Traces of Violence and Freedom of Thought

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Violence can be subtle; it can be elusive; it can leave human beings devastated; it can lead to domination, compliance and oppression and it can provoke resistance to the dominant socio-political context. It can lead to people's physical disappearance and it can provoke human beings to withdraw by coiling up inside. We are all tainted, whether we are actively engaged or not, by violence in its countless and troubling manifestations. By the phrase 'traces of violence' we intend to indicate a human starting point, following Jean Laplanche (1989), where the child is the recipient of enigmatic messages from an adult, and responds to what it fails to grasp by forming an unconscious, and as a corollary, an 'I'. The adult's message is opaque, not only because it conveys an unknown meaning to the child, but also because it makes manifest the

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parental unconscious; the message lacks transparency to the adult as well (1989: 125–126). Thus images and fragments of traumatic and violent scenarios are transported from one generation's unconscious to that of another, leading to cycles of repetition and retaliation, restricting one's freedom to imagine alternatives and to inhabit alternative positions. Violence and power are interlinked as the reaching out for power can lead to violent domination and, in turn, violence leads inevitably to the wish to dominate and control. Avery Gordon describes power as that

> which can be invisible, it can be fantastic, it can be dull and routine. It can be obvious, it can reach you by the baton of the police, it can speak the language of your thoughts and desires…It is dense and superficial, it can cause bodily injury, and it can harm you without seeming ever to touch you. (2008: 3)

This diverse collection of essays is joined by the aim of addressing the workings of violence and power. The essays draw attention to the inexorable conditions of violence in various geo-political locations (for example, Argentina, China, Germany, Hungary), the reach of violence across time (past, present and future) and the inevitable consequences of violence on human beings. This edited collection is located securely within a psychosocial studies framework and the articles included encompass a range of diverse theoretical frameworks. Four themes in relation to violence and power are addressed: the violence of speech, violence and domination, repetition and violence, and finally, the possibility of reparation or renewal. The authors make use of a diverse range of influences. Some adhere closely to psychoanalytic conceptualisations; others are more ambivalent, or indeed want to push psychoanalysis to claim its capacity to unsettle that which is known. All the articles aim to work within a psychosocial framework by unsettling the boundaries between psyche-social, and the commonplace demarcation between the psyche and the political. A strong theme of this collection is the attention paid to historical contexts, and this focus unsettles a dominant understanding of temporality that separates out the past and the present. Instead, the articles, explicitly or implicitly, point to the

fusion of temporalities and argue that the past persists in the present relentlessly.

In *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Horkheimer and Adorno outline how violence towards the element of nature in oneself becomes violence towards others who are seen as representatives of this repressed violence. They argue that the retreat from enlightenment into mythology lies not so much in nationalist, pagan and other modern mythologies, 'but in the Enlightenment itself when paralyzed by fear of the truth' (1997: xiv). What people want to learn from nature is to use it so as to dominate it and to dominate others. On the road to modern science, people renounce any claim to meaning; the kind of thinking that only aims to dominate becomes self-destructive. Whatever does not conform to the rule of computation and utility becomes suspect. Thus the Enlightenment has ruthlessly and, in spite of itself, extinguished any trace of its own self-consciousness—'thought becomes illusionary whenever it seeks to deny the divisive function, distancing and objectification' (1997: 39). The authors take the Odyssey as a parable of the process of enlightenment. 'The opposition of enlightenment to myth is expressed in the opposition of the surviving individual ego to multifarious fate. The eventful voyage from Troy to Ithaca is the way taken through the myths by the self—ever physically weak as against the power of nature, and attaining self-realization only in self-consciousness' (46). In discarding the awareness of oneself as nature, all the aims of one's life are nullified as means are enthroned as ends. 'Man's domination over himself, which grounds his selfhood, is almost always the destruction of the subject in whose service it is undertaken' (54). Furthermore the 'subjective spirit which cancels the animation of nature can master a despiritualized nature only by imitating its rigidity and despiritualizing itself in turn' (57). Jonathan Davidoff's chapter, 'Instrumental Subjectivity: père-suasion as père-version' interrogates Nazism as a phenomenon through which individuals renounce subjectivity for certainty of a place in the symbolic order. Davidoff, importantly, argues that the desire for certainty is a temptation for all subjects as we can give ourselves over to the certitude alleged to occur if submission to the machinery takes place.

Horkheimer and Adorno explore how suppression of nature reveals how this violence becomes violence towards an other: 'Those who spasmodically dominate nature see in a tormented nature a provocative image of powerless happiness. The thought of happiness without power is unbearable because it would then be true happiness' (172). With reference to Freud's essay on *Das Unheimliche* it is described how 'What seems repellently alien is in fact all too familiar: the infectious gestures of direct contacts suppressed by civilization, for instance, touch, soothing, snuggling up, coaxing. We are put off by the old-fashioned nature of these impulses' (1997: 182).

> The howling voice of Fascist orators and camp commandants shows the other side of the same social condition. The yell is as cold as business. They both expropriate the sounds of natural complaint and make them elements of their technique. […] The mere existence of the other is a provocation. Every 'other' person who 'doesn't know his place' must be forced back within his proper confines—those of unrestricted terror (183).

Furthermore, all prejudice is characterised as based on a false projection, that is, a form of projective behaviour from which reflection is absent. Drawing on Kant there is a gulf between the true object and the data received by the senses (the thing-in-itself and the thing-for-me) which the subject must bridge at his or her own risk. The subject creates the external world from the traces it leaves in his or her senses, and must return to the thing more than he or she receives from it to reflect the thing as it is. The 'I' is construed retrospectively by granting a synthetic unity to the external impressions and then to the internal ones, gradually separated off from them. 'The real ego is the most recent constant product of projection. […] It is only equivalent to the significance the world of objects for it. The inner depth of the subject consists in nothing other than the delicacy and wealth of the external world of perceptions. If the links are broken, the ego calcifies' (189). How the process of 'false projection' affects both the 'I' and the perceived other is described as follows:

> When the subject is no longer able to return to the object what he has received from it, he becomes poorer rather than richer. He loses the

> reflection in both directions: since he no longer reflects the object, he ceases to reflect upon himself, and loses the ability to differentiate. Instead of the voice of conscience, he hears other voices … it overflows and fades away at one and the same time. It invests the outer world boundlessly with its own content; but it invests it in fact with the void: with an overstatement of mere means, relations, machinations, and dark practice without the perspective of thought. Domination itself, which, even as absolute rule, is only a means, becomes its own purpose and extraneous purpose in uninhibited projection; indeed, it becomes purpose as such (180–190).

This viewpoint of the inexorable effects of violence on the self is taken up and explored by Kathleen Kelley-Lainé. In her chapter, 'From Totalitarian to Democratic Functioning: The Psychic Economy of Infantile Processes', she provides a case study of an individual patient to understand 'totalitarian psychic functioning' and how this infantile state can persist into adulthood, hindering the development of a more mature transitional space between self and other.

This enables us to see the link between violence done to another human being and what we might refer to as epistemic violence —acts of perception and cognition that violently subsumes the other, or object encountered, to a larger category, with no regard for the particularity of the object or person. A troubling aspect of violence is that of repetition. Julia Richter's contribution, 'Intergenerational Layers of Silence: How the Concealed or the Outspoken Remain Undiscussable or Indescribable' traces the consequences on individuals when silence and absence operates inexorably. Richter is troubled by how the past persists in the present and how multiple layers of silence and absence paralyses the working through of that which cannot be discussed, or indeed that which cannot be deciphered. She is concerned with the phenomenon of intergenerational transmission, discussing that which is lived, but is not necessarily available to be known. Shifting geographical location to Argentina, Lucia Corti's essay 'Recovered Identities: The Found Children of the Argentinian Disappeared' focuses on the troubling history of the people who were stolen and appropriated by the Argentinian military between 1976 and 1983. Through this paper, Corti argues for

the importance of truth as a central dimension, exploring the liberating effects of discovering history that has been concealed.

Where rhetoric is the art of persuasion via language, rhetorics of power are attempts to force people to see a situation in a specific way and compel them to act accordingly, importantly, coercive rhetoric is often uttered by a person who is already in a position to oppress others. 'There is no alternative' is the phrase Thatcher often repeated with reference to economic liberalism and this rhetorical trope persists in the discourses that defend and uphold the politics of austerity. 'There is no alternative' forecloses the possibility of different understandings from entering the political sphere securely and it can be taken as symbolic of the language of power, and as an example of the rhetorics of oppressive persuasion. By contrast, the psychoanalytic practice of free association, of speaking unreservedly while remaining attentive to what is being disclosed, has a potential to challenge established political frameworks. The two first chapters in this volume discuss rhetorical practices that produce obedience and inhibit thinking and pose the question: What personal and social conditions are conductive to freedom of thought? From different perspectives, Lene Auestad and Szymon Wróbel examine the role of rhetoric in the public sphere. In 'Speech, Repetition, Renewal' Auestad is concerned with hate speech and injurious speech acts; she traces through how hate speech is performative and displaces unwanted aspects of the self onto others, following cultural patterns of domination. Wróbel's essay, 'Logos, Ethos and Pathos or The Paradigm of Patho-Politics', uses Artistotle's rhetorical triad—logos, ethos, pathos—to discuss the power of rhetoric in contemporary political persuasive communication. Affect is embedded in the narratives and discourses that are spoken, or that which is made absent, because speech is concerned with the human domain, with what could have been different, and where various courses of actions are open and various interpretations are possible (Aristotle 1984: 2161). Violent discourses, to the contrary, act as if no alternative courses of action or interpretation are open to the listener; they are totalitarian in the sense that they aim to present a view of a state of affairs and a definite outcome as the only possible one. In other words, they seek to convey the position that a development, a strategy is necessary based on natural laws or scientific facts,

and thus that people are determined by forces that transcend the realm of human affairs (Arendt 1976). These discourses persuade, or rather compel them, not even telling them that they *ought*, which still leaves a notion of choice behind, but that they *must* do something. *Ought* presupposes that one can act differently, *must* goes beyond the realm of human action and freedom. Ideology, 'the logic of an idea', starts from an axiomatically accepted premise and deduces everything else from it, a process which 'like a mighty tentacle seizes you on all sides as in a vise and from whose grip you are powerless to tear yourself away' (p. 472). Thus the coercive force of logical deduction stifles thinking, which in its freedom represents its very opposite (p. 473). To Arendt, loneliness represents the essence of totalitarian rule, and it is a state which is destructive of thinking: 'In solitude […] I am "by myself", together with my self, and therefore two-in-one, whereas in loneliness I am actually one, deserted by all others' (p. 476).

In this situation, one loses the elementary confidence in the world needed for experience and for thinking, and logical deduction becomes the only (empty) 'truth' to fall back upon. Loneliness, to Arendt, 'is closely connected with the uprootedness and superfluousness which have become the curse of modern masses since the beginning of the industrial revolution […]. To be uprooted means to have no place in the world, recognized and guaranteed by others; to be superfluous means to have no place in the world at all' (p. 475). These conditions pave the way for subtle domination. In 'To Be or Bartleby: Psychoanalysis and the Crisis of Immunity', Werner Prall engages with Herman Melville's short story 'Bartleby The Scrivener'. Prall discusses the different receptions of this story within psychoanalysis and philosophy, and elaborates the divergences in order to focus on a psychoanalytic understanding of the 'foreign body'. He argues that psychoanalysis should remain true to a tradition of continuing to act as a foreign body within the social fabric in order to provoke socio-affective-political change.

Reflecting on related phenomena, Adorno approaches the theme of masses and domination from a different angle, in raising the question of how a mass becomes just that. He credits Freud with having posed such a question, in not having taken the mass formation for granted, and having

come up with an answer. In 'Freudian Theory and the Pattern of Fascist Propaganda', Adorno argues that modern mass formations cannot, in a straightforward way, be compared with biological phenomena: 'the members of contemporary masses are at least prima facie individuals, the children of a liberal, competitive and individualistic society, and conditioned to maintain themselves as independent, self-sustaining units' (1978, p. 121). Thus one would need to explain why people of today revert to patterns of behaviour which flagrantly contradict their own, as well as their civilization's level of rationality. Psychoanalysis can provide insight into how people participate, actively and affectively, through the powerful emotions of love and hate, and in how they establish their relations with 'otherness,' in reproducing the conditions of their own domination and undermining their own material interests. The agitator performs this feat by artificially creating a libidinal bond, though the element of love must remain unconscious and moulded into obedience. 'It is one of the basic tenets of fascist leadership to keep primary libidinal energy on an unconscious level so as to divert its manifestations in a way suitable to political ends' (1978, p. 121).

A reading of *Group Psychology* leads to the conclusion that the identification involved is of an early, narcissistic kind, rather than relating to a later figure of a father: 'the primitively narcissistic aspect of identification as an act of devouring, of making the beloved object part of oneself, may provide us with a clue to the fact that the modern leader image sometimes seems to be the enlargement of the subject's own personality' (1978, p. 125). The primal father becomes the group ideal, and replaces the ego ideal so as to govern the ego on the basis of an erotic tie. In this, the followers treat the object of the leader as if it were their own ego—the object serving as a substitute for an unattained ego ideal of their own. Through idealization as the partial transfer of narcissistic libido to the object, the leader can absorb and satisfy their strong narcissistic impulses. Thus the leader image is the subject writ large: 'by making the leader his ideal he loves himself as it were, but gets rid of the stains of frustration and discontent which mar his picture of his own empirical self' (p. 126). To allow narcissistic identification, the leader must appear as absolutely narcissistic; the leader himself loves no one, but allows the followers to sustain the illusion that they are equally and justly loved by their leader.

Kinga Göncz's article, 'Rhetorics of Power—Can it Dress up the Naked King? The Emperor Without Clothes'—provides a historical overview of Hungary in order to understand the contemporary political situation. Focusing on the interplay between the place of the leader in people's imaginations and the leader's personality, she argues that the need for a strong leader can be destructive as it hinders working through historical traumas.

In their study of the authoritarian personality, Adorno et al. (1950) found that together with anti-intraception and a tendency to project, and a harsh, punitive super-ego, authoritarian aggression and submission was strongly correlated with a high degree of prejudice. Authoritarian submission represents the masochistic component of authoritarianism while authoritarian aggression represents its sadistic component. In authoritarian aggression, hostility originally aroused by, and directed towards, in-group authorities is displaced on to out-groups. Rather than being intellectually confused with regard to the source of his or her frustration, the authoritarian *must* turn his or her aggression towards out-groups, because of being psychologically unable to attack in-group authorities (Adorno et al. 1950: 233). Because of having projected his or her own unacceptable impulses on to individuals belonging to out-groups, the authoritarian person is driven to see immoral attitudes in others regardless of the facts of the matter. Exaggerated toughness is most apparent in its overemphasis on the motif of power in human relationships, a disposition to view all relations in terms of categories such as strong–weak, dominant–submissive, leader–follower, where it is often difficult to determine which of these roles the subject identifies with. This 'power complex' contains contradictory elements: wanting, but fearing, to seize power; admiring power and being tempted to submit to it, but fearing the weakness this would imply; such that different features will predominate at the surface level at different times. A solution often found to this dilemma is an alignment with power figures, so that the desire for having, and for submitting to, power can be satisfied simultaneously, or by occupying a middle position in a hierarchy (1950, pp. 237–238). The strong–weak dichotomy, furthermore, is made to apply to in-groups and out-groups, 'superior' and 'inferior races'.

> [Freud] defines the realm of psychology by the supremacy of the unconscious and postulates that what is id should become ego. […] Fascism furthers this abolition in the opposite sense through the perpetuation of dependence instead of the realization of potential freedom, through expropriation of the unconscious by social control instead of making the subjects conscious of their unconscious. (Adorno 1978, p. 136)

In object-relational terms, the rhetorics of power can be seen to take on the part-object voice of a persecutory 'over-I'. Melanie Klein described the 'I' as feeling 'oppressed and paralysed by the influences of the super-ego'. No other voice or counter discourse can be heard for the 'I' distrusts 'accepting the influences of real objects, often because they are felt to be in complete opposition to the demands of the super-ego, but more often because they are too closely identified with the dreaded internal ones' (Klein 1931, p. 245). Right-wing populist discourse echoes both the voice of the 'it' and that of the 'over-I',[1] allowing for, and demanding aggression against people posited as 'other' or 'weaker' than those the listener is impelled to identify with. This process is structurally similar to that of identification with the aggressor, leaving behind a mind 'which consists only of the id and super-ego' (Ferenczi 1933, p. 163). In Ferenczi's description: 'at moments of complete exhaustion in the muscle tone […] all hope of outside help or alleviation of the trauma is abandoned. […] Insofar as this psychic being is still accessible to emotions, it turns its interests towards the only feelings left over from the process, that is, the feelings of the attacker' (Ferenczi 1985, p. 104).

We might question whether traumatised societies are more susceptible to such rhetorics of power. Aggregation and massification, in Earl Hopper's terms, is a basic assumption which characterises traumatised groups:

> An aggregate is characterised by a minimal degree of mutual attraction and involvement among three or more people who are neither interdependent nor in sympathy with one another on the basis of shared beliefs, norms and values. In contrast, a mass is characterised by a maximal degree of mutual attraction and involvement among three or more people who are neither interdependent nor in sympathy with one another but

> who share the illusion of solidarity with respect to beliefs, norms and values, usually for a brief period of time.
>
> Although the members of a mass may feel otherwise, a mass is no more a group than an aggregate is. Whereas an aggregate has too much individuality to be a group, a mass has too little. (Hopper 2003, p. 67)

A mass in the description above is very uniform or homogenous; it is characterised by fusion. People are very close together, so much so that they cannot really relate to one another; they are deprived of their individuality. An aggregate is a contrast in the sense that it preserves individuality by withdrawal, though it shares the characteristic of a lack of genuine contact between people. People may alternate between these states, as the one may serve as a defence against the other (2003, p. 66). This resembles Arendt's description of loneliness, induced in totalitarian domination by 'destroying all space between men and pressing men against one another' (1976, p. 478). Amal Treacher Kabesh's essay—Troubling States of Mind: Sacrificing the Other—is concerned with understanding how a problematic state of mind fuelled by anxiety and fear paralyses identification. The summer of 2013 in Egypt (when the Muslim Brotherhood were ousted from power) is the socio-political context from which Treacher Kabesh attempts to analyse the conditions that lead to a worrying indifference towards those who have a different value and belief system. Socio-political conditions can stimulate our anger, including when we happen to expect a contrary result, when someone shows contempt for us in connection with the things we most care about, when someone fails to return our kindnesses, with friends who do not treat us well, with those who are indifferent to the pain they cause us, is followed by an instruction to invoke such judgments and the accompanying affect in the listeners.

Rhetorics of power can become mainstream political discourses and shape people's ideology by totalising and impeding freedom of thought. This is visible in the current economic, religious and ideological fundamentalisms. To echo Thatcher's phrase, we are told that there is no alternative to protecting ourselves against 'others' who are after stealing scarce jobs and welfare goods, or who pose a threat to security. Hence, it

is argued, borders need to be closed, minorities kept at a distance, or in a state of submission, and techniques of surveillance are called for. Fear is stirred up and utilised to produce obedience to these demands, presented as fundamental and thus overriding concerns for human rights. In Moïsi's words 'the culture of fear is reducing the qualitative gap that once existed between democratic and nondemocratic regimes, for fear pushes the countries to violate their own moral principles' (2010, p. x). Think of how fear of terrorism is used to decrease freedom and the validity of the rule of law. An attempted ban on imagining alternatives extends to forgetfulness towards the past.

'We live in an age that pays lip service to history, yet which continually undermines the ties we have to the past', wrote Darian Leader (2013). This statement, which relates to manic depression and the healthcare system's denial and attempted erasure of the meaning of personal history, can be given a wider reading in the context of the present investigation. Undermining history, memory and the ties with the past serves a totalising hegemonic purpose. Historical consciousness, on the other hand, can introduce alternative discourses that challenge the dominating voices of the 'it' and the 'over-I' (Bettelheim 1983). The present, as well as hegemonic historical discourses, can be put into question in the light of the past. Walter Benjamin (1943) calls for a questioning of the pillars of history and culture 'for there is no testimony of culture that it is not also a testimony of barbarism'. The matter of the persistence of history and the consequences of the incapacities to think about what is inherited and perpetuated is explored by Edward Weisband in his article 'Shame Disciplines in the Chinese Cultural Revolution: Lurid and Ludic'. Weisband provides a case study of a different time and political region as he demonstrates how shame dynamics in Chinese Confucian families enabled the violence that took place during the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the rejection of previous cultural traditions and values.

By means of the figure of the 'ragman', Benjamin highlights the importance and unsettling power of what mainstream discourses scorn. He calls for the historian to 'brush history against the grain' (Benjamin 1943, p. 433) as a way of countering the totalising historical discourse by re-introducing what hitherto had been excluded, perhaps feared and deemed abject. Foucault's thinking on 'speaking truth to power', or

parrhesia, is relevant in this respect. It involves: 'the risk of offending or provoking the other person; it is truth subject to risk of violence'. The truth spoken challenges the bond between the speaker and the addressee, at the risk of ending the relationship. Parrhesia means telling all, saying everything, without withholding or concealment. It can be understood in two senses: saying anything 'that comes to mind, anything that serves the cause one is defending, anything that serves the passion or interest driving the person who is speaking'—or in a more positive sense, of 'telling the truth without concealment, reserve, [or] empty manner of speech'. In the positive sense of the term, the truth must be the personal opinion of the speaker—one personally signs the truth stated, binds oneself to it, and is thus bound to and by it (2011, pp. 9–11).

We might ask how the practice of psychoanalysis, and free association, stand in relation to this, and about its political implications. With reference to the protected and confidential space of the clinical setting, Thompson writes: 'Most of us either speak impulsively without awareness of what we say or think through everything we are about to disclose before speaking'. By contrast, 'speaking unreservedly while remaining attentive to what is being disclosed' (2001, p. 75) appears radical, emphasising the significance of the promise to free associate, rather than the activity as such. In Freud's words; 'You must never give in to these criticisms'—which could be conceived of as related to the power of the analyst, figures from one's past, socially more or less conscious restrictions combined with one's own—'indeed, you must say it precisely because you feel an aversion to doing so. […] Finally, never forget that you have promised to be absolutely honest, and never leave anything out because, for some reason or other, it is unpleasant to tell it' (1913, p. 135). What social or political conditions or frameworks are presupposed in, or challenged by, these ideas?

The practice of free association represents a promise of freedom of thought. Where fear is instigated as an attack on thought, memory, curiosity, imagination, creativity—or mental freedom, an internalization of coercion takes place, based on the feeling that some things are too dangerous to be thought about. Thus creativity is severely restrained—one's thoughts can no longer move around freely for fear of what they might encounter (Auestad 2012). Being able to speak to

a listening other who can bear what one is saying; who is not harmed by one's words; and who does not condemn the thoughts they contain, enables a new mental freedom. If someone else can hear and reflect on what one is saying, one may gradually hear oneself without fearing the results of the attention. One's mind can go on a journey to situations far and near, noticing their impressions as they pass by, as in Freud's (1913) simile of looking at the landscape through a train window. Another reason why we have chosen 'freedom of thought' rather than 'freedom of speech' as part of this book's title, is that 'freedom of speech' as we shall see in what follows, is currently often used to defend racist, sexist and other hate speech. 'Freedom of speech' in this context becomes a form of bullying, where the freedom of the speaker is used to undermine the freedom of the intended recipient. Such speech is repetitive, rather than expressive of thought and it does not promote thinking or thoughtfulness. It becomes 'mere talk' which does not illuminate. 'When men are deprived of the public space […] they retreat into their freedom of thought'. (Arendt 1983, p. 9)

This collection of essays ends with two contributions that focus attention on the possibility of repair and renewal: 'Ferenc Merei and the Politics of Psychoanalysis in Hungary' by Ferenc Erős and the contribution by Julia Borossa entitled 'Histories of Violence: Outrage, Identification and Analytic Work'. Erős's chapter focuses on introducing Ferenc Mérei, an important figure in Hungarian psychology. The essay examines Mérei's significant contributions in relation to social and educational psychology, psychodrama and group psychoanalysis, to name but a few of his areas of engagement. Mérei proposed the term 'allusion' to characterise the language of members of groups who share an experience that cannot necessarily be expressed. Borossa is concerned with the psychical effects of violence, arguing that violence reaches inwards and that no one involved is left untouched. Her primary question focuses on what enables the movement from outrage to identification. This troubling inquiry is pursued via a range of texts that include memoirs and novels. Borossa is engaged with how bonds can be remade so that connectedness can take place.

This book is based on a Psychoanalysis and Politics conference entitled 'Rhetorics of Power and Freedom of Thought', held at the Centre

for Advanced Studies, Central European University in Budapest in May 2014. Psychoanalysis and Politics is an international and interdisciplinary conference series, founded in 2010 (www.psa-pol.org). It aims to address how crucial contemporary political issues may be fruitfully analysed through psychoanalytic theory and vice versa—how political phenomena may reflect back on psychoanalytic thinking. The symposium series creates a space where representatives of different perspectives come together and engage with one another's contributions, participating in a community of thought.

We hope that this collection of essays stimulates thought in relation to the various troubling and troublesome themes of, power and (in)visibility—that which is made present or rendered absent. Violence, we argue, can be subtle, covert and overt. It can manifest itself in everyday and elusive interactions, in mental habits and systems of categorization, in the oppressive rule of the State or of markets, and it taints us all. There are, though, possibilities for repair and renewal, through creating spaces for thinking differently, through acting on the public and private spheres that we all inhabit, more effectively, and through claiming the capacities to be and to live otherwise.

Note

1. The use of the terms 'it' and 'over-I' draws on Bettelheim's critique of the standard English translation of Freud in *Freud and Man's Soul*.

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