Uprooted Minds: Psyche and Society in Times of Crisis
Presented at the Freud Conference, Melbourne 2013
Nancy Caro Hollander, Ph.D.

Today's world is characterized by increasing violence in every domain, subjecting peoples across the globe to varying degrees of instability, unpredictability and discontinuity. Minds are being uprooted as we are forced to negotiate intensifying anxieties in response to a global environment saturated with information about droughts, floods, pandemic viruses, crime, hunger, homelessness, indebtedness and the dramatic loss of jobs, health care, pensions, educational opportunities and our ability to rely on a predictable and secure social matrix as well as a sense of hope about the future.   Moreover, our daily personal struggles with work, family, friends, and community are punctuated by inescapable moments of awareness of the threat of global warming, terrorism and nuclear proliferation. For example, last week I was enjoying a balmy Friday afternoon at home in the San Francisco Bay Area, and following an invigorating hike among the glorious redwoods with my husband and two dogs, I sat down to watch the news. I began to feel pummeled by that evening's current events menu, which included the following: how for the first time in human history, the world's atmospheric levels of carbon dioxide are likely by month's end to exceed 400 parts per million, a concentration reached the last time two or 3 million years ago so that our uncontrolled use of fossil fuels is creating conditions heretofore outside the scope of human existence on the planet; how the Syrian civil war, already responsible for the deaths of between 70,000 and 120,000 Syrian men, women and children, promises to be another front for the U.S. expansion of military means to "protect its interests" in the Middle East; that a U.S. corporation has invented a 3-d printer, which permits private individuals to make their own guns, and before the government could prohibit the distribution of the how-to guide on the grounds of national security, 100,000 guides had already been downloaded from the web; that crime rates are escalating in the Bay Area due to budget cuts, resulting in the release of hardened criminals from

prisons, who in the absence of job opportunities and with a reduced and badly equipped police force, operate with impunity, robbing, raping and killing local citizens; how smaller and smaller drones are increasingly used by the state and private enterprise for surveillance of U.S. civilians, intruding imperceptivity in our private lives for security and commercial purposes; and on and on. My lovely day and emotional wellbeing were momentarily perforated by the sudden awareness of a threatening world which would ultimately affect me and those I love …I felt decentered, demoralized, helpless. And then, as if by magic, my attention was turned elsewhere and this terrifying reality vanished from my conscious awareness as I became mercifully preoccupied with mundane personal concerns. While my experience may be representative of an adaptive defensive response to a potentially traumatic trigger, I will try to show how our collective dissociative reactions to the multiple threats of a social world in crisis creates a bystander population whose withdrawal from engagement in collective attempts to resolve these crises facilitates the intensifying destructiveness of those in power.

My reaction reminded me of philosopher Walter Benjamin's Angel of History, which, as many of you probably know, was the central metaphor in his treatise on history, progress and destruction composed at the beginning of World War Two: "This is how one pictures the angel of history," he wrote. "His face is turned toward the past. Where we perceive a chain of events, he sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet. The angel would like to stay, awaken the dead, and make whole what has been smashed. But a storm is blowing in from Paradise…The storm irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned, while the pile of debris before him grows skyward" (Benjamin, 1968). For me, the question we face today even more than on the eve of World War Two is whether *we* can make whole what has been smashed and halt the ever-mounting pile of debris. In other words, can we understand in order not to keep repeating? Can we foster the psychological and social reparative capacities needed in order to propel ourselves into a future that provides hope rather than despair?

It is my goal to explore how the manner in which we respond to social

crisis depends on the interplay among large social forces, ideological hegemony and unconscious fantasy, affects and defenses. The political is, indeed, quite personal. This morning I want to analyze how this complex phenomenon is being played out in the United States, where citizens are responding to a traumatogenic social reality that is exacerbated by the loss of American Exceptionalism. The declining influence of the world's only Superpower has serious political and psychological implications, which I will elaborate in the course of this presentation.

However, I would first like to share with you how I initially learned about the devastating psychological effects of social trauma and the potential for individual and group resilience in the context of the tumultuous political conditions of Latin America. In the late 1960s, I was a Latin American historian living in Buenos Aires during the four years leading up to the military coup that launched the Dirty War, and I experienced first hand what it was like to live in a country undergoing an ominous transition to authoritarian rule. In that process, like so many Argentines, I had dear friends and colleagues who were disappeared and assassinated by death squads as the right wing began the ideological cleansing process that would become state policy under the military dictatorship that ruled the country until 1983. I returned to the United States shortly before the military coup, committed to help document the human cost of political repression. State terror throughout the hemisphere would bear the signifier of September 11, the date of the military coup in Chile, whose repressive political regime would be mirrored in U.S. supported military dictatorships throughout the hemisphere that disappeared, tortured and murdered hundreds of thousands of their own citizens deemed to be "inconvenient to the existing system". My activism in the Latin American solidarity movement kept me in close contact with political refugees from South and Central America. I recognized the multiple signs of trauma in these refugees, among whom were survivors of torture carried out in secret concentration camps, individuals whose loved ones had been disappeared and those whose families or comrades had been assassinated. I was struck by the variability in their states of mind; some were extremely vulnerable with compromised capacities to adapt to life in exile, and others were

relatively resilient in their ability to manage their extraordinary past and present life challenges. Over time and through my own psychoanalytic training, I would come to understand that these differences, which could be accounted for by individual psychodynamics, as well as the diverse consequences and meanings made of traumatic experience, nonetheless, hid what was shared in common: the endurable wounds of having encountered the Lacanian Real. The violence and destructiveness of state terror, like other extreme social situations, was the epitome of the ineffable, that is, what cannot be registered symbolically or easily shared with others (Zizek, 2002).

It was within this intensely charged context that I developed an interest in understanding the mutual impact of psychic and social reality, and by the early 1980s, I came to know and over the years collaborate with a network of Latin American psychoanalysts who were dedicated to struggles on behalf of the political change they believed necessary to provide a social matrix conducive to individual and collective mental health. My own work has focused on an analysis of the dynamics of authoritarianism in both its dictatorial and democratic forms and the psychological profiles of perpetrators, victims, bystanders and resisters. Under conditions of extreme political repression, when, as in Argentina, the state unleashes violent assaults on its own citizens and constructs a culture of fear, the social domain is characterized by what Thomas Ogden calls the pathology of the potential space, that is, a pathogenic social order in which the symbol and the symbolized are collapsed and the capacity to negotiate the demands of external reality while maintaining one's own desire is foreclosed (Gutwill in Bloom, et.al., 1994). However, from my perspective, this psychological experience also characterized the cultures of impunity constructed by the democratic regimes that succeeded the demise of military rule. These democracies were essentially political fiefdoms of the wealthy who ruled in their own self-interest with little accountability to citizens. They oversaw the imposition of U.S. and IMF-backed neoliberal economic policies that concentrated wealth in the hands of national and international elites and impoverished the middle and working classes. In December of 2001, Argentina, once the poster child of neoliberalism, suffered a complete economic collapse, causing an

ontological calamity for the Argentine people. This traumatogenic social condition subjected Argentines to existential vulnerabilities associated with the threat to their ability to protect themselves and their loved ones (Stolorow, 2012). New disappearances terrified them: gone were their life savings, gone were social security pensions and other governmental provisions for the elderly and poor. Gone were a swath of middle and working class jobs in the wake of the abandonment of the country by international investors and the wealthy who fled with their capital and assets, leaving millions of Argentine men, women and children struggling to survive in a broken economic system. Although not the focus of my comments this morning, it should be noted that their revolutionary response to this systemic crisis suggests one positive model of a collective activist intervention in times of social crisis.

I contend that Latin America's half century experience of political authoritarianism and economic debacle foreshadowed similar trends, although not as extreme and in a more condensed period of time, in the Global North. Especially since 9/11, U.S. political culture has been characterized by the deterioration of political and economic democratic structures and processes, whose effects are increasingly felt in daily experience. Understanding this social crisis and its psychic meanings requires a social psychoanalytic frame, one that takes account of how social reality is internalized to become a core aspect of self and intersubjective experience and how hierarchical power relations and discourses shape psychological responses to trauma.

Indeed, beginning with Freud's concepts of the Oedipal Complex and his subsequent notion of the four agencies of mind, including reality, all psychoanalytic traditions have taken account of the intersubjective nature of human functioning. Contemporary psychoanalysis has incorporated much of the research and insights from relational, intersubjective and attachment theories that demonstrate how human development is based on the embodied and mutually regulating mechanisms of caregiver and infant.

As Peter Fonegy argues, a key evolutionary function of early object relations was to equip the young with the capacity to understand the mental states in others and self, so that the social nature of thought is…part of the very

essence of subjectivity" (Fonegy, Gergely, Jurist and Target , 2004, p. 256). The psychoanalytic view that the self is formed within a relational matrix (Schore, 2002; Fonagy, 2000; Seligman, 2000; Bromberg, 1998) has been underscored by neurobiological research, which shows that the right brain is the locus of the human capacity to generate self-awareness and self-recognition and to process affective information through interactions with other human beings in interconnected contexts.   Thus we have organic confirmation of psychoanalytic concepts that understand human development as an interpersonal process requiring interaction with the minds of others beginning in early infancy and extending throughout life.

We also know that early trauma can result from the relational failures of environmental caregivers, and that the infant's psychobiological reaction to trauma is manifested in patterns of hyperarousal and dissociation. The infant's dissociative response is marked by disengagement from external stimuli in order to attend to the internal world, which involves avoidance, compliance and restricted affects (Beebe and Lachman, 1998). As Davies and Frawley point out, dissociation in response to traumatic environmental stimuli is "a submission and resignation to the inevitability of overwhelming even psychically deadening danger." (Davies and Frawley, 1994).

 I would like to extend the relational account of early psychological development and its vicissitudes, which have been elaborated within the context of the family, to its location and dynamics within the larger social surround. In other words, I want to extend Winnicott's felicitous claim that "There is no such thing as an infant" (Winnicott, 1960, p. 587) to argue that there is no such thing as a caregiver/infant (or an analyst/patient for that matter). That is, there is no such thing as an intersubjective experience, be it complimentary or mutual (Benjamin, 1990), that exists outside our insertion in the historical specificity of hegemonic social forces and ideology. From my perspective, we are *psycho*-social beings in that psychic reality transforms our negotiations with anxiety and desire-provoking external circumstances and we are *social*-psychological beings because real events and discourses in the social world shape unconscious fantasies, affects and defenses.

While there is a long tradition in which radical social theory has appropriated psychoanalytic concepts to elaborate this complex picture, several psychoanalytic orientations explicitly account for the relationship between psychic and social reality. Psychoanalysts in the British group psychotherapy tradition speak of a social unconscious that contains shared anxieties, fantasies, defenses, myths, and memories, whose building blocks are made of chosen traumas and chosen glories. The social unconscious includes the installation of social power relations within the core of psychic structure that functions as a bridge between the group and the individual to shape drives, affects and defenses (Weinberg, 2007). Lacanians postulate that the intersubjective unconscious for each generation is shaped not only in relation to the primary adult(s), whose conscious and unconscious identity is saturated with constituents of the social order, but is, as well, constituted by an alterity created by the "discourse of the Other." Larger external forces, including language, patriarchy, social class and so forth, represent an otherness that is internalized to become a core part of the self. In this way, the individual's original state of diffuseness or decenteredness is partially transcended through the encounter with a consolingly coherent image of oneself mediated through the dominant ideological discourse that assigns a place in the social order based on attributes of class, race and gender (Elliot, 1998).

Even as the symbolic order provides the decentered subject with an apparently coherent identity and thus the possibility of covering over internal discontinuities, it simultaneously functions to sustain the repressive and constraining asymmetrical relations of authority and power. Antonio Gramsci showed how power is secured through the shared dominant social symbols of the culture and the complex habitual practices lived out through the unconscious and inarticulate dimensions of social experience. The values, attitudes, beliefs, cultural norms and legal precepts that infuse civil society together constitute hegemony, which is so powerful because it is experienced as the common sense of an entire social order (Boggs, 1984). In Althusser's words, we are "interpellated" or hailed to our place in the social order, reproducing hegemonic ideology in concrete behaviors of everyday life. We are habituated to practices

that maintain the hidden relations of power (1994). This process is what Bourdieu calls *habitus*, ways of behaving that are related to one's insertion in the class/ethnic/gendered system, which are shaped by repeated embodied performances – eating, walking, talking, laughing, yelling, nonverbal affective expressions, etc. –whose symbolic renderings of hierarchical power relations remain largely unconscious (Bourdieu, 1998). As Zizek, quoting Marx, likes to put it, we do not know it, but we're doing it (an extended version of this discussion can be found in Hollander, 2010).

However, our insertion into the symbolic order is not without tension and resistance, for our relationship to authority contains within it an essential ambivalence. From a variety of vantage points, psychoanalysis elaborates the constituents of a mind in conflict, not only within itself but in relationship to authority as well, to which I will return shortly.

Social and cultural organization and its hegemonic institutions and ideologies can exacerbate primitive anxieties in individuals and groups, manifested in the envy, greed, and hate associated with the paranoid/schizoid position; or they can promote the depressive position capacities that form the basis of reparative guilt and love, concern, and responsibility for others (Rustin, 1991). From my perspective, we can understand the response to the traumatic stimulus of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 in the U.S. and to the subsequent cumulative assaults on political and economic democracy in the U.S. by seeing how ideology shapes psychological experience. I would argue that while trauma "overwhelms and defeats…the cultural psychological assumptions governing our lives" (quoted in Goren, 2007) it paradoxically depends on and utilizes those assumptions as well.

I want to describe two key constituents of hegemony in U.S. culture, namely the tradition of American Exceptionalism and our neoliberal cultural milieu, that I believe have shaped people's collective response to social trauma. By fostering paranoid-schizoid states and dissociative defenses in leaders and citizens alike, these cultural traditions and the psychological states they encourage have undermined the potential for constructive and reparative solutions to external and internal assaults on the body politic. American

Exceptionalism is an ideological depiction of the U.S. to the effect that since its founding fathers, the country has had a unique commitment to the principles of freedom, justice and liberty. American Exceptionalism is explicit in the ideology of Manifest Destiny, the historical belief that the U.S. was ordained and destined by the God of Christianity to extend its superior civilization throughout the globe to redeem and remake the rest of the world in our image (Fresonke, 2003). Manifest Destiny has rationalized the ethnic cleansing of Native Americans, the enslavement of Africans, the theft of one-third of Mexico and its citizens, the abusive exclusionary laws and customs aimed at immigrant workers and the exploitation of labor and resources throughout the Global South. This tradition was reaffirmed during the Bush administration's policies of preemptive invasion and occupation of other countries. Through the Bush years, ideology functioned to cover over the psychological experience of individual and group vulnerability and discontinuity and to protect the Superpower against the narcissistic injury of impotence provoked by the traumatic terrorist attack of 9/11. Many citizens, uncritically habituated to the ideology of patriotic Americanism, could automatically endorse the ideological assumptions underlying the war on terror. Before and since 9/11, ideology and psychological defenses of splitting have joined forces to continually depict U.S. aggressive foreign policy as self-sacrificing, humanitarian struggles to spread democracy to the uninitiated and to defensively protect ourselves against aggressive foreign others, be they nations or groups, who must be attacked so that our "radical innocence" (Bollas, 1992) could be defended. American Exceptionalism, a decidedly Euro-American myth, has also justified in the post 9/11 period the uninhibited expression of permissible assaults on the ethnic/religious Other, who has become the repository for disowned and projected aggression. Today Obama occupies the paradoxical position of being the object of unalloyed racial hatred and resentment, all the while that as President he has continued to implement policies based on the ideology of American Exceptionalism, which assumes the right of the U.S. – represented as a humanitarian force for good in a world filled with evil -- to occupy other countries, sustain more than 700 military bases around the globe, forcibly guarantee access to the world's remaining strategic

resources, including water, oil, and natural gas, and impose trade policies that favor U.S. based transnational corporations. In some of the early demonstrations against the invasion of Iraq, one poster satirized these assumptions: It read, "How did *our* oil get under *their* sand?"

The second feature of ideological hegemony that I believe has shaped the U.S. response to social trauma is neoliberalism, a regressive economic policy that beginning in the 1970s, has over time dramatically concentrated wealth and power by using the state to attack working class movements of solidarity and to deregulate the flow of capital and profits through tax and budget cuts. As in Australia, in the U.S. neoliberalism rose to prominence in the wake of the crisis of Keynesian welfare capitalism and represented the interests of finance capital in league with agricultural and manufacturing interests that had gone global. Now the state would be used to protect the interests of these sectors by disenfranchising working people politically and economically. The new hegemony required consensual support from the population, and unlike in Latin America where neoliberalism was imposed by terrorist states, in the U.S. from Reagan on, it infiltrated people's minds as a social and psychological system whose influence increased exponentially with little opposition in the wake of the collective shock of 9/11. In the U.S., neoliberalism embodies a social analysis with prescriptive principles that extend market values to all institutions, social practices and individual psychology, thereby a making it a core constituent of identity among citizens. By way of illustration, think about this joke told by Bob Ray, the former Premier of Ontario, as he spoke to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce about how individualism, the core value of neoliberalism, frames subjectivity:

"This fellow is going to go camping with a friend, and in preparation he goes to a sporting goods store to buy various pieces of equipment and a pup tent. He selects all of his purchases and is about to leave the store when the salesman says to him, "how about a pair of running shoes?"
The customer responds, "Listen, I'm going camping, I don't need a pair of running shoes."
The salesman says: "What if you encounter a bear?"

10   10

The customer, perplexed and a bit irritated, responds, "Are you kidding? I can't outrun a bear…"

To which the salesman replies: "You don't have to; you just have to outrun your friend!" (Eagle) "

When we share and laugh at the joke, we reproduce and reinforce an unconscious aspect of ideology. Our shared chuckle relieves the anxiety produced by the assumption that we are each pitted against one another, that we really cannot rely on our friends, that we will be abandoned at the first sign of danger, or that in our own self interest, we are willing to sacrifice our valued others. It permits a vicarious expression of sadism as well, in the victorious experience of vanquishing the other to survive. In a phrase, each individual is on her or his own. There are profound psychological implications of living in a culture that places such a high value on individualism and narcissistic self-interest, one that implicitly denigrates cooperation in the face of threat. Our insertion into neoliberal capitalism -- whether as members of the working and middle classes or the wealthy who own and manage capital, the means of production and political institutions -- forces us all to be engaged in the competitive struggle for jobs or profits in which we either vanquish others or are vanquished by them. This social reality cannot provide a containing environment but, on the contrary, produces what Rachael Peltz has called a manic society (Peltz, 2007), whose citizens' psychic states of vulnerability must be disavowed and projected if they cannot be symbolized, elaborated and transformed. The lack of social solidarity is also contained in the joke, which further does its job by reinforcing a view of human nature that erases the rich history of peoples' cooperative endeavors and collective struggles in the U.S.

While individualism and social Darwinism are endemic to capitalism itself, their prominent place in neoliberalism in the U.S. is especially problematic given the economic shifts that have significantly widened the gap of power and privilege between, on the one hand, the political classes and finance capital, and on the other, millions of working people in urban and rural areas devastated by the export of capital and resources that have left in their wake massive unemployment, loss of homes, retirement plans and health care, states that are

bankrupt, blighted communities and psychological desperation. Neoliberal principles have been implemented by both political parties, whose policies are, as Wendy Brown suggests, "favorable to business and indifferent toward poverty, social deracination, cultural decimation, long term resource depletion and environmental destruction" (Brown, 2003). Citizens are called upon to develop a subjectivity based on an entrepreneurial ethic and a moral autonomy reflected in the capacity for "personal accountability" and "self-care" (Lemke, 2005).

The model neoliberal citizen strategizes individual responsibility for success or failure that disavows impediments of social class, education, rates of unemployment and limited welfare benefits. The ideology of the "free individual" is closely connected with self-reliance and an emphatic individualism that denies connections of all kinds, constituting what Lynne Layton calls a normative unconscious. As Layton observes, a narcissistic character is fostered based on the denigration of attachment needs and the over-evaluation of agentic capacities, requiring those who occupy dominant positions in a variety of social hierarchies to project dependency and need onto the less powerful (Layton, 2003). The ambitions of the powerful to sustain and expand their influence and control over social resources is facilitated and justified by a range of psychic operations that include omnipotence, denial of interpersonal reciprocity and disavowal of reality, including their destructive impact on others. Seen through the lens of Lacan's discourse of the Other or the group psychotherapy concept of the social unconscious, neoliberal subjectivity constitutes a culture of impunity and characterizes a competitive and self-serving egoism of those in power. It is also internalized by tens of millions of citizens, who identify with and are burdened by similar psychological dynamics, but with little to show for their culturally-induced isolation in either psychological wellbeing, material wealth, social status or political power. A subjectivity characterized by this daily lived ideological stance promotes paranoid-schizoid states and manic defenses to ward off anxieties promoted by the impingements of a failed holding environment. A passive depoliticized citizen becomes the ideal feature of the system as neoliberalism erodes historical memory of collective struggles along

with public-mindedness. Furthermore, as genuine social welfare democracy is undermined, the principles associated with it, including liberty and justice, are used ideologically to justify neoliberal policies that are actually assaults on liberty and justice. Hegemonic ideology, practiced by neoconservatives and neoliberals alike, mystifies and confuses. The narratives of our deepening social, political and economic crises undermine meaning-making and in so doing, are, I believe, a good example of a pathogenic potential space.

   In order to negotiate this pathogenic social environment, many of us need to protect ourselves by struggling to keep ourselves from knowing what we know. In the process, we become a bystander population. As Eric Staub points out, bystander populations inadvertently support their government's perpetration of foreign and domestic immoral and illegal policies in their name. What kinds of psychic defenses are employed that facilitate adaptation to hegemony? Denial is a primary one, which operates on many levels, both conscious and unconscious, and can be manifested in a lack of emotional responsiveness, a cognitive process that blocks factual information, an inability to assume a moral position of responsibility and an incapacity to take action in light of knowledge. Denial helps to ward off feelings of intolerable vulnerability through the retreat into the narrow dimensions of personal concerns we want to believe are disconnected from social issues. Another defensive operation is the assumption of an absolutist state of mind whose paranoid-schizoid defences transform fear into the hatred typical of anti-immigrant vigilante organizations, fundamentalist religious movements, racism and Islamaphobia and assaults on women and gays. We can also identify with aggressive political leaders and policies whose ideological discourse involves splitting – us vs. them – that permits the projection of badness onto an enemy whose destruction is then experienced as a form of manic invulnerability. We can also disavow the ubiquitous dangers we face, letting ourselves know about them at one moment and turning away from knowing the next in an effort to reestablish something akin to what Winnicott called a sense of going-on-being.   Disavowal thus reinstates a temporary sense of psychic equilibrium. As increasing numbers of people face multiple and ongoing threats to their very survival and ideological suppression of collective responses,

13   13

dissociative defenses can provide an illusory protection from intolerable affects and thoughts that threaten to overwhelm.

However, these defenses foreclose the ability to structure meaning out of experience. Turning one's attention away, condoning the ill fate of others, seeking escape in the narrow confines of personal goals dissociated from larger social questions are characteristics of a bystander population that sustains the excesses of power. It also produces symptomatic eruptions of violence among the population such as those that permeate the environment in my country.. The result is that this manifestation of violence – whose historical context is obfuscated by the hegemonic discourse that interprets it as the product of individual mental illness or irrational foreign ideologies that attack an innocent nation – produces persecutory anxieties that compromise citizens' ability to mentalize (Fonagy and Bateman, 2006).   The paradoxical effect is the mobilization of our wish to be protected via heightened surveillance and militarized interventions by the very security apparatus that is one of the agencies of the power structure's systemic impunity.

Thus, while the bystander position protects us from the experience of helplessness in the face of external threats, this safety is secured at the risk of perpetuating the conditions that provoke the need for the employment of the defenses of the bystander in the first place. All of these defenses are deeply permeated by internalized hegemonic ideology, which is defended because it is experienced as a core part of identity. We thus maintain a repetitive need to adapt to the very hegemonic structures and discourses that oppress us.

However, we also have the capacity to assess the nature of the threats in the social world and to actively engage in myriad ways to reform oppressive conditions. In so doing, we can make possible a sense of personal agency and connection to community that help to contain fear, anxiety and dread.   Gramsci emphasized that the consciousness of subordinated social groups is fissured and uneven, in part drawn from hegemony, in part from their own experience of social reality. The inchoate, ambiguous aspects of experience can at moments be raised to the status of a coherent critique and alternative worldview that coalesce in oppositional movements. The disengagement from hegemony

represents new possibilities that are liberating, but also experienced as potentially threatening: when one's belief in and attachment to authority and hegemonic ideology are undermined, a potential psychological as well as political destabilization is often experienced. Just as in the therapeutic experience, in the political domain disengaging from attachments to bad objects, individuating from destructive relationships and acknowledging painful realities can lead to feelings of despair and dread. The capacity to mourn one's losses, face uncertainty, contain ambiguity and paradox and tolerate vulnerability can enable individuals to make new attachments that help them move toward a new sense of engagement and thus hopefulness (Gutwill and Hollander, 2006).   In Boulanger's view of our capacity to repair traumatic experience, the process of recovery entails the resolution of dissociative defenses so that a core self may reemerge that can integrate a sense of agency, continuity, cohesiveness and affect (Boulanger, 2002). Indeed, while the corporate media focus on the right wing populism that heightens hatred and paranoia, there are a growing number of progressive movements in the U.S. organized around human rights, social justice, peace and environmental struggles. They became more visible to citizens in the U.S. and throughout the world through the Occupy movement, which has vigorously challenged hegemony and, by creating an alternative narrative, has altered the discourse and consciousness of growing numbers of citizens.   While Occupy was disappeared by the corporate mass media and repressed by the militarized police forces of this country, it continues to function with the 99 percent against the 1 percent in local grass roots and community struggles. Moreover, its oppositional discourse that challenged the hegemonic narrative of neoliberal culture had a significant impact on the outcome of the last election and can still be observed in the shifting perspectives among U.S. citizens.   For example, recent polls show that the majority of the people in the U.S. support increased taxes on the wealthy, an end to U.S. involvement in overseas wars, restrictions on gun ownership, the continuation of social programs such as social security and medicare, marriage equality and even the legalization of marijuana. What greater proof of a failed democratic political culture could there be than the refusal of our elected representatives to act in

15

accord with what their constituencies desire rather than in alliance with corporate lobbyists?

I would like now to turn to how what I have been explicating relates to the practice of psychoanalysis. I believe we are seeing the manifestations of this traumatogenic social order in direct and derivative forms in ourselves and in our patients, whether or not we can tolerate knowing it. Let me call our attention to a few of the trends that have a direct and insidious impact on people in the U.S.: state governors who are concentrating authority in the executive branch and eliminating local elected officials' rights to represent their constituencies, regressive legislative constrictions on women's reproductive rights, restrictive policies toward immigrant populations, legalization of surveillance interventions that erode our civil liberties, billionaire control over the electoral process along with voter suppression policies aimed at the poor and people of color, corporate concentration of power over the dissemination of information, the erosion of the separation of Church and State, the permissibility of openly racist and anti-gay bashing, the ideological and legal assaults on women's rights, the irresponsible use of technological advances and corporate profits to undermine employment opportunities in every sector of the economy, destruction of quality education, deregulation of government protection of the safety of our food, water, medicine, work places and neighborhoods, brutal police repression of free speech and assembly – these trends and many more represent impingements of the symbolic order that are and will continue to change our lives in the U.S. as citizens and as psychoanalysts, because our own and our patients' sufferings will be inscribed by them. So now I want to suggest how what I have been describing affects our actual experience in the clinical setting.

From my perspective, we act as bystanders within our profession if we exclude the hegemonic social and ideological aspects from the "here and now' of our intrapsychic and intersubjective experience and interventions with our patients. I want to argue that a social psychoanalytic sensibility would permit us to act as witnesses – by which I mean being thoughtfully alert and responsive to how the traumatogenic social surround is embedded in the anguishes and distresses that patients speak about and show us and that we can locate within

our own thoughts and affective experience as well. As Hartman writes, we need to be aware of how we struggle with the internal residue of social relations that are "done to us" by the Other, which interpellates us to a logic that transcends intersubjectivity (Hartman, 2007). Indeed, psychoanalysts can create the opportunity to explore how psychological conflicts manifest larger social processes as well as private pain. The reluctance to participate in such an endeavor leaves intact the ideological domination and exploitation of psychic life and forecloses critical awareness and individual options.

So now I want to ask: might we engage in a psychoanalysis in which, even now and again, the subject emerges when and in so far as interpellation fails? I am going to try to illustrate this through several clinical examples. While any clinical case discussion might explicate the intersubjective dynamics or the co-constructed aspects of the analyst/patient transference and countertransference dynamics or enactments on either or both sides, I will be focusing on how we can be alert to and intervene so as to take up the ways that hegemony emerges in the treatment.

This case vignette has to do with a male patient who is struggling with an overtly political dilemma. Shortly after the controversy about the construction of a Mosque in NYC near the site of the Twin Towers, a politically progressive 60 year old man returns from a summer of living and working in a European country that had been his home for some years earlier in life. He laments his return to the U.S., where he is once again struck, he says, by the political ignorance of people and their blind obedience to the government's destructive policies internationally and the Islamaphobia it has instigated. "Europeans are so much more sophisticated than people here," he complains, "especially when it comes to world events. Everyone there is critical of the U.S. invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan and one can speak openly about how the U.S. has ruined entire countries and their peoples' lives. Here you have to be careful about what you say because you can really offend people and get yourself into trouble. How ironic that Europeans can't imagine how bad it is here." To demonstrate, he reports having to shush a visiting European colleague who in a public venue began a rather noisy critique of a local community's opposition to an Islamic

Center's attempt to rent a space in a neighborhood commercial center. "Anyone could have been overhearing him," he exclaims, "anyone related to our business or, worse, to some family associated with my son's school. We're not Jewish, and most of them are, and I don't want anyone to think I'm anti-Semitic! Besides, you can't just go around supporting Muslim rights like that…even though I agree with him, my friend just doesn't get it!" Similarly dismayed by how compromised he feels to speak his own mind at work or with his Jewish friends, he regrets having to warn his adolescent son against expressing his political opinions at school about Muslims' rights and has demanded that his son not tell anyone that he has signed a petition in support of the mosque.

The analyst's interventions might typically take up aspects of the patient's intrapsychic conflict and transference dynamics, such as his anxiety about his own aggression, his tendency to silence himself in the psychoanalytic relationship with his Jewish analyst for fear of being judged, ostracized and banished, his identification with the aggressor, and so forth. From my perspective, these interpretations are useful and necessary, but they capture only part of the patient's story. I suggest that if the analyst offers only such interpretations, he or she is in the position of unwittingly sustaining the ideological split between the personal and the political, between psychic and social reality, in a kind of inadvertent psychoanalytic "hailing." Additional interventions can serve to highlight the intimate connection between psyche and society by recognizing the centrality of the political citizen within the patient and would keep the following considerations in mind: psychopathology is revealed in the political self-policing functions by which individuals agree to take their place within the Symbolic Order, "doing it without knowing it" as Zizek suggests. What, we may ask, does this patient not want to know when he reacts to aspects of the politically repressive atmosphere in our post-9/11 culture? It seems to me that the challenge is to help the patient see that his subjectivity has historical and cultural specificity: unconscious assumptions of neoliberal individualism have the patient uncritically assuming that he and his son must grapple with their personally-experienced threat and insecurity in an isolated fashion without benefit of participation in collective opposition to Islamaphobia; simultaneously

the patient's experience is also a   particular instance of a general phenomenon related to familial interpellation. That is, the family serves to mold its young to identify with and adapt to hegemonic social values and structures and, under extreme social situations, the family allies with the state and shores up its interests. For example, studies of Germany under the Nazis and Argentina during the Dirty War document how parents taught their children to practice self-censorship in a variety of ways, duplicating the politically repressive environments in their most intimate relationships as they produced a bystander population. This patient, I would argue, can gain by being encouraged to see how and why he reproduces this phenomenon so that his fantasy-based responses to his social milieu become more reality oriented. Such an exploration takes up what it means for the patient to issue an autocratic mandate to his son to be silent rather than to open up an exploration with him of their respective desires and anxieties about having an authentic voice that is different from the majority culture. Then he could wonder why he automatically rejects for himself and his son the challenge of creating strategies that might foster a respectful dialogue with those who have different points of view. The analyst could help the patient examine the meanings of his willingness to constrict his democratic rights -- his freedom of speech -- in a country whose civil liberties, while under attack, still exist. When the patient's explicit and implicit political views are treated as significant aspects of his subjectivity as a citizen, and not taken only as symbolic representations of intrapsychic or intersubjective conflict or deficit, neither analyst nor patient excludes this central aspect of identity from the psychoanalytic frame. This patient might better manage his fears of isolation and retaliatory aggression for his dissident political views were the clinical setting a space for recognition that in the United States today, the official story is contested by an oppositional discourse and a variety of social movements with which he might identify and thus feel less vulnerable. The therapeutic challenge entails how to provide a transitional space in which such a dialogue is permitted to emerge between analyst and patient.

Another clinical example illustrates how we might help patients deal with and tolerate the psychic complexity, ambiguity and paradoxes related to our

class, ethnic and gendered position that contexualizes intersubjectivity. A female patient who is a working professional and first-time mother brings up her intensely conflicted feelings toward her infant's caregiver, on whom she feels resentfully dependent. She agonizes over her own inability to be assertive in light of her inexperience and the caregiver's professional history of caring for children. She feels deauthorized as the infant's mother and she cannot tell her employee what she likes and doesn't like about the latter's childrearing strategies because she is unsure of her own intuitions and is afraid of offending the needed hired help. The therapeutic work includes the following: the analyst takes up the patient's unconscious association of her paid employee with her dominating mother; the interventions include the maternal transference to the analyst, as well as the analyst's countertransferential reactions to her patient's hostile attitude toward her caregiver; they explore the ways that the patient cannot feel entitled to suggest, must less impose, her own requirements and preferences about how her baby is to be cared for in light of a maternal transference to the caregiver in which the patient suffers unconscious guilt for being able to have the happy marriage and financial success that her mother could never achieve. In exchange for betraying her mother by going beyond the latter's limits, which for the patient has unconsciously been equated with an aggressive assault that generates fears of retaliation, the patient is in an infantilized state with the paid employee and resentfully and helplessly yields authority over her baby. If the analyst helps the patient only to work through the maternal transference so that the patient can feel entitled to give orders to her caregiver and take charge over her own infant, I would suggest that we could think about this as a political enactment. How? Because there are other aspects of this relationship that would then go unquestioned related to class and racial inequities in U.S. culture. If these remain as an unexamined given by the analyst, I suggest that the analyst is inadvertantly manifesting her own "normative unconscious," to use Layton's term, in this situation because both members of the analytic dyad are white and thus occupy a privileged position in a racist culture. In this case, though, the analyst inquires about other aspects of the patient's relationship with the caregiver, an exploration that reveals equally

problematic issues, only now in relationship to the patient's dominant class and ethnic position that are unquestioned aspects of her identification with hegemony. She makes authoritarian demands of her employee for excessive hours in exchange for low pay with no benefits. The patient considers herself a political liberal and is proud that she permits her caregiver to take a class in English as a Second Language one morning a week, although she expects in return Saturday night baby-sitting. Because this aspect of the relationship has been brought into the analytic frame, the patient has the chance to explore previously unthought, unrecognized and unconscious ways that her entitlement as a white upper-middle class woman is exercised over her Latina working-class employee. This is an example of what Bourdieu means by habitas; she is, in Zizek's word, enacting hegemonic racist privilege without knowing it, practicing and reproducing it on a daily basis. This is the perfect site, it seems to me, where in addition to preoedipal and oedipal dyanmics, we need to attend to, as well, our affective and attitudinal histories with work, including but not exclusively, the labor of love, that is, what our caregivers' transmit to us unconsciously about the value of work and their relationship to it. In this way, the analyst and patient can consider how both of them fit into the class and ethnic hierarchies and the unthought or unconscious ideological framing of their intersubjective experience. With this patient, the analyst can encourage an examination of the culturally syntonic assumption of her assumed rights in U.S. society to exploit immigrant laborers through low wages, no medical coverage and longer hours than are usually required of workers in the public sphere. The challenge to the analyst is to find ways to open up a potential space in which both participants can risk exploring the shared affective/perceptual awareness of their mutual or disparate experiences related to race and class, thereby expanding critical consciousness and choices in both of their lives.

With specific regard to the issue of our relationship to our social world in crisis, a unique challenge emerges with patients who never talk about any issues beyond their most intimately experienced personal relationships as consciously recognized sources of their anxieties, fears, depression and so forth. Perhaps in such cases the asymmetrical nature of the psychoanalytic relationship suggests

our responsibility to help patients recognize when, if and how that dimension of experience is left out of the work and thus forecloses possibilities to address significant aspects of troubled experience. Sometimes it is appropriate to raise with the patient the fact that he or she has been silent about one of a number of crises in the world as a way of simply bringing to the patient's awareness to this absense. Implicitly we are calling attention to the very personal significance of our relationship to the problematic nature of the social order that do, in fact, affect our thoughts, affective experience and material reality. Many of us alternate between knowing and not knowing the truth. As I indicated earlier, while disavowal offers an illusory psychic equilibrium, as Freud and others have pointed out, the unresolved anxieties and conflicts that provoke the defense in the first place remain like a festering sore within the psychic apparatus, whose symptoms appear in disguised forms.   If we psychoanalysts do not question how anxieties, fears, depression, psychosomatic difficulties, and so forth are related to the larger social order rather than exclusively to impingements stemming from intrapsychic and interpersonal relations, we may run the risk of unnecessarily curtailing symbolic capacities and significant insights that promote emotional growth. Indeed, the absence of the analyst's and patient's social concerns could be construed as evidence of a kind of psychopathological denial of a tortured social world that impact on us all. Our patients' experience in the social order, as well as their values and attitudes, may be similar to or very different from our own. But it is precisely the psychoanalytic frame that offers the possibility of an intersubjective experience in which we can use our minds to reflect critically. Through the analyst's careful monitoring of transference and countertransference dynamics, both analyst and patient can work toward achieving the ability to be separate and different within a caring relationship. The psychoanalytic process can thus provide the potential space for a more sturdy subject to emerge with the capacity to critically negotiate affective and cognitive responses to the social order, so much of which is too often unthought, unquestioned and unconscious. Such patients might not be obliged to rely exclusively on disavowal, dissociation or manic certainty to manage the multiple threats in the world around them. In this sense, the psychoanalytic process can

provide a space for learning to use one's mind in order to tolerate anxieties produced by a traumatogenic social environment.

I want to end by speaking to the value of letting ourselves know the truth of our traumatogenic social reality rather than suffer in silence and ignorance its noxious and unexamined effects on our psyches. How can we live in this dangerous world and let ourselves know what we know without being overwhelmed, terrified or despondent?

How can we confront the future, unlike Walter Benjamin's angel of history who is caught in "the storm [that] irresistibly propels him into the future to which his back is turned while the pile of debris before him grows skyward…"? How do we sustain our sense of agency and hope? I want to quote Robert Jay Lifton, who has spent a good deal of his psychoanalytic endeavors studying the psychopolitical dynamics of war, holocaust, nuclear proliferation and fundamentalist terrorism, who was once asked by colleagues to summarize the lessons garnered from his research on the human capacity to do evil as well as to be able to survive and sustain hope. Dr. Lifton responded: "[Evil] seems to be all too frequent, all too readily called forth, and people all too readily socialize to it or are able to adapt to evil. At the same time, I've also seen the other side of it, survivors able to bring knowledge from their ordeal, recreate themselves with the help of others and with the help of love around them…so I would say for me, and I consider myself neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but to simply confront and make my way through these dreadful events is an act of hope…and I think all of us have to work to combat these events and take steps to prevent their recurrence in some kind of spirit of hope…" And commenting on the spirit of his work, Dr. Lifton continued, "You look into the abyss, but you don't want to be stuck there. Otherwise your imagination is deadened and defeated by the very event you're studying. So you want to look into it in order to see beyond it. If you don't look into it, you are ostrich-like. If you get stuck there, you're incapacitated. So you want to look beyond it to other human possibilities."

While Lifton is speaking of his ability to tolerate knowing about the destructive capacities of human beings, for me his statement also speaks to the importance of understanding the relationship between social trauma and psychic

pain. I believe that a social psychoanalytic process can provide a space for learning to use one's mind in order to tolerate anxieties produced by our traumatogenic environment. A social psychoanalysis might contribute as well to the emergence of individuals who recognize themselves as political subjects able to engage in the remediation of the multiple threats that terrorize us. After all, history has shown us that a healthy democracy, upon which the very practice of psychoanalysis depends, is based on an educated, critical and participatory citizenry.

References:

Althusser, A. (1994) "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes Towards an

Investigation)," in Slavoj Zizek (ed), *Mapping Ideology.* London: Verso, 100–140.

Beebe, B., Lachmann, F.M. (1998) "Co-Constructing Inner and Relational Processes:

Self- and Mutual Regulation in Infant Research and Adult Treatment," in *Psychoanal.*

Psychol., 15:480-516.

Benjamin, J. (1990) "An Outline of Intersubjectivity: The Development of Recognition,"

in *Psychoanal. Psychol*., 7S:33-46.

Boggs, C. (1984). *The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism.* Cambridge,

UK: South End press.

Boulanger, G. (2002) Wounded by Reality: The Collapse of the Self in Adult Onset Trauma. *Contemp. Psychoanal*., 38:45-76.

Bollas, C. (1992). *Being A Character*. Scarborough, ON: HarperCollins.

Bourdieu, P. (December 1998) "Utopia of Endless Exploitation: The essence of

neoliberalism," English language editorial director, Wendy Kristianasen, *Le Monde*
  diplomatique.
Bromberg, P.M. (1995). Resistance, Object-usage, And Human Relatedness. *Contemp.*
  Psychoanal., 31:173.

Gutwill, S. (1994), "Women's Eating Problems: Social Context and the Internalization of
  Culture," in Bloom, Gitter, Gutwill, Kogel and Zaphiropoulos (eds), *Eating Problems:*
  A Feminist Psychoanalytic Treatment Model. New York: Basic Books.
Brown, W. (2006) "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-
  Democratization," *Political Theory* 34: 696.
Davies, J.M., Frawley, M.G. (1992) "Dissociative Processes and Transference-
  Countertransference Paradigms in the Psychoanalytically Oriented Treatment of Adult
  Survivors of Childhood Sexual Abuse," in *Psychoanal. Dial.*, 2:5-36.
Fonagy, P. (2000) "Attachment and Borderline Personality Disorder," in *J. Amer.*
  Psychoanal. Assn., 48:1129-1146.
Eagle, M. (2006). Personal communication.
Elliot, A. (1999). *Social Theory and Psychoanalysis in Transition: Self and Society from*
  Freud to Kristeva. London: Free Association Books.
Fonagy, P, Gergely, G, Jurist, E. Target, M (2004) *Affect Regulation, Mentalization, and*
  the Development of the Self. London: Karnac
Fresonke, K. (2003) *West of Emerson: The Design of Manifest Destiny.* Berkeley:
  University of California Press.
Goren, E. (2007) "Society's Use of the Hero following a National Trauma,"

American Journal of Psychoanalysis, 67: 37-52

Gutwill, S. and Hollander, N., (2006) "Class and Splitting in the Clinical Setting: the

    Ideological Dance in the Transference and Countertransference," in Layton, Hollander

    and Gutwill (eds), *Psychoanalysis, Class and Politics: Encounters in the Clinical*

    Setting. New York: Routledge.

Hartman, S (2007) "Class Unconscious: From Dialectical Materialism to Relational

    Material," *Relational Psychoanalysis*, Vol 3, Suchet, Harris, Aron (eds). Mahwah,

    N.J.: Analytic Press.

Hollander, N. (2010) *Uprooted Minds: Surviving the Politics of Terror in the Americas*.

    New York: Routledge

Lemke, T. "The Birth of Bio-Politics - Michel Foucault's Lecture at the College de

    France on Neo-Liberal Governmentality," website:

    www.***thomaslemke***web.de/engl.../The%20**Birth**%20of%20**Biopolitics** %203.pdf.

    Retrieved June 22, 2008*.*

Layton, L. (February 13, 2003) "Psychoanalysis and the Free Individual," 4. Paper

    presented at the University of South Carolina, Columbia, Conference on *The Desire*

    of the Analysts: Psychoanalysis and Cultural Criticism in the Twenty-First Century,

Rustin, M. (1991) *The Good Society and the Inner World: Psychoanalysis, Politics and*

    Culture . London: Verso.

Peltz, R. (2005) "The Manic Society," in *Psychoanalytic Dialogues: A Journal of*

    Relational Perspectives 15, No. 3: 347-366.

Schore, A.N. (2002). Advances in Neuropsychoanalysis, Attachment Theory, and
    Trauma Research in *Psychoanal. Inq.*, 22:433-484.

Seligman, S. (2000) "Clinical Implications of Current Attachment Theory," in *J. Amer.*
    Psychoanal. Assn., 48:1189-1194.

Stern, D.B. (1996). The Social Construction of Therapeutic Action. *Psychoanal. Inq.*,
    16: 265-93.

Stolorow, R. (2007) *Trauma and Human Existence: Autobiographical, Psychoanalytic,*
    and Philosophical Reflections. New York: the Analytic Press.

Weinberg, H. (2007) "So What is this Social Unconscious Anyway?" in *Group Analysis*,
    40 (3), 307-322.

Winnicott, D.W., (1960). The Theory of the Parent Infant Relationship. *International*
    Journal of Psycho-Analysis, **41:**585-595

Zizek, S. (2002) *Welcome to the desert of the real.* London: Verso*.* 19.