Year after year, decennia after decennia, mankind has become more superficial and corrupted by materialism and narcissism. There are negatives consequences engendered by those two concepts and I believe that evil has been threatening mankind’s mental state for a long time. My first objective in this essay is to render a portrait of the patriarchal society in which narcissist individuals like Patrick Bateman, the protagonist of the novel called “American Psycho” by Brett Easton Ellis (1991), grow in power and seek to destroy both body and soul of underclass people through autocracy. I shall question this statement with the use of the concept of existentialism exploited in the novel “Fight Club”, written by Chuck Palahniuk in 1996, in order to prove that the main’s focus of the story “American Psycho” refers to existentialism and not to autocracy. I shall then be able to provide an answer to the following question: What is the origin of Patrick Bateman’s madness?

“*Adolf Hitler was the reification of evil-banal, pathologically narcissistic, a consummate actor, a perfect mirror. This is how evil is born - when we are no longer ourselves. When we derive our sense of self-worth (actually, our sense of existence) exclusively from others, we seek to subjugate them in order to secure our own gratification. To do so, we often invent "grand schemes" - history, the nation, God, religion, freedom, justice - and then proceed to impose these concocted structures on others, if need be by force*” (Healthy Place. America’s Mental Health Channel. Dr Sam Vaknin, 2008)

I believe that this quote expresses precisely what Patrick Bateman embodies and I would like to suggest the relation between Patrick Bateman and the concept of narcissism in order to prove that Bateman is evil and that he reifies pathological narcissism within patriarchal societies. I shall support my thesis with the use of three concepts; Narcissism, Reification, and Patriarchy.

What are the consequences of narcissism on one’s existence? Narcissism has gained in power during the 80’s; when people were incited in making as much money as possible. In American Psycho, which contextually take place in this period of time, Patrick Bateman appears to be socially, financially, and culturally successful. However, he does not seem to be satisfied given his obsession to improve every aspects of his existence in order to attain absolute satisfaction out of them. Bateman only seeks perfection and hold a lot of resentment toward his current essence. His only way to feel better about it is in annihilating all its representations. In the book, Bateman kills seven men and seven women who happen to be whether a threat to the prestige that narcissism has apparently given him or a representation of the mediocrity engender by what money can buy and control; to him prostitutes reify mere products to be consumed in totality; body and soul. The fact that we are talking about women selling their body and moral values for material commodities brings the worst within Bateman since it reifies what Bateman is in the eye of society. After all, he is a Wall Street investment banker which has been considered as “financial whores” in the past by people like Michael Moore. However, Bateman considers that he and his yuppies friends are part of the high-class people and they make sure to be perceived that way by others. They require the best table in restaurants, judge only through appearance or worst; through material possessions and social prestige. The fact that they constantly identify individuals by what they wear is the perfect example of what consumerism can do to people. Consumerism often describes the tendency of people to identify strongly with products or services they consume and commodities are what provide them a prestigious social status. They portray bourgeoisie in patriarchal societies. “Others”, from Bateman’s perspective, are whether perceived as a threat for his hegemonic male figure, or the flaws in the picture perfect culture fed up by narcissism. He becomes, however, the author of others’ worst nightmare. “*L’Enfer c’est les autres.*” (Jean-Paul Sartre, No Exit, 1944) Yuppies/narcissists take advantage of the less fortunate (easy targets) and stick together as a group in which they “are” equal values. There is no individualism within yuppies’ groups since they all share same ambition, desires, and lifestyle. They try to fill their inner emptiness and insecurity by looking outside of themselves for reasons to feel good about whom they are. They seek power as a counterbalance for their insecurity given their powerlessness, lack of self-confidence and spirit, and meaningless existence. They also tend to despise people in which they perceive similar weaknesses. Patrick Bateman is sick of being the boy next door. He wants to retrieve his distinctiveness and decide to become the judge within a society filled with consumerists ready to sell their soul for social prestige and make everything in his power to remain the protagonist of his own existence.

In what way does Bateman reify pathological narcissism? Many intellectuals have mentioned that reification was the origin of evil. Reification occurred when one takes an inanimate object or concept such as gender or evil and puts a stereotype on it in order to make it concrete. Patrick, like the good narcissist he is, feels injured quite easily when situations do not provide for his needs. Some women have used him, broke up with him for no reasons, ignored him, and even culturally surmounted him. Because of that, Bateman is conscious of his performances with women and given his lack of confidence with them; he despises them. “*Within patriarchal culture women has a double and deceptive visage: she is all that man desires and all that he does not attain.*” (de Beaudoir in Hayt-Atkins, 1994, p.30) As women are becoming a threat to his virility and to his cultural status in a patriarchal society; Bateman accumulates extreme abhorrence toward them and seeks to be relieved from the anxiety occurred by his feeling of non-existence. Consequently, he decides to impose his own suffering on women and makes sure that they suffer as much as he does. When Bateman used a nail gun on his ex, who was probably more successful than him on every aspect of his life, it symbolizes his male domination as he penetrates her in all possible ways. He wants to make holes in her body in order to remind her who she is and what she is not; a man. After he took the life out of her, he smokes a cigar which is also a phallic representation. We can relate to the fact that Bateman is a fetish worshipper since fetishists tend to believe that “inanimate object” will give up its natural spirit in order to gratify their desires. That is why Patrick seems to reach strong orgasm only when the women become inanimate. This proves Bateman’s association of women with commodity. Patrick Bateman’s disgust for women is similar to Hitler’s revulsion toward Jews; a speculative prejudice that has cost the life to many innocent people and this is the kind of consequences that reification creates. I have come to come to associate Bateman with Hitler when I came upon a passage in the book in which Patrick uses a rat as torturing tool on a woman just like Hitler did when he was experimenting human’s tolerance to pain. Reification is exactly the same, is it like projecting unconsciously our own suffering on others.

What is the relation between patriarchal society and narcissism? Patrick Bateman; the first name itself suggests the term patriarchy and his behavior evokes ideas engendered by patriarchal societies such as performance, outcome, impressive incomes, and outward appearance. All those notions, if they dominate one’s reality, will inevitably result in narcissism. Dr. Sam Vaknin (2008) defines pathological narcissism as: “*a pattern of traits and behaviors which signify infatuation and obsession with one’ self to the exclusion of all others and the egotistic and ruthless pursuit of one’s gratification, dominance and ambition*.” If Bateman reifies pathological narcissism in patriarchal society; it means that his main life objective is to be gratified, praised, feared, and respected. It seems that Patriarchy is no longer an adequate term to definite Bateman’s universe. However, patriarchy has altered him into an autocrat who could easily be associated to fascism and madness. With the use of the novel “Fight Club” I would like to bring a relation with patriarchy and existentialism in order to provide the answer concerning the origin of Patrick Bateman’s madness.

This last section of my essay is to question my first stand point concerning “American psycho”. I thought that Patrick Bateman was more or less reifying capitalism in our society but I realized through my reading that he is the product of Abandonment which is the central idea of atheist existentialism. Fight Club is a novel that also deals with Reification. The best example is expressed when the story narrator, who suffers of insomnia, attends a support group for men suffering from testicular cancer only to see what real suffering is like. He needs to explore other’s pain in order to be relieved from his own. The more they suffer; the better he feels. When a woman named Marla starts joining the testicular cancer support group; the narrator starts to hate her since she reifies his own fakeness and how he does not belong to such a group. He meets with a man named Tyler and they start their own support group which main focus is to attack consumerism which was the narrator’s main issue in the beginning of the story. He was the furniture in his apartment and nothing else. Near the end of the story, we learn that the narrator is in fact Tyler. They are not a separate person but a separate personality. Tyler presents himself as the narrator’s perfect masculine representation and refers to the fact that he was created by the narrator’s mind in order to escape from the problems of his own pitiful reality. Tyler is the narrator’s mental executive. In the novel, Tyler points out that he would like to be involved in a fight with his father, who has forsaken him. It can easily be associated to God’s indifference toward mankind suffering. He says that he is part of the generation of men raised by women and suffers from a lack of masculine model in his life. He hates God/his father indifference and he would rather be hated by him than being ignored by him. This is why he is drawn into chaotic behaviors; he wants to make God angry at him in order to bring certain significance into his own existence. *“If you could be either God’s worst enemy or nothing, which would you choose? We are God middle children with no special place in history and no special attention. Unless we get God’s attention, we have no hope of damnation or redemption. Which is worse, hell or nothing? Only if we’re caught and punished can we be saved”.* I believe that Bateman’s chaotic behavior is due to his desire to get God attention which would likewise convey meaning to his existence. Existentialist expresses the bleakness of an existence in a universe without God along with sore convictions that can never be established. If Bateman is nothing, he feels nothing; not even pain, and it explains why he enjoys others’ suffering for the reason that it makes him feel alive. In the beginning of the novel “American Psycho” we can read “*Abandon all hope ye who enter here*”. It can be perceived as the birth of a man in a meaningless and hopeless existence ruled by narcissism in which he shall never gain God’s attention and redemption. And at the end of the novel we can read “THIS IS NOT AN EXIT” and it refers to the fact that Patrick Bateman has not been caught or judged but only ignored. It also means that he is going to be stuck forever in his meaningless existence*. “I just want to be loved,” cursing the earth and everything I have been taught: principles, distinctions, choices, morals, compromises, knowledge, unity, prayer- all of it was wrong, without any final purpose.”* –Patrick Bateman, American Psycho

To conclude, I believe that once the question whether if God exists or not has been raised; the ones who has hasten themselves to provide an answer were already doomed to narcissism. Narcissism as indeed drove Bateman completely mad but we have got to take in account the fact that narcissism is the offspring of vanity. Like Al Pacino, who play the Devil in Devil’s Advocate, has stated: *“Vanity, definitely my favorite sin.”* Vanity brings emptiness in people’s existence since they are let loose in a world in which they just play around with no specific purpose beside themselves. Mankind has become way too much concerned about themselves, their superficial needs, their greed, and because of that; we are becoming monsters. We hate ourselves; praise ourselves, as we are rotting from the inside. God is the water that purifies our heart and we have positioned ourselves before him to finally annihilating him completely from our spirit. We believe that God has forsaken us and only because of that; our modern main objective is to feed up on others in order to position ourselves in a world in which we will die alone. Why do we require an answer if whether God exist or not? Why do we crave to know if our lover has been cheating on us when we know that the answer could only destroy our happiness or worst; making us go through awful worries for nothing. The answer which is so painful for me to write is pride. I have been suffering from my meaningless existence and I always felt that my misery was caused by something or someone else than myself. Like if I had two creeping hands on my throat constantly trying to choke the life out of me and now all I can hear in my head is the idiom “swallow your pride before you choke” and I realize that those hands are mine and now I do not know if a life filled of pride can ever make its way down a throat. Pride has blinded me from the reality in which I actually am only a mere product of the society and in order to find happiness; I have got to stop being afraid of abstract things and stop questioning their significances otherwise I am most likely going to sink into insanity.