CORE
Metadata, citation and similar papers at core.ac.uk
Provided by Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

STEPHEN FROSH (2002) *American Imago*, **59,** 389-407
© Johns Hopkins University Press (2002). Reproduced with permission.

The Other

Few of us can claim to be immune to what seems to be a resurgence of intolerance, bigotry, racism, Islamophobia and antisemitism. Throughout Europe, in the old Soviet Union, in Asia and the Middle East, in the United States of America, the hatches are being bolted down as neighbors repel each other, as good citizens fight to keep what they feel to be alien at bay. In Europe, the Right makes all the noise, and the language of swamping and controls is legitimized by supposedly social democratic politicians. In Israel/Palestine, two nations so closely alike as to be psychologically almost indistinguishable battle with each other in a tiny strip of land, leaving their diasporic relatives torn asunder by grief and anger. In the USA, there is an upswelling of patriotism and a rejection of the rest of the world, drowning, it is thought, in prejudice, fundamentalism, and terror. In the UK, there has been a spate of apparently racist attacks and murders; the response to September 11th pillories Muslims, while the response to the Israel-Palestine conflict spurs on antisemitism. Under such circumstances and in the midst of such clouds of darkness, one wonders if any lessons ever get learned. Each one of us has legitimate cause for violence, it seems, and everyone needs to fear what the other might demand.

The multiple sources of all this barely need rehearsing: colonialism, economic exploitation and privation, disenfranchisement and political oppression, the injustices of history, the legacies of domination. Writing the full story of intolerance would take something truly multidimensional–more than simply "multidisciplinary" in the academic sense. It would have to imagine not just the economic, political, and social roots of the passions of nations, ethnic and religious groups, social classes, and individuals; but also the specific histories of each conflict, the exact fantasies that each group provokes in the others with which it has contact and dispute, and the interconnected web of deceit and influence that envelops the whole. It would have to be expert at the social and political level, understand economics, know its theology and mythology, above all know its history. And still this would not be enough, partly because the situation never stands still, however much it recurs; partly because as well as the various rational factors feeding each conflict–historical and material disputes, interests and investments of various observable kinds–the "causeless hatred" of racism and bigotry is never quite encompassed by rationality, it always seems to figure something else. That is, at its heart (and "heart of darkness" is now an inescapable image, precisely because of its racist connotations), there seems to be something excessive, irreducible to its apparent objective causes, something too much and over the top, something full of what Zizek (1991) calls, with bitter irony, "enjoyment." Levinas (1991), writing about the Shoah, refers to "useless suffering": "Pain in its undiluted malignity, suffering for nothing" (98). Tragically but inescapably, it seems, the two things–enjoyment and useless suffering–often go together.

There is only one real discipline of the excessive, and that is psychoanalysis. So many of its theories seem breathtakingly mad that one can only hazard a guess that its continuing existence depends on that madness, as a sign or emblem of the wildness within. Who, for instance, could really follow the Kleinian argument that the tiny infant projects the death drive into the breast, then splits the breast, reintrojecting it to create a world full of paranoid phenomena that gradually become appeased or exaggerated by the mother's attitude? Who could follow this if she did not already subscribe to a view of the "inner world" of subjectivity as somehow crazy? Who could think that the being-in-fragments looks in the mirror and joyously exclaims its existence as an integrated ego–the Lacanian moment of Imaginary ecstasy–if he did not already experience the pull of destructive dissociation within the psyche, the deep urge to throw it all away? Psychoanalysis, that is, reflects and develops the passion of that inner excess, that which cannot be pinned down or wished away, that demand which will not leave us alone. This reflection is always in tension, it is true, with an alternative, colonizing impulse to make this "irrational" rational, to drag it kicking and no doubt screaming into the light of the analytic eye; as many have observed (e.g., Moi 1989), this impulse is the originating motive for psychoanalysis itself, making sense of–and hence defusing–hysteria. But just as there are no total cures, there are also no total alleviations of the underside of the psyche; psychoanalysis, however hard it has tried, has never quite managed to tame itself or its object of study: its respect for the excessive still remains.

Applied to racism and bigotry, there is a history of psychoanalytic theories that tend to emphasize processes of projection in which the denigrated other is made to carry unwanted aspects of the self; in its more sophisticated version, this has been linked to social and historical formations of oppression and discrimination (e.g. Fanon 1952; Kovel 1984; 1995; Rustin 1991; Frosh 1989; 1997). This work has proved very fertile in linking established psychoanalytic views of the intersubjective defenses of the mind (putting hated and feared elements into the other, for example through projective identification) with the political structures supporting racism, demonstrating compellingly how certain groups become repositories for the paranoid, destructive and sexually exciting fantasies of others. Rustin (1991), for instance, shows how the process of racist thought is one in which unwanted or feared aspects of the self are experienced as having the power to disturb the personality in so damaging a way that they have to be repudiated and evacuated or projected into the racialized other, chosen for this purpose both because of preexisting social prejudices and because, as a category of fantasy, racial "otherness" can be employed to mean virtually anything. Once the projective impulse takes hold, it feeds on itself, creating a lie at the center of the personality, something destructive and damaged, which must be endlessly defended against, poisoning the world around. Rustin comments, "The 'lie' in this system of personality organization becomes positively valued, as carrying for the self an important aspect of its defense against weakness, loss, or negative judgment" (69). The more strongly it is held, the more it is needed; the subject falls in love with the lie and fearful of anything that challenges it, and the investment in racism becomes profound.

Kovel's (1995) analysis parallels this account in many respects, but makes an additional contribution by linking the historical trends leading to Western racism, particularly as seen in its American forms, with the psychoanalytic exploration of the workings of the racist psyche. Specifically, he contends that a set of social circumstances, economically motivated, with slavery and capitalist accumulation at their center, produced in the West a psychological imperative to disown multiplicity and sensuality and to project it into the black Other. The power of this psychosocial organisation is so great that it can "enter into the evolution of the psyche" (212), closing down the possibility of responding to any new experience that is not in the interests of accumulation. Instead, the repressed sensuousness of the white subject, preserved unconsciously because otherwise the psyche dries up completely and is "deadened," is experienced as threatening and subversive, as well as exciting. It is bestial, animal, fit for projection onto those human subjects designated by the complex social drive of capitalist imperialism as nonhuman–in the American context, the slaves.

These and other adventures in extending psychoanalysis to encompass a theory of racism have been very productive and have done a considerable amount to remedy the historical silence of psychoanalysis on issues of social hatred. However, one characteristic they share is a limited account of what constitutes the "other" on the psychological level. For Rustin, it is by nature an empty category, available to be used as the repository of the racist's dark impulses. For Kovel, it is a historically constructed symbolic category made to carry the burden of that which is repudiated from the white psyche. More generally, these theories suggest a relatively clear differentiation between self and other, between what the subject experiences and what the other represents. Yet when one surveys the virulence of bigotry, hatred, and fear of the other as manifested in the intersubjective, interpersonal, and social spheres–when one sees its prevalence and the ease with which what is other becomes what is foreign or alien, and the degree to which this represents a threat–then one has to ask, what exactly might be the characteristics of, or at least ascribed to, otherness in general, and why does it so strain the tolerance of the self? Kleinians in particular are wont to make it a kind of bad object, but this is not enough; the connections are so profound, so distressed, that the other must mean something more, something from which each one of us cannot escape.

Primacy of the Other

Recently, Judith Butler (2003) has produced some exquisite writing on the melancholic aspects of experience, stressing the humanizing experience of loss, the way it moves towards making a life "grievable." Recognizing the humanity of the other becomes a political as well as a psychological priority; denying this humanity is the precondition and consequence of violence, an assault on the other that leaves the self bereft. Numerous issues arise from this: what is the relationship between self and other? What produces the violence that is so entwined with dehumanizing? What is it about otherness that is so threatening, to everyone it seems, even the most liberal of liberal humanists? How, in fact, using the well-worn Kleinian dimension, can we assert the imperative of the depressive position over the attractions of paranoia and hate?

There are now a number of converging theoretical approaches that give primacy to the notion of the other as formative of the self. For some, such as Levinas (1991), this is an ethical position, an irreducible feature of the human condition: if we cannot place the other first, we are not human subjects at all. For others, it is a psychological fact that otherness is primary, with whatever social, ethical, and political consequences may follow from that. Jean Laplanche is a key source here. Consistently over decades, Laplanche has argued that the great contribution of Freudian psychoanalysis to Western thought is in its "Copernican revolution," through which an act of decentering occurs whereby the subject is no longer capable of being taken as the source and repository of psychic life. This decentering has the name of the unconscious, which reveals with great intensity the alien core inside each one of us. In Laplanche's words:

> The sharpness of [Freud's] vision is testified to by terms like "internal foreign body" or "reminiscence." They define the unconscious as an alien inside me and even put inside me by an

> alien. At his most prophetic, Freud does not hesitate over formulations which go back to the idea of possession. (1997, 658)

This notion, that what psychoanalysis reveals is the otherness within, is fairly widely shared among post-Lacanian psychoanalytic critics. For example, Julia Kristeva's meditation, Strangers to Ourselves (1988), is premised on exactly this same idea, that the existence of an unconscious "inside" each one of us means the haunting of the individual human subject by something else, strange, foreign, and real:

> With the Freudian notion of the unconscious the involution of the strange in the psyche loses its pathological aspect and integrates within the assumed unity of human beings an otherness that is both biological and symbolic and becomes an integral part of the same. . . . [The] uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners, we are divided. (181)

Note the use of the term "uncanny" here, which references the same set of processes as Laplanche's admiration for "possession" in the quotation given above. This is not an assertion of the mysticism of the psychoanalytic project, of course, but rather the opposite. Psychoanalysis claims that there is an unconscious of a specifically material kind, acting from "within" the subject with the phenomenology of something "outside," and giving rise to precisely those feelings of something nonmaterially "uncanny," of "possession," which are so commonly drawn on to give voice to a sense of the mystical or even the sublime. To put it another way, the functioning of the unconscious as an "internal other" radically disturbs the rather homely sense that each of us is "master" of himself or herself, and in doing so it opens the way to a collapse of confidence in the self, to a sense that however robust it might seem, it has already been infiltrated by something subjectively inexplicable, something that the "self" is not.

But what is this inside/outside? How do these terms relate to one another and to the idea of an other? The notion of otherness is premised on something that is not the same, hence something outside, yet what is being evoked here is an interpenetration, a one-within-the-other, inescapably together yet experienced as troubling and dangerous. Laplanche's next move is helpful here. Praising the Freudian decentering, he also argues that it is incomplete, that the "Copernican revolution" is "unfinished":

> From the moment the unconscious is brought back from its alienness to what one could call, along with theologians, an intimor intimo meo ["something more inward than my own inwardness"]–we can only observe a return to centering: there is something in me which I've split off from, denied, but which I must re-assimilate. Certainly, the ego is not the master of its own house, but it is, after all, nonetheless at home there. (1997, 659)

Not for the first time, psychoanalysis is accused of betraying its own radical vision, its capacity to roam with the tigers as they worry and tear at the fragile fabric of human egotism. Psychoanalysis shows us that we are "not the master of [our] own house," but in its emancipatory and therapeutic move, it suggests that we could be, that what it takes is, as Freud (1917) claims, merely that the patient should be repositioned so that he "has rather less that is unconscious and rather more that is conscious in him than he had before" (435).

This, it seems, is similar to the disparaging contrast Philip Rieff (1966) made between the "ecstatic attitude" characteristic of the therapeutic optimism of Jung, Reich, and others, and the purity–and the pessimism so attractive to the liberal consciousness–of the Freudian "analytic attitude," promising nothing by way of consolation, only more (and harder-to-bear) knowledge. For Laplanche, the relapse into the hope of mastery, the shift towards cure, perhaps, is a retreat from recognition of the essential alienness of human subjectivity. Moreover, it is not an accidental retreat, but inherent in the material. As John Fletcher (1999) writes in his introduction to Laplanche's Essays on Otherness:

> To this dialectic between a decentering to which Freud officially aligns himself and a recurrent recentering, Laplanche joins the diagnostic notion of a wandering or going-astray of Freudian thought. . . . These wanderings astray are magnetized and drawn by the object of inquiry even when they lead to an impasse. The covering over and occlusion of the discovery of the radical otherness of the unconscious and sexuality in Freud's thought, Laplanche suggests, trace out the movements of just such a covering over in the human subject itself. (3)

Awareness of the extent to which what is other dominates our existence is too painful, too terrifying, to be maintained; instead, both the subject and psychoanalysis itself "wander" back from the momentary vision of this truth, to the fantasy of completeness, of narcissistic selfhood. There is something to be alert to here in reflecting on the impossibility of acceptance of the other, or at least on how painful such an acceptance can be.

Lacan might have called this process of covering-over "the Imaginary," mistaking the big Other of essential alienness for the little other of the specular image. Under the sway of Imaginary fantasies, the subject can hope for unity, for complete control and mastery of otherness, for the reward of total fulfilment. But, as we know, such

Imaginary balloons are prone to being punctured; unfortunately, they also tend to create death and destruction for everyone in their way. For Laplanche, the theoretical terrain is different; where Lacan makes the Symbolic Other abstract and dogmatic, Laplanche sees the other in very precise terms as that which makes the subject, both troubling and constituting it at the same time. Here is his own contrast with Lacan:

> What guarantees the alienness of the other? Can one affirm here, with Lacan, the priority of language? If for my part, I speak rather of a "message," this is for at least two well-defined reasons: firstly, the message can just as easily be nonverbal as verbal; and for the baby it is principally nonverbal. Secondly, emphasizing "language" effaces the alterity and individuality of the other in favor of transindividual structures. (1997, 660)

The other is very specific for Laplanche: rather than being general and "transindividual," it is the actual adult in the infant-adult relationship. This adult plays a "seductive" role, where the term "seduction" is employed because the adult's "message" is "enigmatic," exciting yet also mystifying. As Fletcher (1999) explains, Laplanche builds here on the Lacanian distinction "between a signifier of–a specific meaning or signified–and a signifier to–addressed to and interpellating a specific subject, a subject who may not be able to attribute a specific signified to it but who knows that it is addressed to [him]" (12). That is, the child knows that she or he is in receipt of some kind of message from the other, but this message is opaque or "enigmatic": it cannot be adequately translated. The child feels called, addressed, but does not know to what end; generalizing the famous Freudian question about femininity, the subject asks, "What does the other want?" For instance, the child knows of the breast as an object of desire, but also has a sneaking feeling that the breast wants something too. "The maternal breast," writes Fletcher, apart from satisfying the infant's needs and offering warmth and comfort, is itself an erogenous organ and agent of maternal fantasy" (1999, 14). "Incorporating" this object, as contemporary psychoanalysis might have it, means taking in the unanswerable question of the other: "What does it want (from me)?" That question, by the way, is the one that plagues all who are put in the position of Imaginary authority: the teacher, the lover, the parent, the psychoanalyst; each of these "impossible professions" is impossible in part because it is based on an enigmatic question, one not in any way formulated or articulable, but it nevertheless keeps probing away, undermining the very claims that it seems to support. My authority is premised on my knowledge; but how can I answer a question that refuses to be formed? Similarly, my selfhood is based on my psychic integrity, but how can this be sustained when I have the feeling, always and everywhere, that something else is speaking within me–something over which I have no control (the defining feature of the unconscious), and the voice of which I cannot even properly hear?

What makes the message enigmatic, according to Laplanche, is not simply the child's limited conceptual understanding. It is, rather, the way desire operates within the adult: bearing the traces of her or his own untranslatable residue, a kind of traumatic kernel, the adult speaks from her or his unconscious; so in the most important way, not only does the child not know what has been said, but the adult knows not what she or he is saying. As Laplanche himself puts it:

> To address someone with no shared interpretive system, in a mainly extraverbal manner–or, which amounts to the same thing, with verbal signifiers outside their linguistic "usage"–such is the function of adult messages, which I claim to be simultaneously and indissociably enigmatic and sexual–in so far as they are not transparent to themselves, but compromised (in the psychoanalytic sense of the term) by the adult's relation to his own unconscious, by unconscious sexual fantasies set in motion by his relation to the child. (1997, 661)

The child is thus "seduced" by enigmatic signifiers that arise from the external other and yet are constitutive of the child's own unconscious, in a never-ending cycle from generation to generation, laying a mystery, an alienness, at the center of psychic life. This mystery is sexual, desiring, provoked by the same unconscious message implanted in the now-adult subject by the adult of her or his infancy; sexuality here, in the full Freudian sense, with all its disruptiveness and refusal to be reduced to something relational, is an alien anthem playing within each one of us. This is why the sexual can itself be experienced as "other," as something that takes us over, as a "not-me" that is at one and the same time the source of the subject's most intimate being.

Laplanche's theory has a range of connections with other psychoanalytic approaches, from the Lacanian mirror phase through Winnicottian notions of containment to recent developments on mentalizing such as that of Target and Fonagy, who write: "Unconsciously and pervasively, the caregiver ascribes a mental state to the child with her behavior; this is gradually internalized by the child, and lays the foundations of a core sense of mental selfhood" (1996, 461). They thereby insist on the primacy of the other in creating the child's sense of psychic reality. But what Laplanche achieves most profoundly is to indicate that the other is not just a container or mirror, in the Winnicottian sense, nor a purveyor of narcissistic fantasy, as Lacan suggests, but is causal in the constitution of subjectivity, profoundly passionate yet utterly mysterious, and right there at the center of psychic life. The parent no more "intends" this seductive message than does the child invent it; both are ensnared by it, as a continuing disruption in the unconscious. As Laplanche elaborates:

> So we have the reality of the message and the irreducibility of the fact of communication. What psychoanalysis adds is a fact of its experience, namely that this message is frequently compromised, that it both fails and succeeds at one and the same time. It is opaque to its recipient and its transmitter alike. (1999, 169)

Something passes between them, this other and the subject, a kind of code, glittering enigmatically, attractive and elusive, seductive and irreconcilably alien. In this passing between, it becomes clear just how much there can be no subject without the other; instead, it is from the other that the subject comes.

A Melancholic Twist

In her essay "Violence, Mourning, and Politics," Butler (2003) explores the intricate relationships between selves, communities, and otherness through the lens of melancholy and loss. Perhaps deliberately, she echoes Laplanche's terminology early on in her piece, exploring the dimension of loss in human relationships.

> So when one loses, one is also faced with something enigmatic: something is hiding in the loss, something is lost within the recesses of loss. If mourning involves knowing what one has lost (and melancholia, originally, means, to a certain extent, not knowing), then it would seem to follow that mourning is maintained by its enigmatic dimension, by the experience of not knowing incited by losing what we cannot fully fathom. (3)

As she describes, the experience of loss demonstrates just how much each of us is relationally engaged with others–it shows up the intensity of that bond, which can often be experienced as excessive and uncontrollable, uncontained in the psychoanalytic sense. Butler emphasises here the surprising "not-knowingness" of loss, the way it can put us in contact with an area of unexpected dependence. This is not only an external, relational feature of loss–that you don't know what you've got until it's gone–but rather it is deeply internal, raising the specter of those same fragilities of self to which Laplanche alludes.

Deeply felt loss of the kind Butler is writing about communicates the dispersal of self; perhaps it is literally the case that with every loss something dies inside, that something being the fantasy that we are what we are, independent and autonomous and different from the other to whom we are connected. Butler elaborates:

> What grief displays . . . is the way in which we are in the thrall of our relations with others in ways that we cannot always recount or explain, in ways that often interrupt the self-conscious account of ourselves we might try to provide, in ways that challenge the very notion of ourselves as autonomous and in control. (5)

Again the reference to a kind of mystery ("ways that we cannot always recount or explain"), again it is suggested that our subjectivity is premised on the link with otherness.

Working in the domain of ethics and politics, Butler here moves on from her recent preoccupation with the effects of melancholia to ask how what is melancholic and mournful can be turned into an appreciation of the other, of what constitutes the essential humanity of the other person. Reflecting on the way certain others are written out of history, have their humanity decried in the interests, and as a consequence, of violence, she argues that what makes us prone to the other's violence is also what makes us involved with the other–our mutual dependence, our neediness. The "conception of the human" that she employs here is

> one in which we are, from the start, given over to the other, one in which we are, from the start, even prior to individuation itself, and by virtue of bodily requirements, given over to some set of primary others: this makes us vulnerable to those we are too young to know and to judge and, hence, to violence, but also to another range of touch, a range which includes the eradication of our being at the one end, and the physical support for our lives, at the other. (12-13)

Bodily and psychically–the two are in an important sense one and the same here–the infant is in the hands of the other, with all the propensity that situation possesses for love and care, and violence and neglect. What does the subject seek here, and what does it find? That in every interstice of experience, every look and wish, every psychic nook and cranny, something is there, even if that something actually becomes marked by its absence–a lack of holding for example, a silence or a phobic or depressive looking-away, perhaps what Bion (1962) calls the "no-breast."

Currently, there is much interest in the phenomenon of recognition, as it relates to the bringing into being of the subject through being "hailed" by the other. Jessica Benjamin, with whom Butler has been in productive debate, has made this a key element in her systematic exploration of the constitution of "intersubjectivity" in psychic life. Whereas traditional psychoanalytic (especially object relations) theory has been interested in the ways in which individuals incorporate aspects of the outside world, for example, taking in maternal or paternal attributes, intersubjectivism spotlights this question of recognition, of appreciating, accepting and relating to others as "like subjects" (Benjamin 1998). The self consequently can be seen to arise out of a process of recognizing the intentionality and agency (what Benjamin calls the "authorship") of the loved other and identifying with this. This idea moves psychoanalytic theory away from its tendency to see social life as a struggle between individuals and towards a vision of the bridging of differences. However, in the intersubjectivist version there is still a propensity to postulate the separateness of the other, out of which recognition arises; indeed, it is partly in appreciation of the other's difference that the value of recognition lies.

Moving the argument on here, Butler suggests that in the search for recognition that constitutes the relation to the other, there is constant transformation: in seeking recognition, the subject is already in a relationship with the other, and is changed by that relationship. This again muddies the waters, obscuring the boundary, making subject and object, self and other, indistinguishable ethically and possibly psychologically. What Butler alights on here, in tune with Benjamin it should be noted, is the question of what kind of being is created out of the intersubjective encounter, out of the search for recognition. (Even Lacan is present here, with his "What constitutes me as a subject is my question" [1953, 86.]) Aligning herself with the most challenging position one can envisage, Butler suggests that the being this creates, the human subject of this kind of subject-subject discourse, is the one who puts the other first:

> To ask for recognition, or to offer it, is precisely not to ask for recognition for what one already is. It is to solicit a becoming, to instigate a transformation, to petition the future always in relation to the Other. It is also to stake one's own being, and one's own persistence in one's own being, in the struggle for recognition. This is perhaps a version of Hegel that I am offering, but also a departure, since I will not discover myself as the same as the "you" upon which I depend in order to be. This is, as it were, a Levinasian departure from within the Hegelian scheme. And what that means is that your difference from me becomes, as it were, the ground of my being. (2003, 25)

Back, it seems, to Levinas and the primacy of the other: in recognizing the other's being and claim on us, we have the ethical imperative of human subjecthood. Levinas himself expresses the issue as follows:

> The humanity of consciousness is definitely not in its powers, but in its responsibility: in passivity, in reception, in obligation with regard to the other. It is the other who is first, and there the question of my sovereign consciousness is no longer the first question. (1991, 112)

But there is a quandary here, arising out of the contrast between this assertion of the crucial presence of the other in constructing the subject–a presence that is psychological as well as ethical–and the hatred translated into racist and other violence, described at the start of this essay. If one assumes that there is a relationship between hatred and fear, that is, that the wish to obliterate the other arises out of the subject's own anxiety of dissolution, then what is it that makes the other so terrifying? Butler, like Zizek (1994), tracks the ways in which the very unreality of the denigrated other sustains it in the face of violence, making for an escalating phenomenon of hatred. Being unreal, being fantastic, this other cannot actually be eradicated; in a sense, the perfect enemy is the one who does not exist, who can be reinvented every time to face the subject's renewed wrath. But why? Why the fear and loathing?

Othering Otherness

The argument here has focused on the centrality of the other in the construction of the subject. The reason why it makes no sense to insist on a clear boundary between self and other is that the latter is constantly implicated in the former, not just being carried around as a set of memories and identifications, but absolutely "imbricated," as the poststructuralists used to say, in and through its very being. The "enigmatic signifier" faces us with a deeply mysterious yet absolutely concrete realization of the other's desire within us; this can be seen as producing the unconscious as a mode of "outsideness" within. Taking this argument on, the search for recognition of and by the other identified in intersubjectivist theory becomes a highly complex process in which what is being sought is a link with an other who can embody this internal strangeness and ease the subject out of it. "Soliciting a becoming," as Butler puts it, is entwined with the other's difference because it is in this difference that the supposed answer to the subject's question might be found; sameness, after all, can do no more than confirm what is already known. Hence the link with Levinas, whose ideas are not concerned solely with the ethical foundation of subjecthood, but also with its ontology. Recognition of the other, in the strong sense of giving the other ascendancy, is a key element in the maintenance of subjecthood because it brings the internal other to life, holding out the hope that something can be done with it, that the other can name it and give it shape.

In their work on early psychic life, Fonagy and Target (1996; 2000; Target and Fonagy 1996) offer the idea that the emergence of mentalizing, the capacity "to assume the existence of thoughts and feelings in oneself and in others, and to recognize these as connected to outer reality" is "deeply embedded in the child's primary object relationships, principally in the 'mirroring' relationship with the caregiver" (Fonagy and Target 2000, 854-55). "Understanding the nature of the mental world cannot be done alone," they write; "it requires discovery and recognition of the self in the eye of the other" (Target and Fonagy 1996, 461). This is but one example, attractive because of the offered detailed clinical and empirical grounding, of the view being taken here, that the creation of the mental life of the subject depends upon the existence and psychic capacities of the other. The infant feels emotions welling up, is psychically entangled in a sense of something passionate and material but horribly unknown that has its existence maybe "inside," maybe "outside." Looking at the other who is also deeply present, and thus not at a distance but nevertheless "different," the infant absorbs the message of what that fragmenting state may be. Something meaningful comes into existence, out of the other's mirroring of the subject's confusion.

In the light of Laplanche's theory, one can add to this the idea that the other also does not "know" what she or he is reflecting "back"; rather, her or his own unconscious desires are stirred up. This is the area of mystery arising from the untranslatable messages left through the previous generation's enigmatic signifiers. For the infant, then, the act of seeking the other's mind in order to give form to its own internal strangeness brings with it comfort and order (mentalizing), but also produces further disturbance. This, perhaps, can be taken as a model for the subject-object encounter throughout life, not just in early infancy. We "lean on" others to make sense of the unspeakable elements of our own subjectivities; in periods of loving intimacy, we do indeed find this, but we are also invaded by the other's mystery too, keeping the whole cycle going.

If we look to the other to bring us to life in this way, then his or her existence is an absolute necessity. But this dependence, this genuine psychological primacy of the other, is also what is hardest to bear: it threatens to make identities unsustainable, selfhood to collapse. The "other" that is so intimate inside us–the unexplained message of the unconscious–"calls out" to the other that is apparently outside, bypassing ego and self, desiring something without quite knowing what it is. To borrow the Kleinian terminology for a moment, what else could this bring up inside the subject but the most virulent paranoid-schizoid fantasies? The "ex-centric" location of psychic life (in and of the other) is what most challenges and draws the subject, enriching it and moving it on ("instigating a transformation," as Butler writes), but it also threatens to kill it completely, to make the subject irrelevant. Fighting for its continued existence, the subject seeks the other to give shape to its inner unknown message; but it might also turn on the other, as on that inner life, seeing in it not just the "reflection" or repository of inner doubts projected outwards, but the actual, material source of those doubts. If the other is primary and one is torn apart by otherness within, then hatred for the other can become the overwhelming reality.

There is clearly a danger of psychologizing here, so it is worth reiterating the significance of social and historical conditions in the grounding and production of racist and other forms of hate. This essay, however, is an attempt to approach the intensity of that hate, its subjective, interpersonal, and even intersubjective virulence. In the contemporary psychoanalytic work with which I have been concerned here, what is stressed is not just the connection between subject and other, but the "originary" function of the other in forming the subject, and the continuing causal force of that other in psychic life. The other is marked by difference, otherwise it would not be genuinely "other," but this difference is not just external to the subject; it is right there at its unconscious core. There are conditions of insecurity, oppression, and violence, so many of them it seems that they swamp the modern world, under which this internal otherness is not a source of solace and creativity so much as a disturbance, a reminder of the "Real" of the Lacanians, with its grimness and its continual threat of the abyss. When this happens, otherness is attacked. In turn, this diminishes the possibilities for transformation through recognition by and of the other, leading to a more isolated and poisonous "internal" otherness, the weeds of doubt, the wilderness within. This is perhaps the way the lie, to which Rustin (1991) refers, grows. The subject becomes more and more dissipated in its own violence, more tempted to strike out, to hate for its own sake, to hate itself with all the world, to hate all difference, which it finds in everything because that is what difference is–to hate, that is, just to hate.

Centre for Psychosocial Studies
Birkbeck College
University of London
London WC1E 7HXU
England
s.frosh@bbk.ac.uk

References

Benjamin, J. 1998. Shadow of the Other: Intersubjectivity and Gender in Psychoanalysis. New York: Routledge

Bion, W. 1962. Learning from Experience. London: Maresfield.

Butler, J. 2003. Violence, Mourning, Politics. Studies in Gender and Sexuality 4:

Fanon, F. 1952. Black Skin, White Masks. London: Pluto, 1967.

Fletcher, J. 1999. Psychoanalysis and the Question of the Other. Introduction to Laplanche 1999, pp. 1-51.

Fonagy, P., and M. Target, M. 1996. Playing with Reality: 1. Theory of Mind and the Normal Development of Psychic Reality. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 77:217-33.

__________, and __________. 2000. Playing with Reality: 3. The Persistence of Dual Psychic Reality in Borderline Patients. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 81:853-73.

Freud, S. 1917. Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis. Standard Edition 16. London: The Hogarth Press, 1963

Frosh, S. 1989. Psychoanalysis and Psychology. London: Macmillan.

__________. 1997. For and Against Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge.

Kovel, J. 1984. White Racism. London: Free Association Books.

__________. 1995. On Racism and Psychoanalysis. In A. Elliott and S. Frosh, eds., Psychoanalysis in Contexts. London: Routledge, pp. 205-22

Kristeva, J. 1988. Strangers to Ourselves. Trans. L. Roudiez. London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991.

Lacan, J. 1953. The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis. In Écrits: A Selection. Trans. A. Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1977, pp. 30-113.

Laplanche, J. 1997. The Theory of Seduction and the Problem of the Other. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 78:653-66.

__________. 1999. Essays on Otherness. Trans. J. Fletcher. London: Routledge.

Levinas, E. 1991. Entre Nous: On Thinking_of_the_Other. Trans. M. Smith and B. Harshav. London: Athlone, 1998.

Moi, T. 1989. Patriarchal Thought and the Drive for Knowledge. In T. Brennan, ed., Between Feminism and Psychoanalysis. London: Routledge, pp. 189-205.

Rieff, P. 1966. The Triumph of the Therapeutic. Harmondsworth: Penguin

Rustin, M. 1991. The Good Society and the Inner World. London: Verso.

Target, M., and P. Fonagy. 1996. Playing with Reality: 2. The Development of Psychic Reality from a Theoretical Perspective. International Journal of Psycho-Analysis, 77:459-79.

Zizek, S. 1991. Looking Awry: an Introduction to Jacques Lacan through Popular Culture. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

__________. 1994. The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality. London: Verso.