

AFFECT AND POWER IN RUSSIA: BETWEEN NARCISSISM AND SPLITTING

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The paper is presented at the 41st Congress of International Psychoanalytical Association.
Santiago de Chile, 30 July 1999.

I. AN INTRODUCTION: AFFECT AND RUSSIA

The legitimation of Psychoanalysis in Russia comes to its popularity (sometimes as a kind of latest craze). In our public opinion a psychoanalysis is received as the best remedy for its western origination. There are some typical questions to an analyst: “Can you treat by psychoanalysis? In this case make me... more successful, clever “and so on”.

It's believed the psychoanalyst is a magician or a healer because he deals with an unconsciousness. The letter is understood as a special objective like geological power to overcome with it is possible for an analyst only.

So a psychoanalysis is becoming (for many people) something like an infantile and erotic object especially under Russian frustrated way of life today.

And an analyst is identified with the totem (the father, the forefather) figure, which replaced other parental ones.

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Consequently the analyst has a mission to code or decode a patient mind.

It's interesting the psychoanalysis revival coincided with refusing of taboo for original Russian opinions of "Psychocracy". This is a kind of a social utopia. The dream of wishful society where "people can penetrate each other" and "be clear for others as brothers".

By the way, an affect (emotions en masse) was always preferable than rationality for Russian mentality. First of all they appreciate emotions for their power capturing people.

I'd like to cite the one of popular Russian verse of 19th century by poet Alexis Tolstoy.

"If we, Russians, love
We love out of reason
If we threaten
It isn't a joke..."

It's not difficult to notice a significance of a primordial, natural force of an affect. This side of a mentality associated with "inner", "original" or "true" character of man.

Even in industrial work Russian man prefers a natural factor. This is quotation from Russian folk song:

"Englishman the wiser invented a machine to improve his work, but Russian moujik uses a cudgel from oak-tree to help himself..."

("Doubinushka")

Linguistics say about the high expressiveness of Russian language. Not less 50% of the vocabulary is emotional.

So we may speak of the special Russian analytical space. One of the Russian poet and thinker of the 19th century Theodore Tyutchev who lived 22 years on the West (as a diplomat) wrote

"Not by the mind can Russia be understood,
Nor measured by the common yardstick,
She has a special character –
In Russia one must simply believe."

Not without reason Russia (Russian history and policy) was called unforetelled for its obvious absence of pragmatism and rationality. Some Russian people name such affective behavior (long ago before Freud) “To be without of Tsar in own mind.”

In Russia a psychical balance associated with a power (control) over oneself. “Be quiet” is equal to overcome (conquer) oneself.

So an affect and a power is a peculiar Russian syndrome. During last 15 years Soviet Union and Russia are producing catharsis process: crowded meetings, mass disorders, chaotic irrational military actions. They were results of the democratization connected with the soviet power fall. It had place the acting out of collective phantasy of hope, despair and omnipotence. An affect of tension is changed by an affect of discharge; after depression to mania.

May be this report could be called “Russian patient”.

II. AN AFFECT AS A CONCEPT

The one of the important functions of affect is to indicate a level of significance of psychical process for subject.

And it is not surprising an affect touches a body. Russians say: “something catches a heart and releases”. In other words: “Where your heart is there is your treasure.” By the way, “the heart” is one of primary Russian symbols.

Obviously a connection of affect with an intensive motivation. So an affect concentrates a field of mind, show crucial moments and leads to decision.

Therefore an affect is not repressed absolutely but suppressed only. This gives an opportunity to keep purposes and values of an organism actually. Loosing its non satisfying presentations, ideas an affect doesn’t disappear. It converts to hysterical symptoms, displaces to obsessions or transforms into fears and a melancholy.

Consequently an affect represents modal aspect of Ego and an energetic power of drives. At the same time an apathy is a damaging of meaning.

Our problem is what meaning of Russian “power-wish”? We’ll start to analyze the symbol association chain.

III. POWER SYMBOLS AND AFFECT

Power is one of the overdetermined of Russian mentality. The notion of power in the Russian language is transmitted by one principal term “VLAST’ ” and by its derivatives.

The semantic field of this word includes the following meanings: “coercing”, “commanding”, “possessing”, “mastering”, “taking”, “violating”, “forcing to make sex”, “suggesting”.

The main term of bearer of “VLAST’ ” is called – “NATCHAL’NICK” (chief, head, commander). The root of the word is “NATCHALO”. Its English equivalents are “beginning”, “outset”, “start”, “source”, “origin”.

Also “Natchal’nik” is “PRAVITEL’ ” (ruler, manager). Literally “pravitel’ ” is a representative of the truth (“pravda”) and the law (“pravo”). When I serviced at Soviet Army I heard the such army proverb: “One is right when one has many rights”. In Russian it means “Ruler is always right since he has many power.”

In general Russian power bears primary symbols: “to give rise”, “to create”, “to establish” and so on. These symbols are referring to the basic conditions of life. Other important definition of ruler is a helmsman (Russian “kormtchy”) in Russian it literally means “who nurse (feed, suckle)”. An ironic name of power is “KORMUSHKA” (a feeding trough). It’s clear we deal with a pre-oedipal problems. Since 16th century a coronation of Russian tsar is called “the tsar marriage rites”. It meant “marriage ceremony” with “zemlja” (“earth” or “land” as a symbol of country).

For a long time a family nomenclature is carrying over authorities (till our days). There is profound meaning in Russia calling their leader special affectionate names related to parental figures: and just simple “father”/”mother” but diminutive “batyushka”/”matushka”. These words are meaning something close to “my beloved

saint daddy”/”my beloved saint mammy”; at the same these pet names are applied to clergyman/his wife.

So there is no surprise that in this context Russian power is especially theatrical and demonstrative. It offers the nation an ambivalence of anxiety and enthusiasm, obsessive topics for worshiping and hatred.

Soviet power intensified these powerful traditions. Symbols of the holy victims for native land, the heroic death for salvation and glorifying of fatherland and so on are widespread in Russia.

Naturally we often meet in a mass culture the defence narcissism to compensate anxieties of loss, and a maniac joy of victory to overcome world. At the same there are depressive emotions of guilt for own imperfection.

Next quotation from the very popular Soviet-Russian song (“Pilot marsh”) shows us characteristic features of the affect power.

“We were born to transform fairy tales into reality,
To overcome space.
Our motherland gave us steel wings,
Fiery engines instead hearts.
More higher and higher and higher
We turn a flight our birds.
And each propeller brings a breathing
Of stillness of our frontiers.”

Evidently an infantile character of phantasy (“tale” – “reality”), a regression to an oceanic feeling of omnipotence (“overcome space”).

The chain of images and actions “steel bird” (airplane) – lifting higher and higher (with an animation) plus a quiet (of a single whole) presents a coitus (affect of tension and discharge). So it is a kind of incest phantasy (of aggression) as a power to have the mother (country, land).

At the same time (as it seems to me) here there is a theme of violence. Usually it is named (in Russia) as a “strong love”, “severe love”, “love till the coffins board”.

In general the power affect (feeling) is ambivalence and integrative simultaneously. There are a self-object and external object, narcissic and splitting experiences at the same time.

It may indicate separation anxiety. That is the mother's essence of an power affect.

IV. POWER AS THE MATERNAL FIGURE

The poster "Welcome to Russia" is well-known for Russians and foreigners. You can see a young blond girl of some plump forms of body. In Russia such woman types are called "DORODNAYA", i.e. "belonged to kinship" or "had been a child birth" (from the word "Rod" as a symbol the progenitor, which is the base for words "Rodstvennicki" ("relatives"), "Rodoslovie" ("pedigree") and same others).

This image was the basic one as a girl (woman) model of beauty for many Russians generations.

From the 19th Century this image replaced the very popular mother of God icon. By the way to pray the icon is consider to be more effective. So Christ must receive his Mother request. That's why Mother of God was called "Intercessor". The Mothers image is traditionally identified with Russia ("Mother – fresh soil", "Mother – the Earth" and so on).

It is shown to use the image during war and crises time ("Motherland appeals!", "To die for our Mother-the Earth").

It is possible to say that "Mother" is Alpha & Omega of Russian Civilization. Only to proverbs: "Where you was born you're useful there"; "What habits you have at your cradle the same is at your grave".

It throws light on the morbid sensibility interest to history¹ in Russia, especially in times of troubles.

¹ Russian word history ("istoriya") has a feminine gender.

There is an anecdote of our days. Somebody asks a politician: “What do you speak about the future?” Politician: “Can I speak about the future is I don’t know what past we have today?”

En masse to say the mother’s power of Russia is enough phallic. As a rule Russian authorities are despotic trying to be total. They are very affective and compulsive, obsessive. From early times they tried to attain very close participation even in private life.

Specifically they stimulates to consider family’s complaints openly. From these times we have an ironic proverb: “Russian wife is very strong with her communist party department”.

Certainly, there are many features of primary affective object – relations which are included in Russian power structure.

Hence we should pose a question of the real Russian social and cultural context of pre-oedipal relations.

V. MOTHER – BABY – WORLD: RUSSIAN SCRIPT

One of the specific characteristic of Russian everyday life is a dependence of family surviving upon an environment (kin, community, state).

Firstly it was connected with agrarian labor under the conditions of Russian severe climate (very short agricultural season) later – with development of autocracy. It’s not surprising the peasants family ideal looked like state and quite the reverse. Russian word state (“GOSUDARSTVO”) originated from the word “Houshold” (“Ghospoda”). The Russian word “GOSPODIN” (“Master”) has the same root.

Also it is equal to Russian word “Boss”, “Head”, “Gentelman”, “Sir”, and even close to God (“Ghospod’ ”).

Along existence of Russian patriarchal family is explained by very low level of life despite of very hard work of all family members. Not rare women gave birth during their agricultural labor in the field). Children are traditionally understood as little adults. My blind student comrade told me about his childhood (in 50s). His

parents found his blindness by accident, when he was about 2 years old. The thing was he had not noticed toys. He played with home animals only.

In these cases parents were worried about an external control of child behavior. There weren't any time to establish warm cordial times between parents and children. He said: "You should thing something bad... Also my parents has other children... They were very busy. But they always pity me".

It is significant that "pity" is associated with "true love" in Russia. And from other side the "pity" is the mother (woman) love. Also the "pity" is a synonym of patronage.

Certainly, I wouldn't like to say there is an absence of the individual (mutual) love in Russia. But a status of protective (and public) feelings is more higher ("Mammy sunny" is the scornful nickname).

That's why an affect of libido is invested a collective Super-Ego – "MIR" ("World"). First of all the notion "Mir" meant a meeting of community's representatives, later – a total combination of human relationship.

Other the meaning of "Mir" ("World") is "Pokoy" ("Peace", "Quietness").

Hence there many traditional (proverbial) principles. Among them: "What "mir" orders is God consider", "Mir" opinion looks like sea wave", "Death is beauty at all over "mir", "To live with wolves is to howl with ones".

In general "mir" is an external and internal object representation of the breast.

At the same time "mir" is not an established object (for real reasons). It makes polymorphic types of character, creates fears of self and object loss.

It is not surprising that the shame is a base form to relate and communicate. "What will people say?!" is the one very popular questions and principles.

Wide spread Russian oral fixation – vodka drinking – supposes to drink with others. And they must be friendly like members of "mir" (although conditionally). One of typical question of drunkards is "Are you esteeming?"

A collective drinking² gives its participants the feeling of savety and basic trust. An all proverb: "When a Christian is drunk he's own master". As it seems to

² So called "Feast is for all over world" ("Pir na ves' mir")

me the information mentioned above witnesses a kind of an affective complex of “unrealized” (or frustrated), symbiotic ties”. (They are hyper-compensated by an inflated Super-Ego.)

I think it explains special features of Russian patient’s resistance and defence: an alcoholism, abreactions in the form of revolts and other ways of regressions.

VI. IT’S LIKE A DREAM OR A WISH-FULFILMENT

Here I’d like to present samples of characteristic imaginations for Russian patients’ problems to be settled.

The one of central Russian presentation is “Holy Russia” idea. This idea means: Russia is real holy state for its “purity” and “organic natural nation ties”. So Russian nation is the “God bearing nation” (it bears with itself the pure teaching of Christ). The phantasy of incorporation & omnipotence is presented in concepts of “the every man” and “the all-mankind” (it describes the nature of the Russian man who is said to be particularly open to the influence of other cultures). It opposes to “Man in general – uni-man” (a standardized man educated by Western civilization).

Other characteristic feature of Russian ideas are a splitting of world for absolute Good & Evil, a feeling of threat of world distraction. Hence it follows the patient of salvation accompanied by castration anxieties.

A theme of conspiracy was too very widespread among narcissic paranoid Russian (and Soviet) leaders and masses.

Also I’d like to touch an affectiveness of fetish. I mean a vast number of propaganda production of literature, cinema, fine arts, garden sculptures and posters everywhere.

My foreign students (from USA, in Moscow) took them for an advertising, but they played the role of transitory objects according to the principal “be as they” (ideal characters), or “do as they”.

An importance and a receptivity of fetishes are determined by their oral (folklore) origination. By the way many of them were well known as gossips or public opinions. They were often “chewing thoroughly” and biting through”, i.e. say them

with repeating and implying (in a silence). And after all it should be discuss a peculiarity of verbalization.

VII. AFFECTIVE WORD AND VERBALIZATION PROBLEMS

So the word of Russian tradition is oral connecting with a voice. There is an original Russian word “GLASNOST’ ” (permission to be open, sincere, clear for all), which formed from the word “Golos” (“Voice”).

In general for tradition Russian culture (of non-verbal communication) “the true word” is to say under special conditions. They are words pronounced by authorities or said at the “Mir” (“World”) only. Other once are “empty” or “work out of dust” (equal English idiom “glimmer industry”).

Such word (words) is called “VESCHEYE” (“Prophetic”), i.e. connected with “Vesch’ ” (“Thing”), “Vechnost’ ”, (“Eternity”), “Vedat’ ” (to possess a deep knowledge).

So “real word” is the word of unity with the world (like “oceanic feeling”).

By the way, in Russia popular writers, journalists are called “Lords of mind” or “Word’s master”.

Therefore may be for a long time in Russia the verbal control was existed. There is the alternative: to speak or to be silent. Proverbs: “To keep silence is to live longer”, “Man the wiser is silent”, “The one who jokes is going to prison”.

Thinking of these problems I had dreams of my army service, of the special forced unity where Super-Ego and Id replaced Ego.

So an analyst must examine a semiotic sphere and problems of patient’s self exploration for creating of the safety treatment situation. It is very important to find necessary words to explain patients their state, take non verbal, affective aspects into consideration.