THE LONELY PASSION OF THE "PEOPLE"*

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This paper explores the psychological sources of support for a leader, and unwavering belief in the illusions he promotes, which persists despite confrontation with reality. Lonely passion is an oxymoron. It is passion because of the intensity of the supporters' longing which is partially shaped by fear and loss. Their passion is lonely because they appear to be left empty with their love unrequited, having given their selves up and only having an illusion in return. It explores the effects of socio-economic disruption in creating or contributing to the development of a "social character" and threatening the integrity of the self. It explores the characteristics of the leader, including methods of manipulation, in eliciting passionate devotion. It uses Ferenczi's *Confusion of Tongues* situation as a model for understanding the relationship between leader and follower. The idealization of the leader as a power to be feared and a savior from the imagined threats he has created, and the dynamics of identification, masochism and victimization are invoked. The only remedy for the toxicity of the situation is empathy, which is understood in a historical as well as psychological context.

INTRODUCTION

In its early days psychoanalysts had an eye on the surrounding world and the interrelationships between the clinical, the historical and the political (Roazen, 1968). There has always been within psychoanalysis a strong theme of social and political responsibility and involvement (Danto, 2005). Different historical eras and political movements have evoked particular psychoanalytic attention. For example, Wilhelm Reich's (1933) study of

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Fascism was a classic contribution, on which Erich Fromm's (1936) liberally drew in his formulation of the Authoritarian Personality. Bychowski (1969), reflecting on his last visit to Freud in 1935, recalls his discussion during which Freud expressed a wish that psychoanalysis would become "public property, a kind of universal thought… the day might come when these horrifying reactions of the collective psyche would no longer be possible" (p. 9). He continues:

> The years went by and my clinical and psychoanalytic work prevented me from devoting myself to other problems. Then came the war…I was driven from my home, and my normal activity…was forcibly interrupted. At this moment of personal distress my mind became focused on man's history which I tried to interpret with the help of psychoanalytic concepts. (Bychowski, 1969, p. 9).

Interdisciplinary collaboration is often advocated but elusive. More than three decades ago, Haynal *et al.* (1983) demonstrated the collaboration between a psychoanalyst, historian, and political scientist in addressing fanaticism. The marriage of literature and psychoanalysis has yielded a new line of thought in psychoanalysis: *witnessing*. For example, the work of Felman and Laub (1991), and Volkan *et al.* (2002) have made outstanding contributions to the psychoanalytic study of political and ethnic conflict (see Prince, 2004). More recently, Frie (2018a, b) addressed the challenge of bridging the gap between psychoanalysis and history in reviewing the work of Thomas Kohut, a trained psychoanalyst and professional historian, who studied the generation that brought the Nazis to power.

There are certainly cautions; the psychoanalytic preference for a neutral, non-judgmental attitude is anchored in the wisdom that the psychoanalyst is no less vulnerable to personal biases than anyone else. Hopefully, the psychoanalytic attitude facilitates the ability to recognize, acknowledge and reflect about them. Countertransference, always omnipresent in treatment, is accessible there through consideration of direct experience of clinical data. Reflection on the psychoanalyst's reactions to the political is complicated by the variety of indirect sources of data selectively attended to and the analyst's participation in the same social reality as the subject's, which potentiates the opportunity for distortion. The goal that Thomas Kohut (2012) articulates, of using empathy as a tool both in clinical psychoanalysis and also as a historical method, by which he means the ability to see the world through the eyes of the subject even when the subject is unsympathetic, is obstructed when the analyst, who is trained to shift back and forth between objective and subjective point of view, feels directly threatened. In the current political situation, polarization is stoked further into demonization and the balance of participant observation is in danger of being undermined by an excess of participation. Furthermore,

recognizing the trap of false equivalencies, it has to be understood that there is a grey zone of legitimate, if intense disagreement. Nevertheless, the central preservation of freedom, as a categorical value, even when there is room for peripheral discourse, has to be foundational. There is potential for confusion, sometimes brought about by the "what about" arguments used in rhetorical attack and defense, but it is no less the responsibility of psychoanalysts to think psychoanalytically about this moment of historical inflection.

That said, the personal aspects need to be owned: the following perceptions and interpretations are contextualized by my own intense emotions in response to the subject. The impetus for this paper is anxiety bordering on panic—some olio of challenges of bridging the gaps, bewilderment, cynicism, and despair in response to the collapse of the norms I had come to take for granted and a profound sense of personal threat from forces that evoke paranoia. My world view has been substantially formed by the lessons of the Holocaust (Prince, 1999) and I have had a belief, despite all the atrocities that have followed, that the world has gone forward since and that the ideals of justice, and institutionalized social order, despite all the lapses, were superior to the forces of oppression and injustice. Certainly, surprise at the estrangement of Trump's America from facticity,[2] not only from truth but more radically the idea of truth, might seem naïve to any student of history, but indeed, an ugly populism, "paranoid style" (Hofstadter, 1952) and "know nothingism"[3] has always been a strand running through American history but always also intertwined with the fundamental values of democracy. It is thus unnerving that Trump has, at the moment of this writing, won over the Republican party which has allowed itself to be propelled by a "base" that threatens everything stable about my world. I feel an urgency to understand even as I know that masses supporting leaders who have been inimical to their self-interest have flourished throughout history. My personal dislocation could be one seed for understanding the experience of the Trump supporter who also yearns for an imagined, idealized past—a timeless vision marking what Timothy Snyder (2018), a historian whose writing resonates with in-depth psychoanalytic understanding, calls the politics of eternity. A vision of a past in which there is a chimera of being connected to innocence and virtue that has since been despoiled, and replaced by pervasive alienation from self and surroundings from which they yearn to be saved. Trump, however, is one of a rarer breed of charismatic leader who, more than just scaring us, through the use of splitting and projection, unpredictability, creation of chaos and contradiction, "makes us crazy," to paraphrase a phrase that rose to general use about Chavez in Venezuela. This applies to his opponents and also, in another way, to his core supporters. It is the experience of a

vicarious thrill simultaneous with a realization of the exploitation, which a journalist has described with the acumen of a clinical report:

> Is there anything more fun than a Trump rally? The crowd hooted and hollered, delighted to have an entertainer channeling their ignorance and prejudices, their resentments and familiar enemies .... They've not just normalized what is abnormal, they are wallowing in non-facts, incivility and unseriousness (J. Rubin, 2018, March 3).

Kogan (2018) strives to understand the curious effect that a certain charismatic hero has on the audience. She explains that while we, the audience, may realize that such men are robbing us blind, at the same time we must be OK with that. In trying to understand the most extreme positions and attitudes of the most ardent Trump supporter, I recognize my own internal reactions and any condescending attitude is chastened by the wisdom of Thomas Kohut (2012) who concludes about the German generation he studied:

> What separates us from those who carried out the worst horror in the history of modern Europe is nothing intrinsic to them or to us. What separates us from them is "the grace" of historical experience (Kohut, 2012, pp. 240–241).

DIVERSITY OF THE TRUMP FOLLOWERS—WHO ARE THEY?

It is understood that Trump supporters are not a uniform group but composed of multiple constituencies and that their story has been evolving from the time this essay was conceived with its final iteration still developing. Some support him out of hatred for his opponents, especially Hillary Clinton. Some support all of his policies; others are "one issue" voters. Some are overtly racist, and others bristle at the accusation. Some supporters are ambivalently loyal, recognizing his moral flaws but seeing in him the only hope for return to a deeply held, conservative morality in a culture that has departed from those standards. Others are fiercely loyal because he taps into a reservoir of grievance. I am less interested in those who may actually have disdain for Trump but whose support derives from a narrow self-interest, and who can be accounted for by Rangell's (1980) idea of "compromise of integrity", than those who yearn for an idealized past.

There is a group who, dissatisfied with the erstwhile political status quo, looked to Trump to solve long standing irritants and were able or willing to look away from his hatefulness. My focus is those who have a passion for Trump that expresses the triumph of emotional interest over political or economic interest. These are people who confound polling because they are driven by unconscious forces which contrast with the rationalizations they articulate. Trump's ardent followers include both otherwise intelligent and

rational people whose zeal has astonished their friends as well as racially prejudiced people, including those who Hillary Clinton carelessly called the deplorables, a comment that may have significantly fueled ongoing distress about the prospect of the first female president. It includes people who demand recognition as decent, while simultaneously expressing views, which, beside everything else, are just like Trump, full of grievance and resentment, while short of empathy or generosity. It includes the 60% of committed followers who claim there is nothing Trump could possibly do that would cause them to withdraw their support. Some of his ardent followers express selective criticism but still avow his platform. They will not endorse but are unable or unwilling to acknowledge his dishonesty, disorganization, and contradictions; his misogyny and racial discrimination. Others turn exactly to these traits in adulation. They reframe his offensiveness as directness, rejection of political correctness and what they take to be his realness. They admire him as a disruptor,[4] seeing him as a rebel, rather than self-centeredly injurious. Then there are those who have been simply deceived and are everything but grateful for attempts to enlighten them. Rationalizations, denial, disavowal, splitting, and projection are commonly seen defense mechanisms in the group of core Trump supporters. These intrapsychic processes are fueled by the information exchange with the external world, particularly the distortions and manipulations of the extreme right media and the virtual world of the internet where also historically unprecedented attacks are designed to have the maximum psychic influence.

While demographic surveys reveal the economic and educational diversity of his supporters, Trump recognizes them in a particular way. Thus, when he refers to making America great again, as Snyder (2018) points out, only supporters are included. The essential definition does not extend to an entire citizenry but to a chosen group consisting of the real people, and excluding others who may be identified as an enemy within. And communication by dog whistle[5] makes it understood that these are "other", due to political orientation, race, religion or gender orientation.

It is important to entertain the role of idealization in the functioning of the follower. Idealization of the other is a powerful motivating force, an abstraction outside of the person's awareness. In Melanie Klein's (1946–1963) view, the defensive function of idealization is to counteract envy, generated by greed. As Ilany Kogan (2018) explained, we tend to worship billionaires in the belief that they will solve all our problems. An important aspect of idealization is the immensely gratifying experience of being with a "perfect" person and imagining being a part of him (H. Kohut, 1977, 1984); projection onto the other the imagined ideal characteristics of the person also creates symbiotic oneness (Sullivan, 1965). Additionally, Horney explains that when people are not permitted to experience self-idealizations

they unconsciously externalize their idealizations onto others (Horney, 1950, p. 292). Idealizations can be healthy and pathological. In a healthy sense, idealizations help the person navigate the inevitable major transitions in life. Healthy idealizations are flexible, show openness and are free of major distortions as they help the person process the inevitable differences between the ideal and the real other. Pathological idealizations do not respond flexibly to the discrepancies between the fantasy of the other and reality. They become entrenched and seem removed from actual experiences. The recipients of pathological idealizations get a blank check treatment, no matter what they do, they will continue to be idealized.

SOCIAL CONDITIONS PRODUCING A SOCIAL CHARACTER

Writing from the culturalist-interpersonal perspective, Erich Fromm's (1941) 20th century psychoanalytic study of relations with authority, looked at socio-economic disruption to explain the formation of the *authoritarian character*. Fromm sympathetically understood that a more individualistic society, which allows for greater freedom for the realization of the self, can make the person feel isolated, anxious and powerless, which he indicated happens more often than we care to acknowledge. During the time of Nixon's presidency, Portnoy (1971) referred to Fromm's (1941) "escape from freedom" when he wrote the following:

> It is of interest to note a development which has come increasingly to the fore during the last decade. During precisely that period in which all proclaim the importance of spontaneity, individual autonomy, freedom and choice, there is increasing use of drugs (which diminish autonomy) and *increasing submission to the hypnotic demagogue who influences, not through appeals to individual reason, judgment and choice, but to that in human beings which seeks magical solutions and the loss of self in the chanting crowd.* There is, of course, nothing new in all this. Such needs and such drives have existed in all times. What we see now are only the most recent expressions of man's recurrent attempts to "*escape from freedom*" whenever the stress of life becomes great. (Portnoy, 1971, p. 38) [My italics]

Fromm's explanations have relevance for the psychological upheaval in 21st century America, arising from transformative historical forces. His *marketing character* (Fromm, 1947) is alienated from the self, seeks personalities to idealize and is prone to be disappointed and misunderstood by those he cannot idealize. In the culturalist tradition of psychoanalysis, Rubin (1990) wrote of Trump almost 30 years ago: at times of dislocation like these, "King Donald Trump of New York becomes a prototype for idealization" (p. 2).

Affected are the most visible subgroup of Trump's core supporters, white downwardly- mobile working class and, less visibly but as numerous, their white economically-privileged cohorts fearing downward mobility in a changing world. It has been shown that support for Trump isn't strongly related to income and employment. For hard core supporters, intolerance towards members of a group of others appears to supersede economic anxiety. Fromm (1941), understood that automatization (robots in our contemporary economy), and a greater monopoly of corporations, make the average person feel insignificant, desperate, and unconsciously wanting to escape from life's pressures into conformity.

In the United States, previous assumptions about class, gender and sexual orientation, belief systems represented by religion, scientific discovery, experience shaped by technological innovations, cultural bulwarks, all have undergone tectonic shifts in the last few decades. The American dream of progress and children exceeding their parents has become challenged. Unprecedented claims for social justice by once-invisible groups produced a backlash in the form of resentment and tribalism. The erstwhile privileged, who happened not to experience themselves as such, now experience themselves as victims of others' demands.

The relatively brief period since the mid-1970s, during which these seismic shifts have occurred, have not provided the general culture the chance to mourn the losses and adjust to a newer order. To make things worse, the catastrophic financial crisis of 2008 fueled the existing distrust of the 'system' and anxiety of millions of people, and the crisis is far from over. Like the "People," we, who are portrayed as "Elites," have been disoriented and disorganized since the 2016 election. The recent threats to our cultural traditions and values underscore the importance of cultural values and traditions for our experience of self.

It is important to acknowledge that the reasons for steadfast support of Trump by a certain segment of the population are highly complex, and in this paper, I seek to add my particular psychoanalytic understanding to widely available political speculations. Of course, this is different from our customary psychoanalytic method, where we gather detailed information (aided by careful observations over time), which allows us to understand the individual from the rich perspectives of comprehensive family and individual history, as well as the macro and micro impact of cultural influences on the developing person. It must be stressed that at the publication of this paper, we do not yet have carefully gathered personal data on a sufficiently large sample of core supporters. Currently, we are relying on "here and now" behaviors and aren't fully aided by scientific findings on who the individuals are. We hope that as time progresses, more social scientists will engage in concerted research efforts to gain solid,

specific data on the dynamics of this segment of the population and we hope that detailed biographical studies of supporters will emerge in time. Additionally, this population is hardly static, its members do transform as time goes on and conditions evolve.

LEADERSHIP BY SEDUCTIVE PASSION

Political leaders will often use passionate appeals to the emotions and prejudices of the population as a strategy to invoke themes of unfairness, victimization, and a claim to injured innocence for their own political purposes. Trump's "American carnage" inaugural address rhetoric—which seemed inexplicable to those hopeful about the broadening of possibilities enabled by inclusiveness— reflected a psychological reality resulting from the hollowing out of the White Christian middle class over the last few decades. Pillars of their identity were undermined, their self experience fragmented; their pride was challenged by emptiness and resentments. Their sense of injustice was stoked by a perception that they had been playing by the rules, waiting for their turn in line only to have minorities and women cut in front of them. They were angered by the demands for affirmation by an array of populations: women, immigrants, refugees, people of color, LGBT, everyone who was "other". Their earlier sense of superiority over these others, was a component of their sense of self, consciously or unconsciously. Trump channeled their anger which converged with his own narcissistic entitlement. To people who had lost a sense of control and endured a psychological disruption for decades, that no one seemed to care about, the promise of a return to any idealized—and mythic—past was as much of a narcotic as the opioids that are now severely hurting their communities. Ferenczi captured the nature of Trump's followers' raucous and passionate rallies, their offensive internet trolling and rants: "that when we have been offended, disturbed or injured we all have the reactions of gangsters" (Ferenczi, 1932, p. 74).

We have used the dynamics of the salesman, con man, infant, hypnotist, cult leader, entertainer, and even the "heel" in professional wrestling, to describe or explain Trump's ability to create a phantasmagorical reality and passion for him as the ruler. Each of these roles can be understood in terms of Ferenczi's (1933) Confusion of Tongues (COT) situation. The essence of COT is that it is arises from longing (for the tenderness of the adult) but ends in traumatization (by the adult's passion). Trump simulates concern, apparently responsive to a need for the equivalents of tenderness but in reality, mainly gratifies his own insatiable desires and becomes enraged,

threatening retribution, if frustrated. Then he attacks and humiliates, betrays, becomes cruel and vindictive.

These descriptions touch on the core of Trump's appeal: his ability to engage on an affective level, to create a sense of belonging for those who were feeling unheard, cut adrift, alone, and abandoned. To escape from feelings of aloneness and powerlessness, he invited his followers to personify an enemy and submit to him as leader requiring simultaneous identification with domination and contempt for weakness. Trump's followers deeply connect to his victimization; the passions of the *terrorism of suffering* are activated (Ferenczi, 1933, p. 166), when the follower is bound to the leader because of his alleged mistreatment by the powerful elite or sinister foe, which compels the weaker person to be fully understanding and fiercely protective of the suffering leader. Trump spoke directly to them in only one of the languages of the COT: the *language of passionate love/passionate punishment*, "the serious reality of the infuriated, punitive sanctions," of the harsh and angry other (Ferenczi, 1933, p. 229). The other language, *the language of tenderness,* the emotion of growth-producing connectedness, is abandoned in the COT process. In both the terrorism of suffering and the COT situations, the vulnerable person is driven by a deep desire not to be alone. The ability to promote chaos and confusion is no less dangerous a weapon than passion and abuse against the object (child) of the COT and Trump has mastered it.

Trump's particular policies were often divorced from reason or facts, which paradoxically serve to create an alternate universe of facts that can only be validated by embracing the pronouncements of the ruler because, and only because, he is the leader. The affect behind the kinetic repetition of slogans galvanized his followers' great passion. Trump proclaimed victimization, decried unfairness, which captured their feelings, exactly. His early stump speech "they're laughing at us, taking what's ours," mirrored his followers' humiliation.

Trump's attack on the "elites" was confusing because it sounded, at first, like he was referring to the economic elites, the billionaire class to whom he purported to belong. However, Trump followers immediately understood he was talking about the educated, the liberals, the globalists, the integrationists, that is, everybody who condescended to them, was laughing at them, and represented a threat to their safety and sense of self. These were perceived as enemies; they refused to enter into his reality and were threats to it. Trump's narcissistic vulnerability, constant complaints of injury, and narcissistic grandiosity swept them up into a movement that provided the thing they felt they were losing, an identity to be proud of and a sense of exclusive belonging. He would make America great; they would come first and prosper. He would restore "traditional" values and cultural standards.

They returned the contempt of the elites and, now, could also have all of these *others* to look down upon—in effect, all of the people who had taken their America from them. Through history, authoritarian personalities have formed around their deepest insecurities and created a category of mortal enemy to the self–whether called *Heretic, Jew, Cosmopolitan, Kulak, Elite or Immigrant*, they represented the dangerous other–committed unspeakable crimes, and stirred hatred. Much like the passionate adult's aggression has a devastating impact on the child in Ferenczi's *confusion of tongues* dynamic, the impact of Trump's aggression cannot be underestimated. It simultaneously creates retribution for the injuries inflicted, a traumatized fear of the consequences of defying him, and an identification with a leader to be feared.

The multi-layered identification with the charismatic leader, who seems to embody overwhelming power, contributes to passion for him as well as the dulling of critical faculties necessary to sustaining it. His followers strive to imitate Trump's show of strength and force. They want him to be the mirror they can look into to see someone omnipotent, who can do anything he wants with license and impunity. If this system was rigged, he was the one who rigged it and now he would rig it for them. In his own words, he offered them their hopes and dreams. He could do anything he wanted and the unique pleasure of vicarious participation would be reflected in their rapturous endorsement of what would otherwise have been condemned as unacceptable or even criminal. He was able to control reality, anything that challenged it was "fake news" and his version would be confirmed by Fox News, Info Wars and then the Republican Party.

Identification however is complex and, unconsciously, it comes with both the overt power and an underlying vulnerability. The basic form of such identification is imitation. Thus, if Trump could have his own reality, then so could his followers. Ferenczi describes such imitation as "mimicry" (1920–32, pp. 265–267). In his exploration of the Confusion of Tongues, he addresses mimicry as introjection of the menacing person or aggressor (Ferenczi, 1933, p. 163), and the mimicking person feels colonized by the aggressor. Mimicries are not of a fully internalized other but an introjected, unassimilated, and easily externalized other. This is an early developmental defense mechanism and the term identification may not be sufficient to describe its power. Hostility is projected into the enemy others and all idealizations are externalized into the mimicked other, internal experience is split, and the poisoned inside expelled (see Eekhoff, 2013). Trump's followers mimicked his displays of strength, but they also stumbled on themselves as they selectively unattended to, dissociated, and found themselves in him as they related to his flaws and insecurities, his boasting, greed, corruption, and crude materialism. Ferenczi's *identification with the*

aggressor (Ferenczi, 1933, pp. 163–164) is an adaptation to the dangers of trauma, by identifying completely with a dangerous person. This cornerstone concept in trauma theory describes a coping mechanism with trauma by compliance, a bond of identification between the weaker person and the powerful other (Frankel, 2017). The coping mechanism of identification with the aggressor allows the expression of otherwise shameful thoughts and emotions. By ordinary political norms, the "pussy grabbing" tapes, which inadvertently became public and showed his coarse behavior as he boasted of being able to abuse women without consequences, should have disqualified him. He passed off his misogyny as "locker room talk", women followers of Trump recognized the men in their lives and decided the stuck up "elites" didn't have a sense of humor, and, more importantly, represented a progressive, and thus threatening, conception of gender. When Hillary Clinton expected that confronting him with not paying his taxes would appall the debate audience, he told them he was "smart," and they loved it. Trump's message consists of versions of "I'm like you and you'd be like me if you had the chance or could get away with it," offering frustrated Americans vicarious pleasure. And the message is delivered in simplified language reminiscent of Orwell's (1954) "newspeak" in which words are systematically eradicated from language in order to narrow the range of thought.

Worryingly, Trump's language and disregard for truth evokes the fascistic theories of the philosopher of Putin's Russia, Ivan Illyin. As described by Timothy Snyder (2018), Illyin rejects fact, let alone truth, bowing to the absolute whim of the savior-leader to pronounce reality. Thus, perplexity about "fake news" is clarified. "Elites" reflexively understand the term in relation to objective reality, concrete actuality, in contrast to contradictory, inconsistent myths, which are to be accepted without critical thinking. Truths and lies are simply irrelevant. All that matters are the interests of the state, which is defined by the leader. To belong to the state, which is synonymic with its leader, requires submission to this "reality." Assertion of anything contrary becomes more than excluded, it is identified as an "enemy of the people." Ultimately, facticity is discarded as a value, and thought, itself, logic and reason are dissolved in the passion for the leader.

The followers of a charismatic leader, as in an abusive family, go to great lengths to avoid awareness of the deception and manipulation to which they are subjected (see Prince, 2018b for an elaboration of the role of deception as a psychological force), as well to maintain secrecy of the abuses, which makes them complicit. The profound impact of propaganda, the barrage of calculated misinformation, effectively "brain washing," is often better appreciated outside of psychoanalysis than it is from within. The targets of influence are bound ever closer through the double potency of bribery and shared guilt by

acceptance. Rationalizations and excuses are repeatedly made as the need to defend him (there is a male gendered element of this philosophy) only intensifies with complicity. The lie, appalling to the non-follower, is the glue of the attraction. As Snyder (2018) demonstrates, the more incredible the lie, the stronger the glue, because its acceptance testifies to loyalty.

The title of this essay comes from the observation of the intense passions that are observed in the most devout followers. It comes partly in relief and escape from the emptiness left by the self-alienation, described for example by Horney (1950), of people who have lost their connections, experience an inability to direct their lives or to take responsibility for themselves or pursue their own interests, to say nothing of being connected to their own authentic feelings. These passions reflect an exuberance of a simultaneous identification with and submission to a power that offers a solution to threats to the self which arise in social transformations. Living within a band of certainty and faith in an omnipotent guide provides solace. However, these mechanisms of escape are ultimately futile; the self is sacrificed for a temporary security. Ultimately, the omnipotence claimed by and attributed to the leader fails and the rewards for submission prove as illusory as the basis on which they were offered. The illusory world, one which evolves from our earliest childhood (Ferenczi, 1926) and which we thus all yearn for—to gratify our wishes, reduce our anxiety, provide security—are destined to eventually collapse. Under the weight of reality, the consequences, like the night, come gradually and then all at once. In the meanwhile, the opportunity to demonstrate loyalty purports to bestow gifts of meaning and belonging. However, Trump, while presenting himself as a savior, has repeatedly demonstrated a lack of concern for his followers. He has sequentially used and used up those who have served him. He has demanded loyalty but gives none. His promises, whether to make the enrollees in Trump University rich or America great, are more likely lead to bankruptcy and disaster. The passion of the people is ultimately unrequited and thus truly the loneliest of passions.

The people were abandoned by social conditions that created their insecurity and drove them into the arms of a self-anointed savior, and then by the arms that are not there to embrace them. Will they eventually recognize the exploitations and betrayals? Or is their attachment to passionate love and passionate punishment so inflexible that they will become enraged at the suggestion they have been let down and blame their woes on imagined villains and the archetypes of "international conspiracy"? Or is their attachment to the *terrorism of suffering,* a type of masochism, so rooted in their yearning that they will, like the fabled Griselda, forever demonstrate their loyalty by sacrifice?

CONCLUSIONS

History is littered with the wreckage left behind by demagogues who have successfully exploited the vulnerabilities of their followers. Followers who, while carrying the banner of grandiose declarations and promises and carrying the bully's threat to inflict suffering, are themselves traumatized figures whose lack of empathy, for those weaker than they are, testifies to a hollowing out of their souls. The psychoanalytic conception of defenses dovetails with the classical definition of tragedy: the idea that protagonists might bring on the very fate their actions were intended to avoid.

The steady support of Trump followers reflects a resistance to fact and reason, that grows stronger in the face of any evidence that they have been deceived. Such evidence inflames them further against the exposer and strengthens their support for the deceiver. And, while the resistance finds solace in the comedic skewering of the absurdities of the propaganda machine, followers become more entrenched and protective, recognizing that they are no less the subjects of mockery. There is little common ground. If the aim of propaganda is polarization by creating an "us" that offers the illusion of belonging in the face of aloneness, against a "them" that contains everything bad we have ejected from within, it threatens to succeed.

What is the antidote to the vicious circle of suffering? How do we, Ferenczi asked, "defend…(ourselves) against dangers coming from people without self-control?" (1933, p. 165). Following the legacy of Ferenczi, I would propose empathy, for their loneliness, understanding their authoritarianism, in both its sadistic and masochistic elements, as tragic. Empathy is the only tool for undoing toxic identifications.

What would empathy towards Trump followers be like? Would it entail understanding the unexamined, ongoing and untreated trauma that continues to murder the soul? Or something else? It is helpful to have a larger perspective:

> It is of crucial importance that we view [their] attempts with understanding, with compassion, and with a strengthened determination to build a more mature society and to foster the development of more mature family structures and character structures, all of these being measurable in their maturity by the degree to which they encourage individual choice (Portnoy, 1971, p. 38).

Empathy is the key to addressing the loneliness, to say nothing of the fear, that underlies the "reactions of gangsters", cited above. (Ferenczi 1932, p.74). Only empathy can facilitate benign engagement and avoid the enactment of malevolent repetitions. Acknowledging the suffering person's needs for the other (including Trump) is essential. Hoffer and Buie (2016) describe the required interaction as follows:

We can mention a few aspects of this process by which an analyst can more and more "get it," more and more know their patients' experiences. It begins with patience while we sit and sit with patients while they try to convey to us what they are experiencing. As we listen, we try to gain access to the patient's experience within ourselves. We do so by resonating with it, by noting our similar experiences, current and past, and by using our imagination as we try to take on the feelings the patient is sharing (Buie, 1981). In doing this we begin to recognize our tendency to avoid, suppress and repress as well as our tendencies to wage war against both the patient's and our own feelings. We also do our best to use our capacity for self-analysis to gain self understanding of our own vulnerabilities to these feelings. Very important in this work are the support and contributions of our analysts, supervisors, teachers and colleagues for our discovering and relinquishing our defenses so that we can more deeply know the patients' experiences and more easily come to know these experiences as our own. At the same time, we take on the challenge of maintaining our own psychic equilibrium as we bear these feelings. Like the process of working through, by bearing these experiences over time we become less and less disturbed by them, finally to the point that we can feel them without the threat of being overwhelmed. Although tolerating the feeling of helplessness can rarely become an acquired taste, it can and does become a part of the analyst's familiar world. We gradually are able to say to ourselves, "It's OK. I can stand it, even stand it with relative equanimity." With this accomplishment the analyst is able to maintain a quiet, secure thoughtfulness while experiencing his or her version of the patient's experiences and balance ideational and word listening with non-verbal and affective listening.

As an analyst works to achieve this capacity, his or her patients increasingly feel, or know, that their analyst is with them, is understanding and bearing their helplessness along with their other feelings. To a significant extent this alleviates the patient's aloneness, and in the beginning of treatment this brings a slight beam of hope. The patient feels a little, yet significantly, safer. With this, all but the most desperate and cut-off patients are able to recognize, even feel, the concerned presence and understanding of the analyst (Hoffer & Buie, 2016, pp. 10–11).

We might begin to see through the eyes of followers by letting ourselves feel what it is like to have our own basic values threatened. Having empathy first of all requires coping with our own fears as we also see reflections of our own cynicism, hypocrisy and despair. Writers from Ferenczi onward have struggled, and not always successfully, and not always unscathed, with the challenges of engaging with these more archaic, traumatized, and less developed states.

Trump's techniques of creating chaos, of distraction and mystification, his false assertions about reality, expose his own and his follower's unconscious yearnings and terrors. We do know that confrontation with

logic or evidence is counterproductive. Hannah Arendt (1951), in the *Origins of Totalitarianism* speaks to the challenge of addressing propaganda because the issue is not the false fact but its intention. We know from the confined space of our work with patients, the absolute prerequisite for helping the patient "give up the reaction of identification" (Ferenczi, 1933, p. 164) is to demonstrate genuine concern for them as we try to see their world through their eyes. We need to understand the full cultural details of their loss; how old times are idealized, and the new cultural reality is devalued. Akhtar (1999, p. 87), writing of the immigrant's experience, called it "ethnocentric withdrawal", the clinging to an idealized view of one's earlier cultural experience, and the immense tendency to idealize the past in a nostalgic rumination. In a way, the description fits Trump followers, as they find themselves immigrants in a changed society. According to Akhtar, anyone who is prone to cling to an earlier cultural experience:

> must be empathized with for their loss of historical continuity, and their need for restoration. Lapses into nostalgia must find respect and empathic counter resonance in the analyst. The therapist, however, must not overlook the fact that nostalgic yearning can be used as a psychic ointment to soothe frustration and rage in the external reality. (p. 127) [Also] understanding must be combined with a healthy skepticism toward the realness of the person's current suffering. To create a dialectical approach to view the lament of contemporary dislocation and the wailing about the loss as defending against each other (Akhtar, 1999, p. 129).

Commenting on Thomas Kohut's (2012) study of ordinary Germans who constituted the People of Hitler's Germany—in which Kohut, a trained psychoanalyst as well as a historian, proposes empathy as both a psychological method and a method of historical inquiry—Frie (2018a) writes that empathy should not be confused with sympathy. For Thomas Kohut, empathy

> reduce(s) the intellectual and emotional distance separating us from them, in part by thinking our way inside their unique historical circumstances, in part by recognizing that on some level they were as we are and that we have within us the capacity to be as they were (Kohut, 2012, p. 17).

Empathy requires truth, what psychoanalysts might call interpretation, to reverse the toxic effects of the lie. But for interpretation to be credible and accepted, it has to be offered with genuine concern, and a social "countertransference", engendered by objective threat, makes such concern a challenge.

I believe the shock of Trump has in part to do with the threat to the liberal conviction in the ultimate triumph of an ongoing civilizing process. The outcome is uncertain. The realization that "it can happen here" enjoins a confrontation with darker forces of human nature, including those causing and also arising from false beliefs, one of the subject matters of psychoanalysis. To defeat the forces of reaction requires an empathic understanding of its supporters which, in turn, requires us to understand ourselves and, to invoke Thomas Kohut, to be grateful for the "grace of history" (Kohut, 2012, p. 241).

NOTES

1. Robert Prince, Ph.D, ABPP is an Associate Editor of *The American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, past president of Psychologist-Psychoanalyst Clinicians, Section V of the Division of Psychoanalysis of the American Psychological Association and formerly on the Board of Directors of the Division of Psychoanalysis and of the Academy of Psychoanalysis. He received his Ph.D. in clinical psychology from Columbia University and his Certificate in Psychoanalysis and Psychotherapy from the NYU Postdoctoral Program, where he is adjunct Associate Professor and past co-chair of the Interpersonal Track and one of the founding members of the Trauma Studies Specialization. Among his 40 publications are *The Legacy of the Holocaust, The Death of Psychoanalysis*, and edited special issues of the *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*: Trauma and Culture, and What is Effective in Psychoanalytic Psychotherapy: A Historical Reprise. His most recent articles reflect a concern with divining concrete historical actuality in the shadow of context, construction and narration.
2. "Facticity" is a word with a rich history in philosophy since the 18th century (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Facticity) and with many complex meanings. I have struggled with it and its role in personal and political psychology in four papers (Prince, 2016a, b, 2018a, b).
3. The Know Nothing movement was the anchoring xenophobic, anti immigrant spirit of the short-lived Native American Party, a nativist political party in the mid 19th century in the US.
4. While Trump's claim to be a disruptor is essential to his appeal, he is hardly entitled to claiming it as a new role. Indeed, the appeal of disruption is an essential component of the psycho-historical cycle (Runia, 2010). Similarly, the manipulation of information is not only a part of the historical record, it often is the historical record. It goes back millennia and Fox News is not even the best exemplar of its practice. Digital communication appears more ominous in its reach and potential; it is the nuclear equivalent of psychological weaponry. It has seeds in the oral traditions that established the power structures of civilizations. Those seeds have reached maturity in the development of "political technology," described by Snyder (2018) which had produced a bumper crop of the poisoned fruit of calculated, pervasive misinformation.
5. For years, this phrase, dog whistle, has been describing political communications that overtly may sound innocent to most people, but it communicates a covert, more noxious meaning to some others.

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