

**PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY:
FROM SYMBOLIC IDENTITIES TO A REAL IDENTITY
BASED ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

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INTRODUCTION - PSYCHOANALYSIS AND POLITICS: SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

Psychoanalysis is a way of understanding the Unconscious and of trying to give anyone the ability to become responsible of his/her life and to become conscious of the necessity to accept to fight for his/her own life, rather than waiting for everything to just happen. The goal of psychoanalysis is to transform lack of the other into desire for oneself, by working more on *how* to do things differently than on *why* one feels depressed.

Politics, on the other hand, is a social structure represented by several “bodies”, with always at least two parties opposing each other.

In both cases, there are oppositions: Between the Unconscious and the Conscious in psychoanalysis; and between, for example, Republicans and Democrats in politics. Both are necessary to represent the real nature of the mind: contradiction. Yet, the difference is that in politics, one party wins and has the power, and then at another point in time, the other does; in psychoanalysis, both are present at the same time.

In politics, the goal is to give the country its Laws and its individual, social and economic rights. In Psychoanalysis, the Unconscious has its laws, which have the power over the individual's behavior and way of functioning. As Lacan, a famous French Psychoanalyst, said, “We are spoken beings” (and not speaking beings). In politics though, in principle, the people in charge are conscious of what they do, want and say; and they are in good mental health.

Politics pays more attention to societal problems than individual ones; but in both politics and psychoanalysis, the goal is to give to people the ability to work, to earn a living, to have rights and to defend their values. This is a positive similarity between the two fields; but a negative similarity is that, in politics as in psychoanalysis, the men and women responsible of lives, whether it is their own or others', are most of the time immature, irresponsible, not well-intended and not loving people. Ideas do not give maturity; the heart and good beliefs do, and they also give hope and desire to feel proud of ourselves.

The big difference between politicians and psychoanalysts is that the latter are within society, while the former are above it. However, both have a lot of power, one on his/her patients, and the other on his/her country and on the destiny of the world.

WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE FOR THE WORLD TO BECOME MORE HUMAN AND FOR POLITICIANS AND PSYCHOANALYSTS TO BECOME MORE ADULT, MATURE AND RESPONSIBLE?

To become more human is to become more adult and responsible of our actions, instead of immature and guilty of our reactions. The difference between action and reaction is that action is a real sign of affective maturity and of the ability to separate oneself from the other in the way we think and act; reaction is always against someone else, whereas action is for oneself, for one's desire to achieve something.

In order to leave the Inhumanity of an Unconscious confined in one's childhood history of pathological parental attachments, it is necessary to rectify a wrong way of functioning, based on narcissism and fear of the other.

To become a real adult is to be able to have a personal system of values, which can be universally applicable, for everyone in the world. The inhumanity of hate comes from the impossibility to conciliate one with the others, leading to the perception that the only solution is to stay alone and to eliminate whoever does not obey hate.

It is important to pay attention to who leads a country and has the power over the others; but too often we listen to ideas and we are not enough interested in who the actual person is, who he was as a child: Who is this man talking about his goals, ideas and ideals for his country and people? When we really want to know who is a president for example, we need to look at his background, his life. Because I am a psychoanalyst, I am very interested in who is President Bush, who he really is. Is he a big child? Is he an adult, a Father, a leader? Is he a dictator, i.e., does he have a proud and narcissistic personality, craving omnipotence? Does he want health, security, defense of democratic values and freedom for everyone in his country and in the entire world? Is his charisma a trickery to charm people and use them for his own interest? Or is he a man, just a man, believing in some values so strongly that he can impose his decisions even though others in America and elsewhere do not agree with him, and do not defend the same values—values of democracy and human rights for everyone in the world? *What is his intention?* Is it really to use America's superpower to crush other countries and dominate them?

As a psychoanalyst and a human being, and after putting a lot of thought into these difficult but very important questions, I can say that I agree with this man. I am not a Republican or even a Democrat since I am not American, but I agree with President Bush's decisions because I share the same interest: to protect lives from terror and insecurity, as for me, the values of Life are at the heart of Humanity.

It is important to become conscious that the world is in danger of destruction and authoritarianism because of dictators and the supremacy of terror, killing people's right to exist. This is unacceptable. This is inhumanity. This is hate, an unbearable state of abusive and real poverty.

One of the most essential rights that we have as citizens in a democracy is freedom of speech. If we are scared of saying what we think or feel, it means that the world or the country we live in is not democratic and does not defend freedom and the values of life. And when we are not able to say what we think and how we feel, we are put in a position of children, scared of a severe parent. This is anti-evolution and the worst of castrations.

This is what I like about President Bush: He has not used castration with his people. This is not a question of social level or position; it is a question of maturity. Even if he suffered, like all children, he managed to escape this suffering thanks to his imagination and to his ability to go towards people. To like people is to like simplicity, warmth and to be affective; to like people is to trust them.

A good leader is not just someone who is tolerant and who defends good values like freedom, security, work for all and protection; a good leader also has to be very strong and to give his

energy to fight against everything that goes against his values. To protect is to defend, just like in psychoanalysis, where to protect is to fight against the language of death, of failure, and of impossibility of feeling better and alive. Nothing good can happen without energy, action and patience.

President Bush is a man who became an adult perhaps because of very special circumstances and the presence of terror in his own country, as on September 11, the twin towers fell to the ground. But Bush said that the twin towers may have fallen down but America has not.

This man is just human, not perfect, but he takes responsibility for his actions. He loves America; he loves people (since his childhood); and a proof of love is to become conscious of what people expect from you, like children who need to be defended by their parent when they are in danger because they do not have the capacity and/or the power to do it themselves.

I do not mean to say that the American people is like a child; but the situation brought by September 11 automatically gave the President the ability to decide and to take responsibility over his decisions and interventions. This is too a parental role; but it does not mean that he is a parent; it just means that he inherited this parental role, just like a psychoanalyst does; but it is a role, a situation; it does not define entirely the person.

In psychoanalysis, with time, the relationship between the patient and the psychoanalyst has to move away from this parental relationship, to go towards recognizing each other as independent entities by becoming conscious of the need to get out of this fusion, which is similar to the one with a parent. This link or attachment is not healthy, and all psychoanalysts have to work on it with every patient to eventually arrive at separation; it is only when separation with a parent is made and accepted that the patient can distinguish him/herself from the other, and can love both him/her and the other.

In authoritarianism, the leaders are trapped in a system of fusion, in which no one exists, and all they want is to make everyone follow the laws of their omnipotence.

The ability to love and to defend what we love is a real struggle, which requires that we give a lot of energy to make our goals win; goals today are a vital necessity. When the mind takes the power over the heart, there can be no humanity because heart, life and humanity all go together: **The master of the mind is the body and not the other way around, meaning the place of life is the body, and the heart is in the body; whereas the mind is only a function of the brain, not a real place of life.**

FROM SYMBOLIC TO REAL IDENTITY: FROM OBEYING THE LAWS OF THE OTHER TO OBEYING THE LAWS OF LIFE

The Laws of Life are necessarily adult and mature. To go from obeying the laws of the other to obeying the laws of life means to go from depending on someone else to depending on something else.

At the beginning, before we create a real and separate identity for ourselves, we are all overtaken by a symbolic identity and by the laws of the others, which at first is what our parents transmit to us consciously but also unconsciously.

The parental Unconscious has beliefs, projections, ideals, and commonly has a desire to live and succeed through the child. So every child has to compromise between what the parent wants for him/her, and what *he/she* wants for him/herself.

The Symbolic Language is a language made of religious, social, and/or economical thoughts, principles and beliefs; it is a way of seeing life, the world and people; it is what is transmitted by the parents to the children. At first, we depend on this Symbolic power over us, held by the parents.

The concept of belief is essential in life; when we are small, we believe in the ideas that were transmitted to us; but it is one thing to later continue to believe in those same ideas, and it is another to change our beliefs based on what the experience of life teaches us along the way.

To learn and to continue to learn all through our life is essential to leave our rigid and narcissistic interests. The more we manage to be close with the others, the more we can do with others, and the more we can become real individuals, free men and women, with a personal language of reality, rather than transmitted ideas.

In other words, we do need to integrate the beliefs transmitted by our parents, but we also need to choose what our own beliefs are, to create our own language, and to decide our own positions and actions in our life. And the proof of success in this evolution is when we manage to give priority to the power of a reality that we make, instead of to the symbolic power of what was transmitted to us. Symbolic Identity is parental, not real.

The proof that we have achieved an adult state is when we have gone from being *object* of the other to *subject* of ourselves. This position of object is dangerous because it is source of hate and authoritarian behavior, as it is effectively immature, in *reaction* and *against* something or someone, never *mature*, in *action* and *for* anything or anyone.

To create a real identity for ourselves is to get out of the power of the sexual and to enter the power of gender: To create a real identity for ourselves, we need to accept that we are the son or daughter of our parents. Then, it is easy to become a man or a woman, and to leave behind the symbolic identities that force us to remain in a position of child. To become adult is to become a man or a woman and to prove this identity through our actions, through time, and through our conviction and consciousness that we are going in the right direction.

As long as we define ourselves as the daughter of, the sister of, the wife of, the mother of and so on, only based on a pre-determiner, we cannot enter the *self-determination* of our desire to also become a woman or a man who will never stop to move towards today, and to leave yesterday, everyday. ***This will allow us to make peace with every day, with every morning, because every morning has to give meaning to the day to come.***

All non-evolving ideas are absolute and intolerant, which makes them inhuman, because the choice is either me or you. Only what we make of ourselves is not intolerant; it is relative, based on experience, on actions; and therefore it is human. What we become is made of a new identity, made by ourselves, and this is gendered identity.

We have to make our own aliveness, as we have to give meaning to our life. Aliveness and meaning are not innate or hereditary; they require permanent action, based on will and

motivation, and a desire to make of our life a success and to be proud of it. I love so much the English phrase: “it makes sense.”

THE NOTION OF POWER IN PSYCHOANALYSIS AND IN POLITICS AND ITS CONSEQUENCES ON ONE'S IDENTIFICATION AND IDENTITY

We have many identities at the beginning of our life:

- Identity based on a parent
- Identity based on a social level
- Identity based on an economical level (rich-poor- middle)
- Identity based on a religion
- Identity based on a country

All these identities are source of many ideas, beliefs and judgments; and finding among all these identities is difficult to achieve, but it is possible if we access a gendered, adult and alive identity.

We can be rich but identify with the poor; we can be clever but identify with the unintelligent; we can be shy but identify with the loud people, etc., but one day **we need to identify with values** instead, as if values were beings, able to have a life of their own, a desire of their own, a meaning of their own. And this is more real than anything.

Our real Identity is the result of the quality of our choices of identification.

The more power we have in society, the more we have the necessity to believe in some values, to defend them, and to give all of our energy to make them win. These values cannot be anti-life values, such as unconsciousness, hate, terror and absolute power on people; they cannot consist of having the arbitrary right of life or death on people.

We need to believe in values of life that are also Laws of Life, because every value has its laws, and we cannot feel good doing things in just any way: If we do not respect a value inside, we cannot respect ourselves; and no love is possible without respect. Respect has its laws; freedom has its laws; work has its laws. *The best way to make what we want happen is to obey its logic*; for example, we cannot feel peaceful if we do not decide to make peace.

Decision, determination, good intention, respect of real time—which means making something of it that is good for us—are the real proofs of good mental health.

Similarly, we cannot love in just any way; love is nothing without its way of functioning, without the desire to give regular time to it, regular attention, regular will to build it into a relationship, to realize it in its real meaning: A language made of words that are always new, a really sincere attitude, and a care to see it succeed through the other's eyes.

Every value of life requires effort, determination and patience to become real. Nothing is a given; it is the result of day-to-day learning.

CASE STUDY: PSYCHOANALYSIS AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY IN EUROPE AND IN THE UNITED STATES

The story of the United States is very different from the story of Europe, most obviously because Europe has a long history, whereas the U.S.A. is a young country. Europe is a mosaic; it is only becoming a reality now, with the Euro, slowly by slowly

Europe made Europeans; Americans made America: Europeans have not chosen their country or their nationality; Americans gave their country the name of their nationality.

America has a history of will, of people leaving their original country, their original family, to go towards a life that would be coherent with their values of aliveness. European people believe their way of thinking is best, giving some vanity to their oldness. America has shown the way to the values of life and is not hateful because the American people are confident about what they do and what they choose.

“We The People” is the exact expression of this country’s uniqueness in the world.

Europe is in a scheme of Parental power, following values based on the qualities of the mind; it is proud of its culture, celebrities, and of its intellectuality. Famous thinkers, musicians, and culture more generally are in the heredity of what Europeans are proud of, but they do not have the will to make their life as they hope it to be; instead they make their lives as they think it should be.

Kings, dictators, revolutions, governmental tyranny, etc., have all happened throughout Europe’s history; and still today, discrimination and racism have not disappeared. Democracy in Europe only exists theoretically, not in fact, not in its Language.

In America celebrities are like everyone else; everyone can speak to everyone; even if the notions of elite, elitism, and fanaticism are also part of its history.

In America, the constitution is the Law, and the Law was made by the people: Everyone is free but everyone has to respect the constitution and its laws. Each state makes its laws, but an American is first American, and then Texan or Arizonian. This means that as individualistic as the American people are, the notion of individual still goes with the notion of togetherness, which is not the case in Europe.

The European Identity is created by its leaders. Throughout the years, Europe went through dictators, violence, hate and murder in all its horror. And still today, words of horror are said as if they were harmless; anti-Semitism is still a reality and democracy is more of an idea than a reality in people’s conscience. This is especially the case in France; why is France behaving so cowardly and why is it so anti-American? Because people are jealous and immature in France. Nobody is enthusiastic or hopeful; it is as if France was a depressed country, a place where the values of life, such as work, are completely depreciated; only traditional French values are valued, such as its majority’s religion (Catholicism), its societal level, and elitism, which is present everywhere, at all levels of society.

America is not perfect of course, but we are living through a very special historical time.

For me the problem concerns the world, and everyone who is conscious in the world. Today, the world is becoming increasingly divided in two groups: those who defend the values of life and

those who want to destroy life and its values. In each government, the President has to be the one ensuring the strong defense of Human rights in his country.

FOR THE DEFENSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN POLITICS: THE NECESSITY TO BUILD A HIGH LEVEL OF MATURITY EVERYWHERE TO FIGHT THE INHUMANITY OF THE UNCONSCIOUS' HATEFUL WAY OF FUNCTIONING

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) was adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1948 without dissenting vote. The 30 articles designate civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, which are proclaimed “as a common standard of achievement for all people and all nations.” Two major principles came out: Universality and Indivisibility (or interdependence).

Article 26 of the UDHR states: “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of human rights.”

For this to happen, for the world to change, and for every life to become a real value in itself, we need to change our mind's rules and values, and to transform its way of functioning, which is based on the supremacy of symbolic values (fanaticism comes from them) into a way of functioning based on real values to build and to respect everyday in our own life.

It is not enough to defend freedom and human rights. We also need to dare being against terror and against violations of human rights.

This is a question of education and of level of consciousness in every country: The better are the lives of the people in a country, the higher is their economic level, the more conscious they are of their responsibilities and the more possible it is for them to learn about democracy.

We cannot go suddenly from dictatorship to democracy. People's minds cannot absorb such a different language in a short time. It takes time for the majority of the people to evolve and to make a real state of democracy. It also takes a high level of consciousness and strength to really change a system and to be determined.

But the number is essential; minorities' ways of thinking have always been persecuted by majorities. Even though America is the world's superpower and the strongest country in the world for the defense of human rights, it cannot bring peace in the world on its own. The consciousness of interdependence and the necessity for everyone to understand that we need to build togetherness to win is not widespread enough yet.

In psychoanalysis, we (psychoanalysts) cannot make the happiness of our patients, as only they can do the actual work and make their desire to think and do differently come true, as well as give meaning to their lives. Similarly, in politics, people everywhere need to become more mature affectively, meaning they need to win over their fear and dependence, and over the power that transmitted beliefs took in their lives.

Fanaticism and values of death are not values of a conscious will; they are the result of an Unconscious hatred.

THE FUTURE IS TODAY: LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE – A DEMOCRATIC LANGUAGE

We need to build a democratic language to have a democratic life. It means a language doing our life as we think, and not thinking about it as we do not do it.

We need to become conscious of the Unconscious' power in our lives; and for this to happen, we need to put our energy and determination in getting out of a parental story, made of passion, fusion, frustration and violence (this is the killer). We have to accept what happened in our past, to be courageous, and to become conscious that **our lifetime is our own property**, which nobody, even our own child, husband, wife, etc., has the right to kill.

Peace and love do not come naturally at all. Becoming conscious of this is essential. We have to build them everyday of our life, each one of us, first inside ourselves by learning their language, which is not the narcissistic language of poverty but the golden language that teaches us to give value to ourselves so that we are able to really love someone else and others. This means leaving our transmitted language of lack, while slowly entering the language of desire and aliveness.

Love is not sacrifice, frustration and guilt; love is determination and courage of doing every day the best we can to be responsible of our actions and of our time.

Reaction and hate go together. As long as we will think that the other is the enemy, we will not be able to change anything inside ourselves. Only when we will become conscious that the enemy is also inside us, in our own "home", and way of functioning, will we be able to start changing something in the world as well.

Professor Sam Mac Farland spoke about his study on the Identification With All Humanity Scale (IWAHS) at the congress of International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) in Lund in July 2004. His very interesting study was about people's identification to family, social, ethnic and individual items, and its level of desirability. This measure is very useful to make everyone ask themselves questions about their position on and their level of freedom from, different communities in their lives, so that they can become conscious and change their way of functioning.

IWAHS has merit. It predicted concerns of a global nature, priority given to human rights over national self interests, and a willingness to invest national resources and take risks to defend human rights in situations of grave abuse.

Yes, and when democracy is in danger in one country, it is a danger too for the others countries.

Monroe (1996) asked, "Can humans transcend ethnocentrism and value all humanity? Is it possible to belong to one human family, erasing all distinctions of race, religion and rationality?" Could we be the cells of a community, just like the cells in a body that altogether make up the body?

The answer could be yes; the problem is how to make this become reality.

Democracy needs to become a reality; and do not stay just an Ideal or just words.

Here is the **work to do a democratic language** to learn, to make a real identification with mankind and values of life.

To realize this inside state, we have to go from our minds' disorder and incorrectness to our desire's order of truth. There can be no peace if we do not pay attention to this and work toward a resolution. This is the real respect of what life asks us to do during our lifetime.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, I would like to make some remarks about the Father-Son relationship between George Bush father and George Bush son, because it is not a usual logic to see a father and his son become both President of a democratic country.

It is also a unique father-son story, in psychoanalytical terms: This is the proof that a son can exist without the need to “kill” his father; because hate cannot give someone the ability to take the same place as his father had.

This exception to the rule of the Unconscious makes me say that George W. Bush is an exception to the rule himself, because this special destiny makes him a new specimen, more human, someone who managed to accept his father, not as an enemy but as a human being, whom he wanted to follow the best he could.

Perhaps G.W. Bush is the first Fuhrer of humanity, because we only know the Fuhrer of murder and hate against humanity that was Hitler.

We all need to fight against our little Hitler inside to become a real Fuhrer of life and love. We have to kill the killer of life in us and to follow the Fuhrer of right to life in ourselves.

When a man takes such big decisions for his country and for the world, we just have to know his real intention: Was it a counter-power attempt or a search for absolute and narcissistic power that animated G.W. Bush when he decided to go to Iraq and to spend millions of dollars for freedom and peace? Only time will answer this question; but personally, I think that G.W. Bush loves his country and people and that he believes in the values of life. Is war necessary to defend essential values of life?

As Lacan said, “The man of the answer has to become the man of the question.”

If we want the world to change and if we want life to become a real value, we need to change our mind’s rules and values, and to transform a mental way of functioning based symbolic values, beliefs and ideals, into a way of functioning based on real values, to make and to respect in our own everyday life.

Our identifications make our values, or lack of values; the more we open our personal world to the others and develop a willing of universality and internationality, the more we have chances to participate in a world made of humanity everywhere in the world.

Democracy and universality go together; the language of Parental Inhumanity will become the language of Adult Humanity.