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*Beyond Sacred Cows and Scapegoats: Displacement, Ideology, and the Future of Democracy**

ABSTRACT: This is a paper about the dual nature of ideology—how it functions publicly in the macrocosm of history and political economy, and how it functions privately in the microcosm of individual psyches and the family histories that shape them. The first half (sections I and II) presents an historical survey of how political, religious, and economic ideologies since 1500 have functioned to legitimize monarchy, revolution and capitalism in Western Europe and the United States. Section III addresses how ideologies function in terms of displacement of unconscious complexes and the origins of these complexes in punitive parenting. The concluding section addresses institutional and psychological conditions for democratization in the Twenty-first Century.

On the one hand, I will argue, ideologies legitimize or delegitimize the power of kings, presidents, corporate CEOs and other public authority figures (Skinner, 2002). On the other hand, these same ideologies express unconscious complexes originating in our childhood experiences of our parents or care providers, our earliest encounter with authority and the template for how as adults we perceive public power holders (Lasswell, 2016; Milburn, Conrad et al 1995; Milburn and Conrad, 2016; D'Agostino, 2012; 2018).

That is a simplified, first approximation of my topic. Before getting into the complexities, let me mention my personal connection to this subject matter. I was born in 1954 and grew up in a conservative Catholic Republican family in the suburbs of New York City. Beginning in college, I spent several years in Jungian analysis, especially working through my relation-

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ship with my father, an authoritarian, Italian-born businessman. During this same time my political views transformed 180 degrees. I ended up doing doctoral research on the psychology of ideology, which was informed by introspection on my personal evolution including changing political beliefs. This paper is my latest in a series of writings on the psychology of ideology.

I. MONARCHY, CAPITALISM, AND LEGITIMATION IN WESTERN EUROPE, 1500–1918

Historian Paul Kennedy (1987) in *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* divides European history from the Sixteenth to the mid Twentieth Century into three periods, dominated first by Spain, then France, then Britain. It is convenient to use major wars as the dividing points between these periods. In 1648, the conclusion of the Thirty Years War marked roughly the end of the Spanish hegemony. France then dominated European affairs until losing the Seven Years War in 1763 to Britain, and the British hegemony waned after World War I, followed by "the American Century."[1]

A parallel development to these geopolitical phases was a series of ideological upheavals associated with royal absolutism, religion, and capitalism (Skinner, 1998; MacPherson, 2011). In earlier centuries, the consolidation of royal power in Europe had been legitimized by the Divine Right of Kings—an ideology deriving the authority of rulers from God, not from popular sovereignty. The Pope in Rome was the guarantor on earth of this divinely-based authority, so the Protestant challenge to Papal authority beginning in 1517 threatened the power of Europe's rulers. Spain pressed the counterattack on this new heresy in the Thirty Years War, but the Dutch Republic and other Protestant powers prevailed. The French crown, whose political rivalry with the Spanish Habsburgs proved more decisive than its allegiance to the Pope, sided with the Protestants and ensured their victory.

In Britain, as in the Netherlands, Protestantism as an ideological force coincided with the rise of capitalism and democracy (Weber, 2001). Calvinists, merchants, and republican (small "r") politicians were overlapping and allied groups in both societies. This coalition led the Dutch Revolt in 1568 and for eighty years fought the Spanish Hapsburgs for independence and republican self-rule. In the Seventeenth Century, this same religious-commercial-political coalition overthrew royal absolutism in Britain, establishing a parliamentary system in which real power was held by elected prime ministers, and the royal family became increasingly vestigial. In the Eighteenth Century, a similar coalition overthrew royal absolutism in France.[2]

By the time of the French Revolution, France had dominated continental Europe for over a century but had lost its struggle with Britain for world hegemony. The latter was decided by the Seven Years War, fought by mul-

tinational coalitions in Europe, Asia, and North America. In this global conflict, religion was of little importance, compared with the central role it had played in the Thirty Years War. This time, the economic and geopolitical factors identified by Paul Kennedy came into clearer focus. In its quest for world domination, France had already exhausted its economic resources in land wars on the European continent. Remaining less involved in these wars, Britain had put more of its resources into naval expansion and profitable overseas colony-building, contributing to its 1763 victory over France. The financial strain of the Seven Years War and of France's subsequent aid to the American independence fighters finally bankrupted an already indebted ancien régime, creating political-economic conditions for the French Revolution (Kennedy, 1987).

Meanwhile, the synergy between capitalism and parliamentary democracy in 18th Century Britain was creating the conditions for industrialization. Parliament, controlled by business interests, enacted an import ban on Indian textiles, giving British manufacturers protected access to the domestic textile market and enabling them to eventually match the quality of their South Asian competitors (Toussaint, 2009). By mechanizing production, at first using river-powered mills, British textile makers were also able to compensate for India's lower labor costs.

Parliament's business-friendly policies and the country's indigenous iron and coal resources and inventions, such as the steam engine in 1776, enabled Britain to industrialize rapidly, more than making up for the loss of its American colonies (Landes, 2003). Britain continued to import raw cotton, tobacco, and sugar from slave plantations in the Americas, converting them into textiles, tobacco products, and rum. The country made steel from its own iron and coal, and myriad manufactured goods, including weapons and other machines, using precision industrial methods.

Whereas the wealth of royal families and aristocrats had been based on land, capitalists accumulated wealth primarily through trade and manufacturing (Piketty, 2014). In its origins, modern capitalism challenged the privileges of landowning nobles and played a key role in democratization and establishment of a society based on equality before the law, initially in its European homeland, several thousand miles from the New World slave plantations. A new kind of ideological justification for the emerging capitalist society appeared in 1776 with Adam Smith's *The Wealth of Nations,* which appealed to possessive individualism and the invisible hand of the market, rather than religious duty, as the organizing principle of human affairs (Heilbroner, 1999). No one could foresee at this time that in the next century, capitalism would supplant feudalism as a basis for class inequality, and economics replace religion as inequality's legitimizing ideology.

II. FROM KINGS TO POWER ELITES: THE RISE AND DECLINE OF AMERICAN STATE CAPITALISM

For three centuries from the Dutch Revolt to the American Civil War and Reconstruction, capitalism was a force for equality. In the U.S., manufacturers and the owners of slave plantations initially shared state power, enacting tariffs against British imports, which benefitted the capitalists, while using the revenues to build roads and canals in the South that facilitated transport of the planters' crops to market. But landed wealth and capitalism had divergent political agendas, and the latter eventually triumphed. In Europe, landed wealth had been associated with feudalism while in the United States it was associated with plantation slavery. In both cases, landowners defended legal systems that enshrined serfdom or slavery, while merchants and manufacturers sought to create a society based on freedom of contract, which implied formal equality before the law.

In Europe, this struggle came to a head with the revolutions against royal absolutism and the new legal order found expression in the Napoleonic Code, while in the United States the pivotal event was the Civil War and legal reform came with the 14th Amendment, which conferred citizenship and equal protection of the laws on former slaves. To be sure, equality even today remains an unfinished task (Lindner, 2017), but this was a watershed era and capitalism was on the side of progress.

By the second half of the 19th century, however, Adam Smith's capitalism of innumerable independent and competing producers was giving way to a new engine of inequality based on the modern corporation (Micklewait and Wooldridge, 2003). Business titans such as J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, and John D. Rockefeller absorbed thousands of small competitors into vast commercial empires that dominated not only markets but even the state. An economics priesthood arose to legitimize the new corporate absolutism, just as the Church had previously provided ideological justification for royal power. Moshe Adler's *Economics for the Rest of Us* (2010) and John Quiggin's *Zombie Economics* (2010) discuss in detail how mathematically trained academics with Nobel Prizes have legitimized a system that makes CEOs fabulously rich dictators and produces extreme inequalities of wealth and power generally.

The symbiosis of corporate and state power, an increasingly salient feature of American history since the 19th century, is an integral part of this story (Heilbroner, 1985; Zinn, 2015). Courts and police were used to break strikes, and as early as 1852, marines were being dispatched to Latin America on behalf of U.S. financial interests (Zinn 2015). With its entry into World War I, the U.S. went from a regional to a global power, and after World War II the mantle of world hegemony passed from Britain to the U.S. (Kennedy, 1987). The president of General Electric called for "a perma-

nent war economy," which anti-communism legitimized (Raskin, 1979), and even today, more than twenty-five years after the demise of the Soviet Union, the U.S. maintains a trillion dollar per year national security state of Cold War proportions (D'Agostino, 2012).

This brings us full circle to Paul Kennedy's analysis of the rise and fall of great powers. As with Spain, France, and Britain, at a certain point any hegemony reaches its limits and its costs become unmanageable (Kennedy, 1987). After nearly two centuries of expansion and three decades into its global hegemony, the U.S. reached that point in the 1970s, followed by a decline in industrial vitality and middle class prosperity that continues to this day (Melman, 1987; D'Agostino, 2012). With taxpayer-funded armed forces deployed across the planet and a predatory foreign policy designed to make the world safe for American corporations, the country's political and corporate elites now abandon its workers in favor of cheaper labor abroad, even as Washington and Wall Street provide lavishly for those same elites. An ideological struggle for the hearts and minds of a justifiably angry middle class is now the central problem of American politics (D'Agostino, 2012).

III. IDEOLOGY AND THE PSYCHODYNAMICS OF TRAUMA

We turn now from the question of how ideology functions in the macrocosm of history and public affairs to how it functions in the psychology of individuals. I find it convenient to think of this topic in terms of two aspects of the modern state that are functionally distinct and also lend themselves to the displacement of unconscious complexes (D'Agostino 2012, Appendix; 2018). The first aspect involves the use of force, mainly the military and police. The second involves the regulatory and social welfare functions of government, which conservatives pejoratively call "the nanny state." In addition to these violent and nurturing aspects of the state, other symbolic political objects that structure ideology under capitalism include big corporations, unions, and the CEO's and other top officials who lead these institutions.

In this section, I will outline a theory of how right wing authoritarians in the United States today relate to such political symbolic objects, which will serve as an historical case study in the psychology of ideology. Here I draw on this community's ideological literature (Armey and Kibbe 2010; Beck 2010) and my own psychobiography, which has roots in this subculture and included psychotherapeutic working through of my relationship with an authoritarian father. The picture that I sketch is consistent with Milburn et al's survey research on affect displacement, which examines the role of punitive parenting in the etiology of authoritarianism and support for public policies involving the use of force (Milburn, Conrad et al 1995; Milburn and Conrad, 2016).

In this belief system, military power, wealth, and "the free market" are viewed as Sacred Cows, presided over by Pentagon officials and corporate C.E.O.s, and legitimized by a priesthood of conservative pundits and academics. The failures of these arrangements in the real world are blamed on Scapegoats: unionized workers and labor leaders, minorities and immigrants, government officials and liberal politicians. U.S. military power, according to this ideology, is a benign force that makes the world safe for freedom and democracy. Unregulated capitalism, if only left to itself, would create jobs for every able-bodied person and usher in an age of universal prosperity. But union rules and government regulations are strangling private enterprise. Union pay and benefits are bankrupting state governments and making our corporations uncompetitive. Liberal politicians are stealing the hard-earned wealth of America's middle class and doling it out to lazy and unworthy minorities, siphoning capital from the productive private sector and sapping the welfare recipients of their personal responsibility.

At the basis of this ideology, I would argue, big government and corporations are functioning as surrogate objects for the big and powerful parents who citizens experienced in childhood, while vulnerable outgroups serve as surrogates for the punished child and scapegoats for the displacement of anger and other negative feelings arising from the abuse (D'Agostino, 2012, Appendix). These dynamics appear to be most typical for White males (Milburn and Conrad, 2016), who are socialized in patriarchal cultures to externalize anger, while females and Blacks are socialized to turn anger on themselves or displace it in less overt ways. However, fathers can transmit right wing ideology equally to their daughters and sons, which explains how females can harbor such beliefs and attitudes even if they do not exhibit the same displacement dynamics that originally gave rise to them.

It is helpful to visualize these psychodynamics more concretely. A man raised in a punitive manner carries around within him a traumatized child seething with rage and resentment. When identifying with this inner child, he experiences the abusive parent as a tyrant that must be eliminated or broken free from—the psychological template of American conservative's attitudes towards "government." This same person also has an internalized image of the abusive parent he experienced as a small child—awesome and all powerful, always right, free to do whatever he or she wants, getting what they want by threatening to use force or actually using it. Identification with these abusive parental introjects may be the psychological basis for idealizing both military power and the freedom of big corporations to do what they want—"the free market." In this parent-identified state of mind, the typical feeling is not rage and resentment but contempt for anyone who is weak or dependent.

The inner emotional life of right-wing authoritarian males thus oscillates between the two poles of enraged child and punitive parent. When identifying with the traumatized inner child, the person perceives "government" as an out-of-control tyrant that robs him, renders him powerless, and takes away his freedom. Since this painful material is repressed and unconscious, however, it is not associated with the parental punishment—corporal or verbal—that gave rise to it. The material is not displaced onto the violent arm of government—the national security state—but onto the nurturing arm—the so called "nanny state."[3] This displacement may account for the fury with which right wing authoritarians attack liberal politicians, government officials associated with social services, populations dependent on public assistance, and the leaders of public service unions, who are perceived as protecting unworthy government employees.

At other times, when identifying with the inner abusive parent, this same person idealizes the national security state and big corporations, which must not be restricted in any way. Escaping from the pain, humiliation, and powerlessness of the child, the person now becomes all powerful and free.[4] Any limits on military power and free markets—say international law or environmental regulations—are perceived as a threat to this inner power and freedom. Spending constraints that apply to every other government program, even Medicare, cannot be applied to military power, which must be compulsively amassed without limit.

The correlation between punitive parenting and right wing authoritarian ideology for White males has been replicated in numerous studies, summarized in *Raised to Rage: The Politics of Anger and the Roots of Authoritarianism* (Milburn and Conrad, 2016). A further important finding of this research is that punitively raised males who go into psychotherapy are less likely to hold right wing ideologies than those who don't go into therapy. Interestingly, this effect is independent of the type of therapy. This would be expected if anger issues are salient for punitively parented patients, and these issues are dealt with in one way or another depending on the therapeutic approach. This conscious processing of anger, even if its sources in childhood are not explored as such, is apparently enough to diminish its displacement onto scapegoats.

Here I assume that therapy is a catalyst for psychological integration and healing, which are the real transformative agents in the psychodynamics of trauma and which may occur through other means and even spontaneously to some extent in the developmental trajectories of various individuals. Returning to the historical material with which I started, Martin Luther underwent a similar healing experience, according to Erik Erickson's clas-

sic psychobiography (Erikson, 1993). After twelve years of introspection and relative solitude as a monk, he apparently rebelled against his harsh father introjects and went from dutiful Catholic to the leader of a militant anti-papal reform movement that shook the halls of power throughout Europe. A comparison of Luther's era with our own illustrates how the symbolic political objects onto which unconscious complexes are displaced depends upon the institutional landscape of one's historical context—the Papacy and monarchies in the 16th century, for example, compared with the capitalist states and corporations of today.

IV. A MORE HUMANE AND EGALITARIAN FUTURE

Inasmuch as institutional arrangements depend on ideologies for their legitimation, upheavals in public consciousness can have revolutionary consequences. Such upheavals have occurred periodically in American history including in the 1770s, 1860s, 1890s, 1930s, 1960s, and the current decade, marked by Occupy Wall Street, teacher and student strikes across the country, the Black Lives Matter movement against police brutality, the Me-Too movement against sexual harassment, and the popularity of democratic socialists Bernie Sanders and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez. The 2017 Republican tax cuts combined with increases in military spending (Kuttner, 2018; Daniels and Harrison, 2018) are also reminiscent of the ancien régime in France, when the state was bankrupted by war and the rich tried to impose the tax burden on working and middle class citizens. Whether such revolutionary eras result in enduring institutional change depends upon a number of factors, including the competence of movement leaders and the viability of their reform agendas. I conclude this paper by outlining a reform agenda that can guide progressive movements in the 21st century and actually create a more humane and egalitarian future.

At the macro-institutional level, it is necessary to fashion alternatives to capitalist corporations on the one hand and the national security state on the other. The essence of capitalism, in my view, is control of enterprises by investors or their agents and the alternative is control by workers (Melman, 2001; Schweickart, 2011; D'Agostino, 2012). Summarizing the literature on the governance of firms, economist Gregory Dow (2003) concludes that capitalist firms are no more efficient than worker-controlled firms, but the latter are starved for capital because investors believe with good reason that worker-controlled firms will favor the interests of workers over investors. Similarly, Seth Allcorn and Howard Stein in *The Dysfunctional Workplace* (2015) present abundant case material suggesting that capitalist corporations are not more rational than public sector and non-profit organizations. Given the potentiality of worker control, a number of public policy

initiatives have been proposed by Dow (2003), Schweickart (2011), and others, including me in my book *The Middle Class Fights Back* (2012), for speeding up the transition from capitalism to an economy of worker-controlled enterprises.

As for the national security state, the limiting factor on reform is the so called "iron triangle" of Congress, defense contractors who bankroll congressional campaigns, and top Pentagon officials who administer the defense contracts (Raskin 1979; Melman, 1987; D'Agostino 2012). In my book, I also outline strategies for demilitarizing the US economy and foreign policy and diverting the hundreds of billions of dollars squandered on unnecessary military programs every year into a Green New Deal that can provide productive livelihoods for all and sustainable prosperity for future generations (Rynn, 2010, 2018; D'Agostino, 2012).

Occupy Wall Street, the Bernie Sanders/Alexandria Ocasio Cortez movement, and other political unrest suggest that public consciousness of many people in the United States may be ready for such a far-reaching reform agenda. However, the political backlash to such ideas underscores the need to also reform the culture of punitive parenting that underpins right wing ideology. Fortunately, humane parenting can be taught and a movement is underway to incorporate such skills into educational curricula. Given that young children play at parenting with dolls, such instruction can and should begin in primary school, and a number of age-appropriate parenting curricula for children and teens have been developed and are being successfully implemented (Prepare Tomorrow's Parents, 2018; Miedzian, 2002). Educational initiatives of this sort and a sustained focus of the progressive movement on an agenda of worker-controlled enterprises, demilitarization, and a Green New Deal can help insure a more humane and egalitarian future (Rynn, 2010; Rynn, 2018; Schweickart, 2011; D'Agostino, 2012).

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ENDNOTES

1. This summary "big picture" necessarily omits crucial features such as the Dutch, Portuguese, Russian, Austrian, and German Empires. However, it delineates the geopolitical context in which these other powers operated, and Kennedy of course provides a more detailed account in his 540 page volume.
2. Except that by the time of the French Revolution, democratic ideology was taking the form of a secular republican philosophy rather than Calvinism (Hunt, 2004).

3. While the violent functions of government are typically associated with the idealized punitive parent (whether the mother or father), a separate psychodynamic complex—machismo—sets up males to displace negative affects onto the "nanny state." Even in cases where the quality of mothering is good and non-punitive, conventionally socialized males experience a chronic discrepancy between their mother introjects and the masculine gender ideal into which they are socialized, resulting in a chronic behavioral disposition to "prove your manhood" (D'Agostino, 2018). In managing this gender insecurity, military power apparently serves as a symbol of masculine potency, while the "nanny state" symbolizes the mother from whom the macho male strives to disassociate.
4. This complex, which was described by Anna Freud as "identification with the aggressor" (Freud, 1936/1993), is discussed in my article "Militarism and the Authoritarian Personality: Displacement, Ideology, and Perceptual Control," currently under peer review.

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