

Authors:**Sari Mattila, Ph.D, CP****Ajeet Mathur, Professor, Ph.D.****Shut In, Shut Out: unexamined ‘otherness’ in repressions, suppressions, oppressions and expressions**

Fear of systemic collapses is a pervasive emotion in circulation. There are numerous reminders of how politics of exclusion and hatred are being perpetrated against group identities in support of jingoistic nationalism with plenty of “wall-building” in various parts of Eastern Europe, South America, the Middle East, Asia and Africa. The struggle over Brexit affecting UK and Europe, the gridlock over President Trump in the USA, China’s rejection of verdicts by international courts over territorial disputes in South East Asia, collapse of WTO’s Dispute Resolution Mechanism, unfinished talks over a new trade deal, climate change, biodiversity, food safety and food security, UN reform and the retreat from globalization reflected in sharp reductions in foreign investments worldwide are disturbing signs of various kinds of ‘shut in, shut out’ phenomena marked by collective despair and angst. Some of these are expressions of withdrawal; others unconsciously fueled repressions or outcomes of suppressions or reactions to oppressions triggered by complex sets of motives and powerbases. These need distinguishing to enable differentiate ‘walls’ by our proposed typology and the framework developed to distinguish walls from fences, hedges and other iconic demarcations of diversity and plurality.

Being the other and engaging or disengaging with otherness are both problematic. The Freud-Einstein and Freud-Girindrashekar correspondences dealt respectively with collective and individual aspects of identity formation. The Freud-Rolland correspondence prompted Freud to pen ‘Civilization and Its Discontents’ . Later work on ‘identities’ (Sabina Spielrein, Goffman, Campbell, Laing) drew attention to social defenses against anxiety transmitted as inter-generational traumas involving guilt and hurt, pride and disgust, anger and pain acted out across faultlines of divide such as religion, ethnicity, habitat, language, affluence, gender, nationality, skin colour and culture.

This paper explores currents and cross-currents lurking beneath the surface of formalized coagulations in four ways: (1) by examining dynamics of residues and flashpoints as enactments of unconscious group transferences and countertransferences; (2) by diving deeply beneath the rhetoric over ‘grievances’ for listening to the real conversations about untreated trauma, unmourned grief, unresolved envy, and splitting around two new basic assumptions baPurity and baBravado; (3) by exploring the dilemma of unity versus pluralistic harmony; and, (4) by examining how unconsciously held ‘pictures-in-the-mind’ about politics of relatedness by followers projecting these into their leadership fuels psychopathic behavior with gaps between what is wished and what is espoused, and also between what is espoused and what is enacted.

This paper will explore how unexamined ‘otherness’ involves social, cultural and political defenses against anxiety when thresholds for coping are exceeded and how ‘walls-in-the-mind’ influence patterns of repressions, suppressions, oppressions and expressions. Since ‘Shut In, Shut Out’ phenomena involves twin walls, the underpinning psychopathology renders formation of therapeutic contracts and helping relationships with commitment to aspired wellness improbable. Besides citing scholarly references around the phenomena being presented, the paper will also discuss how healing of group psyches has been attempted based on psychoanalytic insights about stigmatized identities and inter-generational trauma from recent initiatives in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Sri Lanka. At the ISPSO AM, this paper will invite discussion around new ways of exploring defenses against ‘otherness’ that are presented.

Keywords: Systemic Fragility, Stigmatised Identities, Trauma and Unmourned Grief, Inter-generational Residues, Walls-in-the-Mind.

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