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Frosh, Stephen (2019) Psychoanalysis, politics and society: What remains radical in Psychoanalysis? In: Gipps, R. and Lacewing, M. (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Psychoanalysis. International Perspectives in Philosophy and Psychiatry. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press. ISBN 9780198789703.

Psychoanalysis, Politics and Society: What Remains Radical in Psychoanalysis?

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Introduction

It can be claimed that psychoanalysis has always operated in a political domain, in a variety of senses. From his earliest formulations onwards, Freud was interested in how individuals might find themselves at odds with their society, specifically through the opposition between sexual drives and social repression; and the question of human freedom in relation to a fundamentally constraining social world (the world of the 'reality principle') has recurred throughout the history of psychoanalysis. The political engagement implicit in this ostensibly libertarian query – how much latitude can the individual be allowed in a regulated society? – is augmented by a number of other strands, ranging from the political conservatism visible in the privatisation of clinical practice, through social welfarism and radical, socialist or Marxist activism and their contemporary, post-Marxist forms. Although most of these tendencies have competed with one another throughout the history of psychoanalysis (Freud's reluctance to align himself with the radical socialist politics of some of his followers in the early 1930s, despite his awareness of the harmful effects of social inequalities, is an example), a loosely chronological tracing of these different political directions is possible. Freud's 'social awareness' and his commitment to social democratic practice was partly manifested in the free psychoanalytic clinics in Berlin, Vienna and elsewhere in the 1920s and 1930s, which themselves were provoked by his speech to the 1918 International Psychoanalytic Congress in Budapest (Danto, 2005). The promise and limitations of the psychoanalytic radicalism of the time, which was wrecked by the onset of Nazism and the collapse of German psychoanalysis (Frosh, 2005), gave way after the Second World War to the more normative practices of ego-psychological and object relations work in the USA and Britain. From the 1960s onwards, however, there has been a return to various politically active strands in psychoanalytic thought – for example in certain uses of Lacan; in the profound challenge to psychoanalysis that came from feminism; and in more recent critiques and uses of psychoanalysis by queer and postcolonial theorists. On the other hand, psychoanalysis as a practice remains quite conservative and at times (for instance in Latin America during the dictatorships of the late twentieth century) there has been collusion between psychoanalytic institutions and oppressive social regimes, oriented around a cult of 'neutrality' and a familial ideology that was easily appropriated by authoritarian rulers (Rubin et al, 2015).

The conservative elements in psychoanalysis are genuine and would benefit from extended treatment on their own. They have roots in a variety of sources, including Freud's personal attitudes (especially towards women and bolshevism – e.g. Roudinesco, 2016; Makari, 2008); the strong, yet relatively unacknowledged implication of much early psychoanalytic thinking in colonial assumptions and racialisations, as reflected in Freud's *Totem and Taboo* but also in general psychoanalytic notions of

'primitivity' (Freud, 1913; Brickman, 2003; Frosh, 2017); the medicalisation of psychoanalysis under the influence of Ernest Jones and American psychoanalysis (itself driven by the search for professional respectability and fear of 'quackery' – see Makari, 2008; Zaretsky, 2015); the bourgeoisification of psychoanalysis as it settled down, especially post-World War 2, into a middle-class profession never fully integrated into the National Health Service in Britain or public health provision elsewhere (Ryan, 2017); and a conceptual affiliation to psychology or psychologism, with its characteristic 'reduction' of complex social experiences to 'internal' psychological events (Frosh, 1989). In this regard, the emergence of psychoanalysis in the late nineteenth century at the same time as psychology and sociology meant that it participated in the epistemological divisions between what was legitimately the arena of the sociological – the operation of social forces at a structural level – and what was the domain of the psychological – individual behaviour and the 'inner' attributes that lie behind it. Psychoanalysis generally affiliated itself to the psychological domain (this is indicated even by its name – it has never been, as some might have liked, 'socioanalysis') and contested the ground of theory and practice with academic psychology and clinical psychology as well as with psychiatry, with their associated individual-centred treatments such as behaviour- and cognitive-behaviour therapy and, of course, psychopharmacology. For psychology, the medium of engagement with the social and political was largely 'social psychology', understood primarily as the investigation of how social context affects individual psychology (attitudes, group effects, etc). Similarly, 'official' psychoanalysis largely limited its forays into the sociopolitical world to accounts of the requirements for 'adaptation' (Jacoby, 1975) and investigations of the impact of trauma, especially post-Holocaust and then in relation to sexual abuse once it emerged as a major issue in the 1980s. Despite paying homage to Freud's great, late social texts (*The Future of an Illusion* (1927); *Civilization and its Discontents* (1930); *Moses and Monotheism* (1939)), psychoanalysis has largely focused, in a not unwarranted way given the therapeutic focus of its practice, on the struggles of individuals to survive their tumultuous inner world and often difficult early circumstances. This has produced a rich array of concepts relating to what might be required of a caring society in order for people to develop the internal resources and capacities allowing them to manage themselves (Winnicott's (1965) notions of what a baby might need from the maternal 'environment' are particularly expressive and influential here); but it has had relatively little to offer in relation to political thought.

If the tendency towards a more 'conforming' or at least individualising understanding of the relationship between people and their society has been characteristic of mainstream psychoanalytic thinking in the post-war period, there was plenty of radicalism in its early years, expressed most influentially in the Berlin Psychoanalytic Institute of the 1920s and very early 1930s (Jacoby, 1983; Frosh, 2005; Goggin and Goggin, 2001). The Berlin Institute was a remarkable hotbed of psychoanalytic creativity that also housed a large group of socialist intellectuals; and its famous 'Children's Seminar', run mainly by Otto Fenichel, was an explicit attempt to reconcile the 'dialectical' psychological theory of Freud (the dialectic being produced by the conflicting psychic forces either of sexuality and 'ego preservative' drives, as in Freud's first theory, or life drives and death drives, as in his post-First World War reformulation of drive theory) and Marxist social-revolutionary dialectics. This radicalism left a strong legacy, despite the corruption and destruction of the Berlin Institute by Nazism and the exile of its adherents; it has been a place to look back to and locate a genealogy of psychoanalytic radicalism that depends

less on Freud (though his social texts still form the basis of most psychoanalytic radical thought) and more on the mix of theory and social practice that the Berliners advocated. It is with this 'tradition', if that is not too strong a word, that this chapter is primarily concerned. That is, despite, alongside or in tension with the more conservative, psychologically 'reductive' side of psychoanalytic political thought, there is a very challenging radical strand. On the whole, once the Berlin Institute went under, it found its strongholds outside the main psychoanalytic movement, for example in the works of philosophers and social theorists from Herbert Marcuse to Judith Butler; and this is one of the issues that needs to be addressed as part of the question of whether this radicalism is truly 'psychoanalytic'. Or perhaps more usefully, the question should be: what is psychoanalytic about this philosophical strand of radicalism, and what can it draw from psychoanalysis that can contribute to the radical political endeavour? To jump forward quite a lot, the simple answer to this is that psychoanalysis offers a vocabulary for, and orientation towards, subjectivity that is not otherwise highly developed in political thought; but what this means, and what its promise and limitations might be, still needs to be unravelled.

Sexual Emancipation

Freud's (1908) paper, *'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness*, with its argument that neurosis is in large part caused by the hypocritical relations governing sexuality in the Europe of the early twentieth century, can be understood as an intervention in the social and political mores of his time. In this paper, Freud made it clear that there might be a general problem with any form of renunciation demanded by society: 'It is not difficult to suppose that under the domination of a civilized sexual morality the health and efficiency of single individuals may be liable to impairment and that ultimately this injury to them, caused by the sacrifices imposed on them, may reach such a pitch that, by this indirect path, the cultural aim in view will be endangered as well' (Freud, 1908, p. 180). It is notable here that Freud refers without irony to 'civilized' sexual morality – that is, the problem is due not to exceptional sexual restrictions, but is built into the structure of 'civilization'. As Freud considers the actions of society ('civilization') in its various 'stages of development' towards regulating sexuality and restricting it to monogamous marriage, he retains a highly critical stance, seeing this regulation as the source of neurosis in social life and also as damaging of society itself.

> But even if the damage done by civilized sexual morality is admitted, it may be argued … that the cultural gain derived from such an extensive restriction of sexuality probably more than balances these sufferings, which, after all, only affect a minority in any severe form. I must confess that I am unable to balance gain against loss correctly on this point, but I could advance a great many more considerations on the side of the loss. Going back to the subject of abstinence… I must insist that it brings in its train other noxae besides those involved in the neuroses and that the importance of the neuroses has for the most part not been fully appreciated. (p.195)

The spread of neurosis under the conditions of Freud's society is attributed to the impossible demands made by the hypocritical sexual morality of that time; and whilst Freud is cautious about making political suggestions as a consequence, he is pretty clear on the implications of his analysis. The restrictiveness of 'civilized' morality rebounds on society as a whole, corrupting it as well as creating misery for its subjects. In this

moment, we might also see a space opening up for a gendered set of political implications. Freud's early clinical work in psychoanalysis was focused especially on female hysteria, and whilst there are plenty of examples of his adherence to a conventionally patriarchal/paternalistic set of attitudes around feminine 'irrationality', there is also a striking repositioning of the centrality of the 'doctor' as the one who hears the plea in hysteria as a sexual plea arising from inhibition and repression that themselves have strongly social sources. With everything else that goes on in his texts, including a colonising impulse that makes irrationality and femininity (often run together) subject to psychoanalysis' expert understanding, Freud's 'act of listening represents an effort to *include* the irrational discourse of femininity in the realm of science' (Moi, 1989, p.197). That is, he gives the voice of feminine sexuality space in which it can be heard and recognised as saying something of importance – notably, here, that women have desires, and that these are repressed under 'civilized' social conditions.

If *'Civilized' Sexual Morality and Modern Nervous Illness* marks one beginning of 'Political Freud' (Zaretsky, 2015), *Civilization and its Discontents* (Freud, 1930) is the highpoint of his explicit engagement with social and sociological issues. This proposes a necessary opposition between the demands of the pleasure principle, identified as the 'purpose of life', and the 'world', with which it is 'at loggerheads' (p.75). This is firstly because pleasure is an instantaneous event derived from the reduction of tension, and cannot be sustained, whereas suffering ('unpleasure') continues for all the rest of the time. Additionally, people are faced with the threat that comes from nature, from their own bodily frailties, and most importantly, from other people. It is as a consequence of this last factor that civilization emerges as a way to regulate the interactions of people so that we move away from a social order founded solely on domination by brute strength. This regulation is necessary, but it also produces dissatisfaction; and the many shows of 'hostility' towards society that are evident throughout history and in contemporary times are testament to the continuing trace of the pre-civilised impulse to indulge in unregulated wish-fulfilment. 'The liberty of the individual,' writes Freud (1930, pp.94-5),

> is no gift of civilization. It was greatest before there was any civilization, though then, it is true, it had for the most part no value, since the individual was scarcely in a position to defend it. The development of civilization imposes restrictions on it, and justice demands that no one shall escape those restrictions. What makes itself felt in a human community as a desire for freedom may be their revolt against some existing injustice, and so may prove favourable to a further development of civilization; it may remain compatible with civilization. But it may also spring from the remains of their original personality, which is still untamed by civilization and may thus become the basis in them of hostility to civilization. The urge for freedom, therefore, is directed against particular forms and demands of civilization or against civilization altogether.

The essence of society and the essence of individual desire are presented by Freud as if they stand opposed to one another: society is a process of control and limitation of the individual in the interests of the group, and there is no way around this even in the most liberal or permissive social situation. This perspective had a lasting impact on some influential psychoanalytic radicals, for example as reflected in Norman Brown's (1959) suggestion that 'man is the animal that represses himself and which creates culture or

society in order to repress himself' (p. 9); history, in the sense of the development of human collectivity, *is* neurosis (Frosh, 1999).

The pessimistic implications of Freud's adoption of the individual-collective opposition are obvious, and on the face of it also belie the possibility of a radical psychoanalytic politics. In this view, society will always be restrictive, suppressive of individual desire; and 'internally' this will lead to an economy of repression, in which what is most profoundly wished for is also most deeply unavailable. In a way, the story of the Oedipus complex, ostensibly the most 'social' of Freudian ideas because it marks the process by which desire is regulated by the external 'law' (the 'Name of the Father', in Lacan's (1955-6) evocative phrase) simply aggravates this process. Civilization is built on the renunciation of incestuous desire, but also on the internalisation of the social aggression that makes that renunciation necessary. This internalisation is sedimented in the form of the superego, which is the inward registration of paternal violence; and the superego judges and commands, and invites aggression to the fore in order for it to do so. The superego thus describes a mode of psychic activity that does violence to the subject, and is often projected to then do violence to others as well. Importantly, the superego is tightly connected to the social order, as Freud (1930) notes in his famous formulation, in which he describes it as 'like a garrison in a conquered city' (p.124), a formulation that implies an intimate connection between 'the city' and the mind, with the garrison being a code for how something from 'outside' colonises inner space. More 'structurally', the Oedipal father stands in for the Law: Laplanche and Pontalis (1973, p.286) write, concerning the anthropological critique of the universality of the Oedipus Complex, 'In practice, when confronted with the cultures in question, psycho-analysts have merely tried to ascertain which social roles – or even which institution – incarnate the proscriptive agency, and which social modes specifically express the triangular structure constituted by the child, the child's natural object and the bearer of the law.' Punitiveness and violence are attributes of the superego that feed off the death drive; but they are also taken in from a social order that trades in violence, that enforces its prohibitions with a distinct threat. This process is a necessary one for sustaining that social order for two related reasons. First, it provokes subjects to regulate themselves, thus freeing society from the requirement to become so authoritarian that the only way for people to survive would be to rebel; and secondly, it means that individuals are *constituted* as social subjects– they have the 'effects' of society 'inside' them in the form of the superego.

Wriggling out of this pessimistic position has been one of the ambitions of much psychoanalytic radicalism, epitomised especially in the 'libertarian' positions taken early on by Wilhelm Reich and then by Herbert Marcuse. There is quite a lot that can be rescued from Reich's troubled, even tragic, trajectory through psychoanalysis to oblivion, one that has been written about from many perspectives, including through the scathing irony of Philip Rieff (1966). Rieff saw Reich as a misbegotten mystic, an advocate of the 'ecstatic' attitude that could lead only to the decline of the true psychoanalytic contribution, which for Rieff was the maintenance of a capacity to 'live with one's ailments'. In retrospect, this is accurate and yet also too harsh, and Rieff himself clearly recognised this because at the end of his portrait of Reich he reinstates him as a kind of priest of love.

> Reich yearned for a revolution of mood. When both Freudianism and Marxism
> failed to make that revolution, he invented his own, although it came to have an

almost entirely private use... Nevertheless, though publicly labelled an eccentric, Reich was anything but a fool. On the contrary, he was wise enough to know that love is the supreme form of energy...pathetic as Reich's method was, it is well to be reminded that love is the ultimate power. (Rieff, 1966, pp.160-1)

It is perhaps this utopian element in Reich's thought that has continued to catch people's imagination. Reich's formulations, especially in his early years, have been provocative and often influential on those who are impatient with psychoanalysis' often formulaic pessimism about therapeutic and social change. Reich's eventually eschatological view of life and death (orgone energy as the erotic stuff of the universe) had its underpinnings in an understanding of psychic resistance in which the sexual energy of the free subject is constrained by the internalisation of family structures in the form of 'character'. This means that what is structured into the social world as authoritarian, especially fascist, living conditions is also experienced in the individual's psychic life as a personality or character structure that inhibits and suppresses liveliness, becoming, in both political and psychoanalytic senses, *repressive* (Reich, 1946). This not only makes the supposedly 'inner', psychological world just as important as the outer one in relation to continued oppression and resistance to it; it additionally shows up the bonds between them, their inextricability. *Sexual* revolution is as necessary as political revolution if anything is to change, because the one without the other leaves the authoritarian social structures unaltered. There is thus a profound stirring of the psychoanalytic pot going on in Reich's early work, in which the ideological conditions of domination become structured into sexual life.

Traces of this libertarian perspective can be seen in Marcuse's (1955) *Eros and Civilization*, despite Marcuse's much more systematic and thoroughgoing exploration of both Freudian and Marxist theory (see Jay, this volume) Once again there is the idea that the drives are fundamental, and that – as in Freud – they are met by a certain degree of social resistance. However, whereas Freud emphasised the *necessity* of this social resistance for maintenance of an ordered society, the radical critics argued that such 'repressive' forces are in fact, under capitalism, structures of *domination* and the idea that they are anything else is part of the ideological process whereby subjects are regulated and 'administered' or controlled. In late modernity (Marcuse was writing in the mid-1950s) this system of administration is brought to the boil by the possibility of technological alleviation of the supposedly real conditions of nature; that is, there is an increased potential for libidinal release produced by technological advances. However, to counteract this the 'administered society' turns to the management of pleasure itself; which is to say, the contemporary mode of domination is less by active and overt force, and more by the subtle seduction of the subject into its processes of consumption. Advertising replaces armies (though one has to question the global accuracy of this assertion); as Slavoj Žižek (2006) never tires of reiterating, 'enjoyment' ceases to be a way of resisting social constraints and instead becomes a social injunction. We are required to enjoy, to take possession of the commodities available under capitalism and to use them as substitutes for freedom. It is in this way – through the management of pleasure – that society is perpetuated in the interests of capital. This resonates strongly with later work on how, for example, capitalism provokes and frustrates desire at one and the same time, so that each failed attempt at satisfaction drives the subject to consume more. What no-one can bear, neither subject nor society as a whole, is the possibility of coming face to face with desire and the necessary impossibility of its fulfilment – otherwise it would putatively cease to be desire, a point discussed below.

Instead, this process of administration reassures the subject that whilst it may be dissatisfied now, salvation is just around the corner. Žižek, as it happens, has an important and characteristically provocative response to the revelation of the administered society and the place of psychoanalysis within it. 'Traditionally,' he writes (2006, p.304), 'psychoanalysis was expected to allow the patient to overcome the obstacles which denied him or her access to "normal" sexual enjoyment; today, however, when we are bombarded from all sides by different versions of the superego injunction "Enjoy!", from direct enjoyment of sexual performance to enjoyment of professional achievement or spiritual awakening, we should move to a more radical level: today, psychoanalysis is the only discourse in which you are allowed *not* to enjoy (as opposed to "not allowed to enjoy").' This is a new version of the old idea that psychoanalysis can help remove illusions, including ideological ones; one question, in addition to the obvious one about efficacy (does psychoanalysis really succeed in this? – a different question from the one about therapeutic utility, but entertainingly parallel to it) is what we might be left with if this were to occur. Freed of ideological mystification, what does one then see? Moreover, is it the injunction to *enjoy* that characterises contemporary western society (and one needs to note the very particular cultural location of this claim, which seems to be presented by Žižek as if it applies to all societies, and to cross over categories of gender, ethnicity and desire) or are there other competing injunctions? To give one example, Isin (2004) portrays the generalised contemporary subject as a subject of *anxiety*, always dissatisfied and living in fear of catastrophe. This 'neurotic citizen' is produced as such by governing practices that treat the subject 'as someone who is anxious, under stress and increasingly insecure and is asked to manage its neurosis' (p. 225). The neurotic subject, Isin claims (Ibid.), 'is one whose anxieties and insecurities are objects of government not in order to *cure* or *eliminate* such states but to manage them.' Citizenship becomes a space for the appeasing of anxieties that have themselves been created as part of the process of governing; this promotes paranoia and a hunt for security as well as a constant process of self-monitoring that is deliberately induced to block political action (Frosh, 2017). Whilst this has moved quite a way from Marcuse's original analysis, there is a recognisable genealogy in which identification of how desires are 'administered' develops into a fuller account of the management of anxiety and pleasure in a surveillance society, with its attendant implications for control and – ultimately, if we are lucky and persistent – resistance.

War, Barbarism, Rationality

In 1933, Albert Einstein persuaded Freud to collaborate with him in an exchange of letters under the aegis of the League of Nations, to explain why wars occur and to reflect on the possibilities for peace. Published under the title, *Why War?,* this piece opened with Einstein acknowledging that his training as a physicist gave him little understanding of the answer to the 'why war?' question, and deferring to Freud as the expert in psychology who might be able to throw light on the 'psychological obstacles' to peace 'whose existence a layman in the mental sciences may dimly surmise, but whose interrelations and vagaries he is incompetent to fathom' (p.199). Einstein then suggested that there was a simple way to deal with the 'superficial (i.e. administrative) aspect of the problem: the setting up, by international consent, of a legislative and judicial body … the quest of international security involves the unconditional surrender by every nation, in a certain measure, of its liberty of action, its sovereignty that is to

say' (pp.199-200). However, given the 'ill success' of efforts to achieve this goal, Einstein (p.200) could only conclude that there were at work 'strong psychological factors …which paralyse these efforts.' What might these be? Clearly, ideology was at work: the ruling classes dominate the media, education and the Church and use these to 'sway the emotions of the masses, and make its tool of them' (p.201). But why should the masses be so easy to sway, particularly when the effect could be their personal destruction? Here, Einstein's letter takes a peculiarly and very specifically Freudian turn: it invokes the death drive.

> Only one answer is possible. Because man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction. In normal times, this passion exists in a latent state, it emerges only in unusual circumstances; but it is a comparatively easy task to call it into play and raise it to the power of a collective psychosis. Here lies, perhaps, the crux of all the complex of factors we are considering, an enigma that only the expert in the lore of human instincts can resolve. (Einstein and Freud, 1933, p.201)

Freud seems to have been taken aback by Einstein's psychological tack.
> [You] have said almost all there is to say on the subject. But though you have taken the wind out of my sails I shall be glad to follow in your wake and content myself with confirming all you have said by amplifying it to the best of my knowledge –or conjecture. (Einstein and Freud, 1933, p.203)

Freud then goes on to offer a rather convoluted account of the death drive, including the complex idea that the death drive, which is primarily an inner compulsion to return to *rest*, a kind of nirvana-urge, becomes a drive towards destructiveness when it is turned outwards, and that this happens in order to protect the 'organism' (i.e. the individual) from its own internal dissolution: 'The organism preserves its own life, so to say, by destroying an extraneous one.' Given its biological basis, 'there is no use trying to get rid of men's aggressive inclinations,' notes Freud (p.211); rather, one has to work on 'encouraging the growth of emotional ties between men' as the only way to oppose war.

Amongst the interesting points in this exchange is the way Einstein cuts the ground from under Freud's feet whilst apparently setting up the discussion in such a way that Freud can lead it. Not knowing anything about psychology, or so he claims, and enthralled by the great perspicacity of the discoverer of the unconscious, Einstein nevertheless, naively, comes up with precisely the same theory that Freud has laboured his whole life to produce: that inside each one of us there is an urge for destruction, upon which warmongers and aggressive nation states can build. *Anyone can do it* is the unconscious message here: Einstein is as good a psychologist as Freud. The problem for Freud then is that he can only 'confirm all you have said', and in so doing make his own additional contribution either excessively complex for this public and non-technical interchange, or trivial, no better than the amateur can produce without trying. The famous Jewish joke about the response to an attempt to describe Einstein's theory – 'from *this* he makes a living?' – is turned by Einstein onto Freud.

Is the death drive an obvious idea? It has hardly been treated as commonsensical by analysts themselves, many of whom – including Freud's daughter Anna – have tried either noisily or quietly to dispense with it. It is also too easy to explain away the theory of the death drive as if it were invented by Freud out of his despair at the destructiveness witnessed in the Great War, and perhaps also (though this has thinner support) the depression brought on by the death of his daughter Sophie in the influenza

epidemic of that time. This would make it part *of* his psychology, rather than of his contribution *to* psychology. Instead, as followers of Melanie Klein in particular but of others too (Laplanche, for example, as well as Lacan) have shown, the concept of the death drive is a powerful, non-obvious, indeed non-consensual idea with two major elements to it. One is the 'nirvana' principle that Freud (1920, p.56) refers to, characterised by the pull of the subject towards inactivity and complete rest – the characterisation of the death drive that Freud first emphasised. The other is the death drive as a more active principle of destructiveness; this is evident in Freud's later writings, for example at the end of *Civilization and its Discontents*:

> The fateful question for the human species seems to me to be whether and to what extent their cultural development will succeed in mastering the disturbance of their communal life by the human instinct of aggression and self-destruction. It may be that in this respect precisely the present time deserves a special interest. Men have gained control over the forces of nature to such an extent that with their help they would have no difficulty in exterminating one another to the last man. They know this, and hence comes a large part of their current unrest, their unhappiness and their mood of anxiety. And now it is to be expected that the other of the two 'Heavenly Powers', eternal Eros, will make an effort to assert himself in the struggle with his equally immortal adversary. But who can foresee with what success and with what result? (Freud, 1930, p. 144)

Even without the very last sentence, which as the editors to the Standard Edition note 'was added in 1931 – when the menace of Hitler was already beginning to be apparent,' it is clear in this passage that the death drive is being personalised as a 'Heavenly Power' with the capacity to wipe out everything. It takes the form of the 'human instinct of aggression and self-destruction' and is as terrifying for the human subject as it is portentous for the world as a whole. We know something stirs inside us to wreck everything we depend on; the big question is what can be done with this destructive urge, how can it be contested or managed?

For Freud, it is the life drive that embodies hope, 'eternal Eros' as he calls it, drawing on the vocabulary of love that sustained him over the years. The radical possibility here would be that the force of love, or more broadly the libidinal energy that elaborates life and fuels the capacity of humans to come together to create and procreate, can be harnessed in opposition to destructiveness, one force against another, the two 'immortal adversaries' locked in combat. Others, however, have focused differently on the way in which destructiveness can be thwarted, whilst still taking the death drive seriously. The keenest example is that of Kleinian psychoanalysis, where the inborn deathliness of the subject is taken as a given, and the trajectory of thought is towards what can be done to live with this. For Klein, the death drive is manifested psychologically in the state of envy, which 'is an oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expression of destructive impulses, operative from the beginning of life, and … has a constitutional basis' (Klein, 1957, p. 176). Envy is unavoidable and it makes no difference if the object of envy is generous or persecutory; if the former (as with the breast that the infant experiences as full and giving) it can be hated for the fact that it possesses such riches; and if the latter (the mean and grudging breast) it is hated because it refuses to give what it should: the infant, Klein writes (1957, p. 180), 'feels that the gratification of which he was deprived has been kept for itself by the breast that frustrated him.' Thus, when envy is intense, the perception of a good object can be as painful as that of a bad one, for the better it is the more it gives rise to envious wishes.

Envy therefore destroys hope, and good things are poisoned by it; its regular appearance in psychotherapy is both a necessary focus for work and a profound threat to progress.

This description of envy seems to offer little possibility for radical resistance or for reconstruction of a broken world. It is also a reason why Kleinianism is seen as biologistic: everything comes from within, and whatever the nature of the external environment, it is the force of these constitutional drives that determine the structure and phenomenology of psychic life. This characterisation of Kleinian theory as strongly focused on the 'inner world' has a lot of truth, and is a compelling description of much Kleinian clinical practice (Hinshelwood, 1994). Nevertheless, in recognising the ubiquity of human destructiveness, Kleinian psychoanalysis opens out to something else – the issue of what kind of society might be constructed in order to ameliorate this, or at least to make it possible for people to live together peacefully. Indeed, it might be argued that it reflects one of two possible routes into the question of dealing with violence, one of them the ameliorative Kleinian route and the other based on an acknowledgement of needs and of the conditions of sociality that promote the possible meeting of those needs. This differentiation, which perhaps does not have to be an absolute one, produces some slightly unexpected genealogies. On the Kleinian side, for example, there is acknowledgement of the role of the environment in mitigating envy and easing destructive impulses, even though these impulses can never be fully removed or restrained. As Klein herself notes in relation to early infancy, certain kinds of 'good' experience can begin an integrative process that allows envious urges to be offset by loving ones.

> If the undisturbed enjoyment in being fed is frequently experienced, the introjection of the good breast comes about with relative security. A full gratification at the breast means that the infant feels he has received from his loved object a unique gift which he wants to keep. This is the basis of gratitude. (Klein 1957, p. 188)

More powerfully, the Kleinian idea of 'reparation' has been picked up to express a way of coming to terms with destructiveness that has resonance both in psychoanalysis and in social relations. In relation to individuals, reparation refers to the way in which the ego 'feels impelled (and I can now add, impelled by its identification with the good object) to make restitution for all the sadistic attacks that it has launched on that object' (Klein, 1935, p. 149). The issue here is of how to repair what has been damaged, and specifically what each of us feels we have done violence to. It is when we attack what we also need and love that depression follows, and it is under such circumstances that reparation is called for. Reparation rebuilds the world after destruction and as such, as Michael Rustin (1995) points out in relation to Kleinian theory as a whole, it is a 'positive', integrative mechanism: it starts from fragmentation and paranoid splitting (evil versus good; envy versus gratitude) and brings together the damage done with the moral responsibility of the one who has done that damage, so constructing an impulse towards rebuilding and repair. On the other hand, there is something symptomatic in the use of the terminology of reparation, invented at a historical moment in which it had by no means a solely integrative and healing set of associations. Lyndsey Stonebridge (1998) has demonstrated that 'reparations' in its original, post-World War One context, not only meant repairing damage, but also had connotations of being unfair and punitive, and these 'violent' connotations left some trace in psychoanalysis itself. Reparation is one of those complex psychoanalytic concepts that contains many

ambiguities, including a tinge, at least, of hostility alongside its dominant ameliorative connotations. As Stonebridge argues, some of this can be seen in Kleinian analyses of creative artwork (understood as produced largely through reparative processes – Segal, 1990), which contain their own dynamic of destruction and reparation, although it is perhaps more arguable whether the hostile component of 'reparations' is maintained within contemporary Kleinian clinical thinking.

The idea of reparation has had creative resonances for writers seeking to find a way of expressing the possibility of a social world constructed around conditions of care without idealisation. For Michael Rustin (1991), for example, working sociologically in the Kleinian tradition, the issue has long been how to create a model of social reform that will seriously address the fragility of the social order in the face of potential destructiveness, and will maximise the conditions for responding to the need for care. Faced with undeniable tendencies towards splitting and destructiveness, what are the requirements for social conditions that will contain these tendencies sufficiently for them to become less fearsome, less potent, and for the equally important yet often subjugated impulses towards gratitude and love to come to the fore? Perhaps the most obvious, and probably most successful, instance of this working out well is in the construction of the welfare state in Britain after the Second World War. Destruction had certainly made itself felt in acts of barbarism and uncontrolled brutality that overwhelmed much of the world – especially the supposedly 'civilized' world of Freud's imagination – to a degree perhaps never seen before. In response, rebuilding the shattered economy of the country in a context of austerity and continuing rationing, the Labour government of 1945-1950 introduced profound and lasting reforms in education, welfare and perhaps most of all in health care. Psychoanalytically and possibly politically too, though this is not really the language of politics, one can understand this as a way of making reparation to the citizens of the country for what they had had to go through. The force of destruction had been felt as vividly as it could imaginably be; the possibility of further devastation through nuclear war seemed very real; and whilst this demanded political reaction at the level of confrontation of this destruction, it also needed acts that would model and mould a society built around care rather than further suffering. This is exactly what happened in the formation of the UK's National Health Service, and is also perhaps one reason amongst many that social welfare is so virulently attacked by neoliberals and other right wing forces: it reminds us of our dependency and vulnerability, of how much we need protection and exactly why that should be so.

The legacy of this thinking in cultures of care is important (Hollway, 2006), but it is also worth noting how it resonates with other work on violence. Here as in many other places, Judith Butler's influence is significant. Butler regards violence as ubiquitous and endemic to the formation of the human subject, experienced in infancy not only through acts of commission or omission (abuse, neglect) but in a 'routine' way through the forceful imposition of social categories on the subject.

> We are all at least partially formed through violence. We are given genders or social categories, against our will, and these categories confer intelligibility or recognizability, which means that they also communicate what the social risks of unintelligibility or partial intelligibility might be. (Butler, 2009, p.167)

Butler is stressing here both that we are all impinged on in a more or less violent way, all submitted to a regime of dependency that makes us vulnerable, and that the

incorporation of a human subject into sociality is a 'violent' process in which certain pregiven, 'iterable' structures (in the quotation above those of gender) have to be accepted . This significantly extends the usual psychoanalytic notion of what violence might be, but it also draws out the political implications of the social regime of violence, linking Butler's thinking with that of Marcuse and the Frankfurt School. It also allows Butler to articulate the responsibility that falls on each human subject to resist reproducing the violence that we are so fully 'mired' in. 'It may be,' she writes (ibid.), 'that precisely because one is formed through violence, the responsibility not to repeat the violence of one's formation is all the more pressing and important.' We know about violence in our very formation, in the fundamental depths of our lives, just as we know about vulnerability and dependency through the earliest and most deeply-rooted neediness of infantile experience. In response, we can either 'moralize' our situation and inflict violence on others, or we can 'struggle with the idea of non-violence in the midst of an encounter with social violence as well as with [our] own aggression' (Ibid.) Each of these possible routes to action starts with the same state of being 'injured and rageful'. What distinguishes them is the act that follows, whether it is using one's own hurt to justify one's hurtfulness, or whether it is struggling towards 'non-violence' as a consequence of knowing, deeply, from one's own experience, how damaging violence can be. Given that Butler has spoken about what she calls 'pre-emptive reparation' and that she has engaged explicitly with Klein in her work on violence (Butler, 2009), this analysis can be taken to have a Kleinian set of resonances. The radical move here, politically as well as psychosocially, is to use the insight that there could be a fundamental impulse towards care arising from what Butler names as 'a more general conception of the human...in which we are, from the start, given over to the other' (Butler, 2004, p. 31) to generate an impulse towards reparative and generous reaching out towards others, what elsewhere might be called relationships of trust.

As noted above, whilst the articulation of a culture of care can start with destructiveness and move towards reparation, it can also be expressed differently, as a consequence of a different strand of thinking, also psychoanalytic in formation, about what is needed for a benign sociality. I have discussed this previously under the heading of 'relational ethics' (Frosh, 2011) that stem in large part from the object relational perspective in psychoanalysis – or more generally, the 'relational' one that de-emphasises drives and instead focuses on the intersubjective conditions under which people develop and then go on to live their lives. The varying versions of this, particularly associated with Donald Winnicott but latterly with a large group of significant American psychoanalysts (including Stephen Mitchell, Jessica Benjamin and Thomas Ogden), concern how the 'inner worlds' of human subjects are formed as a process of internalisation and identification with loved 'objects'; and the conditions under which this happens are given as products of social structures. That is, the social conditions under which people live profoundly influence their object relationships and their inner structures of security and selfhood. Briefly, we can take as an example the sociologist Axel Honneth (1996), for whom 'affective recognition' grounded in childhood experiences in the family is the source of the kind of emotional stability and security of selfhood that is necessary for social life. It is also a term employed by psychoanalytic theorists who wish for equality and benevolence to operate between analysts and patients. Much of what is discussed under this heading concerns the questions of what constitutes recognition and whether it can ever be enough to sustain an ethical relationship. In social theory, recognition is one focus of a debate about equality that addresses identity politics, including those

surrounding gender, race and sexuality: without recognition, identity cannot be manifested in an emancipatory way; groups are disowned, sidelined, stigmatised. Recognition politics demands that a space is made for these stigmatised groups; that they are acknowledged as a site of existence and value. But it is also emphasises the importance of being recognised *by the other*: it is this that creates the conditions for the development of a secure self that can act in the world, that can be an *agent* as well as a 'subject', much in line with the theory of self-formation put forward by Winnicott (1975), on which several of these thinkers explicitly draw. As Benjamin (2000) comments, 'The problem of whether or not we are able to recognize the other person as outside, not the sum of, our projections or the mere object of need and still feel recognized by her or him, is defining for intersubjectivity' (p. 294).

There are many criticisms that can be made of this general relational approach (Frosh, 2010), but what I want to emphasise here is not so much the strengths or weaknesses of the various theories, but rather that from the nuanced and sophisticated account of subject formation developed by different strands of psychoanalysis (here, Kleinian and object relational), different but not incompatible ideas about social democracy can arise. These focus on the conditions under which what Butler (2004) calls precarious lives can be made more secure. That is, from their somewhat different vantage points, these psychoanalytic ideas move from a sensitive awareness of the vulnerability of human subjects to considerations of how specific modes of social organisation moderate or produce states of increased vulnerability or greater security, exaggerated violence or more resilient possibilities of nonviolent, reparative practice. None of this is revolutionary in the standard sense; but it is part of the struggle for social conditions that will be better attuned to the preservation and furtherance of less precarious lives.

Political Dimensions of Desire

The terms of this discussion to date have left some very obvious gaps. One is the absence of Lacanian theory in what has been outlined above, yet it is in relation to the 'Lacanian left' (Stavrakakis, 2007) that some of the strongest contemporary appeals to radical thinking can be found (see Grigg, this volume). There are many ways into this, but one issue of concern is that whilst Lacanianism seems to have a strong political analysis born out of its interest in the functioning of the Symbolic order of language and culture, its actual engagement with politics is at a level of such abstraction that its effect can be conservative rather than truly progressive. To unpack this a little, the division Lacanianism makes between different registers of experience – Imaginary, Symbolic, Real – has proved very fertile for thinking about the way in which the human subject is 'subjected to' the operations of a social order that regulates it and makes demands of it; yet also retains enough difference (agency, perhaps, in terms that do not quite belong to the Lacanian domain) to resist that order. The problem is that this 'resistance' is not in itself a politically active stance. Instead, it is built out of an acknowledgement of 'lack', understood in the Lacanian scheme as linked inextricably to desire. This is a complex notion that need not delay us too much here; the key point is that desire is fuelled by the lack *of* the object that will satisfy that desire (the breast, for instance, which can meet the infant's 'need' but never fully sate the 'demand' for love) and also by the lack *in* the 'Big Other', which might be approximated to by the Symbolic order or by the fantasy relation between the subject and 'society' as a whole (i.e. the Big Other is not the same as 'society', but refers to the subject-social relationship, mediated as that is by fantasy).

The outcome of this is that the subject experiences a lack in itself, *and* in the social world. Lacan's clearest description of this situation in a way that has political relevance comes from his Seminar XI:

> A lack is encountered by the subject in the Other, in the very intimation that the Other makes to him by his discourse. In the intervals of the discourse of the Other, there emerges in the experience of the child something…namely, *He is saying this to me, but what does he want?* The desire of the Other is apprehended by the subject…in the lacks of the discourse of the Other, and all the child's *whys* reveal not so much an avidity for the reason of things, as a testing of the adult, a *Why are you telling me this?* ever-resuscitated from its base, which is the enigma of the adult's desire. (Lacan, 1973, p. 214)

This seems to be a commentary on how the subject comes to be called into being by a social order that 'desires' it. The subject is lacking because it is placed in a symbolic web that cuts it off from the source of its desire; that is, the subject is always constructed from 'outside' in the light of the desire of the Other – the mass of unconscious expectations and wishes that are directed towards it and position it as one subject amongst others. But the Other is also lacking, because it makes demands on the subject, because it clearly desires that the subject plays a particular role or occupies a specified position (for instance, as a consumer or loyal citizen). This faces the subject with the question, 'What does the Other want?' The interesting point here is that the Other is conceptualised as having a lack within itself that produces a desire of its own, which the subject is immersed in. This describes how any society is propped up by the flow of fantasies that come from its subjects; that is, a social order requires a kind of *investment* from its subjects that can maintain it. Derek Hook (2008) offers as an example of this how the perpetuation of apartheid depended both on a set of fantasy investments by its proponents, fuelled by envious longings and anxieties as well as greed, *and* on the existence of a social order that produced absence and exclusion as a means of sustaining itself, and hence inevitably generated a field of desire. Apartheid, which was clearly a structural (economic and political) organisation of society along highly racialised, colonial lines, survived not only on violence, but also because of the intense emotional dependence on it by a White population that dealt with its own lack through anxious investments in privilege and projective fantasies of black 'primitivity' and hatred, and through (as Hook documents) revulsion towards mixing . Hook (p. 293) provides an example here, derived from J.M. Coetzee's (1991) analysis of the writings of an 'apartheid ideologue, Geoffrey Cronjé':

> any given fantasy is divided between its beatific, stabilizing aspect (the promise, say, of absolute white racial purity/superiority) and its vexing, radically destabilizing aspect that forms the basis of a variety of exaggerated threats (for Cronjé, the contaminant of blackness, or, metonymically, the danger of infection by black blood). The dynamic interplay of these aspects should not be lost on us: the beatific dimension of fantasy functions to mask a structural impossibility (a pure, independent Afrikaner community existing in a state of self-contained harmony), whereas the second dimension provides the reason – and typically also a scapegoat – for why such an inherent impossibility could not be realized.

More generally, the racist imaginary is clearly located at a social level – racism is a social phenomenon, in other words – yet it is deeply invested in by individuals and is often sustained by its immense affective load. Indeed, whereas Kleinian theory has offered at times vivid accounts of how racism might operate through processes of projection of split-off 'bad' material into socially nominated denigrated others, Lacanian

psychoanalysis' contribution to understanding and contesting racism lies mainly in unpicking the way racism functions to cover over certain kinds of lack at the level of the individual, for instance through fantasies of the racialised other's 'theft' of the possibility of the subject's full 'enjoyment' (sexuality, wholeness, integrity, success etc), as well as at the level of society (migrants as scapegoats for economic failure, etc) (Hook, 2012; Frosh, 2013).

There are some contradictory political implications of the social order's need for recognition by the subject. On the one hand, this account shows how the subject is caught in a web of desire that means it is always left empty of something, because the Big Other is not capable of delivering on its promises. In fact, capitalism relies on this non-delivery: continuing consumption depends on raising the hope of fulfilment and then always failing to meet this hope, whilst holding open the possibility that further consumption will finally make one fully satisfied. On the other hand, the incompleteness of the Big Other, its constitutive lack, allows for the possibility of some resistance as the subject discovers its own unmet desire. Stavrakakis (2007, p.40) frames it like this:

> In fact it is this constitutive and unbridgeable gap between the symbolic/ imaginary nexus (the field of social construction and institution) and the always escaping real which also makes history possible: if it was feasible for a particular social construction to symbolise fully the real, then history would come to an end, together with the permanent play between human creativity (desire) and social dislocation (lack).

Stavrakakis presses this point to argue that the Real – the dimension of experience that can never be properly symbolised – acts as a kind of pressure for change; that which is left out of symbolisation always seeks to return, creating new possibilities and perhaps opportunities for the oppressed to have their 'voices' heard.

Stavrakakis (2007), however, also notes another feature of the typical Lacanian political scene, characterised in his account by the work of Slavoj Žižek. This relates to the argument that the subject can never cease to be split, because once the subject achieves desire (i.e. ceases to be lacking) it comes face to face with the horror of its true dimension of need. It is unclear at times whether this is simply a logical statement (desire is defined in relation to what is lacking – the *object a*, as Lacanians name it – hence, if the object is achieved and is no longer lacking, it cannot be desired) or whether it is a description of a psychoanalytic observation (we never seem to desire what we have). In either case, it is not clear that the 'no lack = no desire' formula *necessarily* holds, even if it is often true: is it *always* the case that marriage kills desire? Are there no desires left once one has been fulfilled? This suggests that the assumption made by some Lacanians that the achievement of desire would be terrifying because it would result in the collapse of the subject as a subject of desire, may also be driven more by the semantic logic of the 'no lack = no desire' formula (perfect achievement of desire is impossible) than by a study of what actually happens. Jason Glynos (2001, p.97), for instance, claims that,

> what is most traumatic is not that I am subject to the rule of the big Other, to the Master. All our complaints and appeals to justice conceal their true function, namely to *maintain* the big Other and the *jouissance* it makes possible for us. Far more traumatic is the possibility that the big Other does not exist. *This* is ultimately what we cannot accept as subjects of desire and this is ultimately the

reason for our ready recourse to fantasies of the "Other of the Other" who "steal" our enjoyment.

In some ways this is a persuasive idea, articulating how an 'administered' society might promote anxiety in its subjects ('where is the Big Other who will ensure my needs are met?') which then is dealt with through projection into others who can be elected as the derogated sources of psychic suffering, a role that has been filled particularly by 'migrants' in recent times. It also constitutes a kind of political theory claiming that authority functions to channel resistance ('the existence of the Big Other frustrates my desires, maintaining them and giving sense to my life') and so sustains the security of the subject who never has to face the problem of what to do with a desire that has been fulfilled. What it also makes problematic, however, is the possibility of political resistance or revolution: if a masterful Big Other is always needed in order to preserve the subjecthood of the desiring subject, how can change ever occur? We can be left here with nihilism or ungrounded messianism, in which the only way to produce political change is to smash the social system completely, under the guise of a breakthrough of the Real; and as this is intolerable, because it would also mean the demise of the subject, it means that we are caught politically between a rock and a hard place.

> For Lacanians, the return of the Real is always a disruptive, almost revolutionary event which shatters the entire social totality constructed around its exclusion. Every social order, therefore, has a single touchy 'nodal point' which it must maintain, or else it will collapse. Since the exclusion of a Real element is supposed to be necessary, Lacanians urge that one reconcile oneself to the inevitability of lack. Lacanian politics is therefore about coming to terms with violence, exclusion and antagonism, not about resolving or removing these.
> (Robinson, 2004, p.260)

Whilst this might be an overly critical statement, it reflects a difficult problem that Žižek has also referenced directly, for example when discussing Lacan's idea that the position of the psychoanalyst (the 'discourse of the Analyst') is one that, ideally, disrupts the lure of absolute authority (the 'discourse of the Master') and returns power to the subject. 'Lacan's claim,' Žižek writes (2006, p.307), is 'that the discourse of the Analyst prepares the way for a new Master… The question, however, remains: how, *structurally*, does this new Master differ from the previous, overthrown one…? If there is no structural difference, then we are back with the resigned conservative wisdom about (a political) revolution as a revolution in the astronomic sense of the circular movement which brings us back to the starting point.' One response to this is to see the overthrowing of the Master as only the first step towards building a new set of structures, but the nature of these structures remains hazy, in contrast to the relatively modest proposals of some of the other theorists described in this chapter, who seem to think that it might be possible to use psychoanalytic ideas to promote a more progressive, more caring and relationally fulfilling society. Still, there is something alluring about the Lacanian emphasis on lack and on constant critique: amongst other things, it describes a restlessness that is at the heart of psychoanalysis when it comes to confronting the rigid structures of power and the assumed norms of what Freud, scathingly, called 'civilization'.

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