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Article

Towards a Political Psychology: Historical Materialism and Psychoanalysis

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In this paper, the authors inquire into whether psychoanalysis has the potential to traverse the social and economic determinants that organise the conditions for and situation of the individual. Through historical excavation of the roots of psy-systems and the wider psy-complex, the authors alight at crucial junctures in which radical routes were opened up, and that have been subsequently either ill-taken, snuffed out, or—on occasion—followed; it is the potentialities in these that the authors return to, and set out the beginnings of a theoretical heuristic towards in the latter part of the essay. Through interlocution primarily with the radical communist writings of the early Wilhelm Reich, and the rigorous psychoanalytic formalisation of Jacques Lacan, the authors aim to return to Reich's concept of a 'political psychology', that takes psychosocial structure seriously. From this point, they set out some of its coordinates, against the dictates of diagnostic and statistical administration, the deflections and disenfranchisements of neoliberal responsibilisation, and the capitalistically motivated injunctions of the happiness and wellness industries.

KEYWORDS
political psychology, Reich, Lacan, neoliberal capitalism

> *The increasingly intentional undertakings of a technocracy, the psychological standardization of unemployed subjects, the entering into the framework of existent society head bowed beneath the psychologist's standard.*
> *I say that the meaning of Freud's discovery is in radical opposition to all this.*
>
> *Jacques Lacan* [1]

1 | POLITICS & PSYCHOLOGY

In 1906, Leon Trotsky—Marxist political theoretician and a key architect of the 1917 Russian revolution; later Soviet Minister, then vilified, expelled, and finally executed exile from the bureaucratic regime—gave a critical estimation of the field of psychology, at its intersection with a socialist horizon. This was made in the context of surveying the revolutionary struggles that took place in Russia in 1905, and during a heyday of advances in psychological theory and practice at the beginning of the twentieth century. In his stating in *Results and Prospects* (2007b) that "socialism does not aim at creating a socialist psychology as a prerequisite to socialism but at creating socialist conditions of life as a prerequisite to socialist psychology" (p.80), Trotsky's comment gets at the nub of recurrent political sticking-points that have time and again challenged and interrogated the bases on which psychological practices have been built, and the ethe to which psychological services have been tethered.

We must pay mind to how precise Trotsky is being in his statement, and to what he is identifying, and how his thought develops subsequently. Here, for Trotsky, the aim—and its task—is that of socialism, not that of psychology, and it is to this revolutionary cause and its construction that he was of course devoted. Furthermore, the psychology to which he refers is more that of *the way of the mind*—or *the way the mind would come to be*; in the socially and 'psycho-physically' new type of person under socialism, whom he postulated in *Literature and Revolution* (1924; see Trotsky, 1991, p.281), for example—than psychology as a scientific discipline, which he is implicitly critiquing as something unable to bring about a socialist psychology in the former sense, in and of itself.

Nevertheless, there are here dialectical interrelations, and what get raised in them are key questions as to the place, position, and role, of psychology, socially; that is, within societies dominated and riven by capitalist orders—or, rather, capitalist disorder—and in relation to the world-historical foundations, and founding acts, of psychological frameworks and theses: the question as to whether such are paradigmatically rooted in individualism, and what—in the old (but not dead) language—would be referred to as *bourgeois mentality* (preservative of the old order); or whether they grow out of social milieux that necessitate and constitute both the provision of types of care for persons suffering mental distress and the immanence of critiques of structures and processes of alienation, and expropriation, oppression, and exploitation, that affect people under capitalist systems. In sum; whether they are—or can be—for, or put in the service of, social movements and strivings for equity and equality in all its forms, or are somehow inherently in opposition to this. Arguments have come down on both sides, and the one that will be made here is that a dialectical-psychoanalytic conceptualisation of psychology is the one needed to take psychology to task for the assumptions and pretensions it's built on, so as to properly democratise its work, its internal and external workings, and its processes of working-through. Through such analysis, old paths might be broken, dormant potentials reawakened, and new routes opened up.

This will be commenced in this essay in two ways: primarily historically, and theoretically: charting the course of histories—and historiographies—of the internments and treatments of madness, of mental health provisioning, of the psy-complexes, and their systems and apparatuses; and tracking developments in psychoanalysis, focussing on

[1] See Lacan, 1990, p.83.

Wilhelm Reich and on Jacques Lacan, through whom we return inevitably to Sigmund Freud, and excavating from these researches moves made, and that can be resumed, from technocratic psychological standardisation that imports ideological frameworks from capitalist society into the armouries of clinical settings—to paraphrase the Lacan of our epigraph—towards a political psychology, which Reich lays out a groundwork for in *The Mass Psychology of Fascism* (1933/1942):

> *To the vulgar Marxist, psychology is a metaphysical system pure and simple, and he draws no distinction whatever between the metaphysical character of reactionary psychology and the basic elements of psychology, which were furnished by revolutionary psychological research and which it is our task to develop. The vulgar Marxist simply negates, instead of offering constructive criticism, and feels himself to be a 'materialist' when he rejects facts such as 'drive', 'need' or 'inner process', as being 'idealistic'. The result is that he gets into serious difficulties and meets with one failure after another[.] That political reaction is never at a loss to find a way out of a difficult situation, that an acute economic crisis can lead to barbarism as well as it can lead to social freedom, must remain for him a book with seven seals. Instead of allowing his thoughts and acts to issue from social reality, he transposes reality in his fantasy in such a way as to make it correspond to his wishes.*
>
> *Our political psychology can be nothing other than an investigation of this 'subjective factor of history', of the character structure of man in a given epoch and of the ideological structure of society that it forms. Unlike reactionary psychology and psychologistic economy, it does not try to lord it over Marxist sociology by throwing 'psychological conceptions' of social processes in its teeth, but gives it its proper due as that which deduces consciousness from existence (Reich, 1975a, pp.49-50).*

These insights didn't pass Trotsky by, either, who firms them up, in his reflections—which became increasingly psychoanalytically informed in his later years, and in this instance are presented with a strikingly Reichian dynamism—made contemporaneously, in 1934, that also concern the rise of fascism:

> *that of course, "existence determines consciousness." But that does not at all mean a mechanical and direct dependence of consciousness upon external circumstances. Existence refracts itself in consciousness according to the laws of consciousness. One and the same objective fact may have a different, sometimes an opposite, political effect, depending upon the general situation and preceding events. [. . .] The economic crisis can hasten the revolutionary explosion, and that has happened more than once in history; but crashing down upon the proletariat after a heavy political defeat, the crisis can only aggravate the process of decomposition (Trotsky, 2011, p.35).*[2]

Thus, the centrality of the dialectic to the great historian's methodology is continually reconfirmed.

Initially herein, through surveying psychological developments—professional, personal; clinical, mass; social, domestic—through a historical-materialist method, we might also uncover the peculiarly psychoanalytic potential that Trotsky alludes to in the complement to *Results and Prospects*, *The Permanent Revolution* (1930): that "what might appear as the most useless raking up of long-extinct disputes usually satisfies some *unconscious* social requirement of the day, a requirement which, in itself, does not follow the line of old disputes" (Trotsky, 2007a, p.143, our emphasis).

[2] Trotsky 'use[s] the language of psychoanalysis', for example, in *Literature and Revolution* (1991, p.259) in an analysis how market competition would be 'sublimated' in Socialist society. In 1922, he wrote to the famous, and domineering physiologist Ivan Pavlov, disrecommending the suppression of psychoanalysis under Stalinist orders, as is recounted by Deutscher (2003, p.148).

2 | ROTTEN ROOTS

Trotsky's focus turned from the psychology of his nation to a concern more general, and international, in scope. It is beyond the remit of this essay to give a comprehensive and complete potted history of the development of psychology on a global scale; however, we will endeavour to look to key events and texts that historicise the rise of psychology as a discipline (and punishment), to give a loose outline.

In his original preface to the 1961 first edition of *History of Madness (Folie et Déraison: Histoire de la folie á l'âge classique)*, Michel Foucault highlights two events in French history that signal a discursive psychological shift, in which the "exchange between madness and reason modifies its language, in a radical manner: in 1657, the founding of the Hôpital Général, and the Great Confinement of the poor; and in 1794, the liberation of the mad in chains at Bicêtre" (Foucault, 2009, p.xxxiii). What he aims to archaeologically uncover between these two events is a structure that "explains the passage from the medieval and humanist experience of madness to the experience that is our own, which confines madness in mental illness" (ibid.). "This structure", he asserts, "is neither that of drama nor of knowledge; it is the point at which history freezes, in the tragic mode that both founds it and calls it into question" (ibid. p.xxxiv). We find ourselves (still) in this history—tragically founded and called into question by this structural unificatory/separatoriness—which confines madness in mental illness, and stratifies the multifarious experiences of being, classified as 'madness' or 'mental illness', through its multiform instances of pathologisation, medicalisation, institutionalisation, pharmaceuticalisation, 'responsibilisation', treatment, and quarantine; all of which we will touch on in laying out something of a historical overview of particular roots of societal responses to mental distress in this and the subsequent sections.[3] That is, we will try to learn similarly of the passages of dis/continuity between instantiations of mental health and illness discourse and its associated practices.

In the Anglophone world, roots of what is traditionally known as madness can be found in religious texts and biblical exegesis, in which motifs pertaining to beliefs that some people are possessed by demons are present. The theme of such madness is peppered throughout the work of the English cleric and founder of Methodism, John Wesley, for example. In his journal entry for Monday 3 September 1739, Wesley describes delivering a woman of a demon that was supposedly inside of her, through prayer: "we had scarce begun, when the enemy began to tear her, so that she screamed out, as in the pangs of death: but his time was short; for within a quarter of an hour she was full of the "peace that passeth all understanding" (Wesley, 1829, p.223). The pervasive belief that something *alien*—demons, madness—gets inside of people, and was something that needed to be exorcised for peace to return, used to be commonplace. Madness here is not something that reflects societal pressures, or alienation itself; rather, it centers the 'weak' human being, who is contaminated by delusions, or phantom death pangs; and it is a ritualistic, theatrical process (with undertones of what is now referred to as therapeutic suggestion) that is relied on for deliverance.

Alongside demonic possession and exorcism amongst the pious, historian of Anglo-American psychiatry, Andrew Scull—in *Decarceration: Community Treatment and the Deviant* (1977)—emphasises that modern distinct groups such as the poor, the criminal, and the sick were lumped together in the medieval period and were largely the responsibility of the community or the family. With the advent of industrial capitalism, however, the family unit became increasingly incapable of bearing the responsibility for those who were unable to work; indeed, with the sharp exploitation of labour, and the regular swing of the economy into periods of slump, families faced existential crises in maintaining themselves much of the time. Thus, during the eighteenth century, previous practices of care were forsaken and, in their place, came forms of institutionalisation, specifically workhouses, almshouses, and houses of industry and correction, consisting of mixed populations. In *Social Order/Mental Disorder* (1989), Scull has argued that

[3] For the excavation of the concept of the unificatory/separatory principle—or principle of *enverity*—from the annals of structuralist thought, see Bristow, 2021; a work in the mode of dialectical materialism, only properly offset and complemented by the present essay, in the historical materialist mode.

this shift from the family—and the lumping together of various strata of people—to the segregation of madness from other 'deviances' was due to the "direct and indirect effects of the advent of a mature capitalist market economy and the associated ever more thoroughgoing commercialization of existence" (Scull, 1989, p.216).

Underwriting this rise over the course of the industrialisation period was the Atlantic slave trade, from which arose so many pseudoscientific demarcations to fuel a racist psychological scientism that aimed at proving the inferiority of black people and justifying the condemnation of them to their enforced conditions of slavery. From this epoch that lasted from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries, we may give two examples of psychological assessment that highlight the ramping up of attempts at the legitimisation of racialisation prior to abolition: in 1773, Phillis Wheatley's *Poems* was published in Britain, prefaced by documents that proved that she had written the contents. As Vincent Carretta writes: "Boston publishers had declined the opportunity" to put her book out, "doubting that an Afro-British slave who had been brought to America at the age of eight was capable of writing poetry that contained classical allusions. Wheatley was brought to London in 1773. Phillis carried with her a letter from her master and the signed "attestation" by a group of Boston dignitaries who had examined her, certifying the authenticity of her poetry" (Carretta, 2004, p.68, n.1). The assessment eventually led to both the publication and Wheatley's manumission. The racist doubts and assumptions on which it was based girded the very architectonic that pardoned the inhumanity of the slave trade and, almost a century later, would (in)famously find their apogee in the figure of Samuel A. Cartwright who in 1851 coined the term 'drapetomania' to describe the supposed mental 'condition' or 'disorder' which caused slaves to run away from their servitude; alongside this—as George Yancy highlights in *Black Bodies, White Gazes* (2017)—the "white Louisiana doctor [...] claimed that some work habits of Negroes were the direct result of what he termed *Dysaesthesia Aethiopica*, or 'rascality', a 'disease' (literally 'Ethiopian illness'), which he postulated led to poor habits in labour and work ethos amongst slaves (Yancy, 2017, 118). Alongside the notorious physico-psychological "tortures, murder, and every other imaginable barbarity and iniquity [which we]re practised upon the poor slaves with impunity"—as Olaudah Equiano described them in the 1789 narrative of his life as a slave (Equiano, 2003, p.234)—the sanctional apparatuses of punishment, corporal and capital; incarceration; and psychologising pathologisation were in full swing; and their effects are still felt transgenerationally today (for their bearings on psychotherapeutic practice, see—for example—Thomas, 2013; George, 2016; Brooks, 2020).

With industrialisation thus came the rise of medicalisation and institutionalisation in Britain. Demographically, in the period of burgeoning industrial capitalism, the lumped categories of 'deviants' began to go through processes of being separated out, from which, as Scull points out, a difficulty in managing the insane arose. It was around this time that the medical profession feigned an interest in lunacy, with doctors setting up their own madhouses or charity hospitals as ways to invest in an emerging and lucrative new business sector (see Scull, 1975, p.222). While only the most violent were considered insane in the eighteenth century, by the passing of the Lunacy Act in 1845, asylums were recognised as established institutions for those suffering from mental illness. Memoirist and historian Barbara Taylor writes that asylums got so overcrowded that,

> *pauper lunatics crowded in from the workhouses and wards "silted up" with the "chronically crazy". Moral treatment foundered under the combined pressures of overcrowding, "cheeseparing economies, overworked medical superintendents, untrained under-supervised nursing staff". By the late 1860s most asylums had reintroduced strait-jacketing and other physical restraints. By the end of the nineteenth century the curative confidence of the asylum pioneers had vanished entirely to be replaced by a hereditary determinism as gloomy as the decaying buildings housing the "degenerates" and the "defectives" that the lunatics had now become. Care collapsed into custodialism, as the mad were pronounced "tainted persons" and the asylums became their prisons (Taylor, 2014, p.110; quoted in Ferguson, 2017, p.31).*

Asylums acted as carceral institutions in which the poor and the deviant were stripped of their agency and barred from accessing society. Madness was socially, morally, and economically excluded; an unnatural phenomenon that had to be controlled and confined through asylums. The insane, which were a small proportion of the population, and once under the responsibility of the family or the community, were then transformed into a conglomerate condition that had to be institutionalised and had to be diagnosed by experts. The asylum was designed as an objective sanctuary for those who could not cope with the world. But what was it about the world that was painful enough to become an internalised tumult?

In the same year as the Lunacy Act was passed, Friedrich Engels published *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1845), in which he connected the internal mental world to the social transformations taking place, particularly the impact of industrialisation on working people. Engels writes:

> *All conceivable evils are heaped upon the heads of the poor. If the population of great cities is too dense in general, it is they in particular who are packed into the least space. As though the vitiated atmosphere of the streets were not enough, they are penned in dozens into single rooms, so that the air which they breathe at night in itself is enough to stifle them[.] They are supplied bad, tattered or rotten clothing, adulterated and indigestible food. They are exposed to the most exciting changes of mental condition, the most violent vibrations between hope and fear; they are hunted like game, and not permitted to attain peace of mind and quiet enjoyment of life. They are deprived of all enjoyments except that of sexual indulgence and drunkenness, are worked every day to the point of complete exhaustion of their mental and physical energies and are thus constantly spurred on in the only two enjoyments at their command. And if they surmount all this, they fall victims to want of work in a crisis when all the little is taken from them that had hitherto been vouchsafed to them (Engels, 1999, pp.108-109.).*

Engels clearly examples conditions in which prospects for mental health are severely lacking, and—without being overturned through struggle—completely unconducive for the emergence of a socialist psychology, in Trotsky's sense. The great conceit of the medico-psychological establishment was to reflect this outer tumult and turmoil inwardly, in effect blaming maligned classes for their inescapable material conditions, and reading into social symptoms an array of individual disorders, just as Cartwright had internalised the desire to flee oppression or to refuse forced labour as traits of the personal debilitation of slaves.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, a revolutionary period was inaugurated, politically and psychologically. Freud saw himself as something of a leading light in the latter, comparing the founding and findings of his science—that of psychoanalysis—to the Copernican and Darwinian upheavals that dislodged first the Earth from its conceptualisation as at the centre of the universe and secondly the human from its conceived centrality to the animal kingdom. Freud states that thereafter "human megalomania will have suffered its third and most wounding blow from the psychological research of the present time which seeks to prove to the ego that it is not even master in its own house, but must content itself with scanty information of what is going on unconsciously in its mind" (Freud, 2001b, p.285). This poignant deflation of the ego—that authority that has so long presided and projected itself over the psychological world, which it has surveyed and forced to submit to its totalising gaze, and which is always fighting to reassert its domination—came through the insistence on the unconscious. The practice of psychoanalysis—the operations of which are so clearly clinically detailed in Freud's collected *Papers on Technique* (1911-1915; see Freud, 2001g, pp.91-171)—is given a stunning, Lacanian-inflected modern description by Alenka Zupančič, which we will rely on here, in circumscribing the field of speech, language, and the synthesis of experience; the function of the analyst—as something like a vanishing mediator, and not the imposer of (diagnostic) truth-claims—and Reich's 'subjective factor

of history' (the analysand's own, constituted as it is socio-politically), within the dialectic of knowledge and truth:

> *At the moment of entry into analysis the subject is usually experiencing [...] a tragic, painful split between the way she perceives herself, her desires, and so on, and the unpleasant things that keep "happening" to her, and constitute the way things are "in reality." And the analyst is not—as is sometimes thought—the authority that simply refers the subject back to herself, pointing out how she is in fact responsible for what is systematically "happening" to her; the analyst is, rather and above all, the authority that has to give all this "happening" the time (and the space) to come to the subject. This could be one of the main reasons for the long duration of analysis, for the precipitation of knowledge does not really solve anything: we can come to know what there is to know quite soon in this process, yet this insight of knowledge is not enough; the work of analysis is also needed, the work that is not simply the work of analyzing (things), but much more the work of repetition, work as "entropy." In analysis, the subject very often rushes in different directions, each time expecting to find some salutary knowledge, some secret formula that will deliver her from her pain. And as a rule, she comes again and again, through all these different paths, to the same things, and knowledge that keeps repeating itself. The subject thus often goes along the same paths again and again. Yet this work, in all its entropy, is precisely not empty, it is not wasted time, it is what is needed for knowledge (that can be present from a very early stage) to come to the place of truth (Zupančič, 2008, p.18).*

In the early 1900s, Freud's psychoanalysis of the unconscious would provide coordinates for reimagining and restructuring psychology's place and practice in such ways in the new century, which itself would soon be beset by all sorts of troubles, causing all sorts of confusions and defections within the psychoanalytic field. Freud was particularly attuned to these in the cases of Alfred Adler and Carl Gustav Jung, whom he broke with and castigated for taking his theories and models of practice—which are not without faults and oversights in themselves; some that he ironed out and revised, some that remained, throughout his dynamic career—in pointedly conservative directions; downplaying or eliminating sexual aetiology, and deforming or doing away with the troublesome unconscious.

In 1936—on the occasion of Freud's eightieth birthday—Reich stressed, in a document of congratulation to the octogenarian, that, in reviewing the development of psychoanalysis, "all deviations from Freud's theory, without exception, are characterized by the *negation* of sexuality. With Jung, the libido became a meaningless, mystical all-soul concept, the best possible soil for the later 'Gleichschaltung' [literally 'coordination': the process of Nazification] in the Third Reich. Adler replaced sexuality by the will to power, Rank denied the existence of infantile sexuality" (Reich, 1975b, pp.223-224). What Reich was acutely keyed into had borne itself out with Jung in his proclamation made in 'The State of Psychotherapy Today' (1934) that "the "Aryan" unconscious has a higher potential than the Jewish", and his chastisement of Freud—himself Jewish—as not able to "understand the Germanic psyche any more than did his Germanic followers", after which he hails the rise of National Socialism (see Jung, 1964, p.172). Lame defences that he at the time became infected by overpowering antisemitic notions within the confected 'collective unconscious', for example, betray only the theoretical weakness of Jungianism and highlight its aptitude to renegadism, to a mystical racialism and essentialism that condemns individuals to determinative categories—and the fates that await these categories—overseen by forms of supremacism.

To characterise, determine, and collectivise the unconscious—based on race, sex, class, gender, etc.—that is, fundamentally, to *racialise* it, as Jung has here, is anathema to psychoanalysis proper. We assert with Reich that "our answer [to such must be] *scientific and rational*. It is based on the fact that masses of people are indeed incapable of freedom, but it does not – as racial mysticism does – look upon this incapacity as absolute, innate and eternal. It

regards this incapacity as the result of former social conditions of life and, therefore, as *changeable*" (Reich, 1975a, p.356). The 'racial mysticism' that Reich identifies is a wilful ideological obfuscation aimed squarely at the nuclei of mass neuroses formed under—and thus left seeking, replicatively—authoritarian (socio-familial) structures. Reich issued a powerful warning against its encroachment in a letter to the editorial management and advisory board of the International Psychoanalytic Publishers—which had cancelled contracting his book *Character Analysis*—on 17 March 1933:

> *For a long time, political reaction has identified psychoanalysis with 'Kulturbolschewismus' ['cultural bolshevism'; the term used in a Nazi programme of cultural denunciation], and rightly so. The discoveries of psychoanalysis are diametrically opposed to the nationalistic ideology and threaten its existence. It makes absolutely no difference whether the representatives of psychoanalysis resort to one precautionary measure or another, whether they withdraw from scientific work, or whether they adapt it to present conditions. The sociological and cultural-political character of psychoanalysis cannot be eliminated from this world by any measure whatsoever. The nature of its discoveries (infantile sexuality, sexual repression, sexuality and religion) makes it the arch-enemy of political reaction. One may hide behind such illusory beliefs as a 'non-political' science: this will only harm scientific research, but will never prevent the ruling powers from sensing the dangers where indeed they are, and fighting them accordingly. (For example, the burning of Freud's books.) (Reich, 1975b, p.139).*

He ends the letter invoking "the working class and its allied intelligentsia which is now paying a heavy price in blood in the German Reich", and insisting that "Hitler's rule does not spell the end of the historical process. If ever the historical *raison d'être* of psychoanalysis and its sociological function was needed, the current phase of historical development must prove it" (ibid. p.140).

We must as psychoanalysts be absolute and resolute in our antiracism and antifascism, and in being so be able to distinguish between the structural, institutional, and the 'inherent', 'genetic'; in short, between structuralism and essentialism. To do so, we should return to Freud's radically dialectical and dynamic psychoanalysis, and to Reich's extraordinary period as a thinker of the social within it. Jung does not see a social category, but an *essential* category, and *individualises* its supposed universality *into* a person, making of it a *constitutional* factor and facet within them, traits of which prejudice in the theory are more than likely to return in the practice of treatment. What Frantz Fanon saw in Freud, and adds to—in a manner in tune with the early Reich—is in radical opposition to this archaism, and is where we take our instruction in returning to the radical routes opened up by the psychoanalytic intervention. As he writes in *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952):

> *Reacting against the constitutionalizing trend at the end of the nineteenth century, Freud demanded that the individual factor be taken into account in psychoanalysis. He replaced the phylogenetic theory by an ontogenetic approach. We shall see that the alienation of the black man is not an individual question. Alongside phylogeny and ontogeny, there is also sociogeny[;] it is a question of sociodiagnostics (Fanon, 2021, p.xi).*

3 | RADICAL ROUTES

> *At some time or other the social conscience of society will awake and remind it that the poor man should have just as much right to assistance for his mind as he now has to the life-saving help offered by surgery.*
>
> *Sigmund Freud* [4]

In 'Lines of Advance in Psycho-Analytic Therapy' (1919), Freud highlights that "our therapeutic activities are not very far-reaching. There are only a handful of us, and even by working very hard each one can devote himself in a year to only a small number of patients", and subsequently asks us to "assume that by some organization we succeeded in increasing our numbers to an extent sufficient for treating a considerable mass of the population", in which case he places an emphasis on the necessity that "such treatments will be free" (Freud, 2001f, p.166, p.167). This laid the groundwork for a tremendous upheaval of conservative ideas in the psychoanalytic field, and the implementation of the famous—and famously forgotten—free clinics, the Polikliniks (for the most significant study and history of which, see Danto, 2005). As Patricia Gherovici points out in her introduction to the pathbreaking edited volume, *Psychoanalysis in the Barrios* (2019):

> *Freud's social activism and his commitment to the treatment of the poor and the working classes have been erased not just from the collective memory but, most importantly, also from psychoanalytic history. [. . .] About 20 clinics opened all over Europe, including Vienna, London, and Budapest. Other clinics followed in Zaghreb, Moscow, Frankfurt, New York, Trieste, and Paris. They were free of charge like the municipal schools and universities of Europe. Analysts at the time saw themselves as brokers of change – individual and social (Gherovici, 2019, p.5).*

James Strachey describes in his 1955 editor's introduction to Freud's paper 'On the Teaching of Psycho-Analysis in the Universities' (1919) how "there was then a considerable agitation among the medical students at Budapest for the inclusion of psycho-analysis in their medical curriculum. In March, 1919, when a Bolshevik government took temporary control in Hungary, [Sándor] Ferenczi was in fact installed as Professor of Psycho-Analysis at the University" (Strachey, 2001, p.170). Teeming political and psychological excitation was coinciding and coalescing in innovative and exhilarating ways in these times of social change, and between 1918 and 1938 the free Polikliniks and similar projects were set up, run, and administered by the likes of Max Eitingon, Eduard Hitschmann, Ernst Simmel, Ferenczi, "Erik Erikson, Erich Fromm, Karen Horney, Bruno Bettelheim, Alfred Adler, Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Franz Alexander, Annie Reich, Wilhelm Reich, Edith Jacobson, Otto Fenichel, Helene Deutsch, Alice Bálint, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Hermann Nunberg, Rudolf Loewenstein, and Martin Grotjahn", as Elizabeth Danto enumerates, further commenting that "these were just some of the free clinic analysts who later fanned out across the Western world, some carrying the torch of progressivism and others burying it" (Danto, 2005, p.4).

Freud's outpatient centre, the Vienna Ambulatorium, was opened in May 1922, and Reich was installed as its deputy director. As Reich states, in 1927 he opened six free "clinics in Vienna where people came to receive advice once or twice a week. I had one, Annie Reich had one, Annie Angel had one, [Edmund] Bergler had one, and so on. To provide medical and educational help was its purpose" (Reich, 1975b, p.79). These operated under the Sex-Pol banner (which was the abbreviated name for the German Society for Proletarian Sexual Politics). As well as this, he inaugurated mobile clinics, which he ethnographically described in the foreword to the first edition of *The Imposition of Sexual Morality* (1932):

[4] See Freud, 2001f, p.167.

On the one hand, in the act of bringing mobile psychoanalytic clinics to factory and office workers for their treatment, the very different world of the proletariat was acknowledged to have existence. Their sexual and material lives were strikingly unlike the lives one had come to know through the treatment of well-paying private patients. On the other hand, along with the unfamiliar attitudes toward sex, one noticed attitudes very much like those in the middle-class. Especially, the nature of the family-organized process of education was remarkable. Sexually and otherwise it reduced and shattered the working person just as it did the middle-class person (Reich, 2012b, p.95).

In 1929, he and Annie Reich visited the Soviet Union on a lecture tour; to conduct research into innovations in the psycho-sexual field that were occurring in the region; and to connect with its various luminaries. Whilst the progressive socio-sexual and psychological legislation brought in after the revolution and under the leadership of V. I. Lenin was evidently beginning to recede under the recidivistic policies of J. V. Stalin, Reich took much from this experience, and, combined with later studies on the USSR, produced the remarkable report 'The Struggle for the "New Life" in the Soviet Union', which would come to make up the second part of his 1936 work known in English as *The Sexual Revolution*. This early document provides a valuable history of sexual and psychological struggles within times of social change in the twentieth century, and sustained interactions with works on these questions by political figures such as Lenin, Alexandra Kollontai, and Trotsky, alongside Soviet psychiatrists and psychologists. Further, in the Russian context, much is to be gleaned from Hannah Proctor's *Psychologies in Revolution* (2020), charting the life and work of the neuropsychologist Alexander Luria within Soviet social history. After the revolution in China in 1949, the turbulent developments in psychology there are laid out in C. C. Ching's article 'Psychology in the People's Republic of China' (Ching, 1980); and the Soviet trends it adopted, and departed from, in Zhipeng Gao's study of Chinese Pavlovianism (2015). For an interesting study of the meeting grounds between pre- and post-revolutionary Cuba, in relation to psychology and sexual practices and mores, see Jessica Lambe's (2019) *Visible Pleasure and Sex Policing*; and in the context of the German student socialist movement, Reimut Reiche's *Sexuality and Class Struggle* (1970) should be consulted.

Reviewing the situation abroad in 1933, Freud himself offered qualified words that hint at some hope for civilisation, albeit tinted with his characteristic and increasing pessimism (over which—with its perceived pervasiveness in *Civilisation and Its Discontents* (1930), and the introduction of the death drive into psychoanalytic theory—the more optimistic Reich broke with him); and this at the time of the rise of the far right. Freud stated towards the end of his new introductory lectures: "at a time when the great nations announce that they expect salvation only from the maintenance of Christian piety, the revolution in Russia—in spite of all its disagreeable details—seems none the less like the message of a better future" (Freud, 2001e, p.181). He remained sceptical, however, insisting that:

May it become possible for a new social order not only to put an end to the material need of the masses but also to give a hearing to the cultural demands of the individual[;] even then, to be sure, we will still have to struggle for an incalculable time with the difficulties which the untameable character of human nature presents to every kind of social community (ibid.).

The questions opening up between Freud and Reich here; within the culture of the free clinics; in the age of burgeoning communism, and under the crushing rise of fascism—and these questions' implications—go to the heart of the continual attempts at clarification, and processes of forming a theory and practice through heuristics, that underwrite psychoanalysis. They imply necessary considerations that are strikingly similar to the concerns of social reproduction theory, which Tithi Bhattacharya outlines as raising,

> *questions of who constitutes the global working class today in all its chaotic, multiethnic, multigendered, differently abled subjectivity: what it means to bind class struggle theoretically to the point of production alone, without considering the myriad social relations extending between workplaces, homes, schools, hospitals—a wider social whole, sustained and coproduced by human labor in contradictory yet constitutive ways[;] address[ing] the relationship between exploitation (normally tethered to class) and oppression (normally understood through gender, race, etc.) and reflect[ing] on whether this division adequately expresses the complications of an abstract level of analysis where we forge our conceptual equipment, and a concrete level of analysis, i.e., the historical reality where we apply those tools (Bhattacharya, 2017, p.3).*

Precisely this dialectical interplay between the *abstract* and the *concrete* is what keeps psychoanalysis animated, its forgetting being liable to tempt the fates of the abstract essentialisms discussed above—and that ruinously pervade psychological practices—or risk a concrete 'structurelessness' (rampant in so many antitheoretical psy-practices), which Ian Parker describes as being "the diagnosis of power that returns when it is simply wished away", highlighting that "lack of structure is the feeding ground for undemocratic and exclusionary politics", and envisaging "trying to find new ways of working that take that dialectic between structure and structurelessness seriously so that it may, in practice, be transcended" (Parker, 2017, p.212; p.215; p.216).

Against being a practice and theory based on *assumption*, but rather one that *learns* from the people to whom it attends, psychoanalysis can remain dynamic and dialectical, and avoid such egocentric presumptions as Gherovici delineates in *Psychoanalysis in the Barrios* as having littered the haughtier side of its history:

> *It seems to me that the purported unsuitability of psychoanalysis for poor minority groups also exposes political conflicts, and that these have had important clinical consequences. The idea that psychoanalysis is not useful for dealing with the "real" problems of the poor is often based on the belief that only the "real world" can provide a solution to these problems and that this solution must be sought by political and economic means. This position reflects less a reality than a symptom of the dominant culture. It also reveals the opinion, even prejudice, that caregivers have vis-à-vis the minorities they care for. [...]*
> *Such a construction confuses the contingencies of situations created by poverty with a causal explanation relying on the psyche of the poor. It is a variation on the old truism: "If the poor are poor, it is because they deserve it." But it gets modified into: "If the poor are poor, it is because they desire it unconsciously." [...]*
> *Here one can see how a social tautology ("the poor are poor") has been transformed into a pseudo psychic determinism ("the poor want to be poor") (Gherovici, 2019 pp.9-10).*

As Gherovici so astutely and consistently reminds us, psychoanalysis at all times needs to respond to the questions it is ever asked—and the prompts that it is given, and provocations that are made of it—by the "cultural barometer[s]" that are its analysands (Gherovici, 2017, p.94). (In this instance, Gherovici is centring the hysteric, the subject fundamental to the "hystory"—as Lacan has it (Lacan, 1981, p.vii)—of the formation of psychoanalysis, and from whom it learnt so many of its basic premises; although all other structural subjectivities can act equally barometrically, if nonetheless highlighting different aspects of the socius). This takes us back to Freud, and the fidelity he maintained to the event of psychoanalysis' formation in the treatment of hysteria, for whom the remembering, repeating, and working-through of which was always at the forefront, as its forgetting could lead to departures antithetical to the very ethics of psychoanalysis.

4 | OVER-RIPENED FRUITS

What grew out from the radical routes opened up by the social movements in psychoanalysis would in many instances wither; or be overripened into models and theories far removed from their progressive flourishings, to be co-opted again by biomedical and institutionalising systems; or, indeed, become usurped by politically reactionary movements. Freud escaped Nazi persecution to London. What remained by then of the Polikliniks became Nazified. As Danto recounts: "the new regime [...] secured the Poliklinik's psychoanalytic library for themselves[.] Freud's publications were locked up in a "poison cupboard" and replaced with handpicked authors including, as [Matthias] Göring exclaimed, "to our joy also C. G. Jung" (Danto, 2005, p.301). In the end, the "Nazis used the Poliklinik itself to rid Germany of social influences they considered degenerate, modern, Jewish, democratic, and communist" (ibid. p.302).

In the Americas, as Gherovici explains,

> *... psychoanalysis became a method for personal improvement available only to those who could afford it. Today, most psychoanalytic training institutes in the U.S. offer training that is all but inaccessible to everyone but the wealthy. Candidates in training are hampered by the prospect of incurring hefty student loans. This situation de facto prevents even middle- and upper-middle-class individuals who might otherwise undergo training from taking the time and investing the money to do so. Historically, in its professionalization,*
>
> *American psychoanalysis has disregarded the political implications of the practice, focused on developing as a narrow and very lucrative [...] medical sub-specialty[,] completely divorced from politics and seemingly impermeable to the pressures of history. [...] In the rest of the Americas, psychoanalysis had a very different development. It was considered eminently political. Psychoanalysts were often radicalized, and the psychoanalytic discourse as a whole was embraced by left-wing intellectuals as a tool for social transformation (Gherovici, 2019, p.6).*

By the 1950s, in Great Britain—where psychoanalysis' stake in the social was receding—after half a century of institutionalisation and the regular administration of electroshock treatment and lobotomisation, asylum populations were declining, and mental health discourse was shifting from the institutional to the medical model of treatment. Iain Ferguson pins this shift on economic, ideological, and political pressures, which presaged shifts in capitalism into its neoliberal guises. In 1961, the rightwing Conservative Minister of Health Enoch Powell in his 'Water Tower' speech declared that asylums were not fit for purpose and must be shut, and outlined his desire to see community care provisions in place for their patients (see Ferguson, 2017, p.78). While this may have looked relatively benign, Marxist historian of mass psychiatry Peter Sedgwick reflects that this move rather 'act[ed] as a smokescreen masking the bitter facts of social oppression in the self-interest of a powerful and articulate minority' (Sedgwick, 2015, p.215). This move has to be seen within the framework of a new ideological change and shifting role of the state, in facilitating globalisation and markets, and in rehabilitating and doubling down on what Mark Fisher calls 'responsibilisation' in mental health discourse: 'for some time now, one of the most successful tactics of the ruling class has been responsibilisation. Each individual member of the subordinate class is encouraged into feeling that their poverty, lack of opportunities, or unemployment, is their fault and their fault alone' (Fisher, 2018, p.749).

With the decline of the asylum and the growth of the model which medicalises everyday life, we also start to see the reemergence of a biological basis for mental health. The first edition of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-I) was published in 1952 and served as a way to sanction observation of mental illness in a vacuum, abandoning interest in learning about the individual, social, and economic contexts of the causes of mental distress. The impact of the DSM has been massive, and particularly notable for the way in which it gave licence

to the pharmaceutical companies to respond to mental illness as something that can be fixed through medication. From SSRIs, Viagra, benzos, to sleep medication, big pharmaceutical companies offer a wide range of quick fixes that separate us from our troubles for a short while. Richard P. Bentall has argued that one should take into consideration that the pharmaceutical industry's main purpose is to make money for its shareholders. Drug companies are no more driven by the desire to do good than the manufacturers of auto-mobiles, canned soup or other household products' (Bentall, 2009, p.197). It is clear that those early methods of social control as demonstrated in religion and the asylum system are at work also in the biomedical model. Premonitorily, Freud had articulated, in relation to the policy of United States Prohibition, and to sleeping pills dependency—linking religious and narcotic experience in an echo of Karl Marx, who had famously declared religion the opiate of the masses—in *The Future of an Illusion* (1927):

> *It is certainly senseless to begin by trying to do away with religion by force and at a single blow. Above all, because it would be hopeless. The believer will not let his belief be torn from him, either by arguments or by prohibitions. And even if this did succeed with some it would be cruelty. A man who has been taking sleeping draughts for tens of years is naturally unable to sleep if his sleeping draught is taken away from him. That the effect of religious consolations may be likened to that of a narcotic is well illustrated by what is happening in America. There they are now trying—obviously under the influence of petticoat government—to deprive people of all stimulants, intoxicants, and other pleasure-producing substances, and instead, by way of compensation, are surfeiting them with piety. This is another experiment as to whose outcome we need not feel curious (Freud, 2001a, p.49).*

While we understand that various methods of pain alleviation are helpful for people, we believe that centering the medical model in a vacuum is unhelpful in learning about the individual's sexual and social conditions, which may organise their libido, neuroses, and anxieties. Yet, in the latter half of the twentieth century, and into our own, it is precisely models predicated on vacuous diagnosis and prescription that have come to predominate.

Alternatively, on the fringes, since the 1950s there have been multiple initiatives, projects, thinkers, theories, new and adapted forms of therapy and psychological practice that challenged the carcero-biomedical and neoliberal edifices of administration. To name a few, and alight on a couple within them: in France, Jean Oury founded the experimental clinic *La Borde* in 1953, which enacted policies of democratic centralism for its running, and divided labour, and roles, between its staff and inpatients; Félix Guattari worked there, and was a favourite among the residents. In collaboration with Gilles Deleuze, he would later come to theorise a significant challenge to the psychoanalytic establishment known as schizoanalysis, which revised its family-oriented and overly oedipalised bases.

In Great Britain, from the late 1950s onwards, R. D. Laing's radical reassessments of psychiatry had wide-reaching effects, based precisely on premises of deinstitutionalisation and demedicalisation; in 1965, with David Cooper (who coined the term 'anti-psychiatry' for the movement, which stuck, although it was met with ambivalence by Laing) and others, he founded the Philadelphia Association, which set up community therapeutic houses, versions of which still run today as well as the organisation offering trainings in psychotherapy. Laing and his endeavours prompted much inspiration, and projects and groups sprang up, such as People, Not Psychiatry (set up in 1969 by Michael Barnett), and the Red Therapy Collective, which ran in the 1970s and was set up by members of various radical left groups, and political parties—including the revolutionary socialist feminist organisation Big Flame, the Communist Party of Great Britain, and the then International Socialists—and was influenced by the ideas of Freud, Reich, and Laing, in particular, amongst others. Their history provides an interesting case study of how the antinomies that we began with, and have highlighted throughout—those tensions that reside within questions as to whether psychology, broadly, is *individual* or *social*, 'by nature'—played themselves out in the attempt to reconcile socialist politics with

therapeutic practices. The pamphlet the collective produced in 1978 is an extraordinary and energising document, and ventures perspicacious analyses of "the ideology of capitalist society, [which,] in the guise of bourgeois psychology, tries to persuade us that emotional and mental problems are just in our individual psyches, and that they are separate and different from health problems, economic problems, social, spiritual or political problems" (Red Therapy Collective, 1978, p.10), as well as offering testament to the therapeutic effects of these: one member claiming to have learned that "what I thought to be my own personal problems and experience were in fact the very fibre of capitalism, and that revolutionary politics has as much to do with relations between myself and my parents as my relationships with bosses. Every time I work on a so-called 'personal' problem I feel closer to those around me and feel the Marxism that before I just understood" (ibid. p.51). Yet, throughout, there is an almost tragic sense of the project itself coming undone, as the tensions subsist and cause splits that are unable to be sutured, especially as repressed elements of its intentional structurelessness return, as is exampled in a testimony from the women's group:

> *Several of us have been doing individual therapy; some are doing counselling or psychodrama courses to get some kind of formal qualification and to broaden our experience. Two of us are writing a book about self-help therapy for women. All this has brought up some tensions in the group (were some of us 'professionalising out' of the group? What about our commitment to free, non-professional, expertless therapy?) but partly we have come more to realise that you actually can't do therapy without any kind of teaching or knowledge – we learnt a lot from going to occasional led groups at the beginning; now we are continuing to learn from widening sources (individual therapy, courses) and are exploring new ways of sharing our own experiences and knowledge with more women (ibid. p.43).*

Much of the anti-psychiatriy movements, and their happenings, were catalogued in the USA by The Radical Therapist Collective (formed in 1970)—who operated under a manifesto which railed against how "therapy today has become a commodity, a means of social control" (The Radical Therapist Collective, 1971, p.xvi)—in the journal that they set up, *The Radical Therapist*, which published between 1970 and 1972. From the 1970s onwards, radical thinkers such as Joel Kovel were not only re-envisioning the meeting ground between psychoanalysis and politics, but also restructuring avenues in its intersections with psychology, a tradition which continues to this day in the work of deconstructive approaches, critical and decolonial psychology, and discourse analysis (see, e.g., Kovel, 1978 and 1988; Burman, 2017; Parker, 2015; Beshara, 2019).

Early in 2021, the Freud Museum in London hosted the first part of the landmark conference "Psychoanalysis for the People: Free Clinics and the Social Mission of Psychoanalysis" (which took its name from Freud's call for a 'psychotherapy for the people' in the 'Lines of Advance' paper). It brought together a huge host of psychotherapeutic practitioners; people involved in many contemporary projects that have grown out of socially oriented psychological frameworks; trainees; and newcomers alike. Ana Minozzo, in her review of the event, tallies the presenters, and the bodies they were representing, and provides a heartening description of a Brazilian initiative, which is addressing structural physical and psychological violences in the country, through psychoanalytic means:

> *Kwame [Yonatan], a young psychoanalyst and doctoral researcher, spoke on behalf of the [Margens Clínicas] collective, merging poetry, politics and a powerful overview of their work of listening, witnessing and mapping collective trauma in peripheric zones of São Paulo – from that of victims of state violence during the decades of military dictatorship in Brazil (from the 1960s to the 1980s), to recent victims of police violence. Psychoanalysis, there, operates as a dispositif of political and psychosocial reparation, framing their understanding of the interrelation of psychic suffering within 'social pathologies' and an elaboration, from a*

psychoanalytic clinical listening, of tools for tackling state violence (Minozzo, 2021).

It is a psychoanalytic project that offers some hope and form of reparation in adverse conditions. Under the neoliberal aegis, along with the investment in the medical model—and the rise of the 'happiness industry' that relentlessly promotes good mental health as a (bio)moral injunction—mental health problems have only been on the increase; in 2015, in Britain, mental health-related issues were found to have led to approximately 17.6 million days' sick leave and 181,600 who people unable to join the labour force because of their mental health (see Mental Health Foundation, 2016). In the last decade, we have seen the government direct people to talking therapies. With the introduction of IAPT (Improving Access to Psychological Therapies) employment services, the task for the mental health practitioner has become "to support people using IAPT talking therapies by providing practical advice and interventions to help them retain or enter sustainable new employment" (NHS England (A)). By working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, the IAPT programme, which began in 2008, supports people using the service to find or stay in work. On their website they advise that, 'good work contributes to good mental health, and IAPT services can better contribute to improved employment outcomes' (NHS England (B)). What is essentially a service to get people to talk about their pains and anxieties is in fact structured around getting people back into work, more often than not the very thing that exploits them and adds to illness in service-users. These services act in some ways as a form of conditioning, to increase willingness to return to exploitative and sometimes unsafe working conditions. In the IAPT model, the injunctions of the capitalist order are foregrounded: the emphasis on work, as *good*, for you (for us!), is based on the requirement of labour-power, and underwritten by social reproduction and exclusion. Under such conditions, the unconscious often resists, sometimes by becoming unproductive.

We as practitioners and theorists in the field should champion this form of resistance, not as something that gets in the way of healing, but rather as something that highlights what it is in our socio-economic conditions that incessantly attempts to thwart that process, in the service of productivity; we should not condone the ethos of mental health provisions—the over-ripened fruits of ego-psychological departures from psychoanalysis—that cynically and cyclically implement measures aimed only at rehabilitating the lapsed worker, and jump-starting their labour-power. Instead, in place of this, we should demand of mental health discourses and practices that they somehow facilitate desire, rather than occupy and define the position of the "supreme Good", the repudiation of which Lacan calls for in *The Ethics of Psychoanalysis* (Lacan, 2008, pp.218-222). In this manner, we should take heed from one of Freud's earliest pronouncements on the efficacy of psychoanalysis—that it might transform "hysterical misery into common unhappiness" (Breuer and Freud, 2001, p.305)—and, against the *happiness industry*, with its commanding moralism, advocate for something more like an *unhappiness commons*, recognising what we share, existentially and culturally, and how a coproductive form of therapy such as psychoanalysis can contend with not only individual misery, but social immiseration; and make demands, not only *of* the state, which so often devotes only shallow money, empty words, and burnt-out resources to an overwhelmed and undernourished sector, but also *for* a new type of state that recognises the necessity of autonomy in psychoanalysis; that might grant and fund this; and through which a properly *political psychology* can be worked towards.

5 | TOWARDS A POLITICAL PSYCHOLOGY

What is characteristic of the two of them, Freud and Marx, is that they don't bullshit.

Jacques Lacan [5]

[5] See Lacan, 2007, p.71.

Psychology, and its history, cannot be—nor should it be—suppressed or repressed by psychoanalysis. These strange bedfellows will always uncannily reemerge, and remerge, within, and into, one another. But what psychoanalysis can supplement psychology with is the taking-into-account of the social, and the individual in relation to it, which it has lacked throughout its history, through occasional unconscious oversight or often wilful obfuscation.

We have explored this possibility in part through what gets called 'Freudo-Marxism', which has a history as long—and sometimes as chequered—as psychoanalysis itself. Reich was there at its beginning, and we have tried to provide something of a historical materialist complement to his founding work, *Dialectical Materialism and Psychoanalysis* (1929), in which he proclaimed that "when we apply the methods of psychology, we should aim only at elucidating the more or less numerous intermediate links between the economic process and the actions of men within it" (Reich, 2012a, p.72), and in which he insisted throughout on the role of the social and familial in our psychological formation, and the necessity of the recognition of this by a psychoanalysis that acknowledges and attends to the psychosexual and psychosocial formations of the unconscious.

Without such, we are apt to fall prey to the vacuous biomoral injunctions to 'good health', so often in the service of the capitalist insistence on exploitation of labour for the service of goods and the accumulation of wealth. Freud was attuned to these risks. As he states in the introductory lectures, resisting the importation of the framework of existing society: "we can present society with a blunt calculation that what is described as its morality calls for a bigger sacrifice than it is worth and that its proceedings are not based on honesty and do not display wisdom. We do not keep such criticisms from our patients' ears, we accustom them to giving unprejudiced consideration to sexual [and—we add—social] matters no less than to any others" (Freud, 2001d, p.434). Further:

> *You must not be surprised to hear that even the physician may occasionally take the side of the illness he is combating. It is not his business to restrict himself in every situation in life to being a fanatic in favour of health. He knows that there is not only neurotic misery in the world but real, irremovable suffering as well, that necessity may even require a person to sacrifice his health; and he learns that a sacrifice of this kind made by a single person can prevent immeasurable unhappiness for many others. If we may say, then, that whenever a neurotic is faced by a conflict he takes flight into illness, yet we must allow that in some cases that flight is fully justified, and a physician who has recognized how the situation lies will silently and solicitously withdraw (Freud, 2001c, p.382).*

Why; without having such attunements and analyses at our disposal, technocratic psychological standardisation can leave us with the type of robotism that Lacan so ticklishly describes in *Desire and Its Interpretation* (1958-1959):

> *When our colleague N* mentions the hysteric's character, it is in order to say that everyone knows that an hysteric is incapable of loving. When I read things like that, I always want to ask the author, "And what about you? Are you capable of loving?" He says that hysterics are detached from reality – what about him? Doctors always talk as if they themselves were perfectly well ensconced in their boots, the boots of love, desire, will, and all that follows therefrom. Yet this is a very odd position, and we should have long since realized that it is a dangerous position. It is the kind of position that makes people adopt countertransferential stances owing to which they understand nothing about the patients with whom they work.*
> *This is the real in which we operate, which is why it is essential to articulate where desire is situated (Lacan, 2019, p.290).*

Internal(ised) antagonisms within conditions of work, and the condition of the working class, have led the system under the capitalist modes of production to take mental health and illness a little seriously, yet its remorseless logic persists. Equally, the unconscious persists and insists, throwing a spanner in the works, and draws out—and draws attention to—our internal dissatisfactions with our external world, in which we often find ourselves trapped within systems of meaningless work and social structures of alienation. Perhaps in these moments the unconscious provides impetus to give us the courage to collectivise our antagonisms, through demands made of the state, of our workplaces, and of our social structures. Amongst others, the asylum-; the pharmacological-; the religious-; the conservative-psychoanalytic-; and so many psy- apparatuses employ ways of excluding people from engaging with the reasons for their (our) ailments. They often allow them (us) to cope with and accept things as they are. However, the unconscious, in its transgressive ways, speaks to, even for, people facing misogyny, racial and sexual prejudice, transphobia, ableism, labour exploitation, and other forms of oppression.

The mental health system at large has always focused on the individual, and insisted on *their* getting better. In this, the overmedicated may find themselves reinscribed as the problem that needs fixing, whilst work-related stress entails situations in which individuals are seen as hampering company performance and productivity, when leave-taking, or a change of pace, is needed. In this insistence, anxiety is wont to redouble.

For Lacan, anxiety can be radical, dangerous, and resistant, as a signal of the Real (that field in which we operate, *unknowingly*; and only from which we can situate desire, in its symbolic-imaginary environ). To end on Lacan's return to Freud, on anxiety:

> *Freud indicates that anxiety was in some sense chosen to be the signal of something. Shouldn't we recognize here in this something the essential feature, in this radical intrusion, of something that is as Other to the living human being as the fact of passing over into the atmosphere? By emerging into this world where he must breathe, first and foremost he is literally choked, suffocated. This is what has been called trauma – there is no other – the trauma of birth, which is not separation from the mother but the inhalation, into oneself, of a fundamentally Other environment (Lacan, 2014, p.327).*

If Lacan describes the ego as employing the "armour of an alienating identity" (Lacan, 2001, p.5), we must carry this in mind as we approach the situation of desire, and the instance and insistence of agency, within the unconscious, through a psychoanalytic humility that exposes psychologies, bent on mastery, and that arm themselves through valorisation of the ego, to the disservice of the social and communal.

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