

INTERVIEWS WITH NEIL ALTMAN AND NANCY HOLLANDER

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ABSTRACT *An online interview with Neil Altman and Nancy Hollander, discussing the papers by each of them which were offered to begin online discussion on the theme ‘Thinking critically in the midst of the maelstrom: can psychoanalysis help us stay sane in an insane world?’ Copyright © 2007 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.*

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The online discussion begins with an interview by Annie Stopford with Neil Altman and Nancy Hollander, authors of the target articles. Unfortunately, Stopford was unavailable to conduct this ‘live’ so her questions were prewritten, though submitted and answered one at a time.

Annie Stopford – Question 1:

Nancy and Neil, I want to start by thanking you both for your important, thoughtful and heartfelt explorations of psychoanalysis, war, and the creation of the political subject. One of the many aspects of your papers that I really enjoyed was the way you introduced your own formative experience living and working outside the US. Could you say more about how your experience in Argentina and India, for example, has shaped your respective ways of understanding, utilizing and transforming psychoanalysis?

Nancy Hollander:

During the late 1960s and early 1970s, I was living in Buenos Aires, where as a Latin

American historian I was researching and writing about the political economy of underdevelopment and the radical movements that were challenging centuries-long oppressive social and economic structures. Those were tumultuous times: I had come from the anti-war and women’s movements in Los Angeles and came to know many progressive Argentine intellectuals, artists and working people who were deeply committed to fundamental change in their country. The wave of reactionary military coups that would dominate Latin America’s political landscape for several decades began on 11 September 1973 in neighboring Chile with the violent overthrow of Allende, and I met many Chilean refugees who were fleeing the nightmare overtaking their country across the Andes. I began to see the psychological effects of extreme political repression ‘up close and personal’ through these refugees, an experience that was deepened for me several years later, following the 1976 military coup in Argentina that ushered in

the infamous Dirty War. While I had returned to Los Angeles shortly before the coup, I knew many people who fell victim to the military's policies of disappearing, torturing and murdering its own citizens. In this way, my growing interest in the psychosocial dynamics of political repression and the psychological experience of living in terrorist states and surviving the cultures of fear they construct dovetailed with my personal sense of loss, defeat and anger. The solidarity movement with the people of Chile and Argentina was an important reparative activity and it dovetailed with the emerging struggles against the Reagan administration's reactionary policies in Central America. It was through this solidarity network that I had the great fortune of meeting Marie Langer, an Austrian-born Argentine psychoanalyst then in her seventies living in exile in Mexico and co-directing a team of psychoanalysts who were working with the Sandinista government to create Nicaragua's first (and psychoanalytically oriented) national free mental health care system. Marx and Freud converging in a tiny Third World country under siege by the US was a pretty compelling engagement! Through Langer I became involved with psychoanalysts, many of whom were Argentines, Uruguayans and Chileans living in exile, who were participating in human rights struggles and treating the victim/survivors of Latin America's state terrorist regimes. I was deeply affected by the humanity and commitment to social justice of these psychoanalysts and by their interest in developing theoretical and clinical models that accounted for the interface of politics and psyche. As I sought my own psychoanalytic training, I found that my initiation into the field was atypical of my colleagues' approach to psychoanalysis and with the return to constitutional rule in Argentina I continued to deepen my contacts with politically active

psychoanalysts there. In the nation's post-dictatorship struggles around the question of accountability of the perpetrators, psychoanalysts were articulate spokespersons for those Argentines who argued against social amnesia and impunity. Progressive psychoanalysts took public positions on behalf of bringing the perpetrators to justice, acknowledging and integrating the reality of social trauma and recognizing the need to mourn. I learned from them even before and during my own formal training to challenge the binary psyche/social paradigm and to recognize the centrality of one's insertion into the sociosymbolic order as a core part of subjectivity. And I never had to question whether a psychoanalyst should or should not take a public stand around issues of social justice.

Neil Altman:

I think I sensed, even at the time, that living in India was going to shape my approach to being a therapist, in the psychoanalytic direction. Another way to put this is that I think one of the same things that made India appeal to me, also made psychoanalysis appeal to me. In India, everything is impossible. The problems are too overwhelming, every little thing (meeting somebody at a defined time and place, getting supplies) is generally not feasible. In the face of this, you either give up, or you find a way to find meaning in the process of addressing a problem, not in any particular outcome. You work toward an outcome, but you don't get too invested in reaching it. I came to this way of being in order to survive my experience in village India and came to value it as a way of living, period. Life is impossible, there's too much unpredictability, an individual has too little control over what happens, to get too invested in outcomes. As John Lennon said: 'Life is what happens while you're making other plans.'

So, obviously, I wasn't going to be a behavioral therapist. I found in psychoanalysis a very compatible approach. I loved how Freud allowed himself to get sidetracked by transference and resistance as he was trying to cure his patients. The sidetrack became the road. And, what do you know, it turns out that the sidetrack is the most important road you could have traveled on.

Integrating psychoanalysis and politics is very challenging when you're trying to live your life in this way, because there's so much at stake in politics. War, killing, human suffering. It's hard to say 'I'll do my best and let the chips fall where they may' especially when you run up against people who are trying to keep a damaging status quo in place. But it's still worthwhile to try to find a way to do what you can to promote change without being too invested in the outcome because that helps you avoid hating the people who are working against you. Even in politics, there's a way in which process trumps outcome, that engaging hateful people makes you hateful. Keeping this in mind is perhaps the main thing clinical psychoanalysis has to teach politically engaged people.

Annie Stopford – Question II:

For me, your responses go straight to the core of some of the most urgent and challenging questions about what it means to try to integrate psychoanalysis and politics in our clinical practice, and in our lives, at this particular time in history. I personally find the tension between what Neil talked about, that is, non-attachment to outcomes, and the kind of political passion, courage and determination to achieve social change that Nancy talked about, a very challenging one to manage at times. I think it would be really interesting to hear more of your thoughts about this tension, and how it affects your clinical practice.

Nancy Hollander:

I think this is an important subject, Annie, and it prompted me to think of a variety of things related to the apparent paradox of being politically passionate and being able to maintain an attitude of non-attachment to outcome. It reminds me of what I learned very early on from the 'older, wiser' political activists who said that it isn't the end that matters, it's being in the struggle. That is to say, it is in spite of not knowing the outcome of effort that one engages politically; victory is in the becoming engaged with history and struggling actively on behalf of one's principles and values.

It seems crucial to be able to use our psychoanalytic knowledge to sustain empathy, even for those who feel like the enemy, to avoid splitting and needing to occupy the position of holding truth and goodness and projecting all the badness out there onto those who don't agree with our politics. Sometimes that's difficult when we wholeheartedly struggle for something we think is worth fighting for, like peace, or racial and gender equality, or getting the APA to declare that psychologists should not engage in interrogations of detainees for the military or CIA. It's still a worthy goal. I've found that for most people, the easiest thing to feel is hatred toward perpetrators of injustice, who hold power and cause great suffering to individuals and entire societies. It's much harder to feel compassion, well, at least recognition, in the sense that they exhibit kinds of thinking and mental states that we are all capable of. When progressive people can't achieve the latter, they can wind up reproducing in and amongst themselves the very thing they hate. For me, though, there are moments when it's not particularly necessary to maintain a psychoanalytic stance, for example, when you're in a demonstration demanding peace from the war makers.

I remember in the anti (Vietnam) war movement how much we hated: the government, the military-industrial complex, the class-biased, racist draft, etc. And I recall my youthful feelings of guilt that I was privileged not to be suffering the terrible fate of the Vietnamese. I do not think that is a healthy state of mind to be in and I don't think it is good politics either. I learned from my Latin American friends, especially activist psychoanalysts, how important it is to laugh, have fun, enjoy the present even in the worst of times. I always remember a poster I had in college with a famous quote from Che: 'at the risk of appearing ridiculous, I would say that the great revolutionary is motivated by feelings of love.'

Specifically relating the idea of being attached to outcome, in this world where so much destructiveness dominates, political activism helps me with feelings that otherwise seem overwhelming, especially a sense of isolation and helplessness. Being with other people who struggle to make things better gives me hope in humanity – libidinal social bonding, you could say – and it's an antidote to the despair over our destructiveness toward the Earth and ourselves. Who knows what the outcome will be? The attachment is much more about relationships with others whose interest in human rights and social justice feels right and good. There is also the healthy gratification that comes from acting in concert with one's ego ideal!

We invite our patients to go on a journey toward a fantasy of a better life or at least one relieved of the presenting complaints, whether of loneliness, self-doubt, self-hatred, anxiety, depression, etc., even if what is wished for in its purity is never reached. Along the way, partnering with an other teaches (in the best of circumstances and the best of moments) the gains of a bond that permits one to feel understood and cared

about and to appreciate. The process involves tolerating ambiguity and not knowing about the ultimate outcome. I think these are also aspects of political activism.

Neil Altman:

Thank you, Annie, for picking up on that difference between Nancy and me in our political style, shall we say. I noticed it myself but hadn't quite formulated it. My first thought is that perhaps there's a personal element. I think that perhaps I need some detachment from goals, in part because I can be very impatient and easily get discouraged and angry and burn out. I don't know that I could sustain the level of emotional engagement for as long as Nancy can. A second point is that I am very wary of being sucked into a destructive interaction with people who I think are doing destructive things, as I mentioned in my response to your first question. Perhaps I feel that I am too prone to getting enraged with people and falling into attack-counterattack mode.

I'm liberal but to a degree, I want everybody to be free.

But if you think I'm going to let Barry Goldwater move in next door or marry my daughter,

You must think I'm crazy

(Bob Dylan)

When I contemplate whether it's just human nature to fight with and hurt each other, or whether its contingent on a certain social system or a set of misunderstandings, I think about what I've learned from psychoanalysis, that destructiveness is contagious and tends to infect all those who engage it, like analysts and politically engaged people. We fall into becoming that which we're trying to change, but we can also notice that that's happening and resist the process. That's the best source of hope I can think of. So politically engaged people, maybe more than anyone else, needs to strive for self-

awareness. For me, being aware of when I've gotten so invested in a particular outcome that I'm getting burnt out and enraged is key to this self awareness. I'm afraid that part of the rage people on the right feel toward people on the left in the US is a function of a certain contempt and denigration that gets expressed out of awareness by people on the left. This links up with some social class-based contempt as well. I felt this from Samuel Alito in some interview when he talked about how put off he felt by the students on the left at Princeton in the sixties. I'm afraid we on the left, in our fully justified feeling that we were working toward worthy goals, lost track of how we were being experienced by a large majority of US citizens. We may have been dismissing the concerns of a lot of people in this country (I can only speak about the US) and I think the chickens have come home to roost in the form of the powerful right-wing backlash we're now experiencing. I'm not saying that's the only reason for the right-wing move but it's a part of it and I think it's a part that we can learn from. Having said all this, I admire Nancy's passion and commitment and wish that I could be that passionate and still maintain the level of self-awareness that I'd like to and that I think she does. We are all different in our makeups and have to be political and psychoanalytic in the way that works for us. We can also learn from each other and change, I find, even at the ripe old age I'm getting to.

I realize I didn't address the questions of clinical practice you asked about. I'll have to think more about that.

Annie Stopford – Question III:

Neil and Nancy:

Regarding the potential of psychoanalysis to be socially transformative and liberatory, what are your thoughts about the role of the analyst in confronting 'bystanderism' in the

US, both in the clinical space and in the wider social and political arena? Do we have a responsibility to encourage our patients to question 'the official story' and to develop the capacity not only for compassion, toleration of complexity, ambiguity and so forth, but also the capacity to take ethical social and political action in the world even if it involves personal risk and sacrifice?

Neil Altman:

For the most part I don't intervene explicitly or implicitly when patients of mine never bring up political material or when they express what I consider misguided political views. I have had patients who say explicitly that they are not interested in the political world, and, in the case I am thinking of, although I was stirred up and troubled by this statement, I did not challenge her. I could even respect her position, since I felt that she was making every effort to bring love and respect to her immediate relationships, while dealing with hatred responsibly. There's something to the idea that we'd all be better off if we all tended our own gardens, or that, as someone said, most of the trouble we get in is a function of not being able to sit quietly in our own rooms. Once I had a patient who was laid off twice in three years by large corporations. He was a corporate person in his bones. He talked the talk and he walked the walk. The first time he was laid off he was out of work for a whole year. His wife, who did not work, was furious at him. She felt betrayed, as if he had promised to bring home a certain amount of money without interruption. He talked a lot about her anger. I encouraged him to think about his own anger, and not only at her, but, I wondered, was he ever angry at the corporation that laid him off, at the system that no longer felt a responsibility to take care of workers, at the people who made the decision that he was to go? No way. I got a

torrent of corporate-ese about corporations needing to down size, at the end of the day it was this or that, the bottom line was this or that, etc. I felt really sorry for him, for how indoctrinated he was, how sold he was on the ideology that was causing him such pain. But I felt I could not force a different point of view on him, and he was not heading in that direction himself.

Sometimes patients will express a political view that I disagree with, sort of by the way, and I will tell them about my position, also by the way, while trying to maintain an analytic attitude. Once a patient with right-wing views told me that he knew by the end of the first session that I was a 'liberal' but that since I didn't try to force my ideas on him he would let that go and not make an issue of it. This is a person who is extremely protective of his autonomy; I chose to let that be. So I guess trying to raise the political consciousness of my patients, by my standards, is not an important part of what I do. I'm prepared to learn more about this from this symposium, but that's where I'm at at the moment. I feel that I have my hands full raising my own consciousness and that if I can do some of that, I will do the right thing by my patients, though not in a way that deals with politics explicitly.

Nancy Hollander:

For me, this is a really relevant question. In my paper I explore the psychosocial dynamics of what makes for a bystander population and try to take into account the convergence of psychic defenses and hegemonic ideology as the central constituents of the phenomenon. Now I'd like to first comment on how psychoanalysts might contribute to the confrontation with 'bystandardism' in the wider social and political arena. I feel lucky to be part of a committee of analysts from the seven institutes in Los Angeles that has been organizing public meetings, focusing on

psychoanalytic perspectives on living in a dangerous world. We originally came together to put on a three-day conference called *The Uprooted Mind*. It took place just before the 2002 elections and was very well attended. The committee members stayed together and now call ourselves the *Uprooted Mind Group*; last June we held a one-day conference that featured Nina Thomas, whose presentation on torture raised ethical questions about the participation of psychologists in the interrogations of detainees by the US military and CIA. This was followed by an exploration among the attending mental health professionals of how we might contribute to the various struggles in this country organized around the deteriorating social and economic conditions and fearful political environment that produce destructive states of mind. Our next meeting is on 30 September and is a speak-out in which people of reason and conscience can come together in this time of peril to continue to think about how to enable ourselves and others to act in the face of increasing threat associated with war and destructive violence.

In a related vein, as psychoanalysts, I think we all have an opportunity to engage in progressive social movements and contribute our unique perspective by bringing psychological insights to others, including both organizers as well as their constituencies. As an example of this, the day before I received this third question from Annie, I was moderating a brunch salon organized by a social justice group in Los Angeles and featuring Daniel Ellsberg (the Pentagon Papers) to speak on his grave concerns about the Bush administration's existing plan to attack Iran and its consideration of using some kind of nuclear devices. Ellsberg is urging whistle blowers to act now to prevent war, rather than wait, as he did, years into the war before exposing what they know. I

introduced him by addressing the problem of the bystander. I used the academy award-winning Argentine film, *The Official Story*, whose main character has lived through the majority of the Dirty War by denying the reality of state terror, as a way to begin an exploration of the dynamics of the bystander in the context of today's multiple crises. I described some of the psychological defenses that we use to protect ourselves from feelings of helplessness in the face of the growing destructiveness and threat in the world and quoted Albert Einstein, who wrote: 'The world is a dangerous place, not because of those who do evil, but because of those who look on and do nothing.' I took the opportunity to introduce Daniel Ellsberg, a man who is the epitome of the opposite – a political activist for decades – in order to speak compassionately about how difficult it is for many of us to question the government's Official Story because it might oblige us to tolerate the psychological as well as the political challenges such a stance implies. I was worried that the organizers would think I was speaking 'off topic' but they and many audience members told me they appreciated being able to think about their own fears and inhibitions in that way.

But how about the clinical situation? Well, first of all, I don't believe in the idea of neutrality, behind which I think lots of us hide as a way of convincing ourselves that to take political issues seriously with a patient would be to bring something alien into the psychoanalytic process. I think it's important to recognize that we all practice ideological perspectives, whether or not we say anything 'political' with our patients. In my paper, I quote Žižek to the effect that 'we do not know it, but we're doing' ideology all the time. Maureen Katz (a board member of Section 9) and I presented a workshop on ideology at the San Francisco Psychoanalytic Institute, a segment of which was

devoted to an analysis of the magazines we have in our waiting rooms. It was a fun way to recognize how even what we select, as well as what we don't, as reading material for patients reveals aspects of our identifications and disidentifications based on gender, race and class (especially the latter). It was a revelation for the group to begin the discussion convinced that, in contrast to the Nation Magazine, the New York Review of Books or Atlantic Monthly are basically 'neutral', only to realize that there is an inherent class bias and attraction of the latter two magazines that reflects our own insertion in the larger social order as well as that of most of our patients.

As for work with our patients, I struggle all the time with respect to how to appropriately take up our relationship to politics. For me the concept of politics is one that refers to how each of us is situated in the socio-symbolic order, so it's less about whether one is a Democrat or a Republican than about how we live our lives in relationship to national, class, race and gender relationships. So the challenge becomes one of helping both myself and the patient recognize when, if and how that dimension of experience is left out of the work. But I also don't like the experience of introducing something that the patient might feel is my agenda, so I am always very careful, even about saying something like 'You know, it's interesting . . . I wonder if you notice that you haven't mentioned anything about the war in Lebanon . . .' and I know analysts who think it is important to do that, simply bring it to the patient's awareness. But, really, how is it that we can say nothing when, for instance, we are in endless war, or another group of suspected terrorists have been rounded up, or for the first time in recorded history, no ice breaker was needed for a ship to move up through the glaciers of the North Pole? How is it that we do not

think about how our anxieties and conflicts, which while they appear to be about our spouses, our work, our children, our parents, our illnesses, our depression, and so forth, inevitably reflect our experience of living in a world in which humanity may destroy itself and the earth (and thus the possibility of a decent world for our children and, more importantly, the possibility of symbolic survival of the human species beyond our individual lifetimes)?

I'll share several small examples of how I've tried to help patients think ethically about themselves as citizens. During the Israeli/Hezbollah war, one patient made what was for him a rare comment about the lamentable state of the world. I asked him what he felt. 'Helplessly enraged', he said, and explained that it was precisely because of this that he didn't like to think about the political situation very much. I did not take his comments about politics as symbolic or metaphoric for the 'real' aspects of his personal life but rather as a typical and characterological way he dealt with conflictual aspects of his life in general. His commitment to a sense of helplessness and impotency serves many functions, including an unconscious attachment to an ineffective and dependent mother whom he cannot betray by actualizing his unacceptable desires for success and creative love relationships. His helplessness and disavowal protect him and are as pathological for him as a (bystander) citizen as they are for him as a professional and husband/father. Thus I think that our work together needs to focus on how he negates his potential effectiveness in all domains of his life, including being unable to act on his serious political concerns. Another clinical example might be relevant to Annie's question about how to help patients deal with and tolerate the complexity and ambiguity of our political realities. A female patient brings up her irritation

with her infant's caregiver and her own inability to be assertive and tell her employee what she likes and doesn't like about her childrearing strategies. The patient suffers an unconscious association of her paid employee with her dominating mother, and we have worked on how she cannot feel entitled to suggest, must less impose, her own requirements and preferences for how her baby is cared for. Through this maternal transference the patient suffers unconscious guilt for being able to have what her mother could not; her guilt for betraying her mother winds up infantilizing her with her employee to whom she resentfully and helplessly yields authority over her baby. I think that if I only help the patient to work through her resistance to feeling entitled to give orders to her caregiver, we could think about this as a political enactment. How? Because there are other aspects of this relationship that would then go unquestioned. So I encouraged the patient to explore on the one hand the psychological impediments to her ability to assume her right to exercise maternal authority and on the other, the equally problematic aspects of her authoritarian demands of her employee for excessive hours in exchange for low pay, through which she exercised her entitlement as a white middle-class woman over her Latina caregiver. In this way, I tried to take up what could be thought of as the official story of the assumed rights of the white middle-class to exploit the labor of the immigrant non-white working class through low wages, no medical coverage and longer hours than are usually required of workers in the public sphere. We undoubtedly will be discussing together the more controversial aspect of the question having to do with encouraging our patients to become involved in ethical social and political action, and I look forward to our exchanges about this important but difficult issue.

Anne Stopford – Question IV:

Nancy and Neil, as we're drawing near the end of the interview I want to thank you both for being so frank about your thoughts and perspectives. Your willingness to elaborate your very different approaches has set the stage for some dynamic discussion in the seminar. In conclusion, I'm wondering if there's anything else you'd like to add about your responses to the current political crisis, and the ways in which you try simultaneously to work with the psychological and the political.

Neil Altman:

I'm glad to have had the opportunity to grapple with the way in which social issues permeate individual psychology and the psychotherapy relationship. Bringing up my patient who lost his job and whose wife was so angry, described in my response to the last question, got me thinking in more depth about this case and the way in which the psychic and the social interwove in this instance. As I thought more about it, it occurred to me that his wife was holding the anger and the disappointment about not being taken care of, while he disowned these feelings. She, of course, was feeling let down by him, and he responded only defensively, identifying with the one who was not taking adequate care. He, having been let down by his corporation on two occasions, was, according to this formulation, denying feelings of being let down in the interest of preserving the corporate 'good object'. When I suggested that he might have felt down by his corporation and angry, he denied having such feelings, and I let it go at that. I felt that his defense was too powerful for me to be able to suggest an alternative way of experiencing the situation, and that may be so. But writing about the case got me thinking. Could I have asked him whether he could imagine that his wife might have been angry

at the corporation for letting him go? If so, step two, could he have imagined how she felt that way? And so on.

What would be the benefit of eliciting anger toward his employer or the corporate system in this way? I can imagine my patient saying, as I think he did in fact say, that he had no time to be angry, he needed to focus on finding a new job and taking care of his family. I couldn't argue with that; on the other hand, I feel he was paying a price in terms of the way the anger got displaced onto his wife, into his family, and in terms of the pressure on him to remake his career twice in mid-life.

Nancy Hollander:

As I mull over your final question, Annie, it seems to me that there is just too much to say about the current 'crisis'. For me, what seems so overwhelming is the multifaceted (and interwoven) nature of a number of profoundly serious crises, each of which potentially threatens our survivability as a species, from global warming to potential nuclear war to oil depletion. We might be able to deal with the impact of the latter, but not if the current competitive struggles among nations and peoples to control the remaining oil sources don't cede to a cooperative approach to preparing on a global scale for the development of alternative energy strategies. This will demand necessarily massive changes in every society, which will differ according to the level of industrialization, dependency on technology, agricultural capacity, urbanization and so forth that characterize different regions of the world. But, then, given the situation in Iraq and numerous indications that the administration has prepared for war with Iran, what seems most urgent is the political and military direction this country is consistently going in. The news today is that the military wants an astronomical increase in its budget, which of

course has not only frightening military implications but a profound political and social significance that we will have to contend with in the near future. I think that psychoanalysts can contribute to our understanding of the unconscious mechanisms people use to ward off knowing about all of this because of its threatening meanings. For me, our biggest challenge is to study and confront how it is that so many, from leaders to the rest of us, can ignore/disavow incontrovertible evidence to the effect that we need to drastically alter what we are doing to ourselves and the world or else . . .!

There are so many signs that it is just too overwhelming to think about, especially if we are not trying to effect change and thus only feel helpless in the face of the many threats. I can see it in myself and my friends. For example, I can spend an evening with people who share a similar analysis of global political and economic dangers and spend time elaborating on how probably in our lifetimes we will witness great social and economic instability, if not worse. Then, as if we'd not been discussing that, we can spend the rest of the time sharing plans for the future, our retirement years, etc., as if we can expect to be in charge of our economic futures and be able to realize all our middle-class aspirations for a comfortable life we've worked so hard to have. It feels rather crazy, and represents, I think, the tendency to move in and out of states of awareness, as if knowing what we know is too painful and produces too many feelings of impotence.

One of the issues that gets raised for me as I ponder the easy slide of leaders and masses into states of destructive violence, which seems for so many to be perversely appealing and gratifying, is whether Freud was really off the mark when he thought about the death instinct. The ages-old pattern of violent and brutal confrontations among

human groups and its tenacious hold on current generations demands that we continue to seriously consider how to account for this human capacity for unbridled aggression. Can it be redirected in more constructive avenues? In the face of the multiple fronts of increasingly cruel conflicts between nations, religions, cultures and ethnic groups, I go through periods of feeling more and more discouraged. It helps me to keep abreast of all the creative political movements in this country and elsewhere made up of concerned people who are doing lots of great things on behalf of human rights and social justice. It makes it easier to practice what Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci argued for: 'a pessimism of the mind and an optimism of the will.'

The other thing that comes to mind in response to your question is that I believe it is important for political activists and psychoanalysts to learn from one another's expertise in assessing the complex psychic and social factors that explain our current crises and peoples' responses to them. Too often I've found that those who wish to change the world for the better know lots about the underlying political and economic forces at work but not so much about unconscious and conscious motivation among people to seek or maintain power or to surrender to it on the other. On the other hand, frequently those who are accustomed to thinking almost exclusively in terms of psychological dynamics lose an important aspect of reality and can too easily psychologize complex social phenomena. So I am glad we will be delving into all of this in our discussions over the next month. Thank you, Annie, for asking such important questions of Neil and me that will, I am sure, be the beginning of a fascinating exchange among all of us participating in this Maelstrom discussion.