

The Brexit Psychopathy

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Abstract: A German newspaper recently reported that Mr Jean-Claude Juncker accused Theresa May of being ‘deluded’ and said it was ‘more likely than not’ that Brexit negotiations would fail. Certainly, the neatness and simplicity of the in/out Brexit referendum as the only possible solution for political change in the UK might be a symptom of insanity. In this brief paper, I argue that the adoption of the motivated in/out delusion of Brexit by the UK people is likely to lead to positive epistemic achievements, such as a sense national unity and coherence, rather than the paralysing state of anxiety, stress and depression supposedly caused by mass immigration from Eastern Europe which is essentially imaginary and psychotic but not, for this reason, any less real or vital.

Keywords: Brexit, binary oppositions, binarisation, Britain, Freud, Kierkegaard, Theresa May, Descartes, Dr Liam Fox, disproportionality, psychosis, psychotic, in/out, delusion.

The complete certainty and simplicity of the in/out Brexit referendum as the only possible solution for political change in the UK might be a symptom of group insanity. The institutionalisation of simplicity expressed through ‘voting’ is a distinctive trait of psychotic thought. A revolution is only possible when certain anti-psychotic remedies have been applied and certain mind changes have become operational in a society. So far, our guiding principle has been that ‘things are never as simple as they seem’ – precisely because things are very simple on our side they must be very complicated on the other. Perhaps we’ve been trying so hard to take it all in that we’ve been condemned by some demon to live between claps of thunder. For more than three millennia now, professional philosophers in the West have taken it upon themselves to study the hidden nature of things, reality and fantasy: existence. Yet whenever a great thinker appeared on the scene, she would start by looking at the beautiful complexity of the world around her, trying to make it simple – with a metaphysics; and then she would end up injecting complexity into mental situations that seemed too neat and simplistic to be true; she would be tempted to go back to places *where* she’d been before – with an ethics – *when* perhaps she didn’t really need to.

Since the ancient Greeks, we have been terrified of lightning and thunder when we should have been afraid of the peace that rolls itself underneath the storm. However dramatic violence might be, nonviolence is far more interesting. We have been avoiding simplified generalisations and simplistic answers as if they were a poor reflection of a reality which is considered too complex to be subjected to psychotic scrutiny. Yet, a society is far more sophisticated in its simplistic sense of coherence than it is perhaps acknowledged by the so-called professionals. Remember how Freud began his method of interpreting dreams by alluding to ‘lay opinion’ which, though admitting the absurdity and inconsistency of dreams, it could not bring itself to declare that they could not be interpreted – unlike the ruling theorists of his day.

A change of approach to thinking about simplicity is needed if areto stand a chance to tackle the problem of One identity in the age of globalisation. What Kierkegaard had opened for us in the minds of children ¹, awaits us, in a savage form, in the mind and world of the psychotic. What is this quality of mind, this disposition to binarise which characterises the psychotic, and gives society a poignant moral code with its certainty of merit, value and hierarchy – and that sense of

¹ ‘When one is a child, one has such enormous categories that they would now almost make one dizzy. Then one could cut from a piece of paper a man and a woman, who were a man and woman in general in an even stricter sense than Adam and Eve were.’ ‘Repetition: An Essay in Experimental Psychology’ by Constantine Constantius in Soren Kierkegaard, *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, trans. M.G. Piety, into & notes by Edward D. Mooney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 27.

superior dignity? Despite the mental devastation of binarisation², we find ourselves entering a world of fascinating paradoxes and, in particular, as philosophers and mathematicians, we are invited and indeed tempted to explore the logic of the binary abstract. These *effets pervers* of justice and equality, which correspond in various forms and degrees to the asymmetries found in classical binaries, such as in/out, man/woman, right/left, reason/passion, sun/moon, day/night, and so forth, can potentially be dealt with, not through the challenge, negation and critique of the offending term (say, 'man' in the women's movement, sometimes referred to as 'feminism'), but through the measuring of such asymmetries. In order for psychotic societies to evolve, the measuring of binarised distinctions must become a reality.

It is a little immodest to make an implicit comparison between Theresa May and Descartes – and, at the same time, to claim Descartes' nothing-I-can-be-sure-of/cogito-ergo-sum paradigm (the one that triggered the scientific revolution) has been superseded by May's psychotic paradigm ('Brexit means Brexit') that is bound to trigger a new political revolution. We have moved from the whirlpool of doubt and complexity imagined by Descartes under the old master/slave regime of domination to the maelstrom of psychotic certainty/simplicity advanced by May under the new regime of post-truth hegemony³. Hegemony talks through its black hole (the I/eye⁴) as TOTAL⁵ compression and its human produce is the psychotic moral code made of binary oppositions; a code so limited, stringent and sclerotic that can be systematically analysed, studied, manipulated, and known. If Descartes considered us 'free', it was on the assumption that we were determined by the most complex human and ethical considerations. All his excitement about the world being our oyster was based on the understanding that human beings were at least as complex as their surrounding reality and thus, in theory, capable of sharing the same language with nature. But May has proved that there can be no freedom where humans are determined by the simplest and most stringent ethical considerations.

In a psychotic society, all humans are slaves. A binary choice between in and out, yes and no, man and woman, good and bad, life and death, sun and moon, right and left, republican and democrat, conservative and labour, is too stringent to be considered a choice at all. Here the main challenge is to become skilled at transforming crude binary oppositions into a higher order of theoretical discourse. For example, in what is perhaps the most important political interview of the early 21st century, Dr Liam Fox was chagrined that the British government formulated Brexit in categories that lend themselves to reductionist binary disembodiment: 'We want to look at all different things, it's not binary. I hear people talking about hard Brexit and soft Brexit as though it's a boiled egg we're talking about. It's a little more complex.'⁶ For the first time in the history of post-Enlightenment Western politics, a government minister admitted publicly that there was a problem with 'binaries'. The in/out referendum on membership of the EU is delusional in the context of international trade agreements which do not lend themselves to binary reductionism. In short, if Brexit means Brexit, it is because it means

² Binarisation is the process by which the human mind can imagine only one side of a binary opposition; that is, the process of gradation, repression, consistency, transparency and value that gives mass to the moral code of a psychotic society. A vital component in the process of binarisation is the reader I/eye. This is an imaginary point from which the moral code made of binary oppositions is read. For example, in a simple code made of binary oppositions headed by good/bad, sun/moon, reason/passion, and white/black, the reader I/eye returns 'good, sun, reason, white' completely ignoring the existence of the other side; so 'bad, good, passion, black' is masked, repressed, downgraded, under-valued, and ignored. For the concept of 'binarisation' see Fred Perez, 'Psychotic Society: An Introduction with a Glossary' in *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 5:1, pp. 403-418.

³ Theresa May's aim is to produce an apparently indestructible, total British civilisation. A total, expansive Britain means hegemony binarised as One against domination. Perhaps this explains why May's democracy is psychotically strong. But hegemony is frightening and evil; like gravity, it's not within our power to resist it. Domination is symbolic. Hegemony is psychotic. See Jean Baudrillard, *The Agony of Power* (Los Angeles: semiotext(e), 2010).

⁴ The I/eye is the site of sovereignty in a psychotic society; an imaginary point from which the moral code is read/shared and the binarised decision is taken.

⁵ TOTAL is the maelstrom that sucks everything and everyone; the integral reality we are in – which cannot be challenged with or resisted by conventional means such as revolution, revolt, civil disobedience, street demonstrations, strikes, rioting, and so on. Because the maelstrom sucks at the vortex, hegemony brings extreme polarisation: unparalleled economic growth driven by improvements in technology and population growth together with extreme poverty caused by the depletion of natural resources and the exploitation of the many by the few – this is the One/Many asymmetrical binary which can be equated with the person/individual distinction in tandem with the exception/rule relationship explored by Kierkegaard in *Repetition* and tied up with the concept of sovereignty by Carl Schmitt in his *Political Theology*.

⁶ *Andrew Marr Show*, BBC1, 18.12.2016.

nothing. In a world of complex transnational contracts and hybrid arrangements, to mean is to relate to facts that mean something – that is, which relate to a referent.

The moral code gives Theresa May a coherent but stringent data set against which she can test her theories. Particularist forms of ethnic/religious/sexual identity seem to be contradicting the One⁷ universal/secular/liberal norm that modernity and globalisation were meant to promote. Underlying such One-based distinction is the assumption that liberalism/jihad is a monolithic entity. This fails to recognise its hybridities and mutations, its various ideologies and geopolitical particularities. Like global jihad, Brexit relies on the cause/effect of a psychotic identity developed against a common oppressor for its propaganda. Potential jihadists are not just called to fight against the West; they are called to unite and fight against oppression in any form and in any part of the world. Similarly, Brexit relies on the cause/effect of a psychotic identity developed against a common European Union oppressor for its propaganda. In this respect, jihad/Brexit is tapping into a big/small, global/local, majority/minority, Sunni/Shia discourses/ideologies with-in/with-out certain Middle Eastern countries (think of Iraq under Nouri al-Maliki and Syria under Bashar al-Assad) where Sunnis are living under the oppression of Shia regimes – or a European Union where the British are living in fear of oppression and abuse; supposedly, ‘economic’ abuse by Eastern European migrants and other ‘undesirables’.

All societies have moral procedures to hide such asymmetries and dissonances from their members. The main purpose of Brexit is to hide from the British people discrepancies and conflicts between ideal/perfect principles and a fragmented social organisation. Ideal/perfect justice is a kind of symmetry. But this implies a third point in space from which the two sides of the symmetry can be measured and equated. My intellectual idol Max Gluckman used to say that the first thing that babies get when they look at their mothers’ faces is a sense of justice. Apparently, the eyes of the mother are at an equal distance from the nose. And the nose is the point where symmetry is first imagined as an ‘I’ that later becomes a ‘we’. Because ‘we’ cannot be a ‘nose’, ‘we’ place our ‘I’ in its place, between two equidistant extremities which stand for our mothers’ eyes. As long as individuals are not explicitly conscious of the moral character of the psychotic I/eye reading process through which they were initiated to the forces that shape their cosmos, they cannot break the spell of their mothers’ eyes and shape a new amoral cosmos. As long as British people are not aware of the baby-like moral code through which Theresa May shapes social/political justice, we cannot break the spell of this social system and shape a new one.

REFERENCES

- [1] *Andrew Marr Show*, BBC1, 18.12.2016.
- [2] Kierkegaard, Soren. *Repetition and Philosophical Crumbs*, trans. M.G. Piety, into & notes by Edward D. Mooney (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).
- [3] Perez, Fred. ‘Psychotic Society: An Introduction with a Glossary’ in *International Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities Research*, 5:1, pp. 403-418.

⁷ The psychopathy of One can be expressed as: One/One is to a(=)a as One/Many is to exception/rule. a(=)a can be defined as the relationship ‘(=)’ between ‘a’ and ‘a’, where ‘a’ can be either ‘a’ or the delusional ‘a’ which is more like a ‘b’ and where ‘(=)’ being variable can be anything from ‘wanting to be’/ ‘more or less equal to’ / ‘not completely being’ to anything that can be similarly and randomly thought. ‘(=)’ implies that two things cannot be exactly the same unless there is an observer imagining that they are the same. The first [qualitative, a(=)a=One/One] relationship is related to the ‘identity’ component of the psychotic desire, mania or obsession for total equality as read from the I/eye. The second [quantitative, exception/rule=One/Many] relationship is related to the extreme/borderline ‘value’ of the psychotic experience. It is about the rarity, uniqueness, exceptionality, oddity, scarcity, and life-changing potential of the psycho/semio experience. The I/eye is the site of sovereignty in a psychotic society; an imaginary point from which the moral code is read/shared and the binarised decision is taken.