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Psychodynamics in Times of Austerity
18th to 20th May 2018
Lisbon، Portugal

Psychodynamics in Times of Austerity، a Psychoanalysis and Politics spring symposium in the rooms of the Portuguese Psychoanalytical Society، May 18th–20th 2018، Avenida da Rep□blica 97، 50 ، http://www.psa-pol.org 1050-190، Lisboa

Call for papers (deadline Jan. 20th 2018):
"One bright day in late autumn a family of Ants were bustling about in the warm sunshine، drying out the grain they had stored up during the summer، when a starving Grasshopper، his fiddle under his arm، came up and humbly begged for a bite to eat. "What!" cried the Ants in surprise، "haven't you stored anything away for the winter? What in the world were you doing all last summer?" "I didn't have time to store up any food،" whined the Grasshopper؛ "I was so busy making music that before I knew it the summer was gone." The Ants shrugged their shoulders in disgust. "Making music، were you?" they cried. "Very well؛ now dance!" And they turned their backs on the Grasshopper and went on with their work" (Aesop ca. 600 BC). This fable can be read as advocating austerity and condemning as irresponsible the grasshopper's orientation towards the pleasure and joy of the moment. To Yanis Varoufakis (2016)، "Any narrative of this type،" referring to a recent myth where Greeks (primarily) are cast as the grasshoppers and Germans (primarily) as the ants، "is terribly misleading as a description of the causes of our current crisis".

The word 'austerity' derives from Latin 'austerus'، severe، and denotes 1) sternness or severity in manner or attitude، plainness or simplicity in appearance، or 2) difficult economic conditions created by government measure to reduce public expenditure. As a political-economic term it refers to policies that aim to reduce budget deficits through spending cuts، tax increases، or a combination of both. Since governments that tend to push through austerity tend to come from the right، they have an ideological preference for lower taxes and a smaller state and would thus aim to cut state spending. These measures tend to increase unemployment and reduce consumption. On the basis of classic liberal ideas austerity emerged as a doctrine of neoliberalism in the 20th Century.

To Joseph E. Stiglitz، "Austerity has failed repeatedly، from its early use under US President Herbert Hoover، which turned the stock-market crash into the Great Depression، to the IMF "programs" imposed on East Asia and Latin America in recent decades. And yet، when Greece got into trouble، it was tried again." Though Greece succeeded in converting a primary budget deficit into a primary surplus، the contraction in government spending led to "25٪ unemployment، a 22٪ fall in GDP since 2009، and a 35٪ increase in the debt-to-GDP ratio" (2015).

To Amartya Sen، after 2008، "There was an odd confusion in policy thinking between the real need for institutional reform in Europe and the imagined need for austerity – two quite different things"، and cutting public expenditure did not serve the cause of institutional reform. Sen makes the point that economic growth is needed if we want to reduce public debt، and austerity is essentially anti-growth. Second، while the public debt-to GDP ratio was considerably larger in Britain from the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s than at any time since the crisis in 2008. Yet at that time، Britain was confidently

building a welfare state rather than panicking.

Welfare states are now in process of being dismantled، and redistribution takes place، within nations from poorer to richer citizens، and similarly between them. The one dominant discourse still standing is the economic one. In Paul Verhaege's words: "We live in a neoliberal society in which everything has become a product. Furthermore، this is linked to a so-called meritocracy in which everyone is held responsible for their own success or failure – the myth of the self-made man." Within this logic، the most important criterion is profit، or money. Matters that until recently were human rights، such as medical care، education and a free press، have become commodities، negotiable objects، and، at least in part، privileges. The individual has a duty to succeed according to an "objective" standard that is set externally. In a management culture where efficiency becomes the highest and indeed، the only good the individual is no longer willing to make sacrifices for the organisation، but is only interested in what it can provide. "In concrete terms this means that everything is measured، preferably quite literally، in terms of production، growth and profit. To conduct these measurements each organisation must make frequent evaluations، which within a short space of time take on the air of formal inspections. After all everyone is now suspect because everyone is out for their own good." Arguably، this state of affairs results in a shift from intrinsic to extrinsic motivation، a loss of autonomy and an erosion of trust.

On the level of affect، this recalls Adorno's description of 'the coldness of isolated competitors'، "people completely cold who cannot endure their own coldness and yet cannot change it. Every person today، without exception، feels too little loved، because every person cannot love enough" (1966). "What recourse does a child have if he is uncontained?" asks Carvalho (2002). "One answer might be identification with the figure that fails to contain، and the fantasy of occupying the object. The logic of this is supplied by Matte Blanco's formulation of the basic matrix، as well as by the characteristics of the infinite set in which the individual may experience himself as indistinguishable from his objects، who in turn may be indistinguishable from one another. The statement، in an infinite set where symmetrical logic is predominant، 'Mummy dismisses B' is interchangeable with 'B dismisses Mummy' or، of course، 'the analyst dismisses B'." Or، in Adorno's formulation، "Whoever is hard with himself earns the right to be hard with others as well and avenges himself for the pain whose manifestation he was not allowed to show and had to repress."

An idea proposed by Freud in Civilization and its Discontents (1930) is that individuals are expect to live up to an ideal image imposed on them by society. Their failure to do so، and even their success، lead to forms of suffering. We may assume that different social structures will lead to different areas of tension between individuals and society، between different individuals within a society and within the individuals themselves. We invite papers that problematize the relation between today's politics and ideology of austerity and people's fantasies، affects، defences – and that reflect on the barriers to and possibilities for affective and social renewal.

This is an interdisciplinary conference – we invite theoretical contributions and historical، literary or clinical case studies on these and related themes from philosophers، sociologists، psychoanalysts، psychotherapists، group analysts، literary theorists، historians، anthropologists، and others. Perspectives from different psychoanalytic schools will be most welcome. We promote discussion among the presenters and participants، for the symposium series creates a space where representatives of different perspectives come together، engage with one another's contributions and participate in a community of thought. Therefore، attendance to the whole symposium is obligatory. Due to the nature of the forum

audio recording is not permitted.

Presentations are expected to take half an hour. Another 20 minutes is set aside for discussion. There is a 10 min break in between each paper. Please send an abstract of 200 to 300 words، attached in a by January 20th 2018. We will respond by، psychoanalysis.politics@gmail.com word-document، to and present a preliminary programme on February 1st 2018. If you would like to sign up to participate without presenting a paper، please contact us after this date.

This is a relatively small symposium where active participation is encouraged and an enjoyable social atmosphere is sought. A participation fee، which includes a shared dinner with wine، of 299 before March 1st 2018 – 377 between March 1st 2018 and April 10th 2018 – 455 after April 10th، is to be paid before the symposium. Fees must be paid via Picatic (Picatic fees are not included in the price). Your place is only confirmed once we have received your registration including payment is completed. Additional information will be given after your abstract has been accepted or after the programme has been finalized.

We would like to thank the Portuguese Psychoanalytical Society.

Unfortunately، we are unable to offer travel grants or other forms of financial assistance for this event، though we will be able to assist you in finding affordable accommodation after January 20th 2018. Please contact us if you wish to make a donation towards the conference. We thank all donors in advance!

NB: Please make sure you read the Guide for abstracts thoroughly: http://www.psa-pol.org/?page_id=363

Non-exclusive list of some relevant literature

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