To the Graduate Council:

I am Submitting herewith a thesis written by Alun R. Hardman entitled "Sport and the Culture of Narcissism: A Critique of the Integration of Work and Play." I have examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science, with a major Physical Education.

William J. Morgan, Major Professor

We have read this thesis
and recommend its acceptance

Accepted for the Council:

Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

STATEMENT OF PERMISSION TO USE

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Master's degree at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville, I agree that the Library should make it available to borrowers under the rules of the Library. Brief quotations from this thesis are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgement of the source is made.

Requests for permission for extensive quotation from or reproduction of thesis in whole or in parts may be granted by the copyright holder.

Signature A. P. Hardman

Date 16th August, 1991

SPORT AND THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM:

A CRITIQUE OF THE INTEGRATION OF WORK AND PLAY

A Thesis

Presented for the

Master of Science

Degree

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Alun R. Hardman

December 1991

Copyright Alun Hardman , 1992

All rights reserved

To My Parents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

There are many people I would like to thank for two happy and memorable years of study The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. First of all, I thank Dr. William Morgan, chairperson of my committee, an inspiring teacher and dedicated scholar, whose guidance, inspiration, and encouragement was essential to the completion of my thesis. Secondly, I thank my committee members Dr. Joy DeSensi, and Dr. Robert Gorman for their assistance and advice in the preparation and writing of my thesis. Thirdly, I thank my fellow Graduate student from Australia, Sammy Jill Harley, for her encouragement and criticism in writing my thesis.

In addition, I owe many thanks to the Faculty and Staff at the Department of Physical Education & Dance for their assistance, and for making my studies possible. In addition, I thank the many good friends that have made my stay in Knoxville a rewarding and unforgettable experience.

Finally, I express the greatest gratitude to my parents for their encouragement and assistance during the last two years of study.

ABSTRACT

The culture of narcissism is the contemporary stage of mass culture and has developed as a result of the particular work practices that are common to an age of bureaucratic capitalism. People now look to leisure pursuits, and in particular the practice of sport to find the enjoyment that they no longer find in work. At the same time, activities such as sport, that are essentially activities to be enjoyed in themselves have been corrupted as they become an extension of the market and a means to further instrumental ends. Sport has became an integrated part of capitalist rationalization.

Christopher Lasch has argued that the solution to the corruption of sport is to integrate work and play, qua sport, in a manner that will bring about the socialization of the means of production. His solution has to be rejected on the basis that the formal logics of work and sport show the two activities to have mutually exclusive ends that cannot be integrated in a manner that makes any sense.

The separation of work and sport along the lines of the separation of liberal institutions can provide a solution to the corruption of sport and also limit the corrupting influence of the market.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER PAGE

INTRODUCTION 1

I. THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM 8

Psychoanalysis and Social Theory 9

Psychoanalysis and the Critical Theory of The Frankfurt School 12

The Narcissistic Personality of Our Time 19

Social Influences on Narcissism 22

II. THE DEGRADATION OF WORK 33

Four Views on Mass Culture 34

Mass Culture and The 'Cultural Revolution' 36

Pluralism and the Defense of Modernization 41

The Capitalist Rationalization of Work 44

Bureaucratic Capitalism and The Culture of Narcissism 46

III. THE DEGRADATION OF SPORT 52

Lasch's Critique of Sport 53

Lasch's Solution to the Corruption of Sport 59

A Critique of Lasch's Theory of Sport 67

IV. SPORT AND LIBERAL SEPARATION 74

The Liberal Art of Separation 77

Completing the Liberal Art of Separation 80

The Liberal Separation of Sport as an Ideal 88

V. SUMMARY 91

BIBLIOGRAPHY 96

VITA 102

INTRODUCTION

Sport is arguably one of the most popular leisure pastime in the advanced liberal democracies of Western Europe and North America. The cultural importance and popularity of sport has increased dramatically during the twentieth century. At the same time, however, the increasing rationalization of sports according to capitalist economic principles has been somewhat problematic.

It is no accident that the increased popularity of sport has coincided with the rise of mass production. The particular market forces that began to shape the world of work in the early twentieth century now also shape the world of sport. This is particularly true of professional and top-level sport.[1] It is now the case that the majority of sportsmen and women participate in sport in order to achieve goods that are external to the activity such as fame, fortune, or health benefits. Although I acknowledge that there are practitioners who still participate in sport purely for the fun and pleasure that playing games itself can bring, this way of playing is not what I call the 'dominant moment' of sport. This thesis, therefore, is not about pick-up basketball and little league baseball, but about the 'popularized' instrumental view of sport that monopolizes public discourse and opinions on the activity.

As the popularity of sports has increased, it has inevitably become a part of mass culture. In other words, the prodigious interest now shown in sport occurs due to an invasion of the same economic forces that organize and control the workaday world. Unfortunately, at the same time that sport has

---

[1] Since commercialism has invaded 'amateur' events such as the Olympic games it is no longer possible to make traditional distinctions between amateurism and professionalism. In any case, I will argue that it is not necessarily commercialization, but rather an instrumental view of sport that leads to the corruption of the practice.

become another means of satisfying market demand, the conventions and traditions that previously surrounded games have been destroyed. When the crucial elements of ritual and ceremony are lost to the demand for profit, sport is trivialized and transformed into a 'spectacle.'

Other social practices, of course, are prone to the same corrupting influences as sport. Politics, law, art, music, and science, for example, are now also not so concerned with maintaining standards of excellence, or in virtuously pursuing the essential characteristics that make up the 'internal goods' of the practice. The pursuit of instrumental ends have compromised these practices in the same way they have corrupted sport.

The aim of this thesis is to locate reasons for the degradation of sport in contemporary Western society, and identify possible steps to rid sport of its corruption. I take as my point of departure the writings of Christopher Lasch, the historian and radical cultural critic.[2] Lasch attempts to understand the socio-political forces that have brought about a 'culture of narcissism' -- the contemporary phase of mass culture in American life. He argues that the degradation of our culture arises from the segregation of work and play. In other words, Lasch argues that the organization of the world of work along capitalist lines no longer allows productive activity to contain elements of play, ritual, art, and drama. He argues that before the advent of industrialization, and in particular, before the social conditions of work created by the division of labor, work held a certain quality of creativity, craftsmanship and autonomy that allowed workers to experience instrumental activity as an enjoyable and

---

[2] In his essay, "Politics and Social Theory: a Reply to My Critics," Salmagundi 46 (Fall, 1979),p.194, Lasch cites the critical theories of the Frankfurt School and in particular the work of Herbert Marcuse, Max Horkheimer and Eric Fromm, and the writings Marx and Freud before them as the major influences on his work.

emancipatory vocation. Lasch maintains that before capitalist rationalization of the workaday world, the useful projects of work were joined harmoniously with the gratuitous pleasure of play.

Lasch argues that the early to middle stages of this century have seen an aggressive adjustment in capitalist ideology -- a transition from the stage known as 'liberal capitalism' to 'bureaucratic capitalism.' This change has meant the further rationalization of work and expanded control over all production processes -- work has become exclusively organized according to the demands of the mass market. Lasch argues that capitalist adjustment has not only administered increased managerial and bureaucratic control over the labor force, but at the same time the pursuit of mindless, repetitive, simple tasks that are often of little worth have divested modern work practices of all remaining pleasure. In other words, increased capitalist organization of work has banished all traces of playful activity from our everyday concerns because play has traditionally been considered an activity that is superfluous to the efficiency demands of profit orientated work. Workers no longer experience the autonomy, gratuitousness, and artistry that were formerly common to work at an earlier point in history. Consequently, people invest more time and effort in recreation than ever before and play has come to be considered an activity that is set-off from the concerns of work. It is only in the pursuit of leisure that workers find release from the world of work and believe that they regain some of the autonomy, gratuity and playfulness that they have lost from their daily routine. Lasch agrees with the Dutch historian, Johan Huizinga, that it is at the point when games take on far more meaning in peoples lives that they become "self-conscious" and prone to "lose something of their eternal child-like innocence" (1984a, p.44). In short, capitalist rationalization has turned play into

a necessary activity; sport compensates the drudgery of work and regenerates our appetite to work. At the same time, increased interest in sport at all levels has transformed playful activity into one of the most marketable commodities in contemporary society. Capitalist adjustment, therefore, has changed the view of the sporting ideal as an activity that essentially contributed little to the necessities of life to one that now performs a vital role in maintaining the contemporary social order. Sport is no longer viewed as an autonomous and spontaneous activity but has become either compensation for the drudgery of work or a function of the market.

According to Lasch, the separation of work and play in contemporary society is therefore a sham, for though sport may formally appear to be different from work, capitalist rationalization cleverly takes advantage of these formal differences. In this way, the gratuitous nature of sport compliments, rather than opposes the instrumental nature of work. Lasch argues that the formal separation of work and sport, therefore, is merely a prelude to their structural and functional integration along capitalist economic principles.

Lasch argues that the solution to the degradation of sport lies in the solution to the degradation of work. And since the degradation of sport occurs due to the segregation of work and play, it is necessary re-integrate work and play. Lasch's solution is an attempt to socialize the forces of production through incorporating elements of play into instrumental activity. Once the integration of work and play has been achieved, Lasch argues that sport would no longer be burdened by instrumental demands as productive activity would already provide engaging, autonomous, enjoyable work practices.

I will argue that the critical failure of Lasch's solution is his disregard for the differences between the logic of work and the logic of sport. Sport is defined

by the formal logic of what it means to play a game. I will argue that this formal account enables sport to maintain standards of excellence and act in an oppositional manner to work. The logic of work revels it to be an activity that attempts to provide the necessities of life in an efficient manner. Work, therefore, is a prudential activity, where specific ends are pursued in an efficient way. Sport, on the other hand, is an activity based on overcoming gratuitous obstacles. Integrating work with the formal logic of games, therefore, would require an activity to be pursued while attempting to achieve two mutually exclusive ends. I will argue that Lasch's solution is untenable, for though it is possible to pursue an activity according to either the logic of play, or the logic of work, to attempt to follow both at the same time makes no sense. In the light of the distinctions that I make between the nature of sport and the nature of work, I will argue that though Lasch's solution does not require work to be an activity performed in a prudential manner, in doing so he turns necessary activity into a quasi-game, and his solution into a farce.

Though Lasch accurately captures how bureaucratic forces have shaped the development of the world of work, and how the integration of work and sport furthers the goals of capitalism, I will argue that a workable and tenable solution to the corruption of sport requires its separation from work. I will argue that a separation of practices and their institutions based on liberal principles can ensure the integrity of sport and all other social practices. Furthermore, I will argue that without the liberal separation of institutionalized practices, any attempt to socialize the means of production by wholesale social change, such as Lasch's integration thesis, is likely to intensify, rather than rectify the problems of sport. I will argue that since institutions separated according to liberal principles must answer to the internal logic of the practice, liberal sports

institutions will be able to promote the gratuitous nature of the formal logic of games in a way that they rarely do at the moment. As the antithesis of instrumental reason, therefore, a primary concern for the gratuitous rationale of the formal logic of games can wall out the corrupting influence of the market. The successful separation of sport, in line with liberal principles can also enable the formal logic of games to become an ideal of liberal separation that other institutions might follow in order to successfully achieve the integrity of their own social practice.

In Chapter One, I will argue with Lasch that the dominant force shaping advanced democratic society is bureaucratic capitalism. I will show that the most striking effect of this late stage of capitalism has been its psychological effect in keeping individuals in a state of dependence and immaturity. Lasch refers to this crippling psychological state as the condition of 'narcissism.' I will present Lasch's argument that narcissism, in its milder form, undermines individual autonomy and makes the contemporary individual dependent on bureaucratic organizations to guide their life. I will also show that traditional forms of authority have been replaced by various bureaucratic institutions. I will argue that the most striking way that bureaucratic corporations are able to exert this form of social control is through the industries of mass culture. The culture of narcissism has shaped our leisure time and cultural tastes in music, art, and entertainment. All aspects of modern life have been affected demands of the market.

In Chapter Two, I will argue that narcissism is a condition that has emerged as a result of what Lasch identifies as the 'degradation of work,' a process brought about by the adjustment of capitalist rationalization and the bureaucratic administration of the world of work. As workers lose control over

the production process, labor tasks become increasingly simple, repetitive and boring. Once autonomy and the need for skilled labor evaporates from the work place, work practices become increasingly alienating. Consequently bureaucratic control and therapeutic administration have become a necessary form of social control.

In Chapter Three, I will argue, with Lasch, that the dominant forces of bureaucratic control that first found their way into the world of work now find their way into sport and all other cultural practices. Sport has become a function of capitalist rationalization. I will reconstruct Lasch's integration thesis as a solution to the corruption of sport. I will argue, however, that Lasch's solution of the degradation of sport misses the mark. The integration of work and sport is not possible because the prudential nature of the logic of work is the opposite of the gratuitous nature of the formal logic of games. I will conclude that Lasch's integration thesis is not a practical solution to the present corruption of sport.

In Chapter Four, I will argue that the separation of work and sport is a necessary step to undo the corruption of sport. I will propose a solution based upon the liberal separation of institutionalized social practices. I will argue that the formal logic of games plays an important role in walling out the corrupting influence of the market and thus can become a representation of the ideal of liberal separation.

In Chapter Five, I will summarize the thesis and briefly show that the narcissistic personality allows the bureaucratic process to become an uncontrolable force of its own, and obstructs further capitalist rationalization. I will argue that the liberal art of separation is therefore necessary as a solution to the culture of narcissism and also prevent the further corruption of sport.

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM

In this chapter I will outline the dominant social forces that shape contemporary life. I will use Christopher Lasch's critique of American society in his books The Culture of Narcissism and The Minimal Self as the basis for this framework. Lasch's social observations are based upon psychoanalytic theory and the distinct clinical psychology of narcissism. The first part of this chapter explains the psychology of the concept of narcissism.

If the concept of narcissism is to be of any value as the basis of a social theory, it is crucial that the relationship between psychology and sociology become clear.[1] The second purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to show how narcissism is a distinct psychological condition inextricably linked to the wider realm of socialization. To illustrate this point, I will show how the condition, in its milder form, appears in everyday life and is characterized by a distinct personality type.

Finally, to illustrate how the prevailing social order encourages the psychological condition of narcissism, I will discuss three major aspects of everyday life that, according to Lasch, show our culture to be a 'culture of narcissism.' They are: the emergence of the egalitarian family; exposure to forces of therapeutic socialization; and the effect of mass culture in breaking down the distinction between reality and illusion.

---

[1] Lasch's main defence of thesis is that his critics fail to understand the psychological particulars of the concept of narcissism and consequently fail to see the the particulars of his social analysis. See "Politics and Social Theory: a Reply to My Critics,"p.195. Lasch makes this same point in the preface to The Minimal Self (New York: Norton, 1984), pp.18-20.

In this Chapter, I will only touch on the various socio-political developments that Lasch believes have contributed to the rise of a culture of narcissism. For the time being, the culture of narcissism can be understood as a reformulation of an older critique of mass culture that argues for a radical reorganization of society, but hopes to escape the failures of the earlier 'cultural revolution' (Lasch,1984c; p.39). Therefore, throughout this chapter the changes in socialization that I refer to should be seen as psychological reactions to specific social, political, and economic forces that exist in this present stage of advanced industrial society (Lasch,1984c, p.28).

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND SOCIAL THEORY

Specific changes in the twentieth century render earlier Marxist critiques of bourgeois society based only on economic theory hopelessly out of date. Lasch argues that the present social order, dominated by the manipulative forces of the market, have given rise to a stage of capitalism that is dominated by bureaucratic organizations. Bureaucratic capitalism gives rise to a complex system of authority and control that cause psychological conflict within the individual. This condition is known as narcissism.

Writing in the tradition of the critical theorists of the Frankfurt School,[2] Lasch states that the psychological processes within narcissism derive their

---

[2] Lasch's writing on psychoanalytic theory in The Culture of Narcissism is influenced by Erich Fromm's The Heart of Man (New York: Harper & Row, 1964) and Theodor Adorno's "Sociology and Psychology", New Left Review no.47, (1968). In his later book,The Minimal Self, Chapters V and VII specifically deals with Marcuse's Eros and Civilization (New York: Vintage Books, 1962), An Essay on Liberation (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969) and Five Lectures (Boston: Beacon Press, 1970) and Adorno and Horkheimer's Dialectic of Enlightenment (New York: Oxford University Press,1947).

understanding and justification from the psychoanalytic theories of Sigmund Freud. He makes it clear that psychoanalysis is a theory about the individual psyche and therefore generalizations made from individual clinical results must bear in mind that groups behave with a distinct collective psyche of their own. However, psychoanalysis attempts to understand the precise psychological relationships between the individual and the group. He states

> . . . it is precisely the subjection of the individual to the group that psychoanalytic theory, through a study of its psychic repercussions promises to clarify. By conducting an intense analysis of individual cases that rest on clinical evidence rather than common sense impressions, psychoanalysis tells us something about the inner workings of society itself, in the very act of turning its back on society and immersing itself in the individual unconscious. (1979a, pp.75-76)

Psychoanalysis is therefore at its sociological best when it least intends to be; when it attempts to expose the inner workings of the unconscious mind.[3]

Neo-Marxist philosophers first used psychoanalytic theory as an attempt to account for the rise of various socio-political orders in the early twentieth century. Leftists wished to understand why socialist revolutions, motivated by the desire to remove existing forms of authoritarianism, only succeeded in re-constituting it in another, often more repressive form. By re-working orthodox Marxist philosophy with Freudian psychology the New-Left hoped to explain why, for example, the Russian revolution deteriorated into Stalinism, why the supposed egalitarian left continued to be dominated by aggressive masculine personalities, and why fascism appealed to so many people despite its blatant resistance to liberating change. The traditional Marxist line on fascism often had nothing more to say other than it represented the final stages of capitalism.

---

[3] Theodor Adorno said ". . . the further it (psychoanalysis) departs from this area (the individual mind), the more tyrannically it has to proceed and the more it has to drag what belongs to the dimensions of outer reality into the shades of psychic immanence."

As neo-Marxist's attempted to identify those elements in society that actively contributed to the undermining of the individual's psyche they recognized in Freud's theories an appropriate line of inquiry (Lasch, 1981b, p.24). The Left were particularly taken with the way that psychoanalysis had understood how people who lacked the ability to act in an autonomous manner sought out leaders for direction. Their interpretations of psychoanalytic theory led to explanations as to why society reacts in a particular way to specific social forces, and why those who wish to influence social change are, or are not accepted as legitimate sources of authority.

An outline of the Neo-Marxist interpretation of psychoanalytic theory reveals two things. First, that the original intention of psychoanalysis intended to relate the psychological to the social -- particularly in the context of understanding of the nature of dominant social forces, and secondly, the historical development of psychoanalysis as a social theory illuminates the way that the Left falsely interpreted Freudian psychology in order to promote their own particular theory of society. It is crucial, Lasch argues, to recognize where accurate interpretation of Freud's work breaks away from the confines of psychological principles and becomes a theory that is used in order to suit a particular political perspective and follow a pre-determined course.[4]

---

[4] There are three strands to the Neo-Marxist interpretation of psychoanalysis. Lasch is most critical of the early Freudian revisionists such as Fromm and Reich for their enduring reliance on early Freudian theories. Lasch's own interpretation of psychoanalysis, brought up to date in the form of narcissism, comes to the same pessimistic conclusions as the second group of theorists represented by Horkheimer and Adorno. He is therefore doubtful of Marcuse's overly optimistic view that psychoanalysis will provide the basis of a cultural change. (See "Politics and Social Theory," p.195; "Recovering Reality," Salmagundi 42,(Summer-Fall 1978),pp.45-47 and "The Freudian Left and Cultural Revolution," New Left Review 129,(1981),pp.23-34 as well as The Culture of Narcissism and The Minimal Self).

PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE CRITICAL THEORY OF THE FRANKFURT SCHOOL

The Early Interpretations of Freud

Neo-Marxist's were more interested in Freud's earlier work because it provided a ready made, and acceptable explanation for the source of authoritarianism in society. The starting point of early Freudian theory originated in the most common and primary psychological experiences of the child; the authority of the patriarchal family.

Neo-Marxist's argued that the reality principle, represented by the ego, is triumphant over the pleasure principle, represented by the id. In other words, consciousness overcame instinct (Marcuse, 1962, pp.21-54). The development of the conscious ego, influenced by parental authority, dominated the child's impulsive drives. These findings in Freud's early theories proved to the Left that the conflict between the ego and the id found its foremost expression in the child's experiences of paternalistic authority.[5]

The conscious ego, fully aware of reality, acted as a safety valve to the instinctual drives of the id, thus causing constant conflict between the two entities. The ego, being the only entity conscious of the battle, faced sub-conscious condemnation for this conflict in two ways. It not only had to deal with the fact that it constantly thwarted the gratifications pursued in the id, but that it

---

[5] Lasch is referring to Erich Fromm's The Heart of Man. Fromm's analysis was based on Freud's earlier work. The conclusions he drew were based on the assumption that within the individual there existed only two conflicting entity's, the ego and the id. Fromm later distanced himself from this early simplistic conclusion, recognizing that Freud's later work, particularly the formation of the superego, made his early findings redundant. In doing so, Fromm alienated the Frankfurt School because his misgivings about early psychoanalytic theory contradicted the wider social implications that the Frankfurt School had drawn from early psychoanalytic theory. In other words, Fromm doubted that parental authority was exclusively responsible for the formation of authoritarian personality types.

was the only entity conscious of the destabilizing condition caused by its prohibitions.

Freud argued that along with the conscious development of the ego, the sub-conscious feelings of condemnation that now developed were constituted into a second consciousness, the superego.[6] The superego was understood as the subconscious attempt to defend the id's onslaught on the ego. Freud, therefore, rejected his theory that conflict only took place at the conscious level between the ego and the id, and concentrated on the deeper level of the subconscious battle between the ego and superego.

The Left argued that the development of the superego indicated the way that the young child internalized the reprimands of parents to such a degree that these feelings developed into guilt and fear of reprisal. The young child, having a limited understanding of reality, and of right and wrong, was unable to rationalize the reprimands of parents. Censure, in particular the sterner discipline of the father, prevented the fulfillment of the child's instinctual drives. The superego, therefore, was an expression of the way that the young child developed an early internalized fear of repression and parental authority. Saddled with the internalized concepts of guilt, repression and authority, as the child became an adult, this repression was reconstituted in an authoritarian personality of its own. The Left concluded that "sons overthrow the father but internalize his authority and reimpose it on women and children."[7] Marcuse

---

[6] Lasch points out that it is important to remind ourselves that when talking in Freud's psychological terms we run the risk of thinking that the id, the ego, the superego,(-and now the ego ideal and narcissism) as distinct entities, each with a personality and mind of their own. He states that it is more appropriate to think of these terms as representing different forms of mental activity. We should, he points out, think of terms such as "desire, self-censorship, self-defence, and so on . . ." The Minimal Self, footnote p.176. The terminology only remains useful as long as we are able to prevent mental activity being confused for actual things.

[7] The Minimal Self, p.24. Lasch points out in "The Freudian Left and Cultural Revolution," New Left Review 129, (1981),p.26 that patriarchy and particularly the power structure within the family has always been a popular target for social criticism, regardless of political bent. He states; "Not

concluded that Freud's analysis of the superego was extremely important in helping to understand the developments that had taken place within contemporary society;

> The development by which the originally conscious struggles with the demands of reality (the parents and their successors in the formation of the superego) are transferred into an unconscious automatic reactions, is of the utmost importance for the course of civilization (1962, p.32).

The Left argued that the reproduction of authoritarianism would be inevitable as long as the internalized fear of parental authority within the superego remained unadjusted. The development of a harsh superego, marked by severe self-criticism, meant that the impulsive urges of the id could find no refinement. The consistent condemnation of the superego made it impossible for the id to refashion its desires in a more productive and fulfilling manner.[8]

The Later Freud: Conflict Between Dependence and Omnipotence

Freud's later re-working of early childhood psychology argued that early psychic unease was due to the child's unsure attempts to come to terms with lost omnipotence, and dependence on others. Freud saw that the resulting

---

just the radical left but the political culture of liberalism has been deeply colored by a revolt against the discredited patriarchy of priests and poets and divinely anointed kings, and the critique of the family represents one of the most enduring ideological expressions of this revolt."

[8] The Freudian left cited the development of the Oedipus Complex as the main reason for infantile psychic development. Briefly, the left cited that the repression of the child's genital sexuality by patriarchal authority internalized admonishment and found its expression in a punitive superego. The early psychoanalyst, Wilhelm Reich, argued that the Oedipus complex was exclusively responsible for the development of a punitive superego,(see Lasch,"The Freudian Left and Cultural Revolution"), whereas Marcuse in One Dimensional Man warned that a theory that confined itself to genital sexuality was in danger of 'repressive desublimation.' The key argument here, however, is not the degree of influence the Oedipus complex has on the superego but whether the Oedipus complex, as the left unanimously agreed, leads inevitably to a infantile, punishing and repressive superego.

development of conditions such as the Oedipus complex, in the light of this new theory, required a major re-investigation and comprehensive expression.[9]

Freud argued that before birth the child does not experience pain, hunger, or desire, and lives a blissful existence unaware of the dangers of the real world. In this state, the child develops a "taste of complete self-sufficiency and omnipotence" (Lasch, 1984c, p.167). With the experience of birth, the child first encounters the pain of separation, dependence, desire and its gratification. Although these new experiences by no means make life unbearable, they bring the knowledge that existence is finite, and in order to survive the child must depend on others. The child realizes that all wishes can no longer be instantly gratified and that their own desires do not always take center stage. The developing child's frustration is furthered by the knowledge that dependence originates from a source that can both provide or thwart their desires. Freud explained this conflict in the following way; on the one hand the infant wishes to idealize parents because only they can restore the sanctuary and harmony represented by the womb, and on the other, faced with the knowledge that parents can also defer or refuse gratification, the child fears feelings that re-enforce the reality of their dependent, insignificant and powerless state. The constant conflict between the urge to recapture former omnipotence without acknowledging that this state can only be achieved with the help of others has become the basis of contemporary psychological complaints.

---

[9] It is on this basis, Lasch argues, that the Neo-Marxist interpretation of psychoanalysis now became redundant. Although Marcuse recognized that the formation of the superego was extremely important for understanding psychological development, Lasch argues that he and the rest of the Freudian-left did not re-think their conclusions in the light of Freud's later work. Instead, they continued to base their sociology on Freud's theory of the 'primal horde' and consequently departed from the critical core of psychoanalysis, re-assimilating psychoanalytic ideas to an older socialist critique of the patriarchal family. See "The Freudian Left and Cultural Revolution,"p.25 and particularly The Minimal Self, pp.231-233.

In the light of his later writings, Freud recognized that although the child's superego may consist of internalized prohibitions, these internalized images need not bear resemblance to parental figures (Lasch, 1984c, p.175). The superego, therefore, does not always represent the unconscious internalization of repressive parental authority as the Freudian left were wont to conclude. Instead, Freud argued that the unresolved punishing superego was more likely to reflect the individual's own aggressive impulses (Lasch, 1984c, p.175). Childhood rage, for example, resulting from overbearing anxiety over separation and dependency is re-directed by the superego against the self, and though these impulses may initially be turned toward parental authority, they are reconstituted as repressive and violent images of authority in their own right. In this way, they are directed against the ego. The punitive superego, therefore, is the source of reconstituted repression and authoritarian personality types. Lasch states,

> . . . the superego consists of the individual's own aggressive impulses, directed initially against his parents or parental surrogates, projected onto them, re-internalized as aggressive and domineering images of authority, and finally redirected in this form against the ego (1984c, p.175).

Freud came to the conclusion that a repressive and vindictive superego was more likely to be the outcome of anxiety born out of separation with the mother and the fear of her retribution. The Oedipal complex, if anything, was more likely to dilute the punitive superego of infancy -- the fear of reprisal for having sexual fantasies is an impersonal source of authority and appeals to universal ethical norms, whereas the confrontation of separation with the mother is likely to arouse a more personal response (Lasch, 1984c, pp.176-177). Even so, normal development is probable when the child accepts patriarchal authority that denies the possibility of sexual reunion with the

mother, and at the same time does not fear that this separation will lead to maternal revenge. Lasch concludes;

> Psychoanalytic theory leads on the whole, to the conclusion that normal psychological development cannot be understood simply as the substitution of patriarchal authority for the pleasure principle or as an absolute separation from the mother. It leads to the conclusion in other words, that a satisfactory resolution of the Oedipus complex accepts the father without betraying the mother (1984c, p.177).

In other words normal psychological development is most likely when common sense perceptions develop within the ego.

The Ego Ideal and Narcissism

Psychoanalysis is therefore a theory that has developed from the psychology of early childhood defenses against the fear of separation and dependence. These conflicts find their foremost expression in the ego ideal, a representation of the mature development of an individuals feelings and thoughts. The ego ideal can develop either an admiring, respectful, and idealized image of parental authority, or it can continue to internalize the repressive authority of the punitive superego.

Lasch points out that indecision and lack of agreement as to what the ego ideal should be reflects the contradictory mental activity that takes place in every individual. He considers that since the ego ideal is essentially an effort to recapture the earliest illusions of self-sufficiency and grandiosity, the controversy surrounding the ego ideal is not based on the actual function of this entity, but the way an individual goes about achieving independence:

> It shows how the impulse to restore those illusions expresses itself in regressive fantasies of a magical symbiosis with the world or absolute self sufficiency but also in a loving exploration of the world through art, playful scientific activity, curiosity, and activities of nurture and cultivation (1984c, p.179).

Early defences against separation, or what Freud labelled primary narcissism, also have a profound influence on the ego ideal (Lasch, 1984c, p.182). If the individual can tread the middle ground between accepting dependence without compromising autonomy, the ego ideal will be a progressive, evolutionary, and fulfilling one. On the other hand, individuals who are unwilling to recognize that they depend on others and cling to the illusion of self-sufficiency are more likely to develop self-deceiving, fantastic ego ideals. This personality type is marked by a refusal to acknowledge the separate existence of the self for fear of the attending loneliness and insecurity this situation brings -- it is a self that constantly attempts the impossibility of reaffirming lost power and invincibility. Individuals who display these psychological qualities have been identified as narcissistic personalities. Narcissism, therefore, involves a loss of self-esteem and the impossible pursuit of perfection. The narcissistic individual has an pervasive desire to live out a life freed from the feelings of desire and need. Lasch concludes;

> Narcissus drowns in his own reflection, never understanding that it is a reflection. He mistakes his own image for someone else and seeks to embrace it without regard to his safety. The point of the story is not that Narcissus falls in love with himself, but, since he fails to recognize his own reflection, that he lacks any conception of the difference between himself and his surroundings (1984c, p.184).

The psychological condition of narcissism is a regressive, rather than progressive condition. Lasch's main objection to narcissism is that it develops personality types that contribute to the impoverishment of our society and our culture. He is therefore critical of theorists who think that "strategies of

narcissistic survival" will bring about individual and social changes for the better.[10]

THE NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY OF OUR TIME

The rise of narcissism as the dominant psychological condition of our time gains support from observations of clinical psychologists. The growing recognition of the importance of the ego reflects a corresponding change from the study of classical neuroses to less clearly defined conditions. Lasch argues that patients seeking psychological help today display few extreme conditions but are more likely to complain "of vague, diffuse dissatisfactions with life" and feel their "amorphorous existence to be futile and purposeless."[11] They describe "subtly experienced yet pervasive feelings of emptiness and depression, . . . violent oscillations of self-esteem," and "a general inability to get along."[12] The narcissistic individual gains "a sense of heightened self-esteem only by attaching themselves to strong, admired figures whose acceptance he or she craves and by whom he or she needs to feel supported."[13] Clinical evidence highlights that narcissism has no singular cause, but is a condition inevitably linked to the wider realm of socialization.

---

[10] The theoretical basis of this assertion can be found in Marcuse's Eros and Civilization, and although he acknowledged that the individual was prone to psychological manipulation the basic thrust of the book was ultimately in a positive direction.

[11] The Culture of Narcissism, pp.80-81. Lasch's evidence to support narcissism as the dominant psychological condition in contemporary society comes from the observations of many clinical psychologists, practicing in the field and reporting these common observations. Otto Kernberg, Thomas Freeman, Peter L. Giovaccini, Heinz Kohut, Annie Reich and Melanie Klein are some of his most frequent sources.

[12] Op. Cit.

[13] Op. Cit.

Many critics of narcissism refuse to recognize the distinct relationship between the clinical form of the condition and the influence of social forces. Lasch points out, however, that the connection between sociology and psychoanalytic theory of narcissism can be discerned in the less extreme narcissistic personality traits visible in everyday life. He states that these familiar characteristics are "dependence upon the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings" (1979a, p.74). Critics also fail to see what Lasch calls the secondary characteristics of narcissism; pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, and nervous self-deprecatory humor (1979a, p.74). Lasch argues that our culture is also responsible for "the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women" (1979a, p.75).

Narcissistic depression and loneliness arise from the deeper psychological fact of separation and dependence. The pathological narcissist does not despondently withdraw from social interaction, but erects flimsy barriers to hide feelings of inadequacy and continues to harbor inner rage. The shallowness of the narcissists inner life, along with the deep distrust and fear of others intensifies a feelings of inauthenticity (1979a, p.85).

One of the main strategies the narcissist employs to overcome the feelings of its own insignificance is to seek the approval and admiration of others. In personal relationships, for example, the narcissist exploits partners without getting emotionally involved. The narcissist distinct fear of commitment and emotional ties is due to their overwhelming inability to relive happy

experiences and past memories, or find any meaning in early childhood experiences;

> These patients, though often ingratiating, tend to cultivate a protective shallowness in emotional relations. They lack the capacity to mourn, because the intensity of their rage against lost love objects, in particular against their parents, prevents their reliving happy experiences or treasuring them in memory. (Lasch, 1979a, p.81)

Narcissistic patients outwardly conform to the norms of social intercourse more out of the fear of being socially snubbed than from a sense of guilt. At the same time, narcissists, at every opportunity attempt to assert their own omnipotence, genuinely believing that social rules that apply to others do not apply to themselves. For example, the narcissist will attempt to exploit others in the work-place and in relationships, but if the tables are turned they are quick to expose such tactics.

Clinicians note that the treatment of the narcissistic personality, although not impossible, has very little chance of success because narcissism has qualities that make for success in contemporary society.[14] They note however, that an inability to resolve narcissism has severe consequences for later life. Narcissism is essentially a condition of youth and immaturity, therefore, narcissistic attempts to deny the inevitability of aging intensify, but can bring little success and emotional peace. As the narcissist grows old, unable to identify with their past, or develop a growing solidarity through meaningful relationships and a sense of belonging with others, they continue to compete for the wealth, power, dynamism and fame that comes easier to a younger generation (Lasch, 1979a, p.87).

---

[14] The Culture of Narcissism, pp.91-96. Lasch argues that narcissism has many traits that make for success in a bureaucratized society, particularly within corporate organizations. I will deal with this point in more detail in the next chapter.

SOCIAL INFLUENCES ON NARCISSISM

All societies develop particular psychological reactions to the dominant social, political, and economic forces that shape that society: the study of psychiatric pathology has revealed narcissism to be the dominant clinical condition in contemporary society. Narcissism is marked by a distinct personality type that comes about due to specific changes within the structure of our society and culture. Lasch argues that the narcissistic personality type has developed due to "bureaucracy, the proliferation of images, therapeutic ideologies, the rationalization of the inner life, the cult of consumption, and in the last analysis from changes in family life and from changing patterns of socialization."[15] These aspects play an inescapable part of our everyday social interaction and therefore have an important effect upon individual socialization.

Narcissism and the Family

Changes in relationships within the modern family have taken place due to the specific social, economic and cultural conditions of our time. The contemporary structure of the family, according to Lasch, "is a product of an egalitarian ideology, therapeutic intervention and consumer capitalism" (1979a, p.185). The social reformation the nineteenth century, the women's suffrage movement, the demand for sexual equality, and the abolition of slavery and child labor established egalitarian principles as the basis of social life in the new American nation. This egalitarian ideology, however, has also undermined

[15] The Culture of Narcissism, p.74, Lasch restates this claim in The Minimal Self, p.185 saying "Three lines of social and cultural development stand out as particularly important in the encouragement of a narcissistic orientation to experience: the emergence of the egalitarian family, so called; the child's increasing exposure to other socializing agencies besides the family; and the general effect of modern mass culture in breaking down the distinctions between illusions and reality."

traditional parental roles in child rearing; fathers now neglect their paternal duties, unsure about how to discipline children without being oppressive; mothers take their added importance as a right at every opportunity to interfere and undermine the child's natural tendency to seek independence through exploration of the world. At the same time, new socializing agencies have lawfully taken over many of the parental duties that were previously the exclusive responsibility of the family (1984c, p.186). The school system, child-care professions and, more than ever, the industries of mass culture, perform many of the disciplinary, custodial and educative responsibilities previously performed within the family.

Lasch argues that the new forms of socialization have brought about different problems particular to contemporary society. Children grow up in a world of sexual promiscuity, materialism, and complex social relationships long before they are capable of understanding and rationalizing the complications of adult life (1984c, p.187). The 'sophistication' of the young, often commended for introducing children to the realities of life at an early age, occurs without the appropriate advice and guidance of adult experience and is really a reflection of parental neglect. Predominantly concerned with keeping a fragile peace, parents substitute spontaneous feelings of love, involved parental guidance, and warranted discipline for the distractions of mass culture. They assert that they only want the 'best' for their children, when in reality the best boils down to an array of mass produced 'high-tech' toys and gimmicks. Lasch concludes that in our permissive society liberal attitudes have spilled over into the privacy of the family and the raising of the young. The overwhelming concern for individual rights has played a significant part in destroying family unity (1979a, p.281).

The assault on the traditional family, however, has not gone unnoticed. Many sociologists recognize that an egalitarian ideology, taken to an extreme, has destroyed the inner structure of the family and prevented the appropriate development of the young. However, efforts to counter these effects, and to improve home life, have died in their infancy as institutionalized alternatives, designed to bolster the family against outside forces that weaken it, only served to further undermine the traditional functions of the family. When marriage counselors, family therapists, social workers and academic experts offer conflicting alternatives as to how to carry out the duties of the family, their advice only serves to further erode any remaining confidence that modern day parents have in their own common sense perceptions of family life. The growth of expert advice on how to raise a child is part of a greater social trend within the culture of narcissism -- the rise of a 'therapeutic sensibility.'

The Therapeutic Climate of Narcissism

The therapeutic outlook promoted by professionals "upholds a normative schedule of psyco-social development" (Lasch, 1980a, p.430). Doctors, health care experts, and pediatricians have come to define our normal development in medical terms, and any deviation from that medical norm is a sign that we are sick and need treatment. Weak-willed individuals take their first step towards a therapeutic lifestyle when they allow doctors and psychiatrists to tell them how they should feel. Lasch argues that the individual who deliberately seeks out therapeutic treatment displays classical symptoms of narcissistic dependence;

> Therapy legitimates deviance as sickness, but it simultaneously produces a patient unfit to manage his own life and delivers him into the hands of a specialist. As therapeutic points of view and practice gain general acceptance, more and more people find themselves disqualified in effect from the performance of adult responsibilities and become dependent on some form of medical authority. The psychological expression of this dependence is narcissism. (1980a, p.431)

Overrun by anxiety, depression, vague dissatisfactions, and a sense of inner emptiness, the psychological individual of the twentieth century turns to therapists and the caring professions for solutions to their personal problems. Lasch points out that in all but extreme cases, therapeutic remedies have little chance of success as the condition itself thrives on the attention and self-exploration of the treatment process. If narcissism is marked by a weak ego, then it is reasonable to conclude that the pseudo-self insight encouraged by therapy, and obsessions with health regimens and revolutionary psychological self-help programs are just as likely to exacerbate the patient's narcissistic condition as cure it.

Mass Culture as an Agent of Social Control

The changes within the family and the growth of a therapeutic climate cannot be understood as unrelated and isolated accidents of contemporary life. They have taken place due to specific changes within an industrial society based on mass production and mass consumption. The history of industrialization shows that the original understanding of technical rationality as the intention to satisfy basic material needs has been replaced by a rationale that views economic gain as an end in itself. Lasch states;

> In the period of primitive accumulation, capitalism subordinated being to having, the use value of commodities to their exchange value. Now it subordinates possession itself to appearances and measures exchange value as a commodity's capacity to confer prestige -- the illusion of prosperity and well-being. (1979a, p.137)

Contemporary acquisitiveness therefore arises not out of the genuine need to escape poverty but out of psychological feelings of self-doubt that modern advertising methods instill within the individual (Lasch, 1984c, p.27). Working hand in hand with the contemporary capitalism, marketing techniques promote both the psychological discontent, and the mass produced solution to an individual's 'problem' (Lasch, 1984c, p.27; p.29). According to Lasch, therefore, production and consumption are a part of the same process; "Instead of thinking of consumption as the antithesis of labor, as if the two activities called for completely different mental and emotional qualities, we need to see them as part of the same process" (1984c, p.27).

Lasch argues that modern advertising methods produce two distinct psychological effects. First, they divert attention away from the dissatisfactions that emanate from the conditions of work, and secondly, they turn this same alienation into a commodity (1979a, p.138). The ideology of commodities upholds consumption as the answer to our deepest problems and dissatisfactions; consumption "plays seductively on the malaise of industrial civilization," offering relief from the boredom of work, and an escape from the futility and emptiness of our lives (Lasch, 1979a, p.138). Lasch argues, however, that consumption can never completely resolve our discontents, for modern advertising methods deliberately "institutionalize envy and its attending anxieties" in order to generate a seemingly endless desire for commodities (1979a, p.139). Lasch argues that the ideology of consumption has altered people's conceptions of themselves and the world around around them. As a

consumer, the individual comes "not merely to measure himself against others but to see himself through others' eyes" (1984c, p.29). The contemporary individual learns that both in social life and at work the projection of an image often counts for more than one's honesty, experience, knowledge, and skill. Consequently, Lasch argues that the narcissistic individuals obsession to live out life as a series of superficial images rather than dwell within authenticity contributes to a distinct inability to distinguish the realities and illusions of the world. He states;

> Commodity production and consumerism alter perceptions not just of the self but of the world outside the self. They create a world of mirrors, insubstantial images, illusions increasingly indistinguishable from reality. The mirror effect makes the the subject an object; at the same time, it makes the world of objects an extension or projection of the self. It is misleading to characterize the culture of consumption as a culture dominated by things. The consumer lives not so much surrounded by things as by fantasies. He lives in a world that has no objective or independent existence and seems to exist only to gratify or thwart his desires.[16]

The Blurred Distinction Between Reality and Illusion

Lasch argues that the extreme nature of modern society leads to the breakdown in the distinction between illusion and reality (1984c, p.131). Everyday events point to a society of violence, corruption and immorality. Lasch argues that these events, rather than intensifying our awareness of reality or bringing about an added sense of urgency for social change, have the curious effect of nullifying our sensibilities and reducing our reactions to a state of apathetic indifference. Lasch argues that the contemporary styles of mass communication are responsible for dulling our awareness of the realities of the

[16] The Minimal Self, p.30. Lasch also gives an account for the specific psychological processes that brings about the belief that commodities project an image of the self, See pp.193-196.

world, and at the same time they characterize it as one of extremity.[17] The mass media present everyday events as 'images' and adopt a style of reporting that presents reality as series of fantastic events . News stories, for example, rarely attempt to discuss underlying issues and are only concerned with presenting facts. Little attempt is made to explore the significance and implications that such events have upon our lives and our immediate community. Lasch notes that when mass media restrict their attention to present 'the facts' and make no attempt to draw out broader interpretations of the news they report, we adopt survival strategies that make us immune to the significance and seriousness of everyday reality (1984c, p.131). For example, when murder, natural disasters and other extreme events are dramatized in the news with the superficiality of images, the ability to distance ourselves from reality diminishes and illusions can no longer provoke the reaction they intend. Lasch states that an "overexposure to manufactured illusions soon destroys their representational power. The illusion of reality dissolves, not in a heightened sense of reality as we might expect, but in a remarkable indifference to reality" (1979a, p.160).

Narcissism and the Degradation of Art

The growing inability to distinguish between reality and illusion is most apparent in those 'cultural arts'[18] that have traditionally relied upon the distinction between reality and illusion for their success. Lasch argues that art has found it increasingly difficult to say anything about the torrid nature of contemporary life, "not because it takes extreme situations as its subject --

---

[17] The effect that the mass media has on contemporary culture is great, but here I am concerned with the particular way that they blur the difference between reality and illusion. (See "Truth and Credibility" in The Culture of Narcissism, pp.140-141)

[18] By 'cultural arts' I am referring to a broad ranging group of social practices that are different from work practices in that they do not always serve an instrumental purpose. Included in this group is visual art (paintings and sculpture), music, drama, literature, dance and games, and so on.

though it does much of that too -- but because the experience of extremity threatens to undermine the very possibility of an imaginative interpretation of reality" (1984c, p.131). In other words, as everyday life becomes more and more outrageous, art's ability to represent and exaggerate the realities of life are destroyed. Instead, the popularization and commodification of art reveals that art has lost its distance from reality and can no longer offer a representational critique of the contemporary bureaucratic way of life.

Cultural radicals in the fifties and sixties recognized the breakdown in art's representational capability and the practices gradual assimilation to the demands of the market. They attempted to preserve the integrity of the practice by developing a theory of 'autonomous art' in order to bring to consciousness art's commodification and corruption. Avant-garde artists, for example, argued that art produced from objects abundant in everyday life, when placed out of context (i.e. in an art exhibition), denied that object its original useful intention, thus mirroring the way that the prevailing social order denied the uselessness of art. Practitioners of pop art, for example, took their subject matter from the world of mass production, placing giant hamburgers and coca-cola bottles in art galleries, thus blurring "the boundary between illusion and reality, art and everyday life."[19] The avant-garde argued that in an age that prevents art's traditional ability to represent reality via illusion, only a "drastic reduction of art's field of vision" could enable it to retain its critical function. And in what became known as 'minimal' art they thought they had found "the survival strategy par excellence" (Lasch,1984c, pp.131-132).

---

[19] The Minimal Self, p.142. Similar intentions can be found in "ready-made" art, which confers artistic status on common objects just by labeling them as art; conceptual art, the elimination of the artist by pre-planning every detail of the pieces production; and the "earth artists," the recording of random effects in the natural world.

Lasch notes that this minimalist sensibility is not unique to painting and sculpture but also influences contemporary styles in literature, music, dance and drama (1984c, p.143). In the attempt to deny that art could be assimilated to capitalist reality, 'minimalism' also promoted the deliberate depersonalization of the work of art stressing anonymity and the unimportance of the artist intention. Most of all, minimalism aimed to deny the importance of craftsmanship and technical skill that were required to produce traditional artwork.

Lasch points out that the minimalist style in art has also been a concern of the Frankfurt School. Walter Benjamin, in The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction, argued that in an industrialized technological society, the mass production of art "emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual," destroys the bourgeois qualities of "aura," mystery and uniqueness, and "the location of its original use value" (1968, p.226). Cultural radicals, aiming to democratize culture, argued that the absence of artistic flair, tradition and ritual, and the rejection of technique would free art from the monopolization of creative individuals. At this point, they argued, art would become an autonomous activity and be open to the masses, providing further opportunities for experimentation and new forms of expression. The avant-garde concluded that minimal art was not only free from the restraining traditions of pre-industrial capitalist society, but also defied assimilation to all existing modes of interpretation. And though minimal art could not serve an instrumental purpose for contemporary industrial society, at the same time radicals argued that minimal art represented a critical force to the existing order for it revealed how mass culture attempts to a breakdown people's perceptions of reality and illusion.

Minimalism accurately reflects the effect that a society dominated by the forces of mass production and mass consumption has had on degrading the traditional meaning of culture. Lasch argues that minimalism and all theories of autonomous art that hope to save art from its corruption only contribute to its downfall. He argues that minimalism is a theory that cannot explain how a conception of art that claims to be functionless can at the same time be critical of the existing social order. What these radicals fail to realize is that even if art can be conceived as an autonomous ideal, there is no guarantee that such a view of art can also have a critical social function. Gerald Graff argues that "our ability to recognize perversion as a perversion very much depends upon our ability to refer to a common world" (1978, p.23). In other words, if the intention of minimal art is to indicate the promise of a new social order, the ability to define the new intention of art other than in the conventional language and interpretations of existing bourgeois reality is impossible. Peter Burger clarifies this point

> The avant-garde artist counters such functionlessness not by an art that would have consequences within the existing society, but rather by the principle of sublation of art in the praxis of life. But such a conception makes it impossible to define the intended purpose of art. (1984c, p.51)

Radical art has problems claiming a purpose beyond its aesthetic quality because in claiming to negate existing reality, minimalism must also reject all representational claims it wants to make about an imaginary future. In any case, a theory of autonomous art presupposes that contemporary society still makes representational demands of art when its reification as a commodity indicates that it clearly does not (Lasch, 1979a, p.159).

Lasch concludes that the separation of art in industrial society cannot free itself from capitalist ideology. Instead, he argues that the separation of art entails its integration as a function of the dominant social forces, and its place in

the commodity market. The argument he advances here is important because he uses the same line to show that the attempt to separate work and sport in industrialized society has led to the corruption of sport.

The discussion about minimal art and the present status of our cultural practices in general, points to changes influenced by increasing industrialization and rationalization of our society. Unfortunately, the debate about the autonomy of art highlights how the ensuing critique of mass culture has drifted away from a discussion about the role that capitalist rationalization has played in shaping contemporary society to one concerned with the issues of aesthetic tastes and standards. Lasch concludes that "the phenomenon of mass culture, too often treated from the point of view of its impact on aesthetic standards, raises questions about technology, not about the level of public taste" (1984c, p.25; 1981b, pp.9-10).

By contrast, Lasch's critique of the culture of narcissism questions the validity of the capitalist ideology and the the ideals that capitalist rationalization attempts to achieve. In the next chapter, I will consider Lasch's argument that the capitalist rationalization of the world of work leads to a society without virtuous social practices or moral communities, but a life dictated by the demands of the market.

CHAPTER II

THE DEGRADATION OF WORK

The denunciation of American consumerist culture has a long history, but developments in the late twentieth century have brought added urgency to the critique of mass culture. There have been four major responses to the contemporary cultural crisis: first, conservatives criticize falling cultural standards without acknowledging that the economic policies they endorse may contribute to cultural decline; second, liberals and neo-conservatives criticize consumption, but do not extend their critique to connect consumerism to a process of social control initiated by changes in the conditions of work; third, pluralists argue that modernization has dissolved class conflict and brought about the true democratization of society -- they dismiss the criticism of mass culture on the basis that it advocates an elitist and nostalgic view of culture; fourth, Lasch and the New Left argue that the culture of narcissism, so often treated from the point of view of aesthetic taste, is best considered as a critique of the way that technology has become an effective means of social control. Lasch argues further that the capitalist rationalization of work, not only leads to repressive working conditions but also contributes to the rise of a consumerist culture that threatens to corrupt all spheres of life.

In this chapter I will compare the critique of 'mass culture' initiated by the Left in the fifties and sixties with the contemporary debate on the culture of narcissism. I will then evaluate the pluralists response to the culture of narcissism. This discussion will reveal that the contemporary critique of mass culture must be seen as a broader debate on cultural freedom than one that

presupposes democracy is assured by the free-flow of consumer goods. The culture of narcissism is therefore a critique of the capitalist rationalization of the processes of production that leads to a consumer orientated society. I will agree with Lasch that the culture of narcissism is the result of the degradation of work brought about by the adjustment of capitalist ideology from a liberal to an advanced bureaucratic stage.

FOUR VIEWS ON MASS CULTURE

The conservatives argue that mass culture not only lowers public taste, but more importantly, the increased freedom of the masses has brought about a decline in traditional values, authority and discipline. They base this view on the dubious assumption that the people have "overthrown established elites and gained political power for themselves."[1] The conservatives claim that the decline in cultural standards and traditions have come about due to liberal politics that foster egalitarian and democratic values, thereby undermining the capacity for self-advancement and an entrepreneurial spirit.[2] The conservatives never question whether their support of mass production leads to the lowering of cultural standards -- whether consumerism rather than liberalism leads to the decline in social control and authority.

---

[1] The Minimal Self, p.263. Lasch argues that Jose Ortega y Gasset's The Revolt of the Masses New York: W.W. Norton,(1932), is the best example of this critique, but he also states that "the conservative critique is less interesting than the radical one, partly because it is ideologically predictable, partly because it starts from the dubious premise that the masses have actually overthrown established elites and gained political power for themselves."

[2] The Minimal Self,p.24; See also The Culture of Narcissism, pp.391-397, where Lasch outlines the conservative critique of contemporary bureaucratic society. In this part of the discussion it will become clear that the conservative critique of mass culture, eager to decry the declining cultural standards, fails to recognize that the cause of the problem is due to the relentless pursuit of accumulation that they so readily promote.

The liberal and neo-conservatives blame consumerism for the present cultural malaise. Lasch argues that liberals consider that the present cultural crisis is due to a "collapse in 'traditional values' and the emergence of a new morality of self-gratification" (1984c, p.23). Liberals stress that a hedonistic pursuit of material things, combined with the decline in the Protestant work ethic has changed the judicious individual preparing for insecurities of the future, into an amoral, selfish one with little regard for the value of hard work and traditional family life. Lasch also points out that liberals argue that the decline in moral standards has "crippled productivity, undermined American enterprise, and thus weakened the country's competitive position in the race for markets and national greatness" (1984c, p.24). He argues that the liberals equate consumerism too closely with self-gratification, when in reality the state of mind required for consumption is not marked by the self-indulgent desires of hedonism, but the anxiety and dependence of narcissism. The psychological effect of both production and consumption, therefore, discourages initiative, self-determination and autonomy and instead promotes "dependence, passivity, and a spectatorial state of mind" (Lasch, 1984c, p.27).

A third line of argument has recently arisen as a direct response to the Left's critique of culture of narcissism. Advocates of 'pluralism' claim that industrialization and technological innovation have brought about a classless society and that an individual's freedom and cultural autonomy is guaranteed by the availability of a wide range of cultural options.[3] Pluralist's argue that both the political Left and Right encourage cultural elitism, re-enforcing old class

[3] The standard arguments in opposition to the critique of mass culture appear in Edward Shils's, "Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections on the Criticism of Mass Culture," Sewanee Review 65,(1957),pp.587-608, and Herbert Gans's Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evolution of Taste New York: Basic Books, (1974).

dominations that have been so difficult to destroy. Wishing to avoid an elitist position, pluralists are not concerned with cultural tastes, and argue that a social order that sanctions a free market economy is more important. Pluralists view the psychological condition of narcissism as a temporary moral lapse that will eventually lead to individual freedom and cultural democracy.

Lasch's culture of narcissism is a reformulation of an earlier critique of mass culture that led to a radical program of cultural change in the fifties and sixties. He argues that whereas the politics of the 'cultural revolution' degenerated into issues of aesthetic tastes, the culture of narcissism attempts to recapture the more important question about the effect of technological rationalization on modern society (1984c, p.25). He argues that modern technology has the same effect on culture as it has on work; it brings about a one way system of management and communication that acts as a new form of social control in its own right. Lasch argues, that on this view, consumerism is just another side to the process of social control that aims to make people dependent upon the prevailing system of production and consumption in all aspects of life (1984c, p.27). The repressive psychological effects of the culture of narcissism can only be understood when consumption is seen as another phase of the industrial work routine. Lasch, therefore, concludes that there is little hope for the democratization of culture without first democratizing the work-place.

MASS CULTURE AND THE 'CULTURAL REVOLUTION'

At its heart, the discussion about 'mass culture' is concerned with repression and freedom, and authority and democracy. It is a debate that

presupposes that specific changes in advanced industrialized countries have culminated in new forms of social control. The theory of 'mass culture' was conceived by the Left as a way to discover and understand how authority and repression had revealed itself in certain social and political events in the early twentieth century. In order to break the cycle of domination and authority, critical theorists agreed that it was imperative to develop a theory of mass culture.

The critical theorists of the Frankfurt School argued that the intertwining of the political and economic spheres was apparent in the significant increase in the bureaucratic administration of society. They argued that a critique of capitalism based only on orthodox Marxian theories of political economy could no longer explain the dominant forces that were shaping contemporary society. Their expanded theory looked at the way that ideas and beliefs were transmitted by culture, and how an individual's autonomy is undermined by the psychological effects of the forces of socialization. The Left noted that the individual's consciousness and unconsciousness could increasingly be influenced by external agencies that not only dominated the work-place, but organized 'free-time' as well. They argued, for example, that the radio, television, film, music and professional sports industries imparted certain cultural values that aimed to socialize and discipline society according to particular capitalist ideals. Radicals believed that the theory of mass culture would lead to an actual 'cultural revolution,' and that through radical action workers could gain the cultural autonomy necessary for their political and economic freedom. The Frankfurt School concluded that the democratization of society was no longer a question of political and economic control, but a cultural question too.

According to Lasch, however, a radical view of culture has been a part of democratic ideology before the Frankfurt School expressed their specific theory of mass culture (1981b, p.7). It is an ideology that assumes that democracy can only fulfill its promises in a society of 'enlightened' citizens. The 'Enlightenment project,' initiated in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries, he argues, can be considered as the beginning of the cultural debate. At this point in history, the pursuit of individualism, rational self-interest and instrumental reason were first encouraged as away to further cultural autonomy (Held, 1980, p.65).

Lasch argues that the underlying principles of the Enlightenment need to be reconsidered because they assumed that a rejection of the past, cultural heritage, familial and communal traditions were a necessary and simple task -- a matter of merely educating the masses. This view not only underestimates the strength and resilience of kinship ties, but more importantly it presupposes that a diverse cultural and ethnic societies prevent individual autonomy and self-determination. Lasch argues that one only has to look to contemporary life to see that a rejection of the past will not in itself lead to a more democratic society for it seems that Western industrial nations are made up of a collection of disorientated, apathetic and weak-willed individuals prone to the manipulations of forces that seldom act in their best interests (Lasch, 1981b, p.9).

Lasch's critique of contemporary society is therefore inseparable from his critique of the Enlightenment. Although in its early stages the 'Enlightenment project' was considered to provide the necessary conditions to encourage individual freedom, Lasch argues that over time it has produced new forms of repression that have gradually increased rather than decreased social and political control. In other words, Lasch argues that the Enlightenment enabled capitalist rationalization to develop into a system of social control in itself by

monopolizing economics, dislodging technical efficiency and liberal politics, thus closing-off the processes that supposedly guaranteed the emancipation of the individual. He argues that capitalist ideology has now come to promote a rationale that is more concerned with accumulating capital than furthering the universal interests of mankind, such as justice and freedom.

The Autonomy of Cultural Practices

The Left argued that a society's culture reflected social totality, particularly the conditions of labor production and the distribution of the socio-economic whole. The interpretation, origin, and function of cultural practices, within a society, therefore, revealed the dominant social forces of that social order. Radicals argued that contemporary capitalist culture embodied the dominant forces of mass production to such an extent that cultural spheres had become little more than an extension of the commodity market destroying their original form and function. The Left argued that the only possible way to bring to consciousness the corrupting influence of the market was to contrast those autonomous cultural practices that continued to accentuate the contradictions within capitalist ideology with those that had been completely assimilated to the designs of the market. The Left argued that these social contradictions were most apparent in art, music, drama and literature, for they were cultural forms that both confirmed, and at the same time maintained a critical view of social reality. The Frankfurt School, also wishing to distance themselves from the overtly political pronouncements that beset the more radical leftist demand for a proletarian or 'people's' art concluded that 'high culture,' such as classical music, literary classics, and certain forms of art were practices that retained their autonomy and could potentially resist assimilation to the dominant moment.

'High culture,' for example potentially provided a rich, enlightening, intellectual and aesthetic representation of society if brought to the forefront of human consciousness.

Even so, the Frankfurt School admitted that industrialized society, in breaking down class consciousness, had all but destroyed popular resistance to the forces of mass production, and without this class-consciousness there was little prospect that the policies of the cultural revolution would achieve their original intentions. The growth of controlling institutions such as the mass media had restricted the possibility of developing individual autonomy and genuine popular culture that would not be assimilated to the designs of capitalism. Disillusioned by the inability to reinstate political discourse based on the dialectical nature of the Enlightenment, the theorists of the Frankfurt School saw little hope of transforming the theory of autonomous culture into revolutionary practice. The surviving critique thus became a satire of mass culture and a promotion of cultural elitism -- a position that unwittingly furthered the interests of the very social order they intended to undermine.

According to Lasch, the theory of autonomous culture was not a futile exercise, for it did bring to the surface how the dialectical nature of the Enlightenment has been displaced by capitalist ideology; how the potential autonomy and intellectual freedom of the individual has been undermined by the rise of industrialization and the mass market. It illustrated that the critique of mass culture, if it is to be of any worth, must concentrate on bringing the contradictions within contemporary society to consciousness without resorting to arguments about cultural taste.

PLURALISM AND THE DEFENSE OF MODERNIZATION

The current debate on the culture of narcissism is also prone to the same problems as the original theory of mass culture, although the confusions take on a contemporary form. Narcissism has also been recast in the language of aesthetic preferences as advocates of what is known as cultural pluralism defend the benefits of a society that is organized around mass consumption. Pluralist's, like the Marxist Left, argue that mass culture has broken down class divisions, but unlike the Left's original position, they argue that consumerism furthers the democratization process. The contemporary consumer society, on their view, assures that an unrestricted array of cultural choices previously reserved for the rich are now available to all. They view protests against mass culture as protests against democracy itself (Lasch, 1981b, p.11).

Pluralist's also differ from the Left in that they attempt to acquit themselves of the charge of cultural elitism by deliberately avoiding a debate about the relative merits of competing cultural tastes and different interpretations of social practices. They argue that since individuals already live in a free society, one's freely chosen cultural preferences are no better or worse than another's. Pluralists are therefore indifferent to the criticism that an unabashed support for mass culture lowers public taste -- the fact that people chose their culture freely is what is important for them. In any case pluralists argue that though cultural standards may be in decline, it is unreasonable to expect the masses to share the same cultural tastes as intellectuals and social elites. The masses have only recently liberated themselves from provincial, backward-looking traditions, and only with time and education will they approach the lofty cultural standards achieved by their betters (Lasch, 1984c,

p.35; 1981b, p.36). The Pluralists therefore dismiss the psychology of narcissism as an unfortunate byproduct of a progressive society that provides many different cultural options. The persistent feeling of discontent that plague narcissistic personalities is the price that rootless, directionless people must pay for increased freedom.

Lasch's Critique of Pluralism

Lasch argues that the pluralist's interpretation of modernity simplifies the basic issue at hand and haphazardly rejects the condition of narcissism as an inevitable outcome of history. Lasch argues that pluralism represents an impoverished idea of what constitutes cultural choice:

> Yet the same commentators who celebrate 'modernization' as an ever increasing abundance of personal choices rob choice of its meaning by denying that its existence leads to any important consequences. They reduce choice to a matter of style and taste, as their pre-occupation with 'lifestyle' indicates. Their bland innocuous conception of pluralism assumes that all preferences, all 'lifestyles', all taste cultures, as Gans calls them, are equally valid (1981b, p.36).

This concept of pluralism underestimates the very real conflicts that can, and do exist in diverse and ethnically mixed societies. It minimizes the ideological conflict between different cultures, and promotes the view that cultural differences in any case are of little significance. In reality this is not the case as widespread cultural conflict on important issues such as abortion, gun control, the separation of church and state, and free speech bear witness that even within a relatively stable society such as America's significant cultural differences do still exist (Lasch, 1984c, pp.37-38). Lasch argues, therefore, that a view of mass culture as the free yet unrefined choices of the masses is in the first place very condescending to those who make such choices, and at the

same time it intimates that there are, after all, significant and meaningful differences between cultural preferences. It is a position that would seem to contradict the pluralist's relativistic claim that one choice is as good as another.

Lasch argues that the pluralist's narrow conception of freedom only furthers the goals of capital rationalization and in reality encourages dependence on the contemporary institutions of production and consumption. Pluralism also contributes to the condition of narcissism because it is an ideology that promotes the illusion that freedom and self determination can be achieved through consumption. Lasch states that pluralism brings about this effect by presenting "products as revolutionary breakthroughs," and therapies as "intellectual discoveries the consumption of which will bring instant insight, success or peace of mind" (1984c, p.39).

Pluralism can only be justified as a ally of democracy if it promotes a comprehensive concept of free choice. Advocates of pluralism must re-engage in meaningful debate about what choices enable individuals to achieve greater self-determination, and how those choices can be made without limiting the freedom and choices of others. Lasch concludes that true cultural cosmopolitanism has to be grounded in a society that tolerates cultural and ethnic particularism as people that have roots and find an alternative direction in life represent a valuable alternative social group to the one dimensionality of contemporary society. Unfortunately, the present discussion about alternative ways of life is more concerned with the insignificant differences that may exist between different lifestyles. Rarely does the everyday cultural debate question the underlying presuppositions of a consumer society.

THE CAPITALIST RATIONALIZATION OF WORK

The culture of narcissism, so often treated from an aesthetic perspective, is really concerned with the capitalist process of rationalization and the changing view and purpose of technology. Lasch argues that it is not the case that the dominant social and political forces of contemporary society implement technology in order to advance the material wealth and social progress of mankind. He argues that though technology initially promised the liberation of the masses from the hardship of labor, educational torpor, and a social life based on taboo and superstition, it now consolidates control, wealth, and power in bureaucratic organizations (1984c, p.20).

Lasch, therefore, is critical of an unquestioned belief that the benefits of modern technology lead to social democracy. He argues that in this respect, the Left are just as much at fault for unequivocally accepting technological modernization as the Right. He is skeptical of the Left's view that capitalism, having destroyed ancient faiths and mythical beliefs will awaken the masses to reach for a higher stage of social development and that "socialism will dissolve the contradiction between the 'forces of production' and the 'social relations of production' -- between the potentially liberating effects of mass communication and their control by the bourgeoisie" (1981b, p.17). He argues that the liberal position is no better for approving "the immediate achievements of mass culture in promoting individualism and free choice," when in reality contemporary individualism and choices continue to reflect capitalist priorities (1984c, p.17).

According to Lasch, the liberals, conservatives and the pluralists have misinterpreted the course of historical progress and take for granted that advances in modern technology have led to, or will inevitably lead to social and

economic progress. Instead, Lasch argues

> What if we reject the equation of industrialization with democracy and start instead from the premise that large scale industrial production undermines local institutions and self-government, weakens the party system and discourages popular initiative. In that case, cultural analysis can no longer content itself with balancing the social and political gains allegedly attendant on cultural progress against cultural losses. It will have to decide instead whether the invasion of culture and personal life by the modern industrial system produces the same effects that it produces in the social and political realm: a loss of autonomy and popular control, a tendency to confuse self-determination with the exercise of consumer choices, a growing ascendence of elites, the replacement of practical skills with organized expertise (1984c, pp.41-42).

Lasch defends this claim, arguing that technological changes in work-practices initiated during the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial society were not motivated by the need for increased efficiency or higher levels of production.[4] Instead, organizational changes in work practices at the beginning of the industrial revolution were implemented by capitalist entrepreneurs wishing to establish a profitable and necessary role for themselves within the production process. Industrialization and the mechanization of work practices should therefore be viewed in the context of how these technological changes consolidated the interests of capitalist entrepreneurs rather than furthered efficient production (Lasch, 1981b, p.18; 1984c, p.28).

Capitalist rationalization, therefore, has displaced the promises the Enlightenment and become the dominant form of instrumental reason. It has been the implementation of means-ends rationality according to capitalist goals

---

[4] Stephen Marglin, "What do Bosses do?: The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production" Review of Radical Political Economics 6,(1974),pp.60-112. Lasch also references the work of Harry Braverman, Labor and Monopoly Capital New York: Monthly Review Press, (1974), David F.Noble, America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism New York: Alfred A. Knopf, (1977) , and David Montgomery, "Workers' Control of Machine Production in the 19th Century," Labor History17, (1976),pp.485-509 to support this claim he makes in both The Culture of Narcissism and "Mass Culture Reconsidered".

-- where those goals are rarely questioned -- that has led to technological control of our lives. Once the goals of capitalism went unquestioned, the accumulation of capital, rather than the satisfaction of needs and the reduction of the necessary labor became the dominant ideological view of society. This rationale has not only dominated the world of work, but in its advanced bureaucratic stage, is an ideology that has seeped into all other human activities and cultural spheres.

BUREAUCRATIC CAPITALISM AND THE CULTURE OF NARCISSISM

Corporate Competition and the Changing Work Ethic

The Protestant work ethic, so vital to the early success of capitalism, no longer exists. The Self-Made Man, the shinning symbol of the American way of life, has become an ideological pipedream. Gone is the individual who exhibits the qualities of hard work, prudence, and sobriety. In an age of diminishing expectations, the individual that marked an earlier stage of liberal capitalism has been replaced by one who lives for the moment in an endless pursuit of pleasure and excitement. Investment in the future, the intrinsic reward of work, deferring gratification, and staying out of debt are virtues that are no longer considered to be important. At a time when the social and economic outlook is bleak, only fools put off until tomorrow what they can do today.

Successful business or professional careers no longer require moral and social qualities; success has become an end in its own right and victory over the competition the sole measure of self-approval (Lasch, 1979a, p.115; 1984c, p.30). As success has become a very public affair, people seek the attention of others who do not so much recognize anothers abilities and achievements, but

their notoriety and public image. Lasch states;

> Self-approval depends on public recognition and acclaim, and the quality of this approval has undergone important changes in its own right. The good opinion of friends and neighbors, which formerly informed a man that he had lived a useful life rested on appreciation of his accomplishments. Today men seek the kind approval that applauds not their actions but their personal attributes. They wish to be not so much esteemed as admired (1979a, p.30).

Those who are most successful in business understand the hierarchy of social relationships at work. Outright incompetence, obviously still works against the individual, but in a society of bureaucratic organization and administrative control, knowledge of the corporate structure is a necessity in order to advance and succeed. Lasch states that "the better the corporate executive or bureaucrat understands the personal characteristics of his subordinates, the better he can exploit their mistakes in order to control them and to reassert his own supremacy" (1979a, p.120). In the same way, the ambitious executives learn to read the power relations of the office, which associations will advance their career, and enable them to bask in the reflective glow of the achievements of others.

The Rise of the Culture of Narcissism

The changes in the social relations at work have contributed to a common inability to distinguish reality and illusion. Work, formerly recognized as useful, productive labor now appears wasteful and pointless. The outward appearance of an individual has become more important than the ability to perform a useful productive role. As work becomes an abstract occupation, and success defined as bureaucratic advancement, co-workers fake their commitment to the corporation and to their fellow workers. In reality, the work place breeds an antagonistic form of cooperation, for those who advance their

professional careers can rarely do so without manipulating the social relations of work and gaining credibility at the expense of others. Lasch argues that the work-place has become a theater where the workers are "role players and connoisseurs of their own performance" (1979a, p.169). Lasch concludes that these conditions have contributed to a "culture of immediate gratification, non-participation, and non-binding commitments" and that is why our culture "can accurately be described as a culture of narcissism" (1980b, p.124).

Despite its psychologically debilitating condition, narcissism often possesses the very attributes that make for success in the corporate world. Lasch states;

> For all his inner suffering, the narcissist has many traits that make for success in bureaucratic institutions, which put a premium on the manipulation of interpersonal relations, discourage the formation of deep personal attachments, and at the same time provide the narcissist with the approval he needs in order to validate his self esteem. . . . The management of personal impressions comes naturally to him, and his mastery of its intricacies serves him well in political and business organizations where performance now counts less than "visibility", "momentum," and a winning record. As the "organization man" gives way to the "bureaucratic gamesman" -- the "loyalty era" of American business to the age of the "executive success game" -- the narcissist comes into his own (1979a, pp.91-92).

Narcissistic individuals obsessed with the projection and the consumption of images, thus become dependent on the very organizations and bureaucracies that also bring them success.

Survival and Ironic Detachment from Work

When all traces of enterprise and initiative disappear from the work-place, workers seek an ironic detachment as an escape from routine.(Lasch, 1980b, p.171). Deprived of control and design over their work, people become apathetic and disillusioned with their day to day activities. Few workers display

pride or respect for the work tasks that they perform or feel loyalty to the company. From the other, side managers and supervisors "complain simultaneously that the workers lack the enterprise and initiative and that they merely get in the way of the machines" (Lasch, 1980b, p.123). Yet those who control the production process fail to understand that the whole effect of mechanization "has been to eliminate enterprise and initiative or at least to drive them underground" (Lasch, 1980b, p.123). It is not surprising that exhortations about hard work and self-sacrifice have little impact upon workers who feel that they have nothing to gain from working hard (Lasch, 1979a, p.124). The modern worker, according to Lasch, goes through the motions of work with an 'ironic detachment' that only makes the unreflective accommodation to routine gradually more difficult. At the same time that the degradation of work "condemns people to jobs that insult their intelligence," the promotion of the consumption as a form of escape "fills their heads with visions of experience beyond their means" (Lasch, 1979a, pp.173-174). In other words, as workers become increasingly aware of the futility and hopelessness of the realities of their working life, the gap between reality and the vision of something better in the future becomes so great that even small improvements in the conditions of work seem to be impossible. Lasch states

> The disparity between romance and reality, the world of the beautiful people and the workaday world, gives rise to an ironic detachment that dulls pain but also cripples the will to make even modest improvements in work and play, and to restore meaning and dignity to everyday life (1979a, p.124).

Escape through ironic detachment is itself an illusion that only brings momentary relief. The attempt to turn one's back on the realities of everyday occupations creates an ever increasing cycle of self-consciousness that prevents spontaneous release from everyday reality. When individuals become

obsessed with being in control of every situation, and of being conscious of how their appearance looks to others, the relentless self-scrutiny that follows can only exaggerate the feelings of inauthenticity and inner anger that already flow from the conditions of modern work. Individuals long for release from constant self-consciousness, yet very few experiences retain the ability to suspend reality in the momentary release of illusion. Instead, contemporary social life is dominated by attempts to project illusion and image as reality. And at the same time, a never-ending pleasure in debunking such attempts to suspend reality through exposing the conventions of illusion has also developed. This position provides no relief and only serves to heighten the consciousness of unpleasant reality. Most importantly, Lasch argues that the degradation and the ironic detachment from work destroys the representational qualities of those aspects of our culture that have always provided harmless release and escape from routine. Once this happens, Lasch states that "the ultimate illusions, art and religion, have no future" (1979a, p.175).

Summary

In this chapter, I have argued with Lasch that the culture of narcissism is the reinterpretation of the critique of mass culture that originated in the fifties and sixties. I have outlined Lasch's main arguments as to how particular social and political developments have led to the culture of narcissism. I have argued, with Lasch, that the culture of narcissism reveals the way that bureaucratic capitalism has adjusted the dialectic of Enlightenment and is a social order that does not lead to the democratization of society. I concluded the Chapter by outlining how the particular bureaucratic conditions of the workaday world promote the condition of narcissism which in turn destroys the ability of

harmless substitute gratifications such as art, sport and drama to provide release from everyday concerns. In the next Chapter, I will specifically look at how Lasch believes that the culture of narcissism has affected the practice of sport.

CHAPTER III

THE DEGRADATION OF SPORT

Lasch's critique of sport should be understood as part of his overall theory of mass culture. The social developments that lead to the degradation of sport are the same corrupting influences that have led to the degradation of other practices such as art , music, theater, and so on. His solution to the corruption of sport, however, is crucial in that it provides the basis for his overall solution to the culture of narcissism. Lasch argues that sport retains certain ideals that enable it to oppose the corrupting influences that have degraded other practices. A critique of sport that clarifies the manner in which sport retains its ideals can therefore indicate what steps need to be taken in order for other practices to resist corrupting influences too.

In the first part of this Chapter, I will present Lasch's thesis on the corruption of sport and in particular how the rise of the sport's 'spectacle' represents the dominant sporting moment in an era of bureaucratic capitalism. I will then present Lasch's argument that corruption of sport occurs due to the separation of work and play, and that his solution requires their reintegration.

I will argue that Lasch's solution has in mind the integration of play represented by an ideal conception sport with a concept of work that is understood as a productive but not a prudential activity.[1] Lasch's solution aims

---

[1] In his chapter on sport in The Culture of Narcissism Johan Huizinga's Homo Ludens: a study of the Play Element in Culture Boston: Beacon Press, (1955) and Roger Callois's "The Structure and Classification of Games" in John W. Loy, Jr., and Gerald S. Kenyon, Sport, Culture and Society New York: Macmillan, (1969) are the basis of Lasch's representational concept of sport. Although there is a wealth of literature and debate on play, game and sport theory that Lasch has not referenced, it does not necessarily mean that his understanding of sport should be

to socialize, rather than expand the forces of production and he believes that the integration of work and play in this manner will foster a successful transition towards democratizing the work-place. By integrating work and play, Lasch argues that production will become a more enjoyable, meaningful activity. At the same time, play will once more exist in an ideal state rather than as the corollary to work that it is at the present time.

I will argue that Lasch's integration thesis fails because his representational theory of sport is highly speculative -- the representational qualities that may exist in sport are incidental to the activity and not a definitive quality of sport. The main thrust of my argument, however, will be that Lasch has failed to realize that the formal logic of games, which defines and differentiates sport from all other cultural practices, cannot, in practice, be integrated with work.

LASCH'S CRITIQUE OF SPORT

The Corruption of Sport

Lasch argues that the cultural crisis of sport involves the corruption of its ideal and the rise of the sport's spectacle (1979a, pp.195-196). Sport has been rationalized according to the demands of the market and transformed into a commodity (Alt, 1983, p.98). According to Lasch, the spectacle corrupts sport because it alters the rules of the game and packages the activity in such a way that the representational qualities of the sporting ideal are trivialized -- at this point the values that sport should ideally represent cease to exist. Lasch notes

automatically dismissed. To do so would foreclose any serious debate about the merit of what Lasch may have to say on the matter.

that the sport's spectacle now represents the qualities of excitement, fast action, and aggrandized masculinity; images that reflect the prevalent trends in society and the cultural-emotional needs of the people. In team sports, for example, he argues that the rewards for winning dominate team organizations, creating a win-at-all-costs attitude that destroys the ideal of sport to a degree greater than ever before. The mass media also contribute to sport's corruption through introducing an entertainment ethic; journalism and television rarely contribute to the understanding of the activity, preferring instead the promotion of personality and hype by means of sensationalistic rhetoric that seeks to mindlessly excite spectators rather than deepen their understanding and involvement in the activity. In the most extreme cases, mass media promote the view that sport is nothing more than a commodity (Alt, 1983, p.98).

Modern sports professionals, overtly concerned with obtaining a large salary, present themselves as entertainers rather than experts dedicated to their sport or team. This instrumental attitude is no longer exclusive to professional sport, as even amateurs engage in sport for some external benefit or other, showing little concern for the integrity of sport's conventions, representation and ideals.[2] The cooperation and teamwork necessary to sport, formerly a form of social interaction rooted in the mutual quest to overcome gratuitous difficulty, has been replaced by a form of cooperation that reflects the antagonistic cooperation of the workaday world; both modern day players and workers are more concerned with furthering their own interests through the manipulation of

---

[2] Fischer, Michael "Criticizing Capitalist America," Salmagundi 46,(Fall, 1979),p.169. There is, of course, a big difference between the corruption that stems from the influence of fame and fortune in professional and big time athletics and the corruption that exists in non-comercialized sport. Lasch's point, however, is that there has been a major shift in the ideals of sport and almost all sports practitioners now engage in sports activities for their instrumental benefits.

others rather than achieving a common goal. Novak provides an apt description of the style of teamwork that exists in bureaucratic society:

> Bureaucracies may aspire to be teams, or even families, but they never are. Teams that congeal, beat with a single heart, are the model each collective would like to imitate, but cannot. A team bases itself on the heart. An organization calculates which of your services it can buy and for how much. The money grabbers want it both ways: they have turned teams into organizations, but want them to continue to act like teams. This contradiction may be fatal (1976, pp.304-305).

As sport has become a spectacle, Lasch argues that promoters no longer consider the inherent qualities of the game such as competitive spirit, skilled performance, or the aesthetic dimension of sport. Instead, they appeal to people's basic instincts -- their need to be distracted and satiated by surrounding the sporting arena with a plethora of gimmicks. Promoters attempt to draw spectators by giving away gifts and selling cheap beer at the concession stands. The crowd is entertained during lulls in the action by scantily clad cheerleaders and mascots and 'high-tech' electronic scoreboards that do nothing to deepen the spectators involvement and understanding of the game, but serve only as a mindless entertainment preventing the ritual relationship that would otherwise develop between between players and spectators fully engaged in the conventions that enable the game to become an illusion of reality.

Lasch argues that the most serious corruption takes place when the game itself has to adapt to the demands of commercialization. Television companies willing to pay high prices for the right to air sporting events exert their own influence on sport's contests, even though their interests may not be conducive to sporting excellence or good competition. For example, television time-outs disrupt the ebb and flow of the game, and unlike time-outs called by coaches, they do not occur in response to action on the court or the field of play.

When play is suspended for no apparent reason it is difficult to recreate the illusion of reality within the game once the tension and emotional involvement of both the players and the spectators has been dissipated.

As commercialization and television expand spectatorship, Lasch argues that the level of understanding manifest in the audience is lowered. Viewers new to a particular sport, not conversant with the conventions of the game, struggle to recognize its finer points and understand the ritual of the game and its representational powers. In such cases spectators are unable to form common bonds with the players, to share mutual expectations and pleasures within the sporting performance. Sports commentators reinforce this ignorance by adhering to streams of banal, trite, and condescending superlatives that describe basic plays, and expressions of magical awe at the higher levels of play. Rare is the discerning commentator, fully conversant with the skilled requirements of the game, who has a willingness to share this information with his public. Only in such a way can a greater public understanding and appreciation of games be encouraged (Lasch, 1979a, p.191). Although television elevates sport to new heights of popularity, at the same time it reduces them to entertainment. The corruption of sport, for Lasch, occurs as sport becomes a part of the entertainment industry -- when pressed into the service of entertainment sport becomes a commodity just like all other practices in the culture of narcissism.

The Separation of Work and Play

Lasch's critique of sport borrows from the work of the Dutch historian Johan Huizinga and his conception of the ideal of sport.[3] Huizinga argued that play was an activity that involved the skillful and intelligent pursuit of an arbitrary objective. He argued that though the goals of play had little importance in themselves, following the rules and conventions that defined play made it a serious activity. Huizinga argued that "the great archetypal activities of human society are all permeated with play from the start," for "law and order, commerce and profit, craft and art, poetry, wisdom and science" are "rooted in the primeval soil of play" (Huizinga in Lasch, 1984a, p.43). Huizinga concluded, therefore, that overcoming the instrumental objectives of work could provide pleasure that was more consistent with mastering the gratuitous obstacles of play.

Similarly, Lasch traces the contemporary cultural crisis to a decline in Huizinga's 'play element' of culture. He argues that increased rationalization of the world has led to a dramatic change in the nature of social practices. Work, for example, no longer finds "room for the spirit of arbitrary invention or the disposition to leave things to chance" -- rationalization has sought "precisely to predict and control the future and eliminate risk" (1979a, p.185). The increased rationalization of work, therefore, has banished the qualities vital to the spirit of play from work into all but a few cultural practices at the margins of society. Thus, Lasch makes a stronger case than Huizinga for the place of the 'play element.' He argues that play is a necessary and not a coincidental aspect of a

---

[3] It has been argued that Huizinga's view that sport only exists under ideal conditions, separated and uncorrupted from outside social influences, leads to an elitist polemic. Lasch's reliance on Huizinga's sporting ideal has brought about the charge that his theory of sport merely wishes to dismiss sports enormous popularity as a form of cultural decadence.(See John Hargreaves's, Sport, Power and Culture Cambridge:Polity Press, (1986),p.2). This conclusion displays a simplistic understanding of what Lasch really has to say about sport.

wide range of work activities such as law, warfare, and politics and therefore should not just exist in a select few such as sport, art, music and dance (1984a, p.44).

Lasch argues that at the same time that the degradation of work pushes the play element to the margins of society, people take more interest in those activities that have traditionally been considered set-off from the world of work than ever before. The drudgery and boredom of work creates the need to escape the intense ironic self-consciousness of everyday life. Consequently people engage in leisure activities with greater intensity than ever before (Lasch, 1984a, p.44). The degradation of work, therefore, has a significant effect on sport because sport has qualities that make it an ideal way to find release from everyday concerns (1979a, p.181). He argues, however, that as sport has become increasingly popular, games have tended to lose their ability to provide relief. Increased capitalist rationalization of all aspects of life, which not only provokes the need for the arbitrary invention of play and the disposition to leave things to chance, at the same time has also made risk and daring increasingly rare qualities in sport (Lasch, 1979a, p.217). Lasch argues that the seriousness, rationality and confusion of the workaday world has turned sport into an instrumental activity. People are now encouraged to participate in sport for health benefits, moral training, or to revitalize their enthusiasm for work.

Lasch argues that the invasion of work standards has led to an escapist concept of sport, one that wishes to seal games off in an ideal form, free from surrounding corruption (1979a, p.215). Michael Novak argues that the entertainment ethic has broken down the boundaries between the ideal world of sport and the realities from which it is designed to escape. He argues that it is now necessary to rebuild the barriers between sport and the bureaucratic

nature of real life so that the ideal of sport can be sealed off from corrupting influences (1979, p.215). On the one hand, Lasch agrees with Novak that the corruption of the sporting ideal is due to the invasion of spectacle, but he disagrees with the view that the corruption of the ideal can be solved by a further separation of sport and work. He argues that in society dominated by consumption, no activity can long resist the invasion of spectacle. An escapist theory of sport, therefore, not only concedes, but magnifies the separation of work and play that paradoxically gives rise to the corruption of the ideal of sport in the first place (Lasch, 1979a, pp.216-217). Lasch strengthens this claim by noting that the corruption of sport historically coincides with the rise of mass production, when work not only intensified the needs that sports satisfied, but at the same time provided the technical and promotional capacity to market sport as a commodity (1979a, pp.185, 217). Lasch argues that the degradation of sports "is a history of their gradual submission to the demands of everyday reality" and that the attempt to seal the practice off from the surrounding corruption will lead to the very separation of work and play that create the need and the technical incentive for the commercialization of sport in the first place (1977b, p.26).

LASCH'S SOLUTION TO THE CORRUPTION OF SPORT

The Integration of Work and Play

Lasch argues that corruption of sport stems from the degradation of play, which in turn occurs due to the degradation of work. His solution calls for

something like a reversal of the processes that led to the degradation of play, in other words, a reintegration of work and play. He states;

> Instead of encouraging people to make better use of their leisure time, friends of the arts should think about making the work-place more joyous and playful, even if this means challenging the basic premises of our society. I don't mean that employers should be encouraged to introduce free concerts during coffee breaks. I have in mind something more fundamental: the restoration of craftsmanship, the revival of the artistic dimension of practical activity, the unification of work and play (1984a, p.44)

Lasch, however, does not expand on his solution, leaving it open to question how the integration of work and play would concretely change the structure of society and lead to an uncorrupted version of sport. It is necessary, therefore, to reconstruct his integration thesis as accurately as possible to see if there is any merit to his solution. I will begin by clarifying what Lasch considers play to be, and then construct his thesis by seeing how his concept of play can be integrated with work.

Lasch's Concept of Sport

In his Chapter on sport, Lasch talks about play, game, and sport as if they were activities of the same kind despite the fact that clear differences do exist between them.[4] The differences between play, games, sport, and also music and art, and all the other cultural practices, however, are not important for Lasch's solution as he is more concerned with the qualities that are common to all of them. The common feature of all these cultural practices share is the 'play

---

[4] For the differences between play, games, and sport see Bernard Suits, "Words on Play" The Journal of Philosophy of Sport IV,(1977),pp.117-131. In his chapter on sport, Lasch does not offer a solution to the corruption of sport as such, as he does with respect to the degradation of art, but there are may occasions in his analysis of sport that indicate, as I have argued all along that the solution to the corruption of sport, and all other cultural practices is the same and requires the re-unification of work and play (see Culture of Narcissism, pp.216-219).

element.' Lasch argues that sport, more than any other of these activities, is based in play. It is clear that the gratuitous and non-utilitarian nature of play is central to his understanding of sport. He states that games . . .

> . . . re-create the freedom, the remembered perfection of childhood, and mark it off from ordinary life with artificial boundaries, within which the only constraints are the rules to which the players freely submit. Games enlist skill and intelligence, the utmost concentration of purpose, on behalf of activities utterly useless, which make no contribution to the struggle of man against nature, to the wealth or comfort of the community, or to its physical survival. (1979a, p.182)

Lasch argues that by observing the rules and conventions of play, games have the ability to separate themselves off from everyday concerns in a manner that enables them to create an illusion of reality. In this way, sport, far from becoming an escape from the real world, intensify consciousness, and can offer a dramatic commentary on one's everyday life. Display, representation and drama are thus central themes to an understanding of the sport, "a familiar ceremony that reaffirms common values" (1979a, p.190). Lasch argues;

> The ancient connections between games, ritual, and public festivity suggest that although games take place within arbitrary boundaries, they are nevertheless rooted in shared traditions to which they give objective expression. Games and athletic contests offer a dramatic commentary on reality rather than an escape form it -- a heightened reenactment of communal traditions, not a repudiation of them (1979a, p.216).

Lasch argues that the maintenance of standards and a discerning public within sport has enabled a seemingly trivial activity to retain its seriousness and representational ability. The very popularity of sport, in fact depends on such seriousness, for it is only when players and spectators submit without reservation to the rules and conventions of games that sport has the capacity to create an illusion of reality.

The same cannot be said of the present state of art where the trivialization of the conventions of the practice were implicit in the attempt to set

it off from reality. Assuming that the experience of art would be more intense if it pulled the spectator away from everyday reality, Lasch argues that the modernist aesthetic has destroyed the representational ability of art, and at the same time guaranteed its marginal status and commercialization (1979a, pp.195, 218). Without a discriminating public, constant experimentation in the arts has led to such a confusion and erosion of standards that the only remaining measure of value in art is its shock value and ugliness (Lasch, 1979a, p.190).

The degradation of sport, therefore, consists not in its being taken too seriously, but in the trivialization of the rules and conventions that define the activity. When players no longer engage in the sport with serious intent to follow the rules and conventions of the game, but subject it to some ulterior purpose, such as profit, health, moral training and so on, the ideal of sport becomes corrupted. Lasch argues that although sport and the rest of the arts may provide many instrumental benefits, they do so only as byproducts, and are not essential to the nature of the practice. When the pursuit of those external benefits becomes more important than the dedicated pursuit of the conventions of play, sports lose their capacity to create the illusion of reality (Lasch, 1977b, p.26).

The representational qualities that Lasch argues exist in the ideal of sports are crucial to the integration of work and play. Not only do the traditional qualities of ritual preserve standards of excellence but they help to temper competition and ensure that players play fairly (Lasch, 1979a, pp.189-190, 207). In other words, despite all the social pressures to seek external benefits through participating in sport, there is something about the nature of the practice

itself and its autonomy as a cultural tradition that can inspire ultimate loyalty (Lasch, 1979a, pp.204-205).

Even so, Lasch argues that sport is losing its discriminating public and spectators are becoming ignorant about the game and often display rabid partisanship that can overflow into violence. At this point the ideal of sport disintegrates into spectacle. Lasch's solution to the decline of culture, therefore not only requires the integration of work with the rules and conventions of play, but an integration that will enable all cultural practices to recapture their representational qualities, for only in this manner can they resist the surrounding corruption.

Lasch's Solution: a Construction

The social changes that Lasch believes are necessary for his solution can be discerned from his replies to radical and liberal/neo-conservative responses to his critique of the culture of narcissism.[5] Radicals criticize Lasch for painting a wholly negative picture of contemporary society and for advocating a solution that implies a return to the pre-capitalist past.[6] They argue that narcissism continues to be a defiant political act of resistance; the condition encourages and heightens one's awareness and critical response to social reality. Turning towards the past, radicals argue, prevents Lasch from

---

[5] Lasch, "Politics and Social Theory: a Reply to My Critics," pp.194-202 & also The Minimal Self which was written partly as way to clear up the the misunderstandings (particularly on the feminist issue and 'modernization theory') that were left over from the Culture of Narcissism. Points raised in Lasch's defense, therefore, are basically a reiteration of his understanding of the culture of narcissism that was presented in Chapter Two.

[6] Radical criticism of Lasch has been raised by Janice Doane & Devon Leigh Hodges in "Mobilizing the Ranks of Reality" Salmagundi 46,(Fall 1979), pp.185-193.

seeing that narcissism provides a critical response to issues such as feminism, and paternalism.[7]

Lasch dismisses the radical critique arguing that his thesis calls for a fundamental change in the organization of production -- a shift of emphasis from capitalist technical rationalization to the socialization of labor. He argues that changing the capitalist rationale of production "does not entail idealization of the past," and that radicals suffer from a distinct inability to distinguish the difference between obvious cultural decline and nostalgic view of the past (1979b, p.198). Lasch clarifies his views as follows;

> Once and for all: I have no wish to return to the past, even if I thought that a return to the past were possible. The solution to our social problems lies in a completion of the democratic movement inaugurated in the eighteenth century, not in a retreat to a pre-democratic way of life. Socialism, notwithstanding the horrors committed in its name, still represents the legitimate heir of liberal democracy. Marxism and psychoanalysis still offer the best guides to an understanding of modern society and to political action designed to make it more democratic (1979b, pp.197-198).

A more conservative view has criticized Lasch because he has failed to see that the individualism of contemporary society is an inevitable part of history.[8] On this view, individualism, bureaucracy and the rise of the helping professions are all seen as part of a democratic process initiated long before the onset of industrialization. The distinct condition of narcissism is therefore viewed as an inevitable but unfortunate consequence of long term developments that lead to democracy and freedom. This critique concludes that a solution to mass culture that attempts to socialize the mode of production,

---

[7] "Mobilizing the Ranks of Reality," pp.185-193.

[8] These 'liberal' arguments are raised by Larry Nachman in "Solitude of the Heart: Personality and Democratic Culture," Salmagundi, 46(Fall 1979) pp.173-184. The problem with Nachman's analysis is that he fails to consider what negative effect capitalism has had on the process of democratization. For an excellent response to the Left's flirtation with narcissism as a moment of resistance, and particularly responses to the feminist issue see Paul Picone's "Narcissism After the Fall: What's on the Bottom of the Pool?" Salmagundi 46,(Fall 1979),pp.117-119.

may, under the present circumstances bring out further regressions in the dominant personality -- narcissistic dependence, and the longing for roots may transpire into an unconditional acceptance of more authoritarian forms of social control (Nachman, 1979, p.181).

Lasch disagrees with this view because it fails to see that our present social problems and the condition of narcissism, have developed due to social changes initiated by capitalism rather than a process of democratization and liberal politics. His solution, therefore, is not an attempt to re-unite the narcissistic personality with nature through a regression to the pre-industrial past. Instead, Lasch argues that though the promises of the Enlightenment have not been fulfilled, to dismiss the progress made by science and technology is merely another attempt to deny selfhood; a narcissistic defense that clings to an illusion that the realities of rationalization never happened. Lasch argues that achieving selfhood requires a recognition that technical rationalization gives greater understanding and mastery of our lives, but at the same time it is a process that denies human limitations and dependency (1984c, p.20). Lasch's proposal to integrate work and play is therefore an attempt to infuse this balance in our lives. In other words, it is an attempt to make people realize that faith in technology alone will not solve our pressing social problems. His solution proposes to retain much of the technology and mechanization of the present production process, but one that would be organized in order to achieve quite different goals than at present. It would be a form of production where the overriding concern would not be capital accumulation but the social condition of the worker in his everyday labor.

Lasch argues that the present conditions within advanced industrial countries make it possible for the first time to make work conditions more

enjoyable, democratic, and fulfilling; the socialization of the relations of production can be achieved by unifying work and play. In other words, the production systems of advanced industrial countries have not only the capacity to meet the needs of the general populace but the wherewithal to improve drastically the conditions of work without a detrimental drop-off in production. It is possible therefore, to add an aesthetic dimension to work, to create, as Marcuse argued, "a society in which even socially necessary labor can be organized in harmony with the liberated, genuine needs of men."[9] The integration of work and sport is an attempt to provide an alternative form of work to one rationalized according to the demands of the market.

Lasch's solution does not view sport as an autonomous activity, and he is critical of theories of autonomous culture that fail to realize that sports assimilation to capitalists demands have made a radical critique of sport ineffectual. Lasch points out that cultural radicals who criticize competition, spectatorship, discipline, and elitism, properties vital to the practice of sport in all times, contribute to the corruption of sport because these ideals have already been displaced by a new capitalist sporting ideology. Cultural radicals, uncertain about the emotional response that competitive sport can generate, wish to enlist sport in the pursuit of health or to de-emphasize the uncontrollable "element of fantasy, make-believe, and play acting that has always been associated with games" (Lasch, 1979a, p.194). In doing so, radicals overlook how contemporary society has already reduced sport to an appendage of industry (Lasch, 1979a, p.217).

---

[9] Lasch's argument here is essentially the same as Marcuse's in that both reject the socialist need for increasing the development of the forces of production, and focus instead on mixing qualities of work with the qualities of play. Herbert Marcuse, Five Lectures, Boston: Beacon Press (1969),p.68

On the other hand, Lasch's critique of sport documents the way that the spectacle corrupts its practice, reducing sport to entertainment. Conservatives take a purely instrumental view of sport. More importantly, Lasch argues that this ideological view speaks to ideals that are themselves based on a false understanding of the activity. For example, the right, justify sport for its health benefits and its ability to provide relief from the drudgery of the workaday world. The Right therefore, uphold a sporting ideal that is itself based on the false view that sport is an activity that, first and foremost, stands in an instrumental relationship to the workaday world .

Lasch concludes that the integration of work and play would change the instrumental relationship that presently exists between work and sport. In a different social order, their integration would provide a distinct aesthetic and playful quality to all activities. The integration of work and play sport would rid sport of its corrupting influence as the ideals represented in sport would become central to the engagement in that activity, representing the just and fair conditions that would exist in work.

A CRITIQUE OF LASCH'S THEORY OF SPORT

Lasch's solution departs significantly from the distinction Marx made between the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom.[10] Marx argued that activities that provide for the necessities of life, such as food and shelter, were

---

[10] Marx, Karl Capital Volume Three. New York: International Publishers, (1977), p.820

distinctly different from, and had priority over all other human concerns. Activities not belonging to the realm of necessity could only be enjoyed once the necessities of life had been assured. According to Marx, therefore, play belongs to the realm of freedom. Lasch's solution makes no such distinction; the socialization of the forces of production requires the incorporation of an aesthetic quality to work and not a reduction or elimination of productive activity altogether.

The Formal Account of Games

Lasch has misconstrued what it is about sport that enables it to resist assimilation. He has argued that it is the 'play element' that enables sport to represent particular social ideals. Lasch proposes an integration of work and sport as a representation of an ideal. Representational theories of sport, however, are speculative.[11] Sport's representational capacity is not a defining quality of the practice. Given that players have to devote their attention to the rules and conventions of the game and not on how the performance will appear, it seems that the representational qualities of sport, therefore, will be more of a hit-or-miss affair.[12] In any case, Lasch has argued that due to a confusion of standards other cultural practices such as art and music have lost their powers of representation. In the light of the collapse of art's representational capacity, therefore, Lasch cannot adequately explain why sport's representational qualities should retain a critical function. His confusion stems from an inability

---

[11] For a more complete criticism of representational theories of spot see Christopher Cordner, "The Differences Between Sport and Art,"Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, XV (1988), pp.31-48.

[12] This is also true of the aesthetic sports because although participation is concerned with appearance, the performance is already bound by established standards for that sport. In fact without such standards it is reasonable to presume that the aesthetic sports would suffer from the same confusion of standards that has made arts representational edict impotent.

to see that there are formal differences between cultural practices and that these formal qualities not only mark practices off from work, but from one another. In the case of sport, it is the obligatory observation of the formal elements of games that differentiate it from all other activities, giving it a greater degree of autonomy than other cultural practices.

Sport is better understood as an activity that may serve some instrumental purpose but one that must, in all cases, observe of the logic of games. Bernard Suits's definition of a game reveals sport's formal logic;

> To play a game is to attempt a specific state of affairs (prelusory goal), using only the means permitted by the rules (lusory means), where the rules prohibit the use of more efficient in favor of less efficient means (constitutive rules), and where the rules are accepted just because they make possible such activity (lusory attitude) (1980, p.41).

In other words, in order to play a game one willingly attempts to overcome unnecessary obstacles while playing by the rules of that game. When one no longer attempts to overcome the arbitrary obstacles of the game using means only permitted by the rules, one is no longer playing that game. The salient features, therefore, that distinguish sport from other activities is the willing acceptance of gratuitous difficulty.

Work, on the other hand, involves doing those things we feel are necessary in order to achieve certain ends that we value. In our culture, work is an activity based on various kinds of scarcity -- economic, moral, scientific, psychological, erotic, and so on. When we work we do so to secure the necessities of life such as food and shelter. Ideally, work is the attempt to eliminate scarcity pursuing a particular end using the most efficient means. Even though we may enjoy our occupations, our pleasure in work is secondary to the end of that activity. Like all social practices, work activities are historically constituted, and vary in nature and kind from one culture to another. Even so

work has been understood as an instrumental activity at all times. Work should, therefore, be something we do in a prudential manner so that we can get on to those pastimes that give us intrinsic pleasure.

The difference between of work and sport is explained by the theory of 'radical instrumentalism.' According to radical instrumentalism, games are conceived as having their instrumental goals built into them. Goals of this kind lie outside what it means to play a game and can be achieved in many different ways. In other words, games are viewed as instruments for achieving a particular end. This theory denies that goals such as fame and fortune can be specified independently of the manner of achieving them. But in practice adopting a radical instrumental view of a game will prove to be self-defeating, for attempting to make a game out of productive activity makes no sense. The integration of the work and sport is not possible because the formal logic of the two activities reveal the activities attempt to achieve mutually exclusive goals. Lasch's scheme to integrate work and play is also a radical instrumental view of games, for it too requires the pursuit of the instrumental goals while observing the logic of play. In other words, he requires work to be conducted in the gratuitous manner of sport. The following example shows why a radically instrumental theory of games, and therefore Lasch's solution, when put into practice proves to be self-defeating.

Consider the person who is keen on producing something of value while also making that activity into a game, for example building a house with one hand tied behind their back under certain imposed time constraints. As the foundations are being laid the person believes that these two purposes can be accomplished by the same means. However, scarcely has the first brick been put in place when the person realizes that these two goals are in conflict with

one another. Facing this problem the practitioner will do one of three things: if playing a game is more important than building the house, then the person will attempt to build the house in the allowed time with one hand tied behind their back; if building the house is more important than playing a game, then the house will be built as quickly an efficiently as possible (that is, with both hands untied); if playing a game and building the house are valued equally then the practitioner, in a state of indecision, will be unable to do either because at any one time, one can either be working or playing, but one cannot at one and the same time be both working and playing.

Making a game out of productive activity, therefore, makes no sense and is clearly not what Lasch has in mind, for turning a productive activity into a game nullifies its useful effects. Instead, it seems that Lasch solution is more concerned with permeating work with the qualities of skill and autonomy. Activities that involve craftsmanship such as carpentry, weaving or pottery would appear to the types of activity he has in mind. And though craftsmen and women who use hand tools, a particular kind of wood or clay, or a particular complex technique, willingly overcome unnecessary obstacles in order to produce a useful product, this does not make these activities games. In cases such as these, the subjective pleasure that craftsmanship brings to the worker -- the skill and uniqueness of the type of labor involved in making the product renders the activity that produces it an efficient activity. In any case, the cost of the finished article may also reflect the higher regard that is given to items that are made with skill and the expertise of the human hand as opposed to products made by machines .

However, this analysis cannot be extended to include all forms of work. The intrinsic pleasure that may be true of activities that require craftsmanship is

certainly not true of all productive activities. Street cleaning or garbage disposal for example, have few intrinsic qualities that could relieve them of their drudgery. When necessary tasks have no or little intrinsic appeal, it would seem to make more sense to get the job over and done with as quickly and efficiently as possible. Turning a distasteful activity into a game makes that activity a farce. Lasch's solution passes over the fact that there are significant qualitative differences between different work activities that cannot be changed by reorganization or the inclusion of gratuitous difficulty. Lasch's thesis cannot account for the intrinsic qualities that some occupations may have over others. He does not differentiate between those craftsmanlike activities that gain nothing by being turned in to a game and those boring, oppressive activities that are made considerably worse by increasing their gratuitous difficulty.

Summary

Lasch's account of the way that capitalist rationalization has corrupted contemporary sport is a positive aspect of his critique of sport. However his solution to the degradation of sport is unintelligible. The integration of work with Lasch's conception of sport requires sport to represent particular ideals that are incidental to sport. Representation is therefore a potential, but not a definitive quality of sport. The formal logic of games, however is the definitive quality of sport which enables the activity to become oppositional. The integration of work with the formal logic of games, however, when put in to practice, is impossible. It makes no sense to attempt to undertake an activity while equally observing the prudential nature of work and the gratuitous logic of games. And though Lasch does not advocate a prudential view of work, his solution, in any case, turns out to be a farce. The assertion that work is not a prudential activity can only

contribute to the confusion of realms that has already been perpetrated by capitalist rationalization that has leads to the degradation of sport in the first place.

CHAPTER IV

SPORT AND LIBERAL SEPARATION

In Chapter Three, I presented Lasch's argument that the corruption of sport occurs when the rules and conventions of the game are trivialized. He argued that the trivialization of sport destroys its ability to step back and comment on everyday life. Lasch argues that it is the separation of work and play that has led to the invasion of sport by the standards of the workaday world. Sport only appears to be different from work. In the most important sense, however, he argues that work and sport are integrated; sport has become like work, an activity pursued according to instrumental reason. Sport is now viewed as a temporary release from work and merely performs a compensatory role to the function of labor. Sport has therefore become another means to achieving the ends of capitalist rationalization. Lasch argues that since it is the separation of work and play that leads to the corruption of sport in the first place, the solution to sport's corruption requires a reintegration of the two activities.

I dismissed Lasch's solution to the corruption of sport on the basis that his representational theory of sport is problematic. I argued that sports representational qualities are incidental to the understanding of activity, and secondary to the competitive nature of sport itself. I then argued that the real oppositional quality of sport is not its representational ability, but the very logic that defines the activity itself. The formal logic of games enables sport to be pursued as an end in itself. Work, on the other hand, is dominated by the logic of instrumental reason and is a means to some further useful end. I argued that the logic of games is incompatible with the logic of work and therefore, on this

formal account, the two cannot be integrated.

In this Chapter, I will argue against Lasch, that a solution to the corruption of sport can be based on a separation of work and sport. I will take the view that the separation of work and sport in itself, need not lead to their integration in a form that furthers capitalist rationalization. I will argue that a liberal theory that aims to separate practices and institutions off from the state and from each other can ensure uncorrupted participation in sport.

I will briefly outline the liberal theory of separation as it relates to sport. I will then point out that Lasch's view of separation falls in line with the leftist critique of liberalism, one that argues that separation is an ideological sham and needs to be overcome. In particular, I will argue that though Lasch is correct to say that the present integration of work and sport contributes to capitalist goals, nonetheless a separation according to liberal principles is a possible solution to the corruption of sport. I will argue that without a liberal separation between work and sport, Lasch's solution becomes a speculative attempt to appropriate the process of capitalist rationalization in order for sport to achieve his own political ends. In other words, he wants sport to become an instrument of socialism rather than the market. I will argue, however, that once sport loses the capacity to appeal to a body of concerned practitioners who establish sporting standards and ideals that are upheld in an uncorrupted conception of sport, Lasch cannot justify that the integration of work and sport will enable sport to represent such an ideal or act as a catalyst of democratic socialism. In other words, without an institution, sport will not be able to represent ideals other than those of the prevailing social order. The logical conclusion of his integration thesis shows that sport can just as easily become a means of repression as it can a means of social emancipation. In the current

social climate, moreover, the integration of sport and work is more likely to lead to sports increased corruption than to the socialization of the forces of production.

The Liberal art of separation becomes a necessary part of the critique of both capitalist and the radical attempt to integrate work and sport. I will argue that a successful separation of institutions, according to a liberal theory does not serve the external interests of the market or state; institutions need only answer to the internal logic of the practice. Accordingly, I will argue that the institutions of work and sport must show the differences between the prudential nature of work and the gratuitous nature of the formal logic of games. In this way, the logic of games, as the antithesis of instrumental reason, helps to wall out external influences of the market and politics, and helps to draw the lines for sports institutional autonomy and define what action is, or is not appropriate to the practice of sport. I will argue that the liberal separation of sport is a pragmatic rather than an escapist stance. The wall between work and sport will be built according to the wishes and understandings of practitioners who are concerned about the integrity of the internal logic and goods of the practice itself. Finally, the successful separation of sport and work can also have wider social significance, as the liberal separation of sports institutions can enable the formal logic of games to represent a liberal ideal. It would show how other institutions need to respond to the internal logic of their own practice, rather than the logic of capitalist rationalization.

THE LIBERAL ART OF SEPARATION

Michael Walzer advances a theory of liberalism as a project that maps out the difference spheres of activity. On this view each different practice creates a new liberty and equality. Between each different practice exist walls that define the extent and influence of that practice relative to the next. Although these boundaries are often imprecise, they do exist. The boundaries are more obvious between some practices than others. Walzer argues that the boundaries between church and state perhaps exemplifies this liberal scheme; "The wall between church and state creates a sphere of religious activity, of private and public worship, congregation and consciences, into which politicians and bureaucrats may not intrude" (1984, p.315). But walls between other institutions also exist: the wall between the university and state enables academic freedom; the separation between politics and civil society creates economic competition; and the distinction between private and public life creates individual and familial liberty. The same can be said of sport. In this way, the institution of sport enables the practice to be conceived as an autonomous activity that is independent of other institutions and practices. The behavior and actions of the institution are answerable to the internal standards, demands and expectations of the practice. For now, it is not important to list what these internal qualities are, but just to recognize that they exist and that the institution of sport can be conceived as one autonomous social institution amongst many. The key to the success of this liberal theory of separation, therefore, is that its boundaries need to wall-off the different institutionalized practices.

Lasch's Critique of the Separation of Work and Play

Lasch argues that the liberal art of separation is largely a theoretical rather than a practical exercise. He argues that in reality this liberal map serves the ideological designs of capitalism. In other words, established religions are apologists for the social problems of capitalist society, universities reproduce the social hierarchy of the job market, and political power translates into wealth, or as is more common today, wealth brings its own political privilege. In the case of sport, Lasch has clearly argued along similar lines; the separation of sport has not walled out the dominant influence of the market. In sport, as in all spheres of activity, capital is the dominant good and therefore does not alter sports intimate association with the world of work. He is therefore critical of Liberal theorists such as Novak who argue for "the preservation of parts of life not drawn up into politics" (1976, p.276). Lasch argues

> While he deplores the subordination of sport to entertainment, Novak takes for granted the separation of work and leisure that gives rise to this invasion of play by the workaday world. He does not see that the degradation of play originates in the degradation of work which creates both the need and the opportunity for commercialized "recreation" (1979, p.217).

In line with Marxist politics, Lasch's solution intends to overcome the separation between work and sport, between culture and rest of life. He argues that social change in general, and the change of institutions in particular, will only be achieved by wholesale revolution, and his attempt to socialize of the relations of production through integration of work and sport is one such radical attempt.

A Liberal Critique of Lasch's Integration Thesis

Without formal separations between institutionalized practices, the ideal of sport that Lasch's integration thesis requires will become just one

representation of the practice amongst many. There is no guarantee that the integration or work and sport will be in the form that will contribute to the overall socialization of the production process. Though Lasch attempts to overcome this problem by arguing that the ideal of sport cannot represent political ends, at the same time he proposes to use this ideal concept for his own political goals. Lasch's concept of sport, therefore, fluctuates between opposing itself to work and capitalist rationalization, and appropriating them in the service of his own political aims. Though he wants to contrast sport to work, at the same time he wants to integrate them. Lasch solution, based on belief that the separation of spheres is a bourgeois myth, thus merely perpetrates the confusion of realms he wishes to attack. At one moment, he claims that sport does not represent politics or work but is a representation of an ideal set off from everyday life. In the next, he claims that all practices are integrated, thus turning both work and sport into concepts that can only exist in the imagination.

In particular, Lasch fails to consider that when sport is integrated with work, its ability to represent an ideal is compromised. An integration of work and sport, therefore, would mean that sport would be measured by its success as a catalyst in socializing the workaday world rather than as a representation of an ideal. Lasch's solution is merely an attempt to transform the present instrumental view of sport that furthers the goals of capitalist rationalization in a different direction to further his own social designs. It is not a solution that recognizes the non-instrumental nature of the practice. This need not be a problem in itself, as long as the integration of work with sport makes labor more enjoyable and meaningful, and it is reasonable to expect that as work becomes more enjoyable and meaningful, sport will become less corrupt. But should a tyrannical force come to dominate social life and disregard the ideal of sport,

without the ability to petition a separated institution, sport will only be overwhelmed by totalitarian forces.

Lasch's solution can only achieve democratization by wholesale social changes. His scheme is too risky, for it requires that the all too fragile ego of the narcissistic personality be transformed into a caring, selfless and democratic one. As Picone points out, what Lasch fails to take into account is that the solution to the crisis of contemporary capitalism is not simply a matter of redirecting economics towards socialist goals. Picone concludes; "Clearly in the age of narcissism, any talk of socialism is at best premature, since at this stage it could only mean an extension of some variation of the much despised bureaucratic apparatus overseeing an increasingly cretinized populace" (1980, pp.116-117).

COMPLETING THE LIBERAL ART OF SEPARATION

Walzer argues that the leftist critique of liberal separation may be more profitable if it was conceived in a different way. In other words, he argues that it is more apt to criticize liberal separation as an art that has catered for particular social groups and exists in a partial, imperfect manner. It is now necessary, therefore, to turn the art into an impartial event, with separations that hold and serve no particular interests but that of the separation of spheres itself. If this seems too ambitious a project, then for the time being, the critique of separation needs to advocate the expansion of the current range of cultural possibilities within social practices. At present, to engage within a practice in an institutionalized setting essentially means to undertake that practice along the lines of capitalist rationalization. The task of the liberal art of separation,

therefore, is to encourage different ways of interpreting the function and meaning of engagement within social practices. In this respect, sport -- because of its very nature, will be more successful than most practices for fostering interests other than those of the market. Sport can, for example, be pursued for the instrumental benefits of fame and fortune, health and politics as it is now, or as a ritual as it was in the past, or as an end in itself. The important thing is that if the liberal art of separation is to succeed, practices such as sport must be protected from overbearing powers. Therefore, as institutions were protected from state power in the past, it is now the case that institutions, and the state too, must be protected from the market. The integrity of sport and work, and the general social well-being, separation needs to be expanded and fortified. In this respect, sport needs to wall out the influence of the market.

Even though the art of separation currently leaves a lot to be desired, significant separation, at least in principle, has already taken place. Lasch himself acknowledges that the practice of sport requires specific types of competition, excellence, and teamwork despite the fact that the sporting institutions promote these qualities in a manner that serve economic interests. Lasch also criticizes radicals for their inability to recognize that the corruption of sport occurs due to the distinct contribution of contemporary capitalism, and that the features that they criticize are necessary to the understanding of sport at all times (1979, p.188). Therefore, as it is the case in sport, though the liberal art of separation is incomplete, and capitalist rationalization has meant that spheres of activity only outwardly appear to be different, this does not mean that the institutionalized separation of practices has not, in a significant way already taken place. Universities, for example, shelter nonconformist political views and the state regulates corporate and market activity. One only has to look to

totalitarian states to realize that the practical results of liberal separations have led to greater democratization than integrated social totalities.

The problems in sport, therefore, stem from the fact that institutions no longer represent the best interest of the practice and its practitioners. Institutions are now overwhelmingly concerned with profiting from the financial opportunities that surround the game. They no longer uphold the integrity of the internal goods and logic of the practice. The practice is only viewed as a means to achieve financial ends. Sports become corrupted when its institutions are dominated by managers, promoters and owners who have their own particular instrumental reasons for being involved in sport and no longer uphold the integrity of the practice.

The Right would argue, however, that since players and spectators also increasingly view sport in an instrumental way, then institutions already react to, and cater for the wishes of its practitioners. In this view, institutions already perform their liberal role and therefore, further segregation is unnecessary. Lasch believes that this is precisely the kind of realistic situation that shows liberal separation to be a sham, and theory that is inadequate to protect practices from the invasion of the market. I think however, that these criticisms of liberal separation and the relationship between practices and their institutions are false.

On the liberal view, institutions are concerned with goods, such as fame and fortune that are external to sport, as well as the goods internal to the practice. As institutions have been taken over by wealthy self-interested individuals, it is inevitable that wealth and power become the dominant concerns of sport's institutions. Great disparities in wealth, after all, produce their own dynamic to make economic exchanges between players and owners

only look formally free. Furthermore, when these radical inequalities in capital are organized within institutions they are able to "generate patterns of command and obedience in which even the formalities of exchange give way to something that looks very much like government" (Walzer, 1984, p.321). And ultimately, wealthy individuals who control sport's institutions can very often use the influence of their wealth to call upon the state to intervene in their interests. The instrumental attitude that pervades all forms of sport, I believe, is a result of the coercive nature of contemporary sports institutions rather than the institutions reacting to the wishes of its practitioners. After all, it is bureaucrats within institutions, and not the players, who control sport's financial and regulatory concerns. In a society dominated by capitalist rationalization, institutions have been able to administer a particular view of sport -- one that sees the practice as a means of achieving capitalist ends.

In order for an instrumental view of sport to become the dominant one, sporting institutions have to repudiate widespread views and shared opinions of diverse groups. Contemporary sport, therefore, reflects the financial, behavioral, and political interests of the dominant social group. Sports that do not reflect the qualities of our bureaucratic age are pushed out of the public eye, to the margins of the sporting world where they can contribute little as an alternative view of sport. Women's and amateur sport, for example, cater to different views of sport and diverse interest groups, but rarely get public exposure. In the same way, sports like gymnastics, archery and some of the martial arts display distinctly different qualities that do not cater to the more masculine attributes of strength, speed and power.[1] But since the more

[1] The martial arts that I have in mind are those that stress movement control and grace rather than fighting skills. In his respect, out of the many different martial arts that exist in the East, it is typical of Western society to popularize those that are fighting skills such as Karate and Tae Kwan Do.

their task when financial concerns of the market corrupt the internal meaning and goods of sport.

In order for liberalism to complete a just and free separation of institutionalized practices it must first identify where the walls necessary to keep out corrupting influences should be built, or, where they still exist, fortified. Institutions need to be rebuilt in a manner that promotes the internal logic of the practice itself. Lasch view of sport has intimated where that process must begin; he proposes that sport should be viewed as a representation of the ideals of the community. And though the solution that he proposes to achieve such a view of sport is not possible, it only means that the ideal sport should not be viewed as representational one. In other words the ideal of sport can be actualized through the observation of the formal logic of games.

In response to Lasch, liberal separation can be seen as largely a problem of perceiving where walls need to be drawn rather than a rejection of the value of separation (Walzer, 1984, p.322). In this respect, the internal logic of sport presents a particular forceful means of overcoming the predicament of drawing the lines between sport and other institutionalized practices. As I argued in Chapter Three, although sport can be played in order to achieve its external goods, at the same time those benefits can only be achieved by observing of the formal logic of games. Though practitioners may only see the formal logic as an inconvenience that has to be overcome in order to achieve some further end, at the same time, this logic is prior to all other considerations. In other words, whatever external ends players may value, they cannot but help observe the formal logic of sport -- if it is indeed their intent to achieve those ends through participating in sport .

The formal logic of sport can have a peculiar effect on even its most

feminine qualities of grace, control, and balance, do not reflect the qualities of intense competition, aggrandized masculinity, and antagonistic cooperation of the workaday world, they are allowed to contribute little to the dominant moment of sport.[2] The dominant view of sport therefore, has not been reached by a process of widespread 'democratic consensus'[3] and the present institutionalized view of sport rules out a whole range of sporting interpretations in favor of a select few that have been popularized in the Western world.[4] As it becomes clearer what the current ideals of the dominant moment of sports really are, criticism and complaints about injustice in sport may rise, a sure sign that consensus and approval of these ideals is lacking.

Although the very presence of external benefits tend to corrupt sport, in the most important sense, contemporary sporting institutions are ultimately degraded when they no longer answer to the internal logic and demands of the practice. The liberal art of separation aims to promote sport as an activity pursued according to the particular demands and expectations of that practice. It is a theory that recognizes that though the practice of sport is also concerned with achieving external goods, the manner in which those benefits are be achieved must not compromise the integrity of the practice. Institutions have to fulfill their historical purpose; to realize the internal goods and logic of the practice. On the liberal view, therefore, contemporary institutions are not up to

---

[2] It is clear, except maybe in the case Olympic Gymnastics, that top-class women athletes are only recognized as such for attributes that can be better achieved by males. And though it is vital for women to achieve equality in sport, when basketball, track and tennis are the dominant women's sports, the question of whether sport should encompass a broader spectrum of qualities is never asked.

[3] I borrow here Michael Lavin's concept of democratic consensus as a justifiable way for determining what core set of ideals should exist in sport and be upheld by its institutions. See "Sport and Drugs: Are the Current Bans Justified?," Journal of the Philosophy of Sport, XIV,(1987),pp.39-32.

[4] One can detect in the preponderance of Olympic sports that are native of the Western world, and the success of the World Football League that something akin to 'Sporting Imperialism' is currently taking place.

ardent adversaries. Even though the majority of professional sports persons view money as the main reason for participating in sport, at the same time, the formal logic of games can command its own allegiance. On occasions when an advantage can be gained by cheating without the athlete being found out, the deeply rooted conventions and social agreements that sport demands can serve as a sufficient deterrent to improper behavior. By justly ruling out a whole range of actions that could place one player at a distinct advantage over another, the rules of games make success in sport an activity that requires natural talent and hard work. In this way, by prohibiting the action of cheats, the formal logic of games represents a form of equality that is not often found in real life.

It would be fantastic to suggest that the formal logic of games is all that is required to stop the corruption of sport. As Lasch has accurately pointed out, despite the necessary allegiance to the formal logic, sports institutions are still able to further the goals of capitalist rationalization. Capitalist rationalization at the moment conceals this equivocation by smuggling the gratuitous rationality of games into the institutionalized practice of sport. The oppositional qualities of the formal logic of sport has become ineffective because it is not at issue -- capitalist rationalization limits the sporting agenda to questions about monetary and other instrumental concerns rather than questions about the internal rationality of the activity itself .

The goal of the art of liberal separation is to show how contemporary sports institutions do not perform their proper role. On this view, liberals and sport's practitioners are justified to insist that the internal logic of the practice takes precedence over any other external concerns. In other words, the institution of sport must ensure the integrity of the practice through promoting

the internal goods, and therefore the formal account of games. Once the internal goods of sports become a primary concern, the non-instrumental nature of the formal logic of games can provide the starting point for criticizing the corrupting influence that the market has on sport. External benefits will have to be an incidental, and not the primary concern of institutions. The formal logic of games, therefore, can be viewed a foundation of the liberal wall that is necessary to separate sport from the market.

It is likely that with liberal separation successfully in place, the financial opportunities that exert a corrupting influence on sport will be greatly reduced. This will not be viewed favorably by all athletes, particularly those who achieve great fame and wealth through playing, but this not a problem for the liberal theory of separation. Those who wish to participate in sport in order to achieve some instrumental end may not do so if those ends are incompatible with the shared ideals of the institution they join. Sportsmen and women wishing to achieve the external goods of sport will have to form their own groups and institutions in order to achieve their own instrumental ambitions. It must be remembered that participation in professional and amateur sports is voluntary thing and also that an individuals association with an institution is at any time subject to "schism, withdrawal, cancellation, and divorce."[5] I think that this liberal theory anticipates a clear division between amateur and professional sport, and perhaps various other levels of sport.

---

[5] Walzer, "Liberalism and the Art of Separation," p.324. For a discussion on the morally permissible ends of institutions see Michael Lavin's "Sport and Drugs," p.41.

LIBERAL SEPARATION OF SPORT AS AN IDEAL

The successful separation of institutions that aim to further the internal logic and goods of games is not only a solution to the corruption of sport, but it is an ideal that can act as a benchmark and barometer for the progress of liberal separation in general. The practice of sport, because of the necessary observation of the formal logic of games, has greater potential to wall out external forces than most practices. As Lasch has compellingly shown, though sport, like all other practices is prone to corruption, it is not beset with the particular problems that degraded art. Sport may well be, as Lasch at times intimates, the most compelling alternative to the present instrumental view of culture. If institutions can be compelled to limit the influence of external goods, the rationale of games -- the wish to pursue an activity for no other reason other than the enjoyment it brings -- may motivate individuals and groups to view other practices in the same, or other novel ways. It is engagement of this nature that the liberal art of separation aims to promote. The separation of social practices and their institutions according to liberal principles, when put into practice will enable practitioners to pursue an activity according to the particular demands of that practice unencumbered by the dictates of external forces. Walzer states;

> In each case, institutions are responsive to their own logic even while they are responsive to systemic determinations. The play of internal logic can only be repressed by a tyrannical force, crossing the lines, breaking through the walls established by the art of separation. Liberalism is best understood as an argument against that sort of repression. It would be a meaningless argument, and tyranny a superfluous politics, unless independent churches and universities, and autonomous states, really existed or might really exist in the world. But they can and sometimes do exist. The art of separation is not an illusory or fantastic enterprise; it is a morally and politically necessary adaptation to the complexities of modern life. Liberal theory reflects and reinforces a long-term process of social differentiation (1984, p.319).

Though no great social changes may come from adopting novel and alternative approaches to practices, at least it will be a move that challenges institutions to achieve the democratic consensus that they presently lack.

Walling out the dominant influence of the market is a concern for all institutions and their practitioners. Private governments and self-interested groups, who achieve and maintain social privileges through the coercive means of money need to regulated. Religious freedom, and the freedom that is attainable in sport must find its equivalent in industry and in the work place. Capitalist rationalization should not dictate public ideals or the way that practitioners can interpret and express human action -- it is the responsibility of democratic institutions to regulate and decide what is or is not behavior appropriate to that practice.

Walzer argues that the successful completion of the liberal art of separation passes over into democratic socialism (1984, p.323). On this view, socialism is not a theory based on individual liberty, but a theory concerned with distributive justice and the drawing of lines between institutional settings. Walzer argues that a theory of rights within social settings is a more rewarding freedom than one that is concerned with the indeterminable rights of the individual. After all, men and women exist as social creatures, and are defined in relation to their engagement in social practices. Institutional separations that aim to divide practices from one another therefore, strengthen social liberties and the sense of a common world. Individual liberty, is therefore achieved through an ongoing process of accumulating rights within institutional settings, where once the limits of each social setting are known, ones rights are guaranteed. In order to ensure that liberal separations hold, political power, traditionally associated with its repressive function, must now execute an

important regulatory role. The state, when protected from the influence private governments, becomes the agent of separation, building the walls that separate one institution from another. Although institutions will for the most part regulate themselves by appealing to the practice and its practitioners, in the last resort institutions can appeal to the state. Once established, liberal institutions can only be corrupted by the power of the state, so as long as the state upholds liberal separations the integrity of social practices is secured.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY

I have attempted to show how the dominant social forces shaping contemporary society have influenced all social practices and in particular the practice of sport. Changes in the dominant ideology of capitalism have brought about specific changes in the world of work that in turn have led to the corruption of sport. I have argued that modern sport is corrupted when it is rationalized in the same instrumental way as work -- when it is only considered a means to an end, and not an end in itself.

I have argued, after Lasch, that capitalist rationalization produces particular social conditions that lead to the development of a distinct narcissistic personality type. Although narcissism is a clinical condition, because it is indelibly linked to forces of socialization, in its milder form it can be detected in everyday life. Narcissism reflects the social forces that have destroyed the traditional authority of the patriarchal family and replaced that authority with new forms of social control. Individuals within contemporary society therefore, have become dependent on large bureaucratic institutions and the distractions of a mass consumption for direction in life.

I have argued, after Lasch, that as bureaucracy spreads into all aspects of life, the ability of cultural practices to provide a distanced perspective, or commentary to our lives no longer exists. The spread of capitalist rationalization has undermined the capability of sport to become a representation of our lives by obliterating the gap between illusion and reality. In an age of bureaucratic capitalism, sport and all other cultural practices that

have traditionally been considered separate from work have been rationalized according to the demands of the market. As games have been transformed from a ritual into a commodity, the rules and conventions of the game have been corrupted, and though this is particularly true of top class and professional sport, at the same time, capitalist rationalization has redefined sporting ideals, creating an instrumental view that is now common to all sports. Sport is either viewed as a means to achieve fame and fortune, as a release from the world of work, or as an activity that makes us healthy and gets us in better shape to withstand the rigors of the competitive corporate world. It is only on rare occasions that sport is seen as an end in itself, played simply for the intrinsic pleasure that the activity can provide. I have argued, after Lasch, that the differences that separate sport in contemporary society therefore, enable their structural and functional integration according to the demands of capitalism.

Christopher Lasch has argued that since the formal separation of work and sport presupposes their integration according to the demands of the market, the solution to the degradation of sport is to integrate the formal qualities of work and sport. I have argued against Lasch, that the integration of work and sport in this sense is not possible. The oppositional qualities that Lasch has attributed to sport, that enable it, according to him, to maintain its standards to a greater extent than other forms of culture is due to the formal logic of games. Sports formal logic as the opposite to the logic of work means the activity is pursued as an end in itself. Work, on the other hand, is a necessary activity performed in an instrumental manner. I have argued that though Lasch's solution is an attempt to socialize the conditions of production, and he does not view work as a prudential activity,in practice, the attempt to integrate such a view of work with sport turns that activity into a farce. The

integration of productive activity with the formal logic of games is not possible because the ends of work and sport are mutually exclusive.

I have offered my own solution to the corruption of sport based on a liberal separation of practices and their institutions as a corrective to the capitalist integration of work and sport. Liberal separation aim to wall out the dominant forces of the market with institutions that need only answer to the internal logic of the practice. In other words, liberal separation, requires that sports institutions uphold the formal logic of games, rather than act in the interest of goods that are external to the practice. I have argued that the formal logic of games helps draw the liberal boundaries of sport and defines action that is appropriate to the practice itself. When institutions further the internal logic of the practice they act in the best interests of the practitioners and preserve the integrity of sport. Finally, I argued that the successful liberal separation of sport has wider social implications as it would represent an ideal, showing other institutions that they need to respond to the internal logic of their practice and not to the demands of the market.

In the future, the social problems that exist within the culture of narcissism are likely to deteriorate rather than improve. Present capitalist ideology cannot carry out the checks an balances that inevitably arise within a system based on limitless accumulation. The success of capitalist adjustment in closing the gap between capitalist ideology and the social ideals that this ideology speaks to has created its own particular problems. In other words, as capitalist rationalization spreads to more and more practices not only do all concerns in life come to be viewed in an instrumental fashion, and thus serve the interests of the market, but at the same time these social changes have given rise to a distinct narcissistic personality that can function well within the bureaucratic

system, but cannot control it. The irresponsibility and childish pleasure seeking of the narcissist erodes the discipline and perspective necessary to keep bureaucracies from becoming "a social Frankenstein whose functioning results in waste, inefficiency, and all the traits associated with large bureaucracies unrestrained by external controls (Picone, 1979, p.119).

The need to separate political institutions from the market along liberal lines has become a priority, not only because of the pressing needs of the present situation, but also in order to prevent further capitalist rationalization that may lead to greater repression. The strongest attack against the inefficiencies of the present system, after all, have come from monopoly capitalists who wish to spread the influence of private governments in the interests of further capitalist rationalization.

There are other possible outcomes to contemporary capitalism, other than the present fluctuation between crisis and temporary expansion. In the near future, the expansion of an American culture abroad, as the countries of Eastern Europe and the Third world adopt a market economy, may become an economic necessity. Capitalist rationalization may also find it necessary, to some extent to reconstitute the dominant narcissistic personality in order to counter the inefficiencies of bureaucracy that presently prevent further economic expansion. However, it may be the case that the sacrifices required of narcissistic individuals will only be achieved through more coercive means than the psychological dependency that narcissism breeds at the moment.

The complexities of contemporary political life that occur due to the intermingling of politics and the market are more likely to be happily resolved by the liberal art of separation rather than further capitalist rationalization or the dictates of an authoritarian state. There can be no doubt that the invasion of

external forces end up corrupting institutions that are supposed to uphold the integrity of their practice, and that walling out those external influences can, to some extent, minimize the extent of institutional corruption. As Walzer pointed out, liberal separation faces more of a problem of perception than of justification (1984, p.322). This problem will be solved once concerned practitioners gain control of institutions and further the internal logic of the practice rather than the interests of the market. In this respect, the necessary observation of the formal logic of games can make sport an ideal representation of the critical purpose of the liberal art of separation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Adorno, Theodor W. & Horkheimer, Max. Dialectic of Enlightenment. London: Verso, 1979.

Adorno, Theodor W. Sociology and Psychology." New Left Review. 47 (1968), pp. 80-96.

Adorno, Theodor W. Prisms. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1982.

-----. Minima Moralia. London: Verso, 1985.

Alt, John "Sport and Cultural Reification: From Ritual to Mass Consumption." Theory, Culture, and Society, 1 (1982), pp.93-107.

Barthes, Roland. Writing Degree Zero. Translated by A. Lavers. New York: Hill & Wang, 1972.

Benjamin, Walter. "The Work of Art in an Age of Mechanical Reproduction." Illuminations. Edited by Hannah Arendt. New York: Harcourt Brace, 1968.

Braverman, Harry. Labor and Monopoly Capital. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1974.

Brohm, Jean-Marie. Sport: A Prison of Measured Time. London: Ink Links, 1978.

Burger, Peter. Theory of the Avant-Garde. Minneapolis:University of Minnesota Press, 1984.

Callois, Roger. "The Structure and Classification of Games." in Sport, Culture and Society. Edited by John W. Loy, Jr.. and Gerald S. Kenyon. New York: Macmillan, 1969.

Cordner, Christopher. "The Differences Between Sport and Art." Journal of the Philosophy of Sport. XV, (1988), pp.31-48

D'Agostino, Fred. "The Ethos of Games" in Philosophic Inquiry into Sport. Edited by William J. Morgan and Klaus V. Meier. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1988.

Doane, Janice. and Hodges, Devon L. "Mobilizing the Ranks of Reality." Salmagundi. 46 (Fall, 1979), pp. 185-193.

Fisher, Michael. "Criticizing Capitalist America." Salmagundi. 46 (Fall,1979), pp. 166-193.

Fromm, Erich. Heart of Man. New York: Harper and Row, 1964.

Gans, Herbert. Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evolution of Taste. New York: Basic Books, 1974.

Gallagher, Bernard J. "Breaking Up Isn't Hard to Do: Stephen King, Christopher Lasch, and Psychic Fragmentation." Journal of American Culture. Volume 10, 4 (Winter 1987), pp. 59-67.

Graff, Gerald. "The Politics of Anti-Realism." Salmagundi, 42 (Summer-Fall 1978), pp. 5-30.

Gruneau, Richard. Class, Sports, and Social Development. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1983.

Guttman, Allen. From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sport. New York: Columbia University Press, 1978.

Habermas, Jurgen. Toward a Rational Society. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

-----. Theory and Practice. Boston: Beacon Press, 1973.

Hargreaves, John. Sport, Power and Culture. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986.

Heilbronner, Robert L. Marxism: For and Against. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1980.

Held, David Introduction to Critical Theory: Horkheimer to Habermas. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980.

Hoberman, John M. Sport and Political Ideology. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press, 1984.

Holland, Eugene W. "Narcissism from Beaudelaire to Sartre: Ego-Psychology and Cultural History." New Orleans Review. Vol.11, 2 (Summer 1984), pp. 5-15.

Huizinga, Johan. Homo Ludens: a Study of the Play Element in Culture. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950.

Jay, Martin. The Dialectical Imagination: A History of the Frankfurt School of Social Research, 1923-1950. Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1973.

Kermode, Frank. "The Way We Live Now: The Culture of Narcissism." The New York Times Book Review. (Jan.14,1979)

Lasch, Christopher. The New Radicalism in America. New York: Alfred J. Knopf, 1965.

Lasch, Christopher. The Agony of the American Left. New York: Alfred J. Knopf, 1969.

-----. Haven in a Heartless World: The Family Besieged. New York: Basic Books, 1977a.

-----. "The Corruption of Sports." New York Review of Books. (April 28, 1977b).

-----. "Recovering Reality." Salmagundi. 42 (Summer-Fall 1978), pp. 44-47

-----. The Culture of Narcissism: American Life In an Age of Diminishing Expectations. New York: Warner Books, 1979a.

-----. "Politics and Social Theory: a Reply to My Critics." Salmagundi. 46 (Fall 1979b), pp. 194-202.

-----. "The Culture of Narcissism." Bulletin of the Menninger Clinic. Vol. 44, 5 (1980a), pp. 436-440.

-----. "Narcissism and the Problem of 'Morale'." Telos. 44 (Summer, 1980b), pp. 122-125.

-----. "The Freudian Left and Cultural Revolution." New Left Review. 129 (1981a), pp. 23-34.

-----. "Mass Culture Reconsidered." democracy, 4 (October 1981b), pp. 7-22.

-----. "The Degradation of Work and the Apotheosis of Art." Harper's. 1605 (February 1984a), pp.40-45.

-----. "1984: Are We There?" Salmagundi. 65 (Fall 1984b), pp. 51-62.

-----. The Minimal Self: Psychic Survival in Troubled Times. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1984c.

-----. "The Communitarian Critique of Liberalism." Soundings. 69 (Spring 1986), pp. 60-76.

-----. "The Paranoid Presidency." Center Magazine. Vol. 20, 4 (1987), pp. 42-48.

-----. "Consensus- An Academic Question." Journal of American History. Vol. 76, 2 (1989), pp. 457-459.

McCarthy, Thomas. The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1978.

McLellan, David (Ed.). Marxism:Essential Writings. New York: Oxford University Press, 1988.

MacIntyre, Alisdair. After Virtue. South Bend: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984.

Marcuse, Herbert. Reason & Revolution: Hegel & the Rise of Social Theory. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1941.

-----. Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud, New York: Vintage Books, 1962.

-----. One-Dimensional Man: Studies in the Ideology of Advanced Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

-----. Negations: Essays in Critical Theory. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

-----. An Essay on Liberation. Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

-----. Five Lectures. Boston: Beacon Press, 1970.

-----. Counter-revolution and Revolt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1972.

-----. The Aesthetic Dimension. Boston: Beacon Press, 1978.

Lavin, Michael. "Sport and Drugs: Are the Current Bans Justified?" Journal of the Philosophy of Sport. XIV, (1987), pp. 34-43.

Marglin, Stephen. "What do Bosses do?: The Origins and Functions of Hierarchy in Capitalist Production" Review of Radical Political Economics. 6 (1974), pp. 60-112.

Marx, Karl. Capital: Volume Three. New York: International Publishers, 1977.

-----. Grundrisse: Foundations of the Critique of Political Economy. New York: Vintage Books, 1973.

Montgomery, David. "Workers Control of Machine Production in the 19th Century." Labor History. 17 (1976), pp. 485-509.

Morace, Robert A. "Donald Barthelme's Snow White: The Novel, the Critics, and the Culture." Studies in Modern Fiction. Vol. 26, 1 (Fall 1984), pp.1-10.

Morgan, William J. and Meier Klaus V. (Eds.). Philosophic Inquiry in Sport. Champaign, Illinois: Human Kinetics Publishers, Inc., 1988.

Morgan, William J. "Adorno on Sport: The Case of the Fractured Dialectic." Theory and Society. 17, (1988-89), pp.816-832.

Nachman, Larry. "Solitude of the Heart: Personality and Democratic Culture." Salmagundi. 46, (Fall 1979), pp.173-184.

Noble, David F. America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism. New York: Alfred and Knopf, 1977.

Novak, Michael. The Joys of Sports. New York: Basic Books, 1976.

Ortega y Gasset, Jose. The Revolt of the Masses. New York: W. W. Norton, 1932.

Picone, Paul. "Narcissism After the Fall: What's at the Bottom of the Pool?" Salmagundi. 46, (Fall 1979), pp. 113-121.

Rigauer, Bero. Sport and Work Translated by Allen Guttman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1981.

Roderick, Rick. Habermas and the Foundations of Critical Theory. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1986.

Scott, Jack. The Athletic Revolution. New York: Free Press, 1971.

Seaton, James. "Critique as Bestseller: The Culture of Narcissism." The Centennial Review. Vol. 25, 2 (Spring 1981), pp.169-184.

Shils, Edward. "Daydreams and Nightmares: Reflections on the Criticism of Mass Culture." Sewanee Review. 65, (1957), pp. 587-608.

Suits, Bernard. "Words on Play." Journal of the Philosophy of Sport. IV, (1977), pp. 117-131.

-----. The Grasshopper: Games, Life and Utopia. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978.

Tar, Zoltan. The Frankfurt School: The Critical Theories of Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1977.

Tucker, Robert C. (Ed.). The Marx-Engels Reader. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1978.

Walzer, Michael. "Liberalism and the Art of Separation." Political Theory. Vol. 12, 3 (August 1984), pp. 315-330.

Wellmer, Albrecht Critical Theory of Society. New York: Herder and Herder, 1969.

VITA

Alun R. Hardman was born in St. Asaph, Wales, United Kingdom on June 20, 1966. He graduated from high school, Ysgol Gyfun Llangefni, Anglesey, in June, 1984. He attended the South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education at Cardiff to study Physical Education. In 1987 he graduated with a Class II, Division I, Bachelor of Arts Honors Degree from The University of Wales in Human Movement Studies. Following a years work, he returned to South Glamorgan Institute to complete a Postgraduate Certificate in Education (P.G.C.E.) to qualify as a high school teacher in Physical Education and Math. In the Fall of 1989 he came to The University of Tennessee, Knoxville to begin his Master's studies with a major emphasis in Philosophy and Social-Political Theories of Sport and accepted a two year position as a Graduate Teaching Associate. He completed his Masters degree in December 1991. After graduating he will return to a lecturing position within the Department of Human Movement Studies and Physical Education at Cardiff Institute of Higher Education, formerly South Glamorgan Institute of Higher Education.