therapist assumes that in his or her search for the underlying personality structure, the operating psychological dynamics uncovered are reasonably stable. This assumption permits the therapist to assume a direct causal chain regarding a variety of situations, assuming relationships between seemingly diverse sets of behaviors. The search for causality within the individual is a systematic process.

It is not realistic to label foreign policy as the possible outcome of a group of individuals with similar underlying psychological systems for several reasons. The first is that our foreign policy is not usually solely the result of any single individual's efforts, however high he or she is in the administration. There is Congress to consider, along with future electoral consequences. The latter caught up with George Bush in his second term. The creation of policy is a group process in the United States, although it must be recognized that within the political process, certain people (like the president, the vice president, the speaker of the house, or the majority leader of the Senate) exert very significant influences. This is simply a fact of life in any group process.

However, in some countries, one can legitimately link a direct relationship between the political process and one individual. Thus, in the recent turmoil in some Arab states, public anger could be focused on a single person. In Libya, for example, no one can doubt that state policy is completely under the control of Muammar Gaddafi. At Stalingrad, the destruction of Germany's Sixth Army was a result of Hitler's failure to yield on his policy of designating the encircled army as a fortress. One might fault his decision using narcissism as an argument, but that might overlook the fact that

Hitler's stubborn decision to hold the line at Moscow during the 1941 winter offensive of the Red Army may have saved the day for the *Wehrmacht* (Albert Seaton, *The Russo-German War: 1941-1945*, 1971, 227).

The second problem is that writers using psychoanalytic labels cannot avoid creating the explanatory psychological constructs derived from consequences. It is only fair I should note that I have used a similar psychohistorical approach to military events (Robert Pois and Philip Langer, *Command Failure in War: Psychology and Leadership*, 2004). I must also hasten to add, however, that we used a variety of psychological models. This avoided the somewhat cynical comment of my colleague, who said that my analysis of Napoleon's military successes and failures as somehow reflecting toilet-training problems was stretching causality beyond the breaking point.

This psychohistorical approach of diagnosing from outcomes, without additionally derived information, is fraught with danger. In further defense of my work with the late Robert Pois, the analyses were tied to tightly defined sets of consequences. Along with multiple models, we did not use the same map to go everywhere in the world.

Using the Iraq conflict as an example, the decision to go to war might have been the convergence of Bush's unresolved Oedipal problems ("I will finish what Daddy failed to do") with Dick Cheney ("oil, and think of the money Haliburton can make") and Donald Rumsfeld ("shock and awe"). The fact that their goals shifted—from WMDs (weapons of mass destruction), to getting rid of Saddam Hussein, to creating a democracy—suggests to me, at least, that the assumption of an Oedipal problem, for example, begins to diminish as a universal explanatory construct. Putting it another way, when I begin a lecture, I cannot assume that all those students behind their laptops are taking notes; surfing the Internet is not uncommon.

Returning to the general issue of foreign policy, which consists of rather diverse actions across diverse situations, any broad psychoanalytic labels must be accompanied by the belief that these decisions reflect those aforementioned stable underlying psycho-

logical processes of the individuals involved. The associative linkages derived from diverse policy actions are likely to be highly colored and tightly maintained. In turn, projection can easily contribute to supposed linkages between policy and the individuals assigned to cause. Furthermore, subsequent attempts to maintain the integrity of the cognitive structure may override analytic objectivity in order to preserve the integrity of the beliefs embedded. Conflicting evidence may be ignored or assimilated, according to the developmental psychology of Jean Piaget (1896-1980). In short, it is hard to defend a process, an endeavor that any trained clinician would avoid.

*Philip Langer, PhD, is Professor of Educational Psychological Studies who includes the study of Freud in his classes. His psychohistorical contributions have been in military history, particularly the Civil War, and he may be contacted at philip.langer@colorado.edu.*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## Historical Perspectives

### Puritan Roots of American Exceptionalism

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

The claim that the United States is different from and better than other countries has its roots in the well-known 1630 lay sermon of John Winthrop, the Governor of Massachusetts Bay Colony. Examining this speech helps reveal the dark psychological-religious undercurrent within the history of American exceptionalism.

The Puritan leader proclaims that his colony “shall be as a city upon a hill” and that the eyes “of all people are upon us.” If his Congregationalists can be true to the “speciall commission,” which is a “neare bond of marriage” where God “hath taken us to be his,” succeeding generations will model themselves on the holiness of New England. Winthrop’s band of worshippers needed to strictly adhere to their “Covenant with Him.” They did so by being



without conflict, selfishness, or dissension. The Governor proclaims that we “must be knitt together, in this worke, as one” and “make other’s conditions our oune; rejoyce together, mourne together, labor and suffer together” as if we are “members of the same body.” Then, God will “delight to dwell among us, as his oune people, and will command a blessing upon us.” Being virtuous and communal “makes us nearer to resemble the virtues of our heavenly father” (John Winthrop, 1630, “A Modell of Christian Charity,” <http://history.hanover.edu/texts/winthmod.html>). This is a brand of millennialism wrapped in symbiotic language; it contains a desire to be wed to the Lord and to be in one body with fellow colonists. The images of a sexualized union pervade Winthrop’s rhetoric.

There is another side to this ethic, for this holy exceptionalism contrasts with the normal condition of life. The fall of humanity, according to Winthrop, stems from the fact that Adam “rent himself from his Creator,” thus condemning each human to be separate from God and to only love and seek himself. The original sins are selfishness and separation. God severely punishes humans for their transgressions, for having “corrupted the service of the Lord.” To those who “embrace” earthly goods and “prosecute” their “carnal intentions,” the heavenly father will “breake out in wrath” and be “revenged” against people who disregard his commands. If the Puritans sink into the morass of worldly desires, they will have violated their holy covenant. This will then strengthen the “enemies” who “speak evil of the wayes of God.” Then, God’s “worthy servants” will be “shamed” and their “prayers” will turn to “curses upon us.” The result will be that the Puritans will perish (Winthrop, “Christian Charity”). Winthrop’s version of exceptionalism is an either/or: the glory of redemption or being condemned to the mire. It is either heaven or hell. Winthrop’s sermon contains an image of an idealized father who either grants salvation to the faithful or severely punishes transgressors.

The dichotomy here is between union and separation; the need is to exorcize the stain of being human, to reach a higher plane beyond mixed motivations. This yearning to fully escape moral complexity stems from feeling contaminated by self-centered motivations. The fear is of a judging God, an obvious superego projec-

tion. Virtue can only be attained by transcending the human condition, by entering a near marriage with God. It is a drama of attachment or loss. This longing for innocence is part of the American psychological birthright, a transformational impulse characteristic of modernity, a need to overthrow the old in the perennial hunt for what is new and improved. Winthrop's Puritans can only sustain their blessedness by strictly adhering to every provision of God's commands. It is being the good or bad child in the eyes of the severe, judgmental Heavenly Father. By seeking to escape sin, Americans have perpetuated an internal conviction of unworthiness. In American life, there has been a recurring cycle of striving for purity and unity, followed by a renewed sense of being fallen, then striving once again to escape being transgressors. This is a psychological-religious dynamic.

Millennialism has always contained a double-edged sword; the guilty have to redeem themselves from their sense of being sinners, from their guilt over being bad or for violating morality. The wish to have virtue triumph over evil is a desperate hope, an escape from the inner torment of a harsh conscience.

While the early New England Protestants were often self-accusatory, there have been some alterations in this mental framework. After the passing of Puritan self-severity, the claims of American innocence have often been accompanied by finding a barbarian that needs reforming. In this way, many Americans displace their perceived violations onto others. By the time of the American Revolution, it was less the enemy within than the external oppressor, less embracing paternal authority than escaping its feared judgment. Champions of American exceptionalism frequently need a victim to persecute, a wrongdoer to reform, an evil outside the gates to conquer. Dualism and guilt are at the heart of our claims to superiority; a dichotomy is needed to exorcise demons from the internal to the outside world. While externalization is a common human trait, sometimes the projection works psychologically to reaffirm our idea of being virtuous purifiers, and sometimes it results in a tortured soul. The cycle of exceptionalism can proceed from moral certainty to self-recrimination. Anticipated displeasure of the judging Father always hovers around American crusades and foreign adventures.

In the name of Christianity or democracy, some Americans may stereotype others in missions of domination, discrimination, and displacement. This includes justifying enslaving Africans, attacking Native Americans or others branded as barbarous from the Germans and Japanese to Godless communists, Osama Bin Laden, Saddam Hussein, or Muammar Gaddafi. At times, our proclivity for warfare against the forces of evil has reinforced our religious sense of virtue as after World War II, and at other times it has led to widespread disillusionment and despair, as after World War I and Vietnam.

On another front, an enduring ideology within American exceptionalism is the civic religion of American capitalism. The mythology of this creed is that the self-correcting market economy gives equal opportunity for material success free from restriction by government or monopoly. It is an idealized world without fathers and only with competing brothers and now sisters. What in Puritan days was seen as sinfully self-centered has been transformed so that the pursuit of economic self-interest is proclaimed as virtuous, without sin. Material achievement is a sign of salvation; it is a gospel of wealth. From Calvin Coolidge's declaration that the man who builds a factory builds a temple and the man who works there worships there, to Milton Friedman's *Capitalism and Freedom* and his Chicago school descendants, there is the portrayal of capitalism as free enterprise, as the essence of liberty. The U.S. is seen by many as the true home of the capitalist spirit, unlike the mixed or "socialistic" economies of Europe and other cultures, where paternal restrictions stemming from government hinder freedom. Americans have embraced an ideology of an unfettered individualism, even though in our corporate and bureaucratic economy only 7% of Americans are self-employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics, <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.nr0.htm>).

Those who dare question capitalism may be labeled as un-American. When the capitalist system suffers serious downturns, the upholders of the American way often crack, and seek to find outside sources for the failure of the true faith. The old Puritan fear of the punishing father returns and must be displaced. It is not surprising that soon after the Great Depression started, Congress started investigating subversives, first in the Fish Committee of

1930, then with the 1938 founding of the House Un-American Activities Committee, followed by a paranoid Red Scare after World War II. In the current economic climate, some conservatives want to blame financial malfunctions on the government rather than Wall Street, and fantasize that the President is a socialist, communist, a non-American, or worse. The fault cannot be in our beloved capitalism but in alien forces corrupting our way of life.

Once again, it is the fear of being to blame that is externalized in the form of demonizing others. While American exceptionalism seems to be built on a grandiose and narcissistic self, the remnants of a judging paternal authority—a severe God—haunt the religious roots of the American unconscious. We are often driven to find enemies on whom to project our faults. Our need to seek redemption through dominating and defeating others is a vain hope to exorcize the stain of feeling guilty and to avoid the wrath of the judging God our super-ego fantasies have created.

*Ken Fuchsman, EdD, has been affiliated with the University of Connecticut since 1977 as an administrator, counselor, and faculty member. Currently, he is Assistant Extension Professor teaching in both the Individualized and Interdisciplinary Major and the Bachelor of General Studies programs. His areas of specialty include the interdisciplinary study of the family and the history of psychoanalysis, trauma and war, the Oedipus complex, and interdisciplinary studies. Dr. Fuchsman is a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum and is an Editorial Board member of Clio's Psyche who can be reached at [ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu](mailto:ken.fuchsman@uconn.edu).*

### **The Online Forum Invites You to Participate**

Join the lively psychohistory conversation of the online leg of the Psychohistory Forum.  
To do so contact Molly Castelleo at  
[msc214@nyu.edu](mailto:msc214@nyu.edu).

## **American Hubris in Action**

**Peter Petschauer**—Appalachian State University

As a historian and sometimes a psychohistorian, I wonder why a fairly sizable number of Americans thought and felt from the very inception of this country that it would not be subjected to the same power syndromes as all past great powers. The Summers and Elovitz articles provide a basis for understanding these unsustainable beliefs.

Yes, we will follow the same path as every other major power in the past, but either we don't know it, or know it and cynically exploit it. We are not unique in that we ignore the lessons of our failures; as a matter of fact, we glorify them, like Vietnam, Iraq, and soon to be Afghanistan. The Athenians, the Ptolemaic Dynasty in Egypt, the Han in China, the Romans, the Carolingians, the French before the Revolution, the Russians, the Third Reich of the Germans, and the Soviets, to name a few, all followed a similar path. Those who argue that the U.S. is different because we have created a democracy overlook that ours is not the first experiment with democracy. Like all other forms of government, democracy has profound weaknesses, including the long-standing exclusion or suppression of minorities, a massive underclass that does not participate in the accepted political and economic processes, the radicalization of the political discourse, extreme social and financial discrepancies, an overextension of the military, and national and state debt burdens no one seems willing to tackle seriously.

What causes great powers to fail? Paul Kennedy, in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (1987), describes how one downfall of great powers works. They divert too many of their resources into war or interventions in other areas of the world and thus overextend themselves. I would like to add several other reasons. One has to do with a traditional form of government, namely monarchy. It consistently fails because usually even the best rulers are followed by one or two bad ones, therefore creating a situation in which the state cannot continue as designed. Sometimes priests and nobles exploit this weakness at its center and then undermine it further and frequently destroy it, for their benefit, of course, and not

that of the society. In our system, we have an elected center, that is, the electorate has a chance “to kill the king,” or change the ruler, every four years. But like in all other societies, we have nobles—corporations and wealthy people—who are weakening the center for their benefit. One other phenomenon that has plagued past societies is that the privileged avoid paying their share of the burdens of their society. What happened in Rome offers a hint about what is happening in the U.S. as the wealthiest Americans refuse to pay their share of the tax burden to maintain the benefits of our democracy. Roman imperial nobles, for example, refused to build and maintain roads and aqueducts that previously were their pride and joy.

Another reason that weakened, if not destroyed, most previous regimes is the abuse of their environment. Before the dynastic period, the Egyptians cut down all of their trees to make pottery, and likewise the Indians of the Indus Valley civilization cut down their trees to burn brick for their houses. The Romans destroyed North Africa's capacity to produce wheat, the southwestern American Indians used up their forests for their buildings, and today, we use most of the world's oil to drive our cars. In each case, the greatest advance of a given society was destroyed by the overuse of the resource that was needed to create this most significant product.

As we contemplate how other regimes destroyed themselves, arrogance (“hubris,” as the Greeks called it) emerges as the key reason for their collapse. We assume that we have created a different political and economic structure, a better one at that. But as Summers and Elovitz show, the U.S. is simply in an unfettered and narcissistic stupor, and I would like to add, is seemingly blind to the fate of all other great powers who went down that route.

Is there a way out? Yes, but we would need to look differently at a nation's success and failure, its fate. Like corporations, nations undergo infancy, maturity, old age, and, sometimes, renewal. Usually a prince, king, or emperor consolidates a state, which becomes most important to his success being his dynamism and the sustainability of his dynasty. In the case of the U.S., the impetus and enthusiasm came from the objection to the “old Regime” across the ocean and the establishment of a unique approach to governing. A state's initial success is usually followed by terri-

torial expansion; in the case of the US, a fierce ideology assisted the conquest of a continent. Expansion reaches its limits, and a nation finds it increasingly difficult to maintain the massive territory: internal dissension, abuse of resources, inability to hold the borders, the deterioration of infrastructure, and other factors all play a role. As with corporations that “aged” recently, nations “age” and collapse. Yes, renewal is possible. The Romans pulled it off at least four times, the Russians at least three times, the Egyptians with nearly every new dynasty; in each case they did so with a new dynamism at the center.

In our own case, the first steps to renewal lead away from the slogans that served us in the past; the time of empire building is over. Renewal needs to focus on the inside and I see three interlocking reforms. One, we must accept that we are not exceptional. The sooner we do, the sooner we can talk about the changes that would reverse the obvious downward spiral. The death of bin Laden might have been such an opportunity for conversation. Two, we need proper rewards for work, responsibility toward each other, quality of our products and high standards in general. Three, we must moderate our capitalism, reigning in corporations and their leaders, reassessing our tax structure, and including all members of society in it.

As an immigrant who chose the U.S. freely at age 17 and who has worked all his adult life to make it a better place through intense engagements in higher education, the blithe unwillingness on the part of our leadership to confront the crisis that has been brewing for some time is a slap in the face. This sense, anger if you will, is made worse by all sides posturing and being unwilling to tackle reforms that surely are known to the leadership and would be key to our survival. Sadly, as a historian and psychohistorian, I am doubtful that we will stop wallowing in our self-glorification that allows us to assume that we will prevail. Thus, we may need a collapse before we can find genuine renewal.

***Peter Petschauer, PhD**, is Professor Emeritus of History at Appalachian State University. In addition to holding a named professorship, he chaired the Faculty Senate at Appalachian and headed the Faculty Assembly for the entire University of North Carolina system. Dr. Petschauer is an active scholar whose most*

*recent book is about his father's disillusioning experience as an officer in the SS. He has just returned from spending half a year in Europe writing about the women in his family and he may be contacted at petschauerpw@appstate.edu.*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **Domestic and Foreign Policy**

### **The Myth of American Exceptionalism**

**Francis A. Beer**—University of Colorado-Boulder

The myth of American exceptionalism is a story of the heroic struggle of good against evil, of a virtuous new world against the corruption of the old. This political narrative is embedded in American history and the American dream. It has its origins in the religious beliefs of the first European settlers, traces its way forward through the rhetoric of President Thomas Jefferson's warning about entangling alliances in his inaugural address, the Monroe Doctrine and its various corollaries, and the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. It finally arrives at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century with America in its hegemonic moment as the sole remaining superpower. In this vision, America is the city on the hill, defending good against evil, leading the world into a new day of peace and prosperity, globalization and democracy, and the end of history and a new world order. This messianic rhetoric provides a powerful lever to consolidate domestic support, appeal to friends' shared values abroad, and escape unilaterally from the hostile realist constraints of the international system (Francis A. Beer and Jeffrey S. Kopstein, "Between Maastricht and Sarajevo: European Identities, Narratives, Myths," in Francis A. Beer, ed., *Meanings of War and Peace*, 2001).

The myth of exceptionalism is an essential element of American civil religion at the heart of American culture. This myth communicates part of the collective national vision and serves as an essential tool of political mobilization. "Redeemer nation,"



“renewal through self-flagellation,” and building international community have been recurrent themes in American public life. Political leaders have used these themes strategically as they sought to build “sympathetic public ecologies,” to recreate the American nation and to advance an international program of “soft hegemony” (Siobhan McEvoy-Levy, *American Exceptionalism and US Foreign Policy: Public Diplomacy at the End of the Cold War*, 2001, 146-164).

Even granting the United States’ global dominance and its contribution to democratization and human rights, one may still ask if American exceptionalism has been oversold. If we transfer the narrative of exceptionalism from the collective American psyche (state as person) to that of a single American (individual as person), how might we interpret it? Taking a critical approach inspired by clinical psychology, we might note first the possibility of mythomania, or a propensity to portray oneself in ways that others might find to be unrealistic. The story of exceptionalism would probably exaggerate the subject’s positive qualities, understate the mundane, and neglect the unpleasant. Second, there is certainly a good chance of narcissism, or an excessive focus on the self. If one is exceptional, why bother with the inferior? Third, we might expect to find some degree of sociopathology. Unless he or she was the leader, this person would not be a team player. These themes are related to the symposium articles by Frank Summers and Paul Elovitz. Mythomania and narcissism map onto their description of grandiosity, and sociopathology attached to their discussion of paranoia.

The validity of these clinical themes, not just for particular individuals but also for the state, depends on how we resolve the tension between reality and fantasy. Is the person or state really exceptional? Ayn Rand’s fictional heroes may be exceptional, but there are variable views about Ayn Rand herself. Sarah Palin’s created frontier persona is not always consistent with her tolerance of pain when criticized. The United States is exceptional in many respects but less so in others. Whatever the validity of exceptionalism for individuals, the myth of American exceptionalism functions in the context of international, not interpersonal, discourse. There may be exceptional Americans, but the myth of American excep-

tionalism does not focus on them. It rests upon the real or imputed virtues of the American polity—not America writ small, but America writ large.

Can the categories of abnormal psychology easily transfer to states? The validity of American exceptionalism must be examined within an interstate system with processes and structures that are very different from those of domestic society. Individuals are not states, even though individuals occupy state leadership positions. Particular political leaders may exhibit the characteristics of mythomania, narcissism, sociopathology, grandiosity, and paranoia. Indeed, there may be political selection processes that encourage these attributes in our leaders. At the same time, the application of clinical categories to primary and secondary groups has well known problems in scaling up. States are not people; international relations are different than interpersonal relations.

Whatever its truth value or the appropriateness of clinical categories, is the myth of American exceptionalism a rational political strategy? It does have pragmatic, functional virtues. The myth's altruism can be politically useful, both domestically and internationally. It is at the heart of American soft power. It attracts political support and disarms political opposition. It is a core element in the story of America. In the world politics of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, it is part of the narrative in marketing the American brand. It helps line the velvet glove of soft power that masks the iron fist of military hard power. The myth of American exceptionalism is an important part of the interpretive conflict between cultures and civilizations, of a post-realist struggle for meaning. The contest for hearts and minds in mainstream, alternative, and social media is the latest chapter, still being written, of this ongoing project.

The myth of American exceptionalism is an important element in American public diplomacy, or foreign policy rhetoric. As modern media extend their global reach, they bring national foreign policy actions out of the diplomatic closet and into full public view. Public relations experts market foreign policy as they do other products and services, strategically using rhetoric to legitimize national actions, mobilize support from allies, and counter the propaganda efforts of opponents.

Even if one accepts the clinical criticism, the myth's irrational flaws still have their rational strategic uses. The myth of American exceptionalism may be grandiose, narcissistic, paranoid, and sociopathological at the individual psychological level. At the same time, though, it seems to have survived and prospered as an important way that Americans have historically identified and justified themselves in the world. American exceptionalism constructs an idealistic, moralistic frame to rationalize a realist focus on national self-interest. Mythomania, narcissism, and grandiosity have their political uses. They flatter the domestic audience, generate political support, and disarm critics at home and abroad. Standard realist international relations discourse, on the other hand, describes world politics in harsher realist terms that allow less room for exceptionalism. This traditional view has some basis in world political reality. It has not forgotten World Wars I and II, Hitler and Stalin. In a state of international nature that is seen as deeply unforgiving, sociopathology and paranoia may be, if not always appropriate, at least partly understandable.

Whether the past history of American exceptionalism predicts future political success remains unclear. Insights from political psychology suggest that the myth of American exceptionalism is at least partly a fantasy with political uses, a form of delusion and denial, well separated from the reality principle. It soothes individual fears and insecurities by sheltering them in a larger, stronger political body. Collective mythomania, grandiosity, narcissism, sociopathology, and paranoia may be sustainable for a nation with a hegemonic power position. Very powerful people can claim external validation and can also afford to be unpleasant. The Greek historian Thucydides, commenting on the Peloponnesian War, famously said long ago that the strong do as they will; the weak do as they must.

As the 21<sup>st</sup> century advances, the United States may move away from its hegemonic moment and become less of a superpower. The international context will change. Other states will challenge the United States. Old opponents like Russia have not gone away. Resurrected societies like China will continue to evolve. Emerging powers like Brazil and India will assert themselves. Allies like Western Europe will develop more independent

identities. Other recent friends, like Japan, suffer ordeals of water and fire, nuclear and political meltdown. What if relative American power weakens? American exceptionalism may partly reflect real American attributes; it may contribute to American power. One may recognize the historical political virtues of the myth of American exceptionalism. At the same time, political psychology suggests that it may contain deeply dysfunctional elements that work less well in another context. The myth of American exceptionalism may play less well in a post-hegemonic multipolar world if relative American power declines. Machiavelli long ago advised the Prince that it is better to be feared than loved. For 21<sup>st</sup> century America, both fear and love may be scarcer.

*Francis A. Beer, PhD, is Professor Emeritus of Political Science at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He has taught and published extensively in the field of international relations, with a particular focus on war and peace. His work is described in greater detail at the website <http://sobek.colorado.edu/~beer/>. He may be contacted at [Beer@Colorado.edu](mailto:Beer@Colorado.edu).*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **From de Tocqueville to Baudrillard, Lasch, and Bacevich**

**Tom Ferraro**—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

The term “exceptionalism” has been used to define the American character for at least 180 years. In papers by Paul Elovitz and Frank Summers, the psychological trait of narcissism is used to explain both the American character and our foreign policy traits. Although they describe the problem in clear and persuasive ways, what is lacking is a reasonable pathway out of our narcissistic binds. Heinz Kohut and Otto Kernberg, the leading luminaries on the subject, found many forms of narcissism to be untreatable. If we as Americans suffer from this condition on a large-scale basis, as Christopher Lasch stated in 1979, then exactly how is one to find a way out? Furthermore, Andrew Bacevich, in *The Limits of Power: The End of American Exceptionalism* (2008), has stated that

our foreign policy reflects our attitude of entitlement and endangers our world standing. I will refer to Alexis de Tocqueville's initial use of the term exceptionalism in 1835 and 1840 to explore our national character and will extend his work by reviewing Jean Baudrillard's *America* to assess the changes in American character over a century and a half.

### **Alexis de Tocqueville's View of the American Character**

The French aristocrat and historian de Tocqueville (1805-1859) wrote his two-volume masterpiece of sociological insight, *Democracy in America*, in 1835 and 1840 based on his travels in the United States for nine months. He wrote that "the position of the Americans is therefore quite exceptional, and it may be believed that no democratic people will ever be placed in a similar one." He bases it on "their strictly Puritanical origin, their exclusively commercial habits, even the country they inhabit," which "have singularly concurred to fix the mind of the American upon purely practical objects." De Tocqueville repeatedly emphasized our practical, puritanical, hard-working, and commerce-minded traits, as well as our lack of aesthetic interest in literature, the fine arts, or science. This still holds true. The world still considers us "ugly Americans." The American way of life is work-oriented; we take fewer vacations than any other industrial nation. Our social life has deteriorated dramatically, as Robert Putman has shown in his book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. But our interest in commerce and money is remarkable. De Tocqueville was also correct about our lack of interest in fine art. Compare the attendance numbers at a Yankees baseball game versus a Paul Taylor Dance Company performance. Americans are a practical, work-oriented, and money-minded lot with a Puritan streak even in the age of a consumer society.

### **Jean Baudrillard's View of America: "A Desert Wasteland"**

De Tocqueville is not the only French thinker to attempt to describe the American character. Jean Baudrillard (1929-2007), the French social critic and post-modernist, is considered to be one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's greatest thinkers. He came to the country in 1970 in search of the "true" America. His book *America* (1986) was meant to be a response to and extension of de Tocqueville's work, and he begins his book with "the America of the empty, absolute

freedom of the freeways, not the deep America of mores and mentalities, but the America of desert speed, of motels and mineral surfaces. I looked for it in the speed of the screenplay, in the indifferent reflex of television,” and he continues, “in the film of days and nights projected across an empty space, in the marvelously affectless succession of signs, images, faces and ritual acts on the road.”

He traveled across America in a rental car, which he felt reflected our speed and sense of isolation. He described America as a culture of vast emptiness and noted our embrace of Disney, television, and malls. He emphasizes the desert-like quality of America; this, of course, is an apt description of the narcissist. Narcissists sense their own deadness and emptiness, forcing them into endless competitiveness and a hunger for admiration.

How do we go from being described as “exceptional” due to our practicality and our work ethic to being a nation of empty, over-competitive narcissists? De Tocqueville described America as a fully realized utopia of freedom and equality; Baudrillard describes us 150 years later as a vast empty wasteland. What went so wrong?

### **Christopher Lasch on Narcissism in America**

Narcissism is now seen in epidemic numbers throughout America. The 1970s were coined the “Me Decade” by *Newsweek*, and the situation has only gotten worse with the characterization of the selfish, greedy, hyper-competitive American. This same attitude of exceptionalism would inevitably be seen in our government and in our foreign policy. Lasch was able to describe this problem as far back as 1979. These exceptional American traits have produced a military and financial world power. Our gross national product, as well as our military budget, is by far the largest in the world. Our narcissism and our lust for more have produced great superiority in these areas.

In *The Limits of Power*, Andrew Bacevich described America as profligate, extremely imperialistic, and on the verge of depletion. The current debate about the decline and fall of American exceptionalism borrows from his scholarship.

I have written about the current causes of the Americans’ state of depletion in the past (Clio’s Psyche Vol. 15, No. 4, March 2009). Our current state of depletion has three main causes: 1) the

amazing beauty of the objects produced by our capitalistic system are difficult, if not impossible, to resist; 2) the persuasive power of Madison Avenue to sell these objects; and 3) the financial industry's ability to offer credit. These help explain our addiction to materialism, our shallowness and our sense of being a valueless nation. It seems to me that our only real value is money and all it can buy. This is the current bind we find ourselves in.

### **Is There a Way Out of the Desert?**

Alexis de Tocqueville noted how practical, down-to-earth, hard-working, and money-minded we were. *The Declaration of Independence* fostered the concepts of liberty, individualism, and egalitarianism. As a nation, we have remained fiercely puritanical and compulsive toward work and money. As individuals, we have turned into over-competitive consumers who fetishism commodities and use them to obtain status and undo equality. But to address this problem, as President Carter found out during his malaise speech, is certain political death.

We now have an overworked, overspent, debt-ridden America that is lost to its emptiness and consumer-crazed habits. Summers and Elovitz were correct in their assessment of narcissism in America. The rub is to find a way out. The answer may be in de Tocqueville's simple comment that America is not very interested in science, the arts, or literature. As an example, Europeans regularly have poetry festivals in all their major cities. When was the last time you went to a poetry festival in America? Americans are far more apt to read *People Magazine* than *Clio's Psyche*; America likes baseball far more than ballet.

Yes, we are exceptional Americans, thanks to our intense work ethic, Puritan inclinations, down-to-earth pragmatism, and love of money and commerce. But this has led us to joyless narcissistic exhaustion and a profound sense of meaninglessness. No matter how many Louis Vuitton bags we buy, the emptiness and fatigue remain. Do you recall when Jesse Helms almost dismantled the National Endowment for the Arts because he took offense to Robert Mapplethorpe and Andre Serrano? There is great disdain for the arts in America, as well a great disdain for an inner life. The fine arts and literature, both of which can be curative, may be America's last hope. There are simply not enough psychotherapists

to treat an entire nation, so we must leave much of the work to our artists and writers.

We work too hard, we fight too much, and we love the external world too much. Our exceptionalism in these ways has exhausted and depleted us as a nation. We are depleted of health, of meaning and of savings. We need to learn how to play, how to slow down, and how to relax. It is no surprise that Starbucks, the wonderful espresso bar concept modeled after Italian culture, is so wildly popular here in the U.S. But we need more than a coffee break. We need to import the European love of beauty and the arts. We also need to import the European custom of taking seven weeks off per year. Until we do that, we will remain a superpower that needs a very long vacation—a superpower that needs to learn how to play and how to rest. We need to become a nation that has an inner life to match our outer one. It is only then that we will become exceptional. This is the domain of the arts and letters; the domain that de Tocqueville pointed out as lacking so very many years ago.

*Tom Ferraro, PhD, is a psychoanalyst in private practice on Long Island who works with well-known athletes, actors, and artists. He is a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum with broad cultural interests and may be contacted at DrTFerraro@aol.com.*

We welcome work-in-progress  
seminar paper proposals

**Nancy Unger**  
is our September Featured Scholar who  
will be joining our Board of Editors upon  
the completion of her book on women in  
environmental history



## A Critical View

**Kurt Jacobsen**—University of Chicago

American exceptionalism, as the two provocative essays assert, is a seductive nationalist notion that serves to confer a purifying aura of impunity upon feverish, and often cynical, advocates. If no other nation's fortunes can be compared to the unique American experience, then no external criticism of the red, white, and blue body politic need be heeded. The hoary concept is laden with fantasies of omnipotence, unchecked appetite, self-absorption, a lack of curiosity, thin skin, and narcissistic righteousness. In the fashion of the Puritan heritage, true virtue entails prosperity as an outward sign of divine affirmation. The market—manifest machinery of a grim and detached God—is the sole arbiter of truth, justice, and success. There is no alternative to this “American Way,” as defined by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce standing in God's stead.

For political scientists, the key touchstone is Louis Hartz's *The Liberal Tradition in America* (1955). Following de Tocqueville, it portrayed Americans' image of their new nation as, by an obliging act of providence, exceptional compared to doddering old Europe with its rigid class structures, feudal legacies, ermine-robed tyrannies, obstructive guilds, secret policemen, odious socialists, and lack of a spacious frontier except in some of its colonies. America, in short, is exceptional compared to a fussy, sclerotic world where the fix is in.

The exceptionalism thesis let Americans, above all their corporate and financial bosses, off the hook regarding the ghastly record of Manifest Destiny in action. Richard Slotkin, among others, pins down “regeneration through violence” as the much more revealing theme for apprehending how American elites dealt with all of those eugenically inferior beings, such as Indian savages, a combative proletariat, and immigrant masses (*Regeneration Through Violence: the Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860*, 1973). The irony is that the exceptionalism thesis only reached its apogee after the New Deal arose, when capital was most restrained, and the labor force was most protected via the suppos-

edly feared state. Especially in the new suburban sprawl, it was pretty easy to think that America magically, minus class struggle, arrived in the postwar era with a social contract assuring civil and economic rights for everyone (but overlooked blacks). This myth is steadily drilled into all Americans by school textbooks, movies, TV, radio hosts, merchants, employers, and state authorities, thus making it quite difficult to discern what is really going on inside our minds. Do Americans really swallow these myths? Exceptionalism equates freedom with property (which, according to John Locke, becomes appropriated through applying one's labor to transform it into something productive or otherwise useful). Property, in a market-idealizing realm, is the only means by which freedom is obtained, even if by purchase of the freedom of others by slavery or wringing wealth from wage labor. Property is the American's zone of blissful and private freedom, afforded by the inexorable spread of market relations which even Marx and Engels gave its due. The problem with large-scale markets, though, is not chaos but oligopolistic tendencies, and so the ingredient of self-dissolution was inherent in the concept of market freedom from its febrile beginning. The delirious Tea Party crowd today resists any data that deviates from their image of the country as a liberal Lockean haven, a sylvan paradise, with the machine in the garden and a fence all around. But property itself slipped the leash. Property became the master.

Denial, in either the ordinary or clinical senses of the word, is the engine of right-wing populist politics, staunch denial that elite elements in the private sphere could wax supreme and capture the machinery of the hated public state to retool it to accommodate their acquisitive ends. The exceptionalist myth conceals corporate hegemony like a poisonous pearl. The tyranny that good American liberal Lockceans always feared from the state instead arose from private mega-organizations, which have asserted a stunning form of dominance that the latest bubble episode put in plain, absurdist view. The one percent of upper class population, now in control of more income than half the citizenry, reside in exceptionalist fantasies of their own, where the bubble never bursts and where the victims pay for the damages and will go on doing so forever.

Are the highly individualistic (according to myth) victims capable of critical reflection, and acknowledgment, of where they

really stand in the crass scheme of things? Americans seem imagined as hidebound, confounded, middle-income suburbanites voting assiduously against their own interests for ideological reasons, à la Thomas Frank's thesis in *What's the Matter with Kansas: How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (2004). They exist. No one exposed the grisly core of the self-improving "moral monsters" that the market system breeds as deftly as did Garry Wills in *Nixon Agonistes: The Crisis of the Self-Made Man* (1969, 159). Nonetheless, for decades, polling data (see, for example, Thomas Ferguson and Joel Rogers, who debunk Reagan's policy popularity in their book, *Right Turn: The Decline of the Democrats and the Future of American Politics* [1988]), find majorities of Americans going from 60% upwards supporting single-payer health care, industrial regulation, environmental protection, and a cautious foreign policy (usually derided by irritated policy makers as "isolationist").

In February 2003, in the midst of an intimidating pro-war blitz of government and mass media propaganda, two of three Americans (Gallup News Service, February 17-18, 2003) still wanted the truculent George W. Bush to obtain a second UN resolution before green lighting an invasion of Iraq. This item is worth highlighting: two out of three Americans did not trust their own president to make the decision to go to war. Average Americans (which I define as anyone who can't afford a lobbyist) consistently want one thing and elites want the opposite, and increasingly it appears as though elites get everything they want. How is this contemporary state of affairs "exceptional," with respect to the reviled European tradition of despotism in its many historical guises?

The right comprises a potent minority, if only because it is easy to believe, as Mark Twain and Upton Sinclair observed, anything your paycheck depends on you believing. Yet the conceit of exceptionalism is a deceit that many, if not probably most, Americans recognize as such. They want the egalitarian aspects of the exceptionalist vision restored. In that vein, Michael Moore's *Dude, Where's My Country?* is a symptomatic book title. (Walt Whitman's "Songs for the Open Road" offered a competing vision of freedom untethered from property that many a rebel embraced.) The objective then is to prod errant authorities back into conformity with the belief system they instilled in the citizenry. This is the odd

bequest that the exceptionalist myth allows. Elites do not believe in the liberal values that flow from the ideology, but the public does. It would help in assessing the contemporary plight if we descend from what Americans believe to what classes and status groups believe. In 21<sup>st</sup> century America, the fix indeed is in. I'm not sure psychoanalysis has much to say about what Americans are going to do about it. Yet psychoanalysis surely can help us comprehend why so many (but not a majority of) Americans respond to grave crisis with utter, and self-defeating, irrationality.

*Kurt Jacobsen, PhD, is a research associate in the Political Science Department at the University of Chicago, where he also earned his doctoral degree. He has published articles and reviews in Psychoanalytic Review, Free Associations, History of Psychiatry and Psychoanalytic Studies. His latest books include a 2011 paperback edition of Freud's Foes: Psychoanalysis, Science and Resistance (2009) and the forthcoming co-authored Parables of Permanent War (Lexington Books). Dr. Jacobsen can be reached at [jkjacobs@uchicago.edu](mailto:jkjacobs@uchicago.edu).*

<><><>CP<><><>

## **American Exceptionalism Is Not Benign**

**David Lotto**—Psychohistory Forum Research Associate

I welcome the opportunity to respond to these two papers on a topic which I feel is immensely important for understanding many recent events in which the United States has played a major role, as well as the future course of international relations. America is indeed exceptional in a number of ways. The most salient is that we have significantly more military power than any other country, and a lack of inhibition about using it. In today's world our actions carry more weight than those of any other nation.

Frank Summers has written an excellent, concise account of the problems with American exceptionalism. In particular, he points out its roots and long history—that it goes back to colonial times and that its military and imperial aspects have grown stronger over our three hundred year history. Dr. Summers cites the large

number of military and political interventions this country has made directly or indirectly throughout the world since WWII and the fact that, at the present time, we have more than 750 military facilities in 159 countries. The manifestations of American exceptionalism are everywhere. Dr. Summers also pointed out two other crucial aspects of our exceptionalist identity: as de Tocqueville observed, there is no room for failure; and not unrelated, the appearance of anything that could be characterized as “weakness” is forbidden.

Both articles mention one of the most egregious aspects of American exceptionalism, namely, the profound hypocrisy in the United States’ stance with regard to international treaties and agreements such as the Kyoto protocol, the treaty banning land mines, and the jurisdiction of the World Court. The United States refuses to be bound by them while simultaneously expecting other countries to adhere to them. There is also the hypocrisy involved in objecting to other countries acquiring nuclear weapons while feeling that there is nothing wrong with granting ourselves the right to have, threaten with, and actually use nuclear weapons.

Both papers compare the problematic aspects of American exceptionalism to the narcissistic psychopathology of an individual. I think this analogy is quite useful and that the character traits of individuals with narcissistic personality disorder have much in common with the behavior and psychology of the nation when operating under the thrall of its exceptionalist identity. However, I think the analogy breaks down when it comes to talking about change. Summers refers to the self-psychological treatment of people with narcissistic pathology which has been known to result in the individual giving up, or at least diminishing, excessive narcissism. The problem is that when it comes to countries like the United States, there’s no one on the current scene to take the part of the empathic therapist. There were many who felt that Obama had the potential to be such a “transformative” leader, but these hopes have been largely extinguished.

Paul Elovitz’ paper speaks to one of the “resistances” to this country giving up or modifying its exceptionalist identity. In addition to having an overdeveloped military, America is exceptional in comparison to most other nations in that it has an abundance of

natural resources, protection from external enemies by two huge ocean buffers, and has had technological and military superiority over the native people and neighboring countries in the Western Hemisphere. When reality is such that it gives support to a fantasy or even a delusion, it becomes hard to dislodge the fantasy's grip.

It is acceptable discourse in some mainstream political circles in this country to be straightforward and shameless about saying that the United States should not submit to any international authority because that would constitute an unacceptable infringement on our sovereignty. At the same time, their position is that we have the right, in fact, a duty, to not allow others to engage in a variety of activities we deem unacceptable—like having a communist government, acquiring nuclear weapons, or treating some of the people in their country too harshly, as in Libya.

If we look at American exceptionalism from a psychoanalytic or psychohistorical perspective, it is hard not to see the operation of a good deal of splitting. We have a set of positive ego ideals and an identity as a good people who hold to and try to live by the alleged American political and moral virtues of democratic governance and individual liberty, along with the benign wish to encourage others to adopt these values. Simultaneously, we have the darker aspect of American exceptionalism—the grandiosity, entitlement, arrogance, and need to never be weak or anything other than victorious.

Whenever we see a rhetorical presentation of the more positive and idealistic side of the split, we should be on the lookout for the other side, the side which is being disavowed or denied. Beware of Greeks, or Americans, bearing gifts.

Finally, I will share some of my thoughts on the sentence in Elovitz's article: "All nations view themselves as exceptional," with its implication that there are relatively harmless forms of exceptionalism. Seemingly acceptable expressions of exceptionalism such as national pride, a love of one's country, and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the nation, may not in actuality be so benign. For example, consider the chanting of "USA! USA!" in celebration of United States' victories in athletic competition at the Olympics, making a great show of honoring those who serve in our

armed forces, and 4<sup>th</sup> of July parades filled with displays of military symbols and weapons. When presented publicly in view of the rest of the world, this has the potential for generating shame, humiliation, and narcissistic injury in others. We are essentially gloating, proclaiming that we are better athletes and are militarily stronger than you. It is the stance of the bully. These kinds of displays increase the likelihood that others may seek to avenge their narcissistic injuries by doing harm to us.

*David Lotto, PhD, is a psychoanalyst and psychologist in private practice in Western Massachusetts, a prolific psychohistorian, and a Research Associate of the Psychohistory Forum. He may be contacted at [dlotto@nycap.rr.com](mailto:dlotto@nycap.rr.com).*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **A Cover for Imperialism?**

**Jamshid A. Marvasti**—Manchester Memorial Hospital

The term “exceptionalism” is used at times by the U.S. Government as a cover-up for imperialist intentions, wherein the negative association of imperialism is sugarcoated and presented in a way that makes it acceptable. This type of language distortion is not uncommon: torture of detainees is labeled “enhanced interrogation” and killing of innocent civilians is called “collateral damage.” Also, I wonder if one is capable of objectively judging American exceptionalism/imperialism from the inside, specifically if one was raised in the United States. Consciously or unconsciously, many of us feel hurt when someone, particularly a non-citizen, criticizes the U.S. Are we all psychologically captive of our subjectivity and the concept of “us versus them”?

John Winthrop borrowed from Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount when he predicted that the new Massachusetts Bay Colony would be a “city upon a hill,” an example for the world. Moreover, it was part of a divine plan—a plan that ultimately led early settlers to embark on a mission of genocide, and, I argue, paved the way for Manifest Destiny, slavery, lynching, colonization, military invasions, “regime change,” torture, and war crimes.

True, there was a time when America was a shining city upon a hill. When ordinary citizens were masters of their fate and captains of their souls, and Lincoln beseeched us to act "With malice toward none, with charity toward all." A time when Lincoln described a government "of the people, by the people, for the people." However, let us look to our more recent past. Our leaders' alleged love for democracy (in other countries) is not matched by their actions: we were responsible for the 1953 overthrow of the democratically elected government of nationalist Mohammad Mosadegh in Iran and its replacement with the Shah's dictatorship. We likewise were involved with the 1954 overthrow of democratically elected Guatemalan President Árbenz, and in 1973 elected Chilean President Allende was assassinated and replaced by our choice, General Pinochet, an infamous torturer. In each of these cases, the U.S. government disguised its actions by justifying that it was a source of salvation for the world. International laws dictate that one country cannot interfere with the internal affairs of another; however, the U.S. acts as if it is exempt from these rules and uses this exceptionalism to justify imperialist behavior.

Every dominating government which sought to control the world has justified its behavior on the basis of exceptionalism, narcissism, grandiosity, and a belief that they were special. The claim of one's own nation as the source of salvation for the rest of the world was used by the Persian, Roman, Ottoman, and British empires with equal conviction. The United States is no stranger to such practices. From the Louisiana Purchase to the annexation of the Philippines, U.S. leaders have used exceptionalism as grounds for dominating other lands for our own self-interest and capitalist gains.

The element of domination in humans/animals may be an instinct. For example, within chimpanzee communities, one alpha male is dominant over all others, male and female. He attains his high-ranking position through displays of dominance: intimidation, strength, aggression, and intelligence. A psychoanalyst once told me that one way chimpanzees decide which male is the boss is by comparing the sizes of their penises. The chimp with the biggest penis will be dominant. In our present political condition, the size of the gun's barrel may be the determinant.



If it is human nature to compete, dominate, and control the environment, then it is civilization (and religion) that tries to modify this instinct and create empathy and a sense of fairness (socialism) toward others. However, here the U.S. is sending a mixed message, as we glorify capitalism and make heroes of billionaires who display pathological and insatiable greed (recall Ivan Boesky's infamous statement, "Greed is healthy"). Simultaneously, aspects of Freud's theory of a "primal hoard" are evoked. Freud suggested that when the "primal male" monopolized the women of the tribe, eventually the deprived sons united to destroy him. If the world's population were reduced to a 100-member tribe, with its current ethnic and economic ratios remaining in proportion, six tribe members (6% of the population) would control 59% of the wealth, and those 6 people would be Americans ([www.snopes.com/science/stats/populate.asp](http://www.snopes.com/science/stats/populate.asp)). Following the primal hoard theory, one must wonder how long it will be before other tribe members unite in protest. The modern dominating tribe utilizes the concepts of patriotism, nationalism, and the psychological dichotomy of "us versus them" to create perceived enemies. Bernard Shaw said, "Patriotism is your conviction that this country is superior to all other countries because you were born in it." This reminds me of a child who asks his mother why she thinks that he is the smartest kid in the neighborhood, to which she answers, "Because you are my son."

If history is a testament, any dominating tribe that uses exceptionalism/imperialism as a basis to try to control/exploit the world will deteriorate, not only from outside forces but from inside as well. Greed, narcissism, and grandiosity create wealth; paranoia and military aggression are needed to protect it and suppress any protesters. The world is divided into "oppressed" and "oppressor." The flag of exceptionalism/patriotism/nationalism is not large enough to cover up the atrocities that result from oppression.

Eventually, greed, narcissism, and grandiosity will divide the tribe from within. As Mark Twain said, "America cannot have an empire abroad and a republic at home." De Tocqueville, who first used the term "exceptional" to describe a uniquely American ideology, also stated that "any government reduced to meeting its enemies only on the battlefield would soon fail." When a tribe is

brutal to outsiders, eventually this brutality will be transferred to its homeland. Every city will be divided into a poor side and a rich side, and ghettoization will become a fact. Government policy causes the rich to get richer and the poor to get poorer. Ten elite tribesmen can buy half of the country, while ten thousand of the poor do not have enough to feed their children. Perhaps Lincoln's famous description of government would be more accurate if changed to "of the elite, by the elite, for the elite."

Before telling other nations to imitate us, let us look candidly at our society. We are the richest country, and yet many of our children go to bed hungry. Some of my elderly patients have to choose between buying medication and buying food. The U.S. is the only country which used the atomic bomb on innocent civilians, and afterwards justified it. American officials learn geography when they invade a foreign country, but never learn history and its tendency to repeat itself. Until this changes, we will always risk another Vietnam and another Mai Lai. The U.S. is proud of its progress in science and technology, but how can we call it progress when in every war we kill the "others" with a new high-tech weapon? "Progress" in killing is the regression to a savage state. It is a case of "guided missiles and misguided leaders." We forget the Iranian prophet Zarathustra who, thousands of years ago, said, "When I go to fight the darkness, I carry a torch, not a sword."

Can we truly call ourselves the "shining city upon a hill"? Religious freedom was the very basis of our country, and yet in Florida a religious leader publicly burned the holy book of another religion. In comparison with other industrialized nations, we are one of the most aggressive countries when considering the number of wars outside and murders inside. Child homicide rates in the U.S. have quadrupled since the 1980s. A child is 20 times more likely to be murdered in the U.S. than in France or Germany, and 70 times more likely to be murdered in Dallas than in Tokyo.

Much of the time, our American exceptionalism appears to be nothing more than a cover for imperialism. I do not believe that any government has the right to violate international law on the basis of exceptionalism. No amount of exceptionalism can justify a government that invades other lands, changes regimes, or creates hundreds of global military bases in order to protect its puppet re-

gimes. With wide gaps between our humanitarian ideals and imperialistic realities, can we really believe the words of Presidents Kennedy (“We are a model to others”) or Reagan (“We shall be a shining city upon a hill”)? Can we endorse the statement of George W. Bush, who said, “Our nation is chosen by God, and commissioned by history, to be a model to the world”? We have the option to put aside imperialism and be a model of peace and cooperation with the world, or continue to emulate the Roman Empire and deteriorate. The choice is ours.

*Jamshid A. Marvasti, MD, is a child and adult psychiatrist practicing at Manchester Memorial Hospital, in Manchester, Connecticut. He is an Instructor in Psychiatry at the University of Connecticut School of Medicine and has authored/edited several books and articles. Dr. Marvasti can be contacted at jmarvasti@aol.com.*

◊◊◊◊CP◊◊◊◊

## **Delusion in Foreign Policy**

**Wallace Katz—SUNY- Stony Brook**

We Americans have always believed that our country is exceptional, and at certain times in our history, this was true. Certainly, our founding was exceptional because our first politicians were figures of the Enlightenment and belonged to what one might describe as the *avant garde* of their time: Jefferson, Adams, Hamilton, and Madison were formidable political philosophers as well as politicians; Franklin was a *savant*, the inventor of bifocals and the lightning rod, and was as celebrated in England and France as in the thirteen colonies. Washington was more kingly and nobler in behavior than any monarch. All throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Americans marveled at the opportunities provided by a continental nation where the frontier enabled second chances and social mobility. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the industrial might of America awed the world; no country in history had ever come close to the wealth achieved by the United States. By mid-century, as a result of the reforms of the New Deal, we could also boast that riches and social justice were relatively compatible, meaning that democracy and

capitalism were not necessarily contradictory.

It was during and after the Second World War that our exceptionalism became delusional. In February 1941, Henry Luce, publisher of *Time*, *Life*, and *Fortune*, wrote an editorial in which he decried the isolationist sentiments of many Americans while arguing that in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, our economic dominance and our democratic values required that we play the leading role in the creation of a stable global order. Luce did not speak about imperialism, nor did he really envisage an American Empire. Rather, he was saying that we had been thrust, by our great power and by imminent war, into a position where we should use our economic and political preeminence to create and maintain an ordered and peaceful world. Put simply, he was saying “If not us, then who?”

After the war, the United States was left standing in splendid isolation in an otherwise devastated world. In the 20 years that followed, we were the greatest power on the earth principally by default; we had no competitors because the war had wrought havoc on all the nations of Europe and Asia that might conceivably challenge us. This was, however, a unique situation that would only last for two decades, by which time—the mid-1960s and the early 1970s—other nations, many with our assistance, had regained their footing and were ready to meet us on a more or less level playing ground. West Germany and Japan, in particular, threatened our economic superiority; they produced better products than we did, and unlike us, their economies were based on exports rather than mass consumption. In the 1970s, economic growth slowed because many industrial nations were in competition with each other.

America lost both respect and power because of our hapless interventions in Vietnam and Iraq that had nothing to do with core national interests and everything to do with our triumphal belief in American exceptionalism. Because we were a great liberal democracy and a unique and providential nation, we were by definition incapable of imperialism. Thus our interventions could always be justified and were often considered “necessary” inasmuch as we were fighting to keep the globe free, or intervening in the affairs of other nations only in order to assure peace and stability. Gore Vidal, not without reason, described our postwar foreign policy as “permanent war for permanent peace.”

There were two moments in the postwar era when exceptionalist delusion happily failed to dominate our foreign policy. As an old-fashioned “congenital” liberal Democrat, it embarrasses me somewhat to say that the two presidents who understood the limitations of American power were both Republicans: Dwight Eisenhower and George H.W. Bush (“Bush 41”). Eisenhower was a military man and knew what the ravages of war could mean. Behind his persona of bumble and Midwestern joviality, he was an astute politician and leader who stayed away from adventures overseas (he refused to help the French in Indochina and he scolded the British and French for their invasion of the Suez Canal). It was he who warned us about “the military-industrial complex.” In the 1950s, Eisenhower created an America that was truly peaceful and prosperous, an America that his Democratic successors, making war in Vietnam, destroyed. Later, at the end of the 1980s and early 1990s, George H.W. Bush exploited the opportunity offered by the Eastern European “velvet revolutions” and the collapse of the Soviet Union to chart a foreign policy that specifically emphasized the limitations to American might, while recognizing that our leadership consisted in working in concert with other nations to achieve super-national goals. Bush and his military advisor, Colin Powell, wanted to avoid the “mission creep” of Vietnam, the kind of intervention that began with a few advisors and wound up with an occupation army of 500,000 soldiers, 60,000 of whom lost their lives. Bush and Powell also believed that our resources were not equal to unilateral global responsibility. Unlike his son, the father understood that budgets could only be balanced by raising taxes, and that once in a war, as Powell later said, “You had to own it.”

In his speech announcing the invasion of Iraq, George W. Bush spoke with ardor and conviction about the “fact” that, from his perspective, the United States was “a providential nation.” To be sure, we invaded Iraq because Saddam Hussein supposedly had “weapons of mass destruction.” Some experts on the subject of Iraq argue that Bush and Cheney believed that Saddam was an authentic threat and that he meant to use biological warfare or other means to perpetuate the terrorism we had suffered from on 9/11. Other experts argue that the weapons of mass destruction were a phony justification for a war meant to create in Iraq a so-called

“democratic base” for American control of the Middle East, thereby protecting our ally Israel and creating a shield against our enemy Iran, not to mention desiderata like Iraqi petroleum.

I agree with the latter view, but here my point is that whatever the immediate motives for our intervention in Iraq, the larger ideological or quasi-religious perspective that conditioned this decision was Bush's and Cheney's delusory faith in American exceptionalism. Realism in foreign policy is consistent with two things important to any successful politics: 1) that leaders understand that great power entails equally great responsibility, and 2) that all decisions be based on a prudential calculus that carefully weighs ends and means and correlates practice with principle (and vice-versa). Bush and Cheney took us to war because of ideology, and in this case, their ideology was not even principally neo-conservatism, but rather American exceptionalism. To underscore this point, it is also useful to note that liberal humanitarians who opposed the war in Iraq nonetheless wholeheartedly accepted the ideology of American exceptionalism; indeed, one strain of public opinion that helped Bush and Cheney justify the war derived from liberal humanitarianism.

What I have said above provides a frame to interpret our current situation. I will not take a position, but only ask that readers ponder what American exceptionalism may have to do with the policies of Barack Obama. He has failed to live up to campaign promises: Gitmo (the Guantánamo Bay prison is not closed); even after withdrawal of the troops involved with the “surge,” we will have 50,000 soldiers stationed in Iraq; the war in Afghanistan is described as a “necessary” war and we go on fighting it in spite of the fact that General Petraeus' counter-insurgency strategy is a hopeless failure; and now we have intervened in Libya, where we may not be able to avoid “mission creep.” Is Obama trapped in a policy framework that makes transformation extremely difficult and slow going, or does he, too, pursue these wars because he thinks that the United States is an exceptional nation?

*Wallace Katz is currently Associate Editor of Globality Studies Journal and both a Visiting Scholar and Fellow of the Center for Global and Local History at SUNY-Stony Brook. He has taught history, humanities, and sociology at CUNY, Wesleyan Uni-*

*versity, and the University of the South, and worked in Washington, D.C. for 20 years, mostly in the sphere of urban policy. He may be contacted at wallace.katz973@gmail.com.*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **My Return to Vietnam**

**John Hellman—McGill University**

Americans will not meet hostility if they visit Communist Vietnam 35 years after what the Vietnamese call “the American War,” since as much as 75% of that country’s population has been born since that desperate U.S. helicopter fled from the roof of the U.S. embassy in Saigon. The Ho Chi Minh (formerly Saigon) city population has grown from two to more than six million since 1975, and so few have memories of American aircraft spraying the defoliant Agent Orange in the countryside, of the high altitude B-52 bombardments, or of the dramatic moment on April 30, 1975, when Soviet-made tanks crashed through the high iron gates of the presidential palace compound. The new generation of Vietnamese are more interested in what young Americans are wearing, driving, or doing in 2011 than what an earlier American generation did to a brutalized country four decades ago.

Bill Clinton’s famous visit in 2000 was a graphic display of “American exceptionalism,” as the attractive leader of “the world’s last super-power” summoned the Vietnamese to forget that past when “both of our peoples suffered” and—with the painful allegations of MIA (missing in action) Americans in hidden prisons apparently resolved—to welcome the irresistible new global economy which would bring countries closer together. The “new guard” of the Vietnamese Communist Party, hungry for capital investment to revitalize their country’s stagnant economy, led the positive response to the American’s overtures.

Americans still see themselves as a “city on a hill” chosen to play an uplifting role in the lives of other nations and peoples, who if given the freedom and opportunity will inevitably become

more and more "American." Thus, the 58,000 Americans dead in the Vietnamese war have a special status over those 1,900,000 "ordinary" Vietnamese killed during the "American War." Clinton visited a former battlefield where Vietnamese workers, joined by a few Americans, were searching for American relics (bones) as the wealthier of the combatants had far greater resources, and so could afford far greater efforts, to retrieve their dead than the other. Clinton's visit was slightly soured when an "old guard" Communist broke protocol (annoying his comrades) by bluntly referring to the dark days of "American imperialism." The Americans, of course, responded that they had never been "imperialists" (as opposed to the French or the British) and their soldiers had given their lives for the freedom of the people of Vietnam. So, it was both unfair and impolite to compare the Americans' humiliating flight from Saigon in 1975 to the surrounded French at Dien Bien Phu in 1954.

For the Vietnamese, 1945 to 1975 included the two major phases in their struggle against colonialism and imperialism: "the French War" (1945-1954) and then the "American War" (c. 1964-1975). But in the American perspective, while those colorful Legionnaires who made a last-ditch effort to defend the French Colonial Empire may have been colonialists and imperialists, the same could not be said of those draftees from Arkansas or the Bronx whose relics were being sifted from that damp, unfriendly Vietnamese soil.

Americans in Obama's term bridle at being considered colonialists or racists but are fixed on rescuing the remains of "their own" while remaining indifferent to those of the Vietnamese populace. When General William Westmoreland famously said that "human lives mean less to Orientals than to us," he ignored the fact that the death of one's immediate family members still plays a much larger role for the Vietnamese than for Americans. The Vietnamese maintain shrines and work for generations in the sight of their family's vaulted tombs, which overlook their family's fields. Dead family members are thought to be unable to rest in peace until their remains are brought back to the family tombs, while the remains of Catholics who fought for President Diem, or even for the French at Dien Bien Phu (where approximately 30% of the "French" forces were Vietnamese), can lay alongside those who



were with the Viet Minh or Viet Cong. Because the quarrels of this life are forgotten in the realm of the dead, one can work for the American relic hunters with equanimity. Despite the anger of former insurgents who suffered terribly, the war crimes of the French and Americans figure less prominently in the collective memory of the Vietnamese than expected.

Thus, the American exceptionalism described by Professors Summers and Elovitz in this issue is illustrated by the fate of those masses of the Vietnamese killed or maimed by the American shells, bombs, or chemicals. The slaughter of the Mai Lai village men, women, and children by Lieutenant William Calley and his men is remembered (like the tortures in the Abu Ghraib decades later) as an unfortunate example of good soldiers “losing it” in extremely stressful circumstances, being charged with war crimes, and later regretting following the orders of their superior officers (and receiving a presidential pardon from Richard Nixon). Calley claimed he was acting in a context where American commanders discouraged excessive concern over the summary shootings of untrustworthy “Viets” of all ages and sexes, Robert McNamara acquiesced in the high-altitude B-52 bombings of North Vietnam, and General Curtis Lemay had threatened to bomb Hanoi “back to the stone age” if they didn’t “pull in their horns.”

In the last presidential campaign, John McCain memorably spoke of his experience as “the famous Admiral’s son” in the Hoa Lo prison in downtown Hanoi. To the chagrin of the elderly in Hanoi, the Senator changed his account of being pulled unconscious from Truc Bach Lake near downtown Hanoi when his plane was, according to the Vietnamese, one of 10 shot down that day. This time he recalled only one “exceptional” Vietnamese among the cruel Communists—the jailor who secretly showed him kindness and revealed himself to be a Christian. McCain did not seem to be overly concerned about the civilians hurt by his bombs any more than the commander of all the American forces in Vietnam, Admiral McCain, was for his incarcerated son and namesake. Is a general American culture of narcissism, is an American narcissistic “sense of self,” responsible for this callousness, as Frank Summers and Paul Elovitz interestingly suggest?

During my recent travels in Vietnam, meeting remarkable

people of all generations (though mostly under 35), regions, and social classes, I kept thinking about Harvard in the 1960s and how remote the Bundys, Kissingers, Schlesingers, and Kennedys had been from interest in, much less contact with, "ordinary" Vietnamese people. The best and brightest were (and are) narcissistic, but they also believe that they have a "sense of self" that is generically different from and more advanced than that of their fellow humans in most of the rest of the world. Some of them believe, as did their Puritan ancestors, that this is part of God's plan.

If those benighted, unreflecting Third World people—particularly those incomprehensible Asians—suffered and died, it was obviously without the level of consciousness, and so of much less consequence, than the sufferings and deaths of "our own." Americans, and their closest allies, are "chosen people" because of their distinctive "senses of self," worked out over the centuries by attentively reading the Bible, Augustine, Luther, Locke, Jefferson, and Freud, and, most recently, discovering rock music, abstract art, e-mail, Google, and Facebook. Americans are thus very different from those "faceless hordes" engendered by the totalitarian Communist regimes whose citizens were, as one of my colleagues put it, "stamped out like cookies on a conveyor belt by the Communists." This obtuse tunnel-vision allowed Americans to move from being "hip deep in the big muddy" of bloodied Vietnam, to burying alive thousands of young Iraqi conscripts in their trenches with giant bulldozers during that "clean war" called Desert Storm. Yet Americans still seem puzzled by the apparent ingratitude of the victims of America's well-intentioned efforts to set their countries aright.

Should we, like the authors, be pessimistic about the future? Young Americans today seem much more interested in the lives of other peoples than the generations that spent their down time in a Final Club, playing touch football on the lawn at Hyannisport or hunting in the Texas thickets. They are globally linked on the Web and travel much more than in previous generations. While interest in the war crimes committed by German soldiers in France during World War II, for example, remains much higher than those committed—on a much larger scale—by the Americans in Vietnam, this will change. As American economic and political leadership in

the world is challenged, Americans will be obliged to develop more interest in the lives, values, and historical experiences of other peoples. More and more Americans have, like Barack Obama, in different families, places, and contexts, experienced multiple identities. This will make Americans less prone to see themselves as exceptional human beings living in an exceptionally virtuous and blameless country.

*John Hellman, PhD, Professor of History at McGill University, received his PhD from Harvard University in the 1960s and specializes in European Intellectual and Modern French History. He is author of The Communitarian Third Way: Alexandre Marc's Ordre Nouveau, 1930-2000 (2002) and The Knight-Monks of Vichy France: Uriage, 1940-1945 (1993). Dr. Hellman can be reached at [jhellm@gmail.com](mailto:jhellm@gmail.com).*

◊◊◊◊CP◊◊◊◊

## **A Self-Defeating Idea**

**Michael Aaron Rockland**—Rutgers University

The notion that the United States is a special country, unlike other countries, is deeply ingrained in the American psyche. This was true from our earliest history. The Puritans saw themselves as the contemporary Children of Israel and believed that Americans were the new “Chosen People” and America was “The Promised Land.” Later on in our history, Senator Albert Beveridge of Indiana, in celebrating the Spanish-American War of 1898, said that “God has marked us as his chosen people, henceforth to lead in the regeneration of the world” (<http://www.international.ucla.edu/eas/documents/phlpqust.htm>). Such ideas are still very much current in the United States. When George W. Bush was asked whether he had consulted his father, the former president, about the wisdom of the Iraq invasion, he replied, “No, I consulted my father in heaven.” A similar idea was expressed in 2009 by the former Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin when, commenting on the deep recession into which the United States had fallen, she said, “It would be wise for us to start seeking some divine interven-

tion again in this country so that we can be safe and secure and prosperous." (Note the word "again.")

While there may be a bit of good in America's notions of its specialness—it may account for the fabled American optimism—it also can lead to unwise political and military choices, while also hampering economic and social well-being. For if "America is God's country," as some Americans like to say, little may be required to improve our situation, since God will take care of it for us—a dangerous and self-defeating idea to say the least.

There is a great deal of malaise in the United States today. Part of it is due to a questioning of American exceptionalism in light of a damaged economy, the continuing threat of terrorism, and foreign wars in which few Americans believe. But if Americans are beginning to wonder whether they are really an exceptional people at all, this may augur well for the maturing of American civilization if one were to define maturity as a recognition of one's limitations. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. once wrote, "The choice before America is whether to elect messianism, imagining ourselves the world's messiah, or maturity" (*The Bitter Heritage*, 1967, 79). With maturity, the United States might have avoided the quagmire of Vietnam and the invasion of Iraq, perhaps the worst blunder in American diplomatic history.

Yet people like former House Speaker Newt Gingrich have been regularly attacking President Barack Obama for what they consider his rejection of exceptionalism, as if to do so is to somehow be both irreligious and unpatriotic. Whether Gingrich is correct about Obama or not, he is obviously confused between patriotism and nationalism. Patriotism is simply pride in one's country, an emotion salutary to both individuals and nations alike. Nationalism is the belief that one's nation is better than other nations and is intimately linked to exceptionalism.

The *New York Times* columnist Tom Friedman recently wrote that "Americans are now fighting over how 'exceptional' they are." But, he insisted, it would be better to "work to be exceptional" rather than to assume that we already are. He added, "You can't declare yourself exceptional, only others can say that about you" ("From WikiChina," *New York Times* [November 30, 2010], Section A, 33). When Americans accept that their nation's distinc-

tion and virtue is not a “given” but something constantly to be earned, we, and the world, will be much the better for it.

*Michael Aaron Rockland, PhD, is Professor of American Studies at Rutgers University. His early career was in the United States Diplomatic Service and he is the author of 13 books including the memoir, An American Diplomat in Franco Spain (2011). Dr. Rockland may be contacted at [rockland@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:rockland@rci.rutgers.edu).*

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## Worldwide Perspectives

### The Role of the Individual, the State, and Religion in the U.S. and France

**Charles G. Cogan**—Harvard University

It is often said that the United States and France represent two universalisms. Each of these two societies thinks that it has a message to deliver to the world, a message for the rest of the world to emulate. At the foundation of American civilization, in the formula of the late Professor Samuel P. Huntington, is an Anglo-Protestant culture, based on what he calls an American credo, which comprises five aspects: liberty, equality, individualism, representative government, and private property.

From its origins, the U.S. was the “city on the hill,” morally unsullied compared to the decadent societies of Europe; France was a “beacon” for the oppressed. Both welcomed immigrants, and France particularly welcomed political dissidents.

The U.S. and French messages are similar, and yet they are different. The differences in the two models relate to the role of the individual, the role of the state, and the role of religion, and it extends to the form of public institutions. The late historian François Furet probably summed up the French-American divide best when he wrote that U.S. civilization “is in reality too mixed in with the

Christian faith and too confident about the idea of free enterprise to attract all those who cannot think of the future of democracy except as separated from Christianity and from capitalism: the innumerable children of the French Revolution" (François Furet, *Le passé d'une illusion: Essai sur l'idée communiste du XXe siècle*, 1995, 440).

The U.S. and France, and of course Great Britain, are by tradition and history the three great democracies of the world. Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy; the U.S. and France are republics. France and the U.S., then, can be called the world's two "universal" republics (the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics having gone to dust in 1991). The idea of *nation* is closely associated with both French and American universalisms, in contrast to other universalist movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, notably Communism, which claimed with some degree of spuriousness to transcend the nation-state.

Modern France and the U.S. sprang out of revolutions in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, inspired by the European Enlightenment earlier in that century. The Enlightenment was semi-secular, in that it represented a repudiation of organized religion, though not a rejection of a deity. Thomas Jefferson and a number of other American revolutionaries were Deists, who believed that there was a higher power, a higher organizer, out there somewhere.

But other Americans, notably the Puritans of New England, were fierce, dissident Protestants. They rejected the pomp and liturgy of established churches, first and foremost of Roman Catholicism but also of Anglicanism. Some Enlightenment figures, particularly the so-called radicals of the Enlightenment, were shocked at the intolerance that some of them had found in Puritan New England.

Thus while these Enlightenment figures welcomed the American Revolution (which preceded by a little the French one) as a salutary event in world history, certain aspects of post-revolutionary society in America came under strong criticism: the pervasive religiosity and, more importantly, the continuation of the slave system and the brutal treatment of the Indians.

The two leading mottos of the American and French revolu-

tions are similar but also significantly different. In the U.S. it is “life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.” That is, all are entitled to lead a free life in the pursuit of happiness, but how they get there is up to them. The pursuit is that of an individual, not of a larger force.

The French motto, “*liberté, égalité, fraternité*,” goes farther. It appears to mandate a responsibility to equalize the lives of the citizens. This implies that an external force (a government) should step in to assure a fairer distribution of wealth than that which would be arrived at by the efforts of individuals themselves. However much this is observed in the breach, it remains a canon of French political culture.

In the model of American liberalism (in the European sense of the term “liberal”), society is a market where the individual lives for himself and his own happiness, and for that of those close to him, where the state intrudes as little as possible into civil society. This view, however, has never been to the liking of a majority of French. Individualism is “disguised egoism,” which leads to a two-fold deterioration, political and moral—political by a sort of anarchy and moral by hedonism. For the French, “fraternity” must triumph over “egoism.” The primacy of the law of the market should give way to what is vaguely described as European “humanism,” and which is based instead on ethical principles.

What, then, is the substitute for individualism? It is, of course, a strong, hierarchical state, in a tradition of centralization emanating from Paris that began under the *ancien régime* and was continued by the Jacobin revolutionary tradition.

But what is the philosophical underpinning of this anti-individualism, of this French “statism”? It is largely derived from Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s concept of the “general will” (*la volonté générale*). The general will is a perception of the common good of society as defined by enlightened legislators. This means that there is nothing above the sovereignty of the people as prescribed by legislators. In the French tradition, stemming from the concept of the general will, laws trump rights, which are at the heart of the American tradition as providing a bulwark against the encroachments of the state.

Article Four of the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of August 26, 1789, which is still in effect as the preamble to the French Constitution, states, "Liberty consists of being able to do anything that does not harm others: thus the exercise of the natural rights of each man has no limits other than that which assure other members of society the enjoyment of the same rights. These limits can be determined only by the law." The supremacy of laws over rights and the indivisibility of the general will have had a host of implications for France's political culture, notably that the state has to be unitary, not federal, and the law of the legislators has to be supreme.

In the unitary state, France is a democratic community of citizens, united around a common bond of principles and a common language. Particularism is discouraged in the face of unitary republican citizenship. One's race or ethnicity cannot be mentioned in official documents and multiculturalism is seen as an American disease.

In the U.S., the court says what the law is; in France, the legislators say what the law is. Though in recent years, France is drawing closer to a stronger judiciary, with the Constitutional Council able to rule on the constitutionality of laws, the case remains that in France, the executive and legislative branches of government are "powers," whereas the judiciary is considered only an "authority." To sum up, in the American system, rights are inalienable and are derived from the Constitution. In what Furet described as the legiscentrism of the French system, rights can be altered by laws. This is the French tradition.

French political culture is based on the loyalty of a group of like-minded citizens, regardless of background, who are held together by a strong state. In this it is the heir of the absolutism of the ancient French monarchy as well as the leveling tradition of the French Revolution (expressed in the notion of "Republican values"). The American tradition, also comprising a group of like-minded citizens, is focused on the rights and the freedom of the individual against the encroachments of the state. It is anti-absolutist in keeping with its origins in opposition to the arbitrary actions of the British Crown. In the U.S., the powers of the state are held back by a system of checks and balances within the government.



**Charles G. Cogan, DPA** (Doctor of Public Administration), is an Associate at the John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University. He spent 37 years in the CIA, ending up as CIA Chief in Paris. He received the degree of doctor of public administration at Harvard in June 1992. He is the author of *French Negotiating Behavior: Dealing with “La Grande Nation”* (United States Institute of Peace Press, 2003). Dr. Cogan can be contacted at [ccogan@wcfia.harvard.edu](mailto:ccogan@wcfia.harvard.edu).

◇◇◇◇CP◇◇◇◇

## **An Expatriate Takes Exception**

**Norman Simms**—Waikako University

I was born and bred in New York City and still hold on to my American passport after more than 45 years of living in foreign lands. My first inclination, therefore, always is to feel appalled at the waves of anti-Americanism one encounters not only in the press and among intellectual or academic colleagues, for whom opposition to everything the United States supposedly stands for comes as second nature, but also as a virtual reflex amongst many ordinary people who feel aggrieved at the way our government and business organizations seem to ride roughshod over local interests and cultural sensitivities. My second inclination, simply because I have lived well over half of my life outside my homeland and tend therefore to share many of the feelings of insult that American exceptionalism sometimes prompts around the world, is to look, if not in horror, then at least in dismay at many of the statements made by government officials in Washington, D.C., by American national television networks, and by various sports stars, popular entertainers, and supposedly ordinary people interviewed on television on different issues. I really do still continue to believe in the ideals of the Founding Fathers, the Constitution, and other manifestations of American idealism, such as equality of opportunity, representational democracy, social toleration, and division of legislative and civil powers. However, it distresses me to see how these wonderful abstractions play out in the real world—and often enough in the places I have called home for myself and my family.

Examples of anti-American exceptionalism, such as hesitating or rejecting submission to the jurisdiction of many world bodies and alliances, indicate that world courts, international humanitarian agencies, and so called peace and reconciliation groups are deeply tainted by values often quite contrary to freedom, democracy, justice, tolerance, and real peace. It is painful to watch how often these purportedly idealistic organizations seem to have no other goal than the destruction of United States interests, the backing of terrorist and fanatical movements, the suppression of women, the abuse of children, and the toleration of what is little less than outright slavery. From these NGOs and other associations comes an endless stream of anti-Zionist and anti-Semitic vituperation, an at best naive and at worst cynical misreading of globalization and international trade and finance, and a regressive and superstitious exaltation of victimhood and other versions of identity politics. Where others tend to see the U.S.A. as a Great Satan, a simplistic and coherent evil force in the world, I still see a complex, contradictory, and yet (more often than not) well-intentioned conglomerate of peoples. We are a population that is constantly changing, drawing in diverse immigrant groups, and so transforming itself generation by generation, even as regional cultures articulate themselves or as urban-rural differences become modified and transfigured. What makes America exceptional, in this way, and thus justified in resisting or talking about opting out of world bodies that cannot grasp this dynamic quality, is precisely its lack of coherence and continuity. Moreover, it is this lack of consistency that makes it impossible for me to accept the charges of those who see conspiracy and secret agendas. At worst, the U.S.A., both in its foreign relations and internal politics, tends to blunder about, stepping on many toes unintentionally, and losing focus in its obsessive inward turn on the private, personal, and individual "pursuit of happiness."

I also accept that other nations have their own reasons for exceptionalism, whether it is Israel's right to defend itself as a Jewish State, France's claim to cultural hegemony, and national pride in many areas of diplomacy. I recognize, in a similar way, that when it does not step over the boundary of confusing an opposition to official Washington policies or attempts by huge private American corporations to ignore national laws in areas of the world where

they operate into a hatred of the American people or what are stated to be American values, then this complaint against exceptionalism does not have much merit to it, whether I agree or not. But in a more private sense, while I tend to spend many hours every day reading and viewing (many more when crises occur) and I watch the news media from many countries around the world—over the Internet and through satellite television—I become rather depressed, and sometimes angry and frustrated by how silly, obtuse, and arrogant much of what is presented as American opinion can be. This seems to be as true for so-called liberal public news networks as for private rightwing, conservative, or “objective” channels. Of course, I try not to compare oranges and elephants, and would not expect a local news reporter in some middling city in the South or Northwest America to have the scope and depth proclaimed by a full-time news channel. But I can compare the larger, national (or “international”) networks from many countries with those emanating from the U.S.A. Silly questions, bad taste, and willful ignorance are no new things in the world, but what is new is their appearance on prime-time mainstream media. On French, British, German, Belgian, Dutch, Spanish, and other nations’ news programs, not only the news readers are articulate and trained to pronounce foreign names correctly, but their reporters in the field seem able to grasp complex situations, frame intelligent questions, and not get flustered in tough situations. Moreover, they do not, as on Fox “discussions” or “debates,” shriek over one another or put their interviewees or visitors down with rude remarks. Those on CNN and BBC can be snooty and biased towards the left-wing ideologies of their star reporters—sometimes to the point of outright anti-intellectualism and cultural bigotry, as well as near treasonous remarks about their own governments and leaders—but at least one can understand what they are saying. There was a time when American readers and reporters were trained and educated, trained to project their voices and educated in history, politics, economics, and other topics so they knew what they were seeking; now it is extremely rare.

But this, of course, is only about the sources of information, not how I evaluate them and contextualize them. Intellectually and epistemologically, my long absence from the United States means

virtually all I have learned formally and informally from books, through conversations, meditations, and reflections in ancient places, libraries, museums, art galleries, archaeological sites—all this places American exceptionalism in a rather tiny corner of experience and thought (an important corner, to be sure, but on the fringes, at the margins and away from the point of decision). Even my circle of friends, acquaintances, colleagues, and occasional interlocutors is small and grows smaller the older I get.

Yet when I do sit down with a few people of my acquaintance such as a former Iranian army officer who escaped the current regime after his father was murdered in prison, a Kurdish man from northern Iraq writing his doctoral dissertation, a young woman from Cambodia whose family escaped the Killing Fields, or a Jordanian Christian intensely resentful of the government and the Palestinian refugees in his land—what I find is that they do not hate Israel or America. In fact, they are grateful to the United States and wish it would do more to help them create democracy, show toleration for diverse religious and political views, and be less ambiguous or waffling in its pronouncements and actions, and admire what Israel has created and sympathize with all it has and continues to suffer. At the same time, they do not wish to be Americans or Israelis, wait for an end to their exile, and dream of fulfilling their dreams and aspirations as what they are: Persian, Kurdish, Cambodian, Jordanian. They can therefore appreciate the intentions of American exceptionalism, though only as a strategic move in a complex and hostile world. As an expatriate, I agree very much with them because I fear the globalized homogenization of cultures and economies that would—that already does—attenuate the idealism and naive enthusiasm that makes the United States unique in the world.

*Norman Simms, PhD, recently retired from the demands of academic teaching while continuing to write books and articles, to edit journals, and to attend scholarly seminars and conferences. His latest book, Alfred Dreyfus: Man, Milieu, Mentality and Midrash, will appear in November 2011 under the imprint of Academic Studies Press in Boston. Dr. Simms may be contacted at NSIMMS@waikato.ac.nz.*

## A Letter from Canada to My American Cousins

Donald Carveth—York University

March 20, 2011

Dear Cousins,

At the risk of coming on like a Canadian “wild analyst” you haven’t hired, I’m writing to you today to comment on papers by Elovitz and Summers, both of whom diagnose your culture and behaviour, especially your foreign policy, as symptomatic of pathological narcissism. We Canadians have our particular perspective on these matters, for we live just on the other side of “the city on the hill.” We suspect from your perspective this is the *wrong* side, for it looks as if most of you view us, if you are aware of us at all, as occupying a kind of “outback,” inhabiting “the back of beyond,” like poor rural cousins full of awe and envy in the face of the wealth, power, glamour, glitz, and shopping opportunities enjoyed by our larger-than-life, “hip” cousins to the south.

Despite certain advantages we enjoy (definition of a Canadian: an unarmed person with a health plan), we have tended to suffer from something of a national inferiority complex. This is rather understandable when, to use the words of our most famous (and uncharacteristically sexy) prime minister, Pierre Trudeau: “Living next to you is in some ways like sleeping with an elephant. No matter how friendly and even-tempered is the beast, if I can call it that, one is affected by every twitch and grunt.” As Elovitz and Summers both point out, you have a lot of twitches and grunts, for you are a narcissistic beast and narcissists don’t generally sleep easy, and neither do we who have to sleep beside you. Narcissists are controlling and we have had to struggle hard to hang on to whatever degree of autonomy we still retain. Narcissists are touchy and self-righteous, so we have to be awfully careful about what we say to you and how we say it, especially if it is at all critical. A lot of us are still surprised and gratified that when you invited us to come along with you to Iraq, we managed to decline and got away without paying too high a price in retaliation (except for the manu-

facturers of redwood lumber in British Columbia, who definitely felt the pain).

But the contributions of Elovitz and Summers put what we have considered our national inferiority complex in a somewhat different light. While Elovitz emphasizes the narcissist's need for boundaries and a sense of limits, and Summers stresses the narcissist's need for empathic attunement and containment enabling relinquishment of grandiosity in favor of more creative, stable, and positive means of achieving self-esteem, the Kleinians have stressed the role of destructive envy in narcissistic pathology, a painful and humiliating emotional state often warded off through *invidious* behavior. *Merriam-Webster* defines the latter as action "tending to cause discontent, animosity, or envy." The grandiose narcissist gets rid of his shameful envy by invidiously inducing it in others through defensive grandiosity—arrogant boasting and brash and bombastic displays of his power, wealth, and celebrity. In this light, our Canadian inferiority complex might be seen as resulting, at least to some degree, from the emotional induction or projective identification of your underlying, warded-off feelings of weakness and inadequacy onto us. Whatever other reasons we may have for feeling this way, it is well known that those who live with grandiose narcissists generally wind up feeling inadequate and often depressed, for they are induced to carry the feelings of weakness and deflation that the defensively inflated narcissist refuses to contain.

None of this is to deny the reality of Canadians' widespread anti-Americanism, or our own not-so-subtle compensatory feelings of moral superiority. While some of this is surely justified by your arrogance and bullying, some of it surely flows from our envy of you. But not all of our envy arises simply in the face of your "greatness" (as you may be inclined to think). It also stems from *your* envy, the envy underlying your grandiosity and grounded in the very feelings of inadequacy that you project into us and that we, good neighbours that we are, have done our best to contain and carry for you (rather like the depressed wives of narcissistic husbands).

We didn't have your revolution. A lot us rather liked the Brits and decided to move up here to stick with them. We didn't act out our adolescent rebellion by dramatically breaking off rela-

tions with Dad. We had the opportunity for a more gradual growing up. We still haven't broken our tie with the folks, but they now reside in a kind of retirement community back home while we manage things over here on our own. We sometimes wonder whether, if you had had a chance to mature more gradually without having to violently reject our parents' authority altogether, you might have been able to gradually modify your superego and might thereby have avoided the chronic phallic narcissism (and gun-slinging) of the entitled perpetual adolescent you sometimes appear to us to be. While many of us have reacted critically to this, others, unfortunately including our current political leadership, have started to ape your worst traits and attitudes.

Before signing off, let me acknowledge that there is more than one of "you": there is the phallic narcissist, to be sure; but a society cannot be so easily subsumed in one diagnostic category which even individual personalities generally transcend. Let me also make another admission: whatever its disadvantages, life with a grandiose big brother has its advantages as well; your fondness for weapons and violence has enabled us to count on your protection and to spend our hard-earned tax dollars on socialized medicine instead of the military. For this and many other things we are forever grateful.

*Donald Carveth, PhD, is Professor of Sociology and Social & Political Thought, York University; Training & Supervising Analyst in the Canadian Institute of Psychoanalysis; Director, Toronto Institute of Psychoanalysis; past Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Journal of Psychoanalysis/Revue Canadienne de Psychanalyse. He may be contacted at [dcarveth@yorku.ca](mailto:dcarveth@yorku.ca) and many of his publications are available on his website: <http://www.yorku.ca/dcarveth>.*

We welcome suggestions for special issues and symposia

Some prior suggestions are:

- The love, fear, and anthropomorphism of animals
- Comparisons of different approaches to psychohistory
- The advantages and limits of psychoanalytic and other theories
- The acceptance of psychoanalysis as a type of conversion experience
- How to bring psychoanalytic and psychohistorical knowledge to the public

Join us in turning ideas into realities

## **Symposium Authors Reply**

### **American Narcissism: A Much Needed Discourse**

**Frank Summers**—Northwestern University

The richness and variety of responses to the two papers suggests considerable interest in the issue, a development that can have only a salutary impact. While most of the commentators agree with my and Dr. Elovitz' contention that American exceptionalism has had destructive consequences, many respondents accentuated fresh aspects of the issue. Dr. Petschauer brought out our failure to learn from experience and, quite properly in my view, draws a parallel between our obliviousness to the results of environmental destruction and the fall of the Roman Empire. While Dr. Beers' emphasis is on the political utility of the myth of American exceptionalism, an even harsher response comes from Dr. Marvasti, who contends that American exceptionalism is a cover for naked imperialistic greed. In this context, I can only express the hope that such positions will launch a fruitful discussion about the relationship between American exceptionalism, greed, and imperialism.

Other respondents, such as Dr. Turken, are quick to add that American narcissism is not only pathological, but has also had positive effects, such as in establishing the League of Nations and raising the living standards of poor nations. I question this view not because I doubt that the United States has implemented some healthy policies, but because I do not believe those salutary interventions emanated from a position of exceptionalism. We do not help out poor nations because we think we are exceptional, but because we are a powerful nation that can aid less fortunate countries while benefiting ourselves in the long run.

I now turn to a brief consideration of the primary critiques of my paper set forth in this symposium. Dr. Langer opposes the nation/individual analogy because he claims that the therapist can assume stable dynamics in the patient, whereas foreign policy is a product of a group of individuals with differing dynamics. I am



sure Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld, and many others have their own individual reasons for their investment in American exceptionalism, but that is of little moment given their shared view of American entitlement. Dr. Langer also opposes the view that one can diagnose from outcomes without personal information. In fact, my argument is not based on outcomes, but on the effectiveness of the political rhetoric of American superiority. The evidence of American exceptionalism comes not from the dynamics of George W. Bush, but from the rhetoric used by Bush to get the American people to acquiesce to the invasion of a sovereign nation. The same rhetoric of exceptionalism was used to convince the American people to support the Monroe Doctrine, Manifest Destiny, and other justifications for American expansion.

Dr. Young-Breuhl offers three criticisms of my paper, two of which are attacks on positions I do not take. First, she attributes to me the view that “no lessons can be learned from the interventions justified by the city on the hill.” I did not say that no lessons *could* be learned from such interventions, but that the lessons *have not been learned*. In fact, my position is that lessons could and even *should* be learned from attempting to control events of nations we know little about. However, that we do not learn from history, as Dr. Petschauer put it, is easily demonstrable from the fact that we continue to make the same mistakes. Dr. Young-Breuhl’s second point is that I seem “to think that if a grandiose image is available, people will go for it and become determined by it.” I do not know where in my essay she finds this theory because I said nothing of the sort. In fact, in the brief references I made to the explanatory issue, I note that American grandiosity is a defense against vulnerability. I did not address the explanatory issue in depth, but that was not my purpose, and it is certainly not grounds for attributing to me a theory that I do not hold and did not propose. In the space allotted me, it was not possible to address the complex issue of explanation with any degree of thoroughness. If I have made a contribution toward a dialogue about the role of American grandiosity in foreign policy, I have succeeded in my task.

Dr. Young-Breuhl also states that my “sense for the macrocosm” misses the fact that societies, unlike individuals, are mixtures of groups that differ from one another. First, individuals are

also mixtures of traits, so the analogy holds even here. More importantly, her point is irrelevant. The prevailing attitude of exceptionalism has led the American people to accept interventions that have needlessly caused the deaths of millions of people. The fact that some do not adhere to this notion did not stop the invasions of Vietnam or Iraq nor have any influence against the establishment of torture as an avowed foreign policy tool. The dominance of American exceptionalism in the nation's self-representation is demonstrated by the fact that no politician runs for national office on the basis that America is a country of strengths and weaknesses. Relevant to Dr. Katz' point, Obama repeats the refrain that America is the greatest country on Earth at every opportunity. The fact that some Americans oppose unilateral policies does not alter the fact that narcissism motivates and justifies the imposition of our will on other countries, just as the complexity of an individual personality does not diminish the legitimacy of a narcissistic diagnosis.

Dr. Landes accuses me of a "syndrome" that includes the contradictory vices of moral relativism and moral perfectionism as well as all manner of unsavory traits. Not a word in this diatribe is a substantive response to my essay. The attack is entirely *ad hominem* and guilt by association: because I critique American exceptionalism I am accused of taking absurd positions, including equating Nazis with Israel as well as the failure to tolerate disagreement. Dr. Landes, who knows nothing of my positions on any of these issues, displays the very intolerance and inability for self-reflection he claims to decry in others. Furthermore, his insulting assault on Islamic people opposes even George W. Bush, who took pains to emphasize that America is not at war with Islam, but only with its fringe terrorist element. This distinction seems to escape Dr. Landes. Such insults to one billion people show nothing more than Dr. Landes' inability to tolerate views and beliefs different from his.

With the exception of Dr. Landes' intellectually bankrupt attacks, the responses have all contributed to a fruitful discussion of American exceptionalism and its impact on the country's behavior, and, above all, what can be done to curb it. It is the latter issue that troubles many of the respondents, and the concern is understandable given the intransigence and refractory nature of narcissism.

While none of us has the answer at this point, we must continue this type of discussion so that we may undertake the journey that has the potential to provide a solution to one of the most perplexing issues of our time.

*Frank Summers' biography may be found on page 8.*

◇◇◇CP◇◇◇

## Denial, Distraction, and Fantasy

Paul H. Elovitz—Clio's Psyche

Compared to the rest of the world, America was a much more exceptional place earlier in its history than in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At a time when the planet was dominated by kings and aristocrats, it established a republic and moved toward the democracy (though for white males only) that it would achieve in the late 1820s. The relatively unpopulated, rich in natural resources North American continent offered vast opportunities for individuals like Benjamin Franklin, Andrew Carnegie, and Thomas Edison, only one of whom I have space to discuss. A youngest son and 17<sup>th</sup> child of a Boston candle maker could run away from the tyranny of apprenticeship to his older brother and become the Benjamin Franklin (1706-90) known to history. He rose from poverty to achieve wealth and distinction for his business acumen in printing; scientific experiments with electricity; invention of bifocals, the lightning rod, and the iron safety stove; literary innovation in writing *Poor Richard's Almanac*; diplomacy at the Continental Congress and as ambassador to France; and civic contributions including organizing a fire department and library.

For much of our history the resources seemed endless. The fantasy of inexhaustible land and natural resources remains strong among the conservatives who attack the validity of global warming. America's history of slaughtering the seemingly endless herds of buffalo, shooting to extinction the passenger pigeons that were "darkening the skies," and clear-cutting the forest—all represent the habit of mind which views nature as simply the endless raw material to be used while moving West. Europeans seeking a better life

came in great numbers and many thrived in the "New World."

The collapse of the traditional societies of the world in the face of modernity, exemplified by the U.S., has meant that we have lost many of our unique advantages. Americans proudly advocated and spread free trade, public education, mass marketing, and technological innovation, and now much of the world is using these to become effective competitors. The communications revolution, especially the invention of the Internet, has resulted in opportunities and jobs being spread around the world. Income disparity has widened here; we have more multimillionaires and billionaires while most people are worried about maintaining their standard of living and that of their children. In this context, the conservative political emphasis on "American exceptionalism" serves as a distraction from debating economically beneficial policies.

American exceptionalism is such an enormously emotion-led subject that even talented, psychohistorically-inclined colleagues' responses reveal a tendency to express disappointed hopes and frustrations more than to focus on the issues of emotions and unconscious fantasies underlying the questions of ideals, disappointments, personalities, and policies. We had sought to have our call for papers reach intellectuals around the world. However, one of my biggest disappointments in organizing this symposium is the failure to have at least a third of the perspectives represent the great masses of humanity. Fortunately, we have three colleagues (Carveth, Hellman, and Simms) writing from abroad, with the Canadian Don Carveth providing an insightful and humorous touch in writing to his cousins south of the border.

The world admires, fears, envies, and wants to emulate or avoid the U.S. Most inhabitants of the globe and their governments are uneasy about the preponderance of power of the remaining "superpower," especially when it is used with little awareness of others' realities. Americans think that we should be loved and appreciated by humankind, but we are simply too powerful a country for this to be the case. Imagine yourself being approached by the largest elephant in the world, which is known for its unpredictability but sees itself as very friendly: you try to enjoy some of its exuberance and perhaps put its strength to work hauling some of your logs, but it makes quick motions and abrupt turns while you try to

determine its direction so as not to be trampled underfoot. As a historian, I remember that most of the traditionalist, dictatorial monarchies of Europe supported the 13 rebellious colonies, but not because they liked the colonials' drive for the rights of man—freedom they found to be both odious and an ideological threat to their existence. Rather, they wanted to weaken the British, who had become too powerful by virtue of being on the winning side in the worldwide wars of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

International fear of unchecked power is often grounded in reality. Thucydides long ago commented during the Peloponnesian War that “the strong do what they can and the weak suffer what they must to survive.” As part of George W. Bush’s “War on Terror,” he led America to war against Afghanistan, Iraq, and international terrorism. While the President denounced the “axis of evil” (Iraq, Iran, and North Korea) and made threatening gestures toward other countries, his neo-conservative supporters argued that the U.S. had the power and the will to use it to create a new reality in the world. Aside from the trillion dollars of mostly borrowed money spent and all the military casualties and civilian deaths, it remains to be seen how much of a new reality has been created and to what extent the flames of anti-Americanism and increased terrorism have been fanned by this arrogance of power. (One also might argue that there is both fear and some unconscious identification with the aggressor, rather than our democratic values, influencing the policies of weaker governments.) Money has not really brought us friends around the world: there are few signs of gratitude for the billions we give annually to Afghanistan, Egypt, Iraq, Israel, and Pakistan.

With its isolationist tradition, America has been a power on the world stage for less than a century; often, the country does not know what to do with its power, especially because it pays attention to its own ideology and fantasy far more than to the realities of the rest of humanity. For example, after the destruction of German, Italian, and Japanese imperialism, most Americans expected a wonderful postwar world living in harmony, with our newly created United Nations keeping the peace. Instead, the country was shocked when it wakened to the realization that Joseph Stalin was as murderous and paranoid after the war as before and during it.

The American Right believed Senator Joseph McCarthy's paranoid fantasies that communists and "pinkos" in the State Department caused the loss of China to the "commies"—as if we possessed China to lose! American ethnocentrism creates international strife as we throw our weight around rather than use it intelligently as "soft power."

National exceptionalism is about national self-image—and identity issues are extremely important for countries, just as they are for individuals. They represent not simply chauvinistic self-justifying ethnocentrism, but also the ego ideals of the society. Support for human rights, international law, raising the health and living standards of the impoverished, and the prevention of genocide are all positive elements of American exceptionalism. Ambivalence regarding these is manifested as a reluctance to sign on to climate change legislation and to agree to some aspects of international law.

The 18 commentators in this special issue have expanded our knowledge of and perspectives on this quite emotional subject. Ken Fuchsman has deepened our understanding of our Puritan ancestors' attitudes toward exceptionalism and its subsequent role as the "civic religion of American capitalism," while Charles Cogan and Tom Ferraro provide some perspectives regarding the French and America. It should be kept in mind that de Tocqueville wrote in a period when French social reformers were coming to the U.S. to set up ideal societies. Francis Beers and Peter Petschauer write rather pessimistically about the delusional elements in exceptionalist thinking, while Wallace Katz focuses on this same problem in foreign policy. Michael Rockland, a former diplomat, sees excessive exceptionalism as a self-defeating idea. Jamshid Marvasti discusses the ways exceptionalism can be a cover for imperialism. Kurt Jacobsen, who would rather focus on what class and status groups believe than the notion of exceptionalism, writes in the liberal tradition that concerns Fuchsman. When David Lotto takes exception to any form of exceptionalism being "benign," I understand his point but suspect that he's holding our country to an impossible standard. As a professor, therapist, and citizen I have stressed the need for more humane elements in ego ideals as well as a more realistic sense of what humans are like—the perfect should

not be the enemy of the good.

The most psychologically explicit articles are by Dick Booth, Hannah Turken, and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. I appreciate that the latter has recognized that I have placed my hopes on realistic ambition replacing “American grandiose exceptionalist fantasy.” Yes, I do see America as a narcissistic society desperately in need of boundaries, even while recognizing that the boundaries will be challenged, because that is the nature of human beings and the situation of freedom. I agree thoroughly with her statement, “Unlike individuals, societies are big mixtures—pluralities—of people of all kinds, convictions, cultures, and characters.” It is true that there are many different types within our society, including our psycho-political community, which is discussing these very issues. Dr. Young-Bruehl’s focus on different elements of narcissism is most welcome.

Philip Langer’s critique of using psychoanalytic terms in discussing the group processes of nations brings up some important issues. As an educational psychologist whose psychohistorical contributions have been focused on military history, he finds it problematic to make broad interpretations based on the studies of individuals rather than on the group. To the contrary, I would argue that since society is made up of individuals, much could be gained from utilizing terms like “narcissism.” Certainly, there are group dynamics that have been identified by Bion, deMause, Freud, Janis, Volkan, and many others. While I am much slower to generalize about groups than about individuals, increasingly it has become apparent to me that we do have these generalizations about groups in mind, and however inadequate our intellectual tools, it is still better to utilize them. In fact, Langer reveals his own ambivalence on this subject through a lack of clarity, which led to internal contradictions in his argument. For example, he opens by saying that his “concern is not the labeling of American foreign policy,” but then in the second and seventh paragraphs he discusses labels.

Rather than shed light on the subject matter of exceptionalism, Langer devotes much of his discussion to how his own psychohistorical book does not fall into the pitfalls he attributes to Summers’ and my work. I wonder if Professor Langer has slipped into the temptation of declaring that no one else can use something once

he has benefited from it—in this case, psychohistorical knowledge. Why else would he incorrectly imply that we relied only on psychoanalysis, as opposed to his eclectic approach? This is far from the case. He is equally wrong when he concludes his essay by declaring that “it is hard to defend a process, an endeavor that any trained clinician would avoid.” At the very least, this ignores the reality that both Frank Summers and I are trained psychoanalytic clinicians.

The medievalist Robert Landes interestingly identifies what he calls Masochistic Omnipotence Syndrome (MOS), something he holds in contempt. Although I abhor the use of psychological categories to belittle intellectuals with opposing political positions and do not think that the politics of progressives are necessarily any more masochistic than those of conservatives, the idea that intellectuals are inclined to hold themselves and their countries to a higher standard is a thought that has long intrigued me. This is both because I adhere to it and because I see it taken to an extreme by others who sometimes ignore our world's realities. It represents an impulse of the superego to drive for higher standards for oneself and one's society. However, because we live in a very imperfect world with extremely imperfect individuals, I am sometimes distressed when, again, perfection becomes the enemy of the good. For me, the crucial thing is to do better. So, while I get incredibly frustrated at moments about the direction and actions of American policy, I try to keep in mind the built-in weaknesses of our political system, and work to understand and improve it.

The MOS idea brings to mind the often extreme criticism of this country by progressive intellectuals in general and immigrant intellectuals in particular. With the latter, could this sometimes be based on a longing for the more familiar ways of the societies they grew up in and left behind? Eager as they were to come to the U.S.A., part of their criticism may represent a yearning for the motherland they called home. Although what they left behind wasn't perfect, some part of them wants the U.S. to be the perfect country of their dreams.

Finally, rather than concluding on a psychohistorical note, as an Eriksonian participant-observer in the life of the country I love, I will focus on the politics of the subject. Denial and distract-



tion are central to the contemporary uses of the concept of American exceptionalism. The concept is primarily used as a distraction from dealing with the real problems of our country. Conservative Republicans wrap themselves in the flag of exceptionalism, using it as a rallying cry for the most conservative primary voters, a hammer with which to beat the Democrats as unpatriotic and a distraction for a public that is hurting economically and psychically in a globalized economy. The Left needs to focus on realistic expectations in a political system that is geared to balancing power rather than accomplishing change. It should be far more concerned with strengthening (and in some cases restoring) America's democratic, industrial, and innovative greatness, as well as balanced budgets, rather than mostly ignoring these problems. Pride in the country, including American exceptionalism, can be a useful tool to achieve important goals if the Left stops shunning the concept the Right has been using as a distraction. The Right and Left need to recognize that we are all in this together, regardless of our politics, and that we must get past our narcissistic and paranoid fantasies to maintain our society and place in the world.

*Paul Elovitz' biography may be found on page 16. □*

## **Daniel Rancour-Laferriere: Psychoanalytic Scholar of Russia and Religion**

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College of New Jersey

*Our Featured Scholar is Emeritus Professor of Russian at the University of California (UC), Davis, who upon retirement in 2004 moved to El Cerrito in the San Francisco Bay area, where he uses the UC Berkeley and Graduate Theological Union libraries for his research. He was born on November 2, 1943 in Providence, Rhode Island and grew up in a small town in northern Vermont. He took his undergraduate degree in biology at Denison University (1965) prior to earning his doctoral degree in Slavic Languages and Literatures from Brown University (1972). He was Assistant Professor at Tufts University (1972-1979) and Associate Professor (1981-89) and Professor (1989-2004) at UC Davis where he taught*

numerous courses on Russian culture, literature (Gogol, Tolstoy, Pasternak, Solzhenitsyn), folklore, language, literary and scientific translation, Russian poetry, and sexuality in Russian literature, as well as semiotics and psychoanalytic study of literature. Dr. Rancour-Laferriere received a variety of grants including the International Research and Exchange (IREX) Short Term Research (1990, 1996) and Teacher Exchange Grants in Moscow (1978 and 1984). Among his many books are Signs of the Flesh: An Essay on the Evolution of Hominid Sexuality (1985); The Mind of Stalin: A Psychoanalytic Study (1988); Tolstoy on the Couch: Misogyny, Masochism, and the Absent Mother (1998); Russian Nationalism from an Interdisciplinary Perspective (2000); The Joy of All Who Sorrow: Icons of the Mother of God in Russia (2005); Tolstoy's Quest for God (2007), and The Sign of the Cross: From Golgotha to Genocide (2011). Dr. Rancour-Laferriere was interviewed over the Internet in April and may be contacted through his website: <http://www.Rancour-Laferriere.com>.



Paul H. Elovitz (**PHE**): What brought you to the psychoanalytic study of Russian society and religion?

Daniel Rancour-Laferriere (**DR-L**): As I was beginning graduate study in Russian literature at Brown University, I discovered Freud's *Interpretation of Dreams*. The experience was electrifying. A whole new world opened up before my eyes. Or, rather, a distant old world suddenly came to light, but now there

were words and concepts by means of which I could re-enter that world. I then proceeded to read everything by Freud and the early Freudians I could put my hands on, for I understood that psychoanalysis explained more about the way I was responding to Pushkin's poetry and Tolstoy's prose than the somewhat fuzzy and conventional literary-historical approach to literature which I was getting in the classroom.

**PHE**: What special challenges did you face in doing this work?

**DR-L:** From those early days in grad school until I retired from Russian studies, the special challenge has always been the same: overcoming the resistance of teachers, colleagues, and students to a psychoanalytic interpretation of anything Russian. For example, after submitting a psycholinguistically-oriented doctoral dissertation on the poetry of Afanasy Fet, my dissertation advisor balked, declaring he would not sign on the dotted line (fortunately the famous Russian linguist Roman Jakobson intervened, and I got my degree). Years later, when I came up for tenure at the University of California at Davis, the dean called me in one day and said my tenure was being put on hold because of some complaints from graduate students about my use of psychoanalysis in interpreting Russian literature. Again, however, I was lucky. Some colleagues at Davis, as well as outside scholars, bombarded the administration with letters of protest. With some of these colleagues I even organized a conference on—that's right—"Literature and Psychoanalysis" on the Davis campus. It was a great success. About a month later the Vice-Chancellor of Academic Affairs called me at home with the information that I was now a tenured associate professor.

**PHE:** What is the influence of your presumably French-Canadian upbringing and being raised as a Catholic on your work?

**DR-L:** Yes, the French-Canadian Catholic upbringing was important. It involved, first, a language problem. My spoken French was (and is) poor. English is my native language, not French (although reading French is not a problem). My parents spoke their substandard French as a kind of "secret language" to hide things from us, the children (later I learned Russian, and eventually I realized that this was part of wanting to have my own "secret language").

Second, there was the Roman Catholic problem—a much more complicated business and a much more painful matter to speak of openly. One of the reasons I have finished my work with Russia is that I do not need the Russians anymore in order to deal with the Catholicism issue, or with Christianity generally. I found so much in "holy Russia" that resembled my impoverished French-Canadian Catholic background that I thought I had landed in the right place. Well, it was the right place for a long time. Now I have moved on.

**PHE:** Of which of your works are you most proud?

**DR-L:** The first thing which comes to mind when I hear this question is: you should never ask a mother which of her children she is most proud of!

**PHE:** In the titles of your articles and books, you use terms such as “anality,” “denial,” “masochism,” “narcissism,” “perversion,” and in one case, a “Kleinian Approach.” What psychoanalytic and psychological theoretical approach or approaches have you found to be most helpful?

**DR-L:** Initially Freud was my hero. For example, his ideas about “anal” personality led me to become seriously interested in a Russian character named Akaky Akakievich, and that led to a book about Gogol. Of course, Freud’s notions about Oedipus also helped me understand some things about Russian writers, but something was missing. Ruth Mack Brunswick’s work on the pre-Oedipal phase haunted me, and Melanie Klein’s somewhat disorderly but sporadically profound writing about children impressed me. I dabbled with Jungian ideas (symmetrical linguistic structures as “mandalas”), but then I was repulsed by Jung’s anti-Semitism. For a while I pursued French post-Freudian ideas, such as Lacan’s insistence on the importance of language and signifiers—until I realized the man knew very little about linguistics and semiotics. I hit pay dirt with Heinz Kohut, who helped me understand the narcissistic problems which many of Tolstoy’s characters were struggling with, and which Tolstoy himself had to deal with all his life. Vamik Volkan exerted an enormous influence on my studies of Russian nationalism. Also, the Russian nationalists in Russia (and the nationalists by proxy in many Russian departments in this country) will never forgive me for writing a book about the “slave soul” of Russia, in which I make extensive use of Freud’s notion of “moral masochism.” Most recently, object-relations theoreticians like Winnicott have been very helpful for my research in religious studies.

**PHE:** You’ve researched and written on an impressive variety of subjects, mostly in the field of Russian studies, about which my knowledge is fairly limited. Regrettably, my reading of your voluminous publications is limited to those that you’ve published in

Clio's Psyche and the *Journal of Psychohistory*. I am impressed that you have published about 15 books and innumerable articles in English and Russian, with one book even being translated into Finnish. Your coverage of poetry, Russian national character, Russian anti-Semitism, and dreams, as well as psychoanalytic studies of such varied individuals as Gogol, Stalin, Tolstoy, Pushkin, Pasternak, Peter the Great, and Lermontov, is most impressive. This is part of a considerable body of psychological scholarship of Russian and Soviet society. How well-received have your particular contributions been within Russian scholarship in general and psychological approaches in particular?

**DR-L:** The reviews have ranged from extremely positive to extremely negative, without very many in between. Naturally I prefer to remember the favorable evaluations, and there were enough of them for me to advance up the UC step system and to chair the Russian Program at UC Davis for five years before retiring and moving on to independent research in religious studies. In the Soviet Union, there were no reviews at all, but after that country collapsed in 1991 I was bombarded with invitations to speak at the new psychoanalytic organizations, as well as at some venues for literary scholarship, such as the Tolstoy group at Yasnaya Polyana.

This was gratifying for a while, and quite a few of my works became available in Russian. But then the usual anti-psychoanalytic resistance set in, and certain political barriers also arose with the advent of old-fashioned Russian authoritarianism and slavishness under Putin's pretend democracy. Of course, I am not free to discuss this in detail, but I can perhaps mention just one of my last public appearances in Russia. It was at the East European Psychoanalytic Institute in St. Petersburg for a book signing. The book on Russian nationalism had just appeared in Russian translation, and the Institute had received about 100 copies. When I showed up, however, all the copies seemed to have vanished. There was only the one copy I was carrying with me, and there were no books to sign. So I improvised a lecture followed by Q & A to the 60 or so people in the room. They were interested, and they were interesting, for they asked good questions, such as: what were my personal reasons for taking an interest in moral masochism? But they could not read my book, which had magically

been “unpublished” in Saint Petersburg by a certain organization. Some other incidents of this nature were decisive. I do not envisage ever returning to Russia again.

**PHE:** Your work on the issue of moral masochism and the cult of suffering in Russia interests me because it fits in with some of what I know from my early exposure to Russian literature and groups like the Old Believers, who fled to the cold of Siberia and later Canada and even at times burned themselves alive as a communal group. Please share some of your insights on this with our readers and describe some of the manifestations of this cultural trait in contemporary post-Soviet Russia.

**DR-L:** Please forgive me for not wanting to discuss contemporary post-Soviet Russia at this time. As for the past, readers may wish to consult my paper on the return of psychoanalysis to Russia which appeared a few years ago in *Clio's Psyche*, as well as my book on moral masochism in Russia, *The Slave Soul of Russia* (English edition 1995, Russian 1996).

**PHE:** Are you tempted at times to apply moral masochism to aspects of modern American society? If so, in what respects?

**DR-L:** Yes, there are plenty of moral masochists in all human societies, not just Russia. Eliot Spitzer and Bill Clinton come to mind. Why did they need to do something which was so obviously harmful to themselves? Driving while texting is a more general example. I see idiots driving right near the Berkeley campus while doing it, and I have witnessed a couple of close calls at intersections. But these people are not “idiots.” They are narcissistically-preoccupied masochists, and they pose a danger to others as well as to themselves.

**PHE:** In graduate school in history, we were all warned against delving into national character, as it is a dangerous area because the subject was too large and too prejudicial. Yet, you have been willing to confront this complex issue. What is your advice to someone who would be tempted to make a similar study?

**DR-L:** My advice is to avoid the topic altogether unless you are very thoroughly versed in the history and culture of the nation, religion, ethnic group, etc. that you plan to psychoanalyze (not in the

clinical sense, of course, for there is no “cure” to offer, but in the strictly scholarly or intellectual sense). Even then, the task is difficult if you are not a member of the group being studied, for the “us/them” dynamic kicks in. The last chapter of my book on Russian nationalism relates some funny and some not-so-funny anecdotes on this topic.

**PHE:** In understanding Stalin, how useful have you found the three volumes of the Princeton political scientist Robert Tucker?

**DR-L:** The late Robert Tucker’s work was very important for me, and I quoted him extensively in my book on Stalin. He did not return the favor in his subsequent work on Stalin. I do continue to respect his work, however, for his utilization of Karen Horney’s ideas in characterizing Stalin has considerable merit.

**PHE:** Your book, *The Sign of the Cross: From Golgotha to Genocide*, forthcoming this month from Transaction Press, is a departure from your work on Russian history. Describe its content and how you see it as a departure from previous approaches.

**DR-L:** That book is not a departure in approach (psychoanalytic), but in subject matter (not Russian). The new book may be characterized as a psychoanalytic history of the chief symbol of Christianity—the cross—from its origin in New Testament narrations of the crucifixion of Jesus to its effective culmination in the Holocaust, which was perpetrated under the sign of the Nazi hooked cross (*Hakenkreuz*, usually mistranslated as “swastika,” but in fact a Christian symbol with a long, continuous history going back to the catacombs of Rome). If Jesus Christ thought he was God and volunteered to sacrifice himself on the cross of Golgotha, then he was a grandiose moral masochist. Many of the early Christian martyrs were also masochists, although not particularly grandiose. After Christianity became the official religion within the Roman imperial context, new meanings—in addition to masochism—were attached to the cruciform sign. The crusades, for example, were acts of often sadistic aggression against non-Christians or against heretics (the Albigensian Crusade). Pogroms against Jews were perpetrated by Christians who believed that “the Jews” killed Christ on the cross (the paranoid charge of deicide). Well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century, crosses of various types—the Victoria cross in England, the St.

George cross in Russia, the Iron Cross in Germany, etc.—were awarded for battlefield aggression. Hitler wore his own Iron Cross proudly along with the Nazi Hooked Cross when making public appearances, including appearances with the various Protestant ministers and Catholic priests who supported him, and who wore *their* crosses in the numerous photos we have of these public meetings.

**PHE:** What was the impact of seven decades of official atheism on the Russians, and what do you make of the return to religion in contemporary Russia?

**DR-L:** Religion did not “return,” for it was there all along, and the atheism was merely “official,” as you say. For example, the first post-Soviet Patriarch, Alexy II, had been a KGB agent for many years before he went on to lead the Russian Orthodox Church. Stalin put Orthodox Christianity to very good use when he was at war with Hitler. Of course, Christians, Jews, Muslims, and others were persecuted at various times during the Soviet period. But no particular religious group was eliminated (Stalin died before he could carry out his plan to do in the Soviet Union what Hitler and his willing Christian executioners had done to the Jews in Western Europe). Some have argued that even Marxist-Leninism was (or still is) a religion, for it provides a path to achieving “transcendence”—whatever that term means. Actually, scholars in the field of religious studies have yet to come up with a clear and useful definition of “religion.”

**PHE:** What are you working on now that you have a book in press?

**DR-L:** I am writing a book on beliefs held by Christians about the relationship of the sign of the cross to the mother (Mary) of the child (Jesus) who was executed on that cross.

**PHE:** What is your primary affiliation? Is it literature, history, psychology, psychoanalysis, psychohistory, Russian studies, or something else?

**DR-L:** You are asking a question about my personal identity. For when I am doing it, I identify intensely with the work I am doing. At one time or other I have “done” all of the items you have listed, including of course psychohistory. I would say that psychoanalysis



has long been a unifying model for what I do. Unfortunately, some of the clinicians tell me I do “applied psychoanalysis” at best, otherwise known as “cookbook psychoanalysis.” That was not Freud’s way of looking at things, however, for he regarded clinical analysis as just one of the many applications of psychoanalysis. It has never been demonstrated empirically that clinical training—as opposed to, say, a year of anthropological field work in an alien culture—is the best preparation for becoming a psychoanalyst. Immersion in a strange culture, after all, inevitably enhances self-knowledge. The core of psychoanalysis is self-analysis, and Freud founded the psychoanalytic field on the basis of his self-analysis. Didier Anzieu has written a perceptive book on this topic (1975). In 1994, I edited a volume on self-analysis in literary study for NYU Press, and I see that just recently (PsyArt posting, April 12, 2011) the New York Psychoanalytic Society and Institute has announced its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary with precisely these words: “celebrating a century of advancement through self-knowledge.”

**PHE:** What special training was most helpful in approaching much of your work from a psychoanalytic/psychological perspective?

**DR-L:** My “special training” was in biology (undergraduate) and in Slavic studies (graduate). In everything else I have been an autodidact, although I admit that three months of analysis during a depressive episode improved my self-analytic skill. Unfortunately, the depression worsened during this period, and was not effectively treated until I began taking an antidepressant medication. For many years I continued to have sporadic visits with my analyst, and he encouraged me to continue writing a self-analytic diary.

**PHE:** Have you published, or do you plan to publish, an autobiography or any autobiographical writings?

**DR-L:** My contributions to the above-mentioned self-analysis volume are autobiographical in nature. There are also autobiographical passages in the books on Stalin, Russian nationalism, Russian icons, and the Christian cross. I do not plan to write a memoir, but I do have boxes and boxes of hand-written diaries which will have to be disposed of in some fashion.

**PHE:** What training should a person entering the psychoanalytic study of a culture or society/psychohistory today pursue?

**DR-L:** Get a college education. Then, get totally immersed in an interesting culture or historical period, preferably that culture or historical period about which you have ambivalent feelings (as my colleague, the UC Davis psychologist Alan Elms, recommends). Acquire at least a reading knowledge of all of the relevant languages. While doing this, keep a self-analytic diary, or find some external facilitator of self-analysis, such as a clinical psychoanalyst or other talk therapist. And of course, read the complete works of Freud followed by ample readings from all of the major psychoanalytic schools down to the present day. If you are not a person of independent means and autodidactic inclination, it would also be a good idea to get the advanced degrees necessary for earning a living and for moving into that academic space where psychoanalytic research can be pursued.

**PHE:** How do you see psychoanalytic cultural and societal studies/psychohistory developing in the next decade or so?

**DR-L:** Neuropsychanalysis and evolutionary psychology are among the "hot" areas today. There are some others, too. Unfortunately, many psychoanalysts of different stripes do not display a welcoming attitude toward these new areas of research. But I am hoping that psychoanalytic cultural and historical studies will find ways to profit from the newly emerging disciplines.

**PHE:** What do we, as psychohistorians, need to do to strengthen our work?

**DR-L:** Take time to read outside the field. Keep a written record of important events, and write down any strong emotional responses to whatever is going on in your current psychohistorical research. This latter activity will help you to weed out whatever may be irrelevant or may spoil the objectivity of the research. I call this "taking out the garbage."

**PHE:** What is the importance of childhood to psychoanalytic, cultural, and societal studies/psychohistory? Have you done much work on childhood in Russia or elsewhere?

**DR-L:** Childhood is of immense importance. I have investigated the childhood experiences of Stalin, Tolstoy, Solzhenitsyn, and Hitler in some detail. For example, it would be difficult to understand

why Tolstoy's narcissistic rage (especially in the late diaries and in late works like *The Kreutzer Sonata* and *Resurrection*) was directed specifically at women's breasts without a knowledge of his childhood experience of being wet-nursed and losing his mother at the age of 23 months. As for Hitler, his childhood exposure to the hooked crosses in the Lambach Monastery where he sang in the choir has been ignored or dismissed by most historians as irrelevant to the Nazi *Hakenkreuz*.

**PHE:** Some Forum researchers have been struggling with the issue of identification with a particular parent and achievement. In your experience and life, are high achievers more identified with their fathers?

**DR-L:** Not necessarily. Stalin in some respects fulfilled the grandiose expectations of his mother, who hoped he would become a priest and move up the clerical hierarchy (on the other hand, his great need to "beat" his enemies resembles the abusive treatment he received from his alcoholic father). Tolstoy was very taken by what he heard from relatives about his mother's abilities to speak foreign languages, play piano, and invent stories out of thin air (he went on to perform pretty well in all of these areas himself).

**PHE:** Following up on an issue raised by Freud, what is the impact of parental loss on your level of achievement and those of subjects you have studied?

**DR-L:** I have already mentioned Tolstoy's early loss of his mother, which had great impact for him and for his creativity. My own mother is still alive, and we communicate on a regular basis. My father died in 1999. I am not aware of any impact of his death on my "level of achievement," although his death relatively late in my career may have something to do with my increased interest in religious studies. Overall, my mother has exerted the greatest influence. I was the first and the most favored of her 13 children. She encouraged me in my studies, and she understood that a college education was appropriate. It was she who made me write and re-write many times an essay about forestry in my local 4-H club (which won me a big ax). My father was close to illiterate, having been pulled out of a parochial grade school at an early age and forced to work in a foundry. He thought the idea of my going to

college was ridiculous. I won, and went to college. But I also lost, and was fatherless long before my father died.

**PHE:** How can psychologically-oriented scholars have more impact in academia and on society in general?

**DR-L:** Just as I do the sort of psychoanalysis that is not therapeutic in nature, I am also not oriented toward the ills of academia or of society in general. The need to understand, what Klein somewhere termed the epistemophilic instinct, is what motivates my professional work. That said, my response to suffering is to help, so I am a strong supporter of Save the Children, Doctors Without Borders, Amnesty International, and the ACLU. Furthermore, I believe that psychologically-oriented scholars have dropped the ball on the most important issue of all: the widespread DENIAL of the reality of global climate change.

**PHE:** How can we recruit new people to the field?

**DR-L:** I wish I knew. Psychoanalysis by its very nature provokes resistance. Or, it attracts people who wish to be therapists, rather than scholars, who delve into history, society, and culture as well as the unconscious. And there is always the danger of psychobabble, which drives serious scholars away.

**PHE:** What books were important to your development?

**DR-L:** In order of reading: *Saint Andrew Daily Missal*; *Field Guide to the Birds*, by Roger Tory Peterson; *The Phenomenon of Man*, by Teilhard de Chardin; *Love's Body*, by Norman O. Brown; *The Interpretation of Dreams*, by Sigmund Freud; *War and Peace*, by Lev Tolstoy; *The First Circle*, by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn; *Sociobiology*, by E. O. Wilson; *The Analysis of the Self*, by Heinz Kohut; *Playing and Reality*, by Donald Winnicott; *Alone of All Her Sex*, by Marina Warner; *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, by John Dominic Crossan; *Hitler's Willing Executioners*, by Daniel Goldhagen; *Faith and Fratricide*, by Rosemary Ruether.

**PHE:** How do you define psychohistory?

**DR-L:** The study of historical events and trends utilizing psychological constructs when they are relevant.

**PHE:** Thank you for telling us about your life and career. ◻

## Book Reviews

### The Tea Party's Battle for American History

**Paul H. Elovitz**—Ramapo College of New Jersey

*Review of Jill Lepore, The Whites of Their Eyes: The Tea Party's Revolution and the Battle over American History (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), i-x, 207 pages, ISBN 978-0-691-15027-7, Hardcover, \$19.95.*

Jill Lepore, the David Woods Kamper '41 Professor of American History at Harvard University, has earned my admiration for leaving the safety of her Ivy League campus and the intellectual protection of her position as a staff writer for the *New Yorker* to attend Tea Party meetings. This has led to a book about the fantasies of Tea Party members regarding the “good old days” of Colonial America, what actually happened at the Boston Tea Party and during the American Revolution as discerned by academic specialists working in dusty archives, and her own experiences jostling shoulders with the Tea Party membership. What the professor found makes for a fascinating book, which goes back and forth between fantasies of American history loudly proclaimed at the well-publicized Tea Party protests and the messy realities of our colonial and revolutionary past—including the 1773 Tea Party and wonderful materials on Ben Franklin and his struggling sister Jane Mecom.

At Tea Party rallies, Lepore was immediately branded and often denounced as a liberal the second she identified herself as a professor. On one occasion, a woman—who was there “to see Sarah [Palin]. She’s so adorable”—responded to Lepore’s taking out her notebook by frowning and demanding, “Are you a liberal?” Lepore’s answer, “I’m a hist—” was drowned out by the grabbing of the professor’s jacket and demands for \$50. Lepore’s puzzled, “\$50?” drew the Tea Partier’s response: “If you’re a liberal. Because you people, you want to give money to anyone who asked you” (128-129). Dealing with the fantasies of Tea Partiers, which could occasionally turn aggressive, was a far cry from inspiring bright Harvard undergraduate and doctoral students. Her experiences led me to be uncharacteristically quiet on my own trips to Tea Party meetings.

This volume does a good job of covering the “who, what, where,

when, why, and how” of her subject. The people she met and interviewed at Tea Party rallies were mostly fairly recent transplants to the state known as “Taxachusetts.” Some of them were educated in non-historical fields, such as an MIT technical researcher. The professor treated and describes her interviewees in a respectful manner, mostly letting their words speak for themselves, though juxtaposing some of the realities of colonial history with their images of it. This regard, however, does not extend to the big names in the Tea Party movements and those devoted to proving the constitutional theory of “originality”—the concept of interpreting only the precise meaning of what the founders meant in the Declaration, the Constitution, and the Federalist Papers.

What Tea Partiers had to say reflected great frustration with the gridlock of the American political system, the high taxes, fear of Obama’s “change you can believe in,” and the growing fear that America is in decline. Their ideas about our founders and founding had very little to do with the actual lives of our colonial ancestors, which the historian knows so much about and brings to light especially through the person of Jane Mecom. This populist movement’s lack of historical verisimilitude is not very troubling to those participating. It was always my sense, from watching accounts of Tea Party rallies on the news and at greater length on C-SPAN, that for participants the experience was very much like going to a rock concert or a major sporting event. Since I’ve never been to a rock concert, my equivalent experiences were anti-war and civil rights marches and rallies. In all such cases, there was the *good* (what the rally stood for), the *bad* (those who stood in the way of achieving the goal of *goodness*), and very little concern for the facts.

I remember, as I rapidly made up posters in preparation for our environmental awareness week at Temple University prior to the first Earth Day, being asked by an older colleague, “How do you or anyone know that a quarter of the world’s oceans are covered with debris? Have studies been done?” “But,” I proclaimed, “I read it in the *New York Times*!” “How did the reporter know this to be a fact, as opposed to a wild speculation?” “I don’t know.” I paused. This was one of my first great lessons in groupthink, which helped to prepare me to understand how perfectly intelligent—and not so intelligent—human beings can get together in the name of a cause and often show no more critical sense than at a rock concert or a championship athletic event where the great pleasure comes not from thoughtful analysis but rather from the joy of group identification with the “good” cause or joyous event. The Tea Party rallies I have actually attended have been much more subdued affairs with only approximately 50 in attendance.

The Tea Party rallies in and around Boston evoke all sorts of memories of the actual events that Jill Lepore reports on as she visits the replica of the actual ship and takes her children on weekend excursions to the local historical sites.

Why the Tea Parties in 2009-2010? Why the actual Boston Tea Party and American Revolution in the 1770s? Why did the Tea Party start less than a month after Barack Obama had entered the White House? Hadn't Tea Partiers ever heard of the presidential honeymoon, which the press and I used to write about? Why was there such determination to stop this unusually intelligent and intellectual president from achieving his goals so soon after 53% of the population had voted him into office with 365 electoral votes out of 538? Professor Lepore raises these questions but does not begin to adequately answer them in her fine volume. However, she does give us some excellent information on what brought about the Boston Tea Party, which escalated into the American Revolution.

However, I only wish here and elsewhere the professor would have gone a step or two further to provide direct psychohistorical explanations. Although she was a student of John Demos, who has brilliantly used psychohistory in several of his books on Colonial America, the psychohistorical approach does not appear to have rubbed off on this fine early American historian. She writes about the "anti-history" of the movement she is studying, recognizing the confusion of the present with the past, but ignores the path-breaking work of Vamik Volkan on "chosen traumas," "chosen glories," and "time collapse," which would have given her more insight into what she observed. In Lepore's shoes, I would ask why the colonies, which paid such low taxes compared to the English colonialists, were so rebellious. What psychic forces kept them from enjoying British protection at bargain tax rates instead of becoming involved in a life-threatening civil war, which ended with them paying much higher taxes? Whenever I've had the opportunity to teach about the American Revolution, I've always likened it to the need of many young adults to establish autonomy in a rebellious manner.

Why the Tea Party Movement developed is a complicated issue. The Internet, with Facebook, LinkedIn, and other social networking sites, makes it possible to get lots of people together in relatively short periods of time, especially when they know there will be television cameras. The profound ambivalence of Americans about change in our system of checks and balances found expression in this well funded, well publicized movement. Partly it is a case of growing anxiety about change in America, especially among the graying population. Recipients of social secu-

rity worry about adding medical benefits to others just as they worry about the declining economic basis of our country. When members of Congress held public hearings in their home districts in the summer of 2009 they encountered sharp reactions from their constituents, so many of whom were on Social Security and Medicare, as well as Tea Party members—recipients of big government railing vociferously against government programs. The underlying fear is that by extending medical services and government programs to others in a period of a declining economy, their own benefits will be diminished. I was utterly amazed at the degree to which the rhetoric of protesting against big government was coming from people who were direct beneficiaries of government largesse.

This concern is enlarged by the fear that having an African American president, and many committee chairs who are African American, will result in increased benefits for these groups, cutting the slice of the governmental pie to the general Caucasian population. I have often been struck, in watching both Tea Party and conservative Republican public events, by the extent to which they have had black and/or Hispanic speakers on the podium with them for groups that are so overwhelmingly white. The minorities' seeming inclusion in the rhetoric of struggling against big government and supporting non-existent laissez faire economics is politically correct and much safer than acknowledging whites' fears that this country and the world are on the verge of losing its Anglo-Saxon domination.

Despite its failure to delve explicitly into the psychohistorical roots of the Tea Party movement, it's a pleasure to recommend Lepore's charming book.

*Paul H. Elovitz, PhD*, is editor of this journal and may be contacted at [pelovitz@aol.com](mailto:pelovitz@aol.com). □

*We Wish to  
Thank Our Prompt,  
Hardworking, Anonymous  
Referees and Diligent Editors*



## A Modern Book with Classic Appeal: McAdams' Bush

Bill Peterson—Smith College

*Review of Dan P. McAdams, George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 274 pages, ISBN: 978-0-19-975208-9, Hardcover \$29.95.*

Dan McAdams uses a lens grounded in modern theories of personality to clarify aspects of President Bush's behavior. He combines insights gained from psychological work on traits, motives, beliefs, and narratives to avoid simplistic explanations for President Bush's decision-making.

In his introduction, McAdams sets the stage for his personological analysis (the detailed multidisciplinary longitudinal study of individuals over time, based upon the work of Henry A. Murray's Personological System and practiced mostly by academic psychologists) by asking: "Why did President George W. Bush invade Iraq?" This focus on a single or limited number of questions is reminiscent of classic psychobiographical works by William McKinley Runyan on Van Gogh (1981); David Winter and Leslie Carlson on Richard Nixon's life (1988); and Alexander and Juliette George on Woodrow Wilson (1956). By asking a single question, McAdams signals he is not planning to write a comprehensive biography; rather, he wants to focus on a key moment in Bush's presidency—a moment when personality was pivotal in the decision-making process. Think counterfactually for a moment and imagine that Albert A. Gore won the presidency in 2000 instead of George W. Bush. After the events of 9/11, Gore probably would have retaliated against the Taliban in Afghanistan by using U.S. military power. Individual personality was irrelevant—in post-9/11 America the situational demands on the U.S. President to use armed force were overwhelming. However, it seems unlikely that Gore would have followed up a campaign in Afghanistan with an invasion of Iraq, as Iraq was uninvolved in the 9/11 attacks. Why did George W. Bush generalize the war on terror to justify an invasion of Iraq? McAdams argues that the personality of the 43<sup>rd</sup> President matters to answer this question.

Chapter 1 of the book focuses on George Bush's traits. McAdams argues that Bush (like President Bill Clinton) was exceptionally extraverted and (unlike Clinton) exceptionally low on openness to experience. In order to defend this classification, McAdams cites empiri-

cal studies of U.S. Presidents conducted at a distance by political psychologists and then sifts through several accounts of Bush's life. These accounts humanize George W. Bush. For example, during college at Yale, Bush made it a point to learn the names of all 54 fellow pledges to his fraternity. This is a remarkable feat, to learn the names of 54 strangers, some of whom you may never meet again. Bush's extraversion provided "young George W. with a remarkable temperament resource for developing interpersonal relationships and building a broad social network" (21). McAdams argues that an individual high on extraversion and low on openness is comfortable acting on a big stage if he knows in his heart that he is right—Bush's traits provided the foundation for his ability to convince others to accept a clear and unambiguous message that the U.S. must depose Saddam Hussein in the interests of national and world security.

Bush's high extraversion and low openness, though, would not necessarily lead him to focus on Iraq—other factors were involved in directing Bush's attention. In Chapter 2, McAdams discusses key motives that animated President Bush. Popular accounts suggest that Oedipal themes were important in his life; just as the number 43 is larger than the number 41, deposing Saddam Hussein would showcase Bush junior's superiority to his father. McAdams makes the more parsimonious case that Oedipal themes and the succession of father figures in Bush's political life played a secondary role in leading Bush to invade Iraq. More fundamental is the fact that Hussein was the senior President Bush's greatest enemy, and killing or capturing Hussein would be proper vengeance against a man who "tried to kill my dad at one time" (97).

McAdams next reviews contemporary research in political psychology, focusing on how neo-conservatism played an increasingly influential role in the Bush presidency. In particular, the transformative vision of neo-conservative belief (that it's in the best interests of the U.S. to spread democracy to the rest of the world) dovetailed nicely with certain themes of redemption that existed in Bush's personal and political life. This leads to Chapters 4 and 5 in which McAdams discusses his ongoing work on redemptive narratives and their psychological importance throughout U.S. history (see McAdams' *The Redemptive Self: Stories Americans Live By*, 2006). Chapters 4 and 5 are important for McAdams because they showcase how a life history (George W. Bush) and an historical moment (post-9/11 America) interacted in a combative way (Erikson, *Life History and the Historical Moment*, 1975).

For example, a key redemptive scene in Bush's life revolved around his decision to quit drinking. Through the redemptive power of

Christianity and a good marriage, Bush turned his back on alcohol at the age of 40. He transformed a life story of alcoholism into a narrative of redemptive recovery. As demonstrated by McAdams (2006), Americans value redemptive stories such as rags to riches, spiritual awakening, and political emancipation. McAdams argues that after the tragedy of 9/11, Bush's presidency was energized by redemptive possibilities in the U.S. and the Middle East. His traits allowed him to be comfortable on the world stage in the role of a redemptive leader. His motives and beliefs focused his attention not only on Afghanistan but Iraq. Because Bush was able to restore goodness to his own life through self-discipline, he felt that this was the moment for America to restore goodness (in the form of democracy) to Iraq and thereby make safe the American people. In formulating his argument, McAdams relies heavily on his research on redemptive narratives as well as a careful reading of the historical record, documenting the personalities and behaviors of Bush's inner circle as they prepared for the Iraqi invasion. I should caution that McAdams generally takes Bush and his statements about his life at face value. On the one hand, this strategy puts McAdams on firm ground in that his interpretations are based on documented evidence. On the other hand, this strategy may be vulnerable to a kind of self-presentation bias by his subject by relying too much on autobiographical works produced by members of the Bush family.

Although I am familiar with the personality constructs that McAdams uses to make his argument, it was the primary and secondary historical accounts that interested me the most. I felt I learned much about Bush and his presidency. McAdams provided enough evidence so that I could form my own judgments about whether I agreed or disagreed with McAdams' interpretations. In terms of presentation of theory, McAdams' book has a lot to offer students of personality, social, and political psychology. In lecture courses, the book could serve as a common case study to illustrate basic psychological principles, and it would work particularly well as material for discussion in seminar classes in personality and political psychology. With 230 short pages of text, it should not be a problem for students to read the book over the span of a week. Political "junkies"—both conservative and liberal—should find McAdams' analysis to be a page-turner; when writing, McAdams clearly made efforts to submerge his own political attitudes in an attempt to represent Bush's strengths and weaknesses as a leader in an even-handed way. McAdams' book showcases how multiple psychological constructs are necessary for understanding the way that major political decisions are made and acted upon. This use of empirically grounded theories to understand an individual life remains a hallmark of good psychobiography.

**Bill Peterson, PhD**, is a professor of Psychology at Smith College and is currently the College's Parliamentarian. His research interests are in the areas of adult personality development and political psychology, with specific interests in psychosocial generativity and the psychology of authoritarianism. Peterson has recently served as an associate editor for the Journal of Personality and can be reached at [bpeterso@smith.edu](mailto:bpeterso@smith.edu). □

## Companionate Marriage and Its Discontents

**Ken Fuchsman**—University of Connecticut

Review essay of Christina Simmons, Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), ISBN: 978-0-19-506411-7, Hardcover, \$34.95; Kristin Cejello, Making Marriage Work: A History of Marriage and Divorce in the Twentieth-Century United States (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2009), ISBN: 978-0-8078-3252-3, Hardcover, \$29.95; and Rebecca L. Davis, More Perfect Unions: The American Search for Marital Bliss (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), ISBN: 978-0674-04796-9, Hardcover, \$29.95.

Marriage is mentioned in 27 passages in Freud's writings; divorce not at all. Psychoanalytic volumes devoted to wedlock are few and far between. Historians, on the other hand, have embraced these subjects, most notably Stephanie Coontz' 2005 *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage*. In tracing the winding paths of contemporary marriage, Coontz never quite clarifies what she means by love. On one hand, she portrays romance as ephemeral and disruptive, while on the other as being deeply fulfilling and everlasting. How love can move from volatility to compatibility is not explained, nor does Coontz look at how intimacy evolves into the million incidents of violence a year against women by those whom they have loved (<http://www.dm.usda.gov/shmd/aware.htm>). We are left wondering if it is love, or something else, that has conquered marriage, and what leads from dedication to violation. Three other historians have recently published books on marriage in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, yet they too are fuzzy on what the psychology of marital love entails and only one highlights the history of spousal abuse. If after reading the subtitles of these books, you expect to encounter accounts of companionship and bliss in actual marriages, you will likely be disappointed. These are not works at the ground level of

relationships, but tales of what experts and other spokespeople have written.

Christina Simmons' *Making Marriage Modern: Women's Sexuality from the Progressive Era to World War II* covers a narrower period than the other two books, focusing on the development of the ideal of companionate marriage among whites and African Americans. This idea became influential in the 1920s; it was a term first used in 1924, then popularized in 1926 by Denver Judge Ben Lindsey. Simmons writes: "I will use the term 'companionate marriage' where there is 'the importance of the sexual bond...the use of birth control...and the acceptance of divorce'" (122). To Simmons, in this "new marriage, the companionate sexual bond of the spouses took precedence" (127). Yet when children arrived, Simmons writes, "women were expected to be primary caregivers; marriage revisionists were not displacing motherhood as the expected goal of most women's lives" (122-123). Companionate marriage then moves in a variety of directions. Simmons says that there are "three competing versions of companionate marriage," which she labels flapper, African American partnership, and feminist (15).

The flapper marriage, Simmons says, is a "male dominated vision" as a woman should "put her man first" (139). This kind of marriage "undermined female desire and channeled women's energies back to motherhood and the emotional nurturance of men" (142). However, Simmons fails to specify where the companionship is, if men dominate. The second variation is called African American partnership marriage, where "sexual intimacy, greater freedom and privacy for the couple, and women's equality" are stressed. Simmons adds that these notions had to fit the "context of African American life" (150) relating to the need for wives to be employed (162). Is marriage partnership only made up of sexual intimacy, women's equality, and freedom for the couple, or does it involve other kinds of mutuality beyond the sexual bond? Is the partnership marriage in this period primarily African American; was there no white version of marriage partnership? The last version Simmons describes is feminist marriage. Feminism, according to Simmons, is the striving for "the freedom, equality, and sexual and reproductive self-determination of all women" (226). In feminist marriage, "equality in both sex and work was imagined." Simmons admits this was a minority viewpoint at the time, given that most wives were not employed outside the home (165). But why is this last marriage version called feminist rather than egalitarian, as equality applied to both sexes? Also, do not most marriages involve more than what goes on in the bedroom and workplace? What form, for instance, does parenting take in a feminist

marriage?

Another issue arises from Simmons' description of companionate marriage. While she first says the spousal sexual bond takes precedence, she later writes that motherhood remains paramount for women. These may well be competing commitments for women and much source of tension in family life. Both husbands and wives may have shifting allegiances between the marital bond and their devotion to children. What Freud has labeled the Oedipus and family complexes come sharply into play in the varying family alliances. While Simmons' work brings up these issues, they remain unexplored. Her focus on the place of sex in marriage and of women's employment places less emphasis on other forms of sharing.

Kristin Celello's history of marriage and divorce is centered on the concept of making marriage work. By "work," she means what enables marriages to be successful, and doing so requires great effort. In examining advice literature, Celello finds that the responsibility for having a marriage work was to fall on the wife, rather than on both spouses. In response to many social changes, a new marriage ideal, companionate marriage, emerged in the 1920s. Celello sees this vision of wedlock as "a relationship based on love and satisfying sexual relations" with the option of divorce for spouses "trapped in loveless unions" (16). Still the burden of sustaining marital love fell on women, who by the 1950s were urged to promote their husband's careers and their children's emotional well-being. Wives were warned that if they fell down on this job, their husbands could die young, their children could become delinquents, and the marriage could end in divorce (75).

The late 1960s and 1970s brought changes in this perspective with a large spike in the divorce rate, the emergence of second-wave feminism, and a strong conservative reaction to the critique of marriage by radical women. Feminists argued, among other things, that the workload in marriages needed to be shared, rather than just fall on the wife. Fundamentalist Christians, such as Marabel Morgan in her 1974 best selling *The Total Woman*, reasserted that in troubled marriages it was the duty of the wife to win her husband back by being alluring and subordinate.

Marriage remains a staple of American life, and so do the marriage wars. In 2000, 153 million Americans were either married, divorced, or widowed; yet by 2007 for the first time more adult females in the U.S. lived without a husband than those who were married (12, 164). While a presidential campaign may have turned on who should be married, many Americans were opting out of marriage, whether divorcing,

choosing cohabitation, or remaining single. Making marriages work, Celello writes, includes “paying constant attention to the subtle changes in one’s relationship” (155). She chides Betty Friedan for paying “scant attention to the inner workings of the marital relationship, especially the postwar expectation that wives take responsibility for the success of their marriages” (107). Here Celello seems to equate the advice given to women and the actual dynamics within marriages. At the same time, Celello’s book does not make use of the historical records that follow the inner workings of marriages over decades. She does not address why some marriages remained loving and companionate and others become loveless and/or violent; a history that shows the ecstasy and agony of intimate connections is not attempted in this work.

Rebecca Davis is the only one of the three historians who documents the long history of domestic violence. Her subject matter and time frame overlap substantially with that of Celello. Both concentrate on advice given to wives by experts, though Davis’s focus is more on marriage counseling as a profession. As do the other two authors, she defines companionate marriage, which to her involves “affectionate friendship rather than economic or communal obligations” (19). Davis also sees a social dimension to the personal work of therapy. For 80 or more years, she writes, “marriage counselors...taught Americans that the search for more perfect marriages would enrich their lives and build a more prosperous and stable society” (2).

Davis maintains that marriage counselors, social workers, and other therapists were dominated for many years by psychoanalytic theories. Instead of emphasizing the social and economic factors that “shaped” lives, psychoanalysis blamed neurosis, “usually the wife’s,” for marital difficulties. Social worker Florence Hollis’ *Women in Marital Conflict* was highly influential from its 1949 publication to the 1970s. Hollis adopted psychoanalyst Helene Deutsch’s ideas that females were passive, masochistic, and narcissistic. These concepts were then used by Hollis to reinforce the “idealization of women’s domestic role” dominant in the years after World War II (86-7). When the intellectual tide turned after the second wave of feminism made its mark in the 1970s, “Freudian psychology” was “discredited” as both “sexist” and “scientifically invalid” (175).

In a book that has a central theme of how “marriage counseling grew from obscurity to ubiquity,” there is remarkably little coverage of the professionalization of what is now the American Association of Marriage and Family Therapists (AAMFT) and of the varying approaches prominent among marriage and family therapists. Toward the end of her

volume, Davis does say that in the 1980s and 1990s, systems theory and object relations theory “transformed the practice of marital and couples counseling.” Yet her only discussion of a systems approach is that marriage difficulties can be traced to the “web of relationships, social forces,” and other factors that impacted family relationships (226-7). She neither mentions the names of the most prominent family systems theorists, nor does she discuss the influential theories of Philip Guerin on evaluating and treating marital conflicts, nor of Philip Guerin and Thomas Fogarty’s related volume on relationship triangles, nor the use of genograms to map family patterns across generations. In other words, there is a minimum of psychological explication in a work that has the triumph of the therapeutic as its subject.

To Davis’ credit, she does not underplay the darkest side of marital relationships: spousal abuse. From reading the case records, it was evident, Davis declares, that domestic violence occurred in many families, even though before the 1970s there were few references to this subject by marriage counselors. Then, in 1971, an article showed that in 10% of 150 recent divorces, family violence was reported. Rape within marriage was not declared illegal until a 1980 statute was passed in California (92, 191-192). The concerns originated by second-wave feminists helped uncover a destructive legacy of trauma that revealed the limits of the ideal of romantic marital unions.

Overall, these three historical works share an underlying narrative. Despite its rhetoric of shared intimacy, companionate marriage as originally formulated is basically unequal; it conceives of women to blame, neurotic, and destined to be subordinate to their husbands. The recognition of gender restrictions and power dynamics by these historians is needed to understand marital relationships. Still, these books, by and large, omit other crucial aspects of lived experience that emerge when sex and romance meet a long-term, legally binding, co-residential union. Freud’s assertion that the husband is never the right man, as he cannot live up to the idealized vision his wife has of her own father, is not considered here. Neither does one read much about such marriage therapy staples as relationship triangles or distancer and pursuer. Then again, the word love is only mentioned a total of 18 times in the index of these three volumes. By keeping a considerable distance from the realities of marital life, the reader cannot get a sense of the strong, deep and enduring bond between husband and wife, nor why what starts as a passionate attachment can disintegrate into rage-filled physical beatings and worse. Once again, we encounter history without the full range of psychological experience. Unfortunately, these histories lag behind Tolstoy and Freud in



understanding marital happiness and misery.

*Ken Fuchsman's biography may be found on page 38. □*

## Letters to the Editor

### The Psychohistory Forum American Family Meeting

Dear Editor,

On the last Saturday in January, I enjoyed the animated discussion at the Forum meeting on Ken Fuchsman's paper about how the American family has changed since 1960. The main thread was that children now endure more emotional disruption in familial relations than ever before. The last 50 years have seen a dramatic rise in divorce (the U.S. has the highest of any industrialized nation), cohabitation rather than marriage, "blended" families, and children born out of wedlock (more than half of all African American children). This marks a shift from the ideal of the companion marriage popularized in the early 1920s to self-aspiration, enhanced freedom, and egalitarian relationships. Is this change indicative of a culture of narcissism or about self-actualization and democracy? Since the 1960s, society has become more inclusive and women more financially independent, resulting in increased tension in marriages between individuation and what Erickson described as generativity, a concern for the welfare of others. Adults bring unresolved conflicts into parenting and romance, reenacting their own childhood dramas and sometimes treating their child as a sibling rival. The emotional turbulence of divorce likely leads to feelings of loss, rage, and mourning for all—and frequently the parentification of a child. There can be a lack of generational boundaries that a child needs for their own protection and internal control. One anecdote that stands out concerned two divorcing parents vehemently blaming each other over the phone, while their teenage daughter sat alone in a mental hospital after having a LSD-related psychotic break. In the wake of divorce, it can become hard to trust the ones we love.

In Ken's words, the U.S. "is accumulating a deep psychological national deficit" for future generations. "Aloe parenting," collaborative nurturing through diverse forms of childcare, is one way to balance the rupture of families. Additional role models (extended family, au pairs) can help children learn to regulate themselves emotionally and teach them frustration tolerance and delayed gratification. Yet couples have kids

later in life and, in many cases, extended familial support is not available. There is no village to help raise a child. Society has become more mobile, so aunts and cousins are not living across the backyard as it was for Ken Fuchsman growing up in Queens. From my personal experience, I would note that if you wait too long to have kids, the grandparents can't keep up with them! Media becomes a surrogate parent. Perhaps Facebook is the new (bad) breast. The proliferation of technologies like social networking, cell phones, and video games has altered how children relate to others.

New communications have rudely infiltrated the therapeutic setting as well. Psychoanalyst Hanna Turken related the experience of a patient texting someone else during sessions. Psychiatrist/psychoanalyst Alice Maher was quick to point out that the Internet is not all bad: it provides a venue that also allows us to watch primary processes come alive, observe collective regression, and help others see it in themselves. While husbands are more involved in childrearing, the bulk of housework and parenting still falls on women—which translates into a tricky balancing act between care-giving demands, spousal engagement, and job responsibilities. Self-definition can become a heavy burden and self-defeatist when, at the end of the day, there's no home to come home to. Are women or men the adults today? *Are* there any adults? What does it mean if you're called one? Ken Fuchsman suggests mature couples' parenting is related to the degree you both can negotiate conflict, fear, and primal anxiety without becoming brittle. A problematic economy with extended work hours complicates parenting in other ways. Sometimes we aggressively act out repressed work hierarchies at home. Added to the mix is the seductive power of consumer culture increasing the drive for money: *it is* sexy walking into Louis Vuitton.

As never before, child's play is tied to the desire for the acquisition of a premade object. We used to play stickball in a back alley and pretend with dolls made from old socks. Consumerism shrinks kids' imaginations, some suggest, and play revolves around the object more than the activity. One participant remarked her granddaughter has a Barbie doll for every day of the week. A historical marker for this psychosocial trend is Mattel's noisy machine gun, "Thunder Burp," introduced in 1955. This was the first toy to have a televised commercial outside of the Christmas season. (In light of the January 8<sup>th</sup> Arizona shootings of Congresswoman Giffords and others, it is notable that the first merchandised product for kids was a gun.) Our discussion concluded with some thoughts on healthy adult play, Phyllis Greenacre's notion of having a "love affair with the world," and the wish for parents to gain awareness of how they impact their kids.

I want to thank Professors Fuchsman and Szaluta (the moderator), my fellow participants, and the Psychohistory Forum for a most informative and valuable presentation and discussion.

Sincerely yours,  
Molly Castelloe

*Molly Castelloe, PhD, a North Carolinian like her subject, received her doctorate in theater and psychoanalysis from New York University. She lives in Brooklyn, New York, and when not caring for her four- and six-year-old sons, she is a Psychohistory Forum Research Associate, creator and moderator of its online forum, and blogger for psychologytoday.com. Dr. Castelloe may be contacted at msc214@nyu.edu. □*

## The Psychodynamics of the Family Romance Revisited

Dear Editor,

I came away from our January 29, 2011 Psychohistory Forum meeting wanting to express my appreciation to the Forum and Ken Fuchsman of the University of Connecticut. He was generous enough to share the findings that have accrued from teaching his interdisciplinary marriage and family life course. Three essential points that stayed with me are the disappearance of the traditional family, the dominance of individualism at the expense of the family, and the professionalization of parenthood.

**The Fall of the Family:** A large amount of epidemiological data was presented that suggests that the traditional American family with a father working, a mother staying at home, and kids being cared for by them is fading away. Specifically, only 20% of families now have a father at work and a mother at home. As divorce rates rise, the intact family unit is only a distant memory. Much data now exists to suggest that there are numerous consequences for the children. The most overarching and broadest way to see this is that the self is much less defined by the family.

**The Rise of Individualism:** As identification with the family evaporates, individualism has taken its place. Children are now tattooed, treated as trophies, and triumphant. Narcissism is rampant, as is an exhausted state where kids are overscheduled and burnt out in an effort to establish status, identity, and esteem. As the family shrinks there is no longer a place to go home to in order to rest and refuel. It was stated in the seminar that if the child does not take the pathway of competitiveness, they may and often do turn to drugs to cope with their despair. The self is now challenged with the task of self-definition, and it appears that is a difficult if not ex-

hausting task.

**The Professionalization of Parenthood:** As Christopher Lasch predicted in 1976 (*The Culture of Narcissism*), the role of the parent is now fully professionalized and taken over by psychologists, after school coaches, and yoga instructors. The traditional family function as a good enough holding environment is now being performed by various external processes including television, magazines, social networks, electronics, sport teams, and many other organized after school activities. And though these processes often function well, the individual care of a child by a parent who can be a role model, disciplinarian, and source of solace and guidance is now dramatically missing.

**Conclusions:** The group was divided as to whether there was cause for alarm or celebration. It was agreed that our capitalistic culture rapidly adapts to any crisis by offering answers to culture-wide needs. Starbucks gives our overworked society its energy needs and Bikram Yoga gives us our time to quiet down—all for a nominal fee. As the information age exploded 50 years ago, the fitness movement developed to allow us to stay connected to our bodies and not just our information-filled heads. This may be what is occurring now. As the parents leave their family roles behind to seek fame, fortune, and fun away from the home, the culture at large is posed to service the needs of the children. The massive popularity of Facebook is merely one of many examples of the new holding environments—the new families—that watch over the children.

This symposium was a thrilling and comprehensive look at the current state of the American family and how the culture at large is attempting to deal with it. It was such a joy to be able to listen and speak with my colleagues about this matter. The obvious point is that our children have been largely destabilized and are in many ways suffering. It is said that they are the psychological national deficit that we must somehow pay back. They are destabilized and disrupted due to divorce and moving from place to place. But they still need role models, rules, and attention to their needs and fears. If mom and dad won't do it, then someone else must. This is our "Brave New World," greatly organized and made for profit. As someone pointed out towards the end of the session, the thing that seems to be lacking in all this is some quietness, some peacefulness, and some playfulness. This may be because little profit is likely to be found in the silence.

Sincerely yours,  
Tom Ferraro

*Tom Ferraro's biography can be found on page 50. □*

## BULLETIN BOARD

**CONFERENCES:** The next **Psychohistory Forum Work-In-Progress Seminar** will be held in the early fall with **Alice Maher** presenting on applying psychoanalysis to society. We would like to thank **Flora Hogman** and **Jamshid Marvasti** for making presentations at the April 30 Forum meeting on the Psychology of American Exceptionalism and to **Jacques Szaluta** for moderating. **Herbert Barry, Dan Dervin, Paul Elovitz, Ken Fuchsman, Joseph Kramp, Henry Lawton, David Lotto, Allan Mohl, and Denis O'Keefe** are among the Forum members presenting at the International Psychohistorical Association (IPA) meeting on **June 8-10, 2011** at the Lincoln Center Campus of Fordham University. On **July 7-10, 2011**, at the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) annual conference in **Istanbul**, there is a special session, "Munich and Czechoslovakia in a Psychohistorical Context: Re-Evaluating David Beisel's *The Suicidal Embrace*." It is comprised of **David Beisel**, three Czech scholars, and William Meyer (University of Cincinnati). Psychoanalysis and Politics: Call for Papers Summer Symposium, July 31-August 7, 2011, Malmo, Sweden. The National Association for the Advancement of Psychoanalysis (NAAP) 39<sup>th</sup> annual meeting, "Trauma and Resilience-Family Matters," will be on October 22, 2011 at the Marriott Downtown Hotel in Manhattan. The International Forum for Psy-

*The September 2011 Symposium will be on **Blind Spots and Traumatic Reenactments: Clues from the 20<sup>th</sup> Century**. David Beisel's examples include Pearl Harbor (1941), Korea (1950), the Cuban Missile Crisis (1962), the Gulf of Tonkin Incident (1964), the Iran Hostage Crisis (1979), the Gulf War (1991), and 9/11 (2001). Colleagues are encouraged to write a 1,000 word commentary on this thought provoking paper by July 1, 2011. E-mail pelovitz@aol.com for an electronic copy.*

choanalytic Education (**IFPE**) will be holding its next meeting on November 11-13, 2011 at the Lago Mar Resort in Fort Lauderdale.

**DEATHS: Rudolph Binion** died on May 19 after a long period of ill-health stemming from multiple causes. Besides being a member of our Editorial Board and a frequent contributor to our pages, he was a distinguished scholar. A memorial is planned for the September issue and reminiscences are welcome.

**NOTES ON MEMBERS:** On April 28 **Michael Britton** gave the Rutgers University School of Social Work all-day workshop, "Healthy Love: What It Is and How Do We Foster Its Growth." On March 7 **Eva Fogelman** participated in the book signing for *Sexual Violence Against Jewish Women During the Holocaust*, to which she had contributed a chapter. On April 13 Fogelman was the keynote speaker at the Hebrew University conference where she spoke on "The Kestenbergh Holocaust Child Archive: History, Scope, and Uses." She had arranged to have the archive donated to the University and Yad Vashem in memory of the Forum's former member who did so much valuable research on the child victims of the Holocaust.

**OUR THANKS:** To our members and subscribers for the support that makes Clio's Psyche possible. To Benefactors Herbert Barry, David Beisel, and David Lotto; Patrons Andrew Brink, Alice Maher, Jamshid Marvasti, and Jacques Szaluta; Sustaining Members George Brown, Ken Fuchsman, Mary Lambert, Peter Petschauer, and Philip Pomper; Supporting Members Eva Fogelman, Susan Gregory, Bob Lentz, Hanna Turken, and Nancy Unger; and Members Hannah Cohen, Renee Hano Roth, Christine Silverstein, Chuck Strozier, and Richard Weiss. Our special thanks for thought-provoking materials to Francis Beer, Richard Booth, Don Carveth, Molly Castelloe, Charles G. Cogan, Paul Elovitz, Tom Ferraro, Ken Fuchsman, John Hellman, Kurt Jacobsen, Richard Landes, Philip Langer, David Lotto, Wallace Katz, Jamshid Marvasti, Bill Peterson, Daniel Rancour-Laferriere, Michael Rockland, Norman Simms, Frank Summers, Hanna Turken, and Elisabeth Young-Bruehl. To Nicole Alliegro for editing, proofing, and Publisher 2007 application, Caitlin Adams and Devin McGinley for editing and proofing. Also, Paul Salstrom for proofing. Our special thanks to our editors and to our numerous, overworked referees, who must remain anonymous. ▢

## *Call for Papers*

### **Creative Lives: Psychobiographical Approaches The December 2011 Special Issue**

*Psychological Insights on Lives of Creativity (broadly defined), including:*

- Childhood origins of artistic creativity; interactions with mother, father, siblings, and caretakers
- Genetic versus environmental aspects of artistic creativity
- Emotional and psychological consequences of parental dysfunction or loss
- Self-discovery through art
- Creativity as an act of individuality and a resistance to conformity
- Art as sublimation
- Creative illnesses of artists
- Psychological issues of specific artists through their work
- Gender and identity issues for artists
- Case studies of artists' lives and works, for example:
  - playwrights Antonin Artaud, Bertolt Brecht, or Henrik Ibsen
  - painters and sculptors Judy Chicago, Lucian Freud, or Georgia O'Keefe
- Autobiography and the artist
- When and why in Western history the inner life of an artist came to be seen as the core of creativity
- Artists' role and status in American society today compared historically
- Artists and their work: effect (cause) or reflection (mirror) of changes in society's values?
- Artists in different historical eras and their work as expression of the psychohistory of their times
- How societal catastrophes—war, economic depression, political revolution, epidemic, natural disaster—affect artists' creativity and creative output, and the market for art
- Balancing older Freudian concepts regarding creativity as pathological with a more positive approach
- Insights on creative lives from the theories of Freud, Adler, Jung, Sullivan, Winnicott, and others
- Do artists make different analysts and, if so, how does this impact the countertransference of the analyst?
- Does psychotherapy add to or interfere with artistic creativity? If so, how and why?
- The new frontier of creativity: where psychoanalytic theory joins neuroscience
- Reviews/review essays on relevant books, exhibits, films, plays, or shows

**Due October 1, 2011**

Articles of 500-1,500 words are welcome.

Contact guest editor Bob Lentz at [lentz@telusplanet.net](mailto:lentz@telusplanet.net).

Clio's Psyche  
627 Dakota Trail  
Franklin Lakes, NJ 07417

