

LPAC-TV Interview with Sam Vaknin: Obama Is a Malignant Narcissist

Sam Vaknin (<http://samvak.tripod.com>) is the author of *Malignant Self Love—Narcissism Revisited and After the Rain—How the West Lost the East*, as well as many other books about psychology, relationships, philosophy, economics, and international affairs.

He has served as a columnist for *Central Europe Review*, *Global Politician*, *PopMatters*, *eBookWeb*, and *Bellaonline*, as well as being a UPI Senior Business Correspondent. He was the editor for the Mental Health and Central East Europe categories in *The Open Directory and Suite101*.

This interview was conducted for LaRouchePAC-TV during the first week of November, by Brent Bedford and Matthew Ogden, and can be viewed at <http://tiny.cc/l3tq3>

Brent Bedford: I'm a producer at the LaRouchePAC.com website. I've read a lot of your writings—not all of them, because you've written so much, and you have a lot of YouTube videos too.

I responded to the question of Obama's narcissism, in response to my first encounter with it, which was at a webcast presented by Lyndon LaRouche, on April 11, 2009. And he was very straightforward, that Obama has a narcissist personality type, which he compared to Hitler and Nero. And he further said that, as President, Obama was susceptible to influence by a cabal who was around him, and that under the current conditions of economic breakdown, you had a dangerous mixture, with Obama's personality, and his being President.

So, when I took this diagnosis of Obama, one thing that I found was that in just discussing this casually with people, a lot of people had difficulty confronting this.

Vaknin: They're in denial.

Bedford: Yes. Without a critical analysis, they would try to see Obama as a projection of, say, flaws they saw in themselves. Oh yeah, he has a big ego, or he's vain, or arrogant. But when I was forwarded your



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LPAC-TV editor Brent Bedford (left) interviewed Sam Vaknin (right), a well-known specialist in malignant narcissism, on the subject of President Obama's narcissism. LPAC and Vaknin concur on the extreme danger of having such a narcissist as President of the United States.



writings on it, I realized that this goes much deeper beneath the surface than most people had confronted.

Vaknin: That's very true.

What Is Narcissism?

Bedford: Could you just describe, to start the discussion, what the basis is for the narcissistic personality disorder?

Vaknin: Well, it's very difficult—people find it difficult to make the distinction between *their* traits, and shortcomings, and frailties, and the narcissist, because we all have a modicum of narcissism. We all have what is called healthy narcissism. Without healthy narcissism, we would not look out for ourselves, we would

not have personal boundaries, we would not be ambitious, we would not pursue goals, etc., etc. So, healthy narcissism is, as the name implies, healthy.

So, we are all acquainted with narcissism, and that's where people find it very difficult to distinguish *the* malignant psychopathic narcissist, from your garden-variety narcissist, someone with narcissistic traits, or with a narcissistic style, or with a bloated ego, or something. But as you justly said, the difference is profound.

The malignant, or psychopathic, narcissist lacks empathy. In other words, he lacks the crucial faculty of feeling human, of experiencing what it means to be human. The narcissist is, to a very large extent, a form of artificial intelligence, sort of an alien in the truest sense of the word, because he has never experienced humanity, or humaneness, and he cannot empathize with other people; he cannot put himself in other people's shoes. He cannot feel for them, because he also lacks the emotional apparatus; he lacks emotions, or at least, access to his emotions.

So, this is the first critical difference. Then, as derivatives of this existential condition of lacking empathy, the narcissist is exploitative, anti-social, destructive, and self-destructive, arrogant, feels superior, feels that he's superman, and so on and so forth. All these are derivatives from the inability to know what it means to be human. And so this is where the narcissist differs from someone with an inflated ego, or someone who believes himself to be a genius, or whatever. It's like a difference between a normal cell, and a malignant cell.

That's why I called my book *Malignant Self-Love*. Self-love is okay. It's great. It's needed. But there's a form of malignant self-love. That's why narcissists are very dangerous, and narcissism is a pernicious phenomenon which impacts all of the narcissist's nearest and dearest.

Now, if the narcissist is a local butcher, or neighborhood barber, then the damage is limited. But if he happens to be the president of the United States, it's a calamity. It's an apocalypse.

Obama's Narcissism

Bedford: That's what's interesting. In reviewing Obama's background, or what's available about his background, he appears to have presented himself as a narcissistic personality early on, although it wasn't the same thing as when he presented himself as a presidential candidate. This is when you said—you were one of

the first to identify him back in 2008,¹ and so I was curious as to what did you respond to, or how did you see this?

Vaknin: As far as I know, I was the first. At least I suffered as though I was the first. I was vilified and slandered, and I paid a very, very hefty and dear price for daring to say that he might be, *might* be, mind you, a narcissist.

The signs were all there. First of all, a very chaotic childhood, in a series of dysfunctional households. And within a dysfunctional family—that is the typical, traditional, and orthodox background which leads to the emergence of personality disorders in general, and most particularly, the narcissistic and anti-social personality disorders.

So, check one.

Then, there was the issue of confabulations. Obama lies pathologically, incessantly. He has a hazy biography, which is a major sign of narcissism. Narcissists have this sort of diffuse biography. There's nothing there, it's all in the air, you can't pinpoint dates, names, places, nothing. It's very fog-like, foggy history. So, that was there too.

Then, there was the body language. In total, in the last three years, I've watched, very closely and repeatedly, well over 1,200 hours of Barack Obama. I've scrutinized his body language, I've listened to his speeches, off teleprompter and on teleprompter. I have seen his unscripted reactions to a variety of surprise situations. I notice his attitude toward his colleagues and coworkers, and, for instance, towards his superiors, when he was in the Senate, and so on, and so forth.

So, I've studied this man very, very thoroughly. And his body language was very typical of a narcissist: haughty. Haughty body language. A superior posture. The distance, the invisible wall, the glass wall, between him and others. The pretensions and so on.

Then, there was the issue of pronoun density, one of the major signs of narcissism, which is, by the way, a clinical measure. It's used in testing narcissism. Pronoun density means how many times you say "me," "my," "I," and "myself," in a single sentence, unnecessarily. In places where you could have substituted other, more appropriate pronouns. So, when I wrote the article in July 2008, Obama's pronoun density was *three times*

1. "Barack Obama - Narcissist or Merely Narcissistic?" *Global Politician*, August 13, 2008.

the average pronoun density of a psychopathic narcissist. I mean, that's how bad it was. And it declined somewhat in 2009, and in the last few months, it went up again, especially during the British Petroleum crisis. That is a major clinical sign.

Then we have another clinical sign, which is called adversity tolerance threshold. That is, to translate it into proper civilized English, how many times you snap at your underlings. What kind of interactions you maintain with people who are at your mercy, in some respects; employed by you, your family members, and so on. His adversity threshold went down and down—in other words, he snapped more often. He became irritable, irascible, and cantankerous more often, and very often, on camera. He couldn't control it anymore. It was out of control.

And that's also a clinical test, by the way.

So, we had an adversity threshold that was declining. So, having put all these things together, in a very lengthy essay, in July 2008, I reached the conclusion that Obama *might* be—and I was very careful in that essay; I said that he might be. He must be subjected to proper personality testing, and so on and so forth. I didn't say, oh, the guy's a narcissist, and that's it. I said, he *might* be a narcissist. That was two and a half years ago.

By now, I am convinced that he's a narcissist. I have no doubt in my mind that, should he be subjected to psychological testing, for instance, to the Narcissistic Personality Inventory, which is a classical tool for diagnosing narcissism, or to the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory), I have no doubt in my mind that he will be diagnosed as a classical, malignant, psychopathic narcissist.

After he became President, I had a lot more material to work with, of course. It's mainstream now, absolutely mainstream. You'll find people like George F. Will, and Charles Krauthammer, and even *Time* magazine, not to mention the *Financial Times*, and so on—now it's mainstream. It's in fashion to say that Obama might be a narcissist.

But, even so, people don't realize what they're saying. Lyndon LaRouche is among the very few who realize the severity, and the cataclysmic nature of saying about someone that he's a narcissist. Other people say, well, he's a narcissist, so what? They don't grasp, they don't understand. They don't understand that the narcissist is a time bomb, a walking time-bomb.

It doesn't have to be a Hitler, it doesn't have to be a

Nero. I think the institutional character of the United States is such that it would be very difficult for Obama to commit genocide, or to open concentration camps, or to legislate race laws. So, I don't think his narcissism will be expressed exactly the same way Hitler's was, or Stalin's was, or Nero's was. But it would be as destructive. In this sense, LaRouche is right. It would be as destructive.

One way or the other, the devastation, the wasteland, in the wake of the narcissist, is as big wherever the narcissist acquires power. So, a Hitler left behind a devastated continent. Obama might leave behind a devastated economy. But the devastation would be equally profound, equally deep.

Bedford: I wanted to follow up your initial summation of narcissistic personality disorder with a more focussed question, which I drew from your latest article, but before that, would you be willing to share the nature of the vilification and slander? Do you think that that may have come from Obama, or that there's any significant—

Vaknin: No, I doubt very much if Obama is even aware of my existence. But his fans—and I don't think it was a coordinated sort of thing. I don't think it was a conspiracy, of the Secret Service, or the CIA, or the corridors of power in the West Wing, to vilify and slander Sam Vaknin, the unknown Sam Vaknin, as far as Obama goes. I think simply that Obama has his acolytes, these sycophants, these robots, robotic fans, unthinking, totally, and they think that they're doing their idol, and divinity, in a way, a favor by taking down anyone who dares to question his credentials, his biography, let alone his character. . . .

Bedford: Would you say for that reason, that Obama has this kind of following, that a distinction exists between him, and the average, common narcissist?

Vaknin: No, all narcissists create a cult. The cult around the narcissist could consist and subsist of his family, or even his wife. If the cult is a two-member cult, we call it shared psychosis in psychology—a *folie à deux*, in French. The cult could consist of the narcissist as a husband and his long-suffering wife, as his acolyte, sycophant, follower—he acts as the guru, as the psychiatrist. So it's a two-person cult. But, of course, when the narcissist is President of the United States, he has a 20-million-member cult.

But the narcissist operates through cults. The orga-



White House Photo/Pete Souza

The paranoid look which is captured in this picture of President Obama in the Oval Office in January 2009, was only a foretaste of the paranoia he is now exhibiting, after a series of devastating political defeats.

nizing principle of the narcissist's interpersonal interactions, is through cults. All narcissists, without a single exception, in history and of history, created and create cults. So, inevitably, Obama created a cult, around himself.

A Soul-Snatched Personality

Bedford: You described one of the ways this functions in the individual, as the grandiosity bubble. Could you explain how this pertains to the narcissistic individual?

Vaknin: First of all, the narcissist has no personality. I have seen the [LaRouchePAC] podcast which used the term "failed personality." In psychology, we call it dysfunctional, or disorganized personality. But the truth of the matter is, that narcissists have no personality whatsoever.

Narcissists, in this sense, are also aliens, because they are the only species, or subspecies, of humans, devoid of a personality, of an inner kernel. And this is a result of early childhood, usually abuse and trauma, combined, probably, with some genetic propensity, but mainly early childhood abuse and trauma. To defend against the recurrence, and repeated abuse and trauma, the child invents a structure, a psychological structure, which is called the "false self." It is called the false self

for a very good reason—it's false.

And then the child transfers all the functions which are usually in normal people, reserved to the personality, or what Freud used to call the ego, to the false self. And they are also painted by this transfer. They become fallacious as well. The whole thing is a giant confabulation.

Now, the narcissist, deep inside, is aware that the whole thing is invented. He is aware that he's a walking piece of fiction. He knows it. And as a result, he's hyper-vigilant. The narcissist is very paranoid. He's very careful. He's afraid of being exposed for what he is. A vacuum, wrapped in a shell. A vacuous bubble. So he's very hyper-vigilant, he protects his turf; he's very alert to slights and insults, both real and imaginary.

And then the narcissist operates a series of psychological defense mechanisms. One of them is denial. He denies information that is coming from the outside, that implies that his false self is not as omnipotent, or omniscient as he pretends. That's one mechanism.

Another mechanism is projection. He projects onto others what he hates in himself. So, for instance, if he's weak, he calls other people weak. If he's a liar, he calls other people liars. And so on. This is projection.

Then there is projective identification. The narcissist wants to be treated in a highly specific way, which

conforms to his self-image, bloated ego, and so forth. So, what he does, he forces people to behave that way, by projecting onto them certain beliefs. He motivates them to behave in a specific way, and we call this projective identification.

One of the mechanisms is what I call grandiosity bubbles. When the narcissist fails in one field, one area, he shifts his attention to another field or area. So, if he failed in mathematics, he would shift his attention to literature. Or if he's a bad sportsman, then he would become a politician, whatever. And he would try to inflate a bubble of grandiosity, in that other area. It's simply letting go of one failure, and going on to the next green pasture. That's all it means.

Bedford: This is interesting, because Obama goes from being a nobody, to a community organizer. From there he decides to graduate from Harvard with a law degree. Then, become an author, and then a lot of people would have thought maybe he was looking for a career in local politics, or in the judicial system, but he goes on to take on a faculty position, lecturing at a university. From there, he enters the State Senate, and then he's just two steps from the Presidency, by way of the Federal Senate.

You say that the narcissist is not quite a psychotic, because what you were explaining, is that he has a form of control over how he manages himself. At the same time, he could have been a hedge fund manager. He could have tried becoming mayor. But something in him took him all the way to what could be described as the highest attainable form of power, one of them at least, which is the United States office of the Presidency.

Vaknin: You mean, what drives him?

Bedford: Yes.

Obama's Narcissism Is Very Dangerous

Vaknin: You've made a few observations, all of them correct, I must say, about Obama. First of all, the fact that his career is unstable, chaotic. He moves from one position to another, from one subfield to another, all mildly related, all of them somehow related. Of course, he won't go and become an athlete in the Olympics. It's all related somehow, but still it's very haphazard, it's very chaotic, it's very desultory, and itinerant. And this is very typical of narcissists.

Now, one of the things that convinced me that he might be a narcissist, is that narcissists have a very bi-

zarre duplicity, very bizarre dichotomy. One part of their life is ultra-chaotic. You can hardly follow the ups and downs, and the changes of venues. While another part of their life—it's as though they have a multiple personality. One part is very chaotic, while another part of their life is very stable, actually almost stale and stagnant.

So, for instance, take Obama. His career, as I just said, is itinerant, desultory, and hard to follow. Yet his family life is very stable. Now that is not typical of normal people. Normal people, when they encounter instability in one area of their life, this instability tends to affect the entirety of their life. If you get fired, you tend to fight with your wife. If you tend to fight with your wife, you may get divorced. If you divorce, you relocate. If you relocate, you meet another woman; you get married again, and so on and so forth.

Instability is infectious. In a normal person, instability is infectious. While with the narcissist, instability is highly localized. So, one of the major signs of narcissism is that the narcissist is able to introduce surprise, excitement; he's an adrenalin junkie, but he's able to contain his addiction to excitement, within the confines of a certain subfield in his life.

And that is precisely Obama. A crazy career, totally impossible to follow, and a very stable family life, attending the same church 15 years, and so on. He's very stable elsewhere, and very chaotic in one locus, one place.

That's point number one.

Point number two is psychosis. Yes, you quote me correctly. It's true. I wrote that psychosis and the psychotic episodes of narcissism are not one and the same thing. A psychotic has mainly chaotic thinking. Whatever you think about Obama, I don't think his thinking is chaotic. Psychotic implies a completely impaired reality test, that you can't tell the difference between outside voices and inside voices. Obama is still not there. One day he may be there, but right now he's not there. He's able to distinguish fantasy from reality.

It's all true, yes. Technically, clinically speaking, if you pose this question to a psychiatrist, they will tell you, no, Obama is not psychotic. He may have brief psychotic episodes, but he is not psychotic. But I think the distinction is both artificial and useless. I think it doesn't matter if someone is psychotic *all* the time, or if he's psychotic in the critical moment that he has to press the red button. You understand?

When the person is the President of the United



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Following Lyndon LaRouche's Oct. 6 call for the invocation of the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, to remove President Obama on the basis of mental incapacity, LPAC has held constant rallies demanding that Vice President Joe Biden do his duty. Here's one in Providence, R.I. on Oct. 25.

States, even one second of psychosis, which is very, very common among narcissists—narcissists will face life crises, very often decompensate, in other words, disintegrate. They act out and they have what we call psychotic micro-episodes. Now, if this micro-episode happens to occur with a nuclear threat, or with an al-Qaeda attack, or something, it's calamitous. It doesn't matter if 99.9% of the time the man is composed. And this is what I mean that, with the President of the United States, this distinction is absolutely useless, and irrelevant.

Bedford: Yes, his composure, even, has been revealed already to have fallen apart, repeatedly. You've probably seen the Ulsterman reports, which provide—

Vaknin: Yes, an inside track from the White House.

Bedford: Smoking cigarettes, on depression medication, laughter erupting at very inappropriate meetings, war-planning meetings.

Vaknin: An enormous amount of energy, mental energy, psychic energy, goes into maintaining this outward composure. Simply an enormous amount. You won't believe the extent of energy and resources, mental resources, invested by the narcissist in projecting a given image, which conforms to his false self. It's a full-time job. Absolutely full-time job. And so anything,

any added burden, however marginal and negligible, sort of upsets the apple cart. The whole house of cards falls to pieces, because it takes so much effort and investment.

Bedford: Let me raise the question now, since we are arriving at a multiple number of avenues, of the 25th Amendment. This is something that LaRouche has said is the only way, is the only workable framework, for dealing with the situation we have on our hands.

The part of the 25th Amendment which is relevant, is for the case in which

the President of the United States, elected President, is unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office. This is raised, obviously, if the President is consumed, all of his time is spent trying to—as you said, it's a full-time job just trying to compose himself.

A second consideration which I think also exists, and I'll tell you how I arrived at this, was by way of an old profile from the second World War, by the Office of Strategic Services.

Vaknin: Yes, Adolf Hitler, this I know.

Narcissists Need Crises

Bedford: And a particular passage there made the point that once Hitler had attained the position of power he had, when his source of narcissistic supply was running out, he really had nowhere to go. He had already achieved the height of the highest point of success, beyond which it was impossible to go, and what was described in this report, was a kind of a collapse, which in this particular case, meant something very specific for history, how this case was resolved.

Say that Obama is able to compose himself, hypothetically; is there a second form of danger of what Obama might do, just in trying to find his supply, once he becomes disappointed with speaking tours? What kind of things might he consider?

Vaknin: Very good question, if I may give you a compliment. I've never been asked this question before,

and it's really an excellent question.

As you recall, in the previous answer that I gave you, I used the term *adrenalin junkie*, and I think that's what you're alluding to. Narcissists are *adrenalin junkies*, and like every other type of junkie, addicted to a more physical form of drug, narcissists need ever increasing amounts, and varieties, of narcissistic supply, in order to maintain the balance within the false self. Because the false self is composed of a variety of components, and they're all interacting, and they're interacting with sadistic voices inside the narcissist. I mean, it's an extremely complex type of persona—an extreme type of landscape, inner landscape. And it takes a lot of narcissistic supply, to maintain this landscape in a semblance of order, in a semblance of composure, in a semblance of function.

Now, the thing is, exactly as you said, narcissists are *adrenalin junkies*, and therefore they need more and more of the same, and after that, they need more and more of something different. So, narcissists provoke artificial crises.

For instance: One of the methods of obtaining supply is to place yourself in a position that you become indispensable in a crisis. You provoke a crisis, and then you become indispensable, and that's a new source of narcissistic supply. How much supply can you derive from meeting Hu Jintao 16 times? There's a limit to that.

So, you provoke a crisis. The crisis could be in Congress. The crisis could be constitutional. The crisis could be military. There's no end to the inventiveness of the narcissist. That's precisely why I am terrified. I know a lot about narcissism, potentially more than most other people on the planet. And I know how they think, I know how they operate. I'm terrified, because there's no telling where Obama will provoke the next crisis. He cannot control it.

It's not like he's this evil magician, with a premeditated plan to destroy the United States, as I've read online. It's absolutely out of his control. It's almost automated—that's why I call narcissists, forms of artificial intelligence. He is, in a sense, a *Manchurian candidate*, but he has not been programmed by any external power; he's been programmed by his false self.

Narcissists are the outcomes of soul-snatching, like the famous movie *Invasion of the Body-Snatchers*. They are the outcomes of soul-snatching. And their souls have been snatched by the false self, and there's no telling what the false self will do to obtain

supply. The false self will stop at nothing, literally nothing.

Given the opportunity, for instance, the false self will make Hitler murder people. When such an opportunity does not present itself, the false self will create a financial crisis, and so on. There's no telling. That's the problem. I think Obama's next step would be to destroy the economy.

But I don't know. No one does. Obama doesn't. No one does. The threat, the *Damocles sword*, is hanging above the United States, and by implication, the world. And no one knows when it will drop, when the hair will snap, and the sword will drop. It can cut all our heads off. This is how bad it is. It's nothing against this guy—I never met him, he never met me, I don't know who he is, except what he published. I have nothing personal with him.

I've been a harsh critic of President Bush, for instance, because I'm a foreign policy analyst in Europe, and so I criticize his foreign policy. There was nothing personal there. But with Obama, it's very dangerous. So, this addiction to narcissistic supply, can drive him, and the world, into uncharted territories, simply uncharted.

I would venture a guess that he will now engineer two crises, but that's highly hypothetical. I think the first crisis will be constitutional. I think he's going to go head to head with the new Congress, and provoke a massive constitutional crisis, which will endanger the foundations of the republic, in my view. And the second crisis, which is already—he's been working on it for a couple years—would be an economic crisis.

Now, people don't understand narcissism. The bigger the crisis, the more the narcissist thrives. Normal people, when they are faced with a crisis, they shrink back. They feel bad. They try to avoid it. It's like pain, like fire. Narcissists thrive, they flourish, they blossom, in states of crisis. They provoke crises, because that's their natural state, that's their comfort zone.

And people say, "ah, poor Obama"—you know, analysts in Europe. "Poor Obama. He inherited a crisis situation, he would have loved to have a country with no crisis." It's absolutely, exactly, the opposite. He would have loved the crisis to continue throughout this term in office, and potentially his next term—because that makes him indispensable. That makes him wanted, important, center of attention. All eyes are on him.

Even the defeat in the current election cycle, believe

it or not, even this is a form of narcissistic supply. Because Obama was at the center of attention for 48 hours, 24 hours. This is how distorted these people are.

For instance, they love to go to jail. They love to do time, because when they go to jail, the cameras are there. Everyone's a Bernie Madoff, everyone's on the case, everyone follows, everything is reported minutely. They are in heaven! It's heaven. It is only when they are ignored, that they fall to pieces.

Bedford: I think this is a delusion, but a lot of people have the fantasy that if Obama were allowed to remain in office, if the 25th Amendment were set aside, the fantasy is that Obama could be counseled, could receive therapy, and then adopt a normal personality type; if Obama would do that, he would be forgotten. He would be ignored.

Vaknin: He would be average and common. That is a death sentence as far as a narcissist is concerned.

This is high nonsense. First of all, narcissistic personality disorder is utterly untreatable. You can modify some behaviors, render these behaviors or conduct socially acceptable, or less abrasive, less grating. But that's the maximum. And it's not my words. It's people like Theodore Millen, the giants in the field have written that. And most psychiatrists and psychologists, if you ask them directly, they will admit that they prefer not to treat narcissists, because it's a Sisyphean effort, which results in nothing.

Definitely, no one can adopt a personality. A personality is the outcome of thousands, if not millions, of processes, events, reactions, interactions, interpersonal relations, and so on, over many years. At the age of 40-odd, or 50, it's too late to do anything about it, usually.

So, this is completely out of the question.

I'm not a Constitutional expert, so I on purpose avoid any comment on the 25th Amendment. And I am hardly a political analyst of the Washington scene, this is not my field of expertise. But narcissism *is*. And there is nothing you can do to change Obama's personality. You couldn't do anything about it at the age of 16, let alone 49.

How Narcissists Respond to Defeat

Bedford: We're very, very thankful that you took this question up, today, but also over the past 12 years. I don't know if you thought it would become one of the most important questions for civilization, but it appears that that's the case.

Vaknin: It's very gratifying to hear that. But I think that our civilization gives rise, and succor, and encourages narcissistic traits, and a narcissistic style. Narcissists have a bigger chance of "making it," in current-day civilization, because it's malignantly individualistic, it's natural-selection inclined, it's Darwinistic. It encourages narcissism. And consequently, narcissists keep coming to the top.

If you review history in the last 100 years, you will see that maybe 70, 60 or 70% of all leaders, are, to some extent, and sometimes to a very serious extent, narcissists. And now it's happened in the United States. And this is potentially the worst news ever.

Obama has just suffered a major defeat. That's something we haven't discussed. He's just suffered a major defeat.

Now, narcissists react in five ways to a major defeat. There are five default behaviors. Would you like me to go into them, briefly?

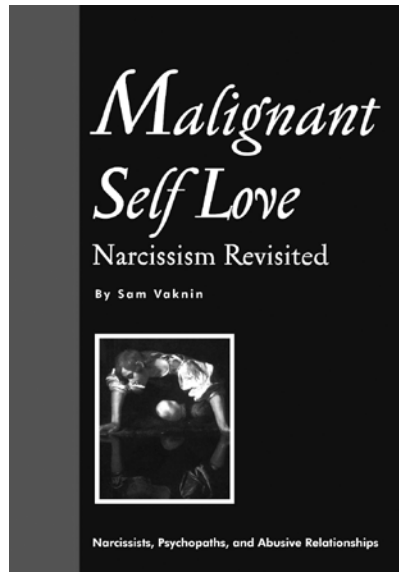
Bedford: Yes, please.

Vaknin: So there are five ways that narcissists react, and unfortunately, there's no way of predicting which of them Obama will adopt, which of them he will be hurled into.

The first one is **delusion**. The narcissist simply denies the situation. He avoids reality. His reality test is erased; he sort of says, nothing happened, or he puts a spin on it. That is the benign solution. As long as the narcissist is delusional about reality, he is unlikely to act out, or to disintegrate, decompensate. He's unlikely to do bad things—let's put it this way.

But I don't think that's going to be Obama's solution. I doubt it very much.

I think Obama will gravitate towards the other four solutions. The first of these four, is the **anti-social solu-**



Sam Vaknin's book on the malignant narcissistic personality was written in 1999, but it has turned out to be a crucial tool in dealing with events for more than a decade, specifically, the election of narcissist Barack Obama as President.

tion. The anti-social solution goes like this: These stupid people don't appreciate me. They don't appreciate my intellect, my commitment, my dedication, the sacrifices I'm making. They fail to recognize my talents, my innate superiority, my brilliance, etc., etc., etc. They are pusillanimous, and stupid. They don't deserve me.

Okay, this is the dialogue, the inner dialogue, that goes on in the narcissist's mind.

And now that the narcissist sort of has made up his mind that people are stupid and pusillanimous, and so on, he becomes anti-social. He begins to hate the people who have rejected him. And as he hates them, he becomes a kind of psychopath. This is actually the transition from narcissism to psychopathy. He begins to ignore the wishes and needs of people. He breaks the law. He violates other people's rights. He holds people in contempt. He attacks society, and social codes. He punishes people because they are ignorant, and they are ingrates.

This is actually a divorce from society. The narcissist says to society, "You had a chance to recognize my ability to save you, my ability. I'm the Messiah, you had a chance to accept me as a Messiah. You have rejected me as a Messiah? You will suffer for the rest of my term." That's the anti-social solution.

Then there is the **paranoid solution**, and it has two variants. The **benign variant** is the paranoid/schizoid solution. A narcissist faced with defeat, like Obama just was, will simply withdraw. He will become schizoid, avoidant. He will withdraw, he will avoid contact, he will rarely appear in the media, he will vanish from the scene. He will seek narcissistic supply in other ways, which we will not go into right now.

Again, this is not Obama. I think Obama will adopt the other type of paranoid solution, which is called the **paranoid-explosive** solution. And this is a very interesting solution.

When the narcissist is faced with defeat, he actually invents a conspiracy, invents some kind of persecutory delusion. He attributes his defeat to external forces—we call it alloplastic defense. He says, "The world is guilty, the universe is guilty, this group of people defeated me, on purpose." He becomes a paranoid. And then there are frequent displays of indignation, righteousness, condemnation, blame—you know, using the bully pulpit, and this is the paranoid-aggressive, or explosive, solution, which, in my view, is the solution that Obama is going to adopt, come next week.

I think you're going to see these things happening, starting next week.

And finally, there is the **masochistic-avoidance** solution, which is also a possibility with Obama. And that is the martyr. "I'm a martyr. I'm being tortured by the Republicans, by the conservatives, by ungrateful people, by ignorant people. I sacrificed everything for them, and look what they're doing to me."

You've seen his speech where he said that people call him "dog." That is the masochistic-avoidance solution. "People call me dog. Why do they call me dog?" Whining, whining. Complaining all the time. "Why do they do this to me? I'm such a good person, I have such good intentions, such good plans, I'm so brilliant, so perfect. And how can they treat me like that?"

And so this is a kind of self-administered punishment, because, listen, to say about yourself that people call you "dog," is a kind of self-punishment, self-flagellation in public. And this is a masochist.

And so, to sum these five solutions, I think Obama is going to combine the anti-social solution, the paranoid-explosive solution, and the masochist solution. In other words, he's going to present himself as a martyr, who has been crucified, who is being crucified, by his enemies and opponents, on behalf of the people. Then, he is going to become paranoid, and very explosive and aggressive. And finally, he's going to become utterly anti-social, including breaking the law, and worse. I think this is going to be the progression. That's how I see it.

No fun at all.

Listen, I still cannot digest that the American people have chosen such a man. I cannot digest it. With no track record, no history, faked—largely faked—biography. Fake, or, you know what, hazy biography. Zero experience. It's unbelievable that you have chosen such a person. It's flabbergasting. It defies belief.

And all these external signs, all these lacks, indicate something wrong with the person himself. You knew about his chaotic and dysfunctional childhood. You knew, he was a black guy raised up in white neighborhoods, and this and that; he never felt that he belonged. You've read his books!

His books are very explicit, by the way. Reminds me of *Mein Kampf*. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* is a very explicit book. Hitler hid nothing, and Obama hid nothing. Obama very clearly describes his state of mind, in a variety of typical American situations.

And the unease, discomfort, of this man, with the typical American, is so evident, so screaming off the page. I can't believe that the American people have chosen someone like that. In any other setting, in a

workplace, a typical workplace, if I had such a worker—I used to be a businessman, I used to employ hundreds of people—if I had such a worker, with this kind of background, I would have insisted on counseling. I would have retained his services, if he was useful, but I would have insisted upon counseling. People are forced, in police departments, to go to counseling for far less.

You have chosen a narcissist! This is so bad. You can't imagine how bad it is. You've elected a narcissist to office, the highest office.

A Narcissist-Creating Culture

Matthew Ogden: You know, one thing that that brings to my mind: you're sort of looking at the situation where you have a culture which is producing, as I think you said in one of your writings, greater and greater amounts of narcissistic personalities, or it's creating this kind of anomie, in more and more individuals, that this is not just an isolated expression that's coming from within the individuals as isolated particles, or something.

Vaknin: True.

Ogden: In terms of what you just said, also, in terms of a culture, a population, especially this current generation, or maybe, you'd say, the Baby Boomer generation and its close proximates, what is it in that generation, or what is it in the current culture, what sorts of things would go into shaping a people, who would fall for a Barack Obama?

Vaknin: Well, first of all, it's very true that narcissism is partly a cultural construct. It's partly what we call a culture-bound syndrome; that means highly dependent upon a specific cultural and societal context. In collectivist societies, like Japan, we have collectivist narcissism. Japan is a highly narcissistic society, but not on the individual level. As a totality, it's highly narcissistic. Witness what it has done during the Second world War.

But what happened in the West, is the atomization of society, alienation (using a Marxist term), but also the all-pervasive disappointment with ideological systems. I mean, it's so bad there's nothing out there. Conse-

quently, technology—technology always reflects mass psychology. Technology, until the early 1930s, was a collectivist technology, a technology that brought people together. Even factories, factories of the Industrial Revolution—what factories did was bring people together. Factories created cities, and cities created urban culture.

And then, as the disappointment grew, as ideological systems crumbled, as idols were exposed as fallacious, as everything collapsed, technology began to isolate, and atomize people, rather than bring them together. Today you have the iPhone. It's immersive. You immerse yourself, to the exclusion of all others.

Yes, you have social networking. It's a joke. Is this a substitute for friendship, or neighborliness. We both know it doesn't work, it's not working. We isolate ourselves more and more, and more and more, and now this results in a double-whammy narcissism. Why?

Feeling unique, feeling distinct, feeling that you have boundaries, that you are not part of a herd, is absolutely a human reflex. The larger the number of people, the more you will try to differentiate yourself, with fashion, with tattoos, with the kind of technology you have. With your family style, with your sexual preferences. All of this has one thing in common: narcissism. Self-assertion.

“Hey, look here, I exist! I'm unique! I'm not part of the flow, or the herd, I am me. I'm not a statistic, or number.”

One of the things we try to do, is to attract the attention of other people, vicariously, and this is precisely the function of the false self. To some extent, large or small, we all create false selves. People create personas, sort of masks, that they use in order to attract attention, and function in society. And so now, the masks took over.

When you go to Facebook, 70% of the people there are handles, they are pseudonyms, they are masks—you interact with masks! You interact with masks everywhere, by the way. And this is Obama. Barack Obama is the ultimate mask. Barack Obama is *only* mask. This is why he was so wonderfully successful in the social-networking environment of the Internet. He is a handle.



Just as Hitler's autobiography, Mein Kampf, clearly signalled the personality traits that would lead to his future crimes, so does Obama's autobiography reveal a lot about his narcissistic character, Vaknin argues. Those who read the books, should have known what they were dealing with.

He is an alias. He's a pseudonym—he's not a real person in any sense of the word. He's as slippery as the online identities of his supporters. He has no past.

Did you ever read the book *Being There*, by Jerzy Kosinski?

Bedford: There was a film based on it?

Vaknin: Yes, with Peter Sellers.

Bedford: I'm familiar with the film only.

Vaknin: With Peter Sellers, yes. Great film. As good as the book.

Being There is the story of a simpleton, an idiot, a retard—sorry, intellectually challenged guy. He walks on the street, he gets hit by a car. He loses consciousness. The car belongs to some very rich family. And so the car's driver, the chauffeur, picks him up from the pavement, brings him to the family's mansion. And as he recuperates in the family's mansion, the family's friends—top-level politicians, upper echelons of business, you name it—they come to visit the family, and so they get acquainted with the simpleton.

And the man is absolutely intellectually challenged—if I've ever heard of one.

And so they ask him, "How are you?" and what do you think about this, and he makes these vague, nonsensical pronouncements, oracular—that you can interpret any way you wish. And he speaks nonsense; it's utter rubbish what he says. But it's enough to get him elected to the Presidency of the United States.

The movie is about an idiot, elected to the Presidency of the United States, because he was a blank screen, onto which anyone and everyone could project whatever they wanted. And that's a very prophetic book. It predicted Obama. It's a wonderful description of Obama.

I want to tell you one last thing. I have watched, as I said, well over 1,200 hours of Obama. I'm not sure there are many other people who have done that. And I want to tell you that I am not convinced the man is intelligent. There is this claim that he is intelligent, mainly because he sold us on this story. Even Lyndon LaRouche made a disclaimer; he said, the man is intelligent but—

Bedford: He said he was a quick study.

Vaknin: I am not sure that he's intelligent. There are subtle signs, and not so subtle signs, of a quick intellect at work. You know, I talk to you guys, you react, I react,

it's clear that we are not stupid—let's put it this way.

I have seen Obama in a variety of situations, with and without teleprompter, and I got the distinct impression that he is acting. You know, you see movies with actors, and in the movie, the actor appears to be a deep thinker, an excellent philosopher, and outstanding scholar—in the movie. Then you see an interview with the actor, and he can't put two words together! And that's my impression of Obama. Great actor.

Bedford: I'm actually in the preparation phase of a video, which for me was just the next step to take it.² I read Obama's autobiography, *Dreams from My Father*. My first reaction was, I was sort of disgusted, but impressed at the writing. It struck me as odd coming from the man I had observed as President.

I encountered a hypothesis, which was in the form of a literary analysis.

Vaknin: Yes, I know, that he hasn't written it, but Bill Ayers wrote it.

Bedford: I've been unable to corroborate that, to prove it definitively, but what I am presenting in a video, which will be released this week, is the literary analysis, because I think it does show the wide discrepancy between the intellect that was presented along with this book, and with the candidate, with what is starting to reveal itself, as you said, as this non-intelligence.

Vaknin: I wouldn't say he's not intelligent, but he's not the genius he's made out to be. He's an average, I don't know what, activist, if you wish. There's nothing sparking there, nothing brilliant, nothing outstanding.

Have you read his poems, by the way? If you're making a video on this literary analysis, you must read his poems.

Bedford: I'm opening the video with one of his poems, about apes.

Vaknin: Is this the man who wrote *Dreams of my Father*? Absolutely impossible. Give me a break! I'm not a forensic analyst, or something, but it's not the same man. I mean, this is so typical of narcissists. They are gelatin-like. There's nothing firm there. They undulate all the time. They are hazy. They are there and not there—they appear and disappear. Their biographies are concoctions. Partly true, of course, to hook you up, but if you go much deeper—and no one bothers to go

2. "The Obama People," larouchepac.com. See <http://tiny.cc/7rm1t>

much deeper, especially not the mainstream media—if you go much deeper, you suddenly discover that things don't fit, or he was somewhere else.

And this is so typical of narcissists. I've been working on narcissism for 15 years. I've analyzed dozens—I wouldn't say hundreds, but dozens of biographies presented to me by narcissists, because I have mailing lists with a total of 20-odd thousand members, 1,000 of whom were diagnosed as narcissists.

So, I asked them to send me their biographies, and 70 or 80 of them did. It was a few years ago. And I've analyzed their biographies—the evasiveness, the half-truth, half-lie expertly combined, the allusions which are not really statements, so you can't catch them in the act—it's so Obama. So Obama. Actually that's the first thing that attracted me to this idea, and his dysfunctional childhood. That's why I homed in on him. I had better things to do, believe me, but I couldn't believe my eyes. That's such a classic case.

And even then, I was very careful. I said, he *might* be a narcissist. I tried to give him the benefit of the doubt. Now, two and a half years later, forget it. The guy is, for sure, a narcissist.

Classical Tragedy

Ogden: One thing I just want to bring up, before we end, maybe just for fun. Brent and I both happen to be amateur musicians. He's a pianist, and I'm a singer, and we've both just taken up an informal study of Mozart's opera *Don Giovanni*, for the very reason that I think it's almost a clinical study of both the personality of a narcissist, in *Don Giovanni*, and the way that the rest of the society, in the form of the other characters, submit and respond and react to the personality of the narcissist.

Vaknin: That's very true. But I never thought about it. That's very, very true.

Ogden: And, one of the provocative things, one of the very important things about it, I think, as is the case with a lot of Classical art, Classical drama, and some of the better operas: It is a real tragedy, it's a study in real human historical tragedy, but so much of the tragedy is

very much the product of exactly the kind of situation that we're discussing here with Obama.

Vaknin: Exactly. Narcissism is a Greek tragedy in the sense that it is inexorable. It emanates from inside your shortcomings; your own deficiencies bring about your dissolution, your death, your punishment. There's nothing you can do; in a way, the narcissist is a tragic figure. There's nothing he can do about it. It's stronger than him. And there is this, as I said, inexorable feeling,

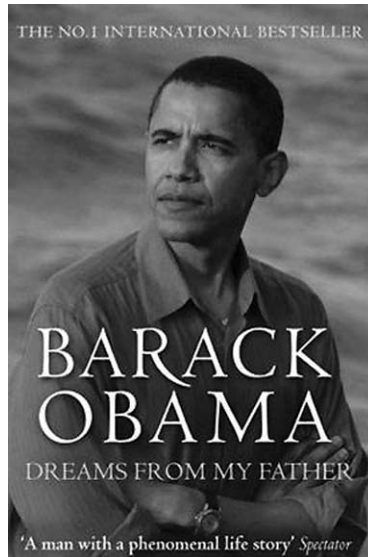
that you can't stop—you as a viewer, or listener, you want to jump on stage and say, "What are you doing? Wake up, man! You can stop it, you can do something about it!"

Consider Madoff, for instance. Probably a classic narcissist, if I ever saw one. Also psychopathic. Why the hell did he need this? What for? I've written about the psychology of corruption. And you know, I just gave an interview to al-Jazeera, and I had a very fiery debate with the head of Transparency International. She repeats textbook phrases, without thinking about what she's saying.

One of the things she said: "Well, corruption is a result of greed." What the hell is she talking about? Mobutu Sese Seko, the ex-dictator of Zaire, continued to steal hundreds of millions of dollars a year, when he had \$3 billion stashed in Switzerland, which he had never touched. All this time, he dressed modestly, ate modestly, sparingly, so he didn't use the money. It

was the hoarding; he was hoarding the money. It didn't have anything to do with greed. He was simply hoarding it, the way other people collect old cars, or something. It was something stronger, something inside himself.

And this is why I say that narcissists are soul-snatched. The false self devours them. They become walking zombies. They're shells. There is a mechanism inside, a robotic, cold, calculated evil, that drives them, inexorably. They cannot stop it. Sometimes, they want to stop it. Many narcissists are self-aware. And they see that they keep getting into bad situations, divorces and bankruptcies, and jail time, and this and that, but they can't stop it. Again and again and again.



Narcissists are frequently eager to write their life stories, but, as Vaknin put it, "their biographies are concoctions," full of "evasiveness, half-truths, and half-lies. This is certainly characteristic of Obama's autobiography, first published in 1995 when he was only 34, and almost certainly written by someone else.