

STUDY DAY ICLO NLS

AN URGENT APPEAL TO DEFEND THE VALUES OF EUROPE

There is no doubt that the fabric that makes up our social bond today is slowly collapsing.

Today, the signifiers that govern modes of enjoyment no longer imposes themselves on everyone as a common measure.

On the 4th of March 2019, President Macron addressed the 'citizens of Europe' in a letter published in all countries of the EU, issuing an urgent appeal to defend the values of Europe. For the first time in 70 years, Europe is in crisis and Brexit a sorry symbol of the impasse. According to Macron there is an urgency to safeguard our democracies, defend our liberties, protect our continent and to take back control of our destiny. However this 'taking back control of our destiny' or revindication is often hard earned and requires collective action, often enforced with demonstrations and strikes or way more disturbingly, as has we have seen recently in New Zealand, with attacks by loners on the other side of the spectrum. The perpetrator of the attack in Christchurch left no misunderstanding that he wants to cause as much unrest as possible. In a long manifesto, written largely in a serious tone for a wide audience which he published before his act, he outlines what he has done in his life and mentions he has recently become a "kebab removalist". The title of his manifesto 'the Great replacement' refers to the fear that the original white population will be slowly replaced by newcomers through immigration and because newcomers have more children. The white majority will become the minority in the future. According to the perpetrator (**Brenton Harrison Tarrant**, a 28-year-old Australian) there is a genocide on the white population.

The live streaming of his act ensured that his social status changed from a nobody to a somebody.

After the live stream, the act is commented on the net. For example, an anonymous commentator writes: "Enjoy eating crisps while dozens of hadjis are mowed down by white anger for your sublime entertainment. What a pleasure to live in 2019, buddies. What a wonderful and unforgettable experience. "

The most shocking of these extreme ideas is that they are already so common. The intolerant nationalist and racist ideas are widespread. Only two weeks ago, the radical right-wing Forum for Democracy (FVD) lead by Thierry Baudet was the big winner of the Dutch provincial elections. 14% of the voters made his party the largest party of the moment. A serious blow for democracy and the vision for the EU that Macron proposes. Baudet was born in the Netherlands to a family of partial French and Indonesian origin. The irony is that Baudet is eurosceptic and opposed to

multiculturalism and an advocate for a return to the nation state. The problem is that Baudet does not have a program. He has but three opinions: get rid of immigration, get rid of the EU, the climate problem does not exist. Baudet's narcissism is of Olympic proportions. He has called himself "the most important intellectual of the Netherlands".

Democracy is a political system built around an orderly and peaceful expression of political diversity. It depends for its proper functioning on reasonableness. It trusts in its most optimistic expression that one can still deal reasonably with unreasonable things. Democracy in its ideal form could be one of the most ingenious institutions that humanity has produced. However, as we have recently experienced, it is also one of the most perilous and open to abuse by party politics as we have seen in the US, Brazil and the UK.

According to Simone Weil, democracy and majority rule are not good in themselves. If democracy can provide a mechanism so that truth and justice may prevail, it is good, otherwise it is not.

How is it that a large proportion of voters are willing to vote for parties that exclude large segments of the population based on origin, race or belief and deny climate change?

It would be a mistake to think that populism is nothing but a passing aberration of the democratic system. It is in fact a structural symptom of democracy since votes can be gained by appealing to the most primal impulses of individuals with huge electoral costs for those who refrain from doing so.

How to think psychoanalytically of the deeply felt unease of so many of us that people like Baudet gain ground. What do the voters for Baudet/Brexit/Trump and the Perpetrator of New Zealand's massacre have in common? They are all clearly concerned about their own safety and survival, do not feel heard by the government. The passage to the act, one by voting and the other one by killing is a response to a situation that is deemed unbearable for the individual.

How does the subject keep a relation with his fellow man and language while at the same time keeping a relation with jouissance? What is

For a Lacanian reading of the impasse our society finds itself in, we need to identify the structural point of the social symptom that is being fragmented. Where is the loss situated? What is being recuperated and how? The loss is often a loss of a real or perceived jouissance, misrecognized as 'it was better in the past' and experienced as the fragmentation of the community to which we belong even though for the speaking being the loss is located at the level of being of language. The common

response is to fabricate a stranger/foreigner who is charged with all the evil and which we are going to manage through annihilation.

For psychoanalysis, the individual cannot be reduced to its bio, psychosocial determinants. There is a jouissance at work that resists easy classification because the jouissance at stake is always singular. If a passage to the act is always a response to a situation that is unbearable for the subject, how to think of a jouissance that makes 14% of the people vote for an extreme right winger with no programme in 4th happiest country in the world? How to think of and how to respond to this collectively felt sense of persecution?

How to produce a system of governing that does not regress to a discourse of racism and violence and does not generate panic? It is the case that psychoanalysis operates and intervenes at the level of singular subjects but will this be enough? What is the discourse that would allow for a place to be created for that which does not work not only at the level of the one by one but at the level of society? Psychoanalysis for its very survival depends on a society/social bond where there is tolerance and free speech. Psychoanalysis does not look for the cause of aggression in a hostile situation but in the subject. What does he do with it?

Jacques Borie puts it this way, "For the analytic discourse to happen, it is necessary that the other discourses – which in their own way are regulating the treatment of jouissance, hold their places, so that from their impossibility appears a remainder, the waste of which we fashion our object. At this moment we are experiencing the erosion of the institutions that protect us. The university discourse is under threat in US, Brazil, Hungary, Turkey to name but a few. Our education system is but one example of our institutions not holding firm.

Psychoanalysis understands that racism is structural. Since the fundamental subjective questions of who am I, what am I doing here, and can I control my destiny cannot receive a definite answer, the subject is sustained in the transference by the community to which he belongs. A community is constituted around a style of enjoyment that is shared/allowed and permitted. This identity formation can easily be mobilized against the stranger, the foreigner by power hungry politicians. The other becomes and represents the thief of jouissance. It is not so much that the other enjoys differently but that the other enjoys at my expense.

What is the responsibility of psychoanalysis and the practitioner of psychoanalysis in this present impasse that is escalating in violence and segregation? How to limit or contain the violence that is always possible as the destructive force of the social bond. Violence for every human being has to do

with a point of real that has to be situated in the right place in order to be veiled by the necessary semblance so that it becomes contained in a way that is liveable for everyone.

How to give people the opportunity to express and put into action their judgement on the main problems of public life? What is or can be a political movement that is not contaminated by party politics or propaganda? How when questions are being put to the people in the form of referenda, how can one prevent them from being misled by party politics as we have seen with disastrous results in US, UK and Brazil.

The unconscious is a relation, subjectivity is a relation, transference is a relation and this relation is theorized by Lacan via topology. The essence of a topological relation is that even though shape and appearance of a phenomenon might change there is no structural difference between any of its appearances. Moreover a topological figure is formed around a structural hole. Each change in any of the positions affects change in all of them without structurally altering them. The subject is constituted in and through the other. When we affect a change on the one, we affect a change on the Other. But... as JAM remarks 'Let us not fool ourselves, "the more things change, the more they remain the same," but they change anyway'

Marlene French Mullen