

# Shadow Politics

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There is increasing interest in the psychology of political processes, especially the psychology of non-violent political change. By 'politics' I mean the arrangements and struggles within a single society, or between the countries of the world, for the organization and distribution of resources and power, especially economic power. This kind of power includes control of information as well as the use of physical force and the possession of vital resources such as food, water, land and oil. At a personal level, political power is reflected in the ability to choose freely what action to take, if any, in a given situation.

Crucially, politics also refers to the interplay between these personal and public dimensions of power, for there is a connection between power as expressed on the domestic, private level, and economic power. This is demonstrated in family organisation, gender and race relations, and in religious and artistic assumptions, insofar as these affect the lives of individuals.

Where the public and the private, the political and the personal, intersect, there is a special role for all kinds of psychology. Working out the detail of this role involves us in challenging the boundaries that are conventionally accepted to exist between the external world and the internal world, between life and reflection, between doing and being, between politics and psychol-

ogy, between public and private, between the political development of the individual and their psychological development, between the fantasies of the political world and the politics of the fantasy world. It has never been more difficult to make a psychological analysis of political process for, in our day, every element in our culture is undergoing a sort of Balkanisation. It has become harder and harder to see what political arrangements do hold culture together.

Still, people have risen to the challenge of these anxiety-provoking ideas. Our sense of fragmentation and complexity seems to *heal*, as well as to wound, the possibilities for political and social empowerment; for in the midst of the tragic anomie and baffling atomisation; the dreadful conformism of 'international' architecture, telecommunications and cuisine; the sense of oppression and fear of a horrific future, in the midst of war itself, there is occurring an equally fragmented and complex attempt at what I call 'resacralisation' of the culture. It seeks to reconnect to a feeling level of sacredness that we imagine once existed, but that has vanished from the modern world (hence *resacralisation*). In general terms, resacralisation is our contemporary effort to shift a sense of holiness and meaning into the material world. That is why, for many, resacralisation has indeed meant a

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frank return to religion. Sometimes this is established religion, sometimes it is archaic (or apparently archaic) religion.

There are many other surface signs of it: New Age thought, expressions of concern for the quality of life, environmentalism, demands for the rights of ethnic and sexual minorities, feminism, the human potential movement, liberation theology, finding God in the new physics. I would even include trying to engage depth psychology with politics on this list; I certainly do not want to leave myself out! In different forms, of course, resacralisation is also a way to describe what has been happening in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. There, too, we see spontaneous movements that are surface signs that something politically transformative is going on.

As a depth psychologist I have to approach resacralisation in a psychological way. It is not enough for us to believe in or support these political movements (and many do not); surely we should try to pick up on the psychology of what is going on. The idea is to bring up and out something that is already there; so these words of mine are intended to be description, chronicle and analysis, not sermon or advocacy.

My overall personal view is that these developments are extremely important and worthwhile. They seem to me to contain within them elements that could help to resolve some of our most vexing dilemmas. But I also think they are at serious risk of failing. In my view, they will fail not only because of the reactionary moves of patriarchal capitalists, but because of a certain something lacking in the kind of energies typically involved in resacralisa-

tion. To be specific, resacralisation seems to be characterised by an attempt to construct a shadow-free politics. The 'shadow' is the term coined by Jung to refer to those aspects of ourselves we would like to disown, but cannot, because to have a shadow is part of being human. Shadow-free politics are to be achieved by locating the shadow elsewhere — in men, in whites, in the market and so forth. Then the fantasies of an apocalyptic end, whether by nuclear conflagration, AIDS pandemic or the greenhouse effect can be understood as attempts to shift a sense of self-blame onto other people and institutions.

We are so full of self-punishing contempt for ourselves, so full of disgust for the culture in whose making we have participated, that we (I mean we resacralisers) opt for a thin, purist, over-clean style of making politics; so anxious not to be contaminated by the shadow, that we don't really want to see our cherished ideals translated into pragmatic results. Even when resacralisers do get involved in politics, it is a half-hearted involvement, psychologically speaking, characterised by a fear of getting dirty hands. Hence the collapse of the green parties.

Is there another way to carry our political dreams through into practical reality? And what is the role of the shadow in all this? In answering these questions; thinkers like Niccolò Machiavelli are important to us precisely because they do not resemble modern resacralisers. There's no transpersonal ecology in Machiavelli, no upbeat spiritual optimism about the unity of the world, not a lot of femininity or feminine consciousness. He's a meat-eater; no vegetarian, he. What there is in Machiavelli is the kind of bleak realism

and sense of civic duty that sees things through. If resacralisation could only tap into Machiavellian energies, then we'd really be on the way.

In psychological language, what Machiavelli did, and what I'd like resacralisers to do, is to make a morality, and then an ideology, out of the shadow, out of those aspects of human psychology that we would rather disown. Most political theory seeks to combat and deal with the shadow. Machiavelli's approach is to embrace the shadow and go with its undeniably effective energies, rather than against them. Why, as General Booth of the Salvation Army asked, should the devil have all the good tunes?

Those of us involved in analysis and therapy need to struggle towards a new

psychological valuing of the potential in political engagement. Involvement in the external world and passionate political commitment are as psychologically valuable, and no more shadowy, than an interior perspective. Involvement in politics can certainly be a means of avoiding personal conflicts or acting out such conflicts ('projection of the shadow', 'possession by the shadow'). But political involvement can surely also be a means of expressing what is best in humans, acknowledging the fact of our social being, that we are not the isolated, solipsistic monads that some psychological theories might lead us to believe we are. We know, as the feminist adage puts it, that the personal is political, that subjectivity can — and should — form a part of political discourse.

