

Prejudice as Ideology: The Creation of “Us” and “Them” Groups in Society (and Psychoanalysis)

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ABSTRACT *Prejudices are never experienced as prejudice: they always seem reasonable. Forms of multiculturalism presume that we are prone to prejudice when we are faced with strangers whose ways and looks we are unfamiliar with. They think that one can be taught to think and experience differently though a process of familiarization and education. This work takes place in the conscious realm. Psychoanalysis, meanwhile, provides a range of explanations that have their sources in the workings of the internal worlds of individuals. The main culprit here is the mechanism of projection. To this way of thinking, the antidote to prejudice is greater self-knowledge and a better understanding of one’s internal world. This work is grounded in the unconscious realm. While each of these discourses has its merits, neither explanation is sufficient in itself. I think that this is because neither gives sufficient weight to the way power relations structure psyche as well as social context. I will argue that an understanding of the human condition grounded in the works of S. H. Foulkes, Norbert Elias and Donald Winnicott provides us with a deeper way of grasping the workings of prejudice. Finally, I will use these ways of thinking to draw attention to, and think about, the forms of prejudice (and the rationales that bolster them) to which the world of psychoanalysis is prone. Copyright © 2015 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

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WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In relation to prejudice, we might be interested in thinking about many different kinds of situations: the self-evident hatred of Others, the murder of Stephen Lawrence, homophobia, violence against women, anti-Semitism, and so on. Here there are openly violent attacks, public abuse, intimidation, and the like. Then there are systemic processes in which there is no self-

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evident violence nor individual villains; for example, a newspaper headline tell us that the UK has “14,000 professors – but only 50 are black” (Shepherd, 2011). Another tells us that in the 2010 season of the BBC Proms concerts “only 1.6% of the conductors and 4.1% of the composers ... [were] women” (Thorpe, 2010). There are other situations again, in which some mix of the two seems to be at play, “Police [are] up to 28 times more likely to stop and search black people” (Dodd, 2012). Because this article was initially delivered to a conference taking place in the Freud Museum in London, it seemed reasonable to inquire into whether psychoanalytic discourse and some of the engagements in the clinical setting should be subject to the same sort of scrutiny. Psychoanalytic discourse tends to view itself as an explanation for, and solution to, the problem but less apparent to itself are the ways in which it is also an expression and a manifestation of the problem.

How are we to understand this mix and range of phenomena? Are they different *kinds* of processes or manifestations of the same thing? Is the notion of prejudice appropriate to any of these situations? What of the notion of phobia in terms like homophobia or Islamophobia? For me, the term “prejudice” is somewhat old fashioned; I recall the phrase “colour prejudice” from the 1960s, when it was commonplace. Prejudice, pre-judgement, has connotations with cognitive processes, errors of judgement, mistaken beliefs, and so on. This aspect of prejudice with its connotations of mistaken ideation make it seem somewhat mild. What, if anything, has it to do with the images of violence and oppression that we have just touched on?

IGNORANCE: MULTICULTURALISM AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Multiculturalism, beginning in the 1960s, used the language of prejudice and thought that prejudice was born of ignorance. It was presumed that we naturally fear the unfamiliar and so treat it badly. From this perspective, the solution to the problem consisted of a process of familiarization and education: of learning and understanding the ways of the Other. The belief is that when we become familiars we will no longer be prone to treating them badly; we will accept them in their difference – hence the adage “different but equal”.

What psychoanalysis adds to this picture is the idea of projection. The thinking here is that the empty space, the realm of ignorance, becomes readily available for projection. Elements of the self that are disparaged, feared or just plain difficult are split off from consciousness; the knowledge of their existence is repressed, and they are projected into various Others. This results in “them” coming to be experienced as contemptible and frightening. Being the containers of all the unwanted aspects of the self, it is important that “they” be kept at a distance from “us”.

In the main, the psychoanalytic view of prejudice is that the problem is psychological rather than sociological. Therefore, the solution must also be psychological. The psychological task is to understand and accept the denigrated parts of oneself which will result in less necessity to denigrate the Other.

We can see then that both the multiculturalists and the psychoanalysts think that knowledge and information will help solve the problem of the unfair treatment of Others born of prejudice. The difference between the two positions is that the multiculturalists think that it is through gaining knowledge of the Other and their ways that change follows, while the psychoanalysts think that it is through gaining knowledge of the Self that change will occur. The work of multiculturalism is in the conscious world, and that of psychoanalysis in the unconscious world.

There is much to be said for these paradigms but in themselves neither is sufficient nor full enough. For example, take the question of ignorance and strangeness. The females of a society are not strangers to the males of that society; they share lives of intimacy and are part of the same culture. Yet we find that women are marginalized and do much less well than men in the job market. Whatever the causes of this, it is not to do with “ignorance” about their exotic cultures as the multiculturalists would have it. The same is true for black people. Almost 400 years of Empire have familiarized the British psyche with the dark folk, and in the last 70 or so years they have been very present in day-to-day life in the UK. Even so, we find the headline about British professors quoted earlier. To these sorts of situations the multiculturalist ethos gives no answer.

WHAT OF THE PSYCHOANALYTIC EXPLANATIONS?

Psychoanalysis offers four different kinds of explanation for adult behaviours in general, each of which we can apply to the phenomenon of prejudice. The first explanation is akin to transference in the sense that Freud first spoke of it – repeating without remembering. Here, events and behaviours in adult life are said to be repetitions and versions of patterns laid down during infancy and childhood. If these developmental events are repeatedly experienced as traumatic then the adult will behave in disturbed and sometimes aggressive, perhaps racist, ways.

The second kind of explanation draws on the individual/group dichotomy which proposes that racism is some kind of group phenomenon that sweeps individuals up in its path through the process of contagion or something similar. In this way of thinking good people find themselves behaving badly because of being swept up by the group; it is surmised that when in groups individuals lose their civilized sensibilities and revert to some primeval savage state. The third explanation says that we are driven to act in certain ways by our biological and genetic inheritance – specifically, the instincts.

The fourth explanation, and by far the most common, features the mechanisms of splitting, repression, and projection. I will limit myself to this last explanation. The idea of projection is well known: difficulties arising in the internal world of an individual (say aggressive impulses), which cannot be managed for whatever reason, are split off from consciousness, repressed and projected into some object or person in the external world. The individual now comes to experience the object/person as difficult in itself (in this instance, aggressive).

This theory does work, but in a limited way, *at the level of a particular individual*. For example, it would explain why a particular individual comes to develop disparaging feelings towards blacks or some other group of people. However, it does not explain *how* and *why* it is that a whole group of people should simultaneously come to hold similar views and feelings towards certain other groups. There is also the issue of why black people rather than (say) nurses should come to be used as containers for these unwanted and problematic aspects of the self. And why is it in one context black people who come to be these receptacles and in another context Protestants, and so on?

One sort of answer to these challenges is to say that these groupings have previously been “socially sanctioned” as deserving of these projections and so are already denigrated. But this answer actually avoids the central issue of how these groupings come to be socially sanctioned in the first place. In addition, this sort of theory does not address what happens to the unwanted aspects of the individuals who constitute these denigrated groups: Black people, Jews, women, for

example; where are they to project the problematic aspects of their psyches? Are they not going to be allowed the same privilege as their White counterparts of getting rid of problematic aspects of their internal worlds through the mechanism of splitting and projecting? This sort of theory says that the psychological mechanisms of individuals exploit pre-existing social conditions to manage internal psychological difficulties. It does not engage with the problem of how those social conditions, specifically the forms of prejudice that result in racism, sexism, and so on, came to be generated in the first place.

SIMILARITY AND DIFFERENCE

Notions of similarity and difference have become buzzwords in this territory. However, in the psychoanalytic literature, the notions of similarity and difference are rendered curiously asocial, as though all differences were equivalent. They are not. A stranger knocking unexpectedly at the door will elicit quite different associations and emotions depending on whether “the stranger” is a young Black man, or a White man in a suit. It will also depend on who is opening the door and where the door is. In other words, one cannot leave context out of the analysis. There is no such thing as “the stranger” in the abstract; strangers are always particular, embodied, and situated.

Animosity is by no means the “natural” and inevitable response to meeting a difference. These reactions are bound to be predicated on the meanings attributed to, and associated with that difference. Thus we cannot leave the social context out of the analysis and, if we do leave it out, the analysis is reductive. The thing is that we are never just “strangers” to each other – we are also simultaneously “familiar”; between any two individuals there is an infinity of similarities and differences. I am similar to you by virtue of at least one attribute and, *in the same moment*, I am different by virtue of at least one other attribute. Thus similarity and differences are not absolutes and neither are they opposites. The experience of similarity and difference can always be deconstructed. For example, in this moment, do you experience me as similar or different to you? Is this experience based on race, culture, ethnicity, or some other category? If you experience me as similar, why are you inclined in that direction at this moment and what have you done with the differences? And if you are experiencing me as different, what have you done with the similarities and why?

My guess is that, in a context like this journal, the similarities and differences that one is likely to find oneself utilizing (and I include myself here) are those to do with “school” – whether Kleinian or Relational or Freudian, whether individual or group, whether political or not, and so on. In sum, the overwhelming majority of the papers in psychoanalytic literature treat the topics of racism and prejudice as a symptom; as the external effect and social expression of internal psychological dynamics.

ANTI-RACISM

In Britain in the 1970s and 1980s, the anti-racist movement disagreed with the psychoanalytic and multiculturalist reading of events. They accused the psychoanalysts of psychologizing problematic social difficulties and they also took the multiculturalists to task, saying that their thesis of prejudice being born of ignorance was naïve and mistaken. The anti-racists charged both with not taking sufficient account of power relations which drove processes of oppression and marginalization. They argued that, rather than putting energy into analysing the oppressors

or into educating them, one should challenge and change the power structures of the nation. Their militancy brought about many positive changes in British society but they lived in a polarized, too black and white world. For example, they conceded that all people were capable of prejudice but insisted that only whites could be racist because of the formula: Racism = Power + Prejudice. To their way of thinking whites had power and blacks did not; therefore blacks could not by definition be racist. By speaking of power in this way, as something that could be possessed, they gave the impression that power was a “thing”, and in doing so they reified it. Despite these problems, the thesis I will develop is in sympathy with the viewpoint of the anti-racists. Of course, it also diverges from it in many important respects. I will begin by unpicking the notion of “them”.

THE MANUFACTURE OF “THEM”

I think we might all agree with the generalization that prejudice emanating from the “us” is directed towards a “them”. The question therefore is what is the relationship between the “us” and the “them”? Is it the case, as our unreflected experience would have it, that varieties of “them” already exist out there in the world, and we merely find them and name them? We know notions of “us” and “them” are meaningful to human identity, and critical to this process is the “difference” that is the basis of the differentiation of the “us” from the “them”. But as we noted earlier, we also know that between any two groupings or individuals differences and similarities are both present. The question then becomes, how do we come to settle on one or other difference or similarity as the decider regarding whether X is “one of us” or “one of them”?

If only on this basis we can now assert that human groupings are not simply *found* in nature but in some way they are *made*. What and where are the mechanisms that drive this “making” process? And what role if any does prejudice play in it? Given the infinite number of alternative logical possibilities as to where one could draw a line between an “us” and a “them”, we have to ask why do we end up making the cuts on the continuum in one place and not another? To put it another way, how and why do we come to experience one encounter as taking place across a difference and the other as within a region of similarity? To make it even more concrete: when and why does Mr Smith experience Mr Singh as one of “us”, and when and why does Mr Smith experience Mr Singh as one of “them”? What role does prejudice play in determining which outcome prevails? But there is another deeper, affiliated question: *will Mr Singh be allowed to have any say in the matter?*

In order to engage with these questions I need to introduce a non-individualist paradigm: that of radical group analysis, which draws heavily on the works of the psychoanalyst and group analyst S. H. Foulkes (1948, 1964) and the sociologist Norbert Elias (1976/1994, 1978, 1991, 1994).

RADICAL GROUP ANALYTIC THINKING

I will introduce four elements of radical group analytic thinking that will help us engage with the questions just raised, and in turn help us reflect further on the theme of prejudice. The first element – power – comes via Elias (1976, 1978, 1991, 1994). He argued that power is an inescapable aspect of all human relationships and it is so because as human beings we are interdependent. Interdependence is another name for “function” or “need”. To say that person

A has a function for person B is to say that B needs A. If B needs A, we can say that A has power “over” B. However, the reverse will also be true, but not in the same way. Hegel (1977) famously showed that the slave was not entirely powerless; the master needed the slave, even if it were only in the minimal sense of needing the slave to continue to exist in order to be exploited. One can see then that the relationship between A and B is interdependent even while it is bound to be asymmetric. A constrains B and *vice versa*. It is these kinds of enabling constraints that are described as power relations. Elias said that power is not a thing; it is not an amulet that one individual possesses which another may wrest from them. No one can be completely powerless or completely powerful. Power is first and last a relational attribute. Thus we can say that all human relationships are of necessity power relationships.

The second element consists of a challenge to the metapsychological assumption that the social and psychological worlds are fundamentally different levels of existence. Both Foulkes (1948, 1964) and Elias (1976/1994, 1978, 1991, 1994) dissolved this dichotomy. They did not propose the more limited idea that these two regions influence each other: this would be to retain an idea of the two regions as separate. They propose something much more fundamental: that the two are aspects of the same process. Foulkes offered a helpful analogy. Imagine we are each driving on our particular journeys. In this we are akin to autonomous individuals. But we end up in a traffic jam. It now appears to each of us that there is something “outside” me that is acting “against” me, preventing me from exercising my autonomy. The name we give this kind of experience – an experience that we actually help create, sustain, and remain integral to – is society.

The third element reverses the usual arrangement between the individual and social. The logic of psychologies that suppose that individuals are prior to society leads one to think of the social “we” as secondary, as something that is constituted by the coming together of a number of pre-existing individual “I’s”. It follows that the forms that these societies take will be driven by the goings on in the internal worlds of the individuals coming together. Individualism of this kind is endemic to many schools of philosophy as well as psychoanalysis. This way of thinking takes the social to be something optional – as something that individuals may or may not choose to create at a later date. This is clearly absurd. Despite it sounding counterintuitive, societies are prior to the individuals that constitute them.

This line followed by radical group analysis reverses individualism, saying that the “I” is constituted by the varieties of “we” that one is born into. Each of us, as *particular* individuals, is born into pre-existing societies constituted by a multiplicity of overlapping and conflicting cultures. The cultures themselves, as well as the relationships between cultures, are constituted by power relationships. As each of us “grows”, we imbibe of necessity the pre-existing cultural norms, habits, beliefs, and ways of thinking that we are born into. These introjections are not taken into a pre-existing self; rather they actually *contribute* to the formation the self. Further, because the relationships between the varieties of “we” are of necessity power relationships, the “I” – the “me” – is constituted at the deepest of levels by and through the power relationships that are part of the social fabric into which one is born.

Foulkes (1948, 1964) did not espouse a kind of social determinism in which human beings are mere pawns of social forces. To think in this way does not mean that one is denying the existence of individuals, each with their *unique* sense of self, or denying that they are biological beings in bodies. To go back to the driving analogy, although each car and driver constitutes and contributes to the traffic jam, they remain nonetheless individuals with their personal thoughts and desires.

These thoughts and desires, although personal, are not prior to the social but are deeply informed and constituted by the social. The personal is the social *personalized*, and so we find ourselves sharing thoughts and feelings with others without any need for the mechanisms of projection or contagion. For example, some of those shared beliefs and feelings of disparagement might be that the traffic jam is being caused by women drivers, or bus drivers, or taxi drivers, or that there are too many immigrants with too much money clogging up our roads with their limousines, and so on.

The fourth element concerns the notion of belonging. Foulkes (1948, 1964) asserted that there is a fundamental need in all human beings to belong – to be part of an “us” – and that this is a *necessary* condition for an experience of psychological wellbeing. But even to put it in this way, to say that there is a need to belong, misrepresents the situation, as it implies that there is the possibility of not belonging. We cannot not belong.

The attributes of human beings vary on a continuum which our minds break up into discrete bits and pieces. How is this accomplished? The social psychologists have shown that we act in unconscious ways to create groupings and to make them appear more distinct and discrete than they actually ever can be. First, having made a cut in the continuum, our minds then play a cognitive trick on us. We tend to perceive those within each of the groupings as more similar than they actually are and we tend to perceptually exaggerate the differences between the groupings so they seem more different than they actually are. Power relations being equal (which is never actually possible), we tend to favour “us” groups as one of the means by which the groups are distanced from each other. (Tajfel, 1981; Brown, 1995).

The emotions also come into play and help in the distancing process by idealizing one grouping and denigrating the other. It seems to me that the emotions of repugnance, disgust, hate, envy, and the like are the instruments used to make and sustain the cut between the “us” and the “them”. I will say more about this in a moment, but before then let me bring in some Winnicott because his developmental schema accords well with the arguments being proposed here.

Winnicott (1982) wrote that at some point the infant experiences an “I am” moment. Prior to this moment the infant’s sense of self was indistinguishable from its environment. In this existential moment, elements of the self are gathered together. But, Winnicott has told us, this is also a paranoid moment because the infant fears attack from the elements that the infant has effectively repudiated and excluded as not-me. Winnicott said (and I agree with him) that group formation is a similar process to this. In the moment an “us” is constituted, one fears those that one has excluded, *because they have been excluded* (Dalal, 1998, 2002).

THE ACT OF NAMING: THE PARADOX OF BELONGING

The notion of belonging only makes sense when two conditions are fulfilled. First, in order to belong to one thing, there needs to be something that one does not-belong to. Second, some have to be excluded from a belonging. Without these two conditions, a belonging would be infinite, encompass everything, and therefore be meaningless. Thus the act of inclusion necessitates a simultaneous act of exclusion.

There follows a further complication. The act of categorization, the act of using a name, not only involves the exclusion of elements deemed to be not part of the name, but also gives a false

impression of cohesion and homogeneity to those who are deemed to be a part of the name. When we look closely within the categories of say “the nobility” or “the English”, we find not unity and homogeneity but conflict and diversity. Court society was and is famously riven by intrigue and factions jostling for positions of power. It gives the impression of and, indeed, is actually experienced as a singular entity when it is confronted by, for example, revolutionary mobs. In such a moment, the internal differences within the nobility and in the mob disappear from view as well as experience.

Here is the paradox: as soon as one tries to get a hold of an identity, it disintegrates in one’s hand. The impossibility of getting a hold of the essence of an “us” impels one to focus on the not-us. This focus helps sustain the illusion of substance and unity of an “us” and simultaneously renders the impression that they too “are all the same as each other”, and usually the same in some negative way: immoral, lazy, and so on (Dalal, 2002). Despite using the language of instincts, this is exactly what Freud (1930) was onto when he said:

The advantage which a comparatively small cultural group offers of allowing this instinct an outlet in the form of hostility against intruders is not to be despised. It is always possible to bind together a considerable number of people in love, so long as there are other people left over to receive the manifestations of their aggressiveness. (p. 114)

BACK TO PREJUDICE

You can probably already see where I am heading. The problematic is the creation and maintenance of human groupings; what I hope is becoming increasingly evident is the role that prejudice plays in this ongoing process. Let me reprise some of the preceding discussion. It is not the case that one simply “finds” a difference which one then finds oneself responding to. Rather, one finds oneself emphasizing certain differences *in order to create a differentiation*. Norbert Elias’ (1994) great work *The Civilizing Process* has much to teach us on this matter. In this work he drew on books of etiquette written from the early Middle Ages onwards to demonstrate convincingly that the key function of the systems of etiquette utilized by the European nobility was to make and maintain a distinction between themselves and the rest. Once a certain convention was established within the nobility, those of lower rank inevitably emulated the behaviours of their betters and in doing so blurred the lines of distinction. This then prompted refinements in the attitudes and behaviours of the privileged in order to re-establish the boundary around the blue-blooded. In time these refinements too come to be taken up by the lower orders, and this in turn drove the aristocracy to further embellish the system of manners which sustained their distinction, and so on.

It is important to note that this is not at all a conscious process; rather it is a movement that evolves, which is given a *post hoc* rationalization, for example, by aesthetics or hygiene. The same sorts of mechanism came to be used to make distinctions between nations and, in a sense, *create* them. The manufacture of the so-called races was born out of similar imperatives (Dalal, 2002). Mary Douglas’s (1995) seminal work *Purity and Danger* speaks to this theme, as does the work of the contemporary French philosopher/sociologist Pierre Bourdieu (2010).

The function of a difference is to make a differentiation between the “haves” and the “must-not-haves”. I will now draw on Elias and Scotson (1994) to throw further light on the role of prejudice

in creating and sustaining the divides. In the 1960s they studied the relationship amongst the inhabitants of a town in the north of England which they called Winston Parva. In particular, they looked at the relationships between “the Established” and “the Outsiders” who came in from London and lived on the estates. Despite the fact that there was no real difference between these two groupings, and the fact that those who lived in the village had not been there many years before the Outsiders, the Established had the upper hand; they had more power. They were able to:

impose on newcomers the belief that they are not only inferior in power but inferior by “nature” to the established group ... and *this internalization by the socially inferior group... as part of their own conscience and self-image* powerfully reinforces the superiority and the rule of the established group. (Elias & Scotson, 1994, p. 159; emphasis added)

Elias and Scotson (1994) described informal gossip mills that disseminated information in a highly selective and partisan way. The gossip streams were full of praise-gossip concerning the Established based on a “minority of the best” and blame-gossip concerning the Outsiders modelled on a “minority of the worst”. These emotional generalizations are what we know as idealization and denigration which Freud (1915) spoke of in the language of primary and secondary thinking, and Matte-Blanco (1988) spoke of in the language of symmetric and anti-symmetric logic.

The fact that the Established were cohesive and had a close-knit structure meant that their gossip streams flowed readily along tried and tested channels. In the Outsider territory there was no such structure so the flow of counter-gossip was much less effective. The stigmatization of the Outsiders served to keep them outsiders, thus excluding them in all sorts of ways but without recourse to violence. The fact that there were many similarities between the Established and the Outsiders demanded that the boundary between the two groups was constantly patrolled by the gossip merchants, ensuring that the “we” stay good and the “they” stay bad. So one of the tasks of gossip is to iron out heterogeneity by ignoring facts that counter the ideology and emphasizing facts that feed into the ideology.

Another way of describing the situation is this: the gossip streams constructed powerful emotional barriers between the Established and the Outsiders which disabled the possibility of migration between the two groups. “This emotional barrier accounts for the often extreme rigidity in the attitude of established groups towards outsider groups” (Elias, 1976, p. xxii). The aetiology is significant: it is not the emotional barrier that causes the division, but the emotional barrier is constructed to facilitate the maintenance of the division and so the retention of the power differential.

Another function that Elias and Scotson (1994) attributed to gossip was that of social control of both the in-group and the out-group. One way it achieved this was to expose a person of the in-group if they had dealings that were deemed inappropriate with the out-group. The person was stigmatized and marginalized from the in-group and the mantle of group charisma was withdrawn from them. The effect of this was to enhance group cohesion and also to work against any integrationist tendencies.

The ideology was so strong that even twenty years after the arrival of the evacuees the older residents of the “village” still spoke of people from the Estate as “foreigners”, saying that they “couldn’t understand a word that they say” (p. 20).

IDEOLOGY

I have said almost nothing so far about the other central term in my title: ideology. Ideology is unconscious; it is the taken-for-granted that is utilized in formulating ideas and experiences. It provides the categories we use in our thinking. Ideology is the basis of what we call common sense, legitimating the interests of interest groups in ways that are hard to recognize. This is because the work of ideology is to give the historical and contingent the appearance of the natural and inevitable. As Harland (1987) said:

The individual absorbs language before he can think for himself: indeed the absorption of language is the very condition of being able to think for himself ... Words and meanings have been deposited in the individual's brain below the level of conscious ownership and mastery. They lie within him like an undigested piece of society (pp. 12–13)

Elias (1991) shared this view. Language according to Elias is not a passive means of representing the world – it actively informs the sort of world one experiences. He said that language provides people with “the means of orienting themselves *far beyond the field of their personal experience*” (p. 125; italics added). To my mind, he was describing prejudice. This prejudice is not just disseminated by gossip – it exists as a kind of a priori, as unreflected social norms. I have been arguing that the work of prejudice is not visible, but unconscious, and that it is in the service of creating and sustaining “us” and “them” groups. I am going to end by briefly saying something about the last term in my title, which I enclosed in parenthesis to signal that it is a kind of afterthought.

THE CREATION OF “US” AND “THEM” GROUPS IN SOCIETY – AND PSYCHOANALYSIS

Our profession is riven by sectarianism, not only in the inner sanctum of the Institute of Psychoanalysis between the Kleinians, Freudians, and Middle Group, but also more generally in the field of psychotherapy. The forms of gossip and prejudice are manifold, subtle and not so subtle. Take, for example, the attempt to form the umbrella body for all psychotherapies – the United Kingdom Council for Psychotherapy (UKCP). This endeavour floundered when those of the analytic persuasion decided to leave the UKCP. It is no coincidence that it was the schools that held the “high” ground in terms of prestige and power that split off to form a new body, the British Psychoanalytic Council (BPC). To be sure, the “rational” manifest reason was couched in terms of standards, methodology, and belief systems, but the hidden latent reason is to be found in the pragmatics of the situation, by which I mean the power relations. If you hold the high ground then you have more access to the resources – bluntly, patients – and from that follows money.

Now, this is a very distasteful thought, and so, like all uncomfortable thoughts, there is an enormous resistance to knowing about it and it is denied. Are group analysts a part of the psychoanalytic “us”? The notion of “analysis” would suggest yes. Many of my group analytic colleagues do indeed consider themselves a part of the psychoanalytic “us”. However, when it comes to supervising or teaching trainings linked to the BPC, this counts for nothing; a line is drawn: only members of the BPC are allowed to supervise and train on BPC trainings. The same is not true of most UKCP trainings which very often call on the services of members of the BPC.

This asymmetry acutely demonstrates the power relations that our field is patterned by. Recall Mr Smith and Mr Singh. It is the one with more power who is able to determine who is one of “us” and why. Some people have the power to name, whilst others find themselves named.

The processes of inclusion and exclusion in our profession take many shapes and forms. Who referrals are made to? Who is invited to teach? Who is being recommended as supervisor or therapist? Who is being cited in journal articles and books? And so on. In my view, people do not just gather or form because of similarity; rather, they group around vortices of power but use their similarity to hide these vortices from view and deny their existence. The pertinent thing is that all concerned are unaware of the entire process, and this is an expression of the social unconscious.

In sum, I have been arguing that prejudice-as-ideology is a key ingredient in the process in which “an other” is turned into “The Other”.

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