Psychoanalysis and our cultural crisis

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Abstract

This paper is a response to Salvatore**,** Picione, Bochicchio et al's. (2021) application of psychoanalysis to understand and remediate current socially destructive processes. The authors conceptualize current ant-social tendencies as due to primary process thinking and meaning making brough about by the dominance of affect in the social field. I present some questions and challenges, including: revisions of Freud's concept of primary and secondary process, the ubiquity of affect links and primary process associations in all social life, the notion that affect is not discharge but is the link to the other and to meaning, a qualitative analysis of prosocial emotions in contrast to the authors' apparently quantitative and mechanistic analysis, and some alternative psychoanalytic formulations of social problems and of the relationship of the individual and the social. I propose that some destructive social phenomena prevalent today, rather than being manifestations of primary process-affective meaning making, are due to failure of social institutions to cultivate the right emotion in the right measure and failure to cultivate prosocial attitudes, values, and capacities, subject to qualitative analysis.

Keywords: *psychoanalysis; culture; social crisis; semiotics; affective meaning; primary and secondary process; social and personal meaning.*

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Discussion of "the affectivization of the public sphere: the contribution of psychoanalysis in understanding and counteracting the current crisis scenarios"

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
>
> William Butler Yeats (1921)

I am honored to participate in this conversation. The paper before us has academic and practical significance. The model elaborated by Salvatore, Picione, Bochicchio, Mannino, Langher, Pergola, Velotti, & Venuleo (2021), the inaugural paper for the journal, *Subject, Action, & Society*

Psychoanalytical Studies and Practices, touches on several important topics, each deserving its own discussion. Our current socio-institutional crisis (SIC), as the authors term it, is complex and _subject to alternative formulations. If understanding the individual is like the blind men and the
elephant, the elephant has grown.
It is difficult to quantify the severity of our social crisis, leaving the assessment subject to emotional, even fear-based, appraisals that depend on one's perspective. Salvatore et al (2021) write, "In its quality of rupture and deep discontinuity, it is not possible to conceive a homeostatic return to the past condition of order, balance and normativity." Why not? Other societies have returned from destruction, however scarred. Philosopher Martha Nussbaum (2018), in discussing our social crisis, advocates a balanced historical perspective. She points to advances in tolerance and opportunity for marginalized persons in her generation. She warns:

> On both left and right, panic doesn't just exaggerate our dangers, it also makes our moment much more dangerous than it would otherwise be, more likely to lead to genuine disaster. It is like a bad marriage in which fear, suspicion, and blame displace careful thought about what the real problems are and how to resolve them. Instead, those emotions, taking over, become their own problems and prevent constructive work, hope, listening, and cooperation. (pp. 3-4)

It is hard to find a theoretically neutral way to describe a complex and multidimensional social process. The features we chose may presuppose the explanation. Salvatore et al. (2021) describe the crisis according to features that reflect their affective character, tendency toward discharge, lack of regard for reality - the very features of the primary process. Their model may be correct, but we should attend to how we characterize the phenomena to be explained.

Primitive Modes of Thought and Retreat to Stable Ground

Salvatore et al. (2021) share an implicit assumption with psychoanalysis: In the face of danger or rupture we return to earlier developmental stages or organizations, a retreat to more stable ground. Affective categories are more stable because they are simpler - the "phase space" of meanings is lower in dimensionality than the more complex secondary process.

Persons and systems do revert to earlier, simpler, and more stable modes. A new attracter more easily destabilizes, and the system moves to a previous and more stable state (Thelen & Smith, 1996). But the notion that forms of thinking develop from primitive and simple to advanced and complex has a problematic history. It has been used to dominate and marginalize local ways of knowing and constructing the world that served to cope with local problems (Shi-Xu, 2005; Jovchelovitch, 2007). Conspiracy theories, for example, are a form of rationality, situated in certain social groups, strategically and rhetorically constructed to advance the interests of that group, and involving significant complexity (Byford, 2014, 2015; Maddison & Ventsel, 2021).

While primary and affective processes are simpler and more stable in some ways, in other ways they are not. The associations can be like shifting sands, expressed by Freud as "mobile cathexis", or easily displaced psychic energy from one thought or image to another. Primary process can be creative, termed "regression in the service of the ego" (Kris 1952). Primary process fields seem to have greater degrees of freedom, or more possible connections, due to their mobility, to be pruned by the more discerning secondary process (Goldin 2018), like neural connections that are pruned through maturation.

Destructive, malignant societies, such as Nazi Germany, are complex meaning fields, supported by complex ideologies. Strategic conspiracy theories are highly complex projects (Madisson & Ventsel, 2021). Cultural semiotics describes increased meaning making in response to social rupture and upheaval (Eco, 1990; Fenster, 2008; Leone, Madisson, & Venstsel, 2020; Madisson, 2014) which seems counter to the model before us of decreased semiotic complexity at such times. I will later argue that the destructive impact of emotions on social life may not be a matter of complexity or other quantitative factors. They are due to qualitative factors, discerned from the nature of the emotions.

What Does an "Affectivized" Field Mean?

"Affectivization" of the social field is a core idea for the model at hand. How does the field get "affectivized" and how is that state sustained? What is the relation of such a state to the affect state of individuals? Is there a threshold number of emotional persons? Many strategic actors sit calmly before their computers to construct and promote conspiracy theories and fake news, which are highly complex projects (Maddison & Ventsel 2021). Perhaps affect is held in the field in potential, distributed in evocative signs and rhetorical and narrative forms. Maddison and Ventsel (2021) show how strategic conspiracy theorists use various media and signs to evoke affect and thereby evoke group cohesion and common identity, increase receptivity to the narrative, and guide the consumer's interpretive code. The interpretive code and form of

thought, though, is not a natural product of affect; it is given by culture (Eco, 1990; Fenster, 2008; Leone, Madisson, & Venstsel 2020; Madisson, 2014; Madison & Ventsel 2021).

Primary Process

Modern psychoanalysts have refined and revised Freud's notion of primary and secondary process. They have disconnected these modes of thinking from the dynamics of energy binding and discharge as they are based on a flawed understanding of how the mind works (Bucci, 2118; Lenoff, 2018). The connection between primary process and lack of reality testing has also been severed as it is inconsistent with its evolutionary survival (Holt, 2009; Yigael, 2005). Freud and others equivocated on the exclusively unconscious nature of primary process (Robbins 2018). We now see both forms in conscious and unconscious processes, rational and irrational thought process (Bucci, 2018; Jovchelovitch, 2007).

Arnold Model (2014), an important contributor to modern psychoanalytic theory, argues that Freud's primary process conflates two modes. Primary process in dreams reflects wish fulfillment; in waking life, it is a rapid inferential process to predict danger. The latter includes Kahneman's (2011) "thinking fast", and, I would think, CS Peirce's notion of abduction (Long and Harney 2013). LeDoux (1998) describes a rapid subcortical low road and a slower cortical high road for assessing threat. Nonhuman species make sense and communicate by primary process associations (Brakel 2018), through iconic and indexical signs (Sebeok, 2001). From cognitive-neuroscience, Wilma Bucci's (1997, 2018) dual code theory identifies primary process with right hemisphere analogical, parallel distributed processing, and left hemisphere symbolic, serial processing. Carhart-Harris and Friston (2010) identify associations akin to primary process by the brain default network, a set of interconnected brain regions activated when the brain is idle.

Primary process associations are fundamental to forming and using signs, symbols, and social meanings. It is not an irrational process; it is a component of all meaning making. Jovchelovitch (2007) writes:

> Finally, let me mention two processes that derive from the potential space and are at work in symbolic representation: Condensation and displacement Both can allow us to appreciate clearly the constructive dimension of representational activity and its connections with the life of the psyche. Condensation and displacement relate to a capacity to playing with meaning: they give things a new form, just as the unconscious does (Freud 1900). Condensation refers to the ability of the symbolic function to condense and coalesce different things, events, and people so that they can merge and become one in a symbolic representation. Condensation gives to symbols their social, emotional and creative load as it allows for many different things to come together and penetrate each other. Displacement is related to condensation in so far as it allows for things, events, and people to be taken away from familiar and natural settings and to be relocated at will, following the logic of meaning and unconscious affects. Both processes are integral to the symbolic function; they are predominant in play and dreams as well as in all works of art and creation,

> whose psychological origins are directly associated with both ludic and oneiric activity. (pp. 32 -33).

Model (2018) sees primary process as fundamental to metaphor, and metaphor as fundamental to how the mind works (Model, 2003, 2018; see also Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Do refinements and revisions of the notion of primary process make a difference for the model we are considering here? Does disconnecting it from a drive discharge model or from lack of reality testing matter? If primary process conflates different kinds of mental functioning, and despite overlap, is not coextensive with affective meaning making, are there conceptual reasons, beyond loyalty to Freud and psychoanalysis, to stay with the term?

Is Affect Discharge? Does Affect Exclude the Other?

Salvatore et al. (2021) link primary process to an outmoded drive discharge model. Antisocial behaviors - such as reactivity, communicating through gesture, solipsism, denial of reality - are seen as immediate discharge. Delayed discharge creates a space for reflection and for the other. But is affective meaning a form of discharge? And is affective meaning making inherently solipsistic? Ronald Fairbairn (1952), a central figure in developing object relations theory, challenged Freud in stating that libido does not seek satisfaction or pleasure, it seeks the object. Arnold Model (1975) argues that emotion is the tie to the other, and persons shut off emotion because of dangers in attachment and relating.[1] According to Dialogical Self Theory, one's position is affectively embodied and oriented or addressed to the other (Shotter, 1993; Leiman, 2002). Affect does not seek satisfaction and discharge; it seeks the other and it seeks meaning.

Affective investment, desire, and the pleasure principle draw us into the world and into meaning (Jovchelovitch, 2007). Contrast this with Freud's sense that we reluctantly turn to the world out of dissatisfaction and necessity, preferring auto-satisfaction through primary process images.[2] The mind seeks to divest itself of energy and return to an unperturbed state. Today we consider persons as inherently, not secondarily, seeking stimulation and activation in the world.

Which Emotions are the Problem?

Since, according to psychoanalysis, aggression is one of the two motivating and organizing forces in life, emotions related to aggression were seen as key to destructive social processes. In *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Freud (1930) writes that social life presents opportunities for discharging aggressive drives that lie in wait:

> Homo homini lupus. Who, in the face of all his experience of life and of history, will have the courage to dispute this assertion? As a

[1] Similarly, Lacan (1973) wrote, "man's desire is the desire of the other" (p. 235), meaning that we desire recognition and animation in the desire of the other, as opposed to desiring satisfaction and discharge.

[2] Freud's idea that the ego and secondary process are born of the unsatisfying need to bind drive energy and delay satisfaction is captured by the song, Hesitation Blues: "Hesitation stockings, hesitation shoes, hesitation women give me the hesitation blues. Tell me how long, do I have to wait? Can I have you now or do I have to hesitate?"

> rule, this cruel aggressiveness waits for some provocation or puts itself at the service of some other purpose, whose goal might also have been reached by milder measures. In circumstances that are favorable to it, when the mental counterforces which ordinarily inhibit it are out of action, it also manifests itself spontaneously and reveals man as a savage beast to whom consideration towards his own kind is something alien. (pp. 111-112)

Group regression, for several reasons, mobilizes powerful emotions.[3] Subject to the regressive pull of the group, members replace their superego with the guiding values, principles, and ideals of the idealized group leader (Freud 1921, Blum 1995), often a charismatic malignant narcissist, and of the idealized, all good, group. The superego is regressively repersonified. Aggression and sadism are given permission and even sanctified (Blum, 1995), justifying, for example, ethnic violence. That the superego can be replaced by groups and charismatic leaders is consistent with Valisiner's ideas on semiotic regulation through hierarchically organized meanings (Branco & Valsiner, 2010; Valsiner, 2001, 2002, 2007). The group and group leader are new hypergeneralized supraordinate signs that shape underlying interactions and meanings. From this perspective the problem is less one of affective and primary process meaning making, but of malignant social leaders and institutions that pervert standards and ideals. Restoring social sanity may call for removing the malignant leader (Lee, 2020). The various links between the individual and the group and group leader include affect and primary process associations. Any meaning that matters and moves us is partly affective. Links between mutually regulating signs must also be partly affective and formed from condensation and displacement, metonymy and metaphor.

From the perspective of Melanie Klein, aggression is also the key, though aggression is personified as senses of self and other. Groups can separate love and hate, good and bad, and externalize on to others aggressively colored or devalued personifications. Splitting good and bad and externalizing the bad leads to idealizing the group and its leader which supports identifying one's values and principles with theirs. Externalizing hate and destructiveness is an alternative formulation for the social construction of the enemy from the understanding of Salvatore et al. (2021), to be discussed further.

Klein believed that personifications of love and hate could be modified through social interactions, through cycles of projection and introjection. Interactions can detoxify archaic senses of self and others and reassure us of our capacity for love, concern, and repair, enough so that we can own and integrate and take responsibility for hate. The reparative actions in intermediate social setting prescribed by the model at hand can be seen from this perspective, as cultivating confidence in our capacity for love, concern, and repair, decreasing our need to externalize badness.

Salvatore et al (2021) highlight fear, which evokes affective meaning making more generally. Fear is also central in Martha Nussbaum's (2018) analysis of our social crisis.

[3] My mentor, the late Anne Alonso, PhD, was a specialist in group psychotherapy. After years of individual psychoanalysis, she felt confident that she had been analysed to the depths and nothing could phase her. Then she walked in as a patient to her first group psychotherapy session, and it was like, "walking into a propeller".

She argues that there are other socially destructive emotions, such as disgust, envy, and hate, but they are made more malignant when combined with fear (Nussbaum, 2018). Other cultural theorists see fear as central to understand meaning making in times of social upheaval (Eco, 1990; Fenster, 2008; Leone, Madisson, & Venstsel, 2020; Madisson, 2014).

Qualitative vs Quantitative Analysis of Social Emotions

Is the problem emotional meaning or specific emotions? A just society is not possible without emotions and emotional investments Nussbaum (2015). Salvatore et al. (2021) suggest a quantitative and mechanistic understanding of why affects are socially destructive; emotional categories are simpler; they represent a field of meanings of lower dimensions. They give rise to immediate discharge in unreflective action and are inherently exclusive of the other. The issue is complexity and quantity, the degree of affect in the field. But the destructive nature of certain emotions, such as envy, greed, hate, disgust, can be understood through qualitative analysis of the nature of the emotion. Some emotions are inherently constructive. And, as noted, emotions do not inherently exclude the other. Some emotions, such as guilt and concern, are inherently inclusive of the other, and destructive emotions, such as hate, also bind us to others. Salvatore et al's. (2021) model risks being mechanistic, without making qualitative and human distinctions between antisocial and prosocial or constructive and destructive feelings.

Destructive social processes are not a matter of dominance by affective meanings, as a society dominated by prosocial emotions would be just fine. And it is not just a matter of complexity as destructive and malignant societies traffic in complex meanings. The reign of socially destructive emotions is not a direct result of primary process modes of psychic function; it is due to social institutions that fail to cultivate and promote the right emotion in the right measure.

Out interlocutors might respond that emotions are not their concern. The problem is affective meaning and primary process unrefined by the secondary process, undiscerning of content and context, and unregulated by recognizing the subjective other. Affective neuroscientist Lisa Feldman Barret (2017), and traditional psychoanalyst Charles Brenner (1982), understand emotion as constructed by ideational content, language, social meaning, personal experience, and context, from raw affective building blocks. But even raw affective experience is oriented to the other. The problem is a social-institutional failure to better mediate and cultivate affect into more discerning and prosocial emotions.

Alternative Psychoanalytic Formulations

I agree with Salvatore et al. (2021) that psychoanalysis can best contribute to social psychology in terms of process rather than the content of meanings. I have discussed the role of altered social constraints on the aggressive drive. Social life has also been considered an extension of the nuclear family or of the body. Malignant social phenomena, such as antisemitism, have been seen as displaced passions and conflicts from childhood. (Ostow, 1996). Arthur Koenigsberg (1976), a psychoanalytically oriented historian, argues that Hitler and Nazi ideology were motivated and

shaped by an unconscious fantasy of the nation as a body and the threat of bodily invasion, infection, or infestation. The metaphor is amply reflected in Hitler's speeches and Nazi ideology. For social attitudes or forms of discourse to "take hold", he believes, they must resonate with shared internal meanings such as unconscious fantasy (Koenigsberg, 2021). It seems unlikely, though, that a particular unconscious fantasy would be especially prevalent in a population, unless it is universal and activated by social conditions. The continuity of narratives and themes in antisemitic conspiracy theories comes from one text building on and incorporating previous ones (Byford, 2014, 2015) rather than from internal unconscious sources. Billig (1995) similarly argues that national consciousness and identity are shaped and sustained by a sea of cultural signs and symbols, so prevalent that we do not register them consciously.

Other ideas from psychoanalysis have been useful to understand social problems. One is splitting of the ego with disavowal of or contradictory registrations of reality, as Freud described for fetishism (Freud, 1938). The process is akin to Karl Marx's (1867) notion of commodity fetishism, where the history of exploitation in producing the fetishized commodity is disavowed. Kaplan (2006) describes cultures of fetishism, such as foot binding in China, where the inchoate, unknowable, uncontrollable other evokes fear and is concretized for control. The idea is like Bakhtin's (1984) description, though not from a psychoanalytic perspective, of how failing to relate dialogically leads to an objectivized and fixed image of the other, and, of course, relates to Buber's (1937) "I-it" relating. Franz Fanon (1952) described the black person under the white gaze as a "suffocating reification" (p. 89). Psychoanalyst Arlene Harris (2019) identifies splitting and disavowal as a "perverse pact" which sustains the fragile identity of white privilege, at the cost of disavowing historical and current violence and oppression.

Divided and multiple identities, identification, identification with the aggressor, divergent centers for generating meaning[4], the need for recognition to experience aspects of self as real, coherent, vital, and one's own, the subjective impact of non-recognition and the experience of alienation with a divided self, are psychoanalytic ideas useful to understand social problems[5]. Identification and the divided self are related to the "double veil", as described by W.E.B. DuBois (1903/1968) and the subjective alienation that follows non-recognition and from aspects of self that are not one's own, as described by Franz Fanon (1951). These processes inform the complexities of identification and identity that emerge from the intersection of cultures in colonialized subjects, as described by Homi Bhabha (2012), who explicitly uses psychoanalytic ideas. Lack of recognition and limiting the potential and full humanity of the other have been applied by psychoanalysts to understand social power dynamics that limit marginalized others (Layton, 2007; Stout, 2019). All these processes involve affective and primary process connections.

[4] Divergent centers for generating meaning, formed from identification and internalization, is similar to multiple "I" positions, more or less in dialogue, as described by Dialogical Self Theory (Hermans 2012)

The Direction of Shaping Between Mind and Culture

Freud oscillated in how he saw the direction of shaping between `mind and world as did psychoanalysis more generally A teacher in my psychoanalytic training, the late Paul Russel, observed that personal psychoanalysis alternates in the same way, between, "this was done to me," and, "this is mine". Classical psychoanalytic drive theory saw the social as shaped by the drives. Salvatore et al. (2021) reflect this view; "…desire, in psychoanalytical terms, mediates the relation between the subject and the reality – more specifically, the subject shapes the reality in terms of its own desire, shaping the later in order to make it conform to the descried object". Ego psychology opened the door to the mind being shaped by the environment, as the ego develops from adapting to and internalizing aspects of the world. But the ego was still demarcated from the world and primarily shaped from within; "The ego is first and foremost a body ego" (Freud, 1923).

Simone De' Beauvoir criticized the psychoanalysis of her day for it's a-social, universalist, biological assumptions. She argued that biology, the body, sex, aggression, the phallus, must have psychological meaning to motivate us psychologically. They acquire psychological meaning from the historical-cultural field. In, *The Second Sex,* published in 1949, she writes, "… no factor intervenes in psychic life without having taken on human meaning; it is not the body-object described by scientists that exists concretely, but the body lived by the subject" (p. 49). And, "A symbol does not emerge as an allegory worked out by a mysterious unconscious … symbolism did not fall out of heaven or rise out of subterranean depths: it was elaborated, like a language, by the human reality…" (p. 56). "Psychoanalysis could only find its truth", she writes, "within the historical context" (p. 58). And further:

> Interiorizing the unconscious and all psychic life, the very language of psychoanalysis suggests that the drama of the individual unfolds within him: the terms "complex," tendencies," and so forth imply this. But a life is a relation with the world; the individual defines himself by choosing himself through the world; we must turn to the world to answer the questions that preoccupy us. (pp. 57-58)

An In-Between Position

Salvatore et al. (2021) correctly refer to reiterative interaction and mutual shaping between mind and culture or between the individual and the social. Two psychoanalytic thinkers are useful to understand these reciprocal connections.

Argentine psychoanalyst, Ernesto Pichon Rivière, also founded a school of social psychology. His idea of the link, "el vinculo", combines personal and social meaning. It is the intersection of horizontal and vertical axes. The vertical axis is our unique life history while the horizontal axis is the history of the various cultural institutions in which we are embedded (Losso, 2017; Sharff, Losso, & Setton 2017). The mechanism of the link could yield to a semiotic analysis, such as Valsiner's model for semiotic regulation (Branco & Valsiner 2010; Valsiner, 2001, 2002, 2007). Links must be symbolic and affective, the latter formed by condensation and displacement, metaphor, and metonymy, if they are to matter enough to move us.

Winnicott's (1953) transitional space is constructed between child and caretaker. It is in between self and other, inside and outside, not fully I and not fully you[6], between the pleasure principle and the reality principle. For social scientist Sandra Jovchelovitch (2007) it is the space of signification, where sign, world, and interpretant meet. There is desire and affective investment in the connection between self and other and between self and the meanings that emerge in that space, linked by primary process associations. Transference in psychoanalytic therapy is seen as a transitional space (Adler, 1989). The transitional space remains a source of art, magic, illusion, and meaning in adult life.

From outside psychoanalysis, Mikhail Bakhtin (1982) captures personal and social meaning that meet in an in-between space, half mine and half someone else's, and in-between social settings; "Language is not a neutral medium that passes freely and easily into the private property of the speaker's intentions; it is populated – over populated with the intensions of others" (p. 293), and, "each word tastes of the context in which it has lived its socially charged life" (p. 293). The individual makes the word his or her own, but it is half someone else's:

> Language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes "one's own" only when the speaker populates it with his own intensions, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intension. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in a neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!), but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one's own (Bakhtin, 1981, pp. 293-294).

Interaction between personal and social settings is more than verbal exchange. Bakhtin (1984) includes embodied participation in dialogue, "a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds" (p. 193). Thanks to condensation and displacement, metonymy, and metaphor the word condenses these many dimensions of meaning. The shared word for Bakhtin is like Pichon- Rivière's vinculo.

The personal and the social are connected by affect links formed by primary process associations in a transitional space. This is true for Jovchelovitch's multivalent representations, Pichon-Rivière's link, and the links in Valsiner's model of hierarchically organized and mutually regulated signs. Social positions and narratives are also multivalent structures that include personal and social dimensions of meaning. (Frosh & Young, 2010; Parker, 2011; Wetherell, 2003). Multivalent social meanings answer a charge by sociologist and psychoanalyst Nancy Chodorow (2001), that social theory ignores personal and idiosyncratic meaning, and that culture must matter personally to affect us. Social meanings, by their nature, condense affect, desire, and personal meaning, emerging between each other and between pleasure and reality principles

[6] Winnicott (1971) said that one must never ask if the transitional object comes from me or from you.

(Jovchelovitch, 2007). Psychoanalysis brings the emotional and intimate context, with its conflicting passions and desires, to the interpersonal plane described by Vygotsky, a transitional space from which tools that mediate mental functions are internalized (Wertsch, 1985). Thanks to primary process associations, the mediation tool carries its socio-economic history. And thanks to primary process affect links, the setting for mediation condenses its' emotionally intimate dimension. Representations are, as stated by Jovchelovitch (2007), "at once a cognitive, affective, and social process" (p. 25).

Does the necessity and ubiquity of affective and primary process links in all social life challenge the special role these processes play in the socio-institutional crisis as theorized by Salvatore et al. (2021)? Perhaps it is a matter of balance, of dominance or unrefined affective and primary process links. If so, the model at hand should spell this out.

The Social Facilitating Environment

Jovchelovitch (2007) likens the social or public sphere to a transitional environment. Winnicott's notion of a transitional space is linked to his concepts of the holding environment – which contains, articulates, and regulates experience and intense feeling, and the facilitating environment – which facilitates the development of subjective vitality and coherence and intersubjectivity. Bion (1962) emphasized intersubjective processes which articulate and transform meaning, from raw sensorimotor and affective experience to represented forms that can be thought (Brown, 2018). Nussbaum (2018) likens the social to a facilitating environment which cultivates prosocial emotions, capacities, and values.

Muller (1996) and Kirshner (2017) integrate psychoanalysis with the semiotics of C.S. Peirce. They understand culture as a symbolic surround, linked to Lacan's symbolic order and Peirce's realm of thirdness, and, I would add, Lotman's (2000) "semiosphere". For Muller (1996), the third or symbolic realm shapes intimate dyadic interactions. I would not restrict culture to the symbolic or thirdness, as the social facilitating environment includes iconic and indexical links, affective connections formed by primary process associations. But these notions are consistent with the metaphor for culture as a holding, transitional, and facilitating environment that contains, mediates, and articulates experience and affect and facilitates development of social capacities.

The socio-institutional crisis described by the paper at hand can be seen as rupture or collapse of the social holding and facilitating environment. Social structures and institutions fail to facilitate prosocial capacities, emotions, and values. The Yeats (1921) lines, "the center cannot hold", and, "the falcon cannot hear the falconer" refer to the collapse of orienting social structures and values. Pathologies of subjectivity and relatedness that follow rupture or collapse of the holding environment might alert us to parallels in the social sphere. Reparative social settings proposed by Salvatore et al. (2021) can be seen as repairing the social holding and facilitating environment.

Primary Process or Institutional Failure?

Many of the social phenomena that Salvatore et al. (2021) link to primary process and affective discharge are more readily explained by social-institutional failings. For example, they see failure to regard the subjectivity of

the other as due to immediate discharge and the inherent solipsism of affective meaning. We have considered that affect is not discharge and it is inherently addressed or oriented to the other -it is the link to the other. Destructive and malignant emotions such as hate, envy and disgust, are oriented to and inclusive of the other, and they can be complex. The socially destructive potential of these emotions is not a matter of complexity, it is in the nature of the emotion itself, to be discerned through qualitative analysis. A just society is not possible without emotions and emotional investment (Nussbaum, 2013). It is a matter of social institutions culturing and promoting the right emotion in the right measure.

Regard for the other is a social value and capacity, to be socially cultured and promoted. Failure to recognize the other in destructive societies is not global. It is selective toward devalued groups. This challenges the notion of a global property of an affectivized field. Authoritarian societies promote monologue over dialogue as a form of social discourse, and thus socially undermine the recognition and value of the other. "Authoritative discourse", as described by Bakhtin (1981), or the "authoritative word", "with its power fused to it", the power of tradition and of fathers, is closed to the voice of the other. The authoritative word is not the direct outcome of affective and primary process meaning. It is socially imposed for the sake of power.

We seem primed today to more readily act and react, to respond with dismissive gesture, rather than engage in dialogue. But these are not necessarily direct expressions of affective meaning and drive discharge. Affective arousal primes action in other ways, such as activating the motor system. Strong emotions disrupt metacognitive functions such as a reflective stance and decentering from self-centered perspectives (Dimaggio & Semerari, 2007). Plus, self-reflection and regard for the other are socially cultivated capacities and values. Internalized social relationships and social meanings give us a place to stand in observing ourselves (Gillespie 2007; Meade 1912). The inability to regard the other as a separate center of intention and meaning lead to action and reaction and psychic equivalence as forms of relating and making sense of interactions (Allen, Fonagy & Bateman 2008; Benjamin, 2018; Fonagy et al., 2002). Failure by social institutions to cultivate self-reflective positions and regard for the other could increase the prevalence of action as a form of meaning making and communication.

Action, reaction, and dismissive gestures are due to social institutions failing to promote prosocial forms of dialogue and values such as respect and tolerance of difference. Angry gestures which shut down the voice of the other are modeled daily on televised political discussions and are internalized by the public as an acceptable form. They are strategic, to mute alternative voices, as we saw with Bakhtin's authoritative word or authoritative discourse, socially imposed in the service of power.

The Value of Truth

Conspiracy theories and "fake news" are also not natural byproducts of primary process-affective discharge and disregard for reality. Truth is a social value and virtue, dependent on social cultivation and promotion. Undermining truth serves complex strategic, political aims.

Vetting and authorizing truth claims are socially distributed functions. Epistemology traditionally focuses on the individual's means for gaining and justifying knowledge. The growing prevalence of fake news and conspiracy theories calls for a social epistemology which studies how societies gain and justify knowledge (Freiman, 2019). Our "post-truth" society (Paterson, 2019) is a function of failed structures and institutions of social epistemology, including undermining the authority of institutions such a science. Again, this serves strategic ends. There are social reasons, other than affectivization, that increase the prevalence of conspiracy theories, such as the Internet, where disparate topics and pieces of information can be more easily linked (Madisson, 2014). Easy access to varied and distributed bits of information is prime for making primary process links. The information is brought together through abduction (Spinks, 1991), which involves primary process associations.

Byford's (2014, 2015) studies of conspiracy theories challenge, in my view, the notion that these are due to affective-primary processes of discharge and disregard for reality. He argues that they are a rhetorical devices and forms of argument and narrative construction, situated in social groups, in the service of political aims. Belief is selective, depending on one's group and political affiliations and identifications, and are held and given up fluidly, which casts into doubt that they emerge from a global property of the field. Might people access multiple fields, some "affectivized" and some not?

Here again is the metaphor of failure or collapse of the social facilitating environment (Nussbaum, 2019). The problems above are not direct outcomes of primary process and affective meanings. They are due to collapse of those social structures and institutions that cultivate and promote pro-social emotions, capacities, attitudes, and values.

Primary Process or Cultural Code?

The mode of interpretation involved in conspiracy theories may be given by culture, not nature. These include Eco's interpretive codes and Lotman's mythological consciousness (Eco, 1990; Fenster, 2008; Leone, Madisson, & Venstsel, 2020; Madisson, 2014). The latter, likely replete with primary process associations, based on "homomorphic resemblances", has been applied to understand conspiracy theories (Maddison, 2014). These codes and forms of thinking are held in cultural memory and are evoked during times of cultural upheaval and fear (Leone, Madisson, & Venstsel, 2020; Madisson, 2014). Byford (2014, 2015) also points to culturally transmitted rhetorical and narrative forms in conspiracy theories.

Social Construction of the Enemy

Mythologic consciousness leads to the social construction of the enemy, the witch, the barbarian at the gates, which serves to define and stabilize semeiotic cultural boundaries (Lotman, 2000; Madisson, 2014). Homi Bhabha (1994) may express a related idea, "the study of world literature might be the study of the way in which cultures recognize themselves through their projections of 'otherness'" (p. 7). Lotman notes that enemy construction, such as witch hunts, were more common during the Renaissance, a semiotic field of significantly greater complexity, than during the Middle Ages. The enemy emerges here in a semiotic field of greater complexity

and dimensionality than the simpler "affectivized" field described by the authors at hand. Eco (1990) also describes increase meaning making during times of social disruption, which seems to contradict the notion of a retreat to more simple and stable affective ground.

Lotman's formulation here is different from the understanding of the social construction of the enemy that we have considered. For Salvatore et al. (2021), and from a Kleinian perspective, the threat to the system is energic, from unsatisfied drives or from unchecked aggression. Destructive energy must be bound by secondary process thought or evacuated. The enemy emerges from frustration or is the externalization of aggression. For Lotman (2000) the threat is meaning, not energy, and the function of the enemy is to define and stabilize semiotic boundaries.

Remediation

Finally, Salvatore et al. (2021) present a model for addressing our social crisis, that includes their notion of semiotic capital. They prescribe actions in intermediate social settings which culture more refined and complex meaning making and culture the inclusion of the other. The idea is laudable, but how do we get neo-Nazis, ultra-nationalists, or Trump supporters to participate? Perhaps it is an acculturation process that begins in early childhood, through the educational system; the details are not spelled out.

There are alternative formulations for the social benefits of these settings that do not turn on primary-affective process vs. secondary process. These settings culture a capacity for concern, the value of the other, and other prosocial actions, attitudes, emotions, and values. As such, they restore the social facilitating and holding environment. Mediating these capacities through action is consistent with a Vygotskian perspective. From a Kleinian perspective, these actions, which include concern for the other, reassure us of our potential for concern and reparation and allow us to own and take responsibility for our hateful and destructive tendencies and thus decrease our need to evacuate and project them. The beneficial nature of action in intermediate settings or of semiotic capital is based on qualitative assessment of prosocial action, emotions, values, and capacities, rather than on quantitative notions. Again, destructive, malignant societies can be complex with multiple dimensions of the field of meanings.

Conclusion

The social crisis we are witnessing is complex and calls for multiple metaphors and models to understand it. The model we have considered here is one piece of a complex puzzle. I have raised a number of questions and challenges: the connection between primary process and the drive discharge model, the unique place of primary process and affective meaning in our social crisis given the necessity and ubiquity of affective and primary process links in all social life, whether modes of thought during times of social disruption are a natural consequence of affect and primary process or whether they are given by culture, carried in cultural memory, and at times strategically evoked for political ends. The social value of emotions, values, and actions are subject to qualitative rather than quantitative and mechanistic analysis. Antisocial emotions, actions, and values are due to failed social structures and institutions that culture and promote

prosocial emotions and orienting values. Conspiracy theories and fake news are due to weakened social structures and institutions that promote the value of truth, and which perform the functions of social epistemology. Reparative action in intermediate settings, or "semiotic capital" is subject to qualitative rather than quantitative analysis and are a repair of the social facilitating environment.

If I have misunderstood my colleagues here, I console myself in having provided them an opportunity for clarification and elaboration. Dialogue with alternative and questioning voices can sharpen our point of view and as described by Bakhtin, can lead to new and unexpected meaning.

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