

Paranoia- basics

A colleague said to me in the zenith of the “first wave” of COVID-19: “it is terrible that now we consider every other as a threat”. Lacan taught us to see in paranoia more than a clinical category, even more than a prominent developmental position as with Melanie Klein, but the basic fundament of the human being, always ready to appear again under certain circumstances. Also Freud wrote a lot on one’s position when the “nebenmensch”, it’s various uses as an object and of different forms of its rejection.

It seems to me that this epoch of Coronavirus, which in general works like a magnifying glass both on the symptoms of the individual, and of the nowadays symptoms of our culture, stresses and points us to the big comeback of the tendency of segregation which of course never disappeared.

We are in the time of the reaction to the period of modern capitalism and its globalization which began after World War II and brought on one hand the unifying forces of liberal democracy and an antisegregative path stressing human rights for all, opening borders, unifying countries like in the foundation of the EU. On the other hand, it led to more and more erosion of traditions and beliefs, cultural identities and of the Big Other as such. Men feel more and more alienated and lost.

One reaction to this was the collective retreat to “individual” self-fulfillment and hedonism without demand (Laurent, 2016). This new social bond was well integrated in the demands of the market and the scientific discourse.

One problem of this reaction is, as Eric Laurent described it: this hedonism without demands is not able anymore to awake the joy of life. One social rebound to this misery was a longing to a restoration of the old order, the other authoritarian “good old father figure” and of traditionalism, nationalism and religion fundamentalism.

It is an installation of the illusion of back to basics and as I wrote in the beginning- paranoia really is basics. The tools of segregation are used very intensively. Exactly in this atmosphere the virus appeared and it seems to me that in the moment it supports and strengthens these tendencies, by its very character that one has to protect oneself of the other, especially of the stranger. “Social distance” is recommended meanwhile on the major medication against falling sick.

Of course, this is also used by those leaders, so Trump speaks of the “Chinese virus”, countries close their borders, even if in the neighbor country the situation is not worse. But there is no need for political manipulations. “Paranoia” works in these days of fear, just because it is basic. So, in the beginning of the pandemic, a man with a Chinese look entered a public toilet in Tel Aviv and I

could see the suspicious and frightened looks on the other men's faces. It was in a time when there were still no COVID-19 cases in Israel...

And what about psychoanalysis in this time of pandemic? I quote Alexandre Stevens' words in the Assembly of the secretaries of the NLS in spring: "psychoanalysis must be made exist even in times of isolation".

Avi Rybnicki

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Bibliography

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