MELINTAS
21.3.2005 [271-293]

Todd Lavin

NEO-LIBERALISM, THE NEW CHRISTIAN RIGHT AND THE DESIRE FOR ONE'S OWN OPPRESSION: The United States at the Turning Point

ABSTRACT

Artikel ini menyoroti bagaimana Neo-Liberalisme dan New Christian Right berhasil mendominasi politik Amerika dan merusakkan ideal dialog universal pembentukan komunitas global. Tindakan komunikatif sebagai ideal ke arah komunitas global dalam kenyataannya menghadapi tantangan sosial dan psikologis. Neo-Liberalisme dan New Christian right di Amerika adalah neurosis sosial, siasat pertahanan diri yang bersifat reaksioner terhadap tantangan-tantangan real. Dengan itu Amerika, alih-alih mengkaji kembali dirinya, justru jatuh ke dalam ideologi yang protektif namun tanpa fungsi.

Key Words:
communicative action • rational consensus • open and inclusive network • detranscendentalize • Neo-Liberalism • New Christian Right • market fundamentalism • narcissism • courage • resoluteness

Global community and universal dialogue are ideals. However, the current policies of the United States represents a growing threat to these ideals, not only internationally, best symbolized by its unilateral war on Iraq, but also domestically, in its undermining of civil liberties within the American polis itself. Along with many others, I identify Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right, which have triumphed in the recent United States' presidential election, as obstacles to the ideals to which we are committed. The task of this paper is two-fold. First, I will explain how these conservative ideologies betray the ideals of global community and universal dialogue. Second, I will argue why Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right have come to dominate current political discourse and policies within the United States.

Deleuze and Guattari, in identifying the fundamental problem of political philosophy, provide us with the orientation of this paper. "Why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?"[1] Following Wihelm Reich's lead, Deleuze and Guattari deny that the masses are innocent dupes. Rather, "at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, [the masses] *wanted* fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for".[2] I take this as my starting point. Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right have triumphed because the American polis has come to desire its own oppression, its own global isolation and domination. It is this that must be accounted for. To do so, one must understand not only the social and political obstacles that we face, but equally important, the psychological ones as well.

In term of the formal and material requirements of global community and universal dialogue, I do not plan to offer anything new, but to follow the lead of Jurgen Habermas. It is important to recognize that Habermas did not arrive at his theory in abstraction, but only in response to the on-going modernization of contemporary western societies. Given the rationalization, secularization and differentiation of our modern world, previous grounds for our normative claims have been rendered obsolete. Living in our post-metaphysical condition, we have access only to the resources of our own reason, to our own communicatively achieved rationality, to legitimize our normative self-understanding. We exist in a tenuous position. The post-metaphysical condition that has set free the communicative potential inherent in our modern context may also threaten and jeopardize precisely this potential. The very factors that set communicative action free may also be interpreted as so many losses

incurred by modernization. These loses include, first, transcendent basis to our norms; second, unified and unproblematic self- and collective-identities, and third, historical and social guarantees for our socialization. For Habermas, no plausible alternative exists to post-metaphysical thinking, "despite fundamentalist reaction."[3] It is this caveat about which I am most concern. We must begin to understand the rise of Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right in the United States as a social and psychological reaction to the on-going process of rationalization, and thus a subversion of communicative action.

This paper will be divided into four parts. First, I will begin by specifying the ideals of communicative action, and analyze how Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right betray these ideals. In the second and third parts of this paper, I will explore the social and psychological challenges that the ideals of communicative action pose. Fourth and finally, in the light of these reflections, I will be able to explore how these two conservative ideologies function as reactionary defense strategies to these challenges, as social neuroses in which we take flight in order to avoid the challenging ideals that communicative action demands. Much like the sluggish horse of Athens which Socrates sought to awaken, the United States has retreated into a protective but dysfunction ideology in order, in the words of Socrates, to "avoid giving an account of [itself]".[4]

Communicative Action and the New Right

In communicative action, actors abandon all instrumental and strategic use of discourse and orient themselves to mutual understanding. Actors pursue illocutionary goals without reservation and tie their agreement to the inter-subjective recognition of criticizable validity claims. Thus, the actors must consider themselves mutually accountable to rationally redeem their statements and norms. The validity we claim for them can no longer rest on unreflective social acceptance, settled custom or threats of sanctions, but must gain its binding force from "rational discourse, that is from the reflexive forms of communicative action itself,"[5] which leads to positions to which all participants can agree without coercion. Communicative action transforms the heteronomy of taken-for-granted authority into the autonomy of participants themselves validating these norms based on rational consensus. Participants therefore must be willing to expose themselves to criticism and to acknowledge the force of better arguments, to forego replying with dogmatic assertions and only participate properly

with argumentation.

Without discussing all the implications of Habermas' theory of communicative action on law and democracy, I will focus on one specific element, namely, the public sphere that must be available in order for communicative action to take place. Rational discourse must take place under conditions that "enable the *free* processing of topics and contributions, information and reason in the public space constituted by illocutionary obligations".[6] This public sphere must be a space within which "the pluralism of beliefs and interests is not suppressed but unleashed,"[7] a space that is premised "on the basis of an anarchic unfettered communicative freedom."[8] Habermas refers to this public sphere as "an open and inclusive network,"[9] of discourses, pluralistic and developing spontaneously, functioning together as a medium of unrestrained communication. We must put aside from our analysis the many legal, economic and social conditions that must be in place to preserve and support this network. What must be noted for our present concerns is that such a pluralized public sphere has, in Habermas' words, "learned to deal with its complexity consciously and deliberately."[10] The complexity and diversity of the public sphere is not seen as an obstacle to be overcome but rather affirmed as the condition for communicative action. Thus, a vibrant public sphere is guided by "strangers who renounce violence and, in the cooperative regulation of their common life, also concede one another the right to *remain* strangers."[11] In the words of Iris Young, a vibrant public sphere is a heterogeneous one, "in which persons stand forth with their differences acknowledged and respected."[12] Thus, a public sphere implies two political principles; one, that "no persons, actions or aspects of a person's life should be forced into privacy;" and two, that "no social institutions or practices should be excluded a priori from being a proper subject for public discussion and expression."[13]

To conclude our review of Habermas' theory of communicative action, we must recognize the unique nature of rationality that is implicit in this theory. Communicative rationality is "a reason that puts itself on trial,"[14] a reason that recognizes "there is neither a higher nor deeper reality to which we could appeal."[15] Communicative action presupposes only the ideal that resides within its own formal-pragmatic structure, namely, the open and inclusive dialogue of participants who engage in illocutionary speech acts without reservation. As Habermas writes,

> The theory of communicative action *detranscendentalizes* the noumenal realm only to have the idealizing force of context-transcending anticipations settle in the unavoidable pragmatic presuppositions of speech acts, and hence in the heart of ordinary, everyday communicative practice.[16]

Communicative action thus exposes us to "the vertigo of this freedom [from which] there is no longer any fixed point"[17] outside of discourse reason itself. We can no longer turn to untested and uncriticizable validity claims, but must pass all validity claims through the crucible of communicative action.

The ideals of communicative action, however, are subverted by Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right. I will argue that Neo-liberalism undermines a non-commodified public sphere, thereby depriving the poor and dispossessed a voice to be heard, while the New Christian Right restricts public discourse by limiting the information and topics that may enter into rational discussion. The two political principles as articulated by Young are thereby betrayed. Selective social institutions and practices are being excluded a priori from public discussion and the public sphere is betrayed by denying the diversity of voices a public space to be expressed.

Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right have been on the rise within the United States since the 1970s, but only since the Reagan administration have they created a culture, in the words of George Soros, "where religious fundamentalism comes together with market fundamentalism to form the ideology of American supremacy."[18] This narcissistic attitude of supremacy became glaringly obvious since the tragedy of September 11th. As Seldon Wolin writes, "Sept. 11, 2001, hastened a significant shift in our nation's self-understanding. It became commonplace to refer to an 'American empire' and to the United States as 'the world's only superpower'."[19] Such uncritical narcissism is most clearly reflected in the "reckless unilateralism [of the Bush administration] that believes the United States can demand unquestioning support, on terms it dictates, ignoring treaties and violating international law at will [and] invading other countries without provocation."[20] As President Bush crudely stated, "Either you are with us or with the terrorists."[21]

What unified these two ideologies is two-fold. First, both are driven, as Henry Giroux writes, by "an inflated sense of moral righteousness mediated by a false sense of certitude and a never-ending posture of triumphalism."[22] Both have taken a radically non-communicative attitude towards their own validity claims. Far from testing their norms and values

within an open public discourse, subjecting their claims to unconstrained critical discussion, Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right, whether by under funding a non-commodified public space, or by censoring and excluding opposition from discourse, assert their claims dogmatically. Second, both Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right share the assumption that all problems besetting a society are private rather than social in nature. Both ideologies appeal only to personal responsibility rather than social justice, assuming that social problems can be absorbed by civil society and the family. Whether it is in terms of Neo-Liberalism's market fundamentalism, or the New Christian Right's faith-based initiatives, both conservative ideologies are committed to privatization, deregulation and commercialization, which in turn empties out any public commitment to democratic goods, leaving the poor, the working class, and even the middle class, more vulnerable than before.

For example, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities report, "some 1.2 million to 1.6 million low-income people including 490,000 to 650,000 children and large numbers of parents, seniors, and people with disabilities have lost publicly funded health coverage"[23] as a result in cuts in public health insurance, such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP). According to Leighton Ku, the senior fellow at the Center, "cuts of this magnitude in health coverage for low-income families are unprecedented."[24]

Many needs within the American polis are now threatened by increased corporate welfare and tax cuts that benefit only the richest 1 percent of Americans. As Sean Gonsalves writes,

> for fiscal years 2002-2004, state governments filled approximately $200 billion in budget gaps by raising state taxes and fees and by cutting services. And during those same years, newly enacted federal tax cuts delivered about as much money - $197.3 billion in new tax breaks for the wealthiest one percent of Americans.[25]

Corporate decisions are freed from public obligations, and economics is disconnected from social consequences. Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right, in the name of privatization, are undermining the economic and political institutions necessary to preserve a democratic public sphere within which communicative action may take place. They seek to forsake any public responsibility for social needs, by abdicating this responsibility to the market and private philanthropy. In a speech delivered to the National Religious Broadcasters, in Nashville, Tennessee, President

Bush summarized the ideology behind the faith-based initiative. He stated, "the role of government is limited, because government cannot put hope in people's hearts, or a sense of purpose in people's lives. That happens when someone puts an arm around a neighbor and says, 'God loves you.'"[26] Implicit within this statement is the assumption that the poor and the dispossessed need neither higher wages nor job protections, neither affordable child care nor health care programs, but God and traditional values. As Political Scientist, James Guth and other, stated, "in [the Christian Evangelical] view, social problems such as poverty result from personal inadequacies and will disappear if enough people are converted to true faith."[27] The New Christian Right is providing the New Political Right with the legitimacy its needs for cutting government social programs and redefining all social problems as personal ones. Ester Kaplan wisely comments that the New Christian Right and the New Political Right assume:

> That you can change the circumstances of the poor without changing the circumstances of the very rich; that you can send hundreds of billions of public dollars to the very wealthy through tax cuts, slash government social programs, and still be...compassionate.[28]

And, as may be expected, many of the grants that have been awarded by various faith-based offices of the federal government are not assessed in terms of their ability to either identify or solve societal problems. Such assessment seems patently irrelevant, for example, to Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing that received $1.5 million in faith-based funds, since its primary mission is "worldwide evangelization."[29] As a result, these conservative ideologies produce and aggravate the very social problems that they deny, such as poverty, inadequate health care, and growing racial and class inequalities.

Where the New Christian Right is not furthering the Neo-Liberals' abdication of social responsibility, it furthers the governments power to restrict public discourse by limiting the information and topics that may enter into public discussion, especially in terms of the values that contradict Christian Evangelicalism, from abortion and sex education to gay rights, AIDS and other medical research. President Bush has already blocked almost all federally funded embryonic stem cell research. He has supported a constitutional amendment banning same-sex marriages, and he has provided judicial nominees who exclusively follow the New Christian

Right's ideology. Furthermore, President Bush has enabled the New Christian Right to restrict relevant and important information on sexual reproduction in order to propose its own value system without critical opposition. For example, Bush reinstated the Mexico City Policy, known as the global gag rule on abortion. This policy dictates that once an organization accepts a family planning grant from the United States, "it can no longer use its own separate funds to provide abortions, refer women to abortions, educate clients that abortion is an option, or even lobby for safe abortion access."[30] However, as stated in the September 2003 report on Bush's Mexico City Policy by the European parliament,

> Ironically, the impact of the Mexico City Policy is...the opposite of its intention: as clinics close and access to reproductive services becomes more difficult for lack of funding, less poor women in Europe and worldwide can afford contraception, leading to an increase in unwanted pregnancies and consequently abortions, many of them unsafe. This, again, drives up the maternal mortality rate.[31]

Sex Education within the United States is also restricted with a "gag-rule," a rule that Representative Henry Waxman criticized as a "gag rule on information."[32] For example, Right Choice, a program entirely funded by the Bush administration, "prohibited [its] instructors from ever discussing [the benefits of] condoms or birth control, even with a sexually active pupil."[33] The policy as a preventative measure against both unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases has been criticized by such scientific communities as the National Institute of Health, the Institute of Medicine, and the American Medical Association. However, as Kaplan wryly recognizes, "while provider of comprehensive sex education and promoters of safe sex are in the business of saving lives, abstinence educators are primarily in the business of saving souls."[34] This is clear from the eight-point federal abstinence-only restriction that is required by the Right Choice program. The restrictions dictate that providers present monogamous relationships within the context of marriage as the only expected standard of sexual activities, and that any sexual activity outside of the context of marriage is likely to have harmful psychological and physical effects. The aim behind this federal program is less to prevent unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases, than to "lead young people away from any sexual activity that God would find unpleasing."[35]

The obstacles that Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right

represent to global community and universal dialogue is most glaringly seen in the current administration's unilateral decision to invade Iraq. Between the Neo-Liberals' and the New Christian Right's uncritical stance towards their own ideologies, questions concerning the relation between Hussein and al-Qaeda, Hussein's alleged possession of weapons of mass destruction, and his alleged imminent threat to the United States, went unheeded. Instead, what took place was a confused identification of nation, church and God. As the President's aide, Tim Goeglein, stated, "I think President Bush is God's man at this hour."[36] Christian Evangelicals, before and after the 2001 terrorist attacks, have identified Islam as evil and in need of conversion to the Christian faith. According to Laurie Goodstein, in her *New York Times* article, "Seeing Islam as 'Evil' Faith, Evangelicals Seek Converts," over 4000 American Christians have been trained to proselytize Muslims over the past several years, "many of those since 2001 terrorist attacks."[37] In 2003, the Evangelical preacher, Rev. Franklin Graham, who had previously referred to Islam as wicked and evil,[38] was invited to deliver a Good Friday sermon at the Pentagon by Defense Department officials. "Graham used this platform to tell his audience of soldier, 'There is no other way to God except through Christ.'"[39] Bush however was silent over Graham's and other Christian Evangelical leaders' religious bigotry, and he remained silent over the many missionary groups capitalizing on the U.S. invasion of Iraq to spread the Christian faith.

The Social Challenges of Communicative Action

The reactionary and anti-democratic measures of Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right must be understood within the context of the social challenges posed by communicative action, and the rationalization of society. Communicative action emerges only in the wake of the dissolution of traditional conventionality, or as Habermas writes, only "after all substantial concepts of reason has been critically dissolved."[40] Yet this dissolution involves significant disruptions to a society, to society's own self-understanding, to its mode of social integration and to the nature of its socialization. In order for communicative rationality to become effective within a society, communicative action must become "a medium through which cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization take place."[41]

As a medium of socialization, communicative action socializes individuals into the process of being able to say no to the cognitive,

normative or expressive claim of their interlocutors. Individuals lose the naivety of their stance and must take up a reflective attitude toward their own claims. "By internalizing the role of a participant in argumentation, ego becomes capable of self-criticism."[42] Only then do they confront themselves as communicatively acting subjects. Furthermore, as a medium of cultural reproduction, "a tradition...can be continued only through the medium of permanent critique."[43] Both one's individual and social world loses is naivety and may be re-appropriated only reflexively. In the wake of this individualization and reflexivity, social integration can no longer be secured by prior value consensus, but only through communicative cooperation, and thus on the basis of intersubjective recognition of validity claims. Communicative action blocks "simple reduplication of group identity in the personality structure of the individual"[44] and encourages solidarity only through the commitments of communicative action.

Thus, communicative action requires the transformation of cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization from their conventional foundations over to "linguistic communication and action oriented to mutual understanding."[45] The continuation of norms and values, the maintenance of legitimate social orders and the continuity of identities now become dependent on its own critique. Faced with communicative action, "cultural values that have not been abstracted into basic formal values (such as equality, freedom, human dignity, and the like) surrender their authority and stand at the disposition of processes of mutual understanding which are not prejudged."[46] In its failure to make this transition, a society still based on conventional foundations will be faced with significant and pervasive disturbances.

Disturbance of cultural reproduction is manifested in "a loss of meaning and lead to corresponding legitimation and orientation crises."[47] Cultural reproduction ensures that new situations are connected with existing cultural norms and values, thereby securing continuity and coherence within the life world of its members. Communicative action jeopardizes such continuity and coherence by threatening its conventional foundations, so that new situations can no longer automatically connect with pre-established cultural norms and values. Disturbance of social integration is manifested in "*anomie* and corresponding conflicts."[48] Interpersonal relations and group identities that guide and direct everyday practices become threatened. Actors no longer have shared norms and values to coordinate actions and unreflectively achieve solidarity and stabilized group identities. Both become threatened and appear scare

within this modern world in which life-contexts are fragmented. Finally, disturbance within the socialization of each individual is manifested in "psychopathologies and corresponding phenomena of alienation."[49] Individual identities previously shaped on unthreatened conventional norms and values, are no longer in harmony with the evolving secularized and rationalized life world. The life world is no longer connected to the agents own life histories.

Thus, communicative action requires that we develop the ability to face the upheavals to conventional cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization, the strength to face temporary threats of losses of meaning, anomie, and alienation, and to have the resources to turn to language and communicative action to overcome such disturbances. One must be able to face the requirements of progressive rationalization rather than become defensive and seek regressive resolutions. But this requires an individual's readiness to criticize cultural norms and values, and thus an individual's readiness to face future upheavals and threats to meaning. Habermas writes of a culture that is able to face its own "continuous revision," a society that is based on "formal procedures" rather than concrete forms of life, and a personality that is "self-steering" rather than naïve and uncritical. These trends are possible only if we do not regress but rather progress towards further rationalization. A regression would entail a personality system that, as Habermas writes, "can preserve its identity only by means of defensive strategies that are detrimental to participating in social interaction on a realistic basis."[50] Such unrealistic defensive strategies to preserve one's conventional identity will be a key to my analysis of Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right. It will also be a key to my incorporation of Freud's psycho-analytic theories into Habermas' comprehensive social theory. Neuroses, as Freud defines them, are precisely unrealistic defensive strategies, strategies to preserve the integrity of one's libidinous desires. Thus, the social challenges that we face in the progressive rationalization of a society must be complemented by understanding the psychological challenges entailed by this progressive rationalization as well.

The psychological challenges of communicative action

From a Freudian perspective, every society requires a sacrifice on the part of the individual's own libidinal process in order to make communal life possible. Instinctual renunciation of some form is the precondition for any civilization, and thus every civilization carries with it a degree of

frustration that cannot be avoided. Social integration will inevitably impose privations and frustrations on our "primary and normal narcissism"[51] that accompanies our instinct for self-preservation. Thus, "Man's self-regard," writes Freud, "seriously menaced, calls for consolation."[52] The progressive rationalization of society is not exempt from a progressive instinctual renunciation, especially in regards to this primary and normal narcissism which resists such permanent and deliberative critique that rationalization requires. In order for communicative action to become the medium of our socialization, we must learn to deal consciously and deliberately with this challenge to our narcissism and our need for narcissistic consolation. Yet, as already argued, Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right feed on and continue to support a narcissistic attitude of supremacy that has become glaringly obvious within the United States since the tragedy of September 11th. If the terrors of 9/11 may be seen as an unprecedented blow to our narcissistic nationalism, then Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right have triumphed in the recent presidential election because they provide an avenue to escape from the challenges of rationalization and recover this lost narcissism.

The mobilization of the Christian Right has been understood as a reactionary force to the process of secularization, and there is important evidence to support this claim. This movement was primary located in the rapidly modernizing Sun Belt, the southern region of the United States, which, since the 1970s, precisely when the Christian Right became politicized, has grown both economically and politically. The assumption was that this secularization was met by resistance, giving rise to the New Christian Right as a "cultural defense movement."[53] My argument, however, is that the New Christian Right is reacting not merely, or even primarily, to the secularization of modernity, but rather to its *rationalization*. As has become apparent through Habermas' theory, rationalization entails self-critique and open dialogue. The return and revival of a fundamentalist and privatized faith that no longer seeks to be translated into the autonomous cultural spheres of modernity must be understood not merely as a religious reaction to protect its faith from secularization, but as a narcissistic reaction to protect its self-complacency from rational criticism and the challenges of communicative action.

One compensatory satisfaction provided by society is "the narcissistic satisfaction provided by [its] cultural ideal."[54] Cultural ideals may be understood as the collective ego-ideal, or super-ego as Freud would later

refer to it, of its members. The ego-ideal is that by which the subject measures his actual ego. The subject "recognizes [it] as a standard for himself and submits to the claims [it] makes on him."[55] The origin of the ego ideal lies in the individual's first and most important identification with his or her parents, and is a result of both the individual's childhood helplessness and the Oedipus complex through which each individual must pass. The formation of an ideal ego is directly tied to the ego's own primary narcissism, a narcissism that is disrupted as we leave childhood and become susceptible to the criticism of others and capable of our own reflexive self-criticism. For Freud, narcissism, "behaves as though the occurrence of *any* divergence from his own particular lines of development involved a criticism of them and a demand for their alteration."[56] Thus, as the child grows and becomes aware of a world different and beyond itself, vulnerable now to external and internal criticisms, its primary narcissism is threatened. However, the individual may recover the perfect narcissism of childhood by identifying with its parents through internalizing parental norms and values, and thus seek to please his ego-ideal rather than his parents over which the individual lacks control. As Freud writes, "a man, when he cannot be satisfied with his ego itself, may nevertheless be able to find satisfaction in the ego ideal which has been differentiated out of the ego."[57] The ideal ego itself becomes the new object of self-love such that the subject's primary narcissism is displaced onto this new ideal ego. The process of idealization itself involves the transference of this narcissistic libido onto these internalized norms and values. Through this process of idealization and internalization, the ego is seeking to recover the narcissism which it lost in childhood. As Freud writes, "what he projects before himself as his ideal is the substitute for the lost narcissism of his childhood in which he was his own ideal."[58] Primary narcissism which was directed at our actual ego, may now be exchanged for a narcissistic satisfaction that is achieved through submission to the ego ideal

By extending the ego ideal beyond parental values and norms and onto cultural ones, we can see that narcissistic satisfaction is achieved through cultural ideals as well. By living up to the norms and values of one's culture, we seek to regain the untroubled self-love we had in childhood. The satisfaction of those who have access to these ideals, as Freud writes, "are plainly seeking *themselves* as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed 'narcissistic.'"[59] This narcissistic satisfaction is achieved when the ego coincides with the ego ideal. The fusion between the ego and ego ideal leads to a mood of "self-satisfaction, disturbed by no

self-criticism."[60]

This extension from parental values to cultural ones is inevitable. Freud assumes that for social integration and group formation to be possible, one's primary narcissism must be replaced in part by a libidinal tie with others. In the formation of groups this libidinal tie is established through the mechanism of identification, where each member identities with, if not a leader, then with a leading cultural ideal where each individual gives up his own ego-ideal and accepts the group ideal. "Social feelings rest on identifications with other people, on the basis of having the same ego ideal."[61]

Those who have access to cultural ideals are usually the privileged classes of that society, those who enjoy the benefits of that culture. Freud recognized, however, the narcissistic satisfaction of the suppressed classes that is achieved through their identification with the privileged classes. Freud writes,

> The suppressed classes can be emotionally attached to their masters; in spite of their hostility to them they may see in them their ideals; unless such relation of a fundamentally satisfying kind subsists, it would be impossible to understand how a number of civilizations have survived so long in spite of the justifiable hostility of large human masses.[62]

Thus, the suppressed class achieves vicariously through the privileged class precisely this same narcissistic satisfaction. The more they are able to identify with their masters, the more they become attached to them for the narcissistic satisfaction their masters provide.

Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right as Social Neuroses

We can now tie Freud's theory of the ego-ideal, identification and narcissistic satisfaction with Habermas' theory of communicative action. Communicative action requires a thorough-going self-criticism to permeate any cultural reproduction, social integration or socialization. Cultural values, norms and ideals must surrender their conventional authority and be open to permanent critique. The individual subject must also surrender its naïve and unreflexive stance and be capable of self-criticism. Solidarity must be secured not by simple identification with a prior value consensus, but must take place only on the basis of actors pursuing illocutionary goals without reservation, freely processing topics and information in an open and diverse public space. However, on the basis of Freud's theory, the

formation of and identification with cultural ideals are bound up with the displacement of our primary narcissism onto those ideals. Any threat to these cultural ideals is a threat to this narcissism. Furthermore, any threat to the cultural elite may also be perceived by the suppressed masses as a threat to their own narcissistic satisfaction that is achieved through the cultural elite. Thus, the primary narcissism of its members, which has been displaced onto the cultural ideals, will resist any threat to these ideals themselves or to those who represent these ideals.

It is here that we begin to understand the emergence of Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right in late 20th and early 21st century. The progressive rationalization of a society, exemplified by communicative action, requires that we are willing to give up once more our primary narcissism that we sought to recover through our idealization and identification with conventional norms and values. A resistance to communicative action is met not only in suppressive economic and political forces that seeks to subvert this process, but also within the masses themselves that seek to preserve precisely these suppressive forces in order to preserve their own narcissistic pleasures. If we take the 1960s as a further rationalization of society, then it is no surprise that the 1970s saw the rise of the New Right, in both politics and religion, since the 1970s was a period reacting to social upheavals of the prior decade. The demand for self-critique that the anti-war, civil rights, and student protests represented, challenged the narcissistic self-complacency of the American polis. The New Right grew as a reaction to this challenge, seeking to regain precisely this narcissistic self-satisfaction. Thus, we must understand the New Right as a defense mechanism against the progressive rationalization of its society, and the demands of communicative action that this rationalization entails. Precisely in its undermining of the public sphere, and in its censoring of public discourse, the New Right seeks to repress any self-criticism within the American polis. The New Right has triumphed in the recent presidential election because our need for narcissistic consolation has eclipsed our ability for rational self-development. Rather than be educated by the progressive rationalization of society, many have taken flight into the social neuroses of Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right.

The development of a neurosis, according to Freud, comes about when a neurotic symptom becomes a substitute for a libidinous process that was frustrated through repression. Forced to remain unconscious, the object of the libido was exchanged for the neurotic symptom. The

symptom serves as a substitute for the satisfaction the libido wished, so that the neurotic symptom ultimately gives the individual for what he longed. The repression is due to a conflict or opposition primarily within the subject's own psyche, which refuses conscious manifestation of this libidinous desire. Without this conflict, and ensuing repression, no neuroses develop. The repudiated libido must now seek satisfaction through its own displacement due to the objection it encountered, constructing symptoms as a substitute satisfaction. The attempt to recall this repressed desire to consciousness is met with resistance. The very patient who may be suffering from his symptoms, struggles "in the interest of his illness"[63] against any conscious recollection of the repressed desire and thus the removal of his symptom. The very attempt to lift this repression is met by resistance for it reawakens the conflict that initiated the original repression and threatens the fulfillment the symptom provided.

While these symptoms may protect the libido, providing it with substitute satisfaction, the formation of symptoms depletes and paralyzes the subject from future development. Furthermore, symptoms represent the turning away of the subject from reality and returning to an "extended auto-erotism,"[64] through the creation of fantasies. Freud writes, "the phantasies possess *psychical* as contrasted with *material* reality, and we gradually learn to understand that *in the world of the neuroses it is psychical reality which is the decisive kind.*"[65] Symptoms, because they have been constructed by the unconscious, becomes marked off from any reality-testing, and withdraw themselves from the reality-principle. This is most clearly seen by neuroses that have developed through fixations or regressions. Fixations develop when individuals become "'fixated' to a particular portion of their past, as though they could not manage to free themselves from it and were for that reason alienated from the present and the future."[66] This particular portion of their past is, in most cases, an early phase of childhood, precisely one in which our primary and normal narcissism is most intact. Regressions, on the other hand, develop when an individual confronts an internal or external obstacle to its satisfaction, and thus regresses to an earlier phase where no conflict exists. Fixations and regressions are often complementary.

> The stronger the fixations on its path of development, the more readily will the [aim of satisfaction] evade external difficulties by regressing to the fixations the more incapable, therefore, does [it] turn out to be of resisting external obstacles in its course.[67]

Freud notes that in this case the neurotic is much like a sick individual who withdraws his libidinal cathexes back upon his own ego. Freud also finds a parallel with sleep, which implies a narcissistic withdrawal of the libido on to the subject's own self. Thus, the neurotic is much like a sick individual who seeks to escape from his wounds into the comforts of sleep. Yet, as Socrates famously remarked, people who are aroused from a doze are easily annoyed, and strike out so that they may sleep on for the rest of their days.[68]

The New Right functions precisely as a neurosis that developed through a regression to a fixation on an earlier past within the American psyche. This past is one that existed prior to the conflicts it experienced, prior to the conflicts not only of the 1960s, but even of the New Deal of the 1930s. The New Right represents a regression to a mythic time during which power relation and social norms had not yet been challenged. William Greider has argued a similar thesis, without the Freudian perspective. In reference to the New Right, Greider writes:

> The movement's grand ambition one can no longer say grandiose is to roll back the twentieth century, quite literally. That is, defenestrate the federal government and reduce its scale and power to a level well below what it was before the New Deal's centralization. With that accomplished, movement conservatives envision a restored society in which the prevailing values and power relationships resemble the America that existed around 1900....[H]ard-right conservatives see themselves as liberating reformers, not destroyers, who are rescuing old American values of self-reliance and individual autonomy from the clutches of collective action and "statist" left-wingers.[69]

Yet, as in any neurosis, the New Right is depleting the United States' ability for further development, not only financially as previously documented, but emotionally as well. Our regression to a fixated and mythic past depletes our ability to face and deal with current obstacles to our development. The more we seek to escape from any self-criticism of our narcissistic self-complacency, the less we will be able to deal consciously and deliberately with realistic and rational challenges to this narcissism. Furthermore, symptoms, precisely because they have been constructed through a withdrawal from the reality-principle, are less susceptible to rational critique. The New Right has been continuously criticized for being more committed to ideology than factual analysis, most glaringly shown in

the war on Iraq. The New Right's commitment to privatization also has been shown to aggravate rather than alleviate society problems. Faith-based initiatives are assessed by this administration more on theological consistency rather than social efficacy. Various ideological policies on sexual reproduction, like the Mexico gag rule and the abstinence-only program, has been shown to increase rather than decrease the number of unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases. In each case, the New Rights' commitment to ideology at the expense of data analysis reflects the New Rights' regression from reality and inability to confront reality. Neo-Liberalism and the New Christian Right must be analyzed in this manner, as social neuroses, by which individuals seek to escape from the ensuing rationalization of the lifeworld, by withdrawing from reality and living within their own ideological framework in order to preserve their narcissistic needs and protect themselves from awakening to reality.

Communicative action is possible only if, to recall Deleuze and Guattari, people no longer "fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation." Global community and universal dialogue are possible only if we are willing to deal consciously and deliberately with our fears and desires, willing to suffer threats to our narcissism, and confront continual upheavals to our individual and collective identities. Kant formulated the motto of the enlightenment as such, "have courage to use your own reason!"[70] In the light of Habermas' linguistic turn, we may find this formula unduly monological, and state the motto for the current age as having the courage to collective use our communicative rationality. Despite Kant's limitation, he anticipated the psychological underpinnings for any progression towards a rational society, namely "resoluteness and courage."[71] Without the courage and resoluteness to engage in open and unrestrained rational discourse, we will be unable to forego the consolations of neurotic illusions. Those who do have the courage and resoluteness to bear the troubles of life consciously and deliberatively, will, as Freud writes, "have to admit to themselves the full extend of their helpless....They will be in the same position of a child who has left the parental house where he was so warm and comfortable [and] in the end go out into 'hostile life.'"[72] Such an education to reality requires the courage and resoluteness of which Kant spoke. Unfortunately, the re-election of President Bush indicates that such virtues may be lacking within the United States.

Todd Lavin
Department of Philosophy
Clarion University of Pennsylvania
Clarion, PA
USA

End Notes:

1. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia, translated by Hurley, Seem and Lane (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983), 29.
2. Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 29.
3. Jurgen Habermas, Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy, translated by William Rehg (Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996), 443.
4. Plato, "The Apology," in The Trial and Death of Socrates, translated by Grube (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000), 40.
5. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 98.
6. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 107-108.
7. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 186.
8. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 186.
9. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 307.
10. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 308.
11. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 308.
12. Iris Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 119.
13. Young, Justice and the Politics of Difference, 120.
14. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, xli.
15. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, xli.
16. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 19.
17. Habermas, Between Facts and Norms, 186.
18. George Soros, The Bubble of American Supremacy (New York: Public Affairs, 2004), 10.
19. Sheldon Wolin, "A Kind of Fascism Is Replacing Our Democracy," Newsday, 18 July 2003.
20. Wolin, "A Kind of Fascism Is Replacing Our Democracy"
21. President George W. Bush, "Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American People," 20 September 2001. Available [on-line]: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/2000920-8.html.
22. Henry Giroux, The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy (Ontario: Garamond Press, 2004), 50.

23. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, "Up to 1.6 Million Low-Income People Including About Half a Million Children Are Losing Health Coverage Due to State Budget Cuts" 22 December 2003. Available [on-line]: www.cbpp.org/12-22-03health-pr.htm.
24. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities.
25. Sean Gonsalves, "How to skin a rabbit," The Cape Cod Times, 20 April 2004. Available [on-line]: www.commondreams.org/views04/0420-05.htm.
26. George W. Bush, "President Bush Discusses Faith-Based Initiative in Tennessee," 10 February 2003. Available [on-line]: www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2003/02/20030201-1.html.
27. James L. Guth et al., "Onward Christian Soldiers: Religious Activist Group in American Politics," in Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches From The Front (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 1996), 71.
28. Ester Kaplan, With God on Their Side: How Christian Fundamentalists Trampled Science, Policy and Democracy in George W. Bush's White House (New York: The New Press, 2004), 47.
29. Operation Blessing, "Statement of Faith," available [on-line]: www.ob.org/about/statement_of_faith.asp.
30. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 220.
31. Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, "Resolution 1347: Impact of the 'Mexico City Policy' on the Free Choice of Contraception in Europe," 11 September, 2003. Available [on-line]: http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/AdoptedText/ta03/ERES1347.htm.
32. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 196
33. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 195.
34. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 208.
35. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 208.
36. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 11.
37. Laurie Goodstein, "Seeing Islam as 'Evil' Faith, Evangelicals Seek Converts," in New York Times, 27 May 2003.
38. Maureen Dowd, "A Tale of Two Fridays," in New York Times, 20 April 2003.
39. Kaplan, With God on Their Side, 18.
40. Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 249.
41. Jurgen Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason, translated by Thomas McCarthy (Boston: Beacon Press, 1987), 86.
42. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 74-75.
43. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 83.
44. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 90.
45. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 107.
46. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 108.

47. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 140.
48. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 141.
49. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 141.
50. Habermas, The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two, 141.
51. Sigmund Freud, "On Narcissism: An Introduction," in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 14 (1914-1916), translated by James Stachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 74.
52. Sigmund Freud, The Future of an Illusion, translated by James Strachey, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 20
53. James L. Guth, "The Politics of the Christian Right," in Religion and the Culture Wars, 8.
54. Freud, The Future of an Illusion, 16.
55. Freud, "On Narcissism," 93.
56. Sigmund Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, in The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 18 (1920-1922), translated by James Strachey (London: The Hogarth Press, 1964), 102.
57. Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 110.
58. Freud, "On Narcissism," 94.
59. Freud, "On Narcissism," 88.
60. Freud, Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego, 132.
61. Sigmund Freud, The Ego and the Id, translated by James Strachey (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 33.
62. Freud, The Future of an Illusion, 17.
63. Sigmund Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, translated by James Strachey, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989), 355.
64. Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, 455
65. Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, 458.
66. Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, 338.
67. Freud, Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis, 423.
68. Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates, 33.
69. William Greider, "The Right's Grand Ambition: Rolling Back the 20th Century," in The Nation, 12 May 2003, 1-12.
70. Immanuel Kant, "What is Enlightenment," in On History, edited and translated by Lewis Beck, et al. (New York: Howard W. Sams and Company, Inc., 1963), 3.
71. Kant, "What is Enlightenment," 3.
72. Freud, The Future of an Illusion, 62-63.

Bibliography

1. Bush, George W. "Address to Joint Session of Congress and the American People," 20 September 2001. Available [on-line]: www.whitehouse.gov.
2. Bush, George W. "President Bush Discusses Faith-Based Initiative in Tennessee," 10 February 2003. Available [on-line]: www.whitehouse.gov.
3. Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. "Up to 1.6 Million Low-Income People Including About Half a Million Children Are Losing Health Coverage Due toState Budget Cuts," 22 December 2003. Available [on-line]: www.cbpp.org
4. Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983.
5. Dowd, Maureen. "A Tale of Two Fridays." New York Times, 20 April 2003.
6. Freud, Sigmund. Introductory Lectures on Psycho-Analysis. New York: W.W. Norton And Company, 1989.
7. Freud, Sigmund. The Ego and the Id. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989.
8. Freud, Sigmund. The Future of an Illusion. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1989.
9. Freud, Sigmund. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 14 (1914-1916). London: The Hogarth Press, 1964.
10. Freud, Sigmund. The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume 18 (1920-1922). London: The Hogarth Press, 1964.
11. Giroux, Henry. The Terror of Neoliberalism: Authoritarianism and the Eclipse of Democracy. Ontario: Garamond Press, 2004.
12. Goodstein, Laurie. "Seeing Islam as 'Evil' Faith, Evangelicals Seek Converts," New York Times, 20 April 2003.
13. Gonsalves, Sean. "How to Skin a Rabbit," The Cape Cod Times, 20 April 2004.
14. Greider, William. "The Right's Grant Ambition: Rolling Back the 20th Century," The Nation, 12 May 2003.
15. Guth, James L. et al. Religion and the Culture Wars: Dispatches From The Front. New York: Rowman and Litterfield Publishers, 1996.
16. Habermas, Jurgen. Between Facts and Norms: Contributions to a Discourse Theory of Law and Democracy. Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1996.
17. Habermas, Jurgen. The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984.
18. Habermas, Jurgen. The Theory of Communicative Action, Volume Two: Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason. Boston, Beacon Press, 1987.
19. Kant, Immanuel. "What is Enlightenment," in On History. New York: Howard W. Sams And Company, Inc. 1963.
20. Operation Blessing, "Statement of Faith." Available [on-line]: www.ob.org
21. Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe, "Resolution 1347: Impact of the 'Mexico City Policy' on the Free Choice of Contraception in Europe," 11 September 2003.
22. Plato, The Trial and Death of Socrates, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 2000.
23. Soros, George. The Bubble of American Supremacy. New York: Public Affairs, 2004.
24. Wolin, Sheldon. "A Kind of Fascism is Replacing Our Democracy," Newsday 18 July 2003.
25. Young, Iris. Justice and the Politics of Difference. New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990.