ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Psychoanalyzing democracies: Antagonisms, paranoia, and the productivity of depression

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When John Rawls crowned justice the 'first virtue' of social institutions, stability was its necessary presupposition. For what worth is there of just ideals if the social order they structure will flicker out of existence when under pressure? As Rawls (2005) wrote *Political Liberalism*, stability became a central concern for his theory of justice, and the "overlapping consensus" is his answer to this problem. The same concern about stability can be found in the works of Habermas, another key theorist of liberal democracy. Habermas (1988, 1998) describes how the only viable source of political legitimacy in the modern world is the socially integrating networks of communication. In his more recent works, he even considers liberal democracy the only viable institutional arrangement that can secure stable political coexistence in our conflict-ridden world.

Yet, really existing liberal democracies are far from stable. Followed by decades of neoliberal reform in major liberal democracies, public accountability of governments soon gave way to accountability to private *shareholders* of multinational capital. Inequalities were staggering, leaving many on the verge of destitution and precarity (Milanović, 2019; Streeck, 2016). Decades after neoliberal reforms have taken root and wreaked havoc, democracies are "undone." The Left is now disoriented, while angry, disenfranchised masses are 're-politicizing' the privatized world with a vengeance, turning to right-wing populisms of hatred, chauvinism, xenophobia, and misogyny (Brown, 2015; Mouffe, 2018).

For most ideal theorists, the problem with existing democracies is that liberal democratic ideals are misapplied.[1] They believe that as long as we reattune democracies to their ideals, inequalities will be kept in check, toxic populisms will disappear, and democracies will be stable once again. However, this account seems increasingly untenable: First, politically, the rise of populism in the liberal democratic West shows that politics guided by rationalist ideals are becoming unrealistically "utopian." Second, these populist currents demonstrate how negative affects such as hatred, jealousy, and paranoid anxieties powerfully shape political life, calling into question the negligence of negative (especially antipathic) affects in ideal theories (Mouffe, 2005, 2009). Thus, *if one's theory aims for stable democracies, then one must go beyond ideals, and the 'affective deficit' of rationalist ideal theories must be addressed.*

Some currents in political thought try to overcome this affective deficit. For instance, Nussbaum (2013, 2018) supplements liberal theory with her account of political emotions. She discusses negative emotions such as disgust, anger, and fear, and argues for the need to foster love and forgiveness, redirecting our emotional energies to productive channels. Axel Honneth from the Frankfurt School is also aware of the limitations of pure ideals. His works

supplement Habermas's discourse–theoretical ideals with an emphasis on affective dimensions of social recognition (Honneth, 1995). In *The I in We* (2012), Honneth even raises the need for an understanding of unconscious affects in politics.

Yet, despite engaging with negative, antipathic affects, their political prescriptions remain optimistic (sometimes moralisingly) and idealistic. They make it seem as though antipathic and negative affects can be tamed by a mere combination of conscious will, improvements in democratic institutions, and public education.[2,3] Something seems amiss when we turn to existing political phenomena for a reality check, given the seemingly insurmountable *difficulty of resolving antipathic affects*. As I shall argue in this paper, populist and fanatical political movements speak to much deeper psychological realities than what simple reforms in democratic institutions and public culture can address. Populist movements (whether of the toxic or progressive types) are resilient to conscious reform due to how they function *as unconscious psychic defenses against severe anxieties* for their participants. This means that unless the *psycho-defensive* nature of these movements is tackled, conscious reform will be met with great unconscious resistance.

On the other side of the spectrum of political theory, Ernesto Laclau's and Chantal Mouffe's studies of populism eschew political optimism by taking inspiration from Freudian and Lacanian readings of antisocial passions (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2018). Taking psychoanalytic assumptions of the persistence of the death drive and Lacan's understanding of impossible *jouissance*, they consider antagonisms *constitutive* of all political relations (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2005). Furthering this view, Laclau (1996) argues that democratic reconciliation and human emancipation are impossible, and political conflicts are necessary. The best way to deal with conflicts, then, is not to repress them but to channel them to critical and democratic causes (Mouffe, 2009).

Although Laclau's and Mouffe's shared approach avoids naïve optimism, they seem to overemphasize the reality of antagonisms at the expense of thoughtful considerations of how democratic institutions can be stabilized. Laclau's own theorizations offer little room for understanding how more democratic political arrangements can be stabilized against potential deterioration. Mouffe (2005, 2009, 2018) goes further than Laclau and proposes the ideal of an "agonistic" democracy that aims (i) to *redirect* antagonistic drives toward a Left populist cause (against neoliberalism), and (ii) to construct a shared symbolic space around liberal democratic ideals open to conflicts in their interpretations. Yet, besides being mostly inchoate, these proposals are suspicious, for they concern only *symbolic* means to contain antagonistic drives, leaving behind complications at the psychodynamic level. Indeed, if antagonisms are so constitutive as her reading of Freud suggests, what prevents them from overspilling the symbolic framework of an agonistic liberal democracy?

To address the affective deficit of democratic theories, I shall turn to the aspects of psychoanalysis that these political theories have neglected. Psychoanalysis is particularly suited to understanding political passions because it systematically accounts for the ubiquitous "irrational" and passionate moments of human sociality (Allen, 2015; Honneth, 2012, pp. 195–196). Inspired by observations in the analytic setting, the psychoanalytic approach takes seriously the fact that (i) negative affects cannot be easily overcome by conscious will, and (ii) that psychotherapeutic interventions targeted at resolving long-standing defenses can only be effective when they work on the unconscious levels. These two features of a psychoanalytic approach counter both the facile optimism in rationalist theories of political affects and the Mouffe's and Laclau's lack of thoughtful consideration of the transformation of antagonisms. Regarding the latter point, psychoanalysis offers significant *therapeutic* insights that may be useful in helping us see how antipathic affects can be contained and *transformed*. The possibility of the (social) *transformation of affects*, not adequately considered by most political theorists, may hold the key to understanding how democracies can be stabilized amid the challenge of toxic populism and sharp antagonisms.

In the coming sections, I will first briefly review psychoanalytical theories of society since Freud, arguing that a comprehensive account of the psychodynamics of (political) groups necessitates the study of preoedipal, psychotic mechanisms (Section 1). After surveying Melanie Klein's account of preoedipal psychic processes in terms of the paranoid–schizoid and the depressive positions (Section 2), I will propose a reading of populism as a brand of paranoid politics (Section 3) and show how the productive aspects of the depressive position (i.e., mourning and reparation) can be practiced socially (Section 4). Such psychodynamic reconceptualization of political affects brings into light a new

challenge to achieving democratic cohabitation in the real world, which I shall outline in Section 5. Finally, Section 6 will extend the Kleinian model to study resistance movements in a nondemocratic setting.

1 | A PSYCHOANALYTIC THEORY OF SOCIETY AND POLITICS BEYOND FREUD

Freud was not only the pioneer in a psychoanalytic theory. He also offered an insightful theorization of group psychology. His famous study in *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego* (Freud, 1955) argues that the primary motivating force that underlies large-group participation is the libidinal ties between group members and the leader serving as a paternal figure. This love toward a shared paternal ideal often leads to narcissism and aggression, as the group is often intolerant and violent against out-groups. This observation about the affective and aggressive dimensions of groups is also featured in his *Civilisations and its Discontents* (Freud, 1961), where he proposes the life and death drives as the ineradicable instinctual basis for all forms of human coexistence.

Bold and pioneering as Freud's social analyses are, his speculations on human aggression and group psychology are underdeveloped. As Lear (2000, 2005) observes, Freud took the death drive as a mysterious force of aggression constantly welling up along the crevices of social life without sufficient psychodynamic explanation.[4] (This theoretical blindness is inherited in the works of Mouffe and Laclau, who draws inspiration uncritically from him.)

To address the limitations of previous theories, this paper aims to seek a psychoanalytic theory that (i) helps us *diagnose antipathic affects in social reality* while (ii) providing directions for *a meaningful social transformation of affects essential for democratic stability and reform*. This requires us to go beyond Freud. In particular, the Freudian approach misses two important aspects of group psychology.

First, as subsequent psychoanalysts point out, Freud's model of groups, centered around the paternal ideal, misses the important preoedipal psychotic dynamics in regressed groups. They propose that, instead of seeing the group as merely centered around the totem pole of the father, groups also perform important "maternal" functions, as group phenomena demonstrate features of our anxiety-ridden, preoedipal object relations with our earliest caregivers (Alford, 1989; Balbus, 2005). These earliest relations are ridden with primitive defenses of denial, splitting, projection, and introjection, which Freud gives insufficient attention to in his sociological writings (Bion, 2004; Jaques, 1953; Kernberg, 1998). As such, our psyches' preoedipal, psychotic functioning plays an important role in a comprehensive diagnosis of group phenomena.[5]

Second, Freud's sociological works also fall short of the *therapeutic aim* of psychoanalysis. Freud's cultural solutions to human narcissism and aggressiveness are dim, and his study of groups focuses mainly on groups in regression. Interesting is how there is no direction for a potential cure outlined in Freud's sociological discussions.[6] If the theory of drives and groups is to be properly psychoanalytic, then not only should it explain regressive groups, such a theory should also be able to inspire practices that may bring about (therapeutical) progress. This pitfall is also addressed by later analysts, for whom group formations are not necessarily regressive. Groups, when functioning well, perform great "work" functions—that is, when it allows group members to cooperatively advance conscious, productive aims (Bion, 2004; Rice, 1969). Besides, as Winnicott (2005) proposes, cultural practices may even be the only reliable place where adults can engage in great creativity to work through their losses. Considering the potentially *therapeutic* nature of groups thus seems indispensable for our search for meaningful social solutions to bitter social antipathies.

Given how the shortcomings of Freud's works necessitate an understanding of the psychodynamics of psychotic defenses in group phenomena and a corresponding account of (group-based) affective transformation that points a way out, Melanie Klein's psychoanalytical study of early infants offers great inspiration. Although Klein is not a group analyst, her idea of the paranoid–schizoid position offers a psychodynamic account of how antagonisms and aggression can be read as paranoid defenses against anxieties, while her ideas of reparation and mourning in the depressive position offer insights into social practices that can transform these antagonistic affects. These ideas will prove useful in helping us outline in later sections how democratic stability may be achieved.

2 | KLEINIAN DEVELOPMENT: FROM PARANOID TO DEPRESSIVE

Beginning her description of the newborn infant, Klein believes that the death drive and frustration of the infant's needs (for nutrition, intimacy, warmth, etc.) haunt the infant's psyche from the moment it is born. Transient bodily states of satisfaction and frustration, pleasure, and pain heavily color the infant's internal and external worlds. When it is fed and well-nourished, it experiences the world as all-good. Yet, when it is frustrated and experiences anxieties, the world becomes menacing, and it is confronted with a profound *fear of annihilation* that it struggles to defend against.

At this point, the infant has yet to develop adult ways of coping, meaning that the infant has no way to calm these anxieties "realistically" through action or thinking. However, infants have special tricks to fend off such anxieties in a collection of defenses Klein refers to as "paranoid–schizoid." In the paranoid–schizoid position, the infant defends itself against anxieties with reality-distorting fantasies of exaggerated proportions. First, the world of objects in the early infant's fantasies is *split*. Infants view their objects as either all-good (when they feel their needs fulfilled) or all-bad (when they feel frustrated). Besides splitting, the infant protects themselves by playing with the self-other boundary in processes of projection and introjection. Projection and introjection contribute to *idealization* and *demonization*:

1. Idealization of the good object: Toward the "good" side of the split world, the infant fantasmatically projects the good, life-preserving parts of the self onto good objects, *idealizing* them as the source of "unlimited, immediate and everlasting gratification" (Klein, 1984a, pp. 63–64). Then, the infant fantasmatically takes the good object back in by introjection. This returned good object then becomes an internal source of safety and confidence for the infant, paving the way for developing a stable ego.
2. Demonization of the bad object: Facing the bad object, the infant *projects* displeasure and (inner) anxieties outward to the bad object, *demonizing* it in the process. Through projection, the infant sees the object's presence as the source of all its suffering, thus assigning the object the role of an evil persecutor in fantasy. Although such projective fantasy creates an image of menacing evil objects, it helps the infant deal with anxieties by externalization.[7] Through projecting the bad, internal conflicts are externalized into a persecutory setting, effectively transmogrifying the inner fear of annihilation into "*persecutory anxiety*" that can be warded off by omnipotent fantasies of control or motor discharge.
   For Klein, the splitting and projective/introjective orchestration of the good and the bad in the paranoid–schizoid position allows the developing infant to master the internal fear of annihilation arising from the death drive.[8]

The paranoid–schizoid position is very much naïve and reality distorting. The good and bad objects are reality-distorting fantasies, and they function in the infant's mind as mere containers of the drives and anxieties of the infant.[9] The mother, as with other objects in the world, is seldom just the fantasized witch or angel. Despite such naivete, constructing such unrealistic fantasies may be the only way for the early infant to tolerate large volumes of anxieties without complete paralysis and disintegration of the ego.[10]

Paranoid–schizoid defenses, of course, are only of limited utility. These defenses are highly unstable when sustained for too long: this is because paranoid defenses produce insurmountable hatred and fear, which can only be endlessly acted out—creating real antagonisms and causing internal fragmentation of the ego.[11] This is where Klein's idea of the depressive position comes to the rescue. For Klein, the ultimate resolution of paranoid–schizoid defenses lies in the "depressive position," which the infant normally reaches when nursed in a relatively loving environment. The depressive position naturally develops from the paranoid–schizoid position, and the centerpiece of it is the *realization of the object and the ego as whole* and not split (Klein, 1984b, p. 267). This realization of the whole object undoes the previous paranoid splitting by requiring the subject to accept that one's ego and the world of

objects contain both the good and the bad parts. The acknowledgment of the object whole arouses *depressive* feelings on two counts:

1. Loss of ideals: Since the object now contains both the bad and the good, the *idealizations* associated with the good object the subject has clung on to so strongly in the paranoid–schizoid position will now prove themselves unrealistic and must be given up. Even if no actual object may be lost during this realization, the developing child is now still faced with great grief, for s/he will be required to mourn the loss of the *idealized* object that has hitherto been their only support against persecutory anxieties of the paranoid–schizoid position.[12]
2. Guilt for object: The pain of losing one's ideal is further magnified by the fear of being deserted and rid of the only sources of goodness. While in the paranoid–schizoid position, the subject has (fantasmatically) attacked the bad object, the reunification of the good and the bad in the depressive position confronts the subject with the horrible fact that what s/he has demonized and attacked (in the paranoid-schizoid position) is at the same time the only source of nourishing goodness s/he has relied on and can still depend on. Acknowledging one's aggression toward the object produces painful feelings of guilt.

Faced with the lost ideal and the whole breast destroyed ("in bits") in fantasy due to aggression, a new type of anxiety emerges—this time not paranoid, but arising from a concern for the object (Klein, 1984b, p. 269).[13] Klein refers to this as "depressive anxiety"—anxiety surrounding the loss of ideal goodness and the guilt that one had irrecoverably destroyed the good object.

In the early stages of the depressive position, depressive anxiety is very distressing, often forcing the subject to fall back on paranoid defenses or attempt manic denial (Klein, 1984b, p. 271).[14] Paranoid defenses against depressive anxieties occur when anxieties (now both persecutory *and* depressive) force the subject to continue splitting, projection, and introjection in the paranoid–schizoid mode. The paranoid cycle continues, and the idealization of the good and demonization of the bad escalate in ever-greater intensities. *Manic denial*, on the other hand, limits the force of depressive anxieties by *denying* the feeling of loss and guilt and renouncing one's dependence on the (whole) object. In mania, the subject narcissistically acts to disparage and express contempt for the object to ward off any feelings of dependency and guilt.

So long as the infant is held in a relatively loving environment, the need for manic and paranoid defenses is phased out in the child's normal development. This happens when the "tragic" anxieties of the depressive position[15] (loss of ideal and feared loss of object) abate under a *constructive metabolization of guilt in mourning and reparation*. For Klein, depressive guilt need not be paralyzing, for it can be the source of the desire to repair the damaged relationship—to mend the object the subject has attempted to destroy. This, for Klein (1984b, p. 311), is observable in infants when they demonstrate a "profound urge to make sacrifices" and "a strong feeling of responsibility and concern for [damaged objects]." When such reparative tendencies take root in the infant's psyche and are confirmed by the infant's loving environment, the child may grow to trust his own reparative impulses and the loving goodness of the world (Klein, 1984a, p. 75). Love and concern from the infant's environment mitigate paranoid and depressive fears, helping it realize that the "love object *inside as well as outside* is not injured and is not turned into a vengeful person." In this way, the developing infant becomes more capable of loving, confident about its capacities for *moral concern*, and can express "genuine sympathy" (Klein, 1984b, pp. 311, 342–343).

No longer paranoid or guilt-ridden, the subject can also gain *a more realistic perception* of him/herself and the external world without the need for reality-distorting manic or paranoid fantasies. Love in the tragic realization of the depressive position will therefore provide room for subjects to feel secure about the (internal) good object and better align their perception with the world (Klein, 1984b, pp. 346–347). As the object becomes whole in the depressive position, paranoid aggression gives way to reality acceptance, increasing capacity for love, moral concern for others, and tolerance for inner anxieties.

To argue for the depressive position as a developmental advance over paranoia may seem to promote a jump out of the frying pan into the fire. The depressive position is not a bed of roses. To call people exhibiting paranoid–schizoid

tendencies to plunge into the depressive position seems only advisable when depressive anxieties can be worked through. Still, dangerous as it may be, central to Kleinian psychoanalysis is what can be called the *productivity of the depressive position*. If paranoia displaces our inner anxieties into ego-disintegration and unresolvable antagonization of the world, the depressive position offers a way out. As Butler (2020, pp. 86–96) argues, paranoia performatively creates social antagonisms ex nihilo when paranoid subjects initiate cycles of aggression by "pre-emptively" striking an object that it considers a threat in fantasy. Cycles of aggression may thus result from such "pre-emptive" strikes when the other strikes due to this provocation, making the paranoid fantasy a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Reparation in the depressive position breaks paranoid cycles. In Klein's reading, guilt in the depressive position is not unproductive stasis. It compels self-reflection, halts automatic aggression and alerts us to repair the damages we have done, and allows us to begin constructive dynamics characterized by better, more mature relations with others. If cycles of reparation get off the ground in the company of good-enough objects (who can be an analyst, a lover, or even a community of solidarity), subjects will gradually be able to acknowledge the other's lack of ill-will and be confident of his/her ability to repair and love. Besides, they may also be able to internalize the goodness of others without the need for (over-)idealization. Confident about oneself and the world, reparation allows the subject to demonstrate openness and moral sympathy, tolerate the smears in the world, mourn the loss of his/her idealizing fantasies, and live better with their endogenous anxieties and others. There will be less need to act out aggression in fantasies of persecution. This is how the tragedy of the early depressive position transitions into a productive state of openness and tolerance. Depressive but reparative accomplishments, as we shall see, may become psychological prerequisites for stable democratic cohabitation.

3 | KLEIN AND PARANOID POLITICS

Klein (1984a, p. 233) made a general claim about how paranoid–schizoid defenses can reemerge when anxiety level increases in adulthood.[16] As later analysts observe, paranoid dynamics are observed in adults not only in individual psychotic and borderline conditions, but also in socially sanctioned paranoid group dynamics. The Kleinian studies of groups of various sizes by Bion (2004), Jaques (1953), Menzies (1960), and Turquet (1975) give concrete descriptions of paranoid dynamics in groups and how homogenizing belonging in groups helps its members deal with psychotic anxieties. Jaques (1953), in particular, proposes that groups can have important psychic functions, serving as "social defense systems" against psychotic anxieties.

Groups differ in the volumes of anxieties they can help the individual defend against. In work institutions (such as factories, schools, and workplaces), too much "politics" (like internal and external schisms of the group) may cause the group to fail its "work function." On the opposite extreme, then, are political and activist groups, as the "work" aim of political participation is much less defined, and politics *is* the focus of these groups (Segal, 1997, pp. 133–134). When charged with great anxieties, groups can regress and "behave in a way that would be considered mad if any normal individual did the same thing" (Quinodoz, 2008, p. 149)—grandiose, paranoid, and narcissistic. These regressive tendencies are observable in toxic populism and revolutionary fanaticism.

Anxieties and traumas across social classes define our age of neoliberal capitalism, and these anxieties feed into the formation of political groups.[17] When these neoliberal anxieties and frustrations pile up, subjects may experience anxieties not dissimilar to those experienced by the early infant. The unconscious fear of annihilation may reanimate psychotic anxieties and unresolved trauma at the personal and collective levels.[18,19] Psycho-defensive (paranoid) functions of political groups may thus be animated. In a paranoid–schizoid mode, contemporary experiences of frustrations and anxieties are instrumentalized to fuel discourses of splitting—discourses of (self-)*victimization* ("we the oppressed People")[20] and social *antagonization* ("They the evil oppressors"). To be sure, one must not reduce discourses of self-victimization and antagonization to paranoiac fantasies. It would be a huge mistake to silence victims, explaining away discourses of victimization as mere paranoia. However, political frontiers seldom map the real causes of social misery. Aside from recent histories of political conflicts, antagonization and victimization frontiers may be heavily tainted by

our unconscious fantasies and traumas. For instance, McAfee (2019), following Winnicott (1950), argues that sexist tendencies may be related to how our earliest dependency on our mothers creates a fantasy of a "fearsome woman" that men will seek to defensively overcome. In Winnicott's eyes, "actual domination" can be "derived from a fear of domination by fantasy women" (pp. 182–183). Besides, Balbus (2005, ch. 8) and Volkan (2020) propose how cultural upbringing may predispose subjects to select a racial or ethnic other as the container of unintegrated drives and anxieties.[21] These cultural fantasies may be at work in the isolation of women, Blacks, refugees, and other minorities as scapegoats for social problems.

Once a frontier is stabilized and the enemy selected, the mechanisms of projection, introjection, idealization, demonization, and manic denial begin. These may work to produce fantasies of conspiring, evil social others on the other side of the antagonistic frontier. Fantasies exaggerate the badness of the other and the goodness of the self—making the other appear extremely bad, dangerous, and conspiring, while the in-group (or a leader, projectively identified) is morally perfect, good, and victimized. At times, a leader of a political movement may deepen the paranoid moments by setting himself as an example, demonstrating infantile narcissistic enjoyment and manic contempt toward outsiders. Such is how paranoia functions in populist persecutory narratives that completely miss the real causes of social injustices, demonize anyone who disagrees, and idealize the moral purity/glory of the "us" group and "our" collective past.

Paranoid defenses are not present only in xenophobic, racist, or sexist populisms. Indeed, even socially progressive movements can exhibit paranoid and manic dynamics. Even if these movements may have identified "real" injustices of the social world, orientation to political reality is seldom the *sole* basis of the movement.[22] So long as the need for populist narratives partly originates from the people's need to deal with anxieties (i.e., their function as psychosocial defenses), they are also vulnerable to paranoiac defenses. Crimp's (1989) and Balbus's (2005) respective reflections of 1980s ACT UP activism and 1960s student protests underline how paranoia under political fanaticism may paranoically deny self-reflection, despair, and grief. As Balbus (2005) describes, piling, unmetabolized anxieties in the movement caused activists who continued their fight to idealize their movement by seeking to idealizingly purify themselves, redirecting their rage toward demonized others who do not share their idealized cause.[23] Furthermore, when expressions of guilt and despair are barred by fanaticism, McIvor (2016, p. 13) describes how activists may become forever uncompromising due to the formation of a "rigid moral–political identity" based on the resistance. When the psycho-defensive function of victimization/antagonism takes over the movement, the psycho-defensive function of paranoia may overshadow its progressive goal.

Paranoid defenses need not be bad, for one cannot underestimate the power of fear, exaggeration, rage, and distrust in fomenting resistance. Perhaps some form of paranoia, mania, and idealization (when not geared to narrow ideas of racial, sexual, or national glory) is essential for critical consciousness and inciting resistance to an unjust world.[24] However, despite their utility, they may well hinder democratic progress. Indeed, since paranoid logics *automatically* displaces our inner anxieties onto ready-made bad objects, it has little room for the self-reflections required for the realistic perception of the social world. This bites emancipatory projects because when defenses prevent a reasonable perception of the (real) social causes of injustice, the movement may fail its emancipatory mission. Even in relatively democratic settings, paranoid defenses can derail progressive projects due to their tendencies to incite distrust and fear.

Indeed, that paranoid group defenses displace anxieties means that people may continuously seek new objects for projection when old antagonisms do not allow as much venting of negative affects. In this case, *political witch hunts* may become the norm with the help that the inner anxieties of subjects are temporarily relieved, but, in the long run, creating deep divides in the citizenry, making it impossible for any lasting political alliance to form. Worse still, it is not hard to imagine how displaced anxieties can performatively create and deepen social antipathies that may play out in increasingly antidemocratic directions. Against this possible deterioration of democracies, it is therefore important to think of ways to deal with paranoia and antagonisms along properly psychological lines that *weaken* these defenses and *transform* antipathic affects into more productive ones.

4 | DEPRESSIVE POLITICS: THE SOCIAL WORK OF MOURNING AND REPARATION

Klein's solution to paranoid defenses is the depressive position. Yet, seeing how paranoid–schizoid defenses are present in populisms and fanatical political movements, we can understand why this solution may be hard. As we saw, *transcending paranoid–schizoid defenses require the acceptance and metabolization of the dual tragedies of the depressive position—first guilt toward the whole object, and second the death of ideals*. In social terms, entering the depressive position requires us to reintroject our destructiveness and recognize our responsibility for being complicit in social oppression and/or blaming the wrong persons for our misery. This is particularly hard in political environments, given how society-wide projective identificatory dynamics create real antagonisms. These antagonisms make it easy for subjects to feel that our self-reflective "vulnerability" is exploited by the antagonistic social other when we experience remorse. Besides, this feeling of vulnerability is only exacerbated by the despair from our realization that our ideals (to which all our energies and hopes have been tied) are no longer workable and that active antagonization is no longer doing us any good. Such loss of social ideals may feel like utter helplessness, despair, and paralysis. This despair is particularly hard to face when we may already feel survivor's guilt for "comrades" that were lost. We may think that honoring the group ideal is the only way to honor lost comrades—"Who is there to honor the death of my brothers and sisters if I do not carry on what they endowed me? Had they died in vain?—[such comes the manic denial] *No*, they hadn't, and I shall carry on their legacy."[25]

Besides, since the depressive position logically follows the paranoid–schizoid position, (previously) unmitigated paranoid anxieties also play into the difficulty of the transition. If the infant's resolution of the depressive position is a challenge, then it is much more so socially, because persecutory fantasies have *real social effects*. Paranoid defenses in the social world not only create the *fantasy* that objects are destroyed beyond reparation, but the *reality* of irreconcilable hostility. Add to this the fact that there is no good-enough social "mother" to contain our anxieties and aggression and return it metabolized—continued mutual incitation only invites corresponding responses of the opposing group and fragments the social world further. Indeed, *the longer persecutory fantasies have been acted out, the greater antagonistic positions solidify, leading to the hopeless idea that reparation is impossible. At this juncture, self-reflection may be haunted by the specter of the depressive position as a desolate place, triggering manic denials and paranoid projections.*

Such is the affective deadlock contemporary political theories must own up to if they seek a viable path toward democratic cohabitation.[26] In light of such challenges, the rest of this section shall discuss potential practices that may help mitigate social paranoia by mollifying the tragic anxieties in our transition into the depressive position. Given the difficulty of the situation, these will not be quick fixes for divided societies, but practices with great potentials:

1. "Everyday mourning" in public deliberation: The idea of deliberation as a space for working through the affective deadlocks of the social world may seem rationalist. After all, we began by challenging rationalist understandings of politics. However, deliberation need not be hyper-rationalist, as speech also has great affective valence in the analytic setting. Instead of seeing deliberations as places for negotiating material interests and exchanging disinterested reasons, McAfee (2019) alerts us to how reason-giving "[calls] forth memory, affect, and grief around past and possible future losses" (p. 156). Attention to these memories and affects may make deliberation a potential space for negotiating and resolving them. Besides, McAfee argues that mourning is a necessary part of democratic decision-making. Democratic decision-making requires constant negotiations and compromising because the participants' views are plural, but there can only be one institutional decision at the end. If dissenting groups do not adequately mourn alternatives to the chosen political decision, these decisions may appear imposing (even persecutory) to them. Thus, if democratic cohabitation is to remain stable, citizens should be ready to give up omnipotent control and mourn the loss of alternatives (which may have previously embodied their ideals). McAfee calls this mourning of ideals in everyday deliberation an "everyday" transition into the depressive position. Democratic decision-making processes may facilitate this in different ways: First, by making people spell out consequences and trade-offs of different courses of action, public discussions may grant people a feeling of participation and allay the

feeling that political decisions are imposing and persecutory. Besides, by making people articulate costs and consequences, grievances are put into words, thus fostering the mourning of unrealized alternatives. Third, by letting people exchange views with "whole" objects (real persons), schisms in the populace may lessen when people are brought to "see why the others held the views they did and changed their views of other's views" (McAfee, 2008, pp. 166–168).[27] This, in the long run, reduces the tendency to demonize others.

2. Reconciliation commissions: Political mourning involves attempts to undo past injustices and social antagonisms. This is sometimes the task for reconciliation commissions. In reconciliation, the *mourning* aspect in democratic and juridical practices is put in focus, as what are addressed are not just historical injustices requiring financial restitution, but also social traumas and bitter antipathies produced by them. Reconciliation can foster active mourning by producing affective conditions that allow different parties to work through traumas and fantasies of victimhood in the collective unconscious, paving the way for a more stable political order. This is especially important for societies ridden with histories of violent conflicts and structural injustices that have just transitioned into a more democratic government. Following McIvor (2016), properly designed Truth and Reconciliation Committees (TRCs) can provide spaces for unheard voices (whether from victims, perpetrators, and bystanders) to speak up, repressed accounts to be recognized, and injustices inherent in the social structure to be exposed in a new light. Hypostatized discourses of victimhood that define groups can be put into words, critically reviewed, and negotiated, while negative affects can be shared across social divides. Besides, as long as participants are not pressured to reach facile consensus and resolutions, TRCs may also provide room for warring parties to relate to one another as "whole objects" in a controlled setting, making room to negotiate the terms of cohabitation in a "posttraumatic" world without violent conflicts again emerging. This is why McIvor (2016, p. 149), following Winnicott, calls TRCs "potential spaces" in which antagonisms can be partially worked through, and "ongoing interactions across social divides" can be established, extending and deepening the reach of "democratic norms and practices."

3. Public grieving: Mourning can take "explicit" forms, including public grieving and memorialization. As events for commemoration, mourners are compelled by the occasion to come to grips with the loss and recognize their libidinal bonds to the objects and ideals lost. Instead of immediately charging, attacking, or even scapegoating, public commemorations are spaciotemporal occasions for people to set aside everyday concerns and fanatical political rage, focusing on loss and despair instead. In general, public mourning allows individuals to access their own grief (which may be too painful to access alone)—thus making a relation to the lost object as "whole" possible (Leader, 2009, ch. 2). This is especially important for melancholic social losses that acquired hypostatized social meanings under existing discourses. In this case, public grieving may ease survivors' guilt. While some activists see passivity in public commemoration as gesturing toward collective weakness and defeatism and therefore should be avoided, assemblies of public mourning are important for groups fighting oppression when political anxieties and despair pile up as social conditions deteriorate. First, public mourning offers collective spaces for sharing individual grief and fosters working- through. This may be essential for the emotional economy of resistance.[28] Second, as Butler (2015, p. 23; 2020, pp. 202–204) and Butler and Athanasiou (2013, pp. 101–102, 196–107) argue, even if collective mourning appears passive, when people are refusing to be deposed by the state powers on the street, such passivity is already defiant. Third, by taking their grievances to the streets, defiant masses make traumas and oppression *visible*. Such visibility (i) can be a moral calling for bystanders to join in for the common cause, and (ii) is itself a performative refusal to condemn historical and social trauma into oblivion. Visibility counteracts forgetting and refuses to relegate social trauma to melancholic denial.[29]

4. Good "holding environments"[30]: For Klein, the reliable antidote to piling anxieties of the past and present is the security accorded by internalized goodness developed naturally in caring relations. Loving goodness is certainly produced natively in caring intimate relationships of friendship and love. But there can also be social and cultural sources of caring goodness. This includes the affective potentials of public assembly and civil society support groups.[31] Despite the hostile environment, people on the streets do form integrated systems of mutual support—functionally and affectively—that may reduce anxiety and panic. Besides, even though political analysis often neglects informal institutions in civil society, social support groups exist as "countercultures of compensatory

respect."[32] Furthermore, Klein also proposes that the tragic aspect of the depressive position can only be overcome by reparation, which, in turn, can get off the ground only if early attempts at reparation are lovingly confirmed. Following this, Balbus (2005, pp. 113–115) emphasizes how important it is for victims to not be completely dismissive and *confirm* (*true*) *efforts* at reparation by historical perpetrator groups.[33] This does not mean that toxic populists and perpetrators should be sympathizingly "held" by victims. Perhaps *only* when true reparative efforts are made should sympathetic understanding be extended to perpetrators. Yet, even this is not easy. Since reparative efforts tap on great depressive anxieties in both parties, even the slightest aggressive cue can incite to manic and paranoid responses by the opposing parties. The psychodynamical stability of reparation, in turn, depends on (among other things) how well the affective work of mourning is carried out in other spaces, including deliberations, TRCs, and public grieving.

All these practices aim to help us mourn and repair—to mourn our lost objects and ideal "whole" and repair damages we have done without falling back to manic or paranoid defenses. As we see with Klein, the two tasks are mutually reinforcing: on the one hand, reparative cycles can diminish the perceived hostility of the other, thus placating the need to hold on to idealizing fantasies; on the other, the giving up of unrealistic ideals and the letting go of lost objects (the source of survivor's guilt) lowers the subject's need to defend against reparative efforts.

Yet, promising as this seems, mourning and reparative work is far from simple, and part of this difficulty lies in the unconscious defenses to anxieties they stir up. In these practices, subjects are not just dealing with present grievances, but also unresolved traumas in the individual and the collective unconscious.[34] Seemingly unrelated pasts and affects will well up, derailing conscious attempts at mourning and reparation. Outbursts of rage, mania, paranoia, and destruction may well up from time to time even as some progress is achieved. Yet, these are nevertheless integral aspects of a genuine social work of mourning and reparation. Without grasping how these seemingly unprompted acts may be rooted in psychotic anxieties, it may be tempting to push them aside and consider them unproductive or uncivil—as ideal theorists in political philosophy do. Yet, from a psychoanalytic perspective, the unconscious is uncivil, and barring it just leaves it forever rebellious. The inability to think and work through the vestiges of anxiety behind negative affects such as anger and fears prevents us from ascertaining the right solutions to our political crises. As such, psychoanalytic reflections along the lines above are indispensable for envisaging realistic ideals for democratic cohabitation and stability.

5 | CRITICAL REJOINDERS

Even though our calls for institutions of mourning and reparation seem optimistic, it would be important to not reduce them to simple-minded calls for love and empathetic understanding, let alone to watered-down versions of patriotism based on formal, liberal ideals. There are always pitfalls associated with uncritical promotions of love and memory.

Bonds of love and concern (e.g., in patriotism) are ready loci for fantasies of in-group idealization and outlets for aggression.[35] For Klein, *love* occurs in both our paranoid–schizoid relation to the *idealized good object*, or our relation with the whole object as in the depressive position. Genuine sympathy and openness define the latter, but love is dogmatic and narcissistic in the former, for the object is loved as far as it contains the idealizing fantasies we project on it (Allen & Ruti, 2019, pp. 141–142). Indeed, the fantasmatic nature of paranoid–schizoid love is especially pronounced in (political) large groups, since group love binds a large group of unrelated people, and anonymous masses are often ready blank screens for idealizing/demonizing fantasies.[36] Here, love is exclusionary and certainly contradicts democratic ideals of pluralism and respect.[37]

Pitfalls also befall social mourning. Bhargava (2012) and Jung (2018, pp. 252–265) argue that reconciliatory attempts can produce moralized imperatives for victims of historical injustice to adapt themselves to the prevailing (neoliberal) order and to forgive even when structural injustices remain unresolved. As such, official reconciliatory

attempts can create a false sense of closure that may turn to "demonize resistance and license social amnesia," silencing those who were unable to forgive, or simply are critical of the normalizing prospects of accepting the terms for reconciliation (McIvor, 2016, pp. 137–138). Besides, public mourning, especially in official forms, may provide ready-made, uncritical narratives that focus on certain losses, while "de-realizing" others (Dumm & Butler, 2008). As McIvor (2016, pp. 10, 20) neatly argues, discourses surrounding national remembrance can end up "splitting off traumas" that do not fit into dominant discourses of liberal progress. They "can dehumanize history's protagonists… and depoliticize the past."[38] This makes the design of such practices important.

Clear-minded and realistic conceptions of ideals of liberty and equality are, of course, important. In the context of group psychology, well-articulated ideals may function as "work aims" integral to the realistic functioning of groups. However, if ideals are not to be used as another insidious ruse of power and human aggression, or in unrealistically utopian ways, I suggest that pitfalls should be further countered by *humility* and *critique*.

Humility is implicitly assumed when democratic theorists argue for pluralism and inclusion. Moving beyond inclusiveness and pluralism at the level of institutional design, "humility" also depends on whether the legal system and the civil society are open to disagreement and resistance. Following Habermas (1985), the intolerance of states and the public to disobedience bespeaks an "authoritarian legalism" that ignores that legitimacy and justice rest on accountability to all. Thinking from the perspective of political psychology, humility in face of difference and resistance is essential not only for realizing ideals of democracy, but also for ensuring that feelings of injustice and persecution can be worked through publicly in constructive channels without being easily outlawed.[39] The "humility" of democratic institutions to forms of (civil and uncivil) resistance may allow the polity to face its repressed past and prevent further repression of differences.

With regard to *critique*, bearing the psychoanalytic insights in mind, it would help for critical reflections and public discussions about political ideals to bring hidden aggressions and narcissisms to public scrutiny. Discourses of idealizations/demonizations and self-congratulatory narratives of progress are highly suspect in this light.

Besides all these, Klein's depressive position teaches us that critique must not only be directed toward others, but must become *self*-reflection and *self*-critique. *A truly critical consciousness must also be self-critical.* Like the subject realizing its own aggression in the depressive position, reparative politics begins with the realization that *we*, behind our tendencies of self-victimization, can also be aggressors or accomplices of oppression. Paraphrasing Sedgwick (2007, p. 638), we can say that it is much easier to accuse others of ressentiment and "partisan rancor" than realize that "*[w]e*, like those others, [can also be] subject to the imperious projective dynamics of ressentiment." Such self-awareness underlies the productivity of the depressive position. If paranoia too readily victimizes the self by exposing oppression, then depressive critique counterbalances the fantasmatic self-victimization of the us-group, bringing us to repair social divisions. This does not mean that we should become moral masochists and position ourselves for endless moral scrutiny, but the readiness to bear responsibility and feel guilt for one's aggression (whichever social position we are in) is essential for social progress.

6 | CODA: THE PRODUCTIVITY OF THE DEPRESSIVE POSITION IN NON-DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES?

We have seen how sedimented anxieties can create passionate divisions in the social world by producing paranoid fears and distrust in the political realm. This account offers a realistic sense of how social antipathies can undermine the stable basis for democracies than mainstream democratic theories. Even though these antipathies may be difficult to resolve, we have also outlined how the *transformation* of affects in the depressive position can stabilize democracies. If democracies are to be a reality, then perhaps not only does it require reasoned deliberations and open institutions, but also psychological work.

There is a need for a reprise. Although the framework of democratic mourning and reparation outlined above is catered to societies with functioning democratic institutions, not all societies in the world are liberal democracies, and

most nondemocratic societies are not heading toward democratization any time soon. If this is the case, is there any way the Kleinian reflections outlined above will be useful outside democratic contexts?

Some may argue that entering the depressive position is counterproductive during resistance to tyrannical regimes, for the tragic worldview it inspires saps valuable energy from rageful resistance. Instead of self-doubts, what is needed is a strong conviction directed against oppressors and fidelity to the revolutionary cause. Calling for "depression" and self-reflection and tuning down idealisms in oppressive conditions seem out of place: First, they are implausible. Though the depressive position is useful for democratic societies, it may be a moral luxury for those under great oppression. This is because a hostile environment makes it hard for people to work through the tragic aspects of the depressive position, leaving them in a place of depressive desolation. The decontextualized call for the depressive position and nonviolence verges upon unreasonable moralization. Second, even if the depressive position can be brought about, depressive emotions may seem counterproductive. Some may argue that they redirect aggression toward the self and only create hesitation, whereas effective mobilizations and resistance require clear, directed rage against oppressive social conditions.

Even though the depressive position is particularly unbearable in oppressive social contexts, they are not necessarily counterproductive. The moment where the force of conviction is the strongest in a political movement is at the same time where its contrary, an *ethic of responsibility*, is most needed. Although institutional measures can act as fail-safes against misguided political decisions in liberal democracies, no such measures can be counted on in nondemocratic societies. Successful political strategies are vital to the survival of any resistance movement, and its participants need to have a perception of the world undistorted by fantasies, coupled with a readiness to engage with others to make compromises. While paranoid projections may help alert people of the ubiquity of oppression, it is certainly unhelpful when it turns political movements into witch hunts. This is why the depressive position, with its better *reality perception*, may be useful even in uprisings.

Besides, the greater the oppressiveness of social conditions, the more likely people will experience despair and frustrations. Uprisings fail much more often than they succeed. Where some emancipatory movements do successfully advance social progress, a failed movement confronts people with large volumes of depressive anxieties and frustrations. Emotional resilience to anxieties and trauma, thus, has to be cultivated. Do we have the ability to mourn, or do we revert to witch hunts within the movement and manically deny our miscalculations? The inability to mourn a failed movement and the losses they bring us results in the inability to metabolize our survivor's guilt and the failure to identify what good parts of a failed past need to be preserved. As Balbus (2005) argues about the Sixties student movement, what is needed after a failed movement is mourning that "might culminate in a selective identification with those (loving aspects) [of the movement]" (p. 89)—for only then will our political imagination be freed from a failed past that haunts us. The fanaticisms of social movements, especially in our "hyper-modern" age of short attention spans, are short-lived. If movements are to go beyond mere momentary insurrections to form long-term resistance against tyranny, then depressive feelings are undeniably things to be coped with—whether one likes it or not.

The paranoid–fanatical and depressive dynamics in emancipatory movements are a vexed problem. Even though the depressive position is productive in such settings, we *cannot reliably* expect people to be able to stay very long in it—let alone work it through—in such a hostile environment. In the worst cases, facing up to "reality" would mean facing not only relatively benign limits to human powers, but utter powerlessness. In an oppressive world, problems are not just unrealistic expectations and fantasies, but *real* persecutors and the collapse of norms of basic humanity and morality. Under such inhuman conditions, it is understandable even if people fall victim to paranoid thinking, scapegoat, or withdraw out of fatigue and resignation (Alford, 2016; Bernstein, 2001).[40] Short of demanding people to become moral saints, it seems difficult to expect people to be sane in an insane world—to be free from paranoia and to express genuine moral concern for others.

If the society's collective psyche has reached such a point, then such a situation is ridden by what Adorno calls antinomic—situations where people are stuck in ethical dilemmas where the "bad social world" blocks all sensible options.[41] In this deadlock, the sheer volume of anxieties, trauma, and despair produced by the world on subjects means that neither the paranoid politics of conviction can generate progressive and sustainable collective dynamics

nor are there prospects of working in the depressive position for reality check and moral concern.[42] To call for the depressive position when the social situation remains hostile may just open a pandora's box that turns into (clinical) depression and suicide.

If the situation is grim, then so should its diagnosis—this is what Adorno teaches us. Is there no basis for hope? The difficulty of the situation surely means that we should be cautious in making all-purpose, decontextualized prescriptions. Yet, one cannot underestimate people's emotional resilience. Where we argued that piling anxieties of the present may lead to a revival of early paranoid defenses, Klein (1984b, pp. 39–40) also argues that early successes in overcoming the tragic aspects of the depressive position will give people strength in dealing with present losses and make people more tolerant of differences in general. It is easy to name leaders of resistance who, by the force of their convictions, reflections, and psychological maturity, were able to demonstrate the ethics of the depressive position amid social hostilities—empathetic, not consumed by hate, and committed to the emancipation of all. We should refrain from heroizing them and decontextualizing their achievements, but the fact that there are such people who can redirect the despairing energies of social movements is a good indication that conditions do not determine everything. In a world of social media where social movements are decentralized, we may also wonder whether there can be civil-society solidarity groups and public assemblies that can function similarly to these reparative leaders.

If depressive emotions are bound to arise, this is perhaps the only way to make the best out of it. This is, to be very sure, not an easy task—for such is demanding even for well-established democracies. Yet, no matter how faint, hope remains that with adequate practices, coupled with sufficient critical consciousness, reparative working through of social antagonisms will not be another unrealistic fantasy.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

NOTES

[1] It is illuminating how the dustjacket of Rawls's (2001) *Justice as Fairness* reads: "Rawls is well aware that since the publication of *A Theory of Justice* in 1971, American society has moved farther away from the idea of justice as fairness. Yet his ideas retain their power and relevance to debates in a pluralistic society about the meaning and theoretical viability of liberalism."

[2] Nussbaum's cognitivist model of emotions often supposes that emotions can easily be normative and rationally controlled (e.g., see Nussbaum, 2004, 2016). Her cognitivist assumption misses how certain emotions such as anger, fear, and anxiety can lack cognitive content because their operation as psychic defenses inhibits rational reflection. Lear (2005), for example, discusses "anxiety defenses" in this regard. Honneth does not seem to share Nussbaum's rationalism. However, his account of the psyche is highly optimistic and idealized, thus admitting little room for negative drives of aggression and destruction. For related critiques, see Allen (2021, Introduction and ch. 1) and Honneth and Whitebook (2016).

[3] Both Nussbaum (2013, 2016, 2018) and Honneth (2012) draw upon Donald Winnicott's idea of transitional objects and play for inspiration in trying to work through difficult affects of anger and grief. To be sure, Winnicott has a less grim picture of early infancy than Melanie Klein. Yet, even for Winnicott, the healthy development of transitional phenomena is predicated upon the assumption of a good "holding environment," and such an environment is not readily available in our social reality. Regardless of one's view of child development, Klein's picture better fits the world of populist and fanatical rage and thus is better able to highlight the difficulty of fostering democratic cohabitation. For related discussions of their misreading of Winnicott, see Whitebook (2021).

[4] In Lear's (2000) reading, Freud's conceptualization of the death drive lumps together different observations (the function of the mind toward discharge, the repetition compulsion, and human aggression) without explaining their inner connections. As Lear puts it, Freud's theory of the death drive "is a theory in name only." It does not help explain repetition nor aggression, instead it only "explains" by grouping disparate phenomena under a unitary drive he named (p. 87). As such, Lear argues that Freud has no *theory* of aggression, and it is only in the works of Klein and post-Klenians that theories of aggression come about. The problem, as I see it, is that Freud has offered an insufficient psychodynamic account of how the death drive

variously functions in social settings to produce aggression. This gives us the impression that Freud sometimes displaces the problem with social antipathies and human aggression into the mysterious essentialism of drives.

[5] This has significant implications for all aspects of the psychoanalytic understanding of groups. For instance, Bion (2004) disagrees with Freud's idea that a group leader necessarily exerts mature dominance and will to lead the group. Indeed, in regressed (what Bion calls "basic-assumption") groups, the "sickest," most psychotic member is often exploited by the group for their regressive features. In this sense, the leader does not "*lead*" as such, but is "an individual whose personality renders him peculiarly susceptible to the obliteration of individuality by the basic-assumption group's leadership requirements. The 'loss of individual distinctiveness' applies to the leader of the group as much as to anyone else" (p. 177). Hinshelwood (1987) made similar observations in therapy groups, showing how highly narcissistic or psychotic personalities can become a group leader. A recent political leader of regressive leaders is Donald Trump—See McAfee (2017) and Prince (2018).

[6] As Quinodoz (2005, p. 192) observes, the theoretical nature of Freud's late drive hypothesis also poses questions for clinical practice, due to how little he discusses clinical interventions in his later writings.

[7] For Klein (1984a, p. 30), the bad, persecutory objects can also be reintrojected. In her 1948 paper "On the Theory of Anxiety and Guilt," Klein argues that these introjected bad objects will become the inner "representatives of the death instinct" and form the cruel and severe parts of the super-ego.

[8] Klein does not see projective identification as a neat, one-time doing. Rather, splitting, introjection, and projection operate in cycles (sometimes benign, leading to normal development, other-times vicious, leading to psychosis). This is quite evident when Klein sometimes phrases it as "*re*-introjection and *re*-projection" alongside projection and introjection (e.g., Klein 1984, p. 70). For a summary of projective identification, see Spilius et al. (2010, pp. 126–134).

[9] As Klein (1984b, p. 262) phrases it, "fantastically distorted picture of the real objects upon which they are based."

[10] Splitting between the good and the bad enhances "the security of the ego" essential for any later psychic integration. Indeed, as Segal (1964, p. 35) argues, some amount of "temporary reversible splitting" may be essential in "mature life" in intellectual work, and for the maintenance a stable ego amid chaos.

[11] There are many related lines of thinking: First, continuous projection of anxieties leads to undue rageful discharges of aggression toward objects (which may gradually not be tolerated as the infant matures), inciting retaliation and resistance by other objects (potentially confirming the subject's paranoid fantasies and preventing him/her from sustaining loving relationships with others). Second, paranoid projection is not one-way. Klein argues that in repeated cycles of projection/introjection, the persecutory object is re-introjected for control, leading to potential internal havoc (Klein, 1984a, p. 69; Segal, 1964, p. 26). Third, "persecution has no resolution; hatred brings persecution and persecution brings hatred" (Segal, 1997, p. 130). Paranoid projections only increase the perceived "evil" (whether real or fantasized) of the world, thus heightening persecutory anxieties, decreasing the subject's belief in the world, and making paranoid defenses even more pressing. Fourth, projection and splitting of the world lead to corresponding *splitting of the ego* (Klein, 1984a, pp. 5–6). Continuing in the paranoid–schizoid position means that paranoid anxieties and the bad parts of the self cannot be worked through constructive reintrojection and integration. At the most extreme, the ego tries to ward off piling anxieties by trying not to exist—the ego disintegrates as a result (Segal, 1964, pp. 30–31).

[12] As Amy Allen puts it, "the depressive position is founded on an experience of loss—namely, the loss of the idealized version of the good object" (Allen & Ruti, 2019, p. 65). "The losses experienced in the depressive position are not only concrete losses, such as loss of the breast, but also loss of omnipotence and loss of the fantasy of a blissfully exclusive relation to the ideal breast or mother" (Spillius et al., 2010, p. 91).

[13] Indeed, aggressive *fantasies* alone (regardless of whether they are acted out) can generate large volumes of depressive and persecutory anxieties. To understand this, it is useful to remark how strong fantasmatic meanings can take for the infant (and regressed adults) when they are coupled with the unconscious fantasy of omnipotence. As destructive fantasies in infants are often backed by fantasies of *omnipotence*, they easily give rise to the "fear that thinking about something can make it happen." This is not completely alleviated even as people grow older. In older analysands, Julia Segal explains, unconscious fantasies can be so compelling as to be "felt to be real," even though people consciously acknowledge that they are untrue (Segal, 2004, pp. 28–31).

[14] Balbus (2005) gives a good summary, although he—like Klein herself—did not emphasize the demonizing aspect of paranoid defenses.

[15] In calling this anxious aspect of the depressive position "tragic," I follow Likierman (2001) who emphasizes the need to overcome the "dangerous crisis point which sets in motion ambivalence, a catastrophic sense of loss and also, psychotic anxieties and defences" (p. 115) in the early phases of the depressive position. This first "tragic" stage does have features resembling paranoia (in the form of paranoid guilt) and clinical depression (Freudian melancholia). The depressive position only becomes a developmental advance over previous stages, when such crises have been worked through, and the tragic gives way to a "moral" concern for others in reparation. Likierman prefers to call the more developed, less anxious part of the depressive position "moral"—emphasizing the depressive subject's love and concern for others. I have chosen "productive" and "constructive" to describe this phase—emphasizing instead the constructive dynamics reparation and mourning brings to social coexistence.

[16] "[U]nder strain from external or internal sources, even well-integrated people may be driven to stronger splitting processes, even though this may be a passing phase" Klein (1984a, p. 233).

[17] Following our discussion in the introduction, financialization and privatization of public goods force many into competitive markets while raising their stakes for participating. Besides, the working class was de-skilled, casualized, and outsourced, practically removing the average citizen's sense of security in maintaining any decent standard of living. Indeed, any social class short of the oligarchs is made more precarious: in part, because systemic financial risks can plunge anyone to destitution, and, in part, because an accelerating culture of competitiveness and entrepreneurialism is forcing everyone into endless self-optimization and compulsive self-presentation across different aspects of life (Han, 2015).

[18] Although triggered by material conditions, anxieties and losses are *psychic* concepts, meaning that worse conditions do not necessarily mean more paranoid defenses. Indeed, how psychic defenses against anxieties of social origins will precisely function depends not only on social factors but endogenous (drive- and past-related) ones. Klein (1984b, pp. 336–337) remarks how the "actual painful situation" of poverty and unemployment "is made more poignant by the sorrow and despair of springing from [the victim's] earliest emotional situations." In the footnotes, she further explains that "fears of being destitute" and "fears of being turned out of the home as a punishment" for one's aggressive fantasies are observed in children "*independently of the parents' financial situation.*" This footnote may help us understand why even the relatively well-off may be prone to severe paranoid fantasies.

[19] I would like to thank an anonymous reviewer of this paper for highlighting to me that Becker (1973) also sees cultural practices as elaborate psychic defenses against our fear of death. Echoing Becker, Han (2021, p. 5) also argues recently that (neoliberal) capitalism and its drive for incessant accumulation are ultimately "a defense against death, a defense against absolute loss." Becker's pioneering study inspired subsequent studies in "terror management theory" that, among other things, empirically demonstrated how the awareness of death causes people to become more intolerant of others and more radical in their political decisions. (For more recent examples concerning COVID and the Trump phenomenon, see Cohen et al. [2017] and Pyszczynski et al. [2021].) Findings of terror management theory fit remarkably well with the psychodynamic hypothesis offered in this paper.

[20] Victimization is a vexed phenomenon. Part of the problem is that victimhood is a concept wrought with confusion. Identifying victims and listening to the victim's perspective is very important for any genuine social progress, and, yet, it is not easy to identify *true* victims and give them their due. While many tend to see themselves as victims, to *perceive the self as the victim does not imply that one is therefore (only) a victim.* (For interesting discussions of victimization, see Brown and Halley [2002] and Meister [2011, p. 34f].) I believe discourses of victimization and their pitfalls can be productively understood in light of the Kleinian paranoid–schizoid position—for example, Klein exposes how the categories of "persecutors" and "victims" are based not directly on the *fact* of social oppression, but discourses tapping upon (distorting) psychological dynamics.

[21] Volkan (2020) describes why objects of large-group projection often follow ethnic, national, or racial cues. Continuous with Klein's idea of good and bad objects, he describes how unintegrated split objects of the developing infant do not only involve the breast, but may later congeal around shared cultural images of Others. Volkan describes how children's cultural upbringing predisposes them to use similar "suitable targets for externalization" to contain their unintegrated "good" and "bad" images. These shared unintegrated targets function to produce a sense of "belonging to a specific large group and separating himself or herself from the shared stranger Other" (p. 23) that can be ignited in adulthood when paranoid anxieties arise. Franz Fanon's (2008, ch. 6) psychoanalytical analysis of the White gaze and the presumed sexual aggressiveness of Black males is also important in this regard. More recently, Judith Butler (2020, pp. 116f) argues with Klein and Fanon that a racial "fantasmagoria" still exists and serves to justify, most notably, excessive police violence against African Americans who were, in the beginning, *presumed in fantasy* to be aggressive.

[22] The intermingling of real characteristics of social others with projective identification that attempts to displace inner anxieties outwards obfuscates the defensive nature of antagonistic discourses—making it difficult to discern the force of paranoiac defenses. As Alford (2019, p. 67) writes: "Since groups generally are under threat by outside agencies…, [paranoiac] defence is easily confused with reality."

[23] Crimp (1989, p. 16) writes: "we [= AIDS activists] do not acknowledge the death drive. That is, we disavow the knowledge that our misery comes from within as well as without, that it is the result of psychic as well as of social conflict… By making all violence external, pushing it to the outside and objectifying it in "enemy" institutions and individuals, we deny its psychic articulation, deny that we are effected, as well as affected, by it."

[24] Butler (2020, p. 170) argues for utility of mania. See also Klein (1984b, p. 312n), Winnicott (1975), and Olson (2009, pp. 82–95).

[25] Survivor's guilt proves to be particularly pressing when the loss of comrades is sudden, prohibited from social recognition, or when social mourning is normalized. From a psychodynamic perspective, the (social) rituals of mourning and memorialization we outline below may help survivors recover the lost object as *whole*, allowing people to realize the complexities of the meaning of losses, freeing up rigidified associations with the lost object, and helping the "survivors" to form constructive identifications with the object. However, the representation of the lost object may be rigidified when grief becomes com-

plicated. When the unworked lost object is introjected, they can function as elements of a persecutory superego, internally exhorting the ego to carry on its hypostatized legacy. For a discussion of complicated grief, see McIvor (2016, ch. 2) and Volkan and Zintl (1993). Klein's discussion of the complexities of the superego can be found throughout her later works. See, for example, her discussion of the *Oresteia* (Klein, 1984a, pp. 275–299).

[26] One should be aware of how difficult it is to resolve this deadlock. On the one hand, one must be realistic and must not underestimate the difficulty of overcoming these affective currents and produce easy but unrealistic solutions. On the other hand, one must not paint the picture so grim as to make reparation appear hopeless. The reluctance to be hopeful can performatively *reinforce* depressive anxieties that the situation is beyond repair. Nussbaum (2018) rightly suggests that hope is what keeps "love and trust alive" and we may add that a healthy degree of love and trust is essential for social reparation and progress. An overly bleak picture of the world is counterproductive when it produces despair (where despair is not warranted), as it may lead people to defensive withdrawal or paranoia. What is needed, then, is "productive hope" that "energizes a commitment to action" (p. 206) but also hope that is attuned to realistic possibilities of improving the social world (p. 214). The proposals in the following sections can be seen as an attempt to strike a balance between hope and critical realism.

[27] McAfee argues that this is better carried out in deliberations of minipublics, as smaller groups are more manageable and closer interactions of different individuals can occur undistorted by large-group processes described by Turquet (1975). Inspirations from psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas may supplement McAfee's ideas on group deliberation. Bollas (2011) argues that the beginnings of a "Fascist state of mind" begin with subtle distortions, decontextualization, and denigration of the views of another group—dynamics. These processes are what deliberative minipublics seek to undo. In *Meaning and Melancholia*, Bollas (2018, p. 80f) argues further with Bion that a contrary "democratic state of mind" can be fostered with good techniques on handling antipathic group dynamics: antipathic affects and traumatic memories may be worked through when the facilitators in groups do not bar their expressions, but instead, reword them as matters of common concern and as affects that we may all share. Besides Bollas, Volkan's (2020, ch. 6) work on diplomatic negotiations also gives an insightful outline of techniques in managing group conflicts, including the interpretation of destructively projective dynamics, and the role of the facilitator in neutrally resolving "miniconflicts" that may reanimate greater traumas if mismanaged.

[28] Crimp's (1989) and Gould's (2012) description of the affective dynamics in the ACT UP movement offers an important negative example of how a movement that is unable to give public room for depressive emotions can become unsustainable.

[29] For a discussion about social foreclosures and melancholia, see Butler (1997, pp. 27f, 128f) and Bell and Butler (1999, pp. 169–173).

[30] The term "holding environments" is borrowed from Donald Winnicott.

[31] Not all support groups are conducive to the social ethic of reparation and the work of mourning. Support groups and public assemblies are likely counterproductive when they become echo chambers of discourses of hatred. Yet, not all support groups are toxic.

[32] This concept is borrowed from Axel Honneth (1995, pp. 124–125; Honneth, 2012, pp. 206–207), who follows Richard Sennett in coining this term.

[33] "True" attempt here not only means that (financial) restitutions in a manner proportionate to harm are in place, but that such attempts are also actively supported by perpetrator groups with a genuine desire to repair social damages. However, distinguishing "true" and "false" reconciliation attempts is difficult and can only be contextually determined under the spirit of criticality and humility outlined below.

[34] Klein's (1984b) remarks on the nature of adult mourning and reparation in relation to our earliest losses are worth quoting at length. As Klein argues with regard to mourning: "In normal mourning… the early depressive position, which had become revived through the loss of the loved object, becomes modified again… The individual is reinstating his actually lost loved object; but he is also *at the same time re-establishing inside himself his first loved objects*… whom, when the actual loss occurred, he felt in danger of losing as well" (p. 369, italics added), and with regard to reparation: "[In] making sacrifices for somebody we love and in identifying ourselves with the loved person, we play the part of a good parent; and behave towards this person as we felt at times the parents did to us-or as we wanted them to do… [By] acting towards another person as a good parent, in fantasy we re-create and enjoy the wished-for love and goodness of our parents. But to act as good parents towards other people may also be a way of dealing with the frustrations and sufferings of the past" (pp. 311–312).

[35] There is arguably some of this in Martha Nussbaum's call for "teaching patriotism" (see Nussbaum, 2013, ch. 8). Despite nuances in her view, her account of love appears too one-sided and idealistic to capture the paranoid and aggressive dimensions outlined in this paper.

[36] Alford (1989, p. 64f) calls this the "screen" function of large groups. Of particular interest also is Turquet (1975), who describes how projective and introjective processes distort how we understand others and the self in large groups.

[37] Liberal politics, even with their commitment to ideals of equality and tolerance, can also harbor traces of idealizing love and demonizing exclusions. Žižek (2008, pp. 96–98) argues that the "truth" of American liberal capitalism is Islamophobia that is not properly avowed, but this stipulation requires much more substantiation that Žižek provides. For more nuanced discussions, Brown (2006) discusses how liberal subjectivity is *assumed* and *idealized* to be open and reflective, while people in

"nonliberal" cultures are supposed to be dogmatic. Besides, Meister (2011) describes an insidious mechanism of idealization at work in human rights discourses that begin with the production of idealizing discourses of "victimhood." By (morally) identifying with these idealized victims, oppressors can indirectly act "*on behalf of*" them and indirectly idealize themselves by seeing themselves as morally worthy.

[38] McIvor names examples such as how Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks are heroized in a decontextualized way, their struggle's significance narrowed to the fight against legal discrimination but not to more contentious issues such as poverty, imperialism, and colonialism.

[39] Although Chantal Mouffe does not argue along Kleinian lines, I suppose she shares a similar idea here when she argues that liberal centrist and rationalist politics fail to open up channels for counterhegemonic resistance. As Mouffe (2009, p. 31) puts it, repressed antagonisms come back "with a vengeance"—in the forms of right-wing populism.

[40] Consider how Adorno describes "coldness" as the response to the totally administered world (Bernstein, 2001, pp. 396f). Consider also how Alford (2016, pp. 20–21, 47–49) discusses how we live in an age of trauma, with flashbacks of traumatic scenes as "a response to a [bad] world in which no one wants to hear, no one wants to know," and how such flashbacks may be dealt with by "tuning down all emotions, achieving a state of emotional flatness, which is almost always associated with social withdrawal."

[41] Adorno believes that one important aspect of what happens in a bad, rationalized world is that moral reason and impulses pull in different directions—even though that both have them carries a moment of truth. In the bad world, moral reasons are rational but are both unmotivating and constrained, while impulses, though right-headed in their stubborn refusal to conform to restrictions by the bad world, are blind and ineffective. For a discussion of Adorno's view of the antinomic nature of morality, see Menke (2005, pp. 36–49).

[42] We can follow Srinivasan (2018, p. 135) in arguing that people suffering systematic oppression are also suffering from a "affective injustice." As she puts it, "affective injustice" is the "injustice of having to negotiate one's apt emotional response to the injustice of one's situation and one's desire to better one's situation—a conflict of responsibilities that are 'all but irreconcilable.'"

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