

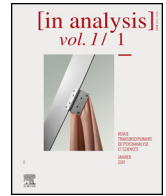


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Debate

Decolonization, Polarization, Psychoanalysis, Privilege: Toward a Cosmopolitan and Culturally Intelligent Psychotherapist

Décolonisation, polarisation, psychanalyse, privilèges : vers un psychothérapeute cosmopolite et culturellement intelligent

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ABSTRACT

Context. – Globalization and ability to communicate freely with anyone in the world brings people together in ways that never happened before. Multiculturalism cannot be reduced to a process of ‘melting pot’, where the “small” (colonized) cultures are absorbed by the dominant ones. This process is the result of binary thinking, and it simultaneously casts doubt over the methodology, epistemology and training of psychotherapists – and particularly psychoanalysts – in academic environments.

Objectives. – This article intends to demonstrate the benefits of a non-dogmatic approach to psychoanalysis, founded on the principles of decolonization and elimination of binary thinking, leading to a cosmopolitan psychotherapy, which has to include a plurality of concepts and theoretical orientation.

Method. – The article employs a qualitative demonstration, in which the author relies on his experience as a clinician and university professor, as well as on a series of philosophical and epistemological critical thinking concepts: binary (polarized) thinking, colonialism, fundamentalist individualism, privilege and its connection to politics and economics, and cultural intelligence.

Results. – Binary (polarized) thinking – a primal, yet efficient and convenient, way of viewing the world, related to our ‘reptilian’ brain – is responsible for our inability to use a larger palette of options and choices, and integrate them into a functional whole. Binary thinking seems to be correlated to radical (fundamentalist) individualism, as well as with a neoliberal, colonial mentality, which are adopted rapidly by many other social systems (nations, cultures), in order to remain competitive economically at a global level. Cosmopolitan psychotherapy aims at decolonizing both psychoanalysis and our psyche, using the intercultural intelligence model, and employing a multimodal, nuanced, culturally mindful psychotherapy. The result is a unified mind-body approach, where research and evidence-based practices do not reduce themselves to a medical model, based on pathology.

Conclusion. – Working with the psyche inside the individual has to include an equal attention to a bidirectional relationship with the collective (social, professional and personal relationships, as well as to the environment (ecopsychology). Equally important is to focus on the somatic memory, where recent research demonstrates the way trauma produces physiological responses that require a different approach than talk psychotherapy. An option may be psychedelics-assisted psychotherapy of trauma, which in the United States are currently in the third stage trial by the FDA (federal department of Food and Drug Administration) for post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.

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RÉSUMÉ

Contexte. – La mondialisation et la possibilité de communiquer librement avec n'importe qui dans le monde rapprochent les individus comme jamais auparavant. La multiculturalité qui s'en dégage ne peut être réduite à un processus de « melting pot », où les « petites » cultures (colonisées) sont absorbées par les cultures dominantes. Le processus de domination que nous constatons est le résultat d'une pensée binaire; or il jette simultanément un doute sur notre environnement académique, sur la méthodologie, sur l'épistémologie et sur la formation des psychothérapeutes.

Mots clés :

Psychanalyse
Décolonisation
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Dogmatisme
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Objectifs. – Cet article vise à démontrer les avantages d'une approche non dogmatique de la psychanalyse, fondée sur des principes de décolonisation et d'élimination de la pensée binaire. Ce travail est fondé sur l'hypothèse qu'une telle perspective conduirait à une psychothérapie cosmopolite incluant une pluralité de concepts et d'orientations théoriques.

Méthode. – L'article utilise une démonstration qualitative, dans laquelle l'auteur s'appuie sur son expérience de clinicien et d'enseignant d'université, ainsi que sur une série de concepts philosophiques et épistémologiques du domaine de la pensée critique: la pensée binaire (polarisée), le colonialisme, l'individualisme fondamentaliste, le privilège et son lien avec la politique et l'économie, l'intelligence culturelle.

Résultats. – La pensée binaire (polarisée) – une façon primitive, mais efficace et pratique, de voir le monde, liée à notre cerveau « reptilien » – serait responsable de notre incapacité à utiliser une plus grande palette d'options et de choix cognitifs, comme à les intégrer dans un ensemble fonctionnel. Ce type de pensée semble être corrélé à un individualisme radical (fondamentaliste), ainsi qu'à une mentalité néolibérale et coloniale, qui sont rapidement adoptées par de nombreux autres systèmes sociaux (nations, cultures), afin de rester compétitifs économiquement au niveau mondial. La psychothérapie cosmopolite vise à décoloniser à la fois la psychanalyse et notre psyché. Elle appuie son approche sur le modèle de l'intelligence interculturelle et sur l'emploi d'une psychothérapie multimodale, nuancée et culturellement attentive. Le résultat se traduirait par une approche corps-esprit unifiée, où la recherche et les pratiques fondées sur des preuves ne se réduisent pas à un modèle médical, basé sur la pathologie.

Conclusion. – Travailler avec le psyché à l'intérieur de l'individu doit inclure une attention égale à une relation bidirectionnelle avec le collectif (relations sociales, professionnelles et personnelles), ainsi qu'avec l'environnement (écopsychologie). Il est tout aussi important de se concentrer sur la mémoire somatique, où des recherches récentes démontrent la façon dont le traumatisme produit des réponses physiologiques qui nécessitent le recours à des approches différentes de la psychothérapie par la parole. Une option pourrait être la psychothérapie du traumatisme assistée par les psychédéliques qui, aux États-Unis, sont actuellement au troisième stade d'essai par la FDA (Département Fédéral de l'Administration des aliments et des médicaments) pour le trouble de stress post-traumatique et la dépression.

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Introduction

It may sound presumptuous, yet I believe I had this little revelation: if there is one thing that would really make humanity take a significant leap forward, it would be giving up binary thinking. This opening argument will focus on exploring *dogmatism* (in my opinion one of the most destructive consequences of binary thinking) in psychoanalysis and psychotherapy. I will also propose as solutions *cultural intelligence* and (a non-dogmatic) decolonization of psychotherapy and psychoanalysis, which can be accomplished by creating diverse, inclusive, and polyvalent curricula to be taught in universities.

Binary thinking can be resumed as follows: *if option A is not working, then Z, its opposite, must be what works, and therefore it is automatically the best choice.* For example, if four years of three times a week of psychoanalysis sessions are 'bad' ("excessive", "patriarchal", "unscientific", "unnecessarily long and complicated", and so on), then solution-focused, brief therapy must be the way to go. If communism didn't work, then neo-liberal capitalism is the answer to the world's problems. If steep hierarchy is faulty, then holocracy will yield justice.

Similarly, if we decided that the medical model of psychotherapy is excessively hierarchical and patriarchal, then we should call the patients *clients* (or even worse, *consumers of health*, basically customers in a business transaction that sells a service); and then replace the whole thing with a "client-centered", "humanistic" model, and cater to their every need as if they were spoiled toddlers raised by insecure parents.

I find it fascinating how popular is this way of making choices. In the United States in particular, there seems to be a firm belief that there is room for only two options, and if the current one doesn't work, then its opposite must do the job. This is a primal, reductionist way of thinking, nested in our reptilian brain, which perpetuates a dogmatic, bipolar mentality and education, rather than allowing for the emergence of a holistic social environment, where nuances, intuition, diversity of options, and ability to

integrate information from apparently unrelated fields come together in a meaningful way. In the era of artificial intelligence - which is currently inserting itself deep into our decision-making process (music and film preferences, news and information presentation and ranking, to name just a few) - it is more urgent than ever to educate students not along dogmatic, reductionist models; but on a foundation of nuance-based, culturally intelligent critical thinking.

Individualism, Privilege and Binary Thinking

The first thing that came to mind when I was invited to write this opening argument for the *Psychoanalysis in University* issue was: the idea is not whether to teach or not psychoanalysis in universities. But rather how much and what kind of psychoanalysis would benefit more the future generations of therapists. In many countries psychoanalysis still is the main approach to psychotherapy, leaving little or no space for other models and theories. In the United States, on the other hand, there is every model you can imagine, while many training programs rarely offer a solid psychoanalytic perspective, focusing on whatever is trendy in psychotherapy at the time. This is a great example of binary, colonial thinking, where the newcomers completely replace one theory with another, throwing out the proverbial baby with the bathwater, and replacing it with their own tub, soap, and preferred newborn. While classic psychoanalysis may well be perceived in the 21st Century as cumbersome, outdated, and pretentious, one cannot not acknowledge the timeless relevance of Freud's contemporary, Carl Gustav Jung, and his brilliant work on dreams, archetypes, collective unconscious, persona and shadow, anima and animus, and individuation. Moreover, many groundbreaking theorists were initially trained as psychoanalysts: John Bowlby, Harry Stack Sullivan, D.W. Winnicott, Erik Erikson, Heinz Kohut; as well as the founders of family systems theory and practice, Salvador Minuchin and Murray Bowen. Attachment and trauma-informed psychotherapy, object relations, intergenerational trans-

mission of family processes and mind-body connection, inform the work of many therapists and are the result of research and insights done by psychoanalysts.

Truth being said, I love the complexity, ambiguity, and intellectual depth of psychoanalysis, especially since I studied and practiced psychotherapy in California, in an environment that often discourages and undervalues intellectual pursuit, favoring action-oriented interventions and self-help work. Yet, it seems that *We've Had [over] a Hundred Years of Psychotherapy and the World Is Getting Worse*, as psychoanalyst James Hillman puts it.

"We still locate the psyche inside the skin. You go inside to locate the psyche, you examine your feelings and your dreams, they belong to you. Or it's interrelations, interpsyche, between your psyche and mine. That's been extended a little bit into family systems [theory] and office groups – but the psyche, the soul, is still only within and between people. We're working on our relationships constantly, and our feelings and reflections, but look what's left out of that.

(Hillman makes a wide gesture that includes the oil tanker in the horizon, the gang graffiti on a park sign, and the fat homeless woman with swollen ankles and cracked skin asleep on the grass about fifteen feet away).

What's left out is a deteriorating world.

So why hasn't therapy noticed that? Because psychotherapy is only working on that "inside" soul. By removing the soul from the world and not recognizing that the soul is also in the world, psychotherapy can't do its job anymore. The buildings are sick, the institutions are sick, the baking system is sick, the schools, the streets – the sickness is out there" (Hillman & Ventura, 1993, pp. 3-4).

It is obvious to me that first and foremost, the education of future psychotherapists needs to focus not only on the fact that we cannot dogmatically prescribe only one specific psychotherapeutic model and theory in universities (and when we decide that that doesn't work, to replace it with its opposite). But also on the reality that individualism (which has greatly been promoted and reinforced in psychotherapy), has fractured and alienated the world around us.

The devastating effect of binary thinking and extreme individualism (curing the individual while letting the relationships and the world around us decay) has become more visible only very recently, when with the help of technology (fake news and virtual reality are, after all, the offspring of Reality TV shows), we have fully fulfilled Baudrillard's 1980s prediction: we have pushed everything to such an extreme, that life is moving *hors de la scene*, becoming ob-scene. "L'obscène est la fin de toute scène" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 61). The result is that an already alienated world is becoming a chaotic game of signs – Metaverse?! –, a "hyperreality", in which the signs of objects "mask the absence of a profound reality", hiding not the old, decaying world that signs used to represent; but the fact that that world as we know it has been disappearing. As signs are losing all connection to the objects they supposed to represent, they cease having "any rapport whatsoever with reality: they have become their own pure simulacrum" (Baudrillard, 1981, p.17).

All things considered, specifically in the United States, good quality therapy seems to still be a privileged accessory of those who are rather wealthy: if you are busy juggling two jobs and a family, living from paycheck to paycheck, you are unlikely to have the time, mental space, and financial resources to focus on personal development workshops and psychotherapy. Interestingly enough – and in direct relationship to polarized, binary

thinking – the same thing often happens to overachievers, who are exclusively or excessively focused on their professional life. Most of the time they become amazing, successful professionals, but remain emotional and/or cultural illiterates.

Psychotherapy & Politics: The Pseudo-Freedom of Privileged Individualism

In the technology-dominated, post-truth era, we cannot talk about psychotherapy without keeping a firm eye on its relationship to two very important areas: politics and economics, in which binary thinking, individualism, and privilege are foundational values, leading to what I call *pseudo-freedom*: I am free to do whatever I want, including ignoring the crucial individual and collective responsibility that comes with my individual freedom.

In fact, psychotherapy, politics, and business are much more connected than we would like to. The 'pioneer' of the so-called Public Relations (PR) field is no one other than Edward Bernays, Freud's nephew, who used his uncle's work to put together a fascinating machinery that will:

make people want things they didn't need, by linking mass produced goods to their unconscious desire. Out of this will come a new political idea of how to control the masses. By satisfying people's inner selfish desires, one made them happy, and thus docile. (Curtis, 2002).

James Hillman has also great advice regarding the way psychotherapy and politics are intertwined:

Every time we try to deal with [the misery and unfairness of life] by going to therapy with our rage and fear, we're depriving the political world of something. And therapy, in its crazy way, by emphasizing the inner soul and ignoring the outer soul, supports the decline of the actual world. [...]

The vogue today, in psychotherapy, is the "inner child". That's the therapy thing – you go back to your childhood. But if you're looking backward, you're not looking around. This trip back constellates what Jung called the "child archetype". Now, the child archetype is by nature apolitical and disempowered – it has no connection to the political world. And so the adult says 'What can I do about the world? This thing is bigger than me'. That's the child archetype talking. 'All I can do is go into myself, work on my growth, my development, find good parenting, support groups.' This is a disaster for our political world, for our democracy. **Democracy depends on intensely active citizens, not children.** (Hillman & Ventura, 1993, pp. 5-6)

Beginning mostly with the School of Palo Alto, psychotherapy in the United States departed from the very long, very expensive psychoanalysis, in a process of therapy democratization. While access to therapy increased significantly with the use of cognitive behavioral, solution-focused, and brief therapies, the results in the US seem to be rather geared toward getting people back on track as productive individuals. To this day, the evidence-based psychotherapies have been preferred not for their amazing results, but because they are easier to quantify in dollars and cents, making them the darling of insurance companies and HR departments. The 'democratization' of psychotherapy -like the 'democratization' of access to communication, information, banking, etc., using technology- ended up as a process of market disruption: a very subtle, yet aggressive take-over, where an object or service that until then was reserved to some privileged few, is now mass-produced and marketed to everyone, with the purpose of maximizing the benefit of the stakeholders.

Psychotherapy in the US seems to be favored by employers and politicians not necessarily because it enhances employees' and citizens' wellbeing, but rather because it is seen as a method of *individually reducing or eliminating the rage and fear* that Hillman was talking about, so that the temporarily incapacitated individuals recuperate and go back to work to continue to produce and consume. Critical thinking, existential concerns, inquiries regarding the meaning of labor and life, are all seen as nuisances, obstacles that prevent economic growth. Ironically, therapy (and of course, a cocktail of psychotropic medication) seems to be the US's answer to even the homeless crisis. It is very easy for the homeless to get free, unlimited therapy, while it is extremely difficult or impossible to get what they really need: a home.

I believe it is our role, as psychotherapists to assist and work with decision makers – businesspeople, politicians, activists, as well as their supporters and electors – so they conceive and enact policies from a place of wholeness and meaningful relationships, rather than from within a binary, fractured self.

This paper advocates thus for the necessity of a university education that is inclusive, multi/interdisciplinary, and culturally intelligent. Instead of adhering – in a more or less dogmatic way – to a single theoretical orientation, and then struggling to squeeze the patients/clients to fit in, socially mindful, cosmopolitan therapists draw their knowledge, skills and expertise from a variety of theoretical orientations (psychodynamic, intergenerational, systemic, structural, strategic or narrative theories), as well as from other disciplines, such as sociology, the arts, philosophy, economics and politics, medicine, physics, and mathematics, or any other field that may help the therapist bridge the (purely theoretical) gap between mind and body, between the macro and the micro social systems.

Cultural Intelligence, Decolonization, Cosmopolitanism

Most important, and most disappointing, psychoanalysis has not evolved scientifically. Specifically, it has not developed objective methods for testing the exciting ideas it had formulated earlier. As a result, psychoanalysis enters the twenty-first century with its influence in decline. This decline is regrettable, since psychoanalysis still represents the most coherent and intellectually satisfying view of the mind (Kandel, 1999, p. 506).

The involution or stagnation of psychoanalysis is a complex and important matter, and I would like to leave that for a different article. Connecting psychoanalysis with physiology, biology and cognitive behavioral sciences would likely elicit new insights into the mind-body connection and its impact on our behaviors and emotions. Yet, one of the main purposes of this article is the promotion of an inclusive view of all psychotherapies, which I consider as different facets of a large network of modalities aimed at enhancing the wellbeing of humanity in its entirety.

While maybe I personally agree that psychoanalysis still is a “coherent and intellectually satisfying view of the mind”, I am puzzled by the assumption that this view automatically applies all over the world. Why would psychoanalysis be *the most* coherent and intellectually satisfying *to all and any culture*? To what extent psychoanalysis is relevant at all, let alone *most satisfying*, to people in California, Madagascar, the Amazonian jungle of Peru, Afghanistan's new Taliban government, or the gypsy community in Timisoara, Romania?

“Provincialism”, says Milan Kundera in his book *The Curtain*

is the inability (or the refusal) to imagine one's own culture in a larger context.

There are two types of provincialism: the one of the big nations and the one of the small ones. Big nations are resistant to Goethe's concept of universal literature because their own literature seems rich enough to not be interested in what is written elsewhere. [...] Small nations are reticent to the larger context for exactly the opposite reasons: they perceive universal culture as something strange, a sky far above their heads, distant, inaccessible, an ideal reality that has nothing to do with their [poor, provincial] national literature. (Kundera, 2005, pp. 52-53).

There are many definitions of *culture*, here are a few that I use in my work as a professor and psychotherapist:

- “The totality of the unwritten rules of the social game” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.6) .
- “The collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.6) .
- “A group of people who share a similar set of values, beliefs, and expectations” (Gheorghe, 2013, p.3).
- “A set of unwritten norms of conduct that guide the behavior of a group of people into deciding what is right or wrong, acceptable or unacceptable, etc.” (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010, p.18) .

Cultural intelligence, on the other hand, is “the capability to function effectively across national, ethnic, and organizational cultures” (Ang & Van Dyne, 2008, p. XV). And if we look at David Livermore's definition, it seems that cultural intelligence is in fact the opposite of Kundera's provincialism.

Having a high Cultural Intelligence doesn't mean exhibiting flawless behavior in cross-cultural settings. Instead, it is personified by people with a strong sense of their own cultural identity. They know who they are and what they believe, but they are equally interested to discover that in others (Livermore, 2009, p. 8).

Using cultural intelligence in psychotherapy is not an option anymore, it is an imperative. Globalization and technology are bringing people together in ways that never happened before in the history of humanity. While this is our chance to finally approach the world from a true holistic, unfractured perspective, it is easy to notice how this unprecedented closeness is creating adverse reactions of aggression, territorialism, nationalism, and xenophobia.

In microsocioal systems relationships (couples, families, groups) where the partners have a low level of emotional and cultural intelligence, “too much” closeness produces fear that one's individuality and uniqueness will be lost in the undifferentiated mass of togetherness. Needless to say, the fear of individuality loss stems from one's inability to remain, in the presence of others, a *differentiated self*, a secure, fulfilled individual who stays true to his/her/their set of values, beliefs and expectations, while remaining open and respectful to the values and beliefs of someone with whom they are (often emotionally) connected.

The higher the level of differentiation in a couple, family, or other social group, the more they can cooperate, look out for one another's welfare, and stay in adequate contact during stressful as well as calm periods. The lower the level of differentiation, the more likely the family will regress to selfish, aggressive and

avoidance behaviors; cohesiveness, altruism, and cooperativeness will break down. (Kerr & Bowen, 1988, p. 93).

Of course, for many cultures psychoanalysis feels indeed like “the most coherent and intellectually satisfying vision of the mind.” Yet, for many others, psychoanalysis seems to be a rigid mold in which the psychoanalyst is struggling to fit them, in the name of healing their mind, life and maybe soul.

Furthermore, not all psychoanalysis is equal. Freud seemed to be convinced that anyone in the world can be healed by a psychoanalytic system that he built around his own childhood and life experience in 19th Century Vienna. Jung on the other hand, seems to have had a much broader view of it, focusing on both the individual and the collective, recognizing archetypes that may be often transcultural:

“Look”, Ochwiä Bianco told me, “how cruel is white people’s appearance. Their lips are thin, their noses sharp, their faces crossed by wrinkles and distorted, their eyes have a fixed look, always searching for something. What are they searching for? White people constantly want something, they are permanently restless. We do not know what they want. We do not understand them. We believe they are crazy.”

I asked him why he believed white people were all crazy.

“They say they think with their head”, he answered.

“But of course they think with their head. How do you think?” I asked astonished.

“We think here”, he said indicating his heart. (Jung, 1996, p. 254).

True diversity of ideas, theoretical concepts, and practical methods of healing those who suffer is difficult to achieve if we do not try, in earnest, to decolonize psychology and psychotherapy. Addressing the colonial assumptions of psychoanalysis is impossible without addressing dogmatism of any kind, whether it manifests itself as provincialism, or colonialism.

To be fair, I personally dislike the word ‘decolonizing’. It evokes in me some sort of revolutionary endeavor, like the one Bolsheviks and communists engaged in, with the results that we all know. It also reminds me of the ‘60 ‘revolution’, and I will let Leonard Cohen define it:

The ‘60s revolution lasted about 15 minutes. You know, every generation has to feel that has a particular significance that no other generation has had. Our generation, the ‘60s generation, felt it was the freest generation. I was talking to someone from the ‘80s generation who felt a great sense of pride that his generation was the most corrupt. And the most greedy. You know, each generation has to locate a significance and hold on to it. And sell it. Sell it to the world and sell it to each other. That’s the way it seems to work. (Cohen, 1993, 3’20”).

Equally worth mentioning is that in my part of the world (San Francisco Bay Area, California), “decolonizing” has already become a buzz word, that is severely overused at this point, in all imaginable and unimaginable contexts, by people who often have no clue whatsoever what they are talking about. Some of them belong to a variety of minority groups, others are part of the so-called majority, but what surprises me is how many of them talk about decolonization -of culture, sciences, psychology, psychotherapy, etc.- with the same angry voices that the communists used to talk about the capitalists. That, in my view, annihilates the very concept of decolonization: if the intention and methods used are focused on taking down the “colonizers” and replace them with decolonizing revolutionaries,

the result may well be just another product, another dogma in a more colorful packaging matching the current social trends.

As René Girard points out, scapegoating is a social mechanism as old as the world (Girard, 2001, p. 154). In order to truly ‘decolonize’ anything, psychoanalysis and psychotherapy included, we really need to grow up as a human race and understand that merely replacing one scapegoat with another is not progress or evolution, and often is not even revolution. It is simply just another rotation within the same old vicious circle that has been dividing the world in abusers and victims, colonizers and colonized.

Politics, social and couples’ relationships demonstrate that any concept, practice, or ideology can be taken to an extreme, pushed all the way at the edge of the scene, until it becomes Baudrillard’s ob-scene. The success of decolonizing psychotherapy, therefore, is directly related to our ability to come out of the binary thinking paradigm, where there are only two extreme options that confront, compete with, and exclude each other. After doing research on a large variety of ancestral cultures around the world, Mircea Eliade pointed out that they saw life not in terms of binary, mutually exclusive opposites. “*Coincidentia oppositorum*”, says Eliade, is a primordial concept present in all ancestral cultures, where the opposites coexist without confronting each other (Eliade, 1995, p. 75). Moreover, they complete each other in a meaningful, upward spiral, eliminating the fragmentation and bipolarization that is clearly alienating the world in the 21st Century.

Einstein had a fundamental question, and the way we answer it directly influences the quality of our life: is the Universe friendly, unfriendly, or neutral? If we believe the Universe (the environment, other nations and cultures, etc.) is unfriendly, then we will approach it with mistrust, disdain, aggression, and violence; and we will consider it a place that needs to be attacked, subdued, conquered and exploited. If we believe that the Universe is friendly or at least neutral, it is more likely we will approach it with curiosity, open mind, and desire for exploration and integration.

As it happens, our beliefs, values and expectations of the world are determined by the way we developed our emotional attachment. Moreover, a healthy, non-polarized attachment is directly correlated to the level of differentiation of self of our caregivers and peers. Self-centered, polarized, fight-or-flight people tend to have insecure attachment, hence the belief that others don’t like them because they envy their penis. They lack a true self, so they survive (and often thrive) on a borrowed, narcissist-like, pseudo-self (Kerr & Bowen, 1988).

Conclusion

For so many years, homo sapiens, by letting its reptilian brain take over, has treated the world as its own playground, to be toyed with and wrecked as we please. It may be the time to use our underserved neocortex and promote a world of nuance and plurality. To stop bouncing from an extreme to another, as if there was nothing in between. As shown by Cambridge Analytica political work, each extreme enhances the power of its opposite. Each dogma generates an opposite dogma.

On the other hand, even the concept of decolonization seems to be already entering in its dogmatic, ‘buzz-word’ phase. In many US universities there seems to be a fundamentalist faction of ‘activists’ who now vigorously -and often aggressively- promote and prescribe “decolonization” of pretty much everything one can think of. This is often accompanied by dismissive commentaries at anyone and anything that dares to challenge their position.

A true decolonial thinking must involve precisely the core of decolonization: plurality, multiculturalism, acceptance. In fact, automatically being judgmental toward and ostracizing those who do not share your beliefs and appear to not belong to your in-group,

risks to become just another form of colonialism. If one ideology has created social abuse, it doesn't mean that its opposite will heal that abuse or generate a just world.

Psychoanalysis and psychotherapy have the chance to promote not only emotional and intellectual growth, but also significant social change. The problem thus is not necessarily whether to teach or not in universities psychoanalysis (or CBT, or systemic and strategic therapies, etc.). The problem is for us, humans, to get out (and move on) the binary, polarized, fight-or-flight way of being. This mentality has served us well during the times we lived in caves, when the most aggressive ones and the fastest runners were the most successful at staying alive.

As history has repeatedly demonstrated, there is no decolonization if that process results into a new class of colonizers imposing their paradigm. Decolonial thinking doesn't mean exchanging one dogma with another; but rather striving to escape the rigidity and simplism of binary thinking and learning to see the world as macro and micro networks of systems, deeply interconnected at multiple levels.

Disclosure of interest

The author declares that he has no competing interest.

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